

TEHRAN CALLING: LONDON

تهران کالینگ: لندن



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March and April 2013

Tehran Calling: London

Curated by

Tarlan Rafiee

Yashar Samimi Mofakham

Texts: Yashar Samimi Mofakham

Tarlan Rafiee, Liz O'Sullivan

at london**print**studio

March and April 2013

Held by Calling Project

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Saeed Ensafi
Negar Farajiani
Farhad Fozouni
Amirali Ghasemi
Alireza Ghazi
Amirali Golriz
Sahand Hesamiyan
Peyman Hooshmandzadeh
Amir Mobed
Behzad Nejadghanbar
Tarlán Rafiee
Saeed Ravanbakhsh
Nastaran Safaie
Yashar Samimi Mofakham
Sina Seiffee
Jinoos Taghizadeh
Saleh Tasbihi
Nasser Teymourpour

*"The sons of Adam are limbs of each other,
having been created of one essence.
When the calamity of time affects one limb,
the other limbs cannot remain at rest.*

*If thou hast no sympathy for the troubles of others
thou art unworthy to be called by the name of a human."**

Part of chapter 1, story 10 of the Gulistan; Saadi Shirazi, (1184 - 1283/1291)

Art is a cornerstone of culture and civilization. The cultural evolution of nations needs new horizons and this means that trading thoughts between nations and cultures must go on an odyssey of episteme -- and the metamorphosis of knowledge is based on "Callings."

In Persian culture, it is said that "a pinch of salt and a piece of bread" is all one needs to make an eternal and unconditional friendship and commitment. This has a history as old as time. In that single moment where you intersect time and place, history is made.

"Calling" is our "Salt and Bread." East and West have heeded the call to make a new relations without any materialistic expectations. This has been a long time coming.

Tarlan Rafiee, Yashar Samimi Mofakham

londonprintstudio is delighted to host Tehran Calling London, the second part of an exchange project between artists based in these two cities. In the summer of 2012, London Calling Tehran, a portfolio of work by seventeen London based artists, presented last year in 7samar Gallery, Tehran, was the first non-commercial visual art exchange between UK and Iran for decades. In compiling that show we aimed to initiate a modest exploration of the similarities and differences between our respective cities and the cultures they nurture. Tehran Calling London, a portfolio of work by twenty Iranian artists, is a fascinating response that reveals hidden facets of a complex society balanced between theocratic regulation, material consumerism and the search for personal and group identities. Tehran's artists employ imaginative visual and organisational strategies to create and distribute their work through underground and public networks. This portfolio, curated by Tarlan Rafiee and Yashar Samimi Mofakham, offers a tantalising and unique glimpse into that world.

John Phillips, Liz O'Sullivan

Twenty two Iranian artists are getting together to show the face of their city Tehran, in London.

London Calling, the song made by West London Punk Rock group *The Clash* in 1979, inspired a group of seventeen London artists to organize an exhibition of their works in 2012 in Tehran. The show, named *London Calling : Tehran*, was received by the Iranian -specially the artists- warmly. In response to this, Iranian artist-curators, *Tarlan Rafiee* and *Yashar Samimi Mofakham*; have organized an exhibition to be titled *Tehran Calling: London* to demonstrate the various aspects of their city Tehran to the British.

The decision of both groups was purely spontaneous and despite the governmental conflicts, was based on the better understanding of each other's people and their culture.

Iran and Britain's diplomatic relations, although after the Iranian revolution of 1979 kept slimming down, but the social and cultural relations between the people of the two nations have not stopped. *Tehran Calling: London*, the spontaneous move of the young Iranian artists, made out of their own modest budget is the latest of such relations.

Through various mediums - mainly digital photos and prints, each of the artists have strived to show an aspect of Tehran. Some of these- like the map of Tehran- are directly related to the city and many others are the reflection or the reaction of the artists to various layers of the city.

To call Tehran the city of a thousand layers is an apt term: a city with ten million people, four million cars and most polluted air. Yet its beautiful mountains and deserts and hundreds of villages make the life more bearable. A city with two contrasting lives; Its inner life with private parties, underground bands, women dressed in high fashion- no less than those in Paris and New York- and in its outer life people running around to make their end needs.

The look of each of the 22 artists at their city differs, some are personal and derive from their inner feelings and others are socio-critical, yet they are all related to their city, Tehran.

No matter how modest the Londoners or Tehrani's exhibitions are, they are the true people's cultural exchanges.

Parviz Tanavoli



Ali Alavi



Alavi's works playfully adapt 19th century photographs of Persian Royalty. He constructs images that address contemporary issues such as Nassir Al-Din Shah, the King of Iran who was assassinated in 1896, proudly displaying a "V" (victory) sign. Such manipulations comment on historic forms of representation and modern-day views on life and politics in Iran.

The title of this series, *The Forgotten*, is borrowed from a book by *Masoud Behnoud*, a prominent Iranian journalist. He says:

"The Forgotten Ones are not always people but events, moments of time and sometimes they are so real that you must give them space and time. The Forgotten Ones are proof that extraordinary events have happened. Let us suppose that on occasion we've turned the story to their liking, turned grey skies into blue, turned dead trees into green trees and maybe even sometimes planted trees in their empty gardens and sometimes given them love and sometimes sorrow."

