

# INTERNATIONAL

*all things that grow*

Nazafarin Lotfi

Spring 2021 International Artist-in-Residence

In residence January 25, 2021–March 27, 2021

Exhibitions on view March 25, 2021–May 16, 2021

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

## ABOUT <sup>THE</sup> ARTIST

Nazafarin Lotfi explores the spatial and temporal experiences of bodies out of place. She combines drawing, painting, and sculpture to create transitory spaces, which unfold between dimensions, often contradicting themselves. She has shown extensively, including exhibitions at MOCA Tucson, AZ; Regards, Chicago, IL; Ana Cristea Gallery, New York, NY; soon.tw, Montreal, Quebec; Tony Wight Gallery, Chicago, IL; among others.

Lotfi received a BA from University of Tehran in 2007 and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2011. She is the recipient of Phoenix Art Museum's Artist Grant, a stART Grant from the Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona, and a CAAP Grant from the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, City of Chicago. In 2015–16, Lotfi was awarded an artist residency from Arts + Public Life and Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture at the University of Chicago.

# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

In *all things that grow*, the Iranian-born, Tucson-based artist Nazafarin Lotfi explores space as a construct and references the design of archetypal gardens as utopian spaces, specifically, those that originated in the ancient Iranian plateau. Those enclosed green spaces were built as idealized landscapes for pleasure, rest, and contemplation, and they served as a respite from the harsh realities just outside their walls. Constructed gardens have also given physical form to political ideologies. They represent a manifestation of power and dominion not only through manipulation of the natural environment but also through the closing off of space to the untamed and undomesticated. In these ways, the walled garden introduced the processes of inclusion and exclusion and marked the growth and expansion of imperialism into space. Given the turbulent history of Iran in the past century—moving from one dictatorship to another, a failed revolution, and decades of suppression and terrorization of dissidents—the garden still offers a relevant alternative space for unrealized dreams and possibilities. The utopian imagination that green spaces call forth, therefore, may also be understood as a tool for fighting oppression.

Individually and collectively, Lotfi's photographs, sculptures, prints, and drawings make reference to gardens while also reconstituting the gallery space as garden-like. The fountains in the center of the gallery are components regularly featured in gardens, and they transform the space into something akin to our collective memory of those spaces. Water's contemplative quality and flowing, meditative sound creates a multisensory experience and provides an impression of being both inside and outside—hallmarks of the constructed garden.

In her photo series *All Things That Grow*, Lotfi is shown holding large boulders in locations around San Antonio that exist as both man-made and natural. One example on view, *Folded Ground*, is a sculptural form made by papier-mâché casting of objects found in the Artpace building. This boulder's form evokes a crouching body and is in conversation with the series of photographs, wherein fragments of the artist's body are exposed as the rest of her form merges, visually and playfully, with the sculpture.

The all-white, embossed prints of the series *Enclosed Landscapes* represent designs inspired by original plans of ancient Iranian gardens. They function as maps highlighting possibilities of spatial organization, ordering and reordering space, and inviting the viewer to participate in their ideation. Nearby are *Four-Fold*, two small, colored pencil drawings that suggest an alternative to the embossed prints as spatial maps reconfiguring how space is understood and imagined.

