

Ensemble of Misplacement, Juxtaposing Feminine Identity in Time and Space: An Analysis of Works of Modern Iranian Female Photographers

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Abstract : In their collections, Shirin Neshat, Mitra Tabrizian, Gohar Dashti and Newsha Tavakolian adopt a hybrid form of narrative to confront the restrictions imposed on women in hegemonic public and private spaces. Focusing on motives such as social marginalisation, crisis of belonging, as well as lack of agency for women, the artists depict the regression of women's rights in their respective generations. Based on the ideas of Michael Bakhtin, namely his concept of polyphony or the plurality of contradictory voices, the views of Judith Butler on giving an account to oneself and Henri Lefebvre's theories on social space, this study illustrates the artists' concept of identity in crisis through time and space. The research explores how the artists took their art as a novel dimension to depict and confront the hardships imposed on Iranian women. Henri Lefebvre makes a distinction between complex social structures through which individuals situate, perceive and represent themselves. By adding Bakhtin's polyphonic view to Lefebvre's concepts of perceived and lived spaces, the study explores the sense of social fragmentation in the works of Dashti and Tavakolian. One argument is that as the representatives of the contemporary generation of female artists who spend their lives in Iran and faced a higher degree of restrictions, their hyperbolic and theatrical styles stand as a symbolic act of confrontation against restrictive socio-cultural norms imposed on women. Further, the research explores the possibility of reclaiming one's voice and sense of agency through art, corresponding with the Bakhtinian sense of polyphony and Butler's concept of giving an account to oneself. Works of Neshat and Tabrizian as the representatives of the previous generation who faced exile and diaspora, encompass a higher degree of misplacement, violence and decay of women's presence. In Their works, the women's body encompasses Lefebvre's dismantled temporal and special setting. Notably, the ongoing social conviction and gender-based dogma imposed on women frame some of the concurrent motives among the selected collections of the four artists. By applying an interdisciplinary lens and integrating the conducted interviews with the artists, the study illustrates how the artists seek a transcultural account for themselves and women in their generations. Further, the selected collections manifest the urgency for an authentic and liberal voice and setting for women, resonating with the concurrent Women, Life, Freedom movement in Iran.

Keywords : persian modern female photographers, transcultural studies, shirin neshat, mitra tabrizian, gohar dashti, newsha tavakolian, butler, bakhtin, lefebvre

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