Alavi holds an M.A. in illustration and received his B.A. in Painting from the Art University of Tehran. Alavi has participated in 19 group exhibitions across Iran, UK, United Arab Emirates, USA and Netherlands. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.

Azarakhsh Askari

Askari has withdrawn from publicly exhibiting her work because of potential confrontations. She is best known for her early work, which critically explored relationships of power and intimacy in everyday family life. These works attracted public attention because of the gravity of the issues they addressed. Her recent work explores radical political and social perspectives, which are at odds with dominant views and decency laws. This has led Askari to selectively present small-scale drawings and sketchbook works to a restricted yet sympathetic audience.

Azarakhsh has participated in 23 group shows throughout Iran, UK, Kuwait and Belgium. She works and lives in Tehran, Iran.



Mazdak Ayari



Ayari is a nationally celebrated documentary photographer whose work explores issues of class and inequality. This image is part of a series "*Behind the Scenes of the Iranian Wedding*" which depicts the highly ritualised shopping experience of the wedding, and in particular Tehran's most famous wedding shopping district Berlin Alley. Ayari's image of mannequins in a shop window is a reflection on rampant consumerism and social ritual. Ayari works and lives in Tehran, Iran.

Amin Davaie

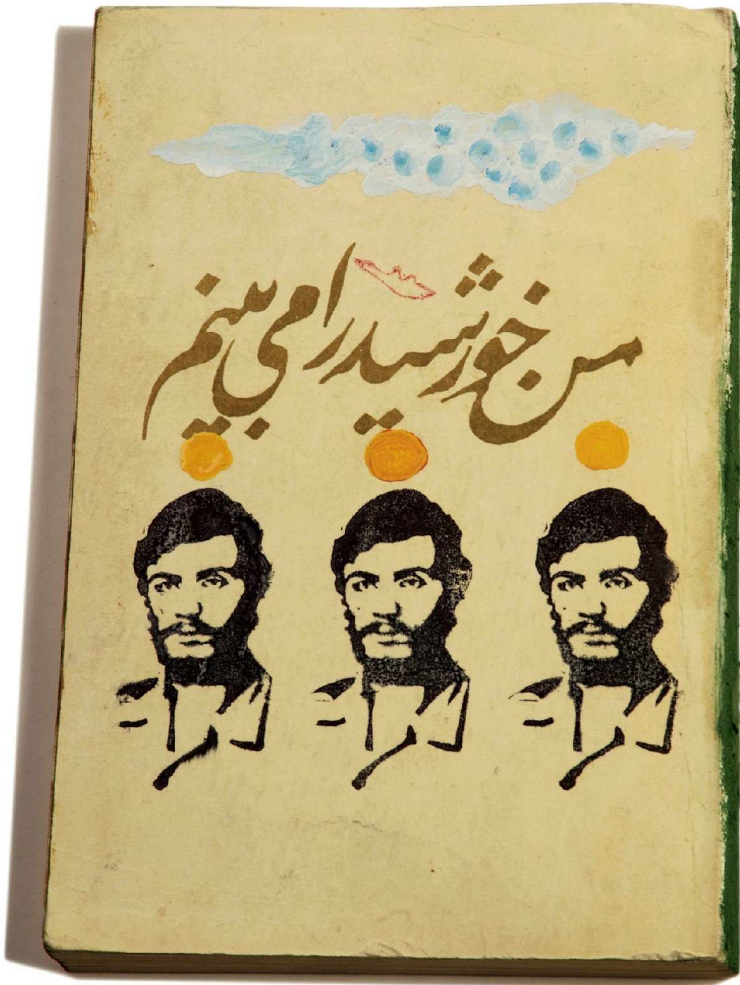
"Each location can create different settings according to the environmental conditions. Jumping is a word that is related to an experience which has some element of choice in it. But sometimes we are thrown and this is not necessarily related to a specific location. Being thrown is a completely compulsive act and it is the thrower's mistake to assume that he is giving a sense of meaning to the location.

Ultimately, the one who is thrown is the subject of that state and he is the one who changes the concept of location in favor of his own idea." Amin Davaie

Davaie began his career as a photographer in 2006. Over the last three years he has worked professionally in the fields of video, video installation and interactive installations. Davaie's works have been shown in solo shows, 19 group exhibitions and he work as received critical acclaim and awards in several international festivals. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.



