

GALLERIE  
NINO MIER

# ORKIDEH TORABI

*Once upon a time*

OCTOBER 2 - DECEMBER 31, 2021



SALON NINO MIER COLOGNE  
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## Orkideh Torabi

*Once upon a time*

October 2 - December 31, 2021

Salon Nino Mier, Cologne is pleased to announce our first solo show with artist Orkideh Torabi. The exhibition, titled *Once upon a time*, will feature twelve works created over the course of 2018 – 2021. In this survey show of her recent work, we see how Torabi constructs a cast of male characters to explore both artistic genres (think: the Venus or odalisque portrait convention in *Nailed it*, normally used to tease an exoticized female form for a male viewer) and social genres (think: the platonic intimacy of a hug in *I Got Your Six* that is usually at odds with machismo). Torabi's playful, funny, and abject portraits stick in the gears of such genres, displaying the absurdity of their will to code behavior and identity.

The works in *Once upon a time* make grand burlesques of masculinity. Torabi's world is one absent of women characters but filled with the genres of femininity. She calls the boys and men that appear in her works her "cast," as though her paintings were a kind of theater of the absurd, crystallizing telling moments of longer, more complicated narratives. The artist culls from history, fiction, and personal memory to divine the characters that populate her paintings. They appear as humorously clownish, loutish, and lumpen, with exaggerated features such as bulbous noses, beady eyes, thick eyebrows, and exaggeratedly separated teeth. But their postures and environments are summoned from other tales and aesthetic genres, like odalisque portraiture, depictions of the Virgin Mary with Jesus, melodrama, and other scenes normally deployed to describe and prescribe the experience of womanhood. This is what happens when conventional logics of how and where bodies should be breaks down: a man cries dramatically as he looks into a handheld mirror, regarding his chubby flesh (*Once upon a time*); another sits lovingly with two babies, holding flowers and wearing a richly colored striped skirt (*It's never enough*).

Torabi's labor-intensive process begins with a piece of cloth. She works with cloth rather than canvas because its softness and pliability allow for dye to permeate and saturate the material more easily. Instead of painting directly on the fabric, she then paints on a screen, transferring layers of color onto the fabric one by one. This method is both time consuming and full of risk, but the uncontrollable, unexpected errors produced during the printing process are what compel Torabi to keep working this way. She finishes her paintings by drying them with a blow dryer to achieve the maximal chromatic vibrancy that makes her patterned backgrounds, textiles, and architectures as beautiful as her figures are grotesque.

Raised in Iran, Torabi was witness to the stark division of male and female – which is often to say, public and private – spheres. While discussing her 2019 painting *Long time no see*, for instance, the artist recalls how women were not allowed to swim in public. In the painting, a corpulent man with a vacant grin is depicted mid-prance through water. He appears buffoonish and mentally idle, enjoying a freedom of activity, but not of representation. The question of freedom and bodily agency is integral to Torabi's practice. What emerges is a world wherein those who normally enjoy corporeal autonomy and who control the means of representation get caught in their own traps. Her work reflects and skewers cultural norms for viewers not with didacticism, but with excess, liveliness, and play.

*Orkideh Torabi (b. 1979, Tehran) graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with an MFA in Painting and Drawing in 2016. Since then, she has had solo exhibitions at Horton Gallery, New York (2017); Interface Gallery, Oakland (2018); Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica (2019); Western Exhibitions, Chicago (2016, 2019); the Museum of Contemporary Art Atrium, Chicago (2021); and Salon Nino Mier, Cologne (2021), among others. Her work has been covered by many publications, including the Los Angeles Times, Artillery, Hyperallergic, and the Chicago Reader. Torabi lives and works in Chicago.*



Installation View of Orkideh Torabi, *Once upon a time* (October 2 - December 31, 2021)  
Salon Nino Mier Cologne



*Once upon a time*, 2020  
Dye on cotton fabric  
83 1/2 x 53 1/2 in  
212.1 x 135.9 cm  
(OTO21.019)







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*Nailed it*, 2018  
Dye on cotton fabric  
37 x 43 in  
94 x 109.2 cm  
(OTO21.005)





*I hear you body*, 2018  
Dye on cotton fabric  
43 x 37 in  
109.2 x 94 cm  
(OTO21.004)





