



**GOOD  
MORNING...  
GOOD NIGHT**



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GOOD MORNING... GOOD NIGHT

CINQUE ARTISTE

E UNA CURATRICE

DALL'IRAN

| PARVANEH ETEMADI

| NARGESS HASHEMI

| FARAH OSSOULI

| ROZITA SHARAFJAHAN

| GOLNAZ TAHERI

AND |

| TARLAN RAFIEE

GOOD MORNING... GOOD NIGHT, IRAN

THE WORD “PARADISE” AND ITS ORIGINS INEVITABLY CON-JURE UP THE WORLD OF IRAN AND ITS CULTURAL TRADI-TIONS. THE TERM DERIVES FROM A “FARSI” WORD MEANING “GARDEN”, AN IDEAL AND PROTECTED SPACE RICH IN DIF-FERENT ANIMAL AND PLANT SPECIES, EMBELLISHED WITH THE PURPOSE OF LIVING IN BLISS AND PEACE.

IF WE THINK, HOWEVER, OF IRAN AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF TODAY’S WESTERN MEDIA, THE REALITY WOULD APPEAR VERY DIFFERENT. PORTRAYED AS IF COMPOSED OF ONE LARGE ISLAMIC BLOCK, ANY TRACE OF THAT CONCEPT OF “PARADISE” IS HARD TO FIND.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO TRAVEL THERE THOUGH, IRAN IS A COUNTRY WITH MANY FACES. THE CI-TIES OF PERSEPOLIS, SHIRAZ AND ESFAHAN, WITH THEIR EVOCATIVE NAMES, OFFER EVIDENCE OF ITS GREAT CUL-TURAL TRADITION.

NOT TO MENTION TEHRAN, A METROPOLIS WHOSE REAL NUMBER OF INHABITANTS IS UNKNOWN, BUT WHICH HAS EVERYTHING YOU WOULD EXPECT FROM AN INTERNATIO-NAL CITY.

MORE LIKE A CONTINENT THAN A NATION, IRAN OFFERS A WIDE RANGE OF CULTURES, LIFESTYLES AND RELI-GIONS – ITS CONSIDERABLE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, FOR INSTANCE, IS DIVERSE AND LARGELY SPEAKING WHOLLY DISTINCT FROM THE SUNNI TRADITION AND THE

ISLAMIC WORLD. IRANIAN ARABS, WHAT IS MORE, ARE PROUD TO BE “ARABS OF IRAN”.

A DIALOGUE THAT INVOLVES THE POSITION AND THE IMAGE OF THIS MAGNIFICENT COUNTRY IN THE CULTURAL WORLD OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY, AND THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT SPRING FROM SUCH A VITAL AND VARIEGATED MINGLING OF TRADITIONS, IS CRUCIAL TO CURRENT AND FUTURE EXCHANGE IN THE ART WORLD. AS REGARDS CULTURE IN IRAN, THE ROLE OF WOMEN IS NECESSARILY KEY, DUE TO THEIR POSITION IN SOCIETY AND TO ATTRIBUTES SUCH AS THE VEIL (HIJAB) BY WHICH THEY ARE SYMBOLISED, THOUGH NOT AS RIGIDLY AS IN THE REST OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

WHEN PLANNING AN EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY ART REPRESENTING IRANIAN CULTURE, THE COMPLESSO MUSEALE PALAZZO DUCALE OF MANTUA DECIDED TO FOCUS ON THE THEME OF WOMEN, AND TO INVITE A FEMALE IRANIAN CURATOR TO OVERSEE THE EVENT. CHOOSING AMONG FEMALE FIGURES OF NOTE, THE TASK WAS TO RESTORE THE SENSE OF WOMEN’S PRESENCE AND THEIR ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY.

THE FOUNDATIONS WERE LAID BY SELECTING FIVE MAJOR CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS OF INTERNATIONAL STANDING, INCLUDING DIFFERENT GENERATIONS AND ARTISTIC LANGUAGES. THEIR WORK DENOTES PRECISE AND TARGETED TECHNIQUES AND VISUAL CODES USED TO HIGHLIGHT SITUATIONS, TRADITIONS AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRIVATE LIFE AND PUBLIC LIFE, A TOPIC THAT IN RECENT DECADES HAS COME UNDER INCREASING

SCRUTINY, AS WELL AS PROVIDING A SOURCE OF  
“MISUNDERSTANDING” BETWEEN THE WEST AND IRANIAN  
CULTURE.

TODAY, IN IRAN, WOMEN WORK MOSTLY IN UNIVERSITIES,  
HAVE LEADERSHIP ROLES IN POLITICS, IMPORTANT POSI-  
TIONS IN THE ECONOMIC WORLD AND EVEN MORE SO IN  
THE ART WORLD. IN THE LAST FEW DECADES, FEMALE  
ARTISTS HAVE BEEN LEADING THE ARTISTIC DEBATE IN THE  
COUNTRY, MAKING THEIR OWN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE VALUES AND CONTENTS OF CONTEMPORARY ART ON  
AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CURATORS TARLAN RAFIEE  
AND YASHAR SAMIMI MOFAKHAM, ARTISTS PARVANEH ETE-  
MADI, NARGESS HASHEMI, FARAH OSSOULI, ROZITA SHA-  
RAFJAHAN AND GOLNAZ TAHERI FOR THEIR FRUITFUL COL-  
LABORATION WITH THE COMPLESSO MUSEALE PALAZZO  
DUCALE OF MANTUA. THIS MARKS THE FIRST TIME IN ITALY  
THAT A CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION ADDRESSES THE-  
SE TOPICS, THUS PROVIDING AN EXCELLENT STARTING POINT  
FOR REFLECTION.

FINALLY, WE ARE CONFIDENT THE EXHIBITION WILL CON-  
VEY THE FASCINATING ASPECTS OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY  
AND ITS MAGNIFICENT CULTURAL TRADITIONS. WE ALSO  
HOPE IT WILL ENCOURAGE THE PUBLIC TO LEARN MORE  
ABOUT IRAN, THEREBY BRINGING US A STEP CLOSER TO A  
CULTURAL WORLD THAT IS SO BEGUILING, AND SO CLOSE  
TO EUROPE.

BEING A WOMAN | ESSERE DONNA

\_IT HAS NOT BEEN LONG SINCE THE CIVIC RIGHTS OF MEN, WOMEN, THOSE WITH DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS, AS WELL AS RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES, BEGAN TO BE ESTABLISHED. AND YET, IN THIS SHORT TIME SPAN, NOT ALL SOCIETIES HAVE ACCEPTED THESE RIGHTS WITH THE SAME SPEED AND TO THE SAME EXTENT. WHILE THERE IS YET TO BE A CLEAR DEFINITION OF EQUAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM FOR EVERY MEMBER OF SOCIETY AROUND THE WORLD, AND WHILE THESE RIGHTS CONTINUE TO BE DEFINED BY THE ADVANTAGES OF A SMALL MINORITY, THEN HOW CAN MEN AND WOMEN HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS AND HOW CAN THEY KNOW HOW TO FIGHT FOR THEM?

FROM A MODERN PERSPECTIVE, IT IS THE FATE OF WOMEN ALMOST EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD TO SUFFER FROM VIOLENCE, AND OPPRESSION, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT. THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE OF WOMEN IN EASTERN SOCIETIES, EVEN MORE SO IN IRAN. BUT REVIEWING ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN IN THEIR SPECIFIC CONTEXTS OR IN A PARTICULAR TIME AND PLACE CAN LEAD TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NUANCES OF THE COMPLEX SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF WOMEN IN ANY COUNTRY OR REGION OF THE WORLD. I AM NOT A SOCIOLOGIST, POLITICIAN, OR HISTORIOGRAPHER. I AM MERELY AN ARTIST, ARCHIVIST, AND CURATOR, WHO HAS SPENT YEARS DEALING WITH THE ISSUES OF ART, WOMEN, CULTURE AND SOCIETY. WITHOUT CREATING AN IMAGINARY LINE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO BRING TOGETHER CERTAIN ITEMS LIKE SCATTERED PIECES OF A PUZZLE, IN ORDER TO MAKE CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS CLEAR TO MY VIEWERS AND MYSELF.

I HAVE SOMETIMES DONE THIS THROUGH MY OWN WORK AND, AT OTHER TIMES, THROUGH THE WORK OF OTHERS, IN EXHIBITIONS THAT I HAVE CURATED.

THE GOAL OF THE CURRENT EXHIBITION IS TO FIND A FEW MORE PIECES OF THIS PUZZLE, AND IT MAY LIGHT THE WAY FOR A VIEWER INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN IRAN, NOT WITH A LANTERN, BUT WITH A CANDLE – OR SO I HOPE.

\_ PRIOR TO THE MODERNISATION OF IRAN BASED ON WESTERN PRINCIPLES, THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN IRAN WAS COMPLICATED AND MULTIFACETED, LINKED TO THE INS AND OUTS OF IRANIAN SOCIETY. PERHAPS, IF IT HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO DEVELOP FREELY AND NATURALLY, PASSING FROM THE TRADITIONAL PERIOD TO THE MODERN ERA WITHOUT EXTERNAL INFLUENCES, IRAN COULD HAVE BEEN A ROLE MODE OF A FEMINIST MOVEMENT CREATED SPECIFICALLY FOR A SOCIETY, AS OPPOSED TO AN IMPORTED MOVEMENT THAT DEVELOPED THROUGH A PROCESS OF TRIAL AND ERROR, CONSTANTLY IN NEED OF BEING SHAPED AND ENTIRELY INCONGRUOUS WITH THE LOCAL CULTURE.

THE IMPORTANT HISTORIC EXAMPLES OF WOMANHOOD IN IRANIAN CULTURE ARE ONES OF CELEBRATING HOLY GODDESSES, FROM ASSIGNING A FEMALE GENDER TO THE SUN, WHICH IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE AND WARMTH AND A GOD OF THE ZOROASTRIANS, TO HONOURING VARIOUS FEMALE RULERS AND LEADERS, AND NUMEROUS FIGURES IN OFFICIAL AND POPULAR WRITINGS AND HISTORIES. IN CLASSICAL IRANIAN LITERATURE, THERE ARE CHARACTERS LIKE “GORDAFARID”, A BRAVE AND ENLIGHTENED WARRIOR PRINCESS;<sup>1</sup> “TAHMINEH” WHO DECIDES TO SPEND

A NIGHT WITH A MAN OF HER CHOOSING IN ORDER TO GET PREGNANT BY HIM, EVEN THOUGH THE MAN IS A TRAVELLER WHO MAY NEVER AGAIN SET EYES ON HIS CHILD;<sup>2</sup>

AND “ROUDABEH”, WHO HANGS HER BRAID OUT OF A TOWER TO ALLOW HER CHOSEN LOVER ACCESS TO HER BED.<sup>3</sup> THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN IMPORTANT WOMEN IN IRAN OVER THE CENTURIES, LIKE RABE’E, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT EARLY SUFI ELDERS;<sup>4</sup> BANU KHORRAMDIN;<sup>5</sup> TÁHIRIH AND PARVIN E’TESAMI, BOTH OF WHOM WERE PIONEERING, LIBERAL POETS; AS WELL AS COMMANDER MARYAM BAKHTIARI, WHO CONQUERED TEHRAN DURING THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION.<sup>6</sup> OTHER EXAMPLES OF FEMALE ACTION IN IRAN ARE THE WIDESPREAD DONATION OF JEWELLERY IN SUPPORT OF THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS, AND WOMEN’S SUPPORT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK. WOMEN SOMETIMES ACTED ON THEIR OWN, AND WERE SOMETIMES INSPIRED TO ACTION BY INTELLECTUALS OR RELIGIOUS LEADERS, BUT NONETHELESS THEIR ACTIONS DEMONSTRATED THEIR POWER IN SOCIETY. EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE VARIOUS PRESSURES AND ATTEMPTS TO SUPPRESS AND SEPARATE THEM FROM THE MAIN BODY OF SOCIETY, THE INTRINSIC POWER OF WOMEN WAS NEVER ENTIRELY IGNORED.

