

## MEDIA RELEASE

University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present *Nazafarin Lotfi: A Garden to Build* from August 11 through October 16, 2022. All events are free and open to the public.

*A Garden to Build* presents new drawings, sculptures, photographs, and prints by Tucson-based artist [Nazafarin Lotfi](#). The artist's practice is rooted in her experiences of growing up in post-Revolutionary Iran and continuing her education and artistic career as an immigrant in the United States. Lotfi cites the body, the house, the garden, and the nation as "some of the enclosures that define the self and other, inclusion and exclusion, access and belonging." In her newest works, the artist explores her current location through the lens of garden-making, which, she points out, has a 5,000-year history in her culture.

Lotfi's *Counter-Landscapes*—drawings based on the floor plans of historical Iranian gardens—index each shade of green found during close examination of her Arizona yard. *Maps of No Return*, a series of geometric drawings and collages based on actual gardens, addresses enclosed borders and nation-making. For her photography series *All Things That Grow*, the artist interacts with papier-mâché "boulders" as her body becomes partially hidden in the Texas landscape. Lotfi's *Traces*—large, hollow, papier-mâché sculptures that imagine a body blending into the environment—have subtly painted and drawn surfaces that evoke stone and lichen. Through these and other works, Lotfi addresses boundaries and world-making. She asks, "What does it mean to make art in the brink of collapse. How do we imagine new worlds?"

This exhibition grew from an earlier collaboration. During the 2019-2020 academic year, University Galleries' Teen Art Group worked with Lotfi on a solo exhibition, which was scheduled to be on view at University Galleries in Summer 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it became an online project featuring Lotfi's artwork, the Teen Art Group's recorded interview with the artist, and a conversation between Kantara Souffrant and Lotfi. The full project is available on University Galleries' [website](#).

*A Garden to Build* is the focus of multiple educational programs. Nazafarin Lotfi will give a public artist lecture and meet with students. The Experimental Ensemble at Normal Community High School will develop an audio response to the exhibition, which may result in a public performance. University Galleries' staff will lead art-making workshops for ISU students, families, K-12 students, and community members. University Galleries continues collaborating with the Children's Discovery Museum for Art Around You, a series of virtual exhibition tours and workshops for children ages 7 through 10. Free virtual and in-person curator-led tours are available by appointment for the duration of the exhibition.

*Nazafarin Lotfi: A Garden to Build* is curated by [Kendra Paitz](#), University Galleries' director and chief curator. This exhibition is supported by University Galleries' grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Alice and Fannie Fell Trust, Harold K. Sage Foundation, and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund.

### [Artist biography](#)

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Nazafarin Lotfi was born in Mashhad, Iran, and is based in Tucson, Arizona. She is currently the Matakayev Research Fellow at the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands at Arizona State University. Her work has been exhibited at Artpace, San Antonio; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix; The Suburban, Milwaukee; Brand New Gallery, Milan; Ana Cristea Gallery, New York City; DUVE Berlin, Berlin; soon.tw, Montreal; Everybody Gallery, Tucson; and The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Artists Coalition, Logan Center at the University of Chicago, Arts Club of Chicago, Regards, Arts Incubator, The Franklin, Goldfinch, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, and Ralph Arnold Gallery, all in Chicago. Lotfi has been awarded artist residencies by the Arts + Public Life and Center for the Study of Race, Politics, & Culture at the University of Chicago, and Artpace International. She has received grants from the Arizona Commission on the Arts, Phoenix Art Museum, Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona, and the city of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. She received both her MFA and her Post-Baccalaureate certificate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and her BA from University of Tehran. Her work is represented by Regards, Chicago.

### **Events and programming**

All events are free and open to the public.

- Wednesday, August 17, from 10:00 a.m. to noon  
All-ages artmaking workshop. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. No registration required.
- Saturday, September 3 at 1 p.m.  
Tour and Workshop: Art Around You. Co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum.  
Register at [childrensdiscoverymuseum.net](http://childrensdiscoverymuseum.net)
- Wednesday, September 21 at noon  
Artist lecture by Nazafarin Lotfi
- Wednesday, September 21, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.  
Artist reception with Nazafarin Lotfi
- Thursday, September 22, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.  
Educator workshop. Meet artist Nazafarin Lotfi, experience her exhibition, and develop lesson plans. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. [Registration](#) required. Registration will close once capacity is reached.
- Friday, September 30  
Family Weekend exhibition tours from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.  
Family Weekend artmaking workshop from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, October 1, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Extended exhibition hours for Family Weekend
- Saturday, October 15, from noon to 2:00 p.m.

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All-ages artmaking workshop. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. [Registration](#) required. Registration will close once capacity is reached.

- Field trip program, curator-led tours, and workshops available by appointment throughout the exhibition. Reimbursements are available for K-12 schools or community organizations to offset the costs of transportation. Please contact University Galleries at [gallery@ilstu.edu](mailto:gallery@ilstu.edu) or (309) 438-5487 to schedule an appointment.
- Additional events will be announced via University Galleries' social media accounts.

University Galleries, a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact [gallery@illinoisState.edu](mailto:gallery@illinoisState.edu) or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to these exhibitions.