



Part art-heist thriller, part personal doc

World Premiere 2023 Tribeca Film Festival

Winner 2023 Hamptons Int'l Film Festival Brizzolara Foundation Award for Films of Conflict and Resolution.

Winner 2023 Prescott Film Festival Best Documentary

Winner 2023 Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival Best Documentary

Opening Night Film 2023 Original Thinkers Festival

Closing Night Film 2023 Port Jefferson Documentary Series

Limited theatrical release

NYC Dec 1 (Cinema Village)

L.A. Dec 8 (Laemmle Royal)

San Francisco Dec 9 (Roxy)

A REVOLUTION ON CANVAS

Featuring

Nickzad "Nicky" Nodjoumi, Nahid Hagigat, Sara Nodjoumi

Written and Directed by

Sara Nodjoumi & Till Schauder

Director of Photography

Till Schauder

Producers

Sara Nodjoumi & Till Schauder

Composer:

Sussan Deyhim

Executive Producers

Nancy Abraham, Sara Rodriguez, Lisa Heller

Presented by

Partner Pictures & HBO Documentary Films

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

In this hybrid political thriller and verité portrait documentary, **Sara Nodjoumi**, working with co-director and husband, **Till Schauder**, makes her directorial debut with this personal film, diving into the mystery surrounding the disappearance of more than 100 "treasonous" paintings by her father, seminal Iranian modern artist **Nickzad "Nicky" Nodjoumi**. (Tribeca Film Festival)

LONG SYNOPSIS

Following his 2017 film *When God Sleeps*, **Till Schauder** returns to Tribeca co-directing alongside his wife and creative partner, first-time director **Sara Nodjoumi** with their investigative documentary - celebrating one of Iran's most revolutionary artists, **Nickzad "Nicky" Nodjoumi**.

Born in Iran but living in New York City, Nodjoumi traveled back to Iran to join the Islamic Revolution, making paintings and posters criticizing the Shah's regime. In 1980, the painter fled his home country following the vandalization of his solo exhibition, "Report on the Revolution," and its subsequent shutdown by Islamic radicals at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Decades later, as Iran is once again embroiled in protests following the suppression and killing of Iranian women and activists at the hands of Iran's "morality police", the renowned artist and his daughter attempt to track down the missing paintings in hopes of reclaiming them. During the search, Sara, drawing on disarmingly frank conversations with both her father and mother, celebrated artist **Nahid Hagigat**, and grappling with complex feelings and mysteries tied to her own upbringing, traces a timeline of events to understand the circumstances that led to her homeland's perpetual state of political turmoil and to her parents' personal estrangement, echoing the treacherous path of many immigrant families caught in the crossfire of politics and life.

Equal parts introspective and investigative, filmmakers Sara Nodjoumi and Till Schauder expertly weave together the personal and political to tell a gripping political thriller that culminates in the soul searching of one family and a moving narrative about the power of art, sacrifice, and family bonds.

FROM THE DIRECTORS / Sara Nodjoumi

In 1980, I was 7 years old and living in Miami. There was an election in the US, Ronald Reagan became president after Jimmy Carter stumbled over the Iranian hostage crisis, and I felt for the first time that the world was big and complicated. But most importantly, my father returned from a "revolution" in Iran that he had set out to document in his paintings. I was hearing words like "prison," "lashes," "escape," "survival". I heard about an "exhibition" that was vandalized, a "damning newspaper article," and the need to escape the country. I remember my mother making frantic phone calls to influential Americans that she hardly knew begging for a visa so my father could get out of Iran. It seemed like his life came to a grinding halt and I didn't understand why. For the next 40 years, my father told the story of the "exhibition" to everyone who'd listen. My mother Nahid Hagigat, a celebrated painter in her own

right, and I heard it so often that we would give each other a knowing look when he started, "here we go again..." Sometimes our looks turned to surprise when he added a new detail that we had never heard before. Of course, in hindsight it's not surprising that he obsessed over that exhibition. It changed the trajectory of his life, indeed that of our entire family.