Saeed Ensafi



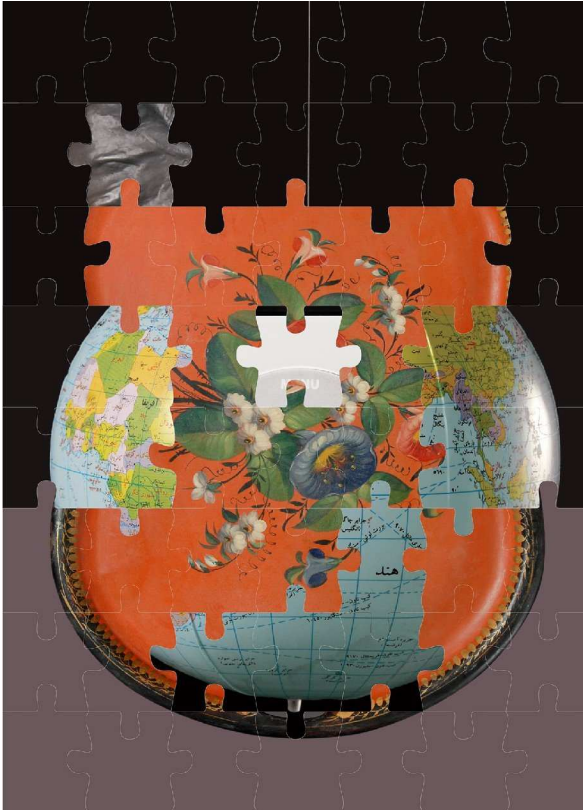
"When I was a child I gave my fish to my uncle's friend to keep it safe and return it one day with other fish. It was wartime and many soldiers left to fight. My uncle's friend was one of them, but he never came back, and neither did my fish. My childhood and adolescence coincided with one of the twentieth century's tragedies, the Iran-Iraq war. It was a war that was supposed to destroy Iran in three days; but it went on and on and stole my childhood from me. Persistently, to the awful sound of bombs, we repeated and repeated this slogan... 'war, war... until victory!' The war continued, victory was ours on TV, but when we were faced with this victory, a crowd carrying a coffin, a photo of a martyr in the cemetery and the mourning banners on city walls, we surrendered to another kind of truth. We saw no victory -- victory would have been final, but there was no end. The unfilled gap between the exaggerated sweet sense of victory and the bitter reflections of war, made a strange association in my mind, which stimulated this series of my drawings and installations. Sometimes they contain direct documentary references other times expressive statements in a surrealistic setting."

Saeed Ensafi

Ensafi studied Illustration and Graphic Design at the Architecture & Art Faculty of Islamic Azad University in Tehran from 1998-2005 as well as studying at Tehran's Documentary and Experimental Film Centre. He has held five solo exhibitions as well as 19 national and international group exhibitions. Ensafi has been the recipient of numerous awards and residencies in Iran and abroad.

He works as a freelance artist/curator and is a tutor of art in Tehran, Iran and Istanbul, Turkey.

Negar Farajiani



"I have always been fascinated with puzzles. There is confusion and a jumble of meanings. The gentle and considered manipulation of of the puzzle pieces allows the opportunity to disentangle and create new meaning. Using this concept, I have taken notions of old meanings and rearranged them to make a new sense in a new space." Negar Farajiani

Farajiani holds a B.A. in Graphic Design and Painting diploma from the School of Fine Arts. As an artist she has had six solo exhibitions in Iran and the USA and has participated in 24 group exhibitions in Iran, Brazil, Kuwait, UK and Japan. She is equally respected and known for her work as a freelance curator specializing in large scale public projects. She works and lives in Tehran.

Farhad Fozouni

"Tehran Poetry" is a poetic representation of the pleasures of everyday life. In Fozouni's series, Moshaddad*, in this work, Fozouni employs the art of text by writing poetic sentences on the map of Tehran which have deep personal meaning to him as a nostalgic reminder of days gone by. In this image he writes to an imaginary lover reminiscing about how they spent life in Tehran in those days.

"Those minibuses, were empty, just me and you – everyone else were extras; sometimes I was pretending to be asleep, my head on your shoulders, a kiss between them, like it was the whole world, the universe, two seats, the right hand window of that minibus." Farhad Fozouni

Fozouni has received critical acclaim as a recipient of numerous international awards and honours for his graphic design works. He is also celebrated as a media artist with a number of solo and international group exhibitions. He divides his career between living in Tehran and Berlin.



Amirali Ghasemi



Ghasemi's image forms part of a long-developing series where he paints iconic images of world cities and sets up a pop-up photographic studio for the public to partake in his work. He invites passers-by to choose a backdrop of their choice and to have their portrait taken.

The Azadi Tower (Freedom Tower) was built to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire as a gateway to the capital city of Tehran. The Tower was originally named the "Shahyad Tower" (meaning King's Memorial) and was renamed after the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Ghasemi founded Parkingallery, an independent project space in Tehran and an online platform for emerging Iranian artists. As an artist he has shown his photographs, videos, design works in various festivals and exhibitions internationally, and as a curator he has directed several exhibitions, workshops, and talks for Parkingallery projects, followed by his involvement in a variety of projects for institutions, project spaces and universities in Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Serbia, UK, Egypt, Turkey, United States, Brazil and India. He lives and works in Tehran, Iran.

