

SITUATIONS

Steinhauer, Jillian. Excerpt from “What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now - Reza and Mamali Shafahi”, The New York Times, online, November 17, 2021.

The New York Times

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

Nov. 17, 2021

DOWNTOWN

Reza and Mamali Shafahi

Through Dec. 19. Situations, 127 Henry Street, Manhattan; situations.us. Club Rhubarb, Manhattan; open by appointment: ronlittles@hotmail.com.



Reza Shafahi's painting "Untitled," from 2021. Reza Shafahi, Club Rhubarb, and SITUATIONS

It's a given that parents shape their children's identities, but if you're like me, you might not have thought much about the influence that you, as a child, have had on them. A two-venue exhibition by the father and son duo Reza and Mamali Shafahi, wryly titled "Daddy Sperm," prompts us to think about familial as well as artistic exchange and how it flows in multiple directions.

The Shafahis began collaborating in 2012. Reza was a retired professional wrestler in Iran with obsessive compulsive disorder and a gambling habit. Mamali, a professional artist living in France and Iran, prompted his dad to try drawing, and the idea took hold: Making art became a rich form of expression for Reza. Mamali then decided to interpret his father's drawings by turning them into sculptural reliefs.

At Situations, Reza's new paintings on paper revel in mixing the sacred and profane. References to American and Iranian culture are subsumed into a brightly colored, psychosexual dream world where people have multiple appendages and tree leaves have human faces. Reza's earlier drawings at Club Rhubarb are more subdued, creating a pliant counterpart for his son's reliefs. The works, from a series titled "Heirloom Velvet," are more technically sophisticated but also more garish: Mamali uses monochrome flocking to accentuate the strangeness of his dad's imagery.

Looking at the two sets of work together, there's no feeling of comparison or competition — only an intergenerational conversation that's equally bewitching and bizarre. *JILLIAN STEINHAUER*