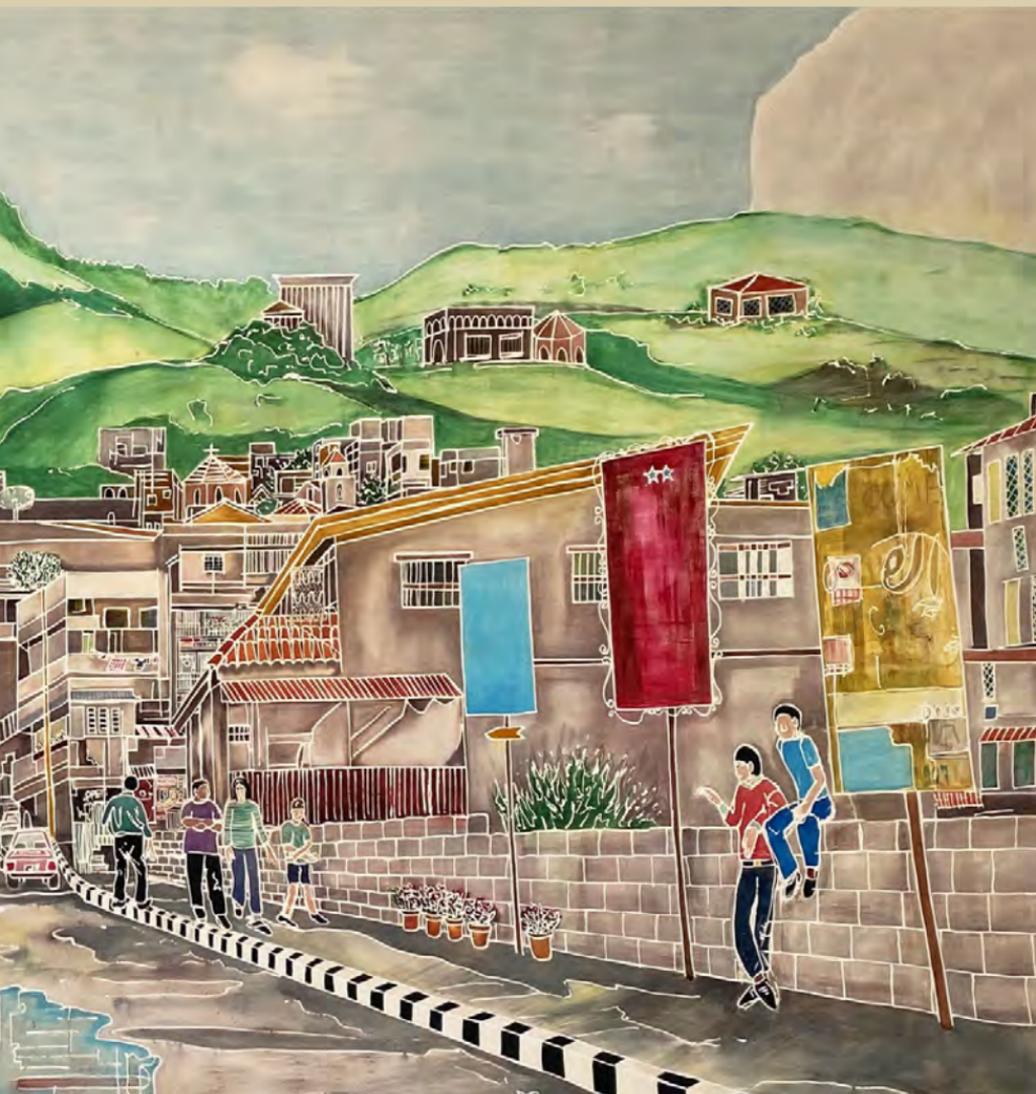


Rachel Hakimian Emenaker
DREAMS GATHER HERE





REFLECTSPACE

ReflectSpace, established in 2017, is an inclusive exhibition space designed to explore and reflect on major human atrocities, genocides, civil rights violations, and other social justice issues. Immersive in conception, ReflectSpace is a hybrid space that is both experiential and informative, employing art, technology, and interactive media to reflect on the past and present of Glendale's communal fabric and interrogate current-day global human rights issues. ReflectSpace.org