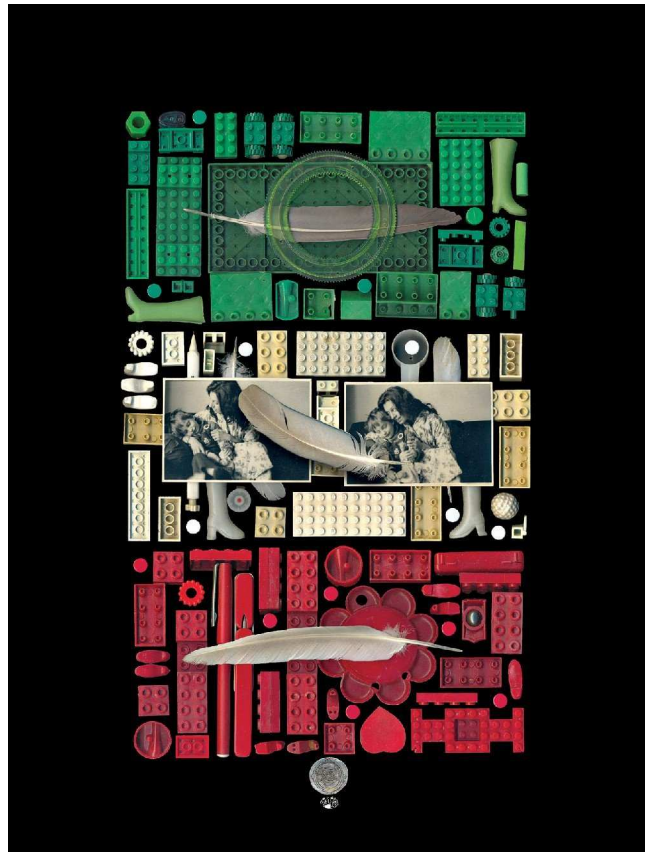
Alireza Ghazi



Ghazi creates work of mixed media collage that explores dramatic incidents in history, with a particular focus on how "props" of everyday life change to reflect aspects of the meaning of life and time.

"Objects gain new qualities as they lose their daily functions - a new essences, a particle of time. This series of works is based on this concept, I have taken personal items and tokens and arranged in the still frames to tell mini-stories which come from the heart of the time." Alireza Ghazi

Alireza Ghazi has a diploma in Graphic design and received his B.A. in photography. He is also a celebrated cinematographer and has more than 40 movies in his resumé as cinematographer and lighting designer over the last twelve years. Ghazi also is a professional photographer and has featured in numerous group exhibitions in Iran and Spain. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.



"... all these trivial things which make "The Heritage" were somehow inherited or will remain as a legacy from us, whether we like or not...the flag of my country, as a symbol of my nationality is part of what I inherited, whether I liked it or not. This flag represents the motherland I was born in, grew up, admired; regardless of any emblems on the white of the flag, I loved it like the mother who gave me the birth..." Amirali Golriz

Golriz is a poet and visual artist whose assembled objects evoke his generation's childhood configured in the dominant colours and structure of the national flag. In this image, the artefacts are a symbol of what remains of Iran for Golriz – elements of his memory, his childhood and his family.

Golriz is a well known writer and poet as well as a visual artist. Golriz has worked as an illustrator, editor, writer and translator for notable magazines in the intellectual scene of Iran. Despite being best known as a literary figure he is thriving as a professional visual artist, holding 11 solo exhibitions since 1995 and has participated in several group shows in Iran and abroad. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.

Sahand Hesamiyan

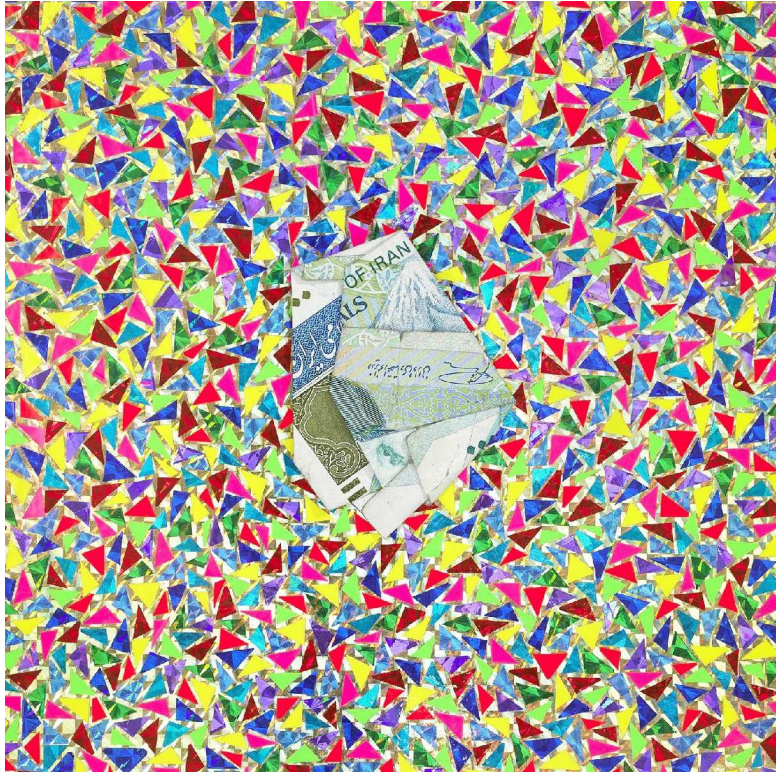
"This piece is driven from a type of dome, which has been used in southern parts of Iran, Iraq, and some other neighbour countries... The main characteristic of these domes is evolution from a simple polygon to a more complex and more mature polygon in its movement towards the top of the dome. In fact, these domes encounter a kind of evolution and development. The philosophy of the construction of these domes, step by step, associates spiritual return of humans toward Unitarianism... I have made this piece to honour memory of my father."
Sahand Hesamiyan

Hesamiyan received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture from Tehran University. Primarily interactive and derived from Islamic architecture, Hesamiyan's work explores the intense relationship between angles, symmetry and structure beyond the mere reflection and repetition of the forms. His welded steel sculptures are large dynamic abstract forms that playfully challenge the viewer's perception of Iranian Islamic art, eradicating its often-associated ornamental quality.

