

SETAREH

Sanctuary

Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar

11. June – 11. July, 2026

SETAREH is pleased to present *Sanctuary*, the fourth solo exhibition for Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar. Returning to London with a new series of paintings, the French-Iranian artist employs registers of colour to map the unstable nature of being.

Amalgamating the artist's French-Iranian heritage, these saturated fields draw from the vibrant light of the South of France, the careful arrangements of Persian mosaics, and the turbulence that neighbours his home in the Gulf. The work is a reflection of its surroundings, both in meaning and material, emanated through grades of light. Through the artist's signature technique of *peinture raclée* – the meticulous layering and scraping of pigment – these disparate influences are marked on the canvas, contradicting and enriching one another. Sourced at the site of creation, ground stone, sand and pigment are mixed to create compositions that are at once heavy and fragile, echoing the unstable nature of identity and the paradox of heritage. Moments of certainty are interrupted by sharp cuts of the artist's hand, lacerating the canvas as if to hyphenate its definition.

Behnam-Bakhtiar's practice taps into a primal purity, and the artist reaches a meditative state through the repeated sculpting and de-layering of the canvas. The process is intuitive, and can last for several months, bearing witness to the changing emotional states of the artist through time. This complex journey is documented on the canvas, where rhythm is established and disrupted, and meaning revealed, then obscured. This unmediated dialogue between gesture and colour might appear resolved on the surface, but hints to the tension that lies beneath.

Sassan Behnam-Bakhtiar's works have been exhibited worldwide, including solo shows at SETAREH's spaces in Düsseldorf, Berlin and now London, as well as at Phillips in London, Sotheby's in Monaco, the Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco, Saatchi Gallery in London and the historic Villa Santo Sospir in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.