– DURING THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION, WHICH WAS BASED ON EUROPEAN IDEALS OF FREEDOM AND LED TO THE CREATION OF THE FIRST PARLIAMENT IN IRAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST, IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT NO RIGHTS WERE RECOGNISED FOR WOMEN, DESPITE THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE THEY PLAYED IN THE SUCCESS OF THIS REVOLUTION. WITH THE RAPID WESTERNISATION OF IRAN’S TRADITIONAL SOCIETY, WOMEN WERE ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE THEIR HOUSES WITHOUT A ROLE HAVING BEEN PREPARED FOR THEM IN MODERNISED IRAN, SO THEY WERE PLACED IN A STATE OF LIMBO. DURING THIS TIME, THE DISREGARD OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS LED TO THE FOUNDATION OF MANY ORGANISATIONS, MOST OF WHICH WERE SECRET OR SEMI-SECRET GATHERINGS.<sup>7</sup>

IN ALMOST ALL OF THESE, THE MAIN ISSUE FOR WOMEN – AS IT WAS FOR MEN – WAS SOCIAL FREEDOM FOR ALL. AND DESPITE THE POWER THEY GAINED DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ERA, THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN NEVER TRIED TO WIN PARTICULAR RIGHTS FOR THEMSELVES (ALTHOUGH THERE WERE A FEW EXCEPTIONS), ALWAYS CHOOSING TO PLACE NATIONAL INTERESTS AHEAD OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.

PERHAPS THESE WOMEN COULD NOT CONCEIVE OF A POSITION FOR THEMSELVES OUTSIDE OF THE HOME AND INDEPENDENT OF THEIR GENDER. OR PERHAPS IT WAS BECAUSE MEN, WHO UNTIL THAT TIME HAD COMPLETE POWER OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE, COULD NOT IMAGINE SHARING IT WITH WOMEN.

IN ANY CASE, AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PARLIAMENT, WOMEN WERE PUSHED ASIDE AND EVEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO VOTE. BUT PERHAPS THE MAIN CONSTRICTION ON WOMEN AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS FROM THAT TIME UNTIL TODAY, IS THAT, IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY THEIR ROLE IN IRAN'S PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY, WOMEN HAD TO ARM THEMSELVES WITH MALE SYMBOLS, FROM THEIR CLOTHING TO THEIR WAY OF SPEECH AND ACTION. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY HAD TO PLACE THEMSELVES IN COMPETITION WITH MEN, USING DEVICES THAT WERE UNFAMILIAR TO THEM AND ENTIRELY INEFFECTIVE IN IRAN'S TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.<sup>8</sup>

EVEN THOUGH WOMEN HAD BEEN ADMITTED TO SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES YEARS EARLIER, THEY WERE NOT GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE UNTIL THE PAHLAVI ERA, ALMOST FORTY YEARS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW ORDER WHOSE MOST IMPORTANT SLOGAN HAD BEEN THE REMOVAL OF REACTIONARY TRADITIONS AND THE MODERNISATION OF IRAN.<sup>9</sup>

\_ WOMEN PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION OF 1979 AND THE ENSUING WAR; HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTED TO LIMIT THEIR POSITION IN SOCIETY BY VARIOUS MEANS, THE CLEAREST EXAMPLE OF WHICH WAS THE OBLIGATORY HIJAB. THE HIJAB MAY APPEAR TO BE PURELY PRESCRIBED BY RELIGION, BUT IT IS IN FACT A SYMBOL FOR REMINDING BOTH MEN AND WOMEN THAT A GOVERNMENT CAN MAKE THEIR MOST PERSONAL DECISIONS FOR THEM. IN IRAN, THIS PRESCRIPTION CERTAINLY HAD A RELIGIOUS QUALITY, BUT IN ACTUALITY IT WAS NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM THE ATTEMPTS OF OTHER IDEOLOGICAL COUNTRIES, IN PARTICULAR THOSE OF THE EASTERN BLOC, TO CONTROL AND GIVE DIRECTION TO THEIR CITIZENS. IT COULD PERHAPS BE SAID THAT, DESPITE THESE LIMITATIONS AND CONDITIONS THAT IMPLIED A PREFERENCE FOR KEEPING THE FAIRER SEX INSIDE THE HOME, WOMEN MADE THEIR PRESENCE IN SOCIETY EVEN BOLDER THAN IT HAD BEEN BEFORE THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION. IN RECENT DECADES, THE HIGH RATIO OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO MALE STUDENTS HAS BECOME UNMATCHED IN THE ENTIRE REGION. AND THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN HIGHER MANAGEMENT, LOWER POSITIONS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, LEGAL SCHOLARS, MEDICAL DOCTORS, INTELLECTUALS, FILM DIRECTORS AND OTHER ARTISTS IN IRAN IS INCOMPARABLE WITH THE REST OF THE MIDDLE EAST. IN MY OPINION, THIS ALL SHOWS THAT WOMEN REALISE THAT THEY NEED TO ESTABLISH THEIR POSITION IN SOCIETY BASED ON AN ACCURATE DEFINITION, AND NOT MERELY AS AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ISSUE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

\_ A HUNDRED YEARS HAS PASSED SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST TECHNICAL SCHOOL OF ART IN IRAN, BASED ON WESTERN PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION, WHICH WAS FOLLOWED A FEW YEARS LATER BY THE FIRST ART DEPARTMENT.<sup>10</sup>

DURING THIS CENTURY, MANY WOMEN (PERHAPS EVEN MORE THAN THE NUMBER OF MEN) GRADUATED FROM THESE SCHOOLS. UNLIKE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES, WOMEN OFTEN HAD A MALE VIEW TOWARD ART DURING THE MODERN ERA, WHICH WAS NOT A GENDERLESS APPROACH, BUT A MEANS OF ESTABLISHING THEIR POSITION IN THE HISTORY OF IRANIAN ART. A REVIEW OF WORKS CREATED AND PRESENTED DURING THE MODERN ERA SHOWS THAT MOST ARTISTS AT THIS TIME TRIED TO AVOID MAKING REFERENCES TO WOMEN'S ISSUES, OR EVEN THE ARTIST'S GENDER (IT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE IF THE CREATOR OF THESE WORKS IS MAN OR A WOMAN; THE VIEWER CAN HARDLY FIND ANY TRACES OF THE FEMALE ARTIST'S LIFE IN HER WORK). EVEN THOUGH THE OFFICIAL ART OF THE TIME, WHICH WAS SUPPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENT, PROHIBITED SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TOPICS, ONE CAN NONETHELESS FIND REFERENCES TO THESE TOPICS IN DEEPER LAYERS OF THE WORKS, WHETHER DONE BY MALE OR FEMALE ARTISTS. BUT FEMININITY ITSELF IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT MATTER, AS IT IS ALMOST COMPLETELY UNREFERENCED IN ANY OF THE WORK FROM THIS ERA.

BEGAN GARNERING MORE NOTICE. BUT WITH THE INCREASE OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE SHAH'S REGIME, THIS ART MOVEMENT, AS WELL AS THOSE THAT CONCERNED OTHER MINORITIES, WAS SOON FORGOTTEN. ISSUES OF GENDER HAD NO ROLE IN THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DEMANDS OF CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE SHAH, PARTICULARLY THOSE LED BY LEFTISTS SUPPORTED BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. WORKS OF ART PRODUCED DURING THIS TIME FUNCTIONED AS POLITICAL PROPAGANDA AND, AS THE REVOLUTION GAINED MOMENTUM, ALONG WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND THE INTELLIGENTSIA, ANY WORK OF ART THAT DID NOT SERVE THE GOALS OF THE REVOLUTION OR DISPLAY OPPOSITION TO THE OFFICIAL ART OF THE MONARCHY, WAS CONSIDERED UNNECESSARY AND CAPITALISTIC.

AFTERWARDS, AS THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND OTHER REVOLUTIONARIES WERE BUSY TRYING TO ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE REVOLUTION, AND LATER THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC (WHICH WAS SOON TAKEN OVER BY THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT AND THE ISLAMISTS), ANY DEMANDS ABOUT GENDER, ETHNICITY, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, AND FREEDOM WERE DEEMED ENTIRELY UNIMPORTANT.

WITH THE ONSET OF THE EIGHT-YEAR WAR BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ IN THE 1980S, THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF IRAN TOOK PRECEDENCE OVER ANY OTHER SOCIAL OR POLITICAL TOPIC, LABELLING THESE AS DISTRACTIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF DESTABILISING THE COUNTRY. DURING THESE YEARS, ART WAS CONSIDERED A BOURGEOIS, UNNECESSARY COMMODITY, AND IT WAS ONLY ACCEPTED AS A FORM OF PROPAGANDA KNOWN AS “ART FOR THE REVOLUTION AND THE HOLY DEFENCE”. WITHOUT GALLERIES OR OTHER PLACES TO EXHIBIT THEIR ART, AND TIRED OF POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS, ARTISTS BEGAN TO PRODUCE NEW WORKS IN THE PRIVACY OF THEIR STUDIOS. THESE WORKS WERE NOT AGREEABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT, AND THEREFORE WERE NOT CONSIDERED AN OFFICIAL MOVEMENT, AND EVEN SHIED AWAY FROM THE POLITICAL.

THE LONG WAR BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ AND THE ISSUES OF DEATH AND SURVIVAL HAD RAISED NEW QUESTIONS IN THE MINDS OF THESE ARTISTS: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ARTIST OR HUMAN BEING AND HIS CONTEXT, EXISTENCE, LIFE, DEATH, AND FREEDOM. AND NOW THAT THESE ARTISTS (WHETHER MALE OR FEMALE) HAD NO PLACE IN THE CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT, THEY BEGAN TO EXPLORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR GENDER AND WOMANHOOD IN GENERAL. PERHAPS IT WAS DURING THESE YEARS THAT, AGAINST ALL THE ODDS, A FEMINIST MOVEMENT REACHED ITS MATURITY – A MOVEMENT WHERE WOMEN REMAINED WOMEN WHILE FIGHTING FOR THEIR RIGHTS.

\_ WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED THROUGHOUT HISTORY AND WILL REMAIN TO DO SO. IN ADDITION TO ALL THEIR ABILITIES THAT ARE EQUIVALENT TO THOSE OF MEN, WOMEN HAVE THE UNIQUE CAPABILITY OF BEARING AND NURTURING CHILDREN. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT MEN WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE. IT HAS BEEN A GREAT MISTAKE OF WOMEN ACTIVISTS, INTELLECTUALS, POLITICIANS, AND OTHERS, TO DISREGARD THESE ABILITIES WHILE DISCUSSING THE RIGHTS AND ROLES OF WOMEN, SOMETIMES ATTEMPTING TO DEPICT WOMEN AS MORE MASCULINE THAN MEN; HOWEVER, ANY STUDY OF WOMEN SHOULD CONSIDER THESE ABILITIES, IN ADDITION TO OTHER INTRINSIC CHARACTERISTICS.

THE ARTISTS BEING PRESENTED IN THIS EXHIBITION ALL HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON – THEY ARE ALL WOMEN TO THE EXTREME. THEY HAVE EACH BEEN INFLUENTIAL ON THEIR OWN GENERATION, AFFECTING BOTH MEN AND WOMEN AND LEAVING AN IMPACT ON THE ART OF IRAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST. THEY ARE INDEPENDENT ARTISTS WHO CHALLENGE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THEIR TIME, REGARDLESS OF IDEOLOGY, AND YET DO NOT TRY TO BEHAVE AS MEN IN THE PROCESS. THEY DO NOT CHALLENGE MEN, BUT RATHER SOCIETY, ITS POLITICS, AND CULTURE AS A WHOLE. SOME HAVE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL POINTS OF VIEW, AND OTHERS TEND TO THE MOST MINUTE ISSUES THAT SURROUND THEM.

