

## RASSEGNA VIDEO

### TREIBSAND

#### DVD MAGAZINE ON CONTEMPORARY ART

Analysing While Waiting (For Time To Pass): Contemporary Art In Tehran

Concept: Parastou Forouhar, Susann Wintsch

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**1**

**A Few Centimeters Above Sea-Level (Neda Razavipour / Shahab  
Fotouhi), Documentation of Installation, 2002, 2:29**

Seven bottles anchored to the ceiling, each filled with clear water and containing a goldfish, are floating in a bathtub. When Neda Razavipour (\*1969 in Tehran) and Shahab Fotouhi (\*1980 in Yazd) tint the bathwater with black ink, the fish swim towards the light. The action is relayed by CCTV to monitors facing the street in the windows of Teheran's Gallery 13. In the dark, passers-by are attracted by the light and so repeat the instinctive action of the fish.

**2**

**A Generation Which Cannot Speak (Soghra Zare Anaghezi),  
Statement, 2005, 3:23**

Speaking in August 2005, Soghra Zare (\*1960 in Tonkabon) describes the concept for a solo exhibition at the House of Artists in Tehran. Shortly before that, she had acquired the use of a studio that had previously been an obstetrics and gynaecology clinic. There, she found a number of medical instruments and several notebooks with patients' addresses. This gave her the idea of interviewing people who had been born in the same year as herself and in the very place where she was now working. The simultaneity of place and time provides a useful method of portraying the individual and collective traits of society. The project, however, could not be realised in the initially envisaged form.

**3**

**Aboureyhan Selfportrait: Day And Night (Jinoos Taghizadeh), Video  
(Excerpt), 2004, 7:52**

For some time now, Jinoos Taghizadeh (\*1971 in Tehran) has been creating a series of works with the title „Aboureyhan Selfportrait“. In them, she describes herself through the mirror of a micro-geography of objects and relationships. For the production of „Day and Night“, the artist tied a camera around her neck to record one-hour sessions of herself moving around her own home and studio in Aboureyhan Street. The uncut video

footage shows the actions of a protagonist of whom all we see is the occasional hand or foot, while the sound of her breathing close to the microphone gives an impression of exhaustion.

**4**

**Bodiless I (Mehraneh Atashi), Photographies, 2004, 1:40**

In „Bodiless I“ Mehraneh Atashi (\*1980 in Tehran) has created a portrait of a group of men practising the Persian martial art of Varzesh-e Pahlavani (the ‚sport of heroes‘) in a traditional zurkaneh (‚house of strength‘). The men use chains, wooden blocks and cudgels weighing up to 30kg for body-building. The supreme goal of this physical regime, however, is to achieve spiritual purity and a heroic soul. To this end, the athletes‘ ritual exercise is accompanied by drumming, religious chants and recitations from epic literature. Women are barred from entering the zurkaneh. Mehraneh Atashi reveals their hidden presence by working with mirrors in which we see the artist performing in a choreography designed for her and her camera.

**5**

**Clothes For Gabriel (Behnam Kamrani), Video, 2006, 5:18**

A translucent robe, light as a feather, hangs between two trees, fluttering in the wind and catching the sunlight. Time and again it seems to burst into flame, only to fall back into position completely unscathed. In his video, Behnam Kamrani (\*1968 in Shiraz) recalls how the archangel Gabriel gave ethical guidance to the prophet Mohammed. According to the Hadith, which recount Mohammed’s sayings and deeds, Mohammed demanded that Gabriel reveal his true form. When he did so, the prophet lost consciousness, for Gabriel, also known as ‚the peacock of angels‘, spread his six wings, each bearing another hundred wings, with just one of which he covered up the sun. In „Clothes for Gabriel“, the intangible and the sublime are portrayed again with a tenderness and simplicity that brings the human essence to the forefront.

**6**

**Coffee Shop Ladies (Amirali Ghasemi), Documentation of Interactive Piece, 2004-05, 7:35**

Amirali Ghasemi (\*1980 in Tehran) is an artist who also runs the Parkingallery in Teheran, an independent art space. In his interactive work „Coffee Shop Ladies“ he blanks out the hands and faces of young women, art students, chatting in cafes, to protect their identity. By clicking on the blank spaces they are transformed into amorphous body shapes and a

soundtrack is activated on which their everyday gossip and chitchat can be heard. Young men appear in some of the photos, but their appearance is not censored and there is no way of finding out anything about them. In this way, the artist makes an insightful commentary on modern society in which the politics of gender – the gaze directed at the woman as mystery-shrouded object – continues even in new media. We confirm this by playing along with it.

