

Burnt Generation is an exhibition of contemporary Iranian photography – most of which has not previously been seen outside Iran. The exhibition seeks to convey the impact of decades of political unrest and social upheaval upon the Iranian people. The exhibition is a rare opportunity to move to a place beyond cliché; a moment to forget the stereotypical images of Iran and enter the world's of eight highly original and intellectually engaged image makers.

Featuring documentary photography, portraiture and fine art photography, *Burnt Generation* has three central themes: the isolation, loneliness and desolation of youth; the common threads that unite the Nation in spite of everything; and the personal, political and social consequences of war.

Burnt Generation is curated by Fariba Farshad, Director of Candlestar. The exhibition is the first of a series of photography related events produced by Candlestar that will culminate in Photo London, also at Somerset House, in May 2015.

THE ARTISTS

Ali Nadjian and Ramyar Manouchehrzadeh (b. 1976 and 1980 respectively) have worked collaboratively in the field of photography for many years. Their practice documents the duality that Iranians experience in their daily life due to their religious and political history. Their series *We Live in a Paradoxical Society* exposes Iran as one of the few countries in which life is divided into two parts: the domestic and the public. These two lives are full of fundamental differences and pretensions that are a necessary condition for survival.



Azadeh Akhlaghi (b. 1978) acknowledges conceptual and postmodern approaches to contemporary art through photography. Her series *By an Eye Witness* comments on the many dramatic, tragic deaths that mark the modern history of the country. Each image is a thoughtful reconstruction of historical events using a combination of archived information, news reports and conflicting accounts from witnesses. Assassinations, torture, accidents, suspicious and natural deaths are all represented in the series; each death marks a moment in Iran's tumultuous modern history, crossing political and factional lines, to which all Iranians can relate.



Gohar Dashti's (b. 1980) latest series, *Iran, Untitled* places emphasis on social and political issues through her carefully staged photographs. Dashti describes these images as haikus exploring the relationship between form and content in which meaning is not necessarily understood but must be comprehended aesthetically. 'It's like objectifying a feeling; that is how an image reveals itself.'



In her series *Nil, Nil*, **Shadi Ghadirian** (b. 1974) places military objects in domestic spaces and in so doing transports us to a place where war has a very silent but powerful role. In *White Square*, Ghadirian has photographed objects of military use – helmet, canteen, ammunition belt, grenade, etc. – that she decorates with a red silk ribbon. Defamiliarised and removed from their context, these accoutrements of war appear at once menacing and delicate, their aggressiveness tempered by the feminine element.



The two series by **Babak Kazemi** (b. 1983) are a commentary on the Iran/Iraq War, the longest battle of the twentieth century and the second longest war after Vietnam. In *Khoramshahr number by number* he superimposes photographs of local people and scenes on to real house number plates from destroyed homes in the war-torn city of Khoramshahr, located on the border of Iran/Iraq. The works symbolise the displaced population and the human and financial cost of war. Kazemi's *Souvenir from a friend and neighbour country* presents bullets from this conflict which, photographed individually, take on a strange and chilling beauty. His works are included in the Museum of War and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran.





Abbas Kowsari (b. 1970). Every major world religion speaks of light, from Zoroastrianism to Christianity; it illuminates spirits and minds in every culture and mythology. Light is a metaphor of truth, knowledge and enlightenment. *Light* shows that respect for religious traditions and rituals is very much alive in Iran, particularly in old neighbourhoods, towns and villages. In *Shade of Earth*, Kowsari documents the trip that hundreds of thousands of Iranians make to the fronts of the Iran/Iraq War during the New Year holidays. This trip, known as Rahian-e Noor, is a pilgrimage to remember the millions of soldiers who died during eight years of trench warfare between Iran and Iraq.



Sadegh Tirafkan's (1965-2013) work observes the male role in traditional Iranian society. His two series *Bodysigns* and *Body curves* are an effort to unite the curvatures of the human body with Persian calligraphy and figurative images from Persian art. To achieve this Tirafkan employed the Mohr technique which uses stamps employed by the Iranian Islamic culture to print on fabrics. Tirafkan's works are in the collections of several museums including the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, British Museum, Brooklyn Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Tirafkan was also a collector and great champion of emerging Iranian photographers and this exhibition arises from numerous conversations with him over several years. *Burnt Generation* is our tribute to the life of this extraordinary artist and generous friend.



Look by **Newsha Tavakolian** (b. 1981) springs from her desire to delve into the lives of those who live in the same building as her and have done for over ten years. These photographs depict the story of middle class youths attempting to cope with their isolated society, and battling with their lack of hope for the future. Over a period of six months at 8pm, Tavakolian fixed her camera on a tripod in front of the window and tried to capture a moment that illustrated each of their stories. Her subjects are caught within the frame of a window looking onto the cold, concrete, impersonal buildings that could be anywhere.

BURNT GENERATION

Candlestar
candlestar.co.uk



Terrace Rooms, Somerset House
10 April – 1 June 2014

We are grateful to the Iran Heritage Foundation for supporting the production of this leaflet

Principality Events

AT
SOMERSET
HOUSE

IRAN
HERITAGE

Candlestar
Somerset House
Strand
London WC2R 1LA
www.candlestar.co.uk
+44 (0)20 7759 1170
info@candlestar.co.uk