THESE ARTISTS HAVE BEEN SELECTED FROM FOUR DIFFERENT GENERATIONS, AND WHAT UNITES THEM IS THE QUALITY OF BEING (AND REMAINING) WOMEN THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES. “GOOD MORNING... GOOD NIGHT!” IS AN ATTEMPT AT PUTTING TOGETHER PIECES OF A PUZZLE ABOUT WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART OF IRAN. THE GOAL IS NOT TO ASSERT THEIR POSITION, WHICH GOES WITHOUT SAYING, BUT TO DISPLAY THEIR UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON THEIR SURROUNDINGS. THEY SOMETIMES DEAL WITH THE VIOLENCE OCCURRING AROUND THE WORLD (AND NOT JUST AGAINST WOMEN), AND SOMETIMES THE SOLITUDE OF HUMAN BEINGS (WHETHER MEN OR WOMEN) IN TODAY’S WORLD. AT OTHER TIMES, THEY DEPICT A LIFE

THAT CAN BELONG TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US,  
OR EXPRESS THEIR MOST INTIMATE PERSONAL DESIRES.  
“GOOD MORNING... GOOD NIGHT!” IS A NARRATIVE OF OUR  
LIVES, AND ANY EVENT THAT CAN HAPPEN TO US, TO OUR  
ACQUAINTANCES, AND IN OUR CONTEXT, THROUGHOUT THE  
COURSE OF A DAY. THIS EXHIBITION IS ABOUT THE QUOTIDIAN  
LIFE OF EVERY ONE OF US: CREATIVE WOMEN, INTELLECTUALS,  
EMPLOYEES, WORKERS, OR HOUSEWIVES; WE WHO BEGIN  
EVERY MORNING AND END EVERY NIGHT WITH SOCIAL,  
POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL CONCERNS AS WOMEN  
AND MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

“GOOD MORNING... GOOD NIGHT!” IS ABOUT OUR DAILY LIFE  
TIED TO OUR HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITY AS WOMEN, MOTHERS,  
WIVES, FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES AND CO-WORKERS, AND  
AS COMPANIONS TO OUR CHILDREN. IT IS ALSO THE PROMISE  
OF A BETTER DAY, NOT ONLY FOR WOMEN, BUT FOR ALL  
OF HUMANITY.

**1** GORDAFARID IS A FEMALE HERO AND PROTECTOR OF IRAN'S BORDERS IN THE "SHAHNAMEH" OF FERDOWSI.

**2** IN FERDOWSI'S "SHAHNAMEH", TAHMINEH IS THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF SAMANGAN, WIFE OF THE HERO ROSTAM, AND MOTHER OF SOHRAB. ONE NIGHT WHEN ROSTAM WAS A GUEST IN HER FATHER'S HOUSE SHE VISITS HIS BED AND CHOOSES HIM AS HER LOVER.

**3** ROUDABEH IS ALSO A CHARACTER FROM FERDOWSI'S "SHAHNAMEH". SHE IS THE PRINCESS OF KABUL WHO FALLS IN LOVE WITH ZAL (THE RULER OF ZABOL), AND BECOMES THE MOTHER OF ROSTAM.

**4** RAB'E BALKHI WAS A PERSIAN POET IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY A.D. SHE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST PERSIAN POETS AFTER THE ARAB INVASION OF IRAN, AS WELL AS AN IMPORTANT SUFI ELDER.

**5** WITH HER HUSBAND BABAK KHORRAMDIN, SHE WAS A LEADER OF THE IRANIAN LIBERATION ARMY AGAINST THE ABBASID CALIPHATE IN THE 9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY A.D.

**6** BIBI MARYAM BAKHTIARI, KNOWN AS COMMANDER MARYAM, WAS A LEADER OF THE BAKHTIARI TRIBES IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. SHE WAS A CONSTITUTIONALIST AND AN ACTIVIST FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS WHO ROSE AGAINST MOHAMMAD ALI SHAH WHO HAD DISMANTLED THE PARLIAMENT AND ESTABLISHED FULL SOVEREIGNTY. SHE CONQUERED TEHRAN WITH OTHER CONSTITUTIONALISTS AND SUCCEEDED IN DETHRONING THE KING.

**7** SUCH AS THE WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN TABRIZ, THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM ASSOCIATION, THE INVISIBLE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN ISFAHAN, ANJOMAN-E MOKHADARAT-E VATAN, ANJOMAN-E KHAVATIN-E IRAN, KHAVATIN-E IRAN CHARITY ORGANIZATION, KHAVATIN COMPANY IN ISFAHAN, AND THE NATIONALIST WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION.

**8** AS MARY BEARD WRITES: "YOU CANNOT EASILY FIT WOMEN INTO A STRUCTURE THAT IS ALREADY CODED AS MALE; YOU HAVE TO CHANGE THE STRUCTURE".

**9** TWO KINGS RULED IRAN DURING THE PAHLAVI DYNASTY (FROM 1925-79), WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED AFTER THE REMOVAL OF THE QAJAR DYNASTY, WITH THE AIM OF MODERNISING IRAN. IT POSITIONED ITSELF IN OPPOSITION TO THE QAJAR'S DISREGARD OF PARLIAMENT AND THE CONSTITUTION, AS WELL AS THEIR TRADITIONALISM AND OPPOSITION TO MODERNISM.

**10** "SANAYE MOSTAZRAFEH" ART SCHOOL WAS ESTABLISHED IN NEGARESTAN PALACE IN 1916 BY KAMAL OL-MOLK (1848-1940). PRIOR TO THIS, PAINTING AND DECORATIVE ARTS WERE TAUGHT USING TRADITIONAL METHODS IN STUDIOS OF MASTER ARTISTS; THE SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS AT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1940.

## THE CURATOR

| TARLAN RAFIEE | IS AN ARTIST, CURATOR, AND ARCHIVIST. SHE WAS BORN IN TEHRAN IN 1980, WHERE SHE STILL LIVES. AS AN ARTIST, RAFIEE HAS PARTICIPATED IN MORE THAN FORTY GROUP AND SOLO EXHIBITIONS IN IRAN, THE UNITED STATES, THE UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE, ITALY, DENMARK, AUSTRIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. HER WORK IS INCLUDED IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS, SUCH AS ISFAHAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, THE ZOROASTRIAN'S COLLECTION IN PARIS, AS WELL AS THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

IN 2008, SHE ESTABLISHED THE PROJECT "BREAD & SALT" IN TEHRAN, ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND AND COLLABORATOR YASHAR SAMIMI MOFAKHAM. "BREAD & SALT" HAS A COLLECTION OF IRANIAN AND INTERNATIONAL MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART, AND ALSO A RICH HISTORICAL ARCHIVE OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY IRAN. IT WORKS WITH CURATORIAL PROJECTS INTENDED TO PRESENT LESSER SEEN, OR PREVIOUSLY UNSEEN, ASPECTS OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN ART AND CULTURE. "BREAD & SALT" THEREFORE ORGANISES ART, ARCHIVAL, AND CURATORIAL EXHIBITS, AND COLLABORATES WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS, SUCH AS INSTITUTIONS, MUSEUMS, AND FREELANCE CURATORS, TO PRESENT AND SUPPORT ART EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD, PARTICIPATING IN LECTURES, CONTRIBUTING WORKS, AND LENDING ITS COLLECTION AND ARCHIVES.

AS A FREELANCE CURATOR, AS WELL AS THE DIRECTOR AND CURATOR OF "BREAD & SALT", RAFIEE HAS ORGANISED VARIOUS EXHIBITIONS IN IRAN, THE UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRIA, ARMENIA, AND UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, AND HAS COLLABORATED WITH VARIOUS MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES, INCLUDING TEHRAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, ISFAHAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

## ARTISTS

PARVANEH ETEMADI

NARGESS HASHEMIFARAH

OSSOULIROZITA

SHARAFJAHANGOLNAZ

TAHERI

## PARVANEH ETEMADI

PARVANEH ETEMADI WAS BORN IN TEHRAN IN 1947 AND CONTINUES TO LIVE THERE. SHE IS AN ARTIST WHO REACHED THE PEAK OF HER FAME BEFORE THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION, BUT IS STILL WELL-KNOWN AMONG IRANIAN ARTISTS. HER MOST IMPORTANT SERIES, KNOWN AS "CEMENT WORKS", ARE NUDES AND STILL LIFES (ESPECIALLY HOUSEPLANTS) PAINTED OR SKETCHED OVER A LAYER OF CEMENT ON WOOD PANELS. THESE ARE NOT ONLY ETEMADI'S BEST-KNOWN WORKS, BUT ARE CONSIDERED AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS OF IRANIAN ART FROM THE 1960S AND 1970S. ETEMADI CONTINUES TO WORK IN HER STUDIO IN TEHRAN WITH GREAT ENERGY. SHE TENDS TO HER PLANTS, HAS CONVERSATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH HER FRIENDS AND REMINISCES ABOUT THE PAST, WHILE ALSO PORTRAYING THE FUTURE. HER WORKS (FROM THE CEMENT WORKS AND OTHER SERIES) ARE INCLUDED IN RENOWNED MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD, SUCH AS TEHRAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE MAXXI MUSEUM IN ROME.

IN ALMOST EVERY ONE OF HER PIECES, THE ARTIST DISPLAYS A PART OF HER LIFE, TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYONE WHO HAS FOLLOWED HER WORK OVER THE PAST HALF-CENTURY WOULD KNOW VIRTUALLY EVERY SINGLE PLANT SHE HAS OWNED OVER THE YEARS, THE NAMES OF HER CATS, THE OWNERS OF THE OUTFITS SHE HAS MADE INTO COLLAGES, EVEN THE CROCKERY SHE HAS INCLUDED IN HER STILL LIFES. AT THE TIME THEY WERE CREATED, ETEMADI'S WORKS WERE SOME OF THE MOST FEMININE PIECES OF ART CREATED BY AN ARTIST IN IRAN. WHEN SHE MADE THE FIRST SERIES THAT BROUGHT HER FAME, MANY FEMALE PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS FACED SUCH COMPETITION THAT THEY TRIED TO EMULATE MALE ARTISTS (IT IS OFTEN IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE THE GENDER OF THE ARTIST FROM THE ARTWORK IF ONE DOES NOT KNOW THE NAME OF THE ARTIST OR THEIR OEUVRE). HOWEVER, IN THE CASE OF ETEMADI, HER PRECISE AND THOROUGH OUTLOOK, ON EVERYTHING THAT DEFINED HER AS A WOMAN FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD TO MATURITY, CAN BE SEEN IN EVERY ONE OF HER PIECES. SHE NEVER COMPARES HERSELF OR HER WORK TO THE WORLD OF MEN. THE ARTIST KNOWS HERSELF WELL, AND EXAMINES HER WORLD SO DEEPLY THAT SHE FORCES THE VIEWER TO SEE IT IN ITS OWN TERMS, WITHOUT THE BAGGAGE OF PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS.

