

EQUINOX GALLERY
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where / between

With works by Hossein Amanat, Nazgol Ansarinia, Soheila Esfahani, Arash Hanaei, Hamidreza Jadid, Mandana Moghaddam, Neda Razavipour, Hossein Valamanesh.

Curated by Pantea Haghighi

June 4 to July 9, 2016

Opening reception: Saturday June 4th, 2 to 4pm

Equinox Gallery, Vancouver

Equinox Gallery is pleased to present **where/between**, an exhibition featuring works of eight contemporary artists of Iranian heritage whose artistic practices explore the complexities of transnational identity in the contemporary world. Curated by Pantea Haghighi, the exhibition opens on Saturday June 4th at Equinox Gallery and continues until July 9th.

The idea of the bridge is an underlying concept in this exhibition. It serves both as a visual motif and a metaphoric analogue, occupying a moment of disconnect as these practices unsettle notions of locale and cultural identity. As a physical conduit, a bridge can straddle two places, providing passage from one to the next. As a set of ideals, the bridge evokes liberation and linkage, constituting a mode by which impossible unknowns may be freely traversed.

A shared history of migration and a learned experience of intellectual, social and physical fragility are common threads throughout the works in the exhibition. Encompassed in the experience of migration, whether forced or chosen, is the idea of *interstice*, a contradictory place of movement and ambivalence that absorbs and witnesses the production of cultural meaning when it is being disrupted by outside forces. The works in the exhibition seek to reflect on the ways in which cultural signifiers and global identities have become indeterminate and mutable, particularly as they move between and beyond borders, reflecting divergent implications of the notion of home. **where/between** poses open-ended questions, particularly in relation to how creative freedom can be used to explore transnational and geopolitical concerns centered around observations and engagements with cultural identity and social agency.

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PANTEA HAGHIGHI

Pantea Haghighi is an independent curator and founder of Republic Gallery, Vancouver. Curatorial projects include the *Utopias Constructed* series from 2014-2018, *Mirrored Explosions* at West Vancouver Museum in April 2016, and *Unsent Dispatches from the Iranian Revolution, 1978-1979* at Presentation House Gallery in 2005. Pantea Haghighi was born in Iran and now lives and works in West Vancouver.

HOSSEIN AMANAT

Hossein Amanat established his reputation as a young graduate in 1966 by winning a nationwide competition to design the Shahyad Freedom Monument in Tehran, which has since become the symbol of modern Iran. This first architectural project led to the opportunity to create some of Iran's most prestigious modern buildings including handicraft centres, universities, libraries and a town on the Caspian Sea. He also designed the embassy of Iran in Beijing, one of the distinguished buildings in the diplomatic quarter of that city. In all his projects, Hossein demonstrates his particular skill for the application and combination of diverse cultural themes in the creation of distinctive designs. He has received numerous design awards and has lectured extensively on art and architecture at cultural and educational institutions and conferences. Hossein Amanat lives and works in Vancouver, BC.

NAZGOL ANSARINIA

Born in 1979 in Tehran, Nazgol Ansarinia graduated from the London College of Communication in 2001 before taking a Master of Fine Arts at the California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco in 2003. Her work examines the systems and networks that underwrite her daily life while dissecting and recasting everyday objects and events to draw out their relationships to the contemporary Iranian experience. Ansarinia's practice is sited upon the fraught faultline between the private realm and its wider socioeconomic context. Even as its concerns have shifted from the intimacy of domesticity to an interest in the built environment, it has maintained an engagement with physicality and materiality. Still, the traces of lived experience—of owners, of residents—remain important. As a whole, the works explore how local iterations of a culture might act as a fulcrum and flashpoint for the hopes and fears of people living in an increasingly, albeit asymmetrically, globalized world. Ansarinia has been featured in a number of exhibitions around the world. Her work is included in the collections of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) in Australia; the British Museum and Tate Modern, London; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Devi Art Foundation, Delhi. Nazgol Ansarinia lives and works in Tehran, Iran.

