

the mosaic rooms



CONTEMPORARY CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD

WHEN LEGACIES BECOME DEBTS 18 JANUARY – 30 MARCH 2019 PRIVATE VIEW: 17 JANUARY 2019



Continuing the 10th anniversary programme of The Mosaic Rooms, *When Legacies Become Debts* (18 January – 30 March) contemplates the personal and collective forms of reliance and liability experienced between different generations of artists and writers. Featuring commissioned works by **Ali Meer Azimi**, **Bahar Noorizadeh** and **Mahan Moalemi**, recent projects by **Hadi Fallahpisheh** and **Shirin Sabahi**, and in-process researches by **Hannah Darabi**, **Ronak Moshtaghi**, and **Hamed Yousefi** (with **Ali Mirsepassi**), the exhibition and related programme addresses the nuance of artistic research and production as part of a series of pedagogical, discursive, and material negotiations with the legacies that shape and inform them.

When Legacies Become Debts centres on intergenerational obligations, personal commitments, intellectual inheritances and volatile destinies. What can be done with legacies handed down from

the immediate, previous generation? Legacies that are desired or unwanted, reassuring or questionable? Legacies of imagined futures, taken a detour?

Turning the notion of inheritance on its head, the exhibition suggests an inward excavation that asks how one might inherit oneself. In this respect, it addresses the feeling of indebtedness that legacies impart upon subsequent generations in the form of posterity. With this relationship comes a need to pay back, an expectation to continue what those legacies have triggered and provoked in their wake.

Indebtedness gradually becomes abstract in time and takes mental and emotional form. The question remains: What are the generative or prospective dimensions of such a form beyond the impositions by the current state of the economy in the art-world and beyond? Can indebtedness not only be associated with guilt and fear (and at the other end of the spectrum, optimistically, with love and care), but instead with an indefinable driving force for carrying on? A sense of commitment to a certain continuum? How irreparable is the debt, and how irrecoverable are the bonds?

Hannah Darabi's research on Iranian propaganda books between 1979 and 1983, offers a comprehensive survey of the photographic production in Iran during these years around the time of Iranian revolution. Her photographic journey through these books lead us to reconstructions of a visual legacy, in form of a photo-book: *Enghelab Street, A Revolution Through Books* (2018). Another series of publications aptly named white cover books, which began spreading on the streets as the Iranian Revolution unfolded in Iran between 1978-79, is reflected in Ronak Moshtaghi's sound installation *Mom likes politics too* (2018). The work introduces us to these publications through the memory of three people connected to them. Chosen and translated in an expedited, intuitive way, these books were in fact pirate copies of whatever piece of literature or theory were in reach at the time. The visual aesthetic and conceptual language of these books was what a generation continued to build things upon. As objects forty years later, they make visible the urgency with which they were published, distributed and collected. In another sculptural installation *The Late Poem Surrounded by Friends* (2018), Moshtaghi evokes the image of a deathbed. As a homage to the poems which arrived at a wrong time, it offers a look at the timeliness or untimeliness of language, where stories are told through new voices and multiple mouths.

Borrowed Scenery (2017) and *Mouthful* (2018), films by Shirin Sabahi revolve around *Matter and Mind* (1977)—a minimalist oil pool sculpture by artist Noriyuki Haraguchi (b. 1946, Japan) installed at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art since its inauguration in 1977. Over the past four decades, the highly reflective container transformed into the object of a vernacular ritual: an accidental wishing well that triggered museum visitors to throw coins and other objects into it, implying the kind of unintended consequences that can arise from attempting an aesthetic programme—leading with a certain intention, while achieving a completely different outcome. The project ultimately led to inviting Haraguchi back to Tehran to oversee the restoration of his sculpture and salvaging the medley objects from the pool.

Part of these objects are exhibited in Sabahi's installation, *Pocket Folklore* (2018). Hinting towards the tropes of identity-based artworks which heavily dominated the Iranian art scenes of 2000s, Hadi Fallahpisheh invites friends to wear clothes from his personal wardrobe and spend time with him. The photographic series *May Died in June* (2015-2017) is composed of 'back-staged' shots of this visit, in which scenery and bodies spoil interpretations, interrupt readership, and question the ability of representations to convey truths. Such revisiting of one's own wardrobe for Fallahpisheh is also an act of opening up the door to see "what one has to wear tomorrow".

The Fabulous Life and Thought of Ahmad Fardid (2015), a documentary by Hamed Yousefi, (with Ali Mirsepassi), explores the life and thought of Iranian philosopher Ahmad Fardid (b.1910, d.1994) in his intellectual crusade to halt rising western influence in Iran. Featuring extensive interviews with Fardid's former colleagues, the film presents a comprehensive intellectual history of modern Iran,

through a figure whose obscure philosophical path remains largely absent from prevailing conceptions of the rise of political Islam.

