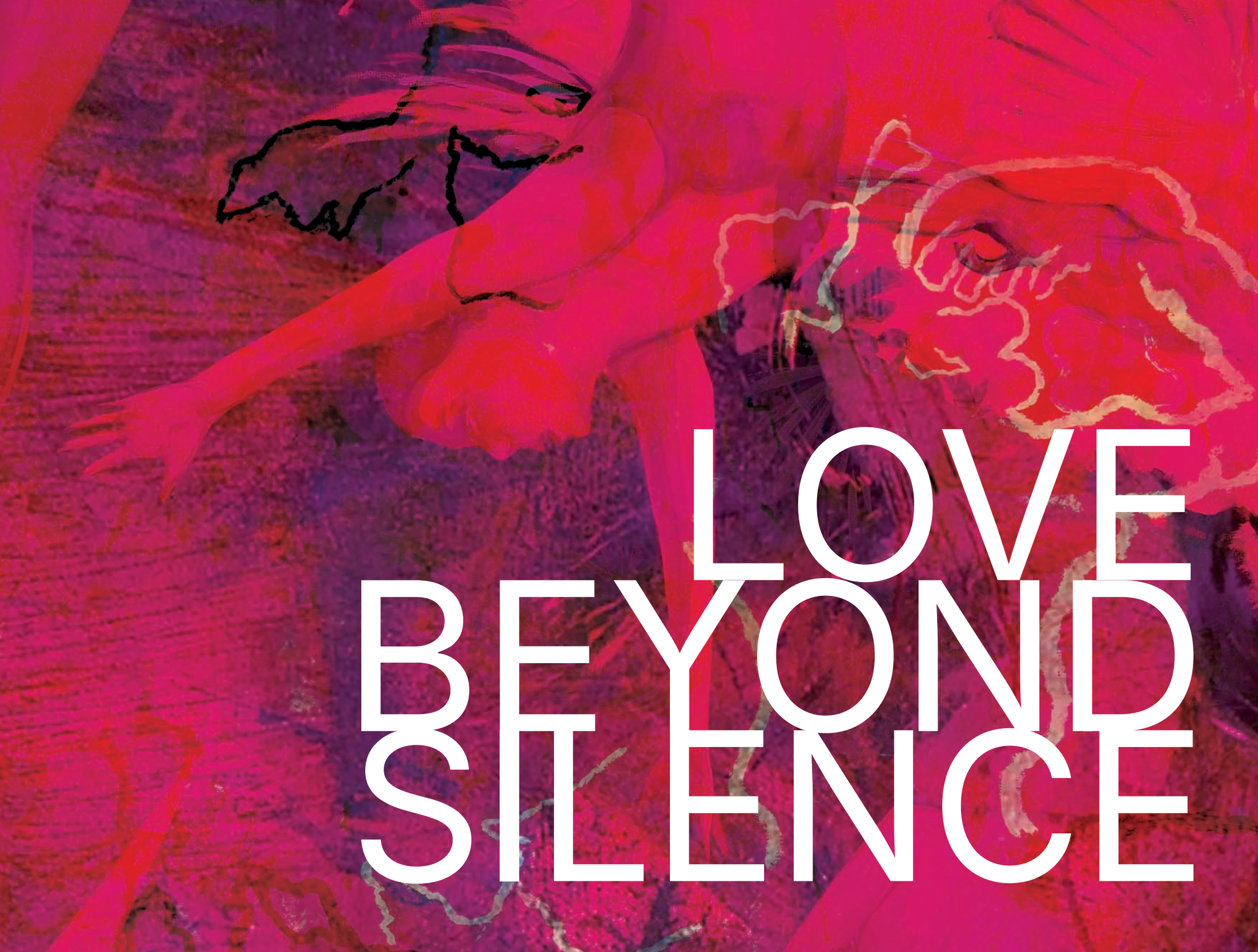
Art UNMUTED

BALICE HERTLING

GALERIE


LOVE
BEYOND
SILENCE

Words From The Curator

Love Beyond Silence takes its point of departure from Gabriel García Márquez's Love in the Time of Cholera, a novel in which love exists not outside of history, but within it; shaped by time, separation, uncertainty, memory, and the circumstances of the world around it.

For this exhibition, I invited Hilda Kheirabadi, Shiva Babai, and Bardia Moradi to engage directly with the novel. Each artist read Love in the Time of Cholera through their own sensibility and experience, translating its characters, themes, emotions, and underlying questions into a visual language of their own. The resulting works are not illustrations of the book, but personal interpretations of it; three distinct ways of entering the same literary world and transforming it through contemporary Iranian artistic practice.

I was particularly interested in what might emerge when Márquez's exploration of love, time, waiting, desire, and loss is encountered through the experiences of artists living within the complexities of contemporary Iran. Today, as Iran faces profound uncertainty and the reality of war, ideas of separation, absence, belonging, memory, and longing acquire an immediacy that is difficult to separate from everyday life.