Hesamiyan was a member of the board for the 6th Tehran Contemporary Sculpture Biennial and a member of the judging panel for the Third Tehran Urban Sculpture Biennial. He has received national recognition for his contemporary Iranian sculptures. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.



Peyman Hooshmandzadeh



Hooshmandzadeh is one of the most celebrated Iranian photographers for both his social documentary and conceptual photographs.

In this series of works, Hooshmandzadeh takes everyday objects which have symbolic and cultural significance and manipulates their placement to make the viewer question why they all appear in the same setting. His use of symbolism and placement creates a visual friction that prompts questions of appropriateness, suitability and belonging.

In this work, a one-thousand Tomans bank note, images and texts are partly invisible except the name of Iran (in English and Persian) and Mt Damavand, the highest peak in Iran and the symbol of Iranian resistance against despotism and foreign rule in Persian poetry and literature.

Hooshmandzadeh worked as a photographer for various Iranian agencies before founding his own agency, 135PHOTOS. He has received many prestigious awards both in photography and also as a writer and also has exhibited his works worldwide in solo and group exhibitions. His reputation as a writer is equally celebrated, being considered one of the most famous young Iranian novelists with six published books and best sellers in Iran. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.

Amir Mobed



Mobed is considered one of Iran's most challenging conceptual and performance artists. His practice challenges social taboos and provokes social engagement. This work, part of a photography series, shows the artist in lingerie, provoking the male-dominated society; and is a reaction against the dominant power of the reactionary which is acting against the natural evolution of the society.

With ten solo and about 30 group exhibitions, he has been one of the most active figures of the Iranian post-revolutionary generation of conceptual artists. His artistic practice has long been identified with large indoor and outdoor installations and environmental pieces, both temporary and permanent. In his performances and installations, he persistently tries to maximize the involvement of the viewers. In recent years, in step with a more media-focused society, he has developed his practice to reflect more direct media like performances, while continuing to make sculptures and altered objects in his studio, Tehran. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.

