

Iraqi-American Painter Vian Sora Makes a Bold Debut in New York

by [AMANDA RANDONE](#)

Following recent acquisitions by the Baltimore Museum of Art and selection for inclusion at Art Basel Miami Beach next month, Iraqi-American painter Vian Sora is presenting her first New York solo exhibition. On view this month at the David Nolan Gallery, the show titled *Vian Sora: End of Hostilities* consists of abstract, gestural work distilling the artist's experience of coming of age in



Baghdad. Grappling with themes of war, political upheaval, and geographic and cultural displacement, the exhibition takes place just steps away from Manhattan's iconic Metropolitan Museum of Art at a relevant time for the city. Since the spring of 2022, over 116,000 migrants fleeing hardship in their home countries have gone to New York from the US-Mexico border.

"My works allude to a regeneration of hope through images of nature emerging within gestural forms; a survivor's lens so that others can see on canvas the struggle to gain safety and security, to control the chaos, and to continue with life, our commonality," explains Sora, who grew up in an academic household in Baghdad with values diametrically opposed to the dictatorship. She remembers the day in May 1994 when that home was raided, her Kurdish father abducted, and their belongings seized from the house and from her father's art gallery. The family believed he had been executed until he returned months later after having remarkably negotiated his own release.

This turmoil in the face of tyranny is what Sora – based in Louisville, Kentucky since 2008 – aims to capture in her mixed-media compositions, which invite larger conversations about the impact of war. "I believe it is critical to listen to the voices of the displaced and those who are seeking asylum, such as my family who first was welcomed into Dubai after fleeing Baghdad as refugees. Immigrants are the collective energy that fuels the American dream."