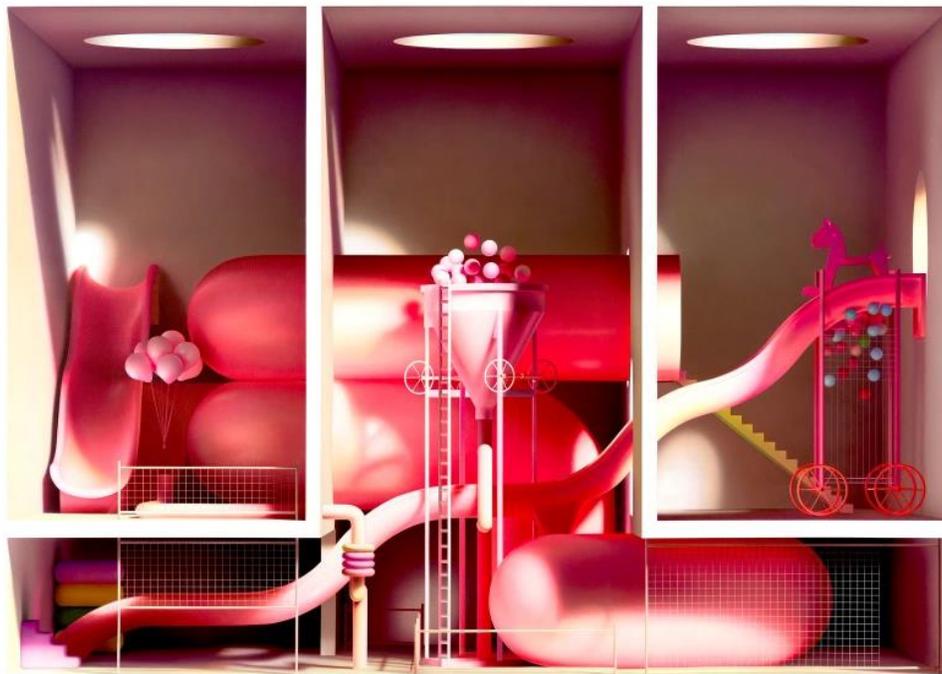


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## Mehdi Ghadyanloo Exhibits His Haunted Playground Scenes at Gagosian New York

Camilla Acosta



*Mehdi Ghadyanloo, The Unreachable Beauties, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas, 70 7/8 x 98 1/2 in, 180 x 250 cm, © Mehdi Ghadyanloo, Courtesy Gagosian

[Mehdi Ghadyanloo](#) gained significant renown by practically turning the cityscape of his native Tehran into an open-air gallery between 2004 and 2011, with his large scale murals becoming immediately unmissable attractions. He's since also placed his stamp on places like London, Boston, the World Economic Forum in Davos, and most strikingly the rooftop of the [OK Center for Contemporary Art](#) in Linz, Austria, where his piece *The Fraud and Hope* might easily trick the viewer into believing they are about to be sucked into a deadly whirlpool.

Many have unimaginatively compared him to [Banksy](#), likely due to nothing more than both creating high-impact public art. But their intent and aesthetic could not be more disparate. If anything, Ghadyanloo conjures surrealistic scenes that much more recall the head-tilting images

by Giorgio de Chirico or even more so [René Magritte](#).

Now [Gagosian](#) has at last organized his first standalone solo New York show – and though the context is obviously different when viewing his work indoors instead of out, the hypnotic qualities are not diminished in the least. In fact, removing them from the urban hustle surely allows for deeper reflection on the intricacies of the imagery. And with these all new works (each completed in 2022), he depicts elements of a fictional children’s playground, arranged in ways that don’t always make sense, but invite thoughtful contemplation.



*Mehdi Ghadyanloo, 2022, installation view*  
© Mehdi Ghadyanloo, Photo: Rob McKeever, Courtesy Gagosian

Yet where de Chirico’s peculiarly depopulated plazas drew the eye to the edge, to ponder what might lie outside the frame, Ghadyanloo’s works here like *The Unreachable Beauties*, *The Sunbathing Monster* and *The Lost Trojan* (a lone bright green hobby horse) feel claustrophobic, inviting the gaze to the center for further rumination. The chiaroscuro shading and the fact that there are not actually any little tykes inhabiting in the spaces gives them a haunted, almost post-apocalyptic sense of desolation. The presentation also feels rather architectural, though it’s an architecture that seems chronologically suspended between the past and the future.

Still, the artist himself hints that the inspiration may have simply been a desire for a peaceful respite amongst the commotion of youth.

“For a moment while I was watching these big plastic slides, surrounded by joyful, noisy children,” he explains. “I [then] imagined them as silent and beautiful as [Giorgio Morandi’s bottles](#).”

[Mehdi Ghadyanloo](#) will be on exhibit through April 23, at Gagosian, 976 Madison Avenue, New York.



*Above three images: Mehdi Ghadyanloo, 2022, installation view, © Mehdi Ghadyanloo, Photo: Rob McKeever, Courtesy Gagosian*