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Special Edition: Echoes from Iran

Ali Tahayori



Born and raised in the oppressively homophobic climate of 1980s Iran,

Ali Tahayori assumed the identity of an outsider, further compounded by his migration to Australia in 2007. Combining fractured mirrors with text and imagery, his recent works draw on ancient Iranian philosophies about light and mirrors to create kaleidoscopic experiences; moments of both revelation and concealment hint at the conflicted nature of his identity. Translating the traditional Iranian craft of Āine-Kāri (mirror-works) into a contemporary visual vocabulary, his practice skilfully combines a discourse about diaspora and displacement with an exploration of queerness – in both cases, poignantly testifying to his experience of being othered.

He holds a Doctorate in Medicine, a Graduate Diploma in Photography, and a Master of Fine Arts in Photomedia from Sydney's National Art School. His work has been extensively exhibited in Iran, Australia and internationally.

Impossible Desire

Impossible Desire is a series of hand-painted photographs captured inside a public toilet, where I had my first intimate experience as a teenager in my hometown, Shiraz. Given the impossibility of return to my homeland, I asked a friend who still lives in Iran to visit the site and take some images. Looking at his photographs, I realized they did not correlate with my memories of the site. The project initially aimed to revisit and reconstruct a past queer memory. Later, it became about the experience of a place and a time that was no longer accessible. I used my own body fluid to express my feelings of longing and loss for a past that was disrupted and a future that never followed. Using my semen mixed with gouache paint queers the image, reimagining a future where homosexuality is no longer prohibited.



Impossible Desire, Public Toilets series, 2023
Ink-jet print on archival paper, gouache paint, water and body fluid, 31 x 22 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Roya Kahdjavi Projects and Nemazee Fine Art



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