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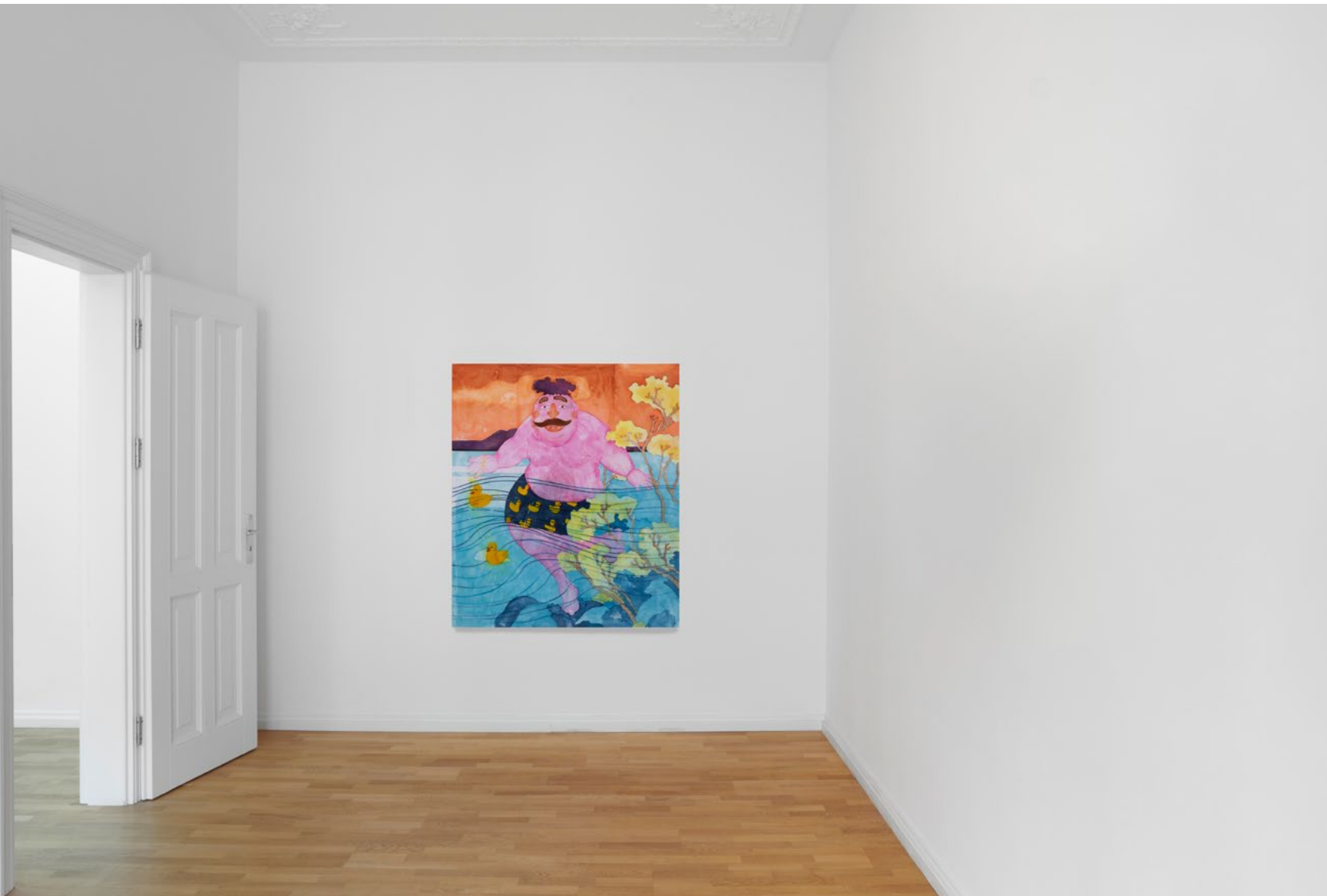
*Shake a leg*, 2019  
Dye on cotton fabric  
24 x 24 in  
61 x 61 cm  
(OTO21.015)







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*Untitled*, 2021  
Dye on cotton fabric  
51 x 78 inches  
129.5 x 198.1 cms  
(OTO21.008)





*Long time no see*, 2019  
Dye on cotton fabric  
43 x 37 in  
109.2 x 94 cm  
(OTO21.013)





*We Can Do It!*, 2018  
Dye on cotton fabric  
48 x 60 in  
121.9 x 152.4 cm  
(OTO21.007)







Installation View of Orkideh Torabi, *Once upon a time* (October 2 - December 31, 2021)  
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*It's never enough, 2018*  
Dye on cotton fabric  
43 x 37 in  
109.2 x 94 cm  
(OTO21.006)





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*Look who's here*, 2019  
Dye on cotton fabric  
24 x 24 in  
61 x 61 cm  
(OTO21.014)





*Yellow Shoes*, 2019  
Dye on cotton fabric  
34 x 42 in  
86.4 x 106.7 cm  
(OTO21.001)







*Missing a*, 2019  
Dye on cotton fabric  
24 x 24 in  
61 x 61 cm  
(OTO21.016)





*I Got Your Six*, 2019  
Dye on cotton fabric  
43 x 37 in  
109.2 x 94 cm  
(OTO21.002)





