

Ziba Safavian Artist Statement

I was born in Tehran, Iran on the brink of a historic seismic sociopolitical shift that not only changed the country of my birth, but also affected the history of the world as we know it. As a little girl learning to walk, talk and hold a pencil in my hands, it was clear to me that my life will not be anything like that of my mother. My first impressions of growing up was that the world inside my home is vastly different from the world in school and on the streets of Tehran. With my naive child's eyes, I saw an increasingly sharp contrast between what I was and what I was expected to be. Contradiction became the only way to survive in a society in conflict. Growing up as a little girl in the eye of the storm of Middle Eastern conflicts, I had to learn how to reconcile the deep contradictions in the world around me. Culture was no longer an aspiration for me to draw from to shape my worldview and character, it was an ever-tightening circle of limitations and dogmatic prescriptions I felt forced to conform to.

In hindsight, while grappling with the nostalgia of an immigrant's life taking root in southern California, I am beginning to cherish the turbulent times of my early years. I learned to use my education as a Bachelor of Arts to channel into my artistic work, the deep contrasts, nauseating contradictions, and heartbreaking personal and societal persecution in Iran. More importantly, I learned to appreciate the beauty and richness of the culture I was born in and how it shaped my artistic aspirations. I now understand the true impact of having lived in the eye of the storm and experienced life as a woman in Iran. My life's experience positively influences my artistic expression. My painting are the tools to channel the sub-conscious influences in my early life into my artistic aspirations and illustrates the world around me as purely as I possibly can. I earned my BA from UCI and MFA based in CSUF.

My works focuses on women's censorship in authoritarian Islamic countries. The series illustrates the condition of a woman who is under the control of unjust and dictatorial regime which takes many of her rights. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, women are as a second citizen with lots of restrictions. My works explore Iranian women journey in life confronted with our limits in space and time and addresses the situation of women in Iran, and how they suffer, both from religion and unbalanced harshness of laws stacked against them.