



**PaykanArtCar, a New Vehicle for Human Rights,  
Makes World Debut at Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami**

**Historic Iranian Automobile, Once a Gift from the Shah of Iran to a Romanian Dictator,  
Is Transformed by Expatriate Artist Alireza Shojaian to Support  
LGBTQ+ Community in Iran**

*PaykanArtCar Will Continue World Tour at Asia Now in Paris, October 21-24*



Image courtesy of John Parra/Getty Images for PaykanArtCar

**Miami, FL (October 4, 2021)** – Today, an historic 1974 Paykan Hillman Hunter limousine was unveiled as the [PaykanArtCar](#) at the Human Rights Foundation’s Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami. The first brand of automobile to have been manufactured in Iran, the Paykan remains a source of national pride for Iranians. The car that was unveiled today—once a gift from the Shah of Iran to the Romanian president Nicolae Ceausescu—has now been covered in paintings commissioned from expatriate Iranian artist Alireza Shojaian, transforming it into a vehicle advocating for the human rights of all Iranians. Shojaian’s paintings on the inaugural PaykanArtCar aim to raise awareness of the persecution faced by LGBTQ+ people in Iran.

Following its unveiling in Miami, the PaykanArtCar will next be presented in Paris at the art fair Asia Now, which this year highlights Iranian art and artists.

PaykanArtCar intends to commission different artists of Iranian background to use the car's surface as a canvas, with each presentation focusing on another area of human rights abuses in Iran.

"This vehicle once was a dictator's car, but from this moment forward, it will be known as the PaykanArtCar, restored as a symbol of pride, calling for advancing human rights in Iran," said Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, Chief Executive Officer of PaykanArtCar. "We can think of no better place to introduce the PaykanArtCar to the world than at the Human Rights Foundation's 7<sup>th</sup> annual Oslo Freedom Forum, surrounded by some of the world's most accomplished human rights advocates and organizations, all exchanging ideas and strategies to combat persecution across the globe."

Alireza Shojaian's painting of the inaugural PaykanArtCar was inspired by one of Iran's most celebrated texts, the Shahnameh (Book of Kings) written by Ferdowsi in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. Shojaian uses one of the most prominent tales of Shahnameh, the tragic story of Rostam and his son Sohrab, to comment on the murder in 2021 of a 20-year-old Iranian gay man, Alireza Fazeli Monfared, who was beheaded by members of his family in an "honor killing."

"The story of Rostam and Sohrab for me was an inspiration for highlighting the brutal injustices that the LGBTQ+ community faces every day in Iran due to the laws imposed by the government," said Shojaian. "The PaykanArtCar will help shed light on the deadly abuse of the LGBTQ+ people in Iran, a tragedy that has been repeatedly denied by the regime and neglected by Iranian society, including

Hiva Feizi, Executive Director of PaykanArtCar, said, "We are thrilled to present the first-ever PaykanArtCar with Alireza Shojaian, an incredible emerging artist, who was born and educated in Tehran but who can no longer live in his own country because of who he is. As the PaykanArtCar makes its way around the world, we will continue to shed light on the human rights abuses taking place in Iran and further our mission to restore rights and dignity to all Iranians regardless of their race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation."

For more information and updates, visit [PaykanArtCar.com](https://PaykanArtCar.com) and follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

### **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 LGBT 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.

### **About PaykanArtCar**

The PaykanArtCar project 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](https://PaykanArtCar.com) is privileged to have acquired an historic Paykan Hillman Hunter limousine. Periodically, 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.

### **About the Human Rights Foundation**

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes and protects human rights globally, with a focus on closed societies. HRF unites people in the common cause of defending human rights and promoting liberal democracy. Its mission is to ensure that freedom is both preserved and promoted around the world. HRF focuses its work on the founding ideas of the human rights movement, those most purely represented in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF) is a global conference series produced by the Human Rights Foundation. No event in the world compares to the Oslo Freedom Forum's unique mix of dissidents, philanthropists, journalists, artists, entrepreneurs, public intellectuals, and world leaders—all of whom come together each year for an immersive experience focused on making the world more peaceful, prosperous, and free.

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