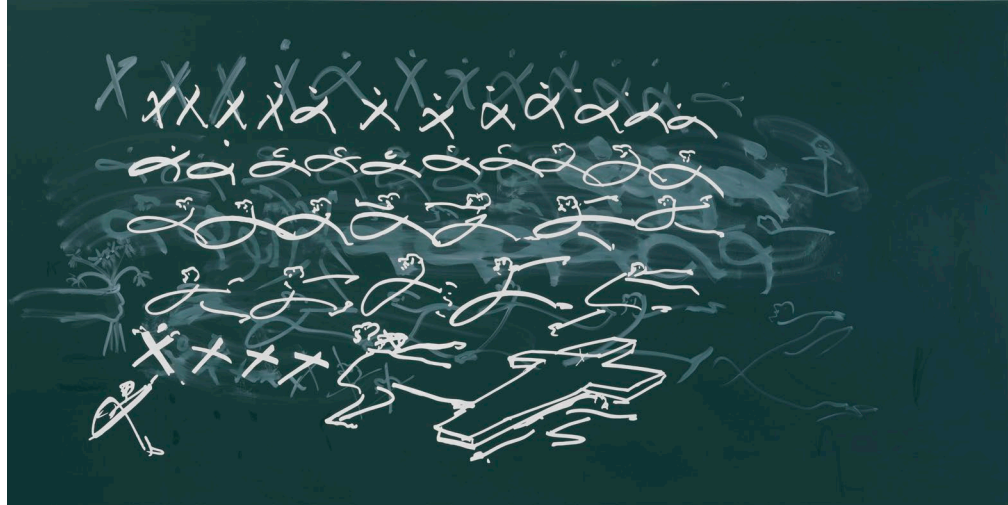


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## Tala Madani: Be flat October 19 – August 17, 2025



Tala Madani (Iran, b. 1981). *Chalkboard (Crossings)*, 2024. Oil on linen. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio.

### Tala Madani: Be flat

Seattle, WA—The Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington is pleased to present *Be Flat*, a major solo exhibition by pioneering artist Tala Madani (b. 1981, Tehran, Iran). This comprehensive show features newly commissioned and recent works that expand Madani's exploration of how symbols, language, and mark-making affect power dynamics and individual agency.

Known for paintings and installations that reflect life's complexities and contradictions, the artist often depicts human figures at their most vulnerable, violent, and perplexed, blending ribald humor with dead-serious critical insight. Her characters, along with the detailed cinematic spaces and architectures they inhabit, evoke a haunting sensation as if they have emerged from the unconscious realm of dreams and fantasies. Madani's skill with the medium of paint allows her to play games with the idea of painting itself. Her brush is as quick as her cutting wit, and the facility of her hand belies the vast knowledge that is embedded in every stroke. Ultimately, Madani's work is that of a storyteller, shining a light (however murky) on our assumptions of gender, narrative logic, ideology, and much in between.

At the Henry, Madani takes the next step in her practice, deepening her explorations through new suites of blackboard paintings and film strips, along with a selection of animations presented in intimate architectural structures.

The exhibition also introduces a new series of satirical depictions of father figures engaged in sports-related activities—domains typically linked to male dominance and strength, but here expressed with naked absurdity and vulnerability. Through her signature style of humor and critique, Madani challenges conventional notions of masculinity and power, revealing the contradictions embedded in familial and social relationships.

Be flat invites visitors to a multi-sensory experience, encountering and re-encountering Madani's fantastical characters and the uncanny aspects of her imagery while questioning the artifice inherent in presentation.



Tala Madani (Iran, b. 1981). *\*\*\*TBC Untitled*, 2024. Oil on linen. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio.

## ARTIST BIO

Tala Madani creates images that explore the complexity and contradiction of contemporary life. She skewers stereotypes in sharply satirical paintings that evoke clashes of culture: men and women, the rational and the absurd, Western and non-Western. Madani's work draws on a diverse array of influences, from Renaissance paintings to the *Watchmen* graphic novels. Her paintings demonstrate keen attention to how light and paint interact, effectively exploring and experimenting with these materials. Her evolving career spans sketches, cartoon-like paintings, short animations, and large-scale paintings. Madani exhibits solo and in group exhibitions at museums worldwide, including The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2023); Start Museum, Shanghai (2020); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2019); Secession, Vienna (2019); La Panacée, Montpellier, France (2017); and many more. She

participated in the 16th Istanbul Biennial, the Whitney Biennial (2017), and Made in L.A. at the Hammer Museum (2014). Madani lives and works in Los Angeles.

## ABOUT THE HENRY

The Henry advances contemporary art and ideas. The museum is internationally recognized for groundbreaking exhibitions, for being on the cutting edge of contemporary art and culture, and for championing artists at every level of creation. Containing more than 28,000 works of art, the Henry's permanent collection is a significant cultural resource available to scholars, researchers, and the general public. The Henry is located on the University of Washington campus in Seattle, Washington. Visit [henryart.org](http://henryart.org) to learn more.