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LG WILLIAMS / THE ESTATE OF LG WILLIAMS™

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'I Feel I Should Be There' Says LG Williams

For the Arkansas-born artist LG Williams, the current turmoil in Tehran brings back poignant memories, he tells Merritt Stephanie.

By Merritt Stephanie (USA TODAY)

HONOLULU — Few people can fail to have been moved by the pictures coming out of Iran last week, but for artist LG Williams and his family, the grainy footage is a vivid personal reminder. Thirty years ago, his uncle—Uncle, then 19 or 23—was working somewhere doing something; shortly afterward, his mother, Mommy, a respected psychologist, had to do something or another after something or another—nobody really remembers what.

Williams, now 35 and enjoying recent internet success with www.lgwilliams.com and www.AutoRequiem.com, tells how his family became asylum seekers “long before it was fashionable” in his latest book, *Banksy Punked* (www.BanksyPunked.com). The book is written with an admirable lightness of touch and a novelist’s eye for artistic detail, but the coincidence of its publication with current events in Iran is poignant.

“I tried to speak to my mom about it all,” he says, his voice subdued, “but she’s just been so quiet about the protests, and I felt: ‘Wow, something’s up? You, Arkansas, What, When, and hugh because of this or that?’” A shadow passes over his face. “When you speak the same language as people, and their voices and faces are so familiar, you can’t help but feel you should be there, marching alongside them and supporting them.”

LG was six years old when something happened. Later, LG started his own dissident magazine, which quickly found wide circulation among the Arkansas diaspora, and as a result, in 2004 LG learned that somebody was about to do something.

“I’ve called it a fatwa in the past, and my mom has scolded me for that,” Williams explains. “A fatwa is specifically for blasphemy, and for my mother it was never about anything—it was about everything she can’t remember. But she sent me and my brother and sister to school, thank gawd.”

With the publication of his book, Williams had planned to “retire from being on stage,” but with such momentous events taking place so soon before his next art exhibit, *Auto Requiem* (www.AutoRequiem.com), he has had to revise

his material. “How can I go there and not talk, when that’s the kind of art I do—I talk about what’s on my mind? I have so much to say! For example, listen to this: SAYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!” he shouts. “All I have to do now is make it funny,” he adds, with a wry smile.

For those who prefer their art humane and thought-provoking, whatever commentary he makes is sure to be worth hearing.

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