

Tala Madani

Control X

September 18 – October 24, 2026

Los Angeles

Press Release

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to announce *Control X*, an exhibition of new paintings and video animations by Tala Madani. The exhibition is on view in Los Angeles at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl. from September 18 through October 24, 2026. An opening reception will be held on Friday, September 18 from 6 to 8 PM.

Control X features several new bodies of paintings and new animations in which characters and settings subject themselves, willingly or not, to forces by which they are broken down and reformed. The works address mythologies of creation as they trace the fine lines between making and destroying in art, language, history, and human relationships. By foregrounding acts of markmaking, the exhibition establishes emotionally resonant parallels between the worlds the figures inhabit and the materially present world of painting itself. The result is a form of realism that goes beyond artifice, and that allows the work to address the widest possible range of historical, art historical, and contemporary crises with both humor and critique.

A new series of mountain portraits, for instance, puzzles over what happens when attempts at portraiture fail to capture the scope and scale of their subjects' importance—a failure that plagues all attempts at idealization to some degree. As if to depict the state of being larger than life, these works have allowed such subjects to become imposing features of a landscape. As a result of these transformations, these once-human forms can elicit the kinds of sublime, overwhelming awe on view in Romantic landscape paintings. Regardless of whether they are set off by nothing but sky or occupy the entirety of the picture plane, their facets have been rendered using brushwork that paradoxically highlights the intimacy and closeness of touch.

If the mountain portraits are born of the unpredictable process of representing powerful people—which can include poking fun at them—*Alphabet City*, a new video, sheds a different light on what happens when power and its symbols get out of hand. Here, Madani has brought decades of experience as an animator to bear on her longest and most complex moving image work to date. It features images originally made as paintings, drawings, and photographs that have been animated using both traditional techniques and digital technologies, with an immersive soundtrack by artist Nathaniel Mellors. The work's oblique narrative follows a process by which letters of the alphabet break free of their confines in books and begin to construct their own world, in part by dominating the humans around them. When the humans eventually learn from the letters and begin to similarly subjugate each other, the world they share begins to fracture, as does the visual lexicon of the animation itself.

As the flexible meaning of the 'X' in its title suggests, *Control X* is filled with moments in which openness and variation are juxtaposed with erasure. The mythologies on view in these works are neither grand nor cosmological, but they do point to places where social codes are being rewritten—and unwritten—in visceral ways. Here, the urges to monumentalize and to desecrate have more in common than they might at first seem, and the act of painting opens pathways to an oft-observed, transitional area where creation and destruction coexist.

Madani was recently the subject of a solo exhibition at Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Solo exhibitions of her work have been also held at National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece (2024); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2022–2023); Start Museum, Shanghai (2020); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2019); Secession, Vienna (2019); Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany (2019); La Panacée, Montpellier, France (2017); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA (2016); Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (2016); Nottingham Contemporary, England (2014); and Moderna Museet, Malmö and Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden (2013). Recent group exhibitions include *MOTHER*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2026); *ECHO DELAY REVERB: American Art and Francophone Thought* (curated by Naomi Beckwith), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2025); *The Living End: Painting and Other Technologies, 1970–2020*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2024); *Burning Down the House: Rethinking Family*, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland (2024); *50 Paintings*, Milwaukee Art Museum (2023); *The Seventh Continent*, 16th Istanbul Biennial (2019); Whitney Biennial 2017, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and *Made in L.A. 2014*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Madani's work is in the permanent collections of institutions including Moderna Museet, Stockholm and Malmö, Sweden; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate, London; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Madani lives and works in Los Angeles.