ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER

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Negar Ahkami, Le Caftan (After Deneuve), 2020-2021. Photo by Luke Walter. © Negar Ahkami.

ARLINGTON, VA – **Opening January 29 and running through March 19, *Le Caftan, Le Turban* features new work by AAC resident artist Negar Ahkami.** In her recent paintings, Ahkami depicts European film and fashion icons clad in caftans and turbans. The paintings fuse campy fashion references in Ahkami's own ornate Persian sensibility with motifs from Ancient Greek and Italian pottery, French religious objects, and 1960s psychedelics. These diverse Western stylistic references are united in their underacknowledged Middle Eastern influences.

By combining Middle Eastern signifiers used in Western pop culture and art, Ahkami exposes the broader, complex phenomenon of cultural appropriation. Ahkami struggles with Western culture's devaluation of Middle Eastern cultures, while at the same time taking guilty pleasure in its seductive applications of Middle Eastern influences. Her ambivalence takes shape in dynamic paintings that move from the playful to the intentionally vulgar, with textures and colors that range from aggressive to exquisite.

This exhibition also includes small self-portraits of Ahkami wearing caftans and turbans that are based on Henri Matisse's portraits of the model Lorette. These stark self-portraits contrast with her fanciful paintings of white women, thereby exploring feelings of being otherized as an Iranian-American woman.

The exhibition will be accompanied by public programs; for more information, visit arlingtonartscenter.org/events.

For exhibition images, visit https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2b0m47exf0kxnwc/AACrdS0DufZBl6W0JSEkpW9Ea?dl=0.

Negar Ahkami (b. 1971 Baltimore, MD) holds a BA from Columbia University and an MFA from School of Visual Arts. She is an alumnae of Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace Residency. Ahkami has exhibited at The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, The North Carolina Museum of Art, The Walters Art Museum, Rutgers University, The Bronx Museum of Art, Leila Heller Gallery and Rossi and Rossi Gallery. Her work is in the collections of The New Britain Museum of American Art, Depaul University Art Museum, Wellington Management Company, the Mohammad Afkhami Collection, and the Farjam Collection. For more information, visit www.negarahkami.com.

ABOUT ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER

Arlington Arts Center is an independent, non-profit contemporary arts center and gallery that enriches community life by connecting the public with contemporary art and artists through exhibitions, educational programs, and

artist residencies. Located at 3550 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA, it is open Wed.-Sun., 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., or by appointment. AAC is free, has on-site parking, is easy to reach by metro and bus, and is accessible. For more information about its other programming, visit: arlingtonartscenter.org. AAC programs are supported in part by The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation; Arlington County through the Arlington Cultural Affairs division of Arlington Economic Development and the Arlington Commission for the Arts; the Virginia Commission for the Arts/ National Endowment for the Arts; the Washington Forrest Foundation; The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia; and generous individual donors.

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