

Nothing to fear



My art is the ultimate remedy.

by **Neda Shoaee**

I am Neda Shoaee, 29, a multidisciplinary artist from Iran. In 2016, I received a bachelor's degree in English literature from the University of Tehran. I make video art and create digital collages, paint doodles and research global issues such as gender studies, human rights, silent extinction, diasporic literature and refugee crises.

When I was 17 and preparing for my university entrance exam, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The left side of my body started to feel numb, and less than 48 hours later, it was completely paralyzed. I moved to San Diego, California, to continue my treatments closer to my parents. At first, I was shocked. I vividly remember how numb I felt, both physically and emotionally. I was completely paralyzed on the left side of my body. Even my vocal cords were affected, and I couldn't sing well for some time. And I love singing! But after a while, I started to gain hope again. I wrote short letters to my fingers, telling them how much I missed them, and I asked them to start moving again. Fortunately, they did.

Nothing helped me out of those days more than the magic of the Harry Potter novels. They helped me detach from all the harsh reality I was coping with during my MS journey. My family supported me a lot through all the hard steps I took dealing with my new life with MS. After I finally started to feel better, I returned to Tehran and entered university.



Neda Shoaie uses the giraffe as a motif in her artwork, “The Giraffe Road.” The giraffe, facing extinction, represents a symbol of hope for the artist.

My MS is always present in my life. Gradually it became my imaginary friend. I learned to manage my MS symptoms through healthy eating habits, doing art and painting, cooking meals with different fresh vegetables and sharing new recipes with my friends.

I adopted a cat. I even started playing video games. Each day, I try to realize there is nothing to be afraid of in this world. Everything can become possible for us, just in our way.

My emotional attachment to giraffes started when I learned that this beautiful creature faces extinction. From then on, the giraffe has remained with me, maybe as a sign of hope. It helped me take a more in-depth look at the environmental crisis we face. By using the giraffe motif in my artwork, I began to point out concerns as a global citizen, artist and activist. I am working on a project titled “Giraffiti,” a series of digital graffiti designs. Each graffiti links to different locations around the world. The main idea of this collection is to bring people closer together and support freedom of speech for every nation, without consideration for borders. I also have been a contributor to an art residency project in Berlin since 2018, working on the refugee crisis and forced migration.

My art is the ultimate remedy for all desperate moments and short-term numbness I experience from time to time. When I start a new design, everything else just fades away. Only the giraffe remains with me.

See [Neda Shoaie's artwork](#).