



© Morehshin Allahyari, *Speculations on Capture*, still, 2024

Morehshin Allahyari

Speculations on Capture

Exhibition: 3 April – 29 May, 2025

GAZELL.iO is delighted to present Morehshin Allahyari in our Project Space, coinciding with her April residency as our artist-in-residence. The exhibition features her latest work, *Speculations on Capture* (2024), a newly commissioned piece recently showcased at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London.

The V&A houses one of the largest collections of Islamic art in the world, with over 19,000 objects spanning the 7th to the early 20th century. Allahyari's poetic film explores the histories of astronomical instruments crafted in Iran and Pakistan, now held within the museum's collection. Dating from the 1200s to the 1700s, each object was digitally reconstructed in 3D for this project and appears in the film alongside archival documents and historical photographs. The museum's records, capturing only fragments of these objects' narratives, document their arrival between 1865 and 1930, yet provide little insight into how their displacement affected their places of origin and the people connected to them. Their journeys reflect the colonial histories that have shaped Western museum collections.

Born and raised in Tehran, Allahyari extends these incomplete narratives, merging historical facts with speculative fiction to imagine lost encounters, diverted knowledge, and inaccessible cultural histories. Her work disrupts conventional museum frameworks, challenging the power dynamics of institutional collections while re-establishing connections between objects and their original histories, cultures, and communities. By transcending the limitations of archives, Allahyari envisions alternative pasts and possible futures for these artefacts.

Allahyari has been instrumental in conceptualising the term “digital colonialism,” describing how technological tools can perpetuate colonial power structures. She reinterprets the act of scanning as an embodied, performative gesture with open-ended political implications, proposing, “Put it to use. Let it colonize the colonizers.” In her work, Allahyari engages with replicas of Middle Eastern cultural artefacts, narrating their long histories as symbols and relics while simultaneously performing ritualised 3D scans of each object. Alongside technologist Rosalie Yu, she explores how digital reconstruction can function as a means of reclaiming narratives, revealing technology’s capacity to either erase or preserve cultural memory.

Through speculative storytelling, historical excavation, and digital intervention, Allahyari’s practice serves as a form of resistance — challenging institutional authority over cultural narratives and advocating for new ways of engaging with heritage. Her work reminds us that history is not static, and by reinterpreting the past, we shape the possibilities of the future.

Commission supported by the Manitou Fund, Kevin, Rosemary, and Hannah Rose McNeely.

About the Artist

Morehshin Allahyari (b. 1985) is an artist, organizer, and educator. Recognised as a leading global thinker by *Foreign Policy* magazine in 2016, Allahyari was born and raised in Iran before relocating to the United States in 2007. Her practice engages with political, social, and cultural contradictions, utilising technology as both a philosophical framework and a poetic medium to document contemporary struggles. She is the co-author of *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* (2016) with Daniel Rourke, and her critically acclaimed project *Material Speculation: ISIS* — which reconstructs ancient artefacts destroyed by ISIS — has been exhibited worldwide.

Allahyari’s work is held in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) collections, San Francisco, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and other major institutions. She has participated in numerous exhibitions and residencies at prestigious institutions, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Venice Biennale di Architettura, Venice, the Pompidou Centre, Paris, Tate Modern, London, the Museum of Contemporary Art Montreal, Montreal, the Queens Museum, Jeu de Paume, Paris, and the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston. She has been an artist-in-residence at BANFF Centre, Carnegie Mellon University’s STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, Autodesk Pier9, the Vilém Flusser Residency Program in Berlin, and Eyebeam in New York City. Her work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, *Wired*, *NPR*, *Parkett Art Magazine*, *Frieze*, *Rhizome*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Al Jazeera*.

She is the recipient of the Creative Capital Award (2025), The University of California, Berkeley Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Award (2024), The United States Artist Fellowship (2021), The Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant (2019), The Sundance Institute New Frontier International Fellowship (2019), and the Leading Global Thinkers of 2016 award by *Foreign Policy* magazine. Allahyari is an Assistant Professor of Digital Media Art at Stanford University.



About the Gallery

Founded in 2010 by Mila Askarova, Gazelli Art House represents an international roster of artists, from leading figures in Post-War movements such as Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism to ultra-contemporary voices redefining art in the digital age. The gallery champions artists who challenge convention through the creative exploration of a variety of media. Along with its sister site in Baku, the gallery also specialises in art from Azerbaijan and its neighbours, fostering cross-cultural dialogue. In 2015 we launched GAZELL.iO, an online platform specifically supporting innovation in art and technologies.

For further information, please contact: press@gazelliarthouse.com.