LIBRARY, ARTS & CULTURE

Founded in 1907, the Glendale Library, Arts & Culture Department includes eight neighborhood libraries including the Brand Library & Art Center, a regional visual arts and music library and performance venue housed in the historic 1904 mansion of Glendale pioneer Leslie C. Brand, and the Central Library, a 93,000 square foot center for individuals and groups to convene, collaborate and create. GlendaleLAC.org

Cover Image: *Traces*, Batik on canvas, 67 x 118 inches, 2025

Rachel Hakimian Emenaker

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February 17 - April 26, 2026

OPENING RECEPTION

Saturday, February 28, 2026, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

ARTIST TALK

Tuesday, April 21, 2026, 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

CURATED BY

Ara and Anahid Oshagan

DREAMS OF A DIASPORIC ARCHITECTURE: *A conversation with Rachel Hakimian Emenaker*

BY ARA OSHAGAN

Diaspora is an elusive word, pulling and pushing at once, marked by contradiction and ambiguity. Rooted in ancient Greek, it was first used in the 3rd century AD to describe the “scattering” of the Jewish people. In recent decades, the term has expanded to include nearly any cultural or national group displaced from a homeland, forcibly or not. Museums are now dedicated to various diasporas. The word risks being overused, yet with few alternatives its broad use persists.

Armenians have their own word, *spuirk*, derived from *sprrel*, meaning to scatter like seeds. Its use came into being after the Genocide of 1915—centering world-building in communities that are often diasporas within diasporas through repeated displacements. Like Russian nesting dolls, each diaspora embedded within another, with many trajectories culminating in Los Angeles.

When Rachel Hakimian Emenaker speaks of diasporic architecture, she grounds it in her unique diasporic experience. South America, North America, Europe, West and East Asia are cultural geographies that jostle and harmonize in Emenaker’s process of world-making. She builds landscapes that exist and don’t exist simultaneously, that look to the past and the future in the same moment—an architecture across space, time, and memory. While her work speaks to her own private diasporic trajectory, with Los Angeles a resonant site, her work echoes with a broader, shared diasporic condition.

Oshagan: You have lived in many countries and moved through many cultures. How has that shaped your thinking and art practice?

Emenaker: I grew up in an Armenian-American home, shaped greatly by my mom’s Syrian-Armenian lineage, between Paramaribo, Suriname in South America, and Moscow, Russia, before moving to the United States for university. I was raised across multiple languages and

cultures and have been deeply influenced by the multicultural environments of the cities I grew up in.

Oshagan: A very diasporic upbringing.

Emenaker: As Armenians, we always think of being part of a diaspora, but in America there's a general American vibe. In Suriname and Russia, you're very aware of different groups, very celebratory of different cultures, while they're merging together. You see this in Los Angeles. It's one of the things I love most about L.A.: the diversity, the pride, the merging, the fusions, cultures crossing into each other and forming new cultures.

Oshagan: You moved to Armenia in your early twenties.

Emenaker: I studied painting in undergrad and earned a BFA. After undergrad, I went to Armenia through Birthright Armenia. It was my early twenties, trying to figure out what I was doing.

Oshagan: That diasporic trajectory continues to shape your work.

Emenaker: Absolutely. I'm continually drawing from those histories, materials and subject matter.

Oshagan: How do you begin an artwork?

Emenaker: All my work starts with a photo or just one part of it. Often a family photo. The rest comes from trying to remember a place and the image builds from that memory. None of these places are real. They are ambiguous memories that I may not have even had. Some of the photos were taken before I was born, so the memory becomes what I imagined the place to be or what I was told about it. This is often part of the diasporic experience. We absorb histories and stories of places we may or may not have been to, and they become folded into our present surroundings and what we know. They turn into mythic places we keep referencing, even if we've never actually seen them. And they become yours but in a different way because they're passed down. And then you kind of absorb them, and then you add to them, and then eventually, you pass them down as well.

