**Dear Members of the Fellowship Committee,**

### I am writing to express my sincere interest in the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowships offered by Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali foundation. As a PhD candidate in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto, specializing in Iranian Art and History, I am eager to bring my academic background, research experience, and passion for Iranian visual culture to your prestigious fellowship program.

My academic journey has been deeply rooted in exploring Iranian art and history, beginning with my Bachelor of Arts in Museum Studies from the Institute of Cultural Heritage and Higher Education, Tehran, Iran, where I focused on the impact of Hellenism on Parthian art. This foundation was further developed during my MA at York University, where I examined Queen Farah Pahlavi’s Western Art Collection and its influence on contemporary Persian visual art from the 1940s to the 1970s. Continuing this trajectory, my current PhD research investigates the Iranian Visual Public Sphere during the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods under the supervision of Professor Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi.

My research positions have provided me with substantial experience in both academic and curatorial settings. As a research assistant at the Tavakoli Archive, I have researched the *Tawfiq* newspaper archives, gaining valuable insights into Iranian historical narratives. My curatorial internships at the Royal Ontario Museum and collaboration with the Aga Khan Museum have further enriched my understanding of Middle Eastern art and the intricacies of museum curation.

In addition to my research, I have actively contributed to the academic community through various conferences and symposiums. Notably, I presented on the depictions of Iranian women in diasporic caricatures at the symposium dedicated to Dr. Shirin Ebadi, and on the curatorial agency in Iranian waqf at the Middle East Studies Association Conference at the MESA. These experiences have honed my public speaking skills and strengthened my ability to convey complex ideas to diverse audiences.

My leadership roles, such as serving as President of the Iranian Studies Student Forum, have equipped me with the organizational and management skills necessary to successfully execute academic events. These roles have allowed me to foster a sense of community among students and scholars interested in Iranian studies, highlighting my commitment to collaborative academic endeavors. I convened a series of symposiums on Exploring Contemporary Iranian Art, with two events already organized: one held on March 1st and the other on June 21st, 2024, and so on. These symposiums brought together scholars, artists, and enthusiasts to explore the evolving landscape of Iranian art. The present and upcoming events featured diverse presentations and discussions on how contemporary Iranian artists blend traditional influences with modern expressions, addressing themes of identity, politics, and diaspora.

Also, I have co-organized three talks focused primarily on the 2022 uprising, spanning from 2023 to 2024. The aim of the 2022 uprising talk series was to analyze and discuss the social, political, and cultural implications of the events surrounding the uprising. These talks provided a platform for critical reflection and dialogue on the significant developments and challenges faced during that period.

I co-organized an event titled “A Half-Century of Towfigh: The Oldest Persian Satirical Periodical” in June 2023. The event featured a guest appearance by Abbas Tofigh, one of the Publishers, Editors-in-Chief, and Satirists of the Tawfigh Satirical Periodical. This program allowed my supervisor, Professor Tavakoli-Targhi, to acquire one of the most impressive collections of Tawfiq from Abbas Tofigh.

The Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowships align perfectly with my academic goals and professional aspirations. I have passed my PhD thesis supervisory committee successfully in April 2025 and am an eligible candidate for the Dissertation Completion Fellowship. It will give me the necessary resources and time to bring my research to fruition. I am confident that my dissertation will contribute significantly to the academic discourse on Iranian art and history, and I am eager to share my findings with the academic community and beyond.

I am confident that my academic background, research experience, and passion for Iranian art and history make me a strong candidate for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowships. I am eager to bring my unique perspective and expertise to your program and to contribute to the vibrant intellectual community at Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali foundation.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss how my background and interests align with the goals of the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowships. Please feel free to contact me at leila.moslemimehni@mail.utoronto.ca or 647-779-2851 if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Leila Moslemi Mehni