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BANISADR

*The
Silence Beneath
the Storm*

Words
JAE KIM
Photography
LISA KATO



Pandemonium of the Sun, 2025, Oil on linen, 82 × 120 in

The Greek word *gnosis* suggests not simply knowledge, but a knowing that is embodied — felt rather than proven, intuitive rather than declarative. Ali Banisadr used the word almost casually during a conversation in his studio, yet the weight it carried echoed long after. His paintings do not proclaim. They pulse. They swirl like weather systems — turbulent, immersive, ungraspable at a glance. You sense them before you fully see them. There is a paradox at the heart of Banisadr's practice. His canvases, such as *Omen* (2025), erupt with chaotic, almost apocalyptic energy, yet his process is governed by patience, deep listening, and rigorous self-discipline. The storm is what meets the eye, but beneath it lies a quiet, deliberate silence.

Born in Tehran in 1976, Banisadr came of age during the Iran-Iraq War. The memory of explosions, sirens, sudden disappearances, and unspoken fears seeps into his work like a recurring undertone. After emigrating to the United States, he encountered a different kind of language — urban tension, graffiti, and fragmented cultural signals pulsing through the streets of San Francisco and later New

York. It was in San Francisco that his early influences took shape amid the immediacy of sonic and visual chaos. Yet his response has never been about replication. He does not paint trauma but rather the atmosphere left in its wake. His oeuvre teems with strange architectures, swarming figures, and fractured landscapes, yet nothing is ever quite defined. They resist clarity the way dreams resist summary.

What might first appear as visual excess reveals, upon closer attention, a practice rooted in restraint. This is not the restraint of minimalism or silence; it is one of control, resisting the seduction of legibility. Banisadr avoids offering meaning with a fixed hand. He constructs visual worlds that hover between knowing and not-knowing, between order and collapse. Figures emerge and dissolve — monsters, myths, apparitions — glimpsed like ancient allegories flickering through static. His refusal to name is not an evasion; it is a strategy. It is a quiet act against spectacle, a space where the viewer must slow down and participate, not consume.

Banisadr's studio in Brooklyn deepens this paradox. The space feels almost clin-

ical, which is surprising given the ferocity of the paintings born there. Long and light-filled, the studio stretches toward a single focal point: a large unfinished painting tilted against the far wall. Banisadr works on one painting at a time, devoting himself fully to its unfolding. He gives each canvas the space and time to speak, adjusting and listening until it quiets into resolution. Above the painting, a row of skylights runs the length of the ceiling, allowing natural light to pour in and shift continuously throughout the day. As the light changes, so too does the painting. Shadows migrate, highlights emerge, and entire passages seem to reconfigure themselves. This constant transformation becomes part of the process; Banisadr often discovers new elements within the work simply by observing it under different illuminations.

The Painting (2020–2024) is a testament to this slow, meditative rhythm. At first glance, the work is a dense, atmospheric field — deep violets and midnight blues dominate the surface, punctuated by flashes of gold that glimmer like distant lanterns in a fog. Ethereal, faceless figures drift along the edges, their forms dissolving





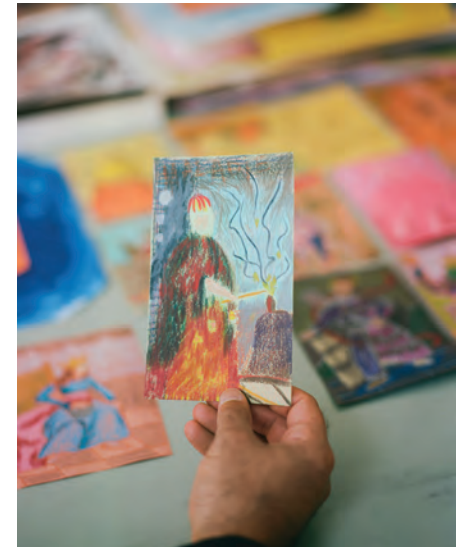
into veils of white and crimson, while spectral shapes flicker in and out of focus, as if glimpsed through a rain-streaked window.

Move closer and the work reveals its secrets: tiny holes pierce the linen, subtle interruptions that break the illusion of the painted world. These punctures are deliberate, a quiet assertion of the painting's material vulnerability and the artist's hand. In an era dominated by speed and instant gratification, Banisadr's willingness to labor over such an intimately scaled, physically marked work feels radical. For him, completion is not about mastery but about an intuitive quieting. "The painting tells me when it's finished," he said. "It calms down." That word *calm* lands strangely amid the turbulence and spectral dynamism of his surfaces. Yet it holds. Within all the movement, there is a core stillness, a deep-set order that anchors the entire composition, inviting the viewer to linger, to look again, and to discover the subtle tension between presence and absence.

Banisadr's paintings unfold like orchestral movements, dense, layered, and

fiercely alive. He has often described his process as synesthetic, where sound and image fuse into one sensory current. Each brushstroke behaves like a musical note — sharp, trembling, or resonant. The canvas becomes a score, where motifs build, collide, and dissolve. Imagine the wild crescendos of Mozart's *Symphony No. 40*: the dramatic lift of violins, the anxious flutter of woodwinds, and the thunderous undercurrent of bass. In Banisadr's visual field, similar forces surge forward — voices erupt, retreat, and overlap in a choreography that feels both improvised and exact. Even the chaos is deliberate, a fugue of fractured meanings held in tension.

There's a discipline in his ambiguity, a resistance to the flattening urge to explain. At a time when images are expected to be legible at a glance — digestible, clickable, conclusive — his paintings insist on duration. They require patience, return, and a kind of listening. Banisadr does not translate meaning for the viewer; he withholds just enough to keep the work vibrating. Each layer conceals another frequency, another contradiction. Like a conductor



suspending the moment before resolution, he lets mystery linger, creating space for the viewer to dwell inside it.

Banisadr has recently extended his vision into three dimensions, treating sculpture as a continuation of painting. The forms he sculpts are not representations but manifestations — creatures pulled from the same world as his canvases, translated into flesh, bone, and shadow. His refusal to name remains intact. These sculptures resemble masks, relics, and vessels — yet they never settle into a single identity, echoing without explaining. Their presence feels uncanny — not because they frighten, but because they resist disclosure. They remind us that not all knowledge arrives through language.

Throughout his practice, Banisadr has constructed a cosmology that resists linearity, rejects instruction, and eludes decoration. His paintings are thresholds, not windows, and they demand time. They ask us to move slowly, listen, and feel before we attempt to interpret. Their complexity is generous; their delivery, precise. In a world that mistakes noise for urgency, his work offers something else: a storm rendered with control, an invitation without a map, a silence that vibrates just under the surface.

Banisadr has mastered the art of restraint. And in that restraint is a form of care, a way of painting the world not as it appears, but as it resonates when language breaks down. The result is a body of work that rewards attention rather than demands understanding. A practice that values slowness, subtlety, and the deep knowledge of *gnosis* that lives beneath the noise.





Animus, 2025, Bronze, 66 × 18 × 9 in



Gilgamesh, 2025, Bronze, 16 × 5 × 5 in



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