



## Artifice

### Date

2022

### Primary Maker

Asad Faulwell

### Medium

Acrylic, pins and photo collage on canvas

### Description

Asad Faulwell's intricate, colorful, and highly detailed *Artifice* brings together Iranian mythological and historical figures and imbeds them into a complex pattern reminiscent of those seen on Persian rugs or Islamic textiles and ceramics. The work features a large, masked king-like central figure who is constructed from "fragments of history," with a masked queen, or priestess, behind. A close viewing reveals *Artifice*'s surface to be studded, not just with pins, but with photographic images of historical leaders and other individuals, alongside painted figures and animal forms, many of whom are drawn from Iran's ancient history. Above the central figure's crown is the beast-like head of Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the destructive spirit of Zoroastrianism, the pre-Islamic religion of Iran. The head is visually similar to that of lions depicted attacking bulls in relief sculptures from the ancient Achaemenid city of Persepolis. An inverted winged figure of Anhiti, the ancient

Iranian goddess of royalty, war, and fertility, who may have originated in Mesopotamian culture and was incorporated into Zoroastrianism, can be seen to the left of Angra Mainyu. Another lion based on an Assyrian carving appears at the bottom of the painting, while the bird on its back is drawn from a Persian miniature painting that the artist particularly admired. Faulwell was born in Idaho to a family who left Iran due to the upheavals that afflicted the country during the mid- to late twentieth century, which the artist references through small photographs—inspired by Persian miniatures—of figures such as Mohammad Reza Shah and Ayatollah Khomeini. In addition, Faulwell highlights the personal impact of global events by including photographs of his great uncle Javad Saeed, the last head of Iran's parliament under the Shah. The artist had family members on both sides of the political divide, some of whom were imprisoned, tortured, and executed for their loyalties and beliefs.

### Dimensions

Overall: 40 × 30 in. (101.6 × 76.2 cm)