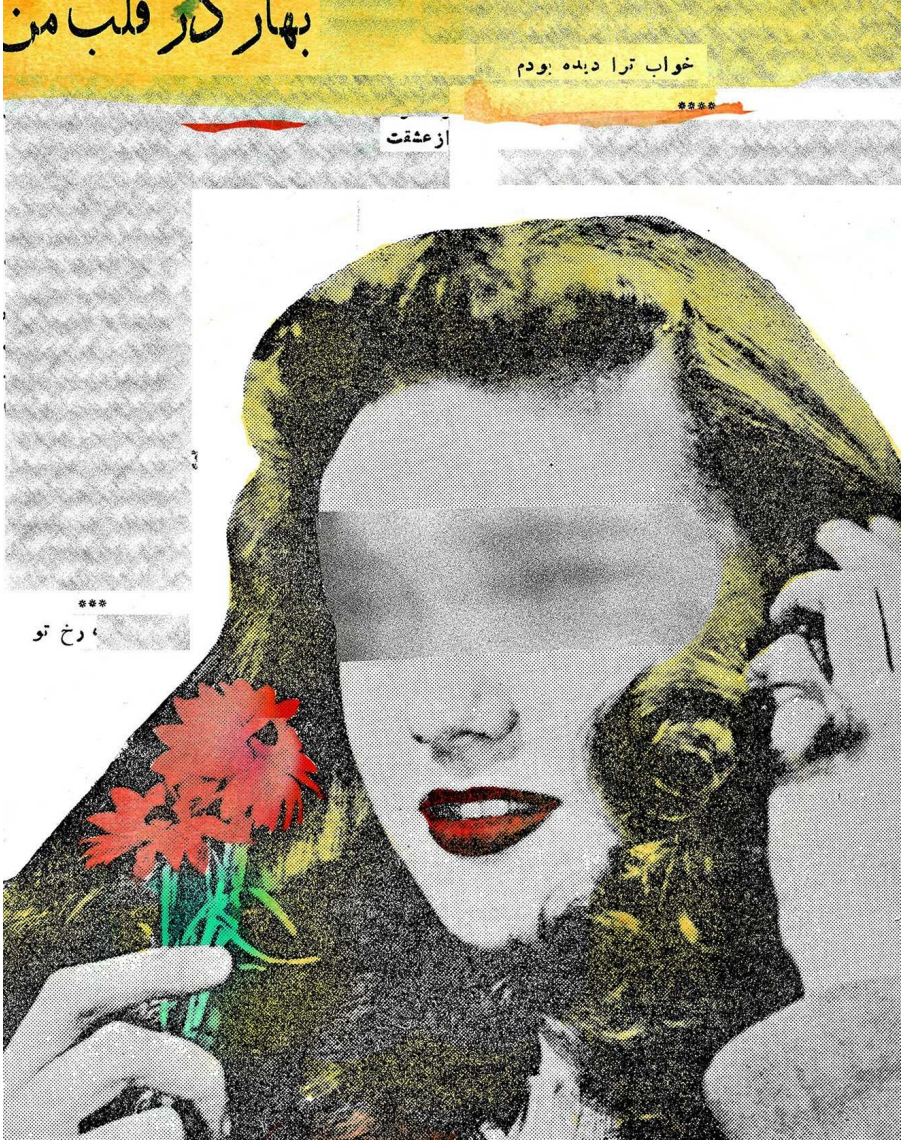
Behzad Nejadghanbar

"These days, instability and dependency prevail more than anything else on the soul of this city, Tehran and the country as a whole. There is an atmosphere of threat and intimidation and nothing seems natural. Threading is the question; who is the friend? What about the enemy? Who is against whom? Defending against what? Honestly, I am not looking for an answer to all of these questions, since we have been unable to find any answers for ages." Behzad Nejadghanbar

Nejadghanbar received his M.A. in Dramatic Literature and is respected as a writer, critic and translator of drama, cinema and visual arts. He is an autodidact and his photography and performance artist work has resulted in a number of solo and group shows alongside public performances. The manifestation of his works are usually a result of his research in sociology and psychology of society. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.



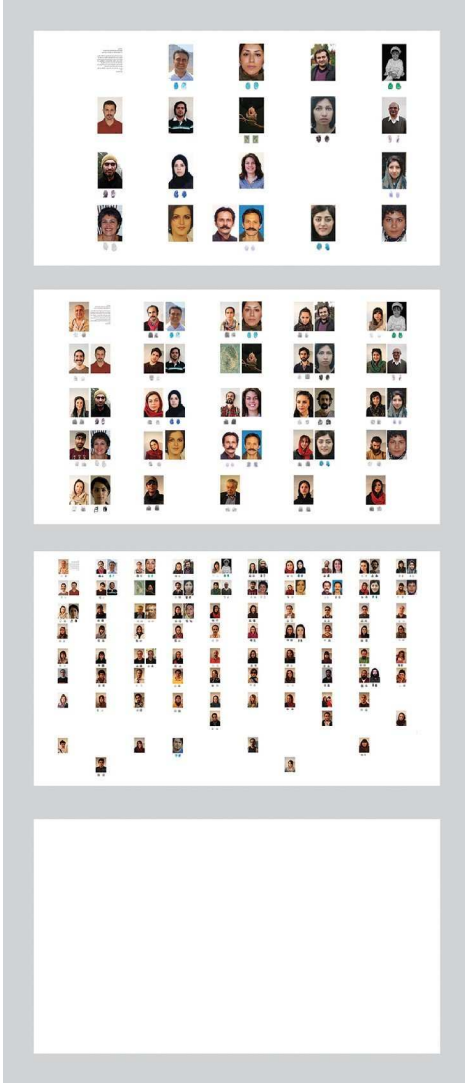
Tarlan Rafiee



Rafiee celebrates the spirit of the female and confronts the restrictions of women within contemporary Iranian society. "Spring in My Heart" was created as a symbol of respect and a celebration of spirit and strength of the young, stylish female activists who are now taking a major role and conquering the front lines of social movements in Iran and the middle eastern countries.

Rafiee has held four solo shows and more than 30 group exhibitions, nationally and internationally. Besides being celebrated as an artist and a well-known printmaker in Iran, she has substantial experience in curating and managing exhibitions alongside participating in a prestigious selection committees and judging for several exhibitions. She runs her own printmaking studio in Tehran. She works and lives in Tehran, Iran and London, UK.

Saeed Ravanbakhsh



*"... I don't know where the position of the artist would be after crossing borders, emigrating to other societies in the international community. Where he would be? Who would be next? Would he be situated next to the people who emigrated before him or after him? To which culture would he belong? Which society? Is this new society comprised of every single emigrant or from other places and communities? Is he going to be accepted or is he going to accept the new atmosphere?
There is no doubt that anywhere I go, a part of me remains in Tehran, but comprehending the bigger journey is the real challenge"*
Saeed Ravanbakhsh

The image presented is part of an ongoing project called "Interspatiality" where the artist requests fingerprints from expatriate Iranian artists and documents their responses.

Ravanbakhsh has a B.A in painting and an M.A. in illustration. He is the founder and director of Charsoo Artistic Centre, one of the leading private art institutes in Iran. He has held several solo shows in Iran and abroad and also more than 40 group shows nationally and internationally. He has published several articles in academic journals and art magazines in Iran. He lives and works in Tehran, Iran and USA.

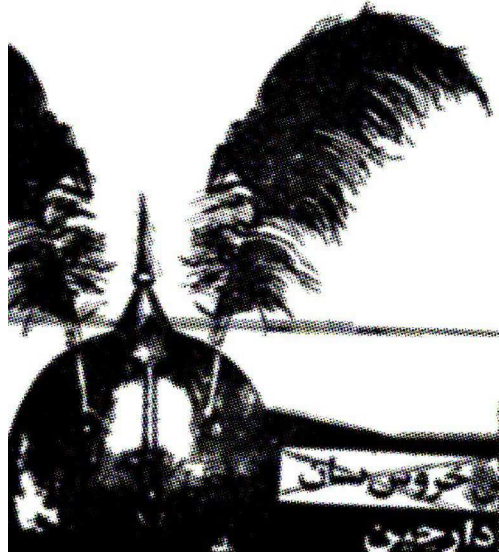
Nastaran Safaie



Safaie's sculptures made from assemblages of female attire, celebrate popular actions -- principally by women -- who wear provocative, Westernised clothing to confront the religious and traditional status quo. This image is part of the collection, "Legs", which includes sculptures and photographs; and has received critical acclaim from artists and reviewers, alike.

