

July 14, 2024

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing a letter of recommendation for Leila Moslemni-Mehni who is applying for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowship. I have known Leila for almost six years and have followed her academic progress with interest, first, as her curatorial supervisor at ROM when she secured the museum's prestigious and highly competitive paid summer internship (2019), and over the last few years as her mentor in the field of museum studies and Iranian art and material culture, and now as a committee member for her PhD dissertation at NMC (UofT).

Leila is a diligent, organized, and engaged student with a passion for learning and research and ultimately wishes to pursue a career in academia and museum curation. Leila has already drafted over half of her dissertation and continues to research and refine her ideas as she presents new material from the Tavakoli Archive. Having read two of her chapters and part of her introduction thus far, I have found that Leila demonstrates outstanding research and linguistic abilities as well as originality and creativity in her investigation of the visual public sphere in late Qajar and early Pahlavi Iran, focusing on a range of political caricatures printed in newspapers and periodicals from these eras. Although English is not her first language, Leila's academic writing has improved immensely under our supervision and guidance and I have no doubt that she will produce a deeply engaging and unique PhD dissertation with the assistance of this prestigious fellowship. Leila brings sensitivity and humour to her intelligent and thoughtful interpretations of the illustrations and material culture of the Qajar and Pahlavi periods. In the early stages of her PhD, Leila suffered a serious physical illness. However, rather than giving up on her studies, she showed great resilience and determination and has not only continued her PhD during her recovery, but has actively contributed to her academic community by participating in and organizing a number of conferences, symposia, and exhibitions attesting to her firm commitment to the advancement of Iranian and museum studies.

Leila is an intelligent, articulate, and hardworking individual who has been a joy to mentor. She has a passion for museums, visual arts, and academic research, making her an ideal candidate for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowship. She is also a warm, outgoing, and polite individual who will bring diversity and richness to your esteemed Institute. I unreservedly support her pursuit of this fellowship to complete her PhD in a timely manner and will continue to support her throughout her academic and professional journey.

Sincerely,



Dr Fahmida Suleman
Senior Curator, Islamic World, Royal Ontario Museum
fsuleman@rom.on.ca

Associate Professor, Departments of Near and Middle East Civilizations (status only) and Art History (non-budgetary cross-appointment), University of Toronto