The artists approach these themes differently. Their works move between the intimate and the collective, between what can be spoken and what remains unspoken. In each case, the literary source becomes a starting point rather than a conclusion: something to be questioned, absorbed, fragmented, and ultimately made their own.



As a curator working from outside Iran, I am conscious of how often Iranian contemporary art is viewed primarily through the lens of its political circumstances. With Love Beyond Silence, I wanted to create space for something more layered. The artists are responding to a universal literary work, but they do so from their own histories, memories, and realities. Their interpretations allow us to encounter Iran not simply through its current circumstances, but through the interior lives, imagination, and emotional landscapes of its artists.

The title Love Beyond Silence emerged from this tension between what can be expressed and what cannot. Silence can be imposed by circumstance, but it can also contain memory, intimacy, longing, and resistance. Art can give form to what language cannot always hold.

I am deeply grateful to Balice Hertling Gallery for giving me the opportunity to bring Love Beyond Silence to Paris and for creating the space in which these three artists can enter into a dialogue with Márquez, with one another, and with a new audience.

Jasmine Melamed
Founder & Curator, Art Unmuted



Shiva Babaei

This series considers the passage of time and its imprint on human experience. The works engage with states of waiting, loss, illness, and return, not through narrative representation, but through an evolving process of making and transformation.

Images are repeatedly constructed, obscured, and reworked. Earlier marks and gestures remain embedded within subsequent ones, allowing the surface to hold traces of what has come before. The paintings emerge through this accumulation and erasure, where experience is continuously transformed without being fully resolved or erased.



Residue 2026 / Acrylic on canvas / 110 × 160 cm



Process **2026** / Oil on canvas / 110 × 160 cm



Stasis **2026** / Oil on canvas / 110 × 160 cm



Confluence **2026** / Oil on canvas / 110 × 160 cm

Shiva Babaei (b. 1981, Iran) is a contemporary painter based in Tehran. She holds a B.A. in Painting from Sooreh University and an M.A. in Painting from the University of Tehran.

Babaei primarily works with oil and acrylic, developing her abstract paintings through processes of addition, alteration, and removal. Color, marks, lines, and texture are repeatedly transformed throughout the process, with the image evolving in response to each stage of the painting. The relationship between color, surface, and gesture plays a central role in her practice.

Her work explores memory, loss, and the passage of time through abstraction, examining the relationship between human experience and the traces left by time. Babaei has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions in Iran and internationally, including at Choom Gallery, O Gallery, Dastan Gallery, and Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai, and has participated in Tehran Auction.



Hilda Kheirabadi

The Story Márquez Did Not Tell
Cholera

In this series, cholera is more than a metaphor for the proximity of pain to love and its signs.
I want to look more deeply into this pain, beyond the metaphor. Who, in truth, were the ones afflicted by this suffering? Who were the ones condemned to bear this pain and forced loneliness?
I speak of the hearts and souls upon whom this pain was imposed; of a place that is more familiar to us, a place we know more intimately and have lived through, yet one that is not portrayed with the same beauty and clarity within the narrative.
Here lies the scorched land of cholera, a land where, in order for the protagonists of the story to be placed within beautiful and unforgettable frames, others were made to carry the burden of rejection, suffering, and grief, and were ultimately erased from the narrative.
The heroes in my frames, however, are those who stood exposed before the eyes of fate and stared back at it; those who emerged from the heart of this darkness.
This series is an attempt to bring back what has been pushed to the margins; to see those whom the story, in order to make itself more beautiful, chose not to see.



Where You Chose To Look Away 2026 / Acrylic on canvas / 110 × 100 cm



Endless Limbo 2026 / Acrylic on canvas / 110 × 100 cm



Grief **2026** / Acrylic on canvas / 110 × 100 cm



Unbridled **2026** / Acrylic on canvas / 100 × 90 cm



hold your breath 2026 / Acrylic on canvas / 100 × 100 cm

Hilda Kheirabadi(b. 1988, Sanandaj) is an Iranian artist whose practice is rooted in painting and visual exploral on. She studied Visual Arts (Painting) at the University of Science and Culture. Where she earned her Bachelore degree in 2015. Kheirabadi work often reflects a contemplative approach to form, space and the unseen dimensions of everyday experience.