## **7**

### **Cultural Shift: To Be Continued (Alireza Sami Azar), Statement, 2006, 9:14**

Art historian and architect Alireza Sami Azar (\*1961 in Teheran) was director of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts from 1999 to 2005 and teaches at the recently opened Mahe-Mehr Institute for Culture and Art. During his term as director, he frequently concentrated on exhibiting and acquiring the work of young artists, and on promoting them in the international art world. His endeavours were facilitated by the then prevailing climate of reform in which the country's burgeoning art scene managed to find a foothold at home and abroad. In his statement, Alireza Sami Azar describes this development.

## **8**

### **Depression (Rozita Sharaf Jahan), Video, 2004, 7:26**

Rozita Sharaf Jahan (\*1962 in Teheran) works as an artist and also runs the Teheran Azad Gallery, one of Iran's leading galleries of contemporary art, together with Mohsen Nabizadeh. In her video „Depression“ she shows a woman sitting on a child's swing. The foremost emphasis is not on the figure, but on the vertiginous view of a world distilled so that the ground is reflected in the sky and the sky in the ground. All that can be heard is the wind, the creaking hinges and the rattling chains – a backdrop of sound that heightens the eery silence that seems to have befallen the woman.

## **9**

### **Have A Good Night (Shahrazad Darafsheh), Video, 2006, 3:51**

In her video Shahrazad Darafsheh (\*1982 in Teheran) shows a young woman preparing for bed. As she turns on the tap to wash, the sounds of partying can be heard in the stillness of the night. To tired ears, they are distorted into empty chatter, ring-tones and dance music. By contrast, the beads of water on her skin and on the metal of the washbasin inspire contemplative calm.

## **10**

### **Ideologically Homeless (Haleh Anvari), Statement, 2006, 7:47**

Born in Iran, the artist, writer and journalist Haleh Anvari (\*1963 in Tehran) grew up in England and has been living in Iran since 1993. As an intellectual from a Muslim background her thinking straddles eastern and western culture, yet finds no firm foothold because these two worlds refuse to meet.

## **11**

### **In Quest Of Identity (Ruyin Pakbaz), Statement, 2006, 8:41**

Ruyin Pakbaz (\*1939 in Tehran), art and art history professor, has been researching Iranian art since the 1970s and is currently working on an extensively updated new edition of the Encyclopedia of Art. In his statement he describes the blind spot in contemporary Iranian art that arises from a lack of engagement with the influences of European modernism, thwarting the development of an independent aesthetics based on an exploration of its own visual tradition – in complete contrast, incidentally, to the situation in contemporary poetry.

## **12**

### **Living Room (Nazgol Ansarinia), Video, 2005, 6:00**

In a long still shot in which we initially see only two electrical sockets, Nazgol Ansarinia (\*1979 in Tehran) shows the bare wall of a room. Gradually, we begin to discern the faint traces of discoloration left by a large picture frame, then a crack running across the wall, and later still more imprints of pictures. The camera collects and crossfades the inconspicuous traces of life that have inscribed themselves quietly but visibly upon the emptiness.

## **13**

### **Mahmoud's Driving School (Mahmoud Bakhshi-Moakhar), Drawings, 2006, 2:46**

Mahmoud Bakhshi-Moakhar (\*1977 in Tehran) reflects on the phenomenon of terrorism by way of example of an official instruction book for learner drivers. His drawings adopt the same didactic visuals, but the accompanying texts have been changed. The question as to who has right of way becomes superfluous when the other drivers have lost their nerve at

the sight of a murder committed in broad daylight. In another instance, the traffic is flowing smoothly even though a petrol station has just exploded. In yet another, a criminal plot is foiled because the traffic regulations have snarled up the time schedule. And so any question of ethics or morality depends entirely on the prevailing structures.

**14**

**Monologue Under White Light (Samira Eskandarfar), Video, 2005, 10:52**

A young couple lives a ghost-like existence until they are accidentally deleted. Samira Eskandarfar (\*1980 in Tehran) presents the private sphere as an isolated world governed by absurd and highly sensitive symbioses. The absence of any public space in which debate and discourse might be cultivated turns inwards, undermining the community.

**15**

**Orientalist, Terrorist, Occidentalism (Khosrow Hassanzadeh), Statement, 2005, 2:39**

Khosrow Hassanzadeh (\*1963 in Tehran) speaks of three projects that can be regarded as a trilogy. The central part consists of a series of large-format silkscreen prints: portraits of the Hassanzadeh family, each with their own personal icons. The nuanced and tender portrayal of the individuals – the film shows the artist sitting before his mother's hands – contrasts starkly with the title „Terrorist“, which reflects western attitudes to the „Orient“. The third project is a work in progress examining the term „Occidentalism“; an ethnological and ethnographic description of the west from an eastern point of view.

