

GAZELLI ART HOUSE



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Situated Selves

Jala Aziz, Irina Eldarova, Eldar Gurban, Butunay Hagverdiyev,
Anar Huseynzade, Ramal Kazim, Tora Mais, Regina Rzaeva, Rza Rzazade

Exhibition: 12 August — 31 October, 2025
Gazelli Art House, Baku

Gazelli Art House Baku is pleased to present *Situated Selves*, a multidisciplinary exhibition drawing on the philosophical thought of Edward S. Casey (1939), one of the most influential voices in American phenomenology.

Casey distinguishes between “place” and “space”, arguing that place is fundamentally tied to embodied experience and lived reality, while space is more abstract and detached. He explores how place shapes our identity, memory, and relationship with the world, advocating for a “place-based” ethic that recognizes our embeddedness in specific locations.

In contrast to modernist and Cartesian traditions that privilege space as empty, uniform, and measurable, Casey positions place as irreducibly lived: textured by affect, temporality, and cultural significance. “We are not only in place,” he argues, “but of it”.

Artists evoke places imagined, lost, and re-inhabited – exploring how place anchors experience and how dislocation reverberates through the body and psyche. In *Situated Selves*, visitors are invited not merely to observe space but to dwell in it, to inhabit the exhibition as an experiential terrain.

The participating artists offer imaginative responses to space, revealing personal narratives and emotional geographies shaped by their unique encounters. Here, space is not a fixed backdrop but a living entity – something to be remembered, questioned and reimagined.

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About the Artists

Jala Aziz (b. 1999) studied at the Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Arts (ADRA), where she earned her Master's degree in Tapestry. She works with textiles, weaving – and embroidery – repurposing old fabrics and photographs to reinterpret themes of memory, identity, and time. Through layers, textures, and traditional motifs, she creates evocative pieces in which the past takes on new meaning. Jala Aziz has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Baku, Istanbul, and Moscow.

Irina Eldarova (b. 1955) began her artistic career as an illustrator at the Children's Literature Publishing House. She participated in many exhibitions in the former Soviet Union and abroad. She has also collaborated with a number of international media outlets. Since 1996, Eldarova has been a member of the British Association of Journalists. She works in various media, including watercolours, but most of her works are executed in mixed media on a large, sometimes monumental scale. Eldarova is well known for her contributions on the development of contemporary conceptual art. Her interests extend to photography, video art and journalism. Irina Eldarova participated in major international projects, representing contemporary Azerbaijani art in the world. Among them, *Fly to Baku*, organized by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (exhibition was showcased in London, Paris, Berlin and Rome), and *Home, Sweet Home*, held in 2013 at the Azerbaijani Culture Center in Paris

Eldar Gurban (b. 1948) is an Honored Artist of Azerbaijan and member of Artists Union of Azerbaijan. In 1969 he graduated from the Painting Faculty of the Azim Azimzade Art College and Graphic Arts Faculty of the V.I. Lenin Azerbaijan Pedagogical Institute. Since his first exhibition in 1972, his work has been exhibited in numerous countries worldwide. He was awarded a gold medal and First-Class Diploma at the 1989 Caspian Republics' Biennale for his work, *Poet and Muse*. He is one of the few artists representing the style of primitivism within the Azerbaijani art scene.

Butunay Hagverdiyev (b. 1989) mainly works in painting and sculpture, and since 2009 he has been actively engaged in video art, shooting mostly short animated films. In his video works, he experiments with different techniques while creating a moving sculpture using time-lapse photography and arrangement. Born in Baku, he studied in the painting faculty at the Azim Azimzade Art College before continuing his fine art education in Moscow at the British Higher School of Art and Design. As a teenager he was already an accomplished painter, having worked with a group of artists on the painting and restoration of frescoes in an orthodox church from 2003-2008, in Baku. He has participated in a number of significant group exhibitions in Baku and abroad in Russia, France, and Italy. In 2013, his work was featured in the national pavilion of Azerbaijan at the 55th Venice Biennale in Italy. In 2015 his wooden sculptures of Azerbaijani carpet motifs were shown in the exhibition *Azerbaijani Carpets in Art* in the Cannes Festival Palace.

