

IRANIAN STUDIES OUTREACH · BILINGUAL LECTURE SERIES

Women, Art, Freedom: Artists and Street Politics in Iran

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026

2:00 PM PDT

ONLINE (ZOOM)

**LECTURE IN
PERSIAN**



REGISTER & INFO

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UCLA Iranian Studies



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Pamela Karimi

Associate Professor

Cornell University

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Pamela Karimi is an architect and historian of modern and contemporary art and architecture of the Middle East. She earned her Ph.D. from MIT in 2009 and is currently Associate Professor at Cornell University. Her interdisciplinary research bridges architecture, art, environmental studies, and socio-political dynamics. Karimi is the author of *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran* (2013; translation into Persian in 2021), *Alternative Iran: Contemporary Art and Critical Spatial Practice* (Stanford University Press, 2022), *Women, Art, Freedom: Artists and Street Politics in Iran* (Leuven/Cornell University Press), and is completing *Survival by Design: Desert Architecture at the End of the World*, a study of architecture and environmental transformations in arid regions. Her most recent book, upon which this talk is based and which was supported by the Persian Heritage Foundation, examines grassroots artistic movements in the 2022 *Woman, Life, Freedom* uprising. Karimi's work also extends globally, from coediting *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: From Napoleon to ISIS* to curating the traveling exhibition *Black Spaces Matter*. Widely recognized by outlets such as NPR, the BBC, and *The Washington Post*, her scholarship highlights the intersections of design, politics, and ecology across diverse contexts.

ABOUT THE LECTURE

This talk, based on Pamela Karimi's 2024 book *Women, Art, Freedom: Artists and Street Politics in Iran*, traces the 2022 *Woman, Life, Freedom* uprising catalyzed by the tragic death of Jina Mahsa Amini while in the custody of the "morality police." Beyond its feminist core and the extraordinary courage of young protesters, Karimi emphasizes that what truly distinguishes this movement is the scale and diversity of its art. Rather than focusing solely on viral images, the talk foregrounds grassroots artistic practices that reshaped local public life. Drawing on interviews with Iran-based artists, it highlights how creative work fueled guerrilla interventions, street occupations, and nonviolent civil disobedience. Set against a wide historical and theoretical backdrop, the presentation maps the genealogies of Iranian protest art and examines the entanglement of public space, women's bodies, and para-feminist imaginaries. Ultimately, Karimi argues that artists are not merely witnesses to upheaval but rather architects of collective action and essential agents in broader struggles for justice and equality.