**16**

**Port (Khosro Khosravi / Farid Jafari), Video, 2003, 6:25**

An abandoned jetty on the Caspian Sea becomes an outlook point for walkers. Towards the end, the picturesque setting of the video „Port“ by Khosro Khosravi (\*1965 in Tehran) and Farid Jafari (\*1980 in Tehran) transforms into a comparative study of the essence and nature of poetry itself: A voice off recites a verse from the „Shahname“ (Book of Kings) of Abul Qasem Ferdowsi (\*939) describing the interminable battles of mythical Persia in some 50,000 verses. But as the pathos of the national epic is absorbed by the quiet poetry of „Port“, it descends into absurdity.

**17**

**Sacrifice (Sadegh Tirafkan), Video, 2003, 4:11**

The works of Sadegh Tirafkan (\*1965 in Iraq) address the perceived role of the male in terms of the shared cultural heritage of Middle Eastern countries. The video triptych „*Sacrifice*“ explores the cult of sacrifice, drawing on the figure of Rustam in Ferdowsi's „*Shahname*“ and the Judaeo-Christian figure of Abraham. Whereas Rustam unwittingly killed his own son in fulfilment of his duty as a warrior, Abraham deliberately sets out to sacrifice his son at the behest of God, only to be spared this fate precisely because of his unconditional obedience. In „*Sacrifice*“, Tirafkan outlines his own fascination with the hero-myth, combining the elegant imagery of wrestling bodies with a soundtrack that disturbingly undermines the myth by evoking the clash of bloody or sweating flesh.

**18**

**Spring Collection (Nina Ghaffari), Fashion Show, 2006, 2:17**

Designer Nina Ghaffari (\*1981 in Hattisburg, Mississippi) creates generously cut garments that allow complete freedom of movement, many of which can be worn by either men or women. In her women's collection she seduces the eye with glamorous textiles of baroque extravagance. She always adheres to the dress codes required by Islamic principles of modesty, which challenge her to explore new avenues in creating possibilities of beauty and elegance.

**19**

**TehranAvenue And Popular Culture (Sohrab Mahdavi), Statement, 2006, 6:46**

Sohrab Mahdavi (\*1963 in Tehran) is co-editor of TehranAvenue.com, the bilingual online magazine for urban art and culture. The term „sidewalk“ sums up the underlying concept: TehranAvenue neither feeds on criticism of the present government nor laments marginalisation. Instead, its intellectual challenge lies in inventing a different aesthetic approach beyond the mainstream of popular culture, which seeks the reality of the unfinished, the provisional and the ambiguous.

**20**

**Terrorist (Arash Hanaei), Drawings, 2006, 2:30**

In „*Terrorist*“, Arash Hanaei (\*1978 in Tehran) charts the changing mindset of the perpetrator in a series of drawings done in the style of a comic strip. The protagonist sees himself as a spy in the mould of a Humphrey Bogart or Al Pacino character, with a code of honour and professional ethos that include quality and style. Which is why he is so fond of his old Tessina 35

mini-camera, which bends the light onto the film at an angle of 45°. The way the camera is constructed requires considerable skill on the part of the photographer, who has to shoot the motif indirectly. The fact that today's cutting-edge technology would make things so much easier is an insult to his dignity.

## 21

### **The Room (Hamed Sahihi), Video, 2006, 2:58**

A young woman is immersed in reading a book. Not only her thoughts are soaring, but also the chair and the figure huddled in it. Only the carpet remains firmly on the ground, for it is only in fairytales that carpets can fly. In his video „The Room“, Hamed Sahihi (\*1980 in Tehran) continues a theme that he developed in a 2005/2006 series of paintings in which the reader is surrounded by huge caterpillars, flies or mystical creatures: threats from which inner exile provides protection, or perhaps visions spawned by the reading matter itself. In „The Room“, by contrast, literature expands the space, suddenly opening up breadth and distance.

## 22

### **The Upper Edge Of The Well (Simin Keramati), Video, 2002/03, 4:41**

Clouds drift across the sky. A young woman bends into the picture and notices an imaginary person – the viewer – far down, outside the frame of the video. Bewildered, she asks what the situation is and reaches out a helping hand. In spite of being urged to jump, the person does not manage to break free. The young woman becomes exasperated and exhausted. In *The Upper Edge Of The Well* Simin Keramati (\*1970 in Tehran) outlines the ambiguity of the elite as an arrogant group with no interest in the lives of others. By reversing the roles, we are invited to look for our own horizons instead of wearing ourselves out raging against the system.

## 23

### **This Is The Story Of Our Past And Present (Iman Afsarian), Statement, 2006, 5:28**

Painter Iman Afsarian (\*1975 in Tehran) is co-editor of the art magazine *Herfe Honarmand* which showcases emerging Iranian and international art and publishes theoretical treatises. Afsarian's thought-provoking statement begins with a parabel about three villagers who want to settle in the city. They have different strategies of integration, but all of them fail because they do not take their own identity into account. Identity, according to Afsarian, is always overshadowed by the dominant culture, whose representatives let their gaze wander over the so-called periphery, but the

only treasures they discover are those that underpin their own point of view.

