

**Lessons of Freedom
Notes for a trip to Iran 1970-2023]**

Curated by **Rischa Paterlini**
Podbielski Contemporary Gallery
Via Vincenzo Monti, 12, 20123 (MI)
22 May – 30 July 2023

The exhibition *Lessons of Freedom – Notes for a trip to Iran 1970-2023* curated by **Rischa Paterlini** opens on Monday 22 May at **Podbielski Contemporary Gallery**. An exhibition that intends to make a visual journey in today's history of Iran through the selection of works by **12 contemporary artists**: Gabriele Basilico (Milan, 1944), Gohar Dashti (Ahvaz, Iran, 1980), Johanna Maria Fritz (Berlin, 1994), Shadi Ghadirian (Tehran, 1974), Peyman Hooshmandzadeh (Tehran, 1969), Shiva Khademi (Mashad, Iran, 1990), Beatrice Minda (Munich, 1968), Tahmineh Monzavi (Tehran, 1988), Antonella Monzoni (Modena, 1960), Shirin Neshat (Qazvin, Iran, 1957), Jalal Sepehr (Tehran, 1968), Shirana Shahbazi (Tehran, 1974).

Lessons of Freedom offers the audience the opportunity to discover a rich perspective of Iran without social, political and censorship borders. The source of inspiration for the curator was *That other world, Nabokov and the enigma of exile*, a text by Azar Nafisi. In the same way that the author decides to immerse herself with her students in the exploration of a new perception, Rischa Paterlini wishes to lead visitors to a different dimension, which encourages them to appreciate beauty even in the face of difficult situations.

“Why do we travel (if we travel)” asks one of the artists featured in the exhibition, **Gabriele Basilico**. The answer seems to belong to these lines: “Even danger, like anguish, brings us closer to being, makes us embrace it, infuses us with terror, the common terror, of being about to lose it. This wasn't what I was looking for. I wanted to begin to see what I was going to see, to encounter the arid, the non-answer.” What he speaks to us about, the non-response, takes us back to travel in time to 1979, the year of Khomeini's revolution, in which everything changes. The Islamic republic confiscates Iran's history, as well as its traditions, its culture, and the identity of each individual.

Each work on display provides us with a snapshot of a complex reality that refuses to live on subterfuge. Starting with **Shirin Neshat** (Qazvin, Iran, 1957), an internationally acclaimed artist who uses poetic language to illustrate the importance of women's rights. A path that crosses the powerful images of **Shadi Ghadirian** (Tehran, 1974), which reflect the relationship between tradition and modernization, and the documentary eye of **Peyman Hooshmandzadeh** (Tehran, 1969) regarding Iranian subcultures. We now wander through

the works of **Shiva Khademi** (Mashad, Iran, 1990) that illustrate the limitations imposed on her generation; to the fascinating carpets of **Jalal Sepehr** (Tehran, 1968) that bring us to Persia and the humanist reportage of **Antonella Monzoni** (Modena, 1960), deeply rooted in memory. The exhibition continues towards realities often placed on the margins of society, photographed by **Johanna Maria Fritz** (Berlin, 1994), a young photographer who highlights the magical world of the circus in Iran; as well as photographs of **Beatrice Minda** (Munich, 1968) which offer her particular insight into Iranian domestic life. While on the one hand, **Tahmineh Monzavi** (Tehran, 1988) deals with the social and intergenerational conflicts of Iran, on the other hand **Gohar Dashti** (Ahvaz, Iran, 1980) in her staged photographs refers to enchanting landscapes, and the birds depicted by the artist **Shirana Shahbazi** (Tehran, 1974), whose wings spread in the wind, evoke the essence of freedom.

At the end of this photographic journey, we discover that, as Vladimir Nabokov wrote: "... Contrary to popular belief, life is not just a journey along a road towards another destination. There is another world, another place right here always around us." And we can no longer pretend it doesn't exist.

Podbielski Contemporary gallery is mainly focused on contemporary photography in its various aspects, with a particular attention to politics and geopolitics.

Pierre André Podbielski tells us: "Involved as I am in this content-laden exhibition, I am proud to support the courageous struggle of the Iranian people, and especially the Iranian women, not to be deprived of their rights. In their hope of regaining the freedom they have been denied for decades and to end the suffering they have been subjected to."

It is significant that most of the Iranian artists mentioned still reside in their country of origin.

Tuesday - Friday: 3.00pm - 7.00pm
Saturday: by appointment
PODBIELSKI CONTEMPORARY
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