Safaie has a B.A in Graphic design but she is a well-known sculptor, especially for her ready-made sculptures. She uses a multitude of materials in her sculptures to express the concept to best effect. The introversion in her works is sometimes illustrated in such an obsessive way and the presence of the artist in her creations is so strong that it seems like the beholder is a voyeur interrogating her diary and private effects. She has held four solo exhibitions and more than 50 group shows in Iran and abroad. She works and lives in Tehran, Iran.

Yashar Samimi Mofakham



"Iranian society as a traditional society has always taken the concept of "new" and given it a particular appropriation through the lens of a unique culture. Iran has a particular talent for absorbing new ideas, however the manipulation of taking on new ideas and amending them to fit Iranian ideals is unique to countries in the Middle East. Therefore, this interpretation by "Authority" sits alongside the vast numbers of new concepts and ideas which enter society and have their own interpretations and meanings by the general public. General views of "the new" blend with the authoritative view of "the new" and this synthesis makes for extraordinary interpretations of symbols. Everything is exotic and everything is exotically meaningless. It is only when "the new" is given a traditional name/meaning/use that it has any hope at arriving at any meaning for the masses. When we observe this cycle of synthesis it is automatically broken due to the disparate message absorption between authority and general public. I have explored this complex issue by giving absurd names to meaningful objects in Iranian culture."

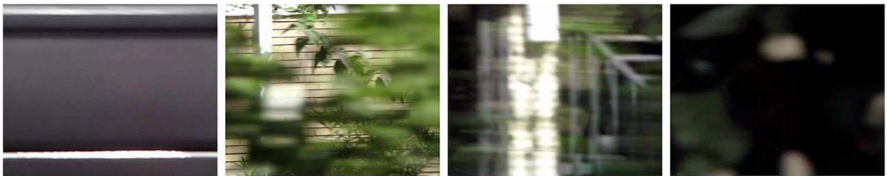
Yashar Samimi Mofakham

Samimi Mofakham is mostly known as a printmaker in the Iranian art scene. He has held 3 solo shows and more than 30 group shows in Iran and abroad. Mofakham is also known for his writings about contemporary art practice, printmaking and his curatorial projects and participating in selection and judgement panels for printmaking and painting exhibitions. His works are part of several private and public collections. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran and London, UK.

Sina Seifee

Everyday life in Tehran, like in most large cities, is dependent on transportation for long journeys – by car, bus or underground train. Usually as a citizen and passenger, one does not see much of the city, as journeys are obscured, blinkered or unobserved. In this work, Seifee has collected a series of arbitrary photographs from a taxi journey through Central Tehran – images which would evoke Tehrani memories from the city in which he lives. Like many large cities, one needs to be a tourist to really see the historical or natural sights.

Born in Tehran, after receiving his B.S. in Applied Mathematics, he began as a post-graduate student at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. His works cover interdisciplinary practices in the fields of computer art, video, performance and painting. Sina has had one solo video installation and 18 groups shows in Iran, Germany and Lithuania. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran and Cologne, Germany.