24

**Undistributed Packages (Mehran Mohajer), Photographies, 2005, 2:25**

In *Undistributed Packages*, Mehran Mohajer (\*1964 in Tehran) documents a handful of books gathering dust in the store-room of a publishing house. Stacked into little piles, they are wrapped in discarded galley proofs on which almost illegible texts have been printed over each other. Some of the proofs are torn and tattered, so that they no longer protect the books properly, while others are crumpled and loosely scattered in bizarre arrangements. This work recalls the many newspapers and periodicals founded in the reform phase of the Iranian regime and later closed down. They still exist between the closed covers of books and in codified texts.

25

**Untitled (Iman Afsarian), Paintings, 2003-06, 1:25**

The paintings by Iman Afsarian (\*1975 in Tehran) evoke the atmosphere of dwelling places that appear to belong to the past. The inhabitants are not there and some of the rooms are empty. Other pictures show interiors with the patina of passing time: crystal chandeliers, rows of dark wooden chairs, lace cloths, heavy, dark red sofas. A diffuse light falling through high windows recalls melancholy afternoons when time flows gently, trickling away.

26

**Untitled (Ghazaleh Hedayat), Video, 2005, 6:37**

In the video "Untitled", a young woman gazes at us expressionlessly, without even blinking. Tears well up in her rigid, uninterrupted gaze ^ a physical reaction designed to protect the eye from dryness. Ghazaleh Hedayat (\*1979 in Tehran) puts the viewer in the uncomfortable position of becoming the object of an extremely cool, aloof and endlessly judgmental gaze. In the installation the work is shown as a video loop.

**27**

**Untitled (Elahe Heidari), Paintings, 2005, 2:37**

On a rooftop in Tehran the artist (\*1968 in Tehran) shows us a series of portraits. We see faces rendered in pastose greyish brown applied roughly and laconically with a palette knife. Only a hint of a black hair or veil indicates femininity. The narrowed eyes gaze at us with aloof detachment, curious but not unfriendly. Against the blue background the faces are like meteorites in the landscape – impossible to overlook, but with an inscrutability that leaves no room for projection.

**28**

**Untitled (Ahmad Morshedloo), Paintings, 2005-06, 2:19**

Ahmad Morshedloo (\*1973 in Mashhad) paints figures in box-like spaces and corridors, against stark and often dark walls or glaring light. Some of them seem to have fallen into a deep sleep of exhaustion almost akin to death. Others stand idly, their arms hanging, their vulnerable bodies and faces turned towards the viewer. These figures, many of them life-size, confront the viewer like a silent assembly, seemingly waiting.

**29**

**What Film? (Samira Eskandarfar), Paintings, 2006, 0:51**

In her triptych “What Film?” Samira Eskandarfar (\*1980 in Tehran) juxtaposes tree stills from the films *Amateur* (France 1993) and *Cabaret* (USA, 1972). She puts words in the mouths of the characters Martin Donovan, Elina Löwensohn and Liza Minelli that distill the original, deepening and melding the existing levels of meaning to create an inexorable link between memory and (political) identity. It is important to have a general idea of the the plot of the films, but not of the scenes that Eskandarfar quotes. Those who remember nothing might be killed because they jeopardise the human community by consciously or unconsciously failing to notice the signs of the times.

**30**

**What Has Befallen Us, Barbard? (Barbard Golshiri), Video (Excerpt), 2002, 5:45**

A young person in a shirt stands in front of a white surface. After a few seconds he or she bows the head forwards and starts cutting the long hair with blunt scissors. Occasionally, he/she rearranges the locks that have fallen to the floor. The resulting painting – and indeed the entire process –

is redolent of Jackson Pollock's dripping technique. The Abstract Expressionist gesture of treating the aleatory brushstroke as a subconscious message becomes the subject of irony in this work by Barbad Golshiri (\*1982 in Teheran) in which he shows an almost identical result being achieved simply by cutting hair and using the material for other purposes.

### **31**

#### **Waiting For Godot (Farhad Fozouni), Documentation of Chatroom-Performance, 2005, 4:51**

*Waiting for Godot* by printmaker and artist Farhad Fozouni (\*1979 in Tehran) is a parody of the play by Samuel Beckett (1948). In the play, the characters are waiting for a certain Godot, and since their aim appears to depend entirely on this meeting, they spend their time in a fragmentary exchange of arbitrary conversation involving other figures. Beckett saw his dialogues as poetry that has traversed nothingness. Just how true to life Beckett's notion of communication is – especially with a view to the internet – is highlighted by Fozouni in the chatroom of a dating site. He enters in search of Godot and writes his play in collaboration with users who just happen to enter and participate.