



Communications

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Exhibition Dates:
September 7, 2023–
May 28, 2024

Exhibition Location:
The Met Fifth Avenue
Facade

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#MetNairyBaghramian
#MetFacade

For Immediate Release

The Met Unveils Nairy Baghramian's Colorful Abstract Sculptures for the Museum's Facade

(New York, September 7, 2023)—The Met unveiled today four new sculptures by Nairy Baghramian (German citizen, born Iran 1971) for the Museum's facade. This is the first public installation by the artist in New York City. Baghramian's cast aluminum polychrome sculptures feature components that seem to have washed up like flotsam and jetsam in the voids of their respective niches. These abstract forms at the threshold of the Museum present a metaphor of the institution as a filter of historical fragments deemed representative or exemplary. The project's title *Scratching the Back*—a distortion of the idiom "scratch the surface"—alludes to the need to move beyond superficially constructed cultural narratives. **The Facade Commission: Nairy Baghramian, *Scratching the Back*** will be on view through May 28, 2024.

The commission is made possible by the Jane and Robert Carroll Fund, the Director's Fund, Angela A. Chao and Jim Breyer, Robert Denning, Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky, and The Hayden Family Foundation.

Additional support is provided by Marguerite Steed Hoffman, Melony and Adam Lewis, Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger, Jerry Speyer and Katherine Farley, and Carlo Bronzini Vender and Tanya Traykovski.

Max Hollein, The Met's Marina Kellen French Director and CEO, said, "Nairy Baghramian creates expressive, daring, site-specific works that both deeply engage with and question their settings. Defying traditional conventions of sculpture, the artist's colorful abstract forms appear to spill out from The Met's sculpture niches—in stark contrast to the monochrome classical architecture of the facade. Her bold yet fragile structures manifest powerfully composed transformations of space, material, and physical relationships."

Nairy Baghramian commented, “*Scratching the Back* is my homage to New York. It is dedicated to the passersby and commuters heading to work on the bus who might only catch a glimpse of the work.”

The four sculptures that comprise Baghramian’s commission—individually titled *Scratching the Back: Drift (sans Tortillon)*, 2023; *Scratching the Back: Drift (Tortillon orange)*, 2023; *Scratching the Back: Drift (Tortillon rose)*, 2023; and *Scratching the Back: Drift (Tortillon jaune)*, 2023—incorporate white gridded structures that support brightly colored irregularly-shaped forms. Three of the four sculptures feature a corkscrew-like tortillon which protrudes from or seems to bind the other sculptural elements. As the artist describes it, “symbolically these fragments are held together by a twisted thread.”

About the Artist

Born in Iran in 1971, Nairy Baghramian fled to Berlin, Germany, in 1984, where she continues to live and work. Baghramian creates abstract sculptures that explore the dynamics of the body, gender, and dichotomies of private and public space. Her site-responsive sculptures and installations engage with architecture and often evoke bodily gestures, junctures, or fragments. Along with site responsiveness, other hallmarks of Baghramian’s work are polychromy and the innovative and subversive use of different types of material.

Her work has been featured in numerous European and American museum and gallery exhibitions and has also been included in the 2019 and 2011 Venice Biennales; Documenta 14, in Kassel and Athens in 2017; the 2017 and 2007 editions of Skulptur Projekte Münster; and the 8th and 5th Berlin Biennales. She was the recipient of the 2022 Nasher Prize. Her work is included in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate Modern, London; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; and the Art Institute of Chicago. She was the recipient of the 2023 Nivola Award for Sculpture and Aspen Art Museum’s 2023 Award for Art and is the subject of a current major solo exhibition at that institution, *Jupon du Corps*, open through October 22, 2023.

The Facade Commission: Nairy Baghramian, *Scratching the Back* is conceived by the artist in consultation with Akili Tommasino, Associate Curator in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at The Met.

The Museum will offer a variety of related education programs, including “An Evening with Nairy Baghramian” on Thursday, September 7 at 6:30 pm. The artist will be in conversation with Akili Tommasino to discuss *Scratching the Back*; [advance registration required](#).

Future programming details will be posted on The Met [website](#) as they become available.

Education programs for The Façade Commission: Nairy Baghramian, *Scratching the Back* are made possible by Marian Goodman Gallery and kurimanzutto.

The Facade Commission is part of a new series of contemporary commissions at The Met in which the Museum invites artists to create new works of art, establishing a dialogue between the artist's practice, The Met collection, the physical Museum, and The Met's audiences. The Facade Commission was inaugurated in September 2019 with [Wangechi Mutu's *The New Ones, will free Us*](#), followed by [Carol Bove's *The séances aren't helping*](#), and most recently [Hew Locke's *Gilt*](#).

The exhibition is featured on The Met's [website](#) as well as on social media using the hashtags #MetFacade and #MetNairyBaghramian.

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September 7, 2023

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