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SOHEILA ESFAHANI

Soheila Esfahani was born in Tehran, moving to Canada in 1992 where she has practiced as an artist and educator for more than ten years. After receiving her BA in Fine Arts from the University of Waterloo, she completed her Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Western Ontario. Esfahani has received numerous awards and grants including the Research/Creation Grant in Fine Arts through Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada. Her work is represented in public and private collections including the Canada Council's Art Bank. Esfahani's current art practice navigates the terrains of *cultural translation* and draws on her experience of living in both Western and Eastern (Iranian) cultures. Her recent practice explores the processes involved in cultural transfer and transformation by exploring the theoretical frameworks of Walter Benjamin's concept of translation as a departure from the original and Homi Bhabha's notions of the *Third Space* and *in-betweenness*. Esfahani lives and works in Ontario.

ARASH HANAEI

Arash Hanaei was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1978. In 2002, Arash received his BA in Photography from Azad University of Art, Tehran, Iran. Since 2008, Hanaei has been portraying the city of Tehran using digital drawing series to dissect the shifting pattern of streets and their inherent contradictions. Based upon his own documentary photographs, the artist interprets the capital city's constant transformation and the chaotic superimposition of dissonant layers with formal austerity. Primarily black-and-white or greyish-green, the drawings reduce the original amount of information on the photographic image to a minimum and direct the viewer's attention to the cultural and geopolitical underpinnings inscribed in the urban landscape. Selected solo exhibitions of Arash include *Miscellaneous*, Aaran Gallery, Tehran, Iran (2010); *Capital*, Aaran Gallery, Tehran, Iran (2009); *The Benefits of Vegetarianism*, Silk Road Gallery, Tehran, Iran (2004).

HAMIDREZA JADID

Hamidreza Jadid was born in Iran in 1974. He received his BA art the Tehran University of Art in 2002, and recently completed his MFA at Simon Fraser University in 2013. Jadid has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Iran and Canada. His paintings evoke a vacillation between abstract and figural, architectonic and animistic, familiar and strange. His works are temporal in nature, built up over several layers of painted sketches and drafts; Jadid then scratches through the acrylic, excavating dense images that harken back to traditional forms while evoking organic textures. Hamidreza Jadid lives and works in Vancouver, BC.

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MANDANA MOGHADDAM

Mandana Moghaddam was born in Tehran in 1962. At the age of 17, the Islamic Republic came to power in a revolution that later led to her father's execution as a member of the Shah's army. She was raised in the often hostile environment of Tehran, and was in her early twenties during the majority of the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88). Her education was disrupted and as a result of hostile conditions, and she was forced to flee the country and was granted asylum in Sweden. Moghaddam is well known for her installation work. Her exposure to the political unrest, strong nationalism, violence and the instability of the Iranian Revolution impact her work significantly. Working with these themes, Moghaddam creates works that attempt to bridge cultural boundaries, inspire intercultural dialogue, and memorialize oftentimes contentious aspects of Iranian life. Moghaddam currently lives and works in Tehran and Göteborg.

NEDA RAZAVIPOUR

Neda Razavipour lives and works in Tehran. She studied fine arts at the university of Paris I/Sorbonne and stage/space design at ENSAD Paris. Her works range in media from performance and interventions in the city spaces to photography, video, drawing, painting and stage design. By connecting art with the events of everyday life, Neda Razavipour tries to deal with various aspects of the current situation of her society in every dimension, from political and social, to psychological or even physiological. Without using direct language, she reveals the complicated challenges embedded in her society and her individual life. In her experiences, Razavipour tries to change the position of an ordinary spectator to an active participant; a kind of dynamic engagement, in a site-specific location, which questions and provokes the audience at the same time.

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

Hossein Valamanesh was born in Iran in 1949 and graduated from the School of Fine Art in Tehran in 1970. He immigrated to Australia in 1973, arriving in Perth. In 1975 he commenced further studies in visual arts at the South Australian School of Art, and since graduating he has exhibited frequently in Australia and overseas including Germany, Poland, Finland and Japan. Hossein has received numerous awards including the Australia Council Residency in Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 1991, and an Australia Council Fellowship in 1998. His work is included in most major public Australian art collections. A monograph on his work written by Paul Carter was published in 1996 by Art & Australia and a major survey of his work was held at the Art Gallery of South Australia in mid-2001 with an accompanying catalogue which included essays by Sarah Thomas, Ian North and Paul Carter. A survey of his work was held at Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney in 2002. Valamanesh lives and works in Australia.