AFTER THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION, AT A TIME WHEN CONDITIONS WERE

NOT FAVOURABLE TO ARTISTS AND INTELLECTUALS, ETEMADI SPENT A LONG PERIOD TRAVELLING AND DOING RESEARCH. SHE SPENT SEVERAL YEARS IN EAST AND SOUTH ASIA, PARTICULARLY INDIA, AND ALSO LIVED IN EUROPE FOR SOME TIME. DURING THIS TIME, SHE PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON DRAWING IN PENCIL, COLOURED PENCIL AND PASTEL. SHE ALSO MADE COLLAGES, WHICH ARE CONSIDERED AMONG HER MOST IMPORTANT POST-REVOLUTION WORKS. IN THESE PIECES, SHE USED PHOTOGRAPHS FROM HER HOME AND PRIVATE LIFE (HER BEDROOM, HOUSEPLANTS, AND CATS), HER TRAVELS, AND HER MEMORIES OF PRE-REVOLUTION IRAN (SUCH AS THE LAVISH DRESSES OF GOOGOSH, THE IRANIAN STAR OF THE 1950S-1970S). THESE IMAGES REPRESENT WHAT ETEMADI CONSIDERS TO BE A GOLDEN AGE. THE PRINCIPAL MAIN WORK THAT ETEMADI IS PRESENTING IN THIS EXHIBITION IS A PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLAGE, MADE DURING HER STAY IN LAMPEDUSA, ITALY, IN 2002. THIS PIECE IS ONE OF FOUR RARE WORKS DEPICTING THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF CITIES IN WHICH SHE HAS LIVED. IN THESE (UNLIKE OTHER WORKS WHERE SHE FOCUSES ON DETAILS AND MAKES DIRECT REFERENCES TO HER IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS), SHE DEPICTS THE PLACE AS IF LOOKING AT IT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GODS. HERE, THE ARTIST'S ONLY REFERENCE TO HER PERSONAL LIFE IS HER DISHEVELLED BED, WHERE HER BODY HAS LEFT AN IMPRINT ON THE PILLOW AND SHEETS, AS IF SHE HAS JUST GOT OUT OF BED. BUT WHAT IS MISSING IS ETEMADI HERSELF, HER BED IS EMPTY BUT STILL WARM – AS IF BEING WATCHED UPON BY AN ANCIENT GOD. ETEMADI REMEMBERS LAMPEDUSA AS AN ISLAND CONTINUOUSLY WHIPPED BY VIOLENT WINDS. MAYBE SHE LOOKED AT THESE WINDS AND REMEMBERED AN ERA WHEN WAR, REPRESSION, SANCTIONS, AND SUBJUGATION PARALYSED HER AND OTHER ARTISTS. REGARDLESS OF THIS, EVERY WORK SHE CREATED IN THESE YEARS WAS A MASTERPIECE REFLECTING A LIBERAL ARTIST WHO DID NOT NEED A CERTAIN CONTEXT TO BE CREATIVE. HER OTHER PIECES IN THIS EXHIBITION ARE PRINTS OF DRAWINGS SHE HAS MADE OVER THE YEARS, AT TIMES CARVED ONTO CEMENT, OR DRAWN IN COLOURED PENCIL: SKETCHES SHE HAS MADE IN EVERY CORNER OF HER HOUSE AND STUDIO. "COLLECTION OF PLANTS", THE OTHER SERIES OF WORKS PRESENTED HERE, CREATED IN 2017, IS ETEMADI'S MOST RECENT WORK, PRINTED IN TEHRAN AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF ANTICIPATION BY HER FANS. THESE SKETCHES FORMED THE BASIS OF SOME OF HER MOST IMPORTANT STILL LIVES AND PLANT WORKS.

PARVANEH ETEMADI

LAMPEDUSA

| 2002 COLLAGE FOTOGRAFICO SU CARTONCINO 55,5X86 CM |



PARVANEH ETEMADI

UNTITLED FROM PLANTS | SENZA TITOLO, DALLA SERIE PIANTE

| 2017 SERIGRAFIA SU CARTA 5 ELEMENTI 70X50 CM CIASCUNO

TIRATURA 25 ESEMPLARI |







## NARGESS HASHEMI

! NARGESS HASHEMI ! WAS BORN IN 1979 IN TEHRAN AND SHE LIVES THERE NOW. HASHEMI MAJORED IN PAINTING AT UNIVERSITY, BEGINNING AT THE SAME TIME AS THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1997. HASHEMI INITIALLY EXPLORED HER HISTORIC AND SOCIAL IDENTITY AS AN IRANIAN ARTIST BY EXAMINING IRANIAN MINIATURES AND THE ART OF THE QAJAR ERA, BUT LATER CHALLENGED HER PERSONAL IDENTITY AS A MEMBER OF SOCIETY. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND HER CONTEXT WITHIN HER FAMILY, HER FAMILY WITHIN SOCIETY, AND THE INNER RELATIONS OF THE FAMILY ITSELF, BECAME THE INSPIRATION FOR HER MOST IMPORTANT ARTISTIC PERIOD. BEFORE THIS, THE CONCEPTS OF DAILY LIFE, SUCH AS FAMILY, EVENTS PARTIES, FUNERALS, IMAGES OF DISHES AND POTS AND PANS, WERE CONSIDERED PERSONAL TOPICS UNRELATED TO ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSIONS. BUT NOW HASHEMI BEGAN TO DESCRIBE THE MOST PERSONAL EVENTS OF HER LIFE TO THE VIEWER. WHEREAS FEMINIST TOPICS HAD ONCE BEEN CONSIDERED COMPLEX SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES, NOW HASHEMI AND HER PEERS PRESENTED EVERYTHING THEY EXPERIENCED AS CONTEMPORARY WOMEN, AS PLAINLY AS POSSIBLE AND WITHOUT ANY CENSORSHIP. SHE SAYS ABOUT HER WORK: "THERE ARE MANY ISSUES THAT CANNOT BE DISCUSSED OUTSIDE OF THE FRAMEWORK OF THE HOME. SOMETIMES PEOPLE YOU THINK YOU KNOW QUITE WELL, TURN INTO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PEOPLE INSIDE THEIR HOMES. I WANT TO PRESENT THE INTERIOR SPACE OF THE HOUSE AND THE FAMILY BY BECOMING CLOSER TO THE ESSENCE OF HOME".

BY ENTERING THE DEEPER LAYERS OF HER WORK, THE VIEWER CAN UNDERSTAND THEY ARE IMMENSELY FEMININE AND DEFEND WOMANHOOD. FOR HASHEMI, INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM OF WOMEN ARE OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. HASHEMI HAS EXHIBITED HER WORK IN MUSEUMS AROUND THE WORLD, SUCH AS TEHRAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM ABU DHABI, AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF PARIS. DURING THE ELECTIONS OF 1997, WHICH MARKED THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN, A GROUP THAT BELIEVED IT WAS TIME TO MAKE THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE MORE OPEN, AND TO PROVIDE CONDITIONAL FREEDOM TO MEDIA,

NEWSPAPERS, AND UNIVERSITIES, GAINING CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT. WOMEN'S GROUPS AND FEMALE ACTIVISTS BECAME OUTSPOKEN AND GAINED ACCESS TO THE MEDIA FOR PRESENTING THEIR DEMANDS. SOCIETY AS A WHOLE WAS MORE STABLE DURING THESE YEARS AND MORE OPEN IN THE DOMAIN OF THE ARTS. NEW GALLERIES WERE ESTABLISHED AND TEHRAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY ONLY HELD EXHIBITIONS OF REVOLUTIONARY ARTISTS, INVITED SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS AND ORGANISED EXHIBITS OF CONCEPTUAL ART, OPENING A NEW WAY FOR YOUNG UP-AND-COMING ARTISTS. YOUNG ARTISTS MORE INTERESTED IN CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS WERE NOW DEFINING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ART THAT, UP TO THIS TIME, HAD BEEN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF PRE-REVOLUTION MODERN ART. THESE YOUNG ARTISTS USED OTHER MEDIA, IN ADDITION TO MORE COMMON MEDIA, TO VOICE ISSUES AND CONCEPTS THAT MATTERED TO THEM. WHILE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS OF ARTISTS TENDED TO USE SUBJECTS LIKE WAR, POLITICS, UTOPIAN SOCIETY, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY, THE ARTISTS OF THE 1990S WERE CONCERNED WITH TOPICS SUCH AS PERSONAL AND CIVIC LIBERTIES, FAMILY, RELATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD, AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING ISSUES. AND FOR WOMEN, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY WERE ARTISTS OR NOT, THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THEIR PLACE IN SOCIETY LOST ITS RADICAL QUALITY AND BEGAN TO BE LOOKED AT THROUGH AN ANALYTICAL LENS. IN THESE WORKS, WHICH ARE CONSIDERED AMONG HER MOST SUCCESSFUL, HASHEMI TENDS TO SUCH TOPICS WHILE CHALLENGING PREVIOUS METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF CREATION. UNLIKE THE PAST GENERATION OF WOMEN WHO ATTEMPTED TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM FEMININE ARTS LIKE NEEDLEWORK, KNITTING, SEWING, AND WEAVING AND TRIED TO IGNORE SUBJECTS LIKE WEDDINGS, BEAUTY SALONS, LAUNDRY, CHILD REARING, AND COOKING, HASHEMI AND OTHER ARTISTS OF HER GENERATION TACKLED THESE TOPICS HEAD-ON. SHE DEPICTS THE SPACE OF HOME WARMLY. FOR HER HOME AND FAMILY ARE A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM THAT CAN PROTECT HER AGAINST ANYTHING THAT MAY HAPPEN OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. SHE DOES NOT ESCAPE HER WOMANHOOD, AND DOES NOT TURN IT INTO A COMPLICATED HISTORIC OR PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUE.

SHE RESPECTS WOMANHOOD, JUST AS SHE RESPECTS FEMININE ARTS SUCH AS NEEDLEWORK AND KNITTING. THE WORKS DISPLAYED IN THIS EXHIBITION INCLUDE A NEEDLEWORK, TWO SILKSCREEN PRINTS, AND A PHOTO-DIARY SERIES. THE NEEDLEWORK IS EMBROIDERED DIRECTLY ON A SHOWER CURTAIN AND DEPICTS A WOMAN WASHING

CLOTHES IN THE BATHROOM: THE SUBJECT MATTER AND TECHNIQUE OF THIS WORK REFER TO THINGS TYPICALLY DONE BY HOUSEWIVES, WHILE THE "CANVAS" IS SOMETHING USED EVERY DAY IN THE HOME. IN "ZARRIN", ONE OF THE SILKSCREENS PAINTED BY HAND, HASHEMI DEPICTS HER MOTHER, WHO IS THE FOUNDATION AND CENTRE OF HER FAMILY. THIS IS A FAMILY WHERE WOMEN PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE, AS THEY TRADITIONALLY DO IN RAISING THE CHILDREN AND KEEPING TRACK OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES. THE OTHER SILKSCREEN IS CALLED "NAZRI", AFTER A TRADITIONAL IRANIAN OFFERING OF FOOD TO NEIGHBOURS AND THOSE IN NEED, WHICH THE MEMBERS OF A FAMILY PREPARE TOGETHER IN ORDER TO FULFILL A VOW. THIS WORKS DEPICTS A SCENE AFTER A SUCH A VOW HAS BEEN FULFILLED. MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN ALL PARTICIPATE IN THE COLLECTION OF INGREDIENTS, PREPARATION OF FOOD, ITS DISTRIBUTION, AND AFTERWARDS IN THE WASHING AND CLEANING. NONETHELESS, IT IS OFTEN THE WOMEN WHO SPEARHEAD THE EFFORT, AND ARE AWARE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR NEIGHBOURS AND DISADVANTAGED ACQUAINTANCES. LASTLY, THE ARTIST DOCUMENTS HER ENTIRE LIFE IN THE PHOTO-DIARY SERIES. FOR YEARS, SHE HAS BEEN METHODICALLY PHOTOGRAPHING EVERYTHING SHE INTENDS TO RECORD. MANY OF THESE IMAGES ARE USED IN HER OTHER WORKS, AND THE REST RECORD HER LIFE FOR HERSELF AND TO DISPLAY TO OTHERS. BEFORE NOW, THESE SERIES OF IMAGES HAVE ONLY BEEN DISPLAYED IN LIMITED NUMBERS AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THEY ARE BEING EXHIBITED TO SUCH AN EXTENT, ALONGSIDE HER OTHER WORKS.

NARGESS HASHEMI

UNTITLED | SENZA TITOLO

| 2014 RICAMO SU TENDA DA DOCCIA 184X176 CM |





NARGESS HASHEMI

NAZRI

| 2016 SERIGRAFIA COLORATA A MANO SU CARTA 50X70 CM

TIRATURA 24 ESEMPLARI |



NARGESS HASHEMI

ZARRIN

| 2016 SERIGRAFIA COLORATA A MANO SU CARTA 50X70 CM

TIRATURA 12 ESEMPLARI |



NARGESS HASHEMI

IMAGES FROM ARTIST'S PHOTO DIARY | IMMAGINI DAL DIARIO  
FOTOGRAFICO DELL'ARTISTA

| 2018 INSTALLAZIONE SITE SPECIFIC FOTOCOPIE |

## FARAH OSSOULI

| FARAH OSSOULI | WAS BORN IN ZANJAN IN 1953 AND LIVES IN TEHRAN. SHE BECAME FAMOUS FOR HER MINIATURE PAINTINGS, BUT IT WOULD NOT BE EASY TO LABEL OSSOULI A PURE MINIATURIST GIVEN HER INTERPRETATION OF IRANIAN MINIATURES (FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A FEMALE IRANIAN INTELLECTUAL), HER INNOVATIONS (SUCH AS THE USE OF HANDWRITTEN TEXT IN LIEU OF CALLIGRAPHY), THE INCLUSION OF MODERN ELEMENTS (LIKE ROCKETS, RIFLES, AND AIRPLANES INSTEAD OF OTHER COMMON ORNAMENTS), AS WELL AS HER FOCUS ON MORE CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND CONCEPTS. OSSOULI WAS AN ACTIVE INTELLECTUAL BEFORE THE REVOLUTION AND REMAINS ONE TODAY. SHE HAS NEVER LIMITED HERSELF TO ANY PARTICULAR IDEOLOGY, AND HAS MAINTAINED INDEPENDENT IDEAS ABOUT ART, SOCIETY, POLITICS, AND CULTURE.