Anar Huseynzade (b. 1981) received a Master's in Fine Arts from the Art Academy, Azerbaijan. Anar has a clear idea of his objective as an artist – to destroy borders and to fill the space that exists in traditional fine art in Azerbaijan. Anar has taken part in collective exhibitions in Turkey, Germany, Switzerland, Uzbekistan, Moldova and England. In addition, Anar is a member of the Union of Artists of Azerbaijan and has exhibited works throughout Azerbaijan since 2005. Exhibitions of specific note include; solo exhibition *Legends Speak* –

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(Museum Centre, Baku, 2014) and *Tale of Absheron* (Gazelli Art House Baku, 2021). Many of Anar's works are held in private collections across the USA, UK, Switzerland, Turkey, Greece, Australia and Norway.

Ramal Kazim (b. 1987) is a graduate of the Azerbaijani State Academy of Arts (2008). Since 2009 he has been a member of the Azerbaijan Artist's Union. Kazim's works have been exhibited extensively in Azerbaijan and abroad. Drawing from the expressionist tradition, he composes paintings marked by impactful, unusual figures and a chromatic bluntness. Kazim essentially constructs a visual diary of human experience, using strategies of shock and provocation as important vehicles of expression. Kazim's expressive figures and imagery directly address issues that are taboo in Azerbaijan. The figures are representative of an experimental portraiture that lives on the border between reality and abstraction. Images combine broken bottle fragments, violent gestures, and contorted faces that twist in pain and passion.

Tora Mais (b. 1979) is an Azerbaijani multidisciplinary artist. After obtaining her MA in Fine Art Painting from Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Arts, in 2002 Tora moved to Shanghai, China before Berlin, Germany, where she currently resides. Her artworks, be it a depiction of imaginary creatures populating the Caspian Sea or landscapes, emit positive energy and humor. Many of Tora's works present a female gaze on sexuality that, rather than objectifying, playfully employs the visual language of Orientalist painting to depict scenes of everyday life. Her works featured in the Azerbaijani National Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, and group exhibitions at the Manege Central Exhibition Hall in 1999, Centre for Contemporary Art, Stavanger in 2010, Voluntary Art Liaison, Berlin in 2018 and Cyprus Museum of Modern Arts in 2019, which acquired her works for the permanent collection. Tora took part in the travelling exhibition *Fly to Baku* (2011-2012) and PERMM Museum (2015), and *Café Avarice & Generosity* in GalerieDix9 H  l  ne Lacharmoise (2019) dedicated to Azerbaijan's contemporary art scene.

Regina Rzaeva (b. 1996) is a graduate of the Azerbaijan University of Culture and Art with a degree in fashion design. She uses traditional painting techniques and works with different materials and fabrics. For the artist, the fabric ground is an essential component of her paintings. Using the technique of thin lettering, she applies the paint in fine vertical lines along the fabric structure of the canvas, entering into a dialogue with the surface texture. Rzaeva describes her artistic method as observational. For her, art is an integral part of philosophising and recognising the concept of time. With the subtlety, "tremulousness" and lightness of her works, the artist wants to draw attention to the impermanence and fragility of self-perception.

Rza Rzazade (b. 1994) is a Baku-based visual artist. He studied painting at the Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Arts. His works are included in private collections in Italy, Germany, Turkey, and the UK. In 2022, he presented his first solo exhibition *Storm*. Rzazade's visual language seeks balance between emotional chaos and form; through expressive gestures and symbolic fragments, he constructs multilayered portraits of contemporary existence. Occasionally, nature – especially the motif of trees – appears as a silent metaphor within this visual flow.

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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.