She has participitated in several group exhibitions, including Nothingness at nat gallery (2016),

Museum of stolen objects at Nat and Sayeh galleries(2016), and One day auction at gallery No.Six (2017), and artunmuted/severalgroup exhibition/ leila heller gallery (2026)



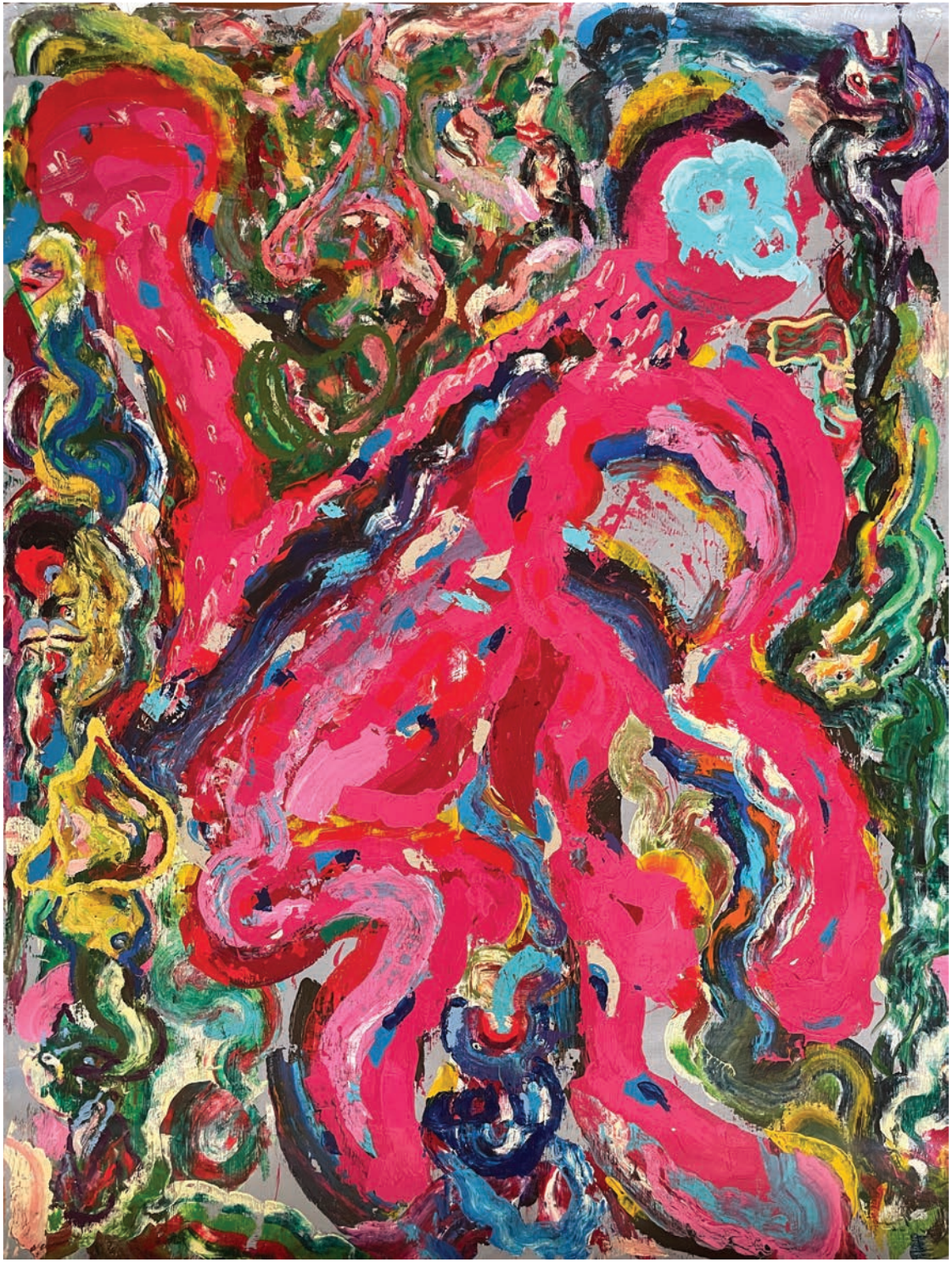
Bardia Moradi

This series begins with Love in the Time of Cholera, but does not remain within its narrative. I move the characters, animals, and situations of the novel from their original context so that their meanings shift with them. In this displacement, the parrot transforms from an animal into a force that dominates the human; love becomes fragmented under the pressure of time, while desire remains; and animal instinct, confronted with human order, becomes a question of freedom and control.

These works take shape along unstable boundaries between nature and culture, instinct and judgment, desire and limitation; a space where breaking familiar scales, forms, and rules allows meaning to shift again.



Un loro real de Paramaribo 2026 / Mixed media / Acrylic and Oil stick on Canvas/ 215 × 130 cm



«Yellow Monkey»-They don’t like monkeys because they masturbate 2026 / Acrylic and oil stick on Canvas/ 100 × 80 cm



Love, Desire, Wantonness and Repulsion 2026 / oil on Canvas / 170 × 100 cm

I am an interdisciplinary artist whose journey began in petroleum engineering and modeling and gradually expanded into the visual arts, fashion, sculpture, object design, and creative workshops.
Working with the body and image first led me to painting and performance, and later into fashion and textile design.
Today, my practice is a dialogue between painting, fashion, sculpture, design, and society where each work is not only a personal statement but also part of a collective experience.