Oshagan: Does the photographic moment play a key role in your work?

Emenaker: It's important to me that the work starts with a moment that did exist, because that's where memory begins. But it transforms—each time we recall, it's different, and each time it's passed down, it shifts. A photograph captures a moment, but that moment is fleeting and largely unknown. It's just one angle at one point in time. When I look at it years later, I absorb what I believe is a truth about that moment and bring it into the painting, while the rest becomes an imagined story built around it. Even the titles are a kind of lie. I call them cities, but these cities never existed.

As artists we are constantly creating worlds. We're creating our interpretation of the world that we see around us or what we may have inherited. As a diasporic people, we're constantly interpreting the world as we live in it. For me, that means moving between different perspectives, sometimes viewing things through an American mindset, other times through an Armenian one, trying to make sense of things and find some kind of middle ground.

Oshagan: You use a very interesting phrase—diasporic architecture. What is that and how does it percolate through your work?

Emenaker: Diasporic architecture is made up of structures that aren't quite structures. It's a way of building through memory, an architecture of remembering embedded in cities like Los Angeles, Moscow, or Yerevan. It's how diasporic communities construct spaces from fragments, from what's inherited and passed down. It's the coming together of multiple cultures to form foundations for new futures. People are as important as the buildings in my paintings. There's constant movement and flow: a collective act of place-making while living in between; people, places and histories in constant motion, crossing borders. None of these people or buildings exist. But they could.

Oshagan: Is there a ghostliness to being diasporic?

Emenaker: There's a ghostliness in my work, a longing for a place whether you've been there or not. I think of a ghost as someone long-

ing for something, looking back at a life they had. As a diasporic person, you carry that longing while living somewhere else. Even if it's not always conscious, there's a reckoning with what could have been.

Oshagan: You carry that with you: that other place, that other possibility, that other past. Survivors of trauma are ghosts in a way. They're physically alive but exist in between life and death.

Emenaker: That's true, it resonates. Diaspora, especially ours, comes from extreme, multi-generational trauma. There seem to be two approaches. You can be fully assimilated and disconnected, or you can care deeply and stay connected, which means leaving part of yourself elsewhere while learning how to function here. It's a strange state to live in.

Oshagan: How important are materials to your work?

Emenaker: I choose craft-based materials. They hold knowledge, stories, histories. Batik, for instance, is a wax-resist dyeing technique that started in Java, Indonesia, as a communal, ritual practice tied to storytelling. Under Dutch colonial trade, it was industrialized and spread to places like Suriname, West Africa, India, and the Caribbean. Along the way, communities reshaped it, folding it into their own traditions. So batik carries histories of migration, holding the violence of empire and the resilience of culture all at once. Just like tile making, knitting, lace making, carpet making, ceramics—all with their own histories. Some of it is gendered work, often carried out by women. In Western contexts, they are stripped, commodified, mass-produced. My batiks are paintings as much as any other painting.

Oshagan: And the title, *Dreams*? What kind of dreams?

Emenaker: Dreams as survival, not escape—as strategies for survival for communities shaped by migration, grief, historical ruptures. I'm curious whose dreams are allowed to gather, whose dreams are deferred or erased, and what it means to hold space for dreaming together as a community. Dreams become portable homes, a place to rest when permanence is impossible.





