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THE NEW
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A conversation with
**FRANCES
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BLACK FRIDAY
MALL CULTURE *with*
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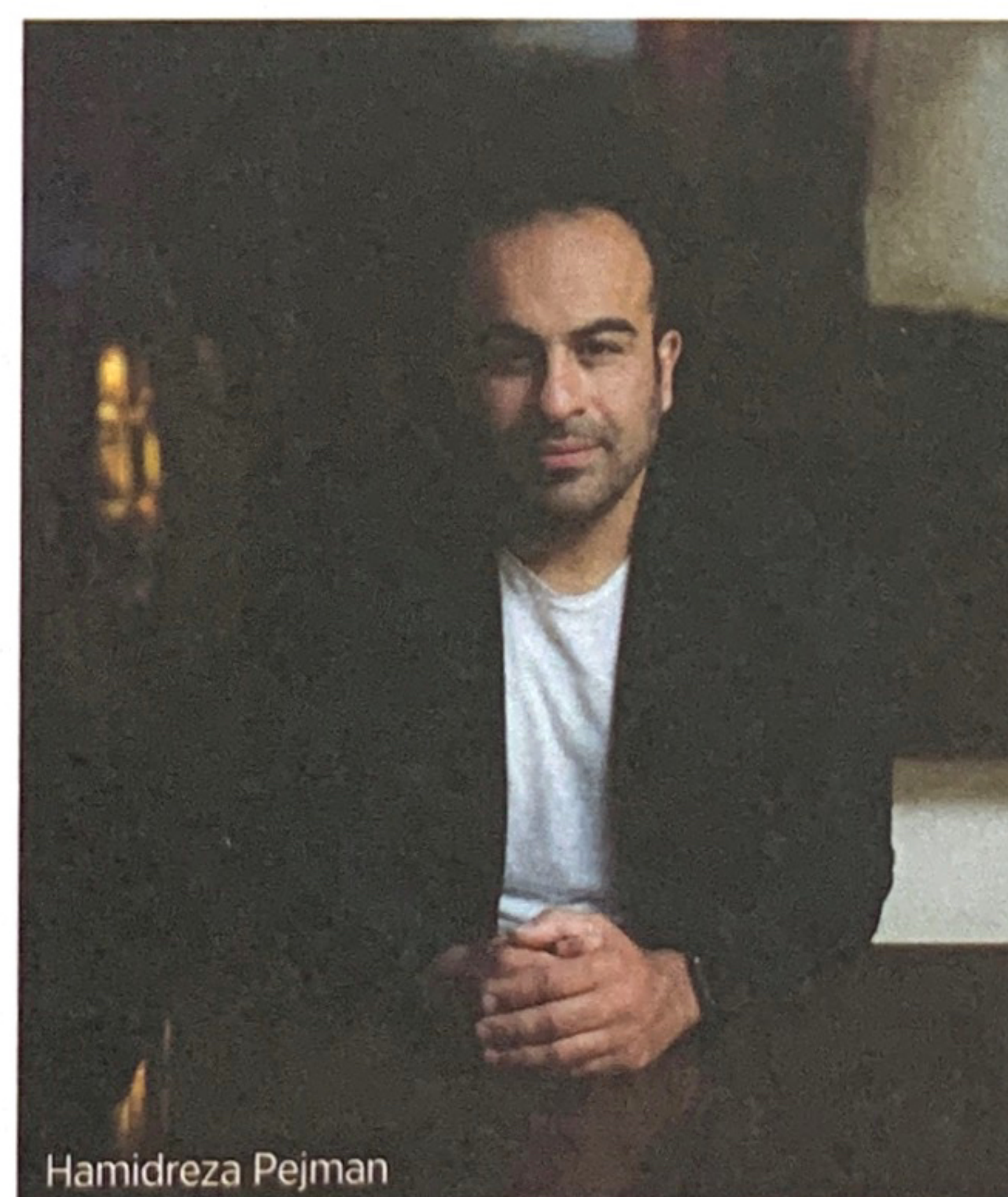
Neil Beloufa and Mahan Moalemi during an artist talk at Pejman Foundation

THE PEJMAN FOUNDATION: FOR A BRIGHTER, BOLDER AND ARTISTIC IRAN

The not-for-profit foundation is committed to putting contemporary Iranian artists on the world stage, writes **Tanika D'souza**

COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A BETTER FUTURE for Iranian contemporary art, the Pejman Foundation believes in developing a stronger infrastructure for progressive artistic practices within and outside of Iran. In addition to supporting local artists, the foundation focuses on developing alliances with figures in the global scene of contemporary culture, as well as deepening the reception of contemporary Iranian art by the greater public.

Through establishing new platforms for which existing networks of local practitioners can build upon, the foundation intends on being a crossroad for Iranian culture and the cultures of other countries around the world by offering work and study spaces, studios and libraries to students and researchers. Novel alliances and new modes of engagement are sought out and turned into long-lasting practices that aspire to result in the cultivation of a more diverse and conscious public in Iran. "The foundation focuses on strategies for mediating global contemporary art in the Iranian context," says the foundation's Shakiba Abdollahian. "By inviting international artists and curators who initiate projects within Iran through



Hamidreza Pejman

residencies, artist displays and talks, the foundation ensures maximum exposure, an engagement with public discourse and the transfer of knowledge." In a similar vein, the foundation is committed to the initiation and funding of research-based projects that are in the domain of Iranian visual history. Hoping to shed new light on the context within which contemporary visual art in Iran is rooted, the Pejman Foundation supports art-related projects of all kinds, including film projections, performances and

workshops as well as readings and conferences.

In the past, the foundation has put forth work by artists such as Ardeshir Mohassess, Aria Kasaei and Dariush Kiaras who collaborated over the production of a piece entitled *Ardeshir Hyphen Seventeen Eighty Seven: A Publication*. The Pejman foundation supported the publication and organised a launch session for the occasion. Looking into Ardeshir's under-recognised *oeuvre* and devoted to highlighting his indisputable influence on visual production in contemporary Iran, the publication honoured an exceptional vision investigating the most disquieting elements in Iran's identity, across its long history and beyond the dominance of periodic ideologies.

Earlier this year, the foundation announced its support for Tala Madani's solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis. Being the artist's first solo exhibition in an American museum and focusing on her engagement with the cinematic, the exhibition presented a contemporary commentary on animation and premiered a new series of paintings. Also this year, the foundation presented a group exhibition entitled *Return*. Held at the Porsesh Institute's NOT Gallery in Tehran, the exhibition included a collection of drawings curated by Aidin Xankeshipour and paid homage to 21 Iranian artists of different generations. Accompanied by an illustrated publication designed by Aria Kasaei and Mona Shirazi at Studio Kargah, *Return* featured exhibited works, curatorial statements, artist biographies and essays by the critic Ali Golestaneh and art history lecturer Helia Darabi. Looking back at Francisco Goya's *Disasters of War*, *Return* aimed to shed light on contemporary encounters with widespread violence. The works reflected on how perceptions of modern age terror are shaped through a vast array of mediatisation. The exhibition also showed how staged alternative forms of expression and visualisation can be counterparts to the dominant modes of witnessing atrocity and accounting for horror.

For centuries, the visual culture of Iran has been influenced by the rich heritage of Iranian society. As one of the more prominent and progressive countries in regards to contemporary Middle Eastern art, Iran has much to offer on a multitude of mediums. The Pejman Foundation and those like it are, at the core of their existence, some of the pivotal propellers working to further lead their country to an international platform of Post-Modern and contemporary art. ■
pejman.foundation