

BOLT is a highly competitive, juried, one-year artist studio residency program offering emerging artists the opportunity to engage the Chicago arts community and its public in critical dialogue about contemporary art.

Chicago Artists Coalition (CAC) is a non-profit organization that supports contemporary Chicago artists and curators by offering residency programs, exhibitions, professional development and resources that enable them to live, work and thrive in the city. CAC is deeply committed to advancing the cause of art and its importance to Chicago's culture and economy by cultivating a wide-reaching civic, philanthropic and public support network.

chicagoartistscoalition.org

Exhibition Dates: November 18, 2022 - January 12, 2023

Opening Reception: Friday, November 18, 5 - 8pm

ARTIST BIO

Laleh Motlagh (b. Tabriz, Iran) is a Chicago-based artist and educator. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in the U.S., Mexico, Germany, Italy, and Iran. She was previously artist-in-residence at Nature, Art, and Habitat Residency (Taleggio Valley, Italy), Kunsthalle Bellow (Techentin, Germany), Institut für Alles Mögliche (Berlin, Germany), and House of Nature (Wald, Germany). She received her MFA from the University of Illinois Chicago in 2021.

Motlagh's work intertwines with the non-human others built on exchange and personal entanglement. She explores notions of love, intimacy, trust and resilience through drawing, painting, performance, video, and installation. She questions and challenges the socio-cultural alienation in human societies and reflects on her identities: female, Iranian, multicultural. She explores the complexity of our sensorial perceptions and how they shape us as humans. Motlagh's work often extends beyond momentary exchange, as it interrogates both the borders between human and natural life, the admissible and taboo, as well as the geopolitical overtones found so prevalently in the discourse of border zones and notions of belonging.



2130 W. Fulton Street
Chicago, IL 60612

Wednesday - Friday, 11AM - 5PM
Saturday 12-4PM

CAC's mission and programs are funded by the Alphawood Foundation; Art Works Fund; Chicago Community Trust; City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Coleman Foundation; Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation; Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; Illinois Arts Council; Jessica and Timothy Canning Charitable Fund; The Joyce Foundation; John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; Prince Charitable Trusts; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; and the generosity of members and supporters.

BOLT

CHICAGO ARTISTS COALITION

November 18, 2022 - January 12, 2023



Contemplation

WORK BY
Laleh Motlagh

Artist Laleh Motlagh (b. Tabriz, Iran, lives and works in Chicago, IL) has long nourished a relationship with the natural world, built on exchange and personal entanglement. In her performances and drawings, Motlagh cedes authorship and space to her collaborator, which has included cows, pigs, and her dog, Honey, a recurring artistic partner. For the artist and companion, the experience becomes an instance of mutual understanding in which respect and existence is accepted fully and equally. However, Motlagh's work often extends beyond momentary exchange, as it interrogates both the borders between human and natural life, the admissible and taboo, as well as the geopolitical overtones found so prevalently in the discourse of border zones and notions of belonging.

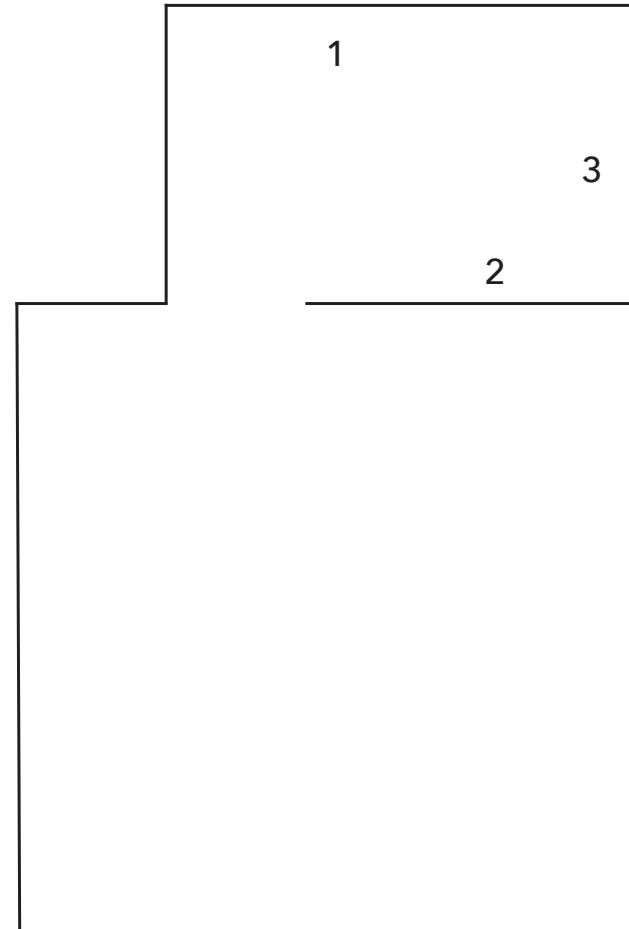
In her newest body of work, Motlagh furthers her accord with flora, which has held a steadfast presence in her life, and whose universality embodies both geographic and political isolation as well as solidarity. As with her earlier work, her engagement is spoken in the language of her partner, producing a conversation rooted in silence and intentional contemplation. A conversation for which access relies on deliberate detachment from human discourse and environments.

In "**Contemplation**", entering the secluded space that the artist has created, we are invited to consider our own conversations with the natural world in silence. Motlagh's drawings of a Monstera, entitled **Obscurity** appear almost transparent, encouraging the viewer to move in closer and avert our gaze away from our own existence to the natural life hidden just outside of our senses. This gesture is an invitation to quietness. It evokes a handshake or recognition, as we pass between the borders of existence.

Untitled documents Motlagh's earliest memories of her upbringing in Iran where plants were an abundant presence in her family's home. Their leaves embracing and permeating the domestic space and synonymous with the truest sense of belonging and community. However, this image also evokes feelings of displacement and separation from our native lands, as the artist grapples with the borders placed between physical and political space. Though identical to its counterpart, a Monstera cultivated in a home in Iran can never be fully accepted as one grown in the West, its origin always foreign to the local ecosystem. As a result, this image have come to represent the duality of both welcome memory as well as turmoil and fear of which Motlagh and global Iranians now feel of their homeland.

In her final work, **Quiet Chaos**, Motlagh continues to investigate this dualism and universality. Filmed in Chicago with two locally sourced Monstera plants, the artist physically embodies her confictions, moving between both the natural and human world, embracing the quietness of natural life while evoking her own visibility and solidarity to those who remain geographically distant. The artist grasps a white scarf affixed to a stick, a symbol of protest and revolution for women in Iran who have sought freedom with every fiber of their being. In this gesture the artist offers an exchange of discourse between the natural and the human world, moving between the border of contemplation and discord in which solidarity remains a universal constant.

Text by: Noah Hanna



1.
Obscurity
Marker on paper
Each 8.5" x 11"
2022

2.
Untitled
Photograph
3.5" x 5"
1991

3.
Quiet Chaos
9:40 Performance
video
2022