

## A...cademy of Fine Arts Vienna

Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute for Iranian Studies  
Faculty of Arts and Science  
University of Toronto  
100 St George St  
Toronto ON M5S 3G, Canada

### **Letter of recommendation for Dr. Nargess Khodabakhshi for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies for 2023-2024 at the University of Toronto**

Vienna 09/06/2023

Honorable Jury for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship,  
Dear colleagues,

I am delighted to recommend Dr. Nargess Khodabakhshi for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies for 2023-2024 and it is my honor to endorse Nargess' work in revising and completing her internationally outstanding, foundational PhD thesis on *Oil Fashion and Modernization: A History of Fashion and Dress in Iran 1941- 1979*, which was awarded the 2023 Science Prize of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna at your esteemed institute for publication as a monograph.

Personally, I have known Nargess for more than ten years from very different perspectives from a student, to an excellent dissertation candidate, to a highly professional lecturer and member of staff at my department and further major Art Universities in Austria. Since as a bright, motivated person and distinguished scholar Nargess has become a highly valued colleague, who works with the highest dedication, diligence and ambition on expanding fashion studies as well as global fashion and design histories from the perspective of Iranian Studies.

Her PhD on *Oil Fashion and Modernization: A History of Fashion and Dress in Iran 1941- 1979* is an internationally long-awaited, highly topical, and exceptional contribution to the field of Iranian studies as well as to fashion studies. This historiography of Iranian fashion and clothing cultures (1941-1979) ranges from the abolition of veils and chadors for women in the country in 1936, to the emergence of Tehran fashion boutiques and a scene of fashion influencers in the late 1960s, to the imperial couture introduced by Empress Farah Pahlavi during the oil boom, to a diverse spectrum of protest fashions by Iranian oppositionists - from Marxist, fadayeys, mojaheds, hippie/hipigari or Mao styles, to fashionable chador

Prof. Dr. Elke Gaugele  
Fashion and Styles - Design in Context  
e.gaugele@akbild.ac.at  
T +43 1 58816-9200

Academy of Fine Arts Vienna  
Institute for Education in the Art, IKL  
Karl-Schweighofer-Gasse 3, A-1070 Vienna  
www.akbild.ac.at

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designs of the 1970s. With the introduction of the compulsory hijab in 1980, the Mullah regime put an end to these fashion developments after the Iranian Revolution.

Nargess has written a brilliant, exciting, and at the same time richly detailed political history of fashion that brings together decolonizing and de-orientalizing perspectives with an intensive research source material, which she has gathered through long term research in Iran as well as in the Iranian diaspora, through oral history interviews, image, media, and magazine analyses.

Particularly at the current stage of revising the PhD thesis for a monograph, Nargess' work would benefit extremely from a fellowship at your institute, a renowned hub of Iranian Studies and vibrant research community, in which she will fully engage herself.

I would like to highlight and to emphasize how much I appreciate Nargess' outstanding commitment, longstanding dedication and mindfulness in collecting and dealing with very sensitive research data. On the one hand, her access to field research and source materials was complicated and partially denied by the Islamic Republic's censorship measures, as the topic of the dissertation, the history of fashion, is considered "critical" on the part of the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, under these circumstances, she has developed a special sensitivity in methodology and the evaluation of the field research. In addition to this she has conducted research on the role of fashion for the Iranian diaspora. Through her research on social media accounts of the Iranian diaspora Nargess has traced the relevance of these fashion stories (1941-1979) and elaborated on the memorializing role of fashion and the associated emancipatory power of historical fashion images/and developments.

To conclude, I believe Nargess should be considered for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Fellowship due to not only her impressive qualifications and passionate enthusiasm regarding furthering herself and but also to foster her pioneering book, which will be the first monograph in this field.

I highly recommend Dr. Nargess Khodabakhshi for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship at your esteemed institute without reservation and look forward to hearing about a successful future there!

Sincerely,

Elke Gaugele



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