## **ORKIDEH TORABI**

Born 1979 Tehran, Iran,  
Lives and works in Chicago, IL

### **EDUCATION**

- 2016 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, Master of Fine Arts, Painting and Drawing
- 2014 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, Post-Baccalaureate, Painting and Drawing
- 2005 The University of Art, Tehran, Iran, Master of Arts, Illustration
- 2002 The University of Art, Tehran, Iran, Bachelor of Arts, Graphic Design

### **SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS**

- 2022 Half Gallery, New York, NY (forthcoming)
- 2021 *Once upon a time*, Salon Nino Mier, Cologne, DE
- 2021 MCA Atrium Project Series, Peach House's 5 Bucks Morning Special, 2020. Chicago, IL
- 2019 Orkideh Torabi: Give The All They Want, Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
Western Exhibitions, Chicago
- 2018 Stacey Beach and Orkideh Torabi, Interface Gallery, Oakland, CA
- 2017 Christopher Davison and Orkideh Torabi, Horton Gallery, New York, NY  
Orkideh Torabi: New Paintings, Yes, Please & Thank You, Los Angeles, CA
- 2016 Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2020 Gest, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018 Weight of a World, Weinberg/Newton Gallery, Chicago, IL  
What have you got to lose?, SLOW, Chicago, IL
- 2017 Council, curated by Robert Burnier, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago, IL  
EXPANDED, MANA Contemporary Chicago, Chicago, IL
- 2016 Ground Floor, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL Sullivan Gallery, Chicago, IL  
MCAC Emerging Illinois Artist, Bloomington, IL Cool and Lame gallery, Chicago, IL  
The National Wet Paint MFA Biennial, Chicago, IL  
23rd Annual Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal U.S.A. Art Appreciation Program Presidential Award Exhibitions,  
Chicago, IL
- 2015 Gallery 213 at Mana Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL The Open Center for the Arts, Chicago, IL
- 2014 Sullivan Gallery, Chicago, IL  
21rd Annual Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal U.S.A. Art Appreciation Program Presidential Award Exhibitions,  
Chicago, IL
- 2013 The Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria  
Open Knowledge Foundation Austria (OKFT) on the occasion of the international women's day, Tehran, Iran  
Shirin Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran

- 2012 Aria Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran  
 2011 The Third Contemporary Drawing Festival, Imam Ali Museum, Tehran, Iran  
 2009 Imam Ali Museum, Tehran, Iran  
 Iran Painters Association, Tehran, Iran  
 2008 The Second Contemporary Drawing Festival, Imam Ali Museum, Tehran, Iran  
 2007 Group printmaking workshop, Barg gallery, Tehran, Iran Group printmaking exhibition, Barg gallery, Tehran, Iran  
 2006 Iran Painters Association, Tehran, Iran  
 2005 Laleh gallery, Tehran, Iran  
 2004 Kamaledin Behzad Gallery, Tehran, Iran

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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 2019 Los Angeles Times, David Pagel, "In her paintings, the glorious awkwardness of men failing to have fun." July 29  
 Artillery, Annabel Osberg, "Orkideh Torabi." July 24  
 Art Now LA, Zellen, Jody. "Expoloring Issues of Patriarchy." July 14  
 2018 Hyperallergic. Sutton, Benjamin. "Lapping Up NADA New York's Lush Portraits and Giant Tongue Sculptures." Mar. 9 Roberta Smith on Instagram. "At Horton Gallery/Western Exhibitions chez @newartdealers..." March 11  
 Lenny Letter. Elizalde, Molly. "How Iranian Painter Orkideh Torabi Found Her Voice." April 10 Weinberg/Newton Gallery.  
 "Artist Interview: Weight of a World: Orkideh Torabi." Aug. 4  
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 2017 New American Paintings. Midwest, Issue #131.  
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 2017. Art and Cake Magazine. Quinn, Patrick. "Yes, Please, and Thank You Projects: New Paintings by Orkideh Torabi." January 26, 2017.  
 Artillery. Osberg, Annabel. "Orkideh Torabi: Yes, Please & Thank You Gallery." March 7,  
 2016 Chicago Gallery News. Reilly, Allison. Ground Floor at the Hyde Park Art Center. September 20, 2016  
 New City. Ali, Hiba. Colorful, Cartoonish Constructions of Masculinity A Review of Orkideh Torabi at Western Exhibitions. July 27, 2016  
 Chicago Reader. "Some Standouts Among the Hodgepodge at SAIC's MFA Show." Dmitry Samarov, April 29, 2016.  
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 2012 Orkideh Torabi, Shahrouz Mohajer, Trans, Persian lithography from the orientalist's` point of view, Tehran: Peikareh.  
 2011 Research on The Lithographed Images of Ali Quli Khoi in Ajaib Almakhuqat-e Qazvini. Ketabe Honar-e Mah, Vol. 156  
 2010 Meraj-e Mohammad: The Lithographed Images of the Prophet Mohammad Farhang-e Mardom, Vol. 35-36: 127-148.  
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