About 10 years ago, I began collaborating on documentaries with my creative partner and husband, Till Schauder, and as we made films about other Iran related subjects, people would often ask "why not make a film about your father when you have this incredible access?" I always knew that his work was cinematic, but I didn't know how to start, and given that he hates talking about his art, and even more so about his personal life, it felt like an overwhelming endeavor. Finally, as he grew older and mellowed out a bit Till and I decided to forge ahead.

Nicky has been a painter for 7 decades. There are rolls and rolls of canvas, and files and files of artwork in his studio. In addition to images found in newspapers, my parents often used photographs as the basis of their paintings. A makeshift darkroom was created in our apartment which doubled as their studio, and I witnessed the magic of photography. For years, those negatives have been sitting in boxes. Unearthing them was something I had longed for but never thought I'd actually do.

I understood right away that a film about my father could not be made without including my mother. Even though they've been divorced for 20 years their shared story is as intertwined as a co-directed movie. I was interested in the push and pull of committing their lives to art, while having to also create a stable environment for me. I wanted to understand the nuances that informed my parents' different approaches to life.

Gradually, as we were making the film, Till convinced me of another necessity that I tried to resist for a long time. Having already filmed for the better part of a year, and having started out with the clearly stated desire to make this "just an artist portrait" rather than a personal documentary that would also unpack our family's history, I finally relented and agreed to being included in the film myself, even though that was the last thing on my mind when we first embarked on this project.

Eventually the central event of my father's life - the revolution and subsequent vandalization of his art show in Tehran - led us to a film that hopefully pays tribute to both my parents' art and life while also helping me understand the origins and mysteries of our homeland and family better. This is my directorial debut, and I'm grateful for having embarked on it with my husband creative partner Till Schauder.

FROM THE DIRECTORS / Till Schauder

My father-in-law, Nicky Nodjourni, has lived in exile almost his entire life. As a refugee artist he had to adopt to his new home, New York City, while struggling to maintain a sense of identity. Over the decades his paintings remained unflinchingly critical of the Iranian regime, while also confronting Western politicians and powerbrokers and dissecting the cultural, religious and political fissures within the West.

Revolution on Canvas aims to understand this controversial artist. In doing so it hopes to raise questions about religious and political extremism and artistic integrity. Beneath these global issues lies a very personal story of one immigrant family that finds echoes in countless other immigrant families. In light of the worldwide conflicts over religious and political oppression, refugees and integration, and particularly the newest uprisings in Iran, this seems like the right time to tell this story.

When Nicky's daughter, my wife and now co-director Sara, and I started dating 21 years ago, I was somewhat familiar with Iranian culture, thanks to a few formative Iranian friends I made while growing up in Germany. However, I was not free of the common stereotypes, not only the political ones but also the ones pertaining to Iran's patriarchal society. Suffice it to say, I was intimidated when Sara wanted to introduce me to her father - of whom I knew nothing except that he was a well regarded painter. When I met Nicky for lunch my nervousness quickly dissolved into pixy dust, as - over a game of backgammon - I was immediately charmed by one of the gentlest and kindest human beings I've ever encountered. More strikingly, I felt I was in the presence of a true genius. Nicky gave me a small painting as a gift. 20x20 inches. Just two figures placed in an abstract landscape. Simple and yet so full of cinema, tension and evocation. How lucky was I to be blessed with such a singularly interesting person in my life in addition to having just met his daughter, my future wife!

I've always felt that the folks who made the "Dos Equis" beer commercial featuring the "most interesting man in the world" had cast the wrong guy. They somehow missed out on Nicky. I also knew that behind every interesting man is an even more interesting woman, and so it came as no surprise that I was even more smitten by Sara's mother, Nahid, a seminal artist in her own right, who was living in L.A. at the time, shortly after they had separated. Sara and I set out to make a film about these two incredible artists and their family, echoing the treacherous path of so many families caught in the crossfire of politics, art and life.

I feel truly blessed that Sara trusted me to come along for this ride - in life and in filmmaking. I feel equally honored that Nicky and Nahid gave us unrestricted access to tell their extraordinary story. Such access is a prerequisite for trying to represent the different facets of their personalities, which can be provocative, courageous, restless, endearing, maddening, contradictory and above all fascinating.

