



The Art

Drama
Exhibition
Film
Literature
Music

Editor's Corner

Editorial
Feature
Video

Around Town

Cafe
Citylog
Fiction
Society
Outdoors

Archive



The Age of Polaroidism

Riyas Komu at Azad Art Gallery in Tehran

Divas of Fereydoun Ave

Year-End Resolution

Voeux de nouvel an

more...

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Silent, Unidentified Faces of Samira Alikhanzadeh

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For the past ten years, {Samira Alikhanzadeh} has been using photographs to create figurative presentations of women and children; her wooden surfaces are transformed into collages covered with impressions of found photographs, paint and quite often mirror-work. And although her subjects are unidentified, upon a more personal and inevitable interaction, one realizes that they are infused with philosophical questions of identity, existence and time.

Born in Tehran in 1967, Samira received her MFA degree from Tehran's AZAD University and began painting subject matter reminiscent of windows and frames through which viewers could look to another world. Purely by accident, she chanced upon a box of old photographs which she took home and began applying to her canvases, filling her window frames with images of women and children and inviting viewers to behold a long forgotten world of unknown faces.

The subjects in Samira's work are often melancholy and distant. The absence of any narrative heightens their anonymity. Their pose and dress reveal nothing more than the era they lived in. Their gaze guards secrets we will never discover; yet, in silence they patiently wait to confront viewers with the only truth they can offer: That in our not too distant future, we too shall become silent, unidentified images of the past.

This connection between the past and present is made by a strategic overlay of mirrors in the form of circles or squares and literally holds a mirror to society, putting it in touch with those who engage in their relationships at a remove. Usually covering the subjects' faces or eyes, they also reveal a deliberate ploy by the artist to incorporate the viewer into the work and to create reciprocity between the lost identities of subjects with those of present day individuals. One immediately wonders what kind of lives they led, if they ever loved, if they experienced happiness and where they are today? The answers begin to blur into our own fears, hopes and dreams.

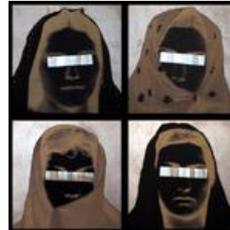
What were in her previous works portraits of a woman, child or bride and groom, have in her latest exhibition at GOLESTAN Gallery, developed into family shots recalling an era of newfound wealth and social status. By covering everyone's eyes save one or two centrally positioned figures, she places emphasis on one individual, creating fixity in a presence suspended in place and time.

Often, the uncomfortable question arises: Who are these people and why should we today be confronted with their image and memory? We are not meant to know who they are but rather what

Picture Gallery



Works of S. Alikhanzadeh



they represent. They are simply the realization of our own mortality and transience. Their existence was as fleeting as our fragmented presence reflected in mirrors as we walk past. All this, enhanced more by the use of negative images, creates a haunting vision of what is in store for us, the present day viewer.

The works of Samira Alikhanzadeh will be on display at Golestan Gallery from Friday February 29 through Thursday March 6, 2008.

[Top](#)

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