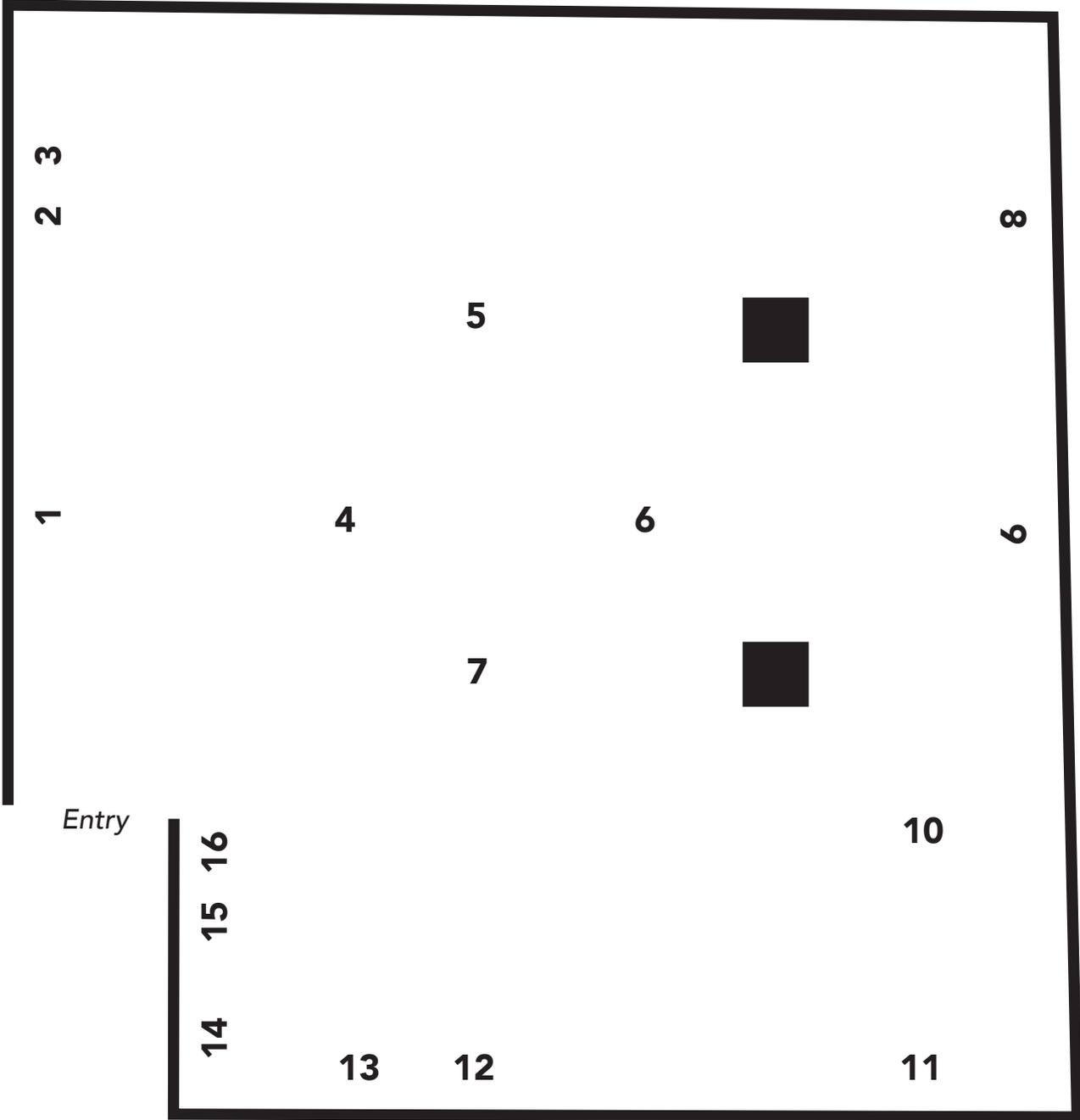
Lastly, though perhaps the most subtle intervention in the gallery, are papier-mâché pillars cast from existing columns in the space. The artist uses these to disrupt and disorient the architectural layout for gallery visitors, especially those already familiar with the space.

*all things that grow* offers viewers different sensations, desires, and experiences in order to generate a palpable sense of possibility in the constructed garden. Yet, since the utopic space or landscape is both imagined and never fully realized—a placeless place that can both liberate and exploit—Lotfi intimates that there are undeniable limits to one's understanding of Utopia.

## Artist Thanks

The artist would like to extend special thanks to Gary Nichols of Hare & Hound Press, Charlie Kitchen, and Jenelle Esparza.

# GALLERY MAP



*Please refer to the Works List for titles and materials.*

# WORKS LIST (clockwise from entrance)

- 1** *All Things That Grow*  
Inkjet prints on paper
- 2** *All Things That Grow*  
Inkjet prints on paper
- 3** *All Things That Grow*  
Inkjet prints on paper
- 4** *Circular Fountain 1*  
Stainless steel
- 5** *Pillar 1*  
Papier-mâché and gesso
- 6** *Circular Fountain 2*  
Stainless steel
- 7** *Pillar 2*  
Papier-mâché and gesso
- 8** *All Things That Grow*  
Inkjet prints on paper
- 9** *Unbound*  
Digital print on fabric
- 10** *Folded Ground*  
Papier-mâché and gesso
- 11** *All Things That Grow*  
Inkjet prints on paper
- 12** *Enclosed Landscapes*  
Relief print on Rives BFK White  
250gsm paper
- 13** *Enclosed Landscapes*  
Relief print on Rives BFK White  
250gsm paper
- 14** *Enclosed Landscapes*  
Relief print on Rives BFK White  
250gsm paper
- 15** *Four-Fold*  
Colored pencil on paper
- 16** *Four-Fold*  
Colored pencil on paper

# ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Since 1995, Artpace has welcomed more than 251 artists through its renowned International Artist-in-Residence program. Annually, Artpace hosts three residencies, which each feature one Texas-based artist, one national artist, and one international artist, who are selected by a notable guest curator. Each eight-week residency culminates in a two-month exhibition on site. The mission of this program is to provide artists with unparalleled resources that allow them to experiment with new ideas and take provocative risks.

## ABOUT ARTPACE

Artpace San Antonio is a nonprofit residency program which supports regional, national, and international artists in the creation of new art.

As a catalyst for artistic expression, we engage local communities with global art practices and experiences.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Support for the International Artist-in-Residence Program comes from Artpace members & donors and:

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