OSSOULI'S WORK HAS BEEN EXHIBITED IN VARIOUS EXHIBITIONS AROUND THE WORLD, AND IS INCLUDED IN VARIOUS COLLECTIONS, SUCH AS THE LOS ANGELES MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART (LACMA), THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM IN NEW YORK, THE DEVI ART FOUNDATION IN NEW DELHI, MUSEUM LUDWIG IN COLOGNE, TROPENMUSEUM IN AMSTERDAM, AND TEHRAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART.

IRANIAN MINIATURES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD FOR MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS. ON THE ONE HAND, THEY SHOW THE ARTIST'S SKILL; ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS CAN DIVERT THE ARTIST AWAY FROM CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION. THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN IRAN HAS LED TO A RIFT BETWEEN ARTISTS AND MINIATURISTS: THE FORMER CONSIDER MINIATURE PAINTERS TO BE SKILLED BUT REPETITIVE TECHNICIANS WHO ARE NOT CONCERNED WITH DEFINITIONS OF ART: TRADITIONALISTS, AT BEST, AND, AT WORST, PAINTERS FOR TOURISTS. MEANWHILE, MINIATURISTS CONSIDER THEMSELVES THE TRUE INHERITORS OF AN ARTISTIC TRADITION THAT HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN THROUGH THE GENERATIONS, AND ACCUSE ARTISTS OF DEFILING ITS PURITY IN EXCHANGE FOR FAME AND FORTUNE.

IN IRAN, THEREFORE, MINIATURISTS ARE NOT CONSIDERED ARTISTS, NOR ARE ARTISTS MINIATURISTS, SO ARTISTS WHO WORK IN MINIATURES END UP BELONGING TO NEITHER GROUP.

AND SO OSSOULI, AS ONE OF THE MOST TECHNICALLY ADEPT ARTISTS IN MINIATURE PAINTING, HAS BEEN BOMBARDED BY BOTH ARTISTS AND MINIATURISTS OVER THE YEARS, BUT HER PERSEVERANCE, MASTERY OF MINIATURE ELEMENTS, LAYERING OF IDEAS AND CONCEPTS IN HER WORK, AS WELL AS HER ARTISTIC LIFE, HAS PLACED HER AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT AND INFLUENTIAL IRANIAN ARTISTS OF THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PERIOD. HER WORKS, WHICH USE A PURE BEAUTY FROM AN IMAGINED WORLD TO PORTRAY THE BITTEREST TRUTHS OF OUR TIME, ENCHANT THE VIEWER WITH THEIR BEAUTY AND SUBDUE HIM WITH THEIR VIOLENCE – SOMETHING THAT WE SELDOM EXPERIENCE AS VIEWERS IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION, SO BOMBARDED WITH VIOLENT IMAGES THAT WE HAVE BECOME NUMB AND INDIFFERENT TO TRAGEDIES.

THE MAIN SUBJECTS OF OSSOULI'S WORKS ARE WOMEN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, WAR AND, IN PARTICULAR, RELIGIOUS FANATICISM: INJURED, MUTILATED WOMEN, HEADLESS BABES, AND DECAPITATED LOVERS. BUT WHAT GRASPS THE ATTENTION IS THE DIRECT GAZE OF THE WOMEN, WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST HESITATION OR DOUBT, CEASELESS DEFENDING WHAT THEY HAVE FOUGHT FOR OVER CENTURIES. THIS CAN BE SEEN IN THE SERIES "WOUNDED VIRTUE AND LISTEN, DO YOU HEAR THE BLOWING OF THE DARKNESS", WHICH MARKED A NEW PHASE IN OSSOULI'S WORK. BY APPROPRIATING MASTERPIECES FROM ART HISTORY, IN PARTICULAR CLASSIC EUROPEAN ART, THROUGH DIRECT REFERENCES, SIMILAR COMPOSITIONS, OR SELECTION OF SUBJECT MATTER, SHE REFERS THE VIEWER AT FIRST GLANCE TO WORKS ABOUT WHICH HE HAS PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS.

IN THE WORK SHOWN IN THIS EXHIBITION, TITLED "LEONARDO, FOROUGH, AND I", THE ARTIST TAKES ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS OF ART HISTORY AS THE BASIS OF HER CREATION, WHICH CAN ALSO BE CONSIDERED HER ARTISTIC STATEMENT. UNDOUBTEDLY EVERY VIEWER (EVEN ONE WHO IS NOT A LOVER OF ART) IS FAMILIAR WITH THE MONA LISA OR LA GIACONDA: A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN IN A MYSTERIOUS PAINTING, WHICH EVERYONE HAS TRIED TO UNRAVEL OVER THE CENTURIES. OSSOULI PLACES EVERYTHING IN FRONT OF OUR EYES: A WOMAN BOUND BY TRADITION, BREASTFEEDING A HEADLESS BABY, SURROUNDED BY TOOLS OF VIOLENCE, WHO CRIES TEARS OF BLOOD (WHICH EXPRESSES THE DEPTH OF HER SUFFERING, ACCORDING TO THE FARSI SAYING,) BUT HER FACE SHOWS NO SIGN OF PAIN. DESPITE ALL SHE HAS EXPERIENCED, AND WILL EXPERIENCE AGAIN, IT IS AS IF SHE IS DETERMINED TO CREATE A BETTER WORLD.

THE WORK DEPICTS A MOST TRAGIC EVENT IN A MOST TRAGIC MANNER, AND THE VIEWER CANNOT MERELY PASS IT BY. IN EVERY COLOUR OF EVERY LAYER, EACH OF WHICH CAN BE CONSIDERED AN INDEPENDENT WORK OF ART, THE ARTIST PRESENTS THE VIEWER WITH THE LAYERS OF HER MIND. THERE ARE TOOLS OF VIOLENCE, CREATION, BIRTH, GROWTH, BEAUTY, AND DEATH, REFLECTING THE ARTIST'S COMPLICATED INTERPRETATION OF WHAT THREATENS NOT JUST HER, NOR WOMEN IN GENERAL, BUT ALL OF HUMANITY. IN THE FINAL LAYER, THE ARTIST INCLUDES VERSES FROM FOROUGH FARROKHZAD'S POEM "TERRESTRIAL VERSES". THESE ARE SECTIONS OF A POEM BY A WOMAN WHO IS CONSIDERED A LEADER OF FEMININE IRANIAN LITERATURE THAT EXPRESS THE EXTENT OF SOCIETY'S VIOLENCE, IN THE:

**PREGNANT WOMEN  
GAVE BIRTH TO HEADLESS INFANTS  
THEY HAD CRADLES FOR SHAME  
BURIED THEMSELVES IN GRAVES.  
...  
NO ONE CARED FOR LOVE  
NO ONE CARED FOR TRIUMPHS  
AND NO ONE  
EVER CARED FOR CARING ANY MORE.  
...  
THE SUN WAS DEAD  
AND NOBODY KNEW  
THAT THE SAD LITTLE DOVE  
FLOWN OFF FROM THE HEARTS IS CALLED-FAITH.**

WHILE OSSOULI USES WORDS LIKE "LOVE", "TRIUMPH", AND "FAITH", TO ILLUMINATE HER WORK, THE MOST RELEVANT PART OF THE POEM IS ABOUT PASSIVE VIEWERS OF EXECUTIONS, VIOLENCE, AND HUMILIATION:

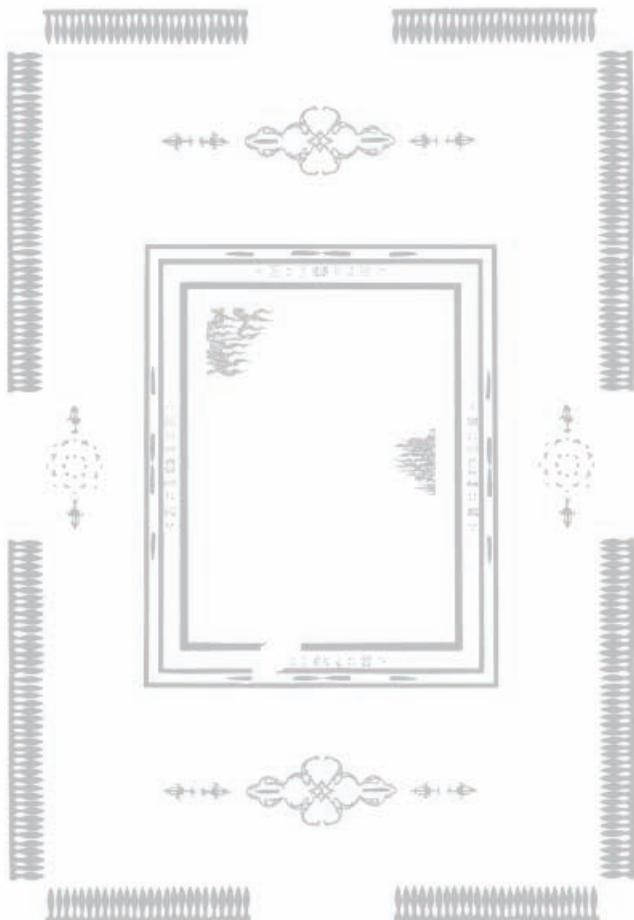
AND IN PUBLIC HANGINGS, OFTEN  
AS THE HANGMEN'S ROPE  
PUSHED OUT OF ITS SOCKETS  
THE BULGING EYES OF THE CONDEMNED MAN  
THEY SANK INSIDE THEMSELVES  
AND THEIR TIRED OLD NERVES FELT ALIVE  
AT SOME LUSTY SENSATION.

