

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / SEPTEMBER 28, 2020 - ICA San José announces The Facade Project with a major mural commission from **Amir H. Fallah** and reopens its doors to become an Official Vote Center for November 2020 election.

The Institute of Contemporary Art San José is excited to debut *The Facade Project*—an ongoing public art program dedicated to exploring the most critical social and political issues facing our time—by tapping Amir. H. Fallah as its inaugural artist. The new initiative will feature artists whose identities and work represent areas of our global community that have been largely overlooked by American arts institutions, thereby, offering a course correction to past patterns of inequity within the museum system. With this program, it seeks to engage new communities, reaffirm our commitment to art as a social public good, and contribute to the writing of a more inclusive art history cannon.

Making art accessible is a core part of the ICA's mission, and this tenet has never been more vital than during the era of COVID-19 closures. This ongoing project will offer safe, outdoor, in-person, socially distanced and engaging experiences for our audiences while allowing artists the opportunity to respond, push, and reinvent the limits of their practices in terms of scale, medium, concept, and the work's relationship to the architecture and urban space of downtown San José.

According to Alison Gass, Executive Director of the ICA San José "San José is one of the most diverse big cities in the country in the fastest growing county of California, and by moving to the exterior of the building, we can ensure access to the largest cross-section of people engaging with the work. This program reflects a deepened belief that in this moment of global crisis spanning a pandemic, divisive political election, George Floyd's murder, Black Lives Matter and the powerfully heightened awareness of systemic racism, art should help us process. It can also offer a way into conversations and inspire a moment of examination, discourse, pleasure and respite."

Amir H. Fallah: *The Facade Project* will include a 50ft mural enveloping the front of the building, and two 6ft circular paintings will offer an entirely new conception of the relationship between the street and the building's architecture. Appropriating images from across history, geographical regions, popular and art historical sources, and personal and universal references, Fallah deftly creates new meanings through a fully original language of vibrant color. He presents text and images from children's books interspersed with visual quotations from Persian miniatures, illuminated manuscripts, American propaganda imagery (primarily around wars in South and Southeast Asia), and widely dispersed paraphernalia such as matchbooks. With this web of sources, Fallah points to his own navigation of Iranian and American identity, reminding us that being American today often means one does not identify solely with any single nationality or heritage. It is his insistence on the complexity of identity, parsed through the language of painterly delight, that makes Fallah such a powerful inaugural artist for the ICA San José Facade Project.

To coincide with the inaugural Facade Project, the ICA San José will also be transformed into a Vote Center for the first time in its 40-year history. This status reflects our desire to be "of

service” to our community, support voter turn-out and physical access, and to deepen the idea that museums are a place of civic action and for the people. Following the 2016 legislation passed by the State of California to increase accessibility to voters, the Vote Center will be open for 4 days prior to Election Day and allow voters to drop off their ballots and/ or cast their votes.

According to the artist “Now, more than ever, it is crucial to make artworks that speak to the issues of the day which is why I am I’m thrilled to be collaborating with the ICA San José to realize a work that addresses themes of social justice, inclusion, empathy, and humanity in such a public way.”

About the ICA San José:

Established in 1980, The Institute of Contemporary Art San José (ICA) is a non-collecting contemporary art museum committed to examining the most urgent contemporary issues through the lens of artistic practice. Located in downtown San José, the ICA provides a platform for changing the enlarging and broadening the art historical canon, providing visibility and critical examination for the most inclusive selection of artists possible and reflecting the diverse population of the region. The ICA is equally committed to reflecting the diversity of its audiences and offering engagement with the best contemporary art practice for free.

About Amir H. Fallah:

Amir H. Fallah (b. 1979, Tehran) received a BFA in fine art and painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, and an MFA in painting at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has exhibited extensively in solo and group exhibitions across the United States and abroad. In 2015 Fallah had a solo exhibition at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas, and received a Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant. In 2009 the artist was chosen to participate in the 9th Sharjah Biennial and received the 2018 Northern Trust Purchase Prize at EXPO Chicago. In 2019 Fallah was awarded a permanent public art commission by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and won the COLA Artist Fellowship. Fallah is also the recipient of the 2020 Artadia Award for Los Angeles. His work is in the permanent collections of museums across the United States and in the UAE. Amir H. Fallah is represented by Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles.

About the California Voters Choice Act:

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voters-choice-act/about-vca>

The ICA San José is a Vote Center

The Vote Centers open 10/31 and the general election is 11/3

You can vote or drop off your Vote-By-Mail ballot

More info at www.sccvote.org

ICA San José

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[#icasanose](https://www.instagram.com/icasanose)

Admission to the ICA galleries is always free.

The ICA is wheelchair accessible.

The ICA is currently closed.