Untitled (Los Angeles), Batik* on canvas, 70 x 156 inches, 2024

*Batik is a wax-resist dyeing technique



Dreams of Van, Batik on canvas, 56 x 67 inches, 2025



Arax, Batik on canvas, 67 x 56 inches, 2025





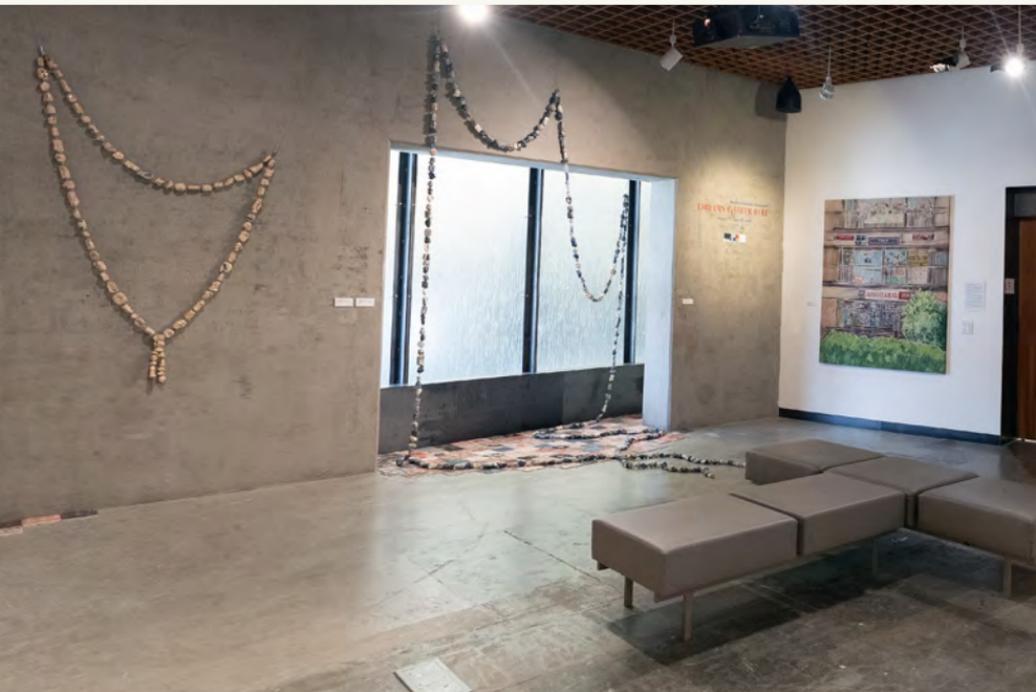
Dreams Gather Here PassageWay installation view
Untitled (Tile wall), Glazed ceramic tiles, Variable dimensions, 2026

Dreams Gather Here ReflectSpace installation view
365 Prayers/365 Fists (Lapis Lazuli), Crystalline glazed porcelain and rope, 264 inches, 2026





Untitled (Paramaribo), Batik on canvas, 70 x 156 inches, 2024



Dreams Gather Here ReflectSpace installation view, 2026









Untitled (Moscow and Kessab), Batik on canvas, 70 x 156 inches, 2024





Untitled (Yerevan), Batik on canvas, 70 x 156 inches, 2024



Rachel Hakimian Emenaker is a Los Angeles based artist working across installation, craft, sculpture, painting, sound, and textiles. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Grand Central Arts Center, Santa Ana, Luce Gallery, Turin, Italy, UCLA Broad Art Center, Los Angeles, Bardwell Project Space, La Mirada, Guest House, Inglewood, the American University of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, and Earl & Virginia Green Gallery, La Mirada. She has participated in group exhibitions at LA Artcore, Vardan Gallery, Cal State Long Beach, and The Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego among others. She is the recipient of the 2024 Dedalus MFA Fellowship in Painting & Sculpture and the 2023 UCLA Elaine Krown Klein Fine Arts Scholarship.

Rachel Hakimian Emenaker is a multidisciplinary artist whose work explores migration, cultural memory, and diasporic identity through mixed-media installations that merge Eastern and Western art and craft traditions. Her work often centers on materials shaped by global trade routes and histories of colonization, migration, and commodification, using them to examine how histories, identity, and culture are formed, carried, and re-remembered across generations and geographies. Growing up between languages, countries, and traditions has shaped her practice through images, voices, colors, and memories—sunsets filtered through humid air, coarse carpets in open bazaars, and domes emerging from graffitied urban cement. These fragments inform a research-driven approach that traces material histories, shifting meanings, and landscapes over time. Through architectural and domestic references embedded in craft traditions, her installations seek to create spaces where diasporic memory becomes visible and where re-remembering functions as an active process of care, continuity, and resilience.