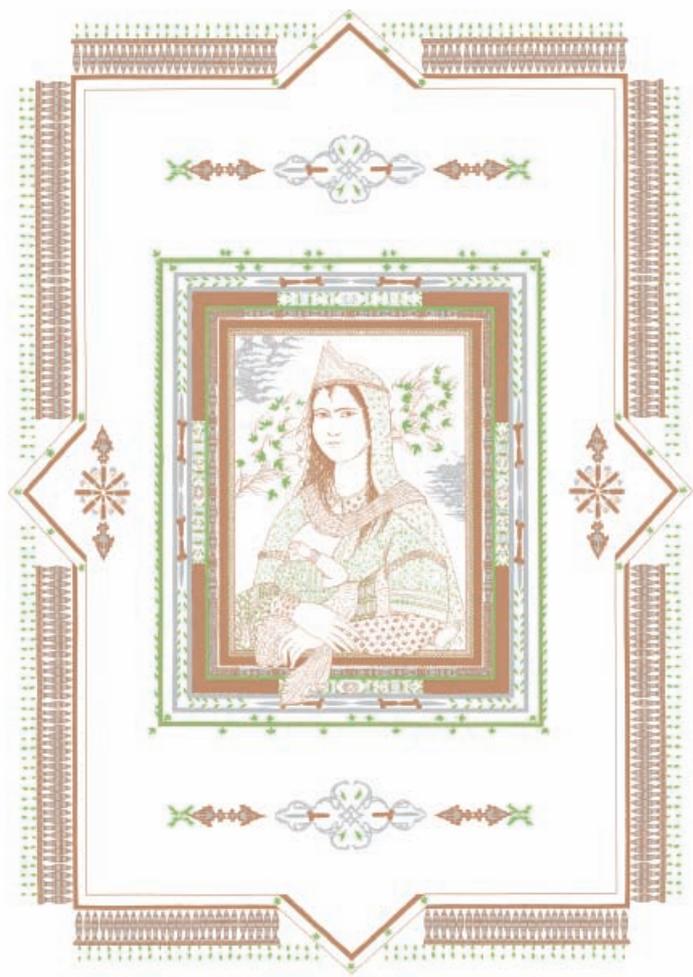
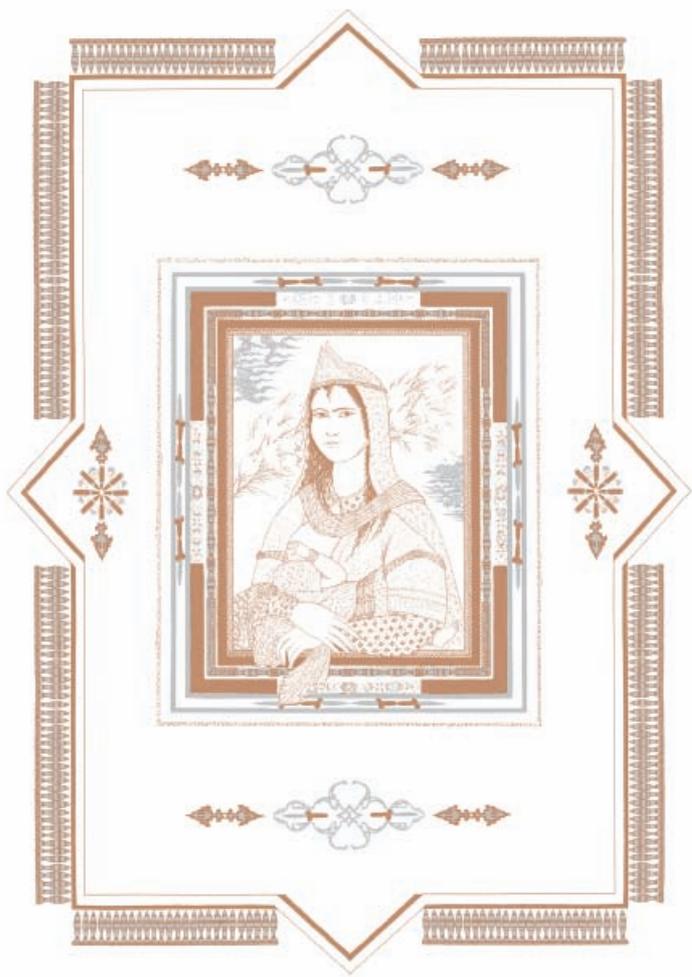
AND YET YOU COULD ALWAYS SEE  
THESE LITTLE MURDERERS  
AT THE EDGE OF THE PUBLIC SQUARE.

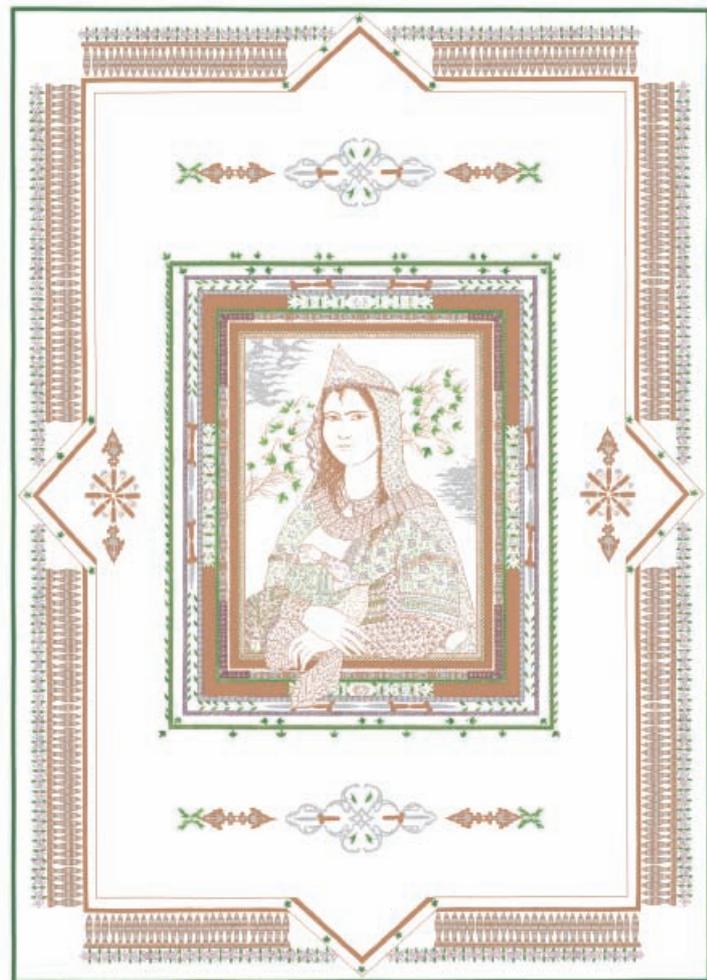
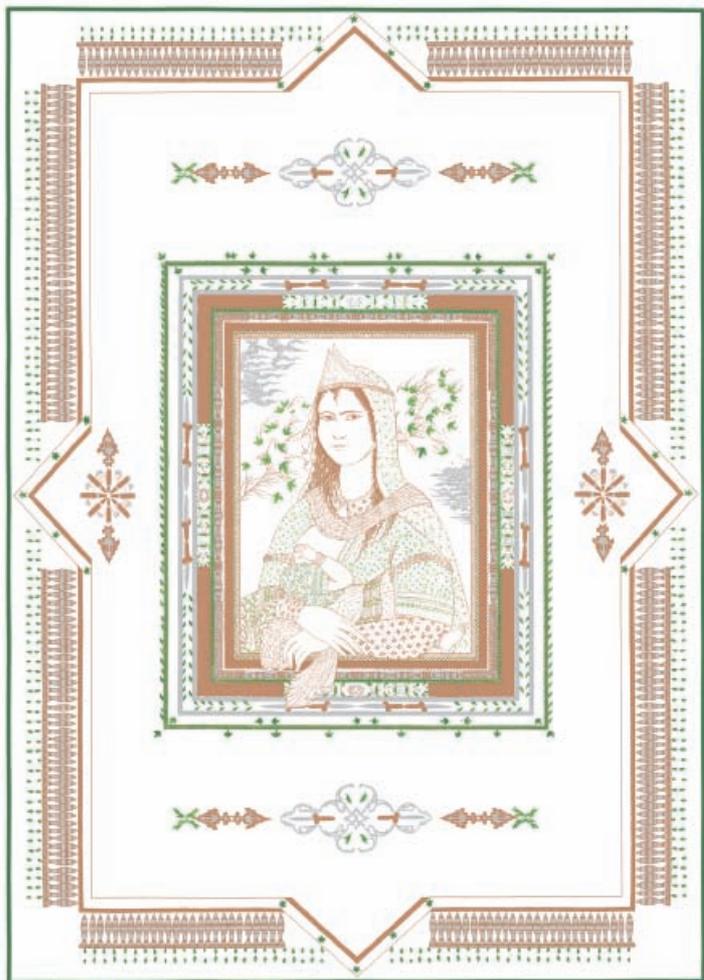
STANDING  
AND STARING  
AT THE CONTINUAL DOWNPOUR OF WATER SPRAY  
FROM THE FOUNTAIN.

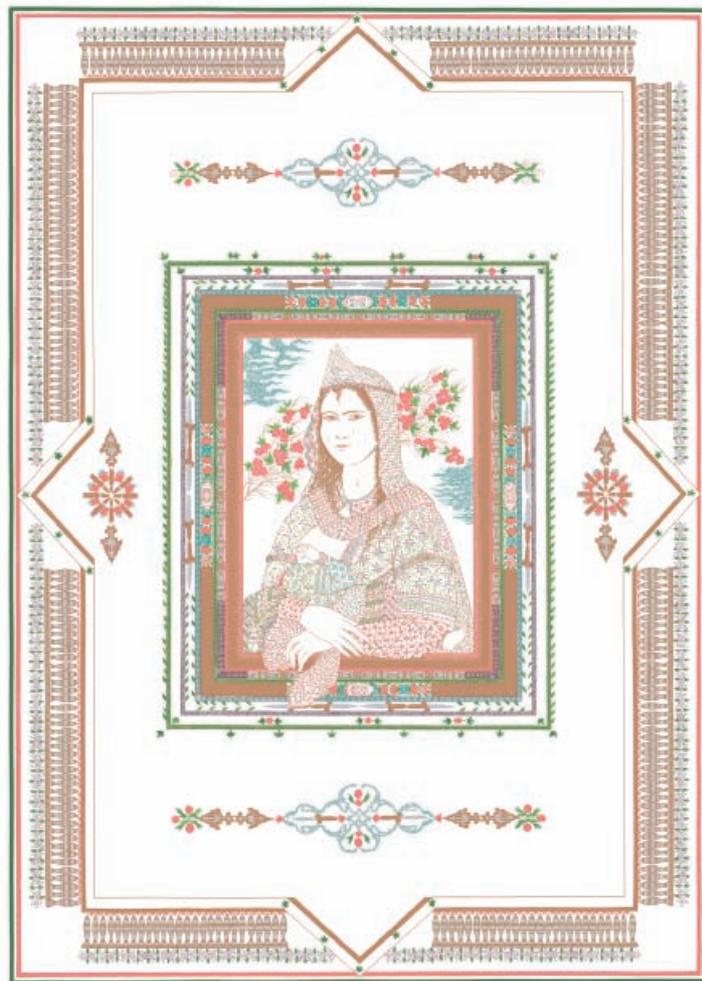
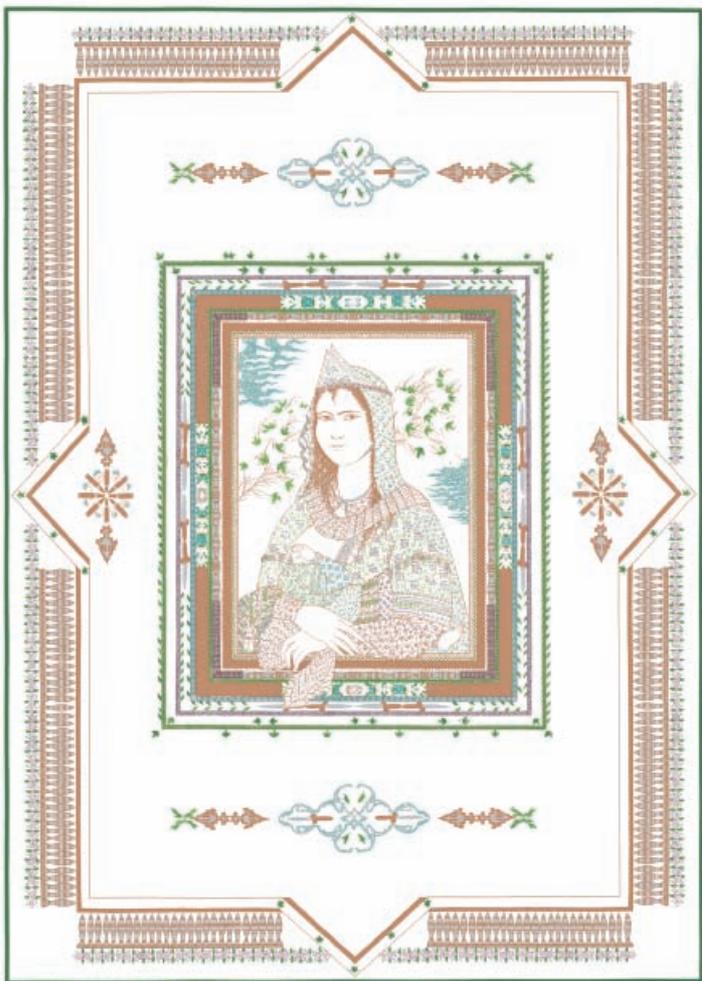
DID THOSE WHO GREW ACCUSTOMED TO THE SIGHT OF EXECUTIONS,  
UNDERSTAND HOPE, AND BEAUTY? PERHAPS THEY COULD AND  
PERHAPS THIS IS WHY OSSOULI PRESENTS US WITH UNCENSORED  
VIOLENCE AND INTRICATE BEAUTY, BECAUSE WE, THE VIEWERS,  
HAVE BECOME PASSIVE OBSERVERS OF EVERY CRIME COMMITTED  
ON THIS EARTH.

