



Monthly Newsletter

ARTSA Presents a Multi-Artist Exhibition during the 61st Venice Biennale

Featuring two multi-artist exhibitions and a solo presentation



ARTSA will transform Palazzo Nani Bernardo during the 61st Venice Biennale into a dynamic exhibition platform, positioned within one of the most significant global moments for contemporary art. Set in Palazzo Nani Bernardo, a historic aristocratic residence on the Grand Canal in San Polo, the project unfolds within interiors enriched by 16th-century frescoes, layered noble salons, and rare Venetian architectural details.

Positioned opposite the Pinault Collection and in close proximity to Dorsoduro, Venice's most active contemporary art district, as well as the Arsenale, one of the principal venues of the Biennale, the palazzo occupies a uniquely strategic cultural axis.

Opening on 6 May 2026, ARTSA will present three private exhibitions conceived specifically for this historic setting. Moving room by room across the piano terra and piano nobile, the project unfolds as a layered curatorial journey through distinct artistic positions and exhibition formats. The project is conceived by Head Creator Selcan Atilgan, with co-curators Daria Borisova, Destina Ecem Bulut, and Laurence Dreyfus, in partnership with DG Art Project.

The Absurd and The Dreamlike



Where the absurd meets the dreamlike, reality shifts and reforms.

From 19 June through 31 October 2026, ARTSA presents *The Absurd and the Dreamlike* at La Citadelle, the 16th-century fortress overlooking the Mediterranean in Villefranche-sur-Mer, a landmark site whose architectural gravity and panoramic presence position it as one of the Riviera's most compelling cultural stages. Between the absurd and the dreamlike, reality is both unsettled and reimaged. Over the past months, Arne Quinze and Joana Vasconcelos have been working in close collaboration, developing a shared visual language where two distinct practices converge into newly conceived works. Moving between monumentality and intimacy, material force and symbolic intricacy, their dialogue produces an artistic synthesis that feels both unexpected and inevitable.

Internationally acclaimed for major institutional exhibitions and monumental public commissions worldwide, both artists bring formidable presence and global recognition to this rare encounter. Head curator Selcan Atilgan, founder of ARTSA, leads the exhibition, with Camille Frasca, Director of La Citadelle Villefranche-sur-Mer, serving as co-curator, with Clare Lilley as collaborator, the exhibition unfolds across expansive outdoor installations and intimate interior spaces, fully activating the historic fortres.

Exploring the Shadows Series: An Interview with Soraya Sharghi



ARTSA conducted an exclusive interview with Soraya Sharghi about her Shadow series.

ARTSA: Your “Shadow” series draws from Carl Jung’s idea of the shadow self. When did you first realize that darkness could become a creative language rather than something to conceal?

SS: I grew up in a place where certain parts of oneself had to remain hidden. At the time, concealment felt like a form of protection, not something creative. But later, when I encountered Jung’s idea of the shadow, I recognized something I had already been living with for years. What struck me was the idea that the shadow is not simply darkness or negativity. It is a space where everything that has been pushed aside continues to exist with enormous energy. When I began working on the Shadow paintings, I realized that darkness could actually become a language, one that reveals rather than hides. In painting, shadow is not the absence of light; it is where another truth begins to appear.

ARTSA: Many of your earlier works are vibrant and mythological, yet Shadows introduces a slower, darker atmosphere. Did this shift feel like losing control or discovering a deeper layer of your

practice?

SS: It felt more like entering a deeper layer of the same world. The mythological imagery was never about fantasy alone; it was always about survival, imagination, and transformation. In the Shadow series, the imagery becomes quieter and more submerged. Instead of presenting itself immediately, it emerges slowly through darkness and atmosphere. That shift required patience and a different kind of attention in the studio. Rather than losing control, I felt as though I was allowing the work to breathe in a different rhythm, one that asks the viewer to stay longer and look more carefully.

ARTSA: *Your name, Soraya, refers to a star cluster and evokes brightness, yet your Shadow Series explores darkness and the unseen. In the context of Jungian philosophy, how do you interpret this interplay between light and shadow in your work?*

SS: I actually find that connection very meaningful. A star can only be perceived against the darkness of the sky. Without darkness, light would not be visible. In Jungian terms, the shadow is not the opposite of light; it is part of the same psychological landscape. The two are inseparable. In my work, light and shadow exist in a constant dialogue. Light reveals, but shadow gives depth and complexity to what is revealed. For me, the work is not about choosing light over darkness, but about understanding how the two shape each other.

ARTSA: *You describe the shadow as a threshold rather than an endpoint. What kind of transformation happens in that threshold?*

SS: A threshold is a space of transition. It is the moment when something is no longer what it was, but has not yet fully become something else. When we enter the shadows psychologically, we are confronted with things we may not want to see: fears, memories, contradictions, hidden desires. But within that confrontation there is also the possibility of integration. In the paintings, this threshold often appears visually as a space where forms begin to emerge from darkness. They are not fully defined yet, but they are in the process of becoming. Transformation happens precisely in that unstable moment where the unknown begins to take shape.

ARTSA: *Many artists use darkness symbolically. In your work, however, darkness feels alive. What does the shadow want from the viewer?*

SS: I think the shadow asks for patience. At first glance, darkness can feel opaque or even intimidating. But if the viewer stays with the painting longer, shapes begin to surface slowly. The shadow invites a different way of looking, one that is less immediate and more intuitive. It asks the viewer to move closer, to allow their eyes to adjust. In that sense, the shadow is not trying to hide something from the viewer; it is inviting the viewer into a process of discovery.

ARTSA: *If the shadow represents what we hide, what did you discover about yourself while painting these works?*

SS: I discovered that the things we hide are not always negative. Sometimes they are parts of ourselves that simply did not have space to exist before. Working on these paintings made me realize that imagination, vulnerability, and instinct all live in that hidden space. When they surface, they can reshape how we understand ourselves. The shadow is not only where fear lives; it is also where creativity waits to be acknowledged.



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