In a newly commissioned work, *Body Side*, Ali Meer Azimi (with contributions by **Dirar Kalash** and **Konstantin Schimanowski**), investigates the disappearance of a group of public sculptures in Tehran that went missing around spring of 2010. The work brings together various materials, to develop a fiction-theory, correlating the history of urban monuments and their origins in Tehran's old Arsenal to the exploration of a "bio-topology" in which certain things from the surface of the city are devoured by an ancient algorithmic organism. In another new commission, *CAD Conspiracy*, Mahan Moalemi and Bahar Noorzadeh (with contribution by **Chris Tegho**) collaboratively develop a video-essay. Here, the installation shots of contemporary art exhibitions serve as an entry point into reflections and speculations around the politics of documentation, the history of representational technologies, and the future of empiricism in relation to developments in machine vision. The realities of accessibility, circulation and mobility in the art world meet political fictions based around how emerging technologies might transform not only our perception of the given reality but the very fabric of empirical reality itself.

The exhibition borrows a spiral staircase from **Dora Garcia's** *Red Love* (2018). The structure intersects The Mosaic Rooms' main gallery and will host a collection of books and a series of conversations which will unfold in the exhibition space over the course of ten weeks. Contributors to the conversation series include **Heytham Al-Wardani**, **Catherine David**, **Sumaya Kassamali**, **Sami Khatib**, **Hamed Khosravi**, **Suhail Malik**, **Lucie Mercier**, **Khashayar Naderehvandi**, **Mo Salemi**, **Sam Samiee**, **Ashkan Sepahvand**, **Mamali Shafahi**, **Jan Verwoert** and the artists contributed to the show. **Ghazaal Vojdani** of Studio EROUPIUM has responded to the exhibition with design interventions, including *Security Blankets I and II* (2019), alongside making the identity design for the programme.

When Legacies Become Debts is curated by **Azar Mahmoudian**.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Mosaic Rooms are situated on the corner of the Cromwell Road and Earl's Court Road in Kensington, London, a short walk from the V&A and Design Museum.
- Entry to the exhibitions are free. The Mosaic Rooms are open from 11am–6pm Tuesday to Saturday.

About The Mosaic Rooms

The Mosaic Rooms are a non-profit art gallery and bookshop in London dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture of the Arab world and beyond. We do this through our free contemporary art exhibitions, our multidisciplinary events (including film screenings, current affairs talks, book launches and more) artist residencies and learning & engagement programme. We work in partnership with local, national and international organisations to disseminate our combined arts programme to the widest possible audience – in London and beyond. Our previous collaborations include partnerships with The British Museum, ICA, Shubbak Festival, London Design Festival and London Festival of Architecture, amongst many others. We believe in the importance of creating a cultural space that presents new thinking and daring creativity, illuminates ideas, inspires understanding, and interrogates contemporary issues. Our vision is for a London audience with a more informed, engaged and critical understanding of the culture and society of the Arab world and its neighbours. We are a non-party political, non-religious organisation, and we are a project of the A.M. Qattan Foundation, a registered charity number 1029450.

Guest curator

Azar Mahmoudian

Azar Mahmoudian is an independent curator and educator based in Tehran. Recent projects include the multi-chaptered film programme, *Sensible Grounds* for Tensta Konsthall; *SAVVY Contemporary*; *Fundació Antoni Tàpies*; *RCA London*; and *Vilnius Academy of Arts*, among others (2018-2020); and *Shifting Panoramas* at *TMOCA*, Tehran, and *DAZ*, Berlin (2018). In 2016 Mahmoudian was part of the curatorial team of the 11th Gwangju Biennial.

LISTINGS INFORMATION

When Legacies Become Debts

18 January – 30 March 2019

The Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW

T. +44 (0) 207 370 9990

Open 11am – 6pm | Tuesday – Saturday | Free Entry

www.mosaicrooms.org

PRESS CONTACT

Naomi Crowther

Reiber PR

E. naomi@reiberpr.com

T. +44 (0)20 7079 3300

The Mosaic Rooms' 10th Anniversary programme continues with the following exhibitions:

12 April – 22 June 2019

Private view: 11 April 2019

Mohammed Melehi | Curated by Morad Montazami

New Waves from Casablanca looks at abstract painter Mohamed Melehi's career at the Casablanca art school. The school was an influential avant-garde group which radically questioned cosmopolitan abstraction of the 1960s. Melehi's own work is inspired by Moroccan traditional and popular craft, whilst also connecting to the hard edge painters of the 50's and 60's. Paintings by Melehi, canvases of bright flat colour with his characteristic wave motif, will be shown alongside work by other influential figures from the school.

5 July – 14 September 2019

Private view: 4 July 2019

RAW QUEENS | Curated by Yasmina Naji

In collaboration with Kulte Gallery and part of Shubbak Festival

The exhibition explores art, feminism and decolonisation and features work by artists including Fatima Mazmouz and Meriem Bennani. From the Chikha, a wild and raw feminine figure of Moroccan popular culture, to the overarching image of Moroccan middle-aged women, the artworks question the roles associated with women as much as the meaning of history and social relationships in contemporary Moroccan society.