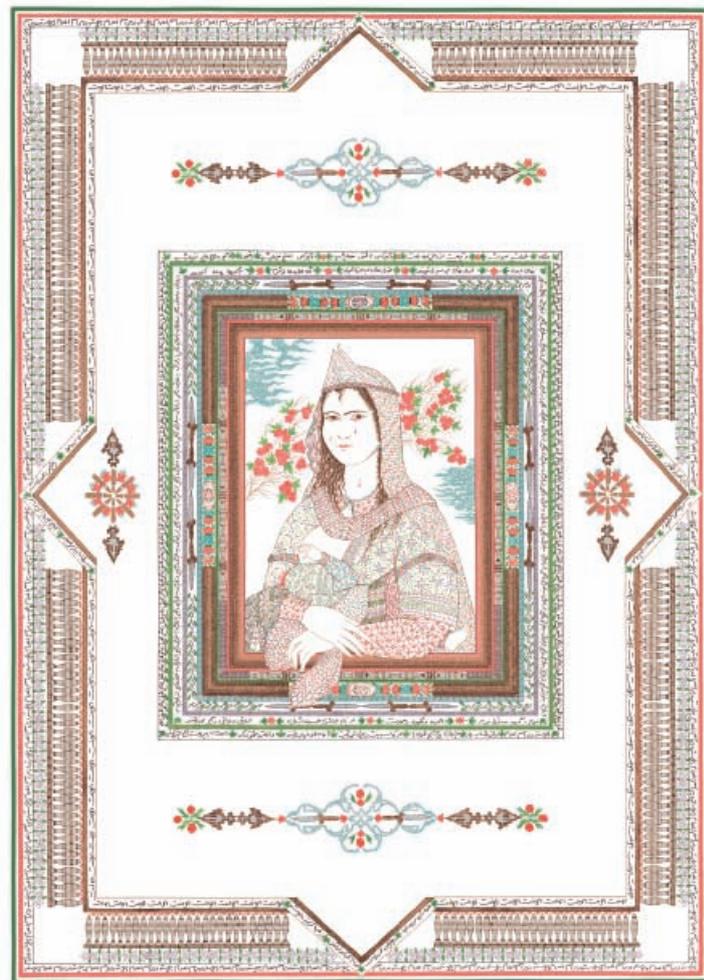
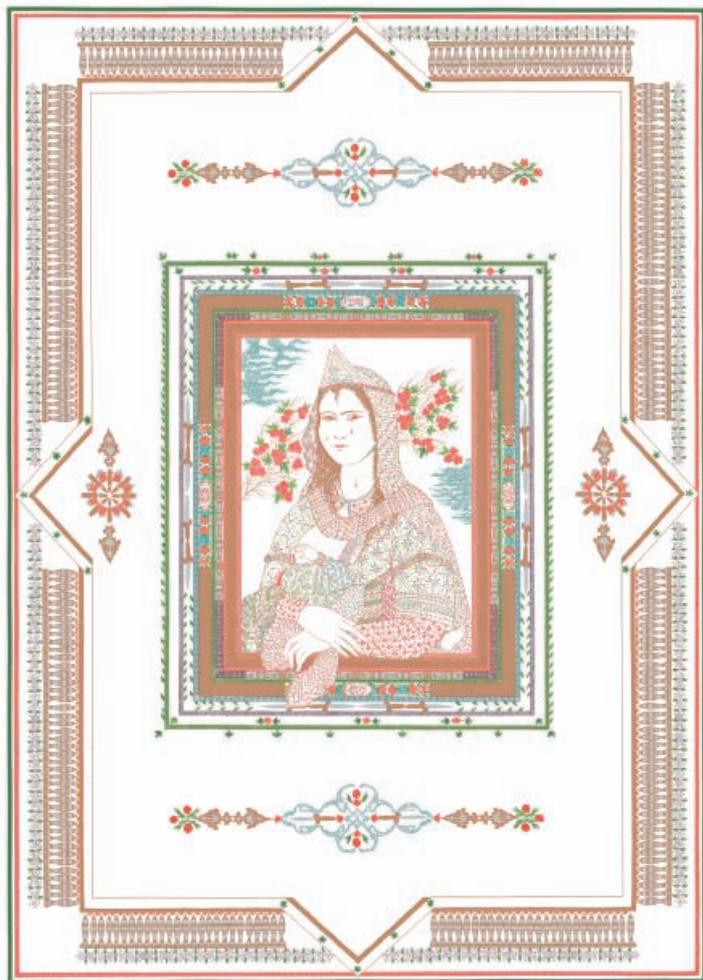
LEONARDO, FOROUGH AND I | LEONARDO, FOROUGH E IO  
| 2017 SERIGRAFIA SU CARTA 9 ELEMENTI 70X50 CM CIASCUNO  
TIRATURA 10 ESEMPPLARI |











## ROZITA SHARAFJAHAN

| ROZITA SHARAFJAHAN | WAS BORN IN TEHRAN IN 1962 AND HAS LIVED THERE SINCE. SHE WAS AROUND SIXTEEN YEARS OLD AT THE TIME OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND BY THE TIME SHE GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITH A DIPLOMA IN FINE ARTS THREE YEARS LATER (IN 1981), THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR WAS IN ITS FIRST YEAR. SHE STUDIED PAINTING DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND GRADUATED IN THE MIDST OF A DECADE MARKED BY LITTLE, IF ANY, INDEPENDENT CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITY IN IRAN. WHEN SHARAFJAHAN WAS ACCEPTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ART TO STUDY PAINTING, ITS ONLY GOAL WAS TO TRAIN REVOLUTIONARY AND ISLAMIC ARTISTS. BY THE TIME SHE RECEIVED HER BACHELOR'S DEGREE, THREE YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE THE GREATEST POLITICAL REPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN – THE MASS EXECUTIONS OF 1988. THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION HAD BEGUN WITH THE CLOSURE OF UNIVERSITIES AND CENTRES OF HIGHER EDUCATION, WITH THE PURPOSE OF DISMISSING PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS WHO WERE LABELLED “WESTERNISED” AND “EXTRAVAGANT”. EVENTUALLY, HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED AS LEFTIST, LIBERAL, POLITICAL, AND THE OPPOSITION – IN OTHER WORDS ANYONE WHO CHALLENGED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TIME – WERE REJECTED FROM THESE INSTITUTIONS. DUE TO THIS PRESSURE, ALL SORTS OF GATHERINGS (EVEN NON-POLITICAL ONES) WERE DISCONTINUED. IN A VERY SHORT TIME, INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC CLUBS, AND SMALL GATHERINGS WHERE ARTISTS EXCHANGED THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH STUDENTS AND DISCUSSED AND CRITIQUED THEIR WORKS, CAME TO AN END. THE ARTISTIC ATMOSPHERE THAT HAD DEVELOPED IN IRAN OVER DECADES, AND ANYTHING THAT WAS IN ANYWAY RELATED TO NON-REVOLUTIONARY ART, WAS SHUT DOWN: GALLERIES THAT WERE RENOWNED ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE; THE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED TEHRAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, WITH ITS COLLECTION OF MODERN ART UNMATCHED IN ASIA; VARIOUS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS; AND ARTISTIC PUBLICATIONS. THE GOAL OF TRAINING REVOLUTIONARY STUDENTS AND ABSORBING THEM INTO ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS THE ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION DID NOT WORK OUT AS PLANNED. EVEN THOUGH MANY GRADUATES ENTERED THIS SYSTEM EITHER BECAUSE OF THEIR PERSONAL BELIEFS OR THE ADVANTAGES THEY COULD GAIN THERE, A GREATER NUMBER

OF STUDENTS ENTERED THE UNIVERSITY WITH OTHER INTENTIONS AND GRADUATED WITH THEIR POINTS-OF-VIEW INTACT. IN THOSE YEARS, THERE WERE NO INDEPENDENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXHIBITING ARTISTS' WORKS. EVERY EXHIBITION HAD TO OCCUR IN A GOVERNMENTAL SETTING, WITH COMPLETE SUPERVISION OVER ITS CONTENT AND FORMAT. A FEW YEARS LATER, SEVERAL PRIVATE GALLERIES WERE ESTABLISHED IN TEHRAN. BUT EVEN THOUGH THE OWNERS OF THESE GALLERIES HAD NO TIES WITH THE GOVERNMENT, THEY WERE RELUCTANT TO DISPLAY EXPERIMENTAL AND AVANT-GARDE WORKS OF ART. WITH THE END OF THE WAR (IN 1988) AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TECHNOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, WHICH PREFERRED AN OPEN ECONOMY TO THE IDEOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE PREVIOUS YEARS, THE BORDERS BECAME MORE RELAXED, A LIMITED NUMBER OF SELECTED INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE COUNTRY, AND THERE WAS A NEED TO PRESENT AN INDEPENDENT ART SCENE AS A COUNTERPOINT TO IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY ART, IN ORDER TO GAIN MORE INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE. IT WAS DURING THIS TIME THAT A NUMBER OF YOUNG ARTISTS DECIDED TO CREATE A CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENT THAT, ON THE ONE HAND, STOOD IN OPPOSITION TO REVOLUTIONARY ART PROPAGANDA AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, SUPPLEMENTED THE EXISTING CONSERVATIVE MODERN ART MOVEMENT IN IRAN. DURING THIS TIME, SHARAFJAHAN MADE HER STUDIO AVAILABLE FOR GATHERINGS AND, IN TIME, EXHIBITIONS. SHE EVENTUALLY DECIDED TO CONVERT THE SPACE INTO AN OFFICIAL GALLERY ACCESSIBLE TO OTHER ARTISTS AND ESTABLISHED "[TARAHAN] AZAD ART GALLERY", WITH HER HUSBAND. IT WAS THE FIRST GALLERY AFTER THE REVOLUTION TO DISPLAY WORKS OF EXPERIMENTAL, VIDEO, SOUND, INSTALLATION, AND PERFORMANCE ART, AS WELL AS OTHER MEDIA THAT ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF ARTISTS. EVEN TODAY, WITH NUMEROUS GALLERIES IN TEHRAN PRESENTING DIFFERENT EXHIBITIONS COVERING ALL SORTS OF MEDIA, "AZAD ART GALLERY" REMAINS MORE THAN JUST A GALLERY. IT IS A SPACE THAT SUPPORTS INDEPENDENT, EXPERIMENTAL, NON-COMMERCIAL PROJECTS. MEANWHILE, SHARAFJAHAN HAS NEVER CEASED HER ACTIVITY AS AN ARTIST OVER THE YEARS. HER WORK, COMPRISING OF PAINTINGS, VIDEO AND INSTALLATION ART, HAS BEEN EXHIBITED NUMEROUS TIMES IN VARIOUS MUSEUMS AROUND THE WORLD. SHE IS AN ARTIST WHO HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONCERNED WITH WOMEN'S ISSUES.

