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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sheree Hovsepian

*Figure Ground*

May 3 - June 21, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, May 3, 6 - 8pm

Uffner & Liu is pleased to present *Figure Ground*, Sheree Hovsepian's second solo exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition will be on view from May 3 through June 21, 2025. An opening reception will take place on May 3rd from 6–8pm. The exhibition coincides with the release of Hovsepian's monograph, published by JRP Editions. A book launch will be held at the gallery on May 28th.

Featuring four distinct yet interconnected bodies of work – traditional silver gelatin photographs, ink-on-paper drawings, mixed media assemblages, and bronze sculptures – this exhibition marks a significant evolution in Hovsepian's practice. The title *Figure Ground* references a foundational concept in both psychology and visual art: the perceptual distinction between an object (the “figure”) and the space that surrounds it (the “ground”). Often employed to explore moments of visual ambiguity, this principle becomes, for Hovsepian, a powerful metaphor for the slippage between body and environment, subject and object, presence and absence. Across all four series, she plays with this duality, probing how identity and notions of the self are shaped, obscured, and recorded.

The three bronze sculptures serve as anchor points within the exhibition – slender figures in space that echo the scale of the artist's own body. Each work is constructed from forms that have long appeared in Hovsepian's collages, such as the elongated half-moon, now translated into large, three-dimensional scale. Standing upright and quietly monumental, these sculptures evoke both sentinels and glyphs, charged with the same quiet mystery that pervades throughout Hovsepian's works. The surface of each is shaped by hand, creating repetitive, tactile marks that serve as visual records of a body in motion.

Hovsepian's interest in art-making as a method of recording action originates in her formal training in photography. Just as Roland Barthes' canonical thought of “ça-a-été” (“this has been”) pervades every photograph, mark-making records every movement of the painter across canvas. Hovsepian's large scale ink-on-paper works are gestural and improvisational – abstracted grids composed of rhythmic, looping lines that map some physical or perhaps psychological terrain. They are the “ground” before which the bronze sculptures dance, and their lines which stretch, drip, tangle, and pool document Hovsepian's own presence in the studio.

The assemblages – mixed media works on linen encased in artist-made walnut frames – continue Hovsepian's investigation of the body and its relationship to symbolic form. These works incorporate photographs, ceramic, string, nails, and, for the first time, painted elements. The addition of paint introduces new material contrast and chromatic depth, heightening the formal interplay between texture, surface, and line. The ceramic elements also shift in shape and tactility, expanding the vocabulary Hovsepian has developed fluently in previous collage work. The female form, fragmented and reconfigured, is embedded in a matrix of geometries – triangles, spirals, and arcs – that evoke boundaries and moments of transition.

Uffner & Liu  
170 Suffolk Street  
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064  
info@uffnerliu.com  
uffnerliu.com

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“The instability of identity persists as a recurring theme in my work,” Hovsepian writes. “I embrace the self as split and fractured and the body as a palimpsest of memory that shapes our understanding of reality.” In the silver gelatin photographs, the female figure (who is always Hovsepian’s sister) is partially concealed behind bold, graphic cutouts. Her body is interrupted and eclipsed by oversized flat white shapes that create illusions of looking – are they part of the photographed scene or interventions made after the fact? The figure becomes the ground as negative space becomes the subject.

Photography remains the connective tissue between these distinct modes of working. “It serves as a conduit for affect,” Hovsepian writes, “embodying an indexical nature that reflects a trace of the subject while simultaneously existing as an abstract entity.” Whether through the literal lens of the camera, the mark of photo ink, or the physical shaping of clay and bronze, Hovsepian’s work asks how memories and motions are recorded, transferred, and shared. *Figure Ground* is a meditation on this process: a materially expansive exploration of how bodies – and images of bodies – are shaped by the spaces around them.

**Sheree Hovsepian** (b. 1974, Isfahan, Iran) earned her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL in 2002, a dual BFA/BA from the University of Toledo, OH in 1999, and studied at the Glasgow School of Art, Scotland in 1998. Hovsepian has had recent solo and two-person exhibitions at Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York, NY (2022); Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, NY (2020); Higher Pictures Gallery, New York, NY (2019); Team Bungalow, Los Angeles, CA (2019); and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago, IL (2018). Institutionally, Hovsepian has been included in group exhibitions at the Bemis Exhibition Center, Omaha, NE (2025); Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA (2025); Shah Garg Foundation, New York, NY (2023); Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY (2023); The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel (2023); International Center of Photography, New York, NY (2023); the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani, Venice, Italy (2022); and the Tang Teaching Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY (2020). Hovsepian is in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Bronx Museum, the Kormal Shah Collection, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Studio Museum in Harlem, among others. She currently lives and works in New York City.

Image: Sheree Hovsepian, *Egress*, 2025, silver gelatin prints, ceramic, string, nails, and acrylic on linen in walnut artist's frame, 25 1/2 x 19 1/2 x 3 1/2 in (64.8 x 49.5 x 8.9 cm)

Please call +1 (212) 274-0064 or email Lucy Liu, Partner, [lucy@uffnerliu.com](mailto:lucy@uffnerliu.com) for more information

Uffner & Liu  
170 Suffolk Street  
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064  
[info@uffnerliu.com](mailto:info@uffnerliu.com)  
[uffnerliu.com](http://uffnerliu.com)