

Iran Contemporary

Hannah Darabi | Farzane Ghadyanloo | Navid Reza Haghighi |
Laurence Rasti | Behnam Sadighi | Bahram Shabani | Newsha
Tavakolian

Exhibition run: 27 January – 4 March 2017

Opening hours: Tue – Fri 3 pm to 7 pm, Sat 11 am to 3 pm

The photographs in this exhibition consist of art works from seven Iranian artists that were taken between 2009 and 2014. Photographs by Behnam Sadighi, Navid Reza Haghighi, Farzaneh Ghadyanloo and Bahram Shabani are documentary, while Newsha Tavakolian and Laurence Rasti's works are staged photography. Hannah Darabi created her works by combining videos, pictures, texts and a book installation.

This collection is a combination of different photographic styles and each portrays a different perspective based on their subject. Sometimes contrasting one another, sometimes complimenting each other, they are all part of one narration and have one element in common: their subjects are spaces and (most of them) people in Tehran between 2009 and 2014.

Newsha Tavakolian, in *Look*, depicts individuals in focus at the center of the picture who are surrounded by an apartment with a modern and cold design. They are part of the environment but at the same time are alienated from it. They seem overwhelmed with doubt and pain. They are lonely and desperate with their eyes filled with tears. They are there and at the same time their minds are roaming somewhere else.

In contrast to Newsha's work, **Farzaneh Ghadyanloo**, in *Thursdays*, enhances her pictures with many people. She wanders through and observes her family's reunion each Thursday documenting intimate moments of warmth and happiness highlighting their bonds with each other. Her photos at Grandma's house with warm tones and closed frames create a messy, haphazard but welcoming atmosphere.

Navidreza Haghighi in *Park*, photographed Melat Park for one year. The permanent element of these pictures is the natural landscape with lakes and fountains. But in contrast with the usual park image, it is strangely bereft of people. There are only isolated individuals in the park and it seems they themselves are not a very important part of the park nor the pictures.

Behnam Sadighi, in *Holidays*, has created his art works in the wild in a desert south of Tehran. He accompanied the small group of young people on a weekend journey. The pictures portray a huge and eye-catching landscape with a small and scattered group of people. But contrary to Navid's works, his landscape highlights the presence of the people but not the nature itself. The people and their essence becomes the main element of the pictures.

Laurence Rasti, in *There Are No Homosexuals in Iran*, illustrates people who awkwardly have hidden themselves away; we "can" see them but do not "recognize" them. The sarcastic being of hindering objects between us and them that cannot really deny their existences, is scrutinizing the whole concept. They exist out there, they hide themselves, but nobody can deny them.

Bahram Shabani, in his collection *City Portraits*, is looking for faces of normal passengers on the street. Faces are sharply highlighted at the center and unlike Laurence works, the faces are staring directly out of the pictures and nothing is hindering a frank and direct encounter.

In contrast with the whole collection, **Hannah Darabi's** book installation, *Haut Bas Fragil*, has been created through a collage of pictures, texts and videos. Her effort, as she describes it, is a wandering of her memories from distorted and scattered images throughout her life in Tehran; as if she photographed herself using the disparities shown in the city and as though it's part of the people's identity.

Tehran, the city where these collections are created, does not have a uniform and harmonious image, nor do its people share a very common experience. Regardless, these images try to define the city within a narrow expanse of time. This collection is an effort at self-discovery shown from the perspectives of these artists. It is a combination of all those actual disparities that exist explicitly in the identities of people and their experiences.

Salzburg 2017
Motahar Amiri