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The idea of moving Iran's capital has been under discussion since 1989, due to Tehran's heavy pollution and overcrowding, but most of all due to the risk of an earthquake. Tehran lies on a major seismological fault and experts have long warned that a strong earthquake in the city would be devastating. Numerous faults crisscross the city. The hazard of the city is known, but to predict the time of the earthquake remains, as always, impossible. It is believed that it takes 20 to 30 years to gradually move the population out of the capital. The moving of the capital may also be limited to that of the top officials and their security, at least in its early phase. The citizens of Tehran are faced with a double-edged anticipation: the predicted catastrophe and its proposed preventive measure, the moving of the capital. They both lack any political, economical and scientific backing for the time and nature of their occurrence. This has developed the abstract notion of predictions (that of the quake), and the fantasy of prevention (in terms of the moving of the capital) into an ever-returning dialectics that is evoked whenever reality comes too close. The withdrawal of the governing force from Tehran as the first (and possibly the last) steps in moving the capital would not only undermine the city's geopolitical role on the national and international level, but even the social, economical and urban structure of the city will be destabilized. But more than anything this idea of moving the capital carries with itself, as a safety measure, the notion of abandonment, an escape from the predicted disaster that may one day take us for surprise. The anticipation of the moving of the city of Tehran is maybe closer to reality than the catastrophe that is being predicted for more than 20 years. But this is nothing new. Any preventive measure for a predicted catastrophe is meant to take place way before it is too late. The occupation of Iraq by the allies was also a

preventive measure to "safeguard the world" from a predicted nuclear catastrophe. What happened was in the end the opposite: the prevention became the actual catastrophe; the anxiety of a catastrophe is often taken as a pretext for the safeguarding and the reestablishment of positions and ideologies.

Foreword

What makes a place different from other places is first of all its setting or *mise-en-scène*, the orientations and subjectivities that it implies. Often however, a place thought of in these terms is translated into a location from where stories are transmitted, or is transposed into a locale with a recasting of its inhabitants' roles into reenactments of the play of the space they inhabit. As such, transpositions can develop into strategies of applying changes to places. These changes do not necessarily have to be physical to be real.

The subjects addressed in this issue are to be developed and followed through into the 3rd issue. Pages is open to different proposals, by artists and writers from Iran and other countries to reflect on these subjects.

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A City Built By Its Inhabitants

Arash Mozafari

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Iran was introduced to the ideas shaping the west through photography at the end of the 19th century. Local architects began to introduce new ideas demanded by clients who wanted to use and imitate features seen in postcards and photographs from Europe. A kind of ‘postcard architecture’. Architecture and fashion were not the only things subjected to western influence. Democracy as an idea if not in actuality had also arrived. This intensified expectations for change. Piecemeal reforms began around 1925. Oil explorations, mainly carried out by British Petroleum were bringing new wealth to Iran. This intensified modernization in Iran. However the changes were superficial and had left the old social structures intact. Tehran’s architecture is a post-war architecture influenced by what took place after the Allies’ invasion of Iran in 1941. After the war the process of modernization began in earnest. Thus the population of Tehran began to increase with the arrival of people from the country side looking for work and a better standard of living. The urgent need for housing resulted in ramshackle building practices, fraudulent business practices and the creation of slums. According to Ali Madanipour “the Islamic revolution in Iran was a result of this improper development.”¹ There are deeply rooted social reasons for this improper development. A kind of self regarding, self preserving individualism which is a direct result of living under cruel and despotic dictatorship for generations has become a characteristic of Iranian society. One manifestation of this fact can be seen in the absence of participation and citizenship, the lack of occupation of public domains, a lack of respect for the law, and the proliferation of independent and individualistic ie selfish behavior by the population. Under such conditions urban development remains questionable if not impossible. Should we expect anything other than violation of urban development

standards, environmental codes, and traffic laws in such circumstances? These conditions are in fact the key to the forming of independent and self-made architecture by a society whose members have separately sought their own ways.

Popular Architecture Tehran architecture can be called popular in the sense that it has been devised by the people of that city. Impressed by social and political trends of the upper classes and professional architects, the people of Tehran created a ‘material-based architecture’. A phenomenon that has persisted to date. Due to the need for housing and the ever-increasing cost of land and property, as well as the high cost of construction, quality began to diminish. Buildings were made using simpler plans and cheaper materials. With maximum use of materials and prevalence of weak forms for building cheaper houses, the formal proportionality of the buildings changed. That was a sign of lack of social participation in civil institutions and individual actions that the government has not had the possibility or the required resolve to encounter to date. Thus, here we witness a kind of architecture that