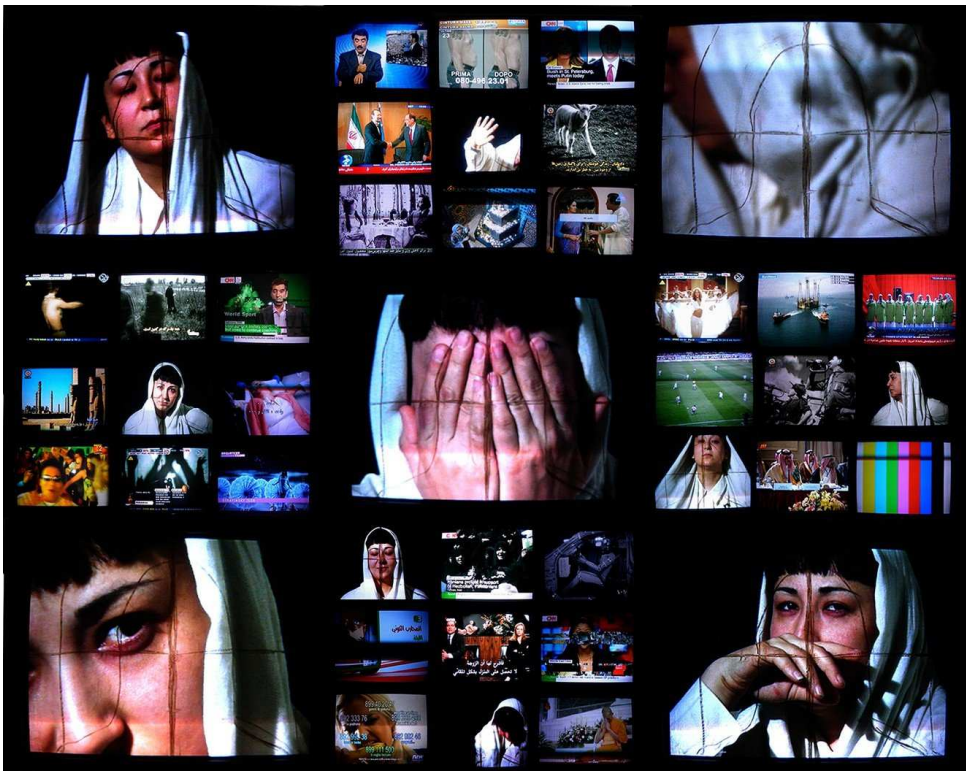


Jinoos Taghizadeh

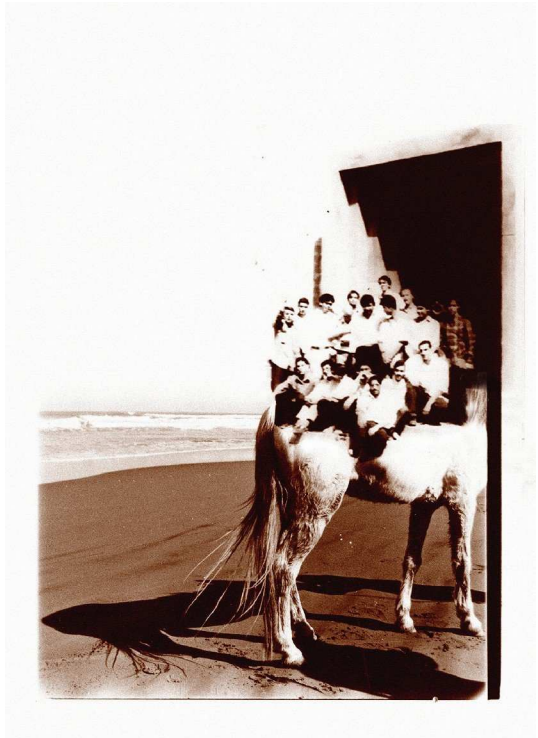
Taghizadeh's works explore socio-political matters such as domination, oppression, intimidation, evasion and resistance. This work is a video message with the artist transmitting a message to a friend. The piece starts with "We are doing well – just a mild coma, which will pass soon..." progressing to "I'm still here, beneath the ground, I am unavailable at this time and all other routes are busy."

Her final message is "That's all". The video is interspersed with footage of Tehran. The construction of the piece reflects Taghizadeh's initial happiness and feeling of promise regarding changes to society, only to have them progressively deteriorate after trying every [metaphorical] door with neither success nor solution to a way forward.

Jinoos Taghizadeh received her B.A. in sculpting and has diplomas in Graphic design, Dramatic literature and Pottery. She is a well-known artist in Iran for her early installations and conceptual works which were first of their kind in Iran. She held nine solo shows in Iran and Switzerland and 10 solo performances which were seminal works introducing performance art to Iran's art scene. She was member of the selection committee for 4th Sculpture Biennial of Tehran, member of managing board of Iranian Sculptor's Society and member of Board of Editors for several art magazines. Her writing features in many art magazines and art books such as Art Tomorrow and Tehran Art Today. She works and lives in Tehran.



Saleh Tasbihi



Tasbihi employs graphic satire in his work. This piece depicts a number of people fleeing the land in a, somewhat, inappropriate manner. Iranians have emigrated over the past 30 years – from all classes of society – in search of “a better land.”

Some emigrants have relocated and reached very high positions in other countries and have assimilated to new societies and cultures. For others, there is a feeling of being “strangers with no land,” and an overwhelming sense of 30 years of homelessness.

Tasbihi is an illustrator, graphic designer and photographer. He is also known as a writer for his published articles and short stories in magazines and newspapers in Iran. He has also published two books, one with his illustrations and the other, “*Flooded House*” his own short stories. He is the director of Garte, a weekly internet magazine focusing on graphic design. He had held several exhibitions in Iran and abroad. He works and lives in Tehran, Iran.

Nasser Teymourpour

"Identity and immigration are two issues with deep ambiguity within them, sometimes one without the other is meaningless and sometimes together they represent no meaning. At times you'll come across one of them when following the other one and at times one shows itself through the other. Both issues grasp the society when one least expects it. As soon as you learn a new word, you obtain a new identity and once you start liking a new image you have migrated. Assessing the value of this topic or criticising it is not within the purpose of my artwork. I have simply put it in front of me and thought about it. In this work, I have used the identity of a new method of writing which I think has carried out the most blunt attacks against the written Farsi, and with no difficulties has conceived within our young society's womb and will live for a while, and with no doubt it will become a part of our cultural identity. Here the word "identity" has been represented with a new identity, an identity which is about to migrate from an ancient society to a post-ancient one."
Nasser Teymourpour

Teymourpour received his B.A. in Design. He has experience in design, media and photography, but is best known as a photographer and conceptual artist. His work, "Chamar," featured at the first Iranian Conceptual Art exhibition at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. He has held 2 solo exhibitions and has participated in more than 20 group shows. He works and lives in London, UK.

hoviyať ;)



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