Till Schauder

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

SARA NODJOURI (Director, Producer)

Nodjoumi is a producer, director and film festival programmer. Producing credits include THE IRAN JOB (2012), shortlisted for a German Academy Award and released worldwide on Netflix, WHEN GOD SLEEPS (2017), which played over 100 festivals worldwide, premiered on Independent Lens, and won numerous international awards, before being shortlisted for a German Academy Award, and REGGAE BOYZ (Audience Award Brooklyn Film Festival 2019). She is an alum of the Sundance Creative Producers Summit and the IFP Cannes Producers Network Fellowship. Nodjoumi was awarded the 2021 Inaugural Brown Girls Documentary Mafia Sustainable Artist Grant. REVOLUTION ON CANVAS is her directorial debut.

TILL SCHAUDER (Director, Producer, Director of Photography)

Till Schauder, originally from Germany, is a Brooklyn based writer, director, and cinematographer. His first documentary THE IRAN JOB (2012) was released on Netflix, mentioned as an Oscar contender, and shortlisted for a German Academy Award. His 2017 documentary WHEN GOD SLEEPS premiered at Tribeca, won Most Valuable Documentary of the Year at Cinema for Peace during Berlinale, and was shortlisted for a German Academy Award. His feature documentary WARRIORS OF FAITH (2017) won the German Television Academy Award (German Emmy) and a nomination for the Prix Europa. His 2019 documentary REGGAE BOYZ (Audience Award Brooklyn Film Festival) was called "one of the funniest documentaries in years" by film-rezensionen.de and released theatrically in Germany and in digital theaters across America in 2020. His 2021 film POSTER MIGRANT premiered on German broadcast (ARD). REVOLUTION ON CANVAS is the first film that he co-directed with his producing partner and wife Sara Nodjoumi.

ABOUT THE CAST

NICKY NODJOURMI

Nikzad Nodjoumi, more commonly known as Nicky Nodjoumi is an [Iranian-born American](#) fine art painter. He currently lives and works in [Brooklyn](#), New York. His paintings address Iranian politics, history, power and corruption. Nodjoumi was born in 1942 in [Kermanshah](#), Iran. In 1961, he studied Fine Arts at the School of Fine Art at [Tehran University](#) and in 1969 studied English at [The New School](#) in New York. In 1969, he came to the United States initially to have surgery in [the Bronx](#) for a congenital heart defect.

He married artist, [Nahid Hagigat](#) in 1973 (divorced in 2003). His daughter, filmmaker Sara Nodjoumi, was born in New York City in 1973. In 1974, Nodjoumi received his Master's degree in Fine Arts from the [City College of New York](#). He returned to Iran after his studies and was making artwork and posters that criticized the [Shah's](#) regime. During the [Iranian Revolution](#) he was exiled from Iran and by 1980 he had moved back to New York City. His paintings have an absurd mockery about them. With objects such as mullahs, men in suits, horses and apes sharing canvas space with figures from classical Persian paintings.

Nodjoumi's artwork has exhibited at various galleries and museums and are in collections worldwide, including the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) in New York; the [British Museum](#) in London; the DePaul Art Museum in Chicago; and the National Museum of Cuba

NAHID HAGIGAT

Nahid Hagigat is a seminal [Iranian-American](#) artist, based in [New York City](#). She is known for her paintings, etchings and prints with layered imagery. Hagigat was born in 1943 in Iran. She studied art at Tehran University where she met artist [Nicky Nodjoumi](#) who became her husband. In 1968 she moved to New York to continue her art education at New York University. In the early 1970s she was one of just a few female Iranian artists to address political issues at the time. She has a Ph.D. in Art Education from [New York University \(NYU\)](#) and a Ph.D. from Huntington Pacific University in Behavioral Therapy. Her work is part of the permanent collection at the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#). Hagigat and Nodjoumi divorced in 2003.

SARA NODJOURMI

See "about the filmmakers"

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Magic of Persia

Brown Girls Doc Mafia

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