SHE SAYS:

"EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD I REFUSED TO ACCEPT THAT I COULDN'T DO EVERYTHING THAT A BOY COULD DO. I WANTED TO BE LIKE MEN. THIS

IS WHY I CHOSE TO MAKE SCULPTURES. I WAS INTERESTED IN MAKING LARGE SCULPTURES AND CARVING STONE. IN MY PAINTINGS I ATTEMPTED TO FREE MYSELF FROM ANY DEFINITION OF WOMANHOOD MADE BY A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY THROUGH THE BOLDNESS AND POWER OF MY BRUSHSTROKES. THIS ISSUE GRADUALLY RESOLVED ITSELF: I ACCEPTED THAT I AM A WOMAN WITH THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A WOMAN. THESE CHARACTERISTICS ARE IN FACT ADVANTAGES, NOT DISADVANTAGES". IN HER WORK, SHARAFJAHAN IS INFLUENCED BY FOROUGH FARROKHZAD, THE IRANIAN POETESS AND FILM DIRECTOR WHO PASSED AWAY WHEN SHARAFJAHAN WAS ONLY FOUR YEARS OLD. FARROKHZAD WAS CONSIDERED ONE OF IRAN'S MOST IMPORTANT FEMALE INTELLECTUALS, AND HER LIBERAL IDEAS AND WAY OF LIFE LEFT A DEEP IMPACT ON IRANIAN GIRLS, SUCH AS SHARAFJAHAN. FARROKHZAD DIED AT THE APEX OF HER FAME, BUT HER INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE ON THOSE YOUNGER THAN HER HAVE NEVER WANED. SHE SAID: "MY WISH IS FREEDOM AND EQUAL RIGHTS FOR IRANIAN WOMAN ... I AM COMPLETELY AWARE OF THE PAIN MY SISTERS SUFFER FROM THE INJUSTICES OF MEN, AND HAVE SPENT HALF OF MY ART TO ENVISION AND ALLEVIATE THEIR PAIN". SHARAFJAHAN SEEKS THE SAME THING IN HER ARTWORKS, BE THEY PAINTINGS, INSTALLATIONS, OR VIDEOS. IN HER VIDEO INSTALLATION "RED MIRAGE", SHE PLACES ONE OF FARROKHZAD'S BEST-KNOWN POEMS IN FRONT OF THE VIEWER. THE POEM, CALLED "LET'S BELIEVE IN THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD SEASON", IS PROJECTED ON TORN-OUT PAGES OF A NOTEBOOK:

**AND  
IT IS ME,  
A LONELY WOMAN  
AT THE DOORS OF A COLD SEASON,  
AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE SOILED SOUL OF THE EARTH,  
THE SAD DESPAIR OF THE SKY,  
AND THE INABILITY OF MY FROZEN HANDS.**

THE ARTIST THEN ADDS HER VOICE TO THE POET'S AND RECITES HER POEM FOR US: SHE ENVISIONS HER POEM AND SINGS HER SONG. THE TEXT BEGINS WITH "AND", AS IF WE KNOW WHERE AND WHEN THE STORY UNFOLDED. PERHAPS THE VIEWER KNOWS WHAT THE ARTIST IS SPEAKING OF AND IS FAMILIAR WITH HER AND HER LONELINESS. BY EMPHASISING THIS, AND HER GENDER, SHE DEFINES HER BORDER WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NOT UNDERSTOOD HER. DESPITE FORTY YEARS BETWEEN THEM, FARROKHZAD AND SHARAFJAHAN SEE THEMSELVES IN THE SEASON OF WINTER; FOR BOTH, SPRING SEEMS A LONG TIME AWAY.

ROZITA SHARAFJAHAN

RED MIRAGE | MIRAGGIO ROSSO

| 2008 INSTALLAZIONE VIDEO SITE SPECIFIC

DURATA DEL VIDEO 08.17 MINUTI |

ایمان بیاوریم  
ایمان بیاوریم به ویرانه های باغ های تخیل  
به داس های وارزون سندهی بیگار  
نگاه کن که چه برفی میبارد ...  
شاید حقیقت آن دو دستی چون بود، آن دو دست جوان  
که زیر بارش بگریز برف مدفون شد  
و سال دیگر ، وقتی بهار  
بالسیمان پشت پنجره هم خوابه میشود  
و آن نسبی فوران میکند  
فواره های سبز ساقه های سبکی  
شکوفه خواهد داد ای بار ای بیکانه تهنیت بار  
ایمان بیاوریم به آغاز

# فصل سرد

خطوط  
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نفس  
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میزدند  
نسیم  
برگ های  
شبهوت

این غوا اجتماع بود که در آن روزی در آن روزی سکوه

## GOLNAZ TAHERI

! GOLNAZ TAHERI ! WAS BORN IN TEHRAN IN 1979 WHERE SHE STILL LIVES. TAHERI ENTERED THE UNIVERSITY AT A TIME WHEN REFORMISTS HAD CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT; HOWEVER, IT WAS DURING THIS TIME THAT THE TRAGEDY KNOWN AS “KOORY-E DANESHGAH” (UNIVERSITY ALLEY) OCCURRED. HER SERIES “REFLECTIONS” WAS PRODUCED THREE YEARS AFTER THE TRAGEDY AT THE UNIVERSITY AND EXPRESSES THE WIDESPREAD PESSIMISM OF THOSE YEARS. IN THIS SERIES THE ARTIST CALLS OUT TO THOSE WHO, UNDER THREAT OF VIOLENCE AND REPRESSION, HAD ONCE AGAIN RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES AND THEIR SILENCE. SHE CALLS ON THOSE WHO BELIEVED THEY WERE FORGOTTEN ONCE AGAIN, ASKING THEM TO AT LEAST LOOK OUT FROM THEIR WINDOWS.

IN ANOTHER SERIES CALLED “CALENDAR” CREATED IN 2008, TAHERI LOOKS INWARDS INSTEAD OF OUTWARDS. SHE FOCUSES HER INQUISITIVE GAZE ON HER INNER LAYERS, AS IF TURNING THE PAGES OF A CALENDAR AND COMING FACE TO FACE WITH A DIFFERENT MEMORY OR ASPECT OF HER LIFE ON EACH PAGE. IN THIS SERIES, SHE PLACES IN FRONT OF THE VIEWER OBJECTS THAT ARE REMINISCENT OF THINGS, THAT TRIGGER A MEMORY, OR THAT SHE HERSELF HAS EXPERIENCED OR SEEN OR HEARD ABOUT. THESE ARE THINGS THAT THE ARTIST USES IN ORDER TO PRESENT HERSELF TO THE VIEWER. IN HER PREVIOUS WORK, TAHERI ATTEMPTED TO SHOW “US” TO OURSELVES, BUT HERE SHE TRIES TO PRESENT “HERSELF” TO HERSELF.

HER WORK HAS BEEN DISPLAYED IN NUMEROUS GROUP AND SOLO EXHIBITIONS IN TEHRAN, PARIS, VIENNA, BRUSSELS, MONTREAL, AS WELL AS MUSEUMS AND CENTRES SUCH AS ISFAHAN CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM OF ART, PANTHÉON SORBONNE, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, AND PARIS PHOTO. HER WORK MAY SEEM DISPARATE AT FIRST, BUT IT POSSESSES A COHERENT CONCEPT AND A CONTINUOUS VIEW OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER AT HERSELF AS WELL AS HER CONTEXT.

IT WOULD HAVE GIVEN TAHERI HOPE TO HAVE STUDIED AT A TIME WHEN THE REFORMISTS HAD CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT. A SEGMENT OF SOCIETY THAT HAD FOUND ITSELF SILENCED AND DETACHED FROM POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION, FOLLOWED BY THE WAR, AND THEN DURING THE TIME OF TECHNOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS

SUPPORTED BY THE RIGHT WING, HAD FINALLY FOUND THEIR VOICE AND BEGAN TO ACTIVELY EXPRESS THEIR DEMANDS.

THIS NEWLY VOCAL SEGMENT OF SOCIETY, FROM THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL MIDDLE CLASS, WAS COMPOSED OF ACADEMICS, ARTISTS, AND INDEPENDENT INTELLECTUALS WITHOUT TIES TO THE GOVERNMENT, HAVING ESSENTIALLY BEEN INDEPENDENT OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS.

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE REVOLUTION THAT MANY OF THESE PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THEY RECOGNISED AN OPENNESS IN POLITICS AND CULTURE THAT, PRIOR TO THIS, THEY HAD HAD NO HOPE OF EVER EXPERIENCING.

HOWEVER, MANY UNELECTED POWERFUL ORGANISATIONS, PRIMARILY WITH TIES TO THE RIGHT WING, STILL CONTROLLED SIGNIFICANT SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY. EVEN THOUGH THESE TRADITIONALISTS HAD LOST THE ELECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT CHOSEN BY SOCIETY, THEY CONTINUED TO ATTEMPT TO REVERT THE SITUATION TO THE WAY IT HAD BEEN BEFORE THE ELECTIONS THROUGH VARIOUS ACTS OF OBSTRUCTION, INCLUDING THE NOW-INFAMOUS UNIVERSITY ALLEY. PRIOR TO THE GREEN MOVEMENT OF 2009, THIS GATHERING AT THE UNIVERSITY WAS THE LARGEST LIBERAL MOVEMENT IN IRAN SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION. BUT IT WAS SEVERELY SQUASHED AT EVERY UNIVERSITY AND MANY STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED.

THE PEOPLE WHO HAD EXPERIENCED A GLIMPSE OF HOPE FOR THE FUNDAMENTAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT, AND WHO BELIEVED THE REFORMIST GOVERNMENT COULD BE CAPABLE OF BRINGING ABOUT SUCH CHANGES, WERE NOW MORE INCONSOLABLE THAN EVER. OVER A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, THEIR OPTIMISM TURNED INTO A WIDESPREAD PESSIMISM, WHICH CONTINUES TWENTY YEARS LATER, IN THE PRESENT DAY.

A NUMBER OF WORKS FROM TAHERI'S SERIES "REFLECTIONS" WERE EXHIBITED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2002, AND ARE INCLUDED IN THIS EXHIBITION IN THE FORM OF AN ARTIST'S BOOK.

THE SERIES IS BASED ON A POEM BY AHMAD SHAMLOU, IRANIAN POLITICAL POET. THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTION THE ARTIST MAKES REFERENCE TO IS:

AND THEN I  
SET THE UNSTRUNG HARP  
IN A CORNER,  
I PICKED UP THE LANTERN AND WENT ON THE STREET  
I SEARCHED AMONG THE PEOPLE  
ENTICING THEM WITH A WORD:  
“HEY!  
LOOK OUT THROUGH THE WINDOWS!”

IN THIS COLLECTION OF ANALOGUE PHOTOGRAPHS, GOLNAZ TAHERI FINDS HER SUBJECT MATTER IN HOUSES HERE AND THERE, SOMETIMES STARING OUT AT THE DISTANCE AS IF LOST IN THOUGHT. THE CAMERA SEEKS THEM FROM OUTSIDE, LOOKS IN THROUGH THEIR WINDOWS, CALLS THEM TO THE WINDOW TO COME AND TAKE A LOOK OUTSIDE. SHE (THE PHOTOGRAPHER) CALLS THEM TO COME SEE HER; HOWEVER, IN MANY OF THESE IMAGES, TAHERI TRAPS HERSELF WITHIN HER CAMERA. SHE THEREFORE CRIES OUT TO HERSELF JUST AS SHE DOES TO OTHERS.

THE SERIES “CALENDAR” INCLUDES 10 PICTURES OF A WOODEN BOX, AND IN EACH ONE SLIGHT ALTERATIONS TO THE BOX CHANGE ITS CONTENT. THE ARTIST CONSIDERS THESE BOXES PAGES OF A CALENDAR; PAGES THAT WE SOMETIMES CROSS WITH AN “X” TO MARK A BIRTHDAY, WEDDING, OR SUCH EVENT, SOMETIMES INDICATING DAY TO DAY HAPPENINGS OR PERHAPS SPECIAL EVENTS, BUT NONETHELESS, DATES THAT WE PASS BY. THE ITEMS AND OBJECTS IN THE BOXES CHANGE FROM ONE IMAGE TO THE NEXT, LIKE THE DIFFERENT EVENTS OCCURRING IN DIFFERENT DAYS: BUT NO MATTER HOW SLIGHT THE CHANGE, THEY LEAVE THEIR UNIQUE EFFECT ON THE BOX, JUST LIKE THE EFFECT OF THE QUOTIDIAN ON OUR LIVES.

GOLNAZ TAHERI

REFLECTIONS | RIFLESSIONI

| 2002 LIBRO D'ARTISTA 18X29 CM TIRATURA 3 ESEMPPLARI |



FROM THE CALENDAR SERIES | DALLA SERIE CALENDARIO

| 2009 FOTOGRAFIA DIGITALE 10 ELEMENTI 20,5X26,5 CM CIASCUNO

TIRATURA 5 ESEMPLARI |















GOOD MORNING... GOOD NIGHT

CINQUE ARTISTE E UNA CURATRICE DALL'IRAN

LAGALLERIA

COMPLESSO MUSEALE PALAZZO DUCALE DI MANTOVA

9 MARZO - 13 MAGGIO 2018

MOSTRA A CURA DI

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