



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**The PaykanArtCar, a Vehicle for Human Rights, is Touring Canada**  
*As seen in [The New York Times](#), [Out](#) and [TIME Magazine](#)*



**TORONTO, ON, November 8, 2021** – [PaykanArtCar](#) will partner with [3.19.27\(2\)](#) to bring the inaugural PaykanArtCar on tour across Canada. The tour begins in Toronto on November 24 through to December 15. Exhibition dates in Montreal, Edmonton and Vancouver are to be announced. The PaykanArtCar is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that unites the talents of contemporary Iranian artists with a beloved symbol of national pride — the Paykan automobile — to advocate for the restoration of human rights and dignity for all in Iran no matter their race, religion, gender or their sexual orientation.

The inaugural PaykanArtCar is painted by Iranian artist and activist Alireza Shojaian, and gives a voice to the LGBTQ+ community in Iran who live under a brutal and oppressive regime. The organization plans to periodically commission Iranian artists to paint this historic Paykan to highlight the struggle for human rights and dignity in Iran.

“We are privileged to have acquired a historic 1974 Paykan Hillman Hunter limousine, a gift by the Shah of Iran to the authoritarian Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu,” says Dr. Hiva Feizi, executive director and co-founder of PaykanArtCar. “PaykanArtCar is putting Iranian artists in the driver’s seat and steering a conversation about the ways in which Iranians are silenced and persecuted. We want artists to use this vehicle as a canvas to share stories of oppression while inspiring people and calling for change.”



Left: by Hossein Qollar-Aghasi (1902 – 1966) titled, “Sohrab and Shaban”  
Right: by Alireza Shojaian (2021), titled “Sous le ciel de Shiraz” for PaykanArtCar

“Iran is one of the few remaining countries still responding to homosexuality with capital punishment. With the PaykanArtCar, I hope to give visibility to the strength and emotion of queer culture that has long been hidden in the region with my artwork titled ‘Sous le ciel de Shiraz’,” says Shojaian. “The persistent myth that homosexuality is a Western import outright denies the existence of LGBTQ+ Iranians. Because of this, I did not depict a rainbow in this work, rather, I showed an iris, the flower named for the goddess who created the rainbow.”

Shojaian is a queer Iranian artist and activist living in exile. His inspiration for the PaykanArtCar draws from the *Ghahvehkhaneh* school of Iranian screen-reading, and the battle of Sohrab and Shaban, a spinoff created by folk Iranian storytellers referencing the *Shahnameh*, the Persian book of Kings. With this work, Shojaian subverts the image of Sohrab and Shaban, traditionally patriarchal symbols, into homosexual characters.

The image of Shaban recalls the 2021 murder of Alireza Fazeli Monfared, a 20-year-old Iranian gay man who was beheaded by members of his family in an “honour killing”. The image of Sohrab represents the many men in Iran who have been sentenced to death because of their sexual orientation. On the front of the car, the men are seen making love, before ending up dead on the sides of the car, laying next to each other under the sky of Shiraz. Inside the Paykan, a voice note sent by Alireza Fazeli Monfared speaking about the threats he was facing from his father plays along with recordings of numerous news channels announcing his death.

“Alireza Shojaian’s PaykanArtCar has set the Iranian general populace ablaze with an unmitigated, uncompromising uproar against human rights violations. Worldwide engagement with the piece has brought Iranians of divergent backgrounds together in discussion,” says Matt Forouzandy, artistic director at 3.19.27(2). “From the beginning, 3.19.27(2) has focussed on exhibitions highlighting “at risk” artists. This installation is without doubt the most important we will exhibit to date.”

### **About PaykanArtCar**

The PaykanArtCar unites the talents of contemporary Iranian artists with a beloved symbol of Iranian national pride — the Paykan automobile — to advocate for human rights and dignity in Iran. The non-profit, non-partisan PaykanArtCar is privileged to have acquired a historic Paykan Hillman Hunter limousine. Periodically, the PaykanArtCar will choose and commission an exceptional Iranian artist to use the vehicle as the canvas in support of the ongoing struggle in Iran for human rights. The purpose is simple: to use art and a beloved symbol of national pride to promote the rights of all Iranians no matter their race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. For more information, visit [paykanartcar.com](http://paykanartcar.com).

### **About 3.19.27(2)**

3.19.27(2) is a Toronto-based arts organization giving a voice to silenced artists from around the globe. Fuelled by the injustices faced by marginalized artists, the organization creates space for artists who are censored and attacked by oppressive regimes. For more information, visit [319272.org](http://319272.org).

### **About Alireza Shojaian**

Alireza Shojaian is an Iranian painter and visual activist. Shojaian was born in Tehran, Iran in 1988. Shojaian depicts his subjects nude or semi-nude in intimate and vulnerable positions. His work aims to fight societal prejudice against LGBTQ+ people while making space for non-heteronormative masculine identities. His work reflects on the queer history of the Middle East, the present context, and his own experiences. Shojaian knew he could not continue his work in Iran, where human bodies are censored and sexual identity is scrutinized and politicized. In 2016 he moved to Beirut and held two solo exhibitions, in 2017 and 2018. In 2019 the French embassy in Lebanon offered Shojaian a residency with the Académie des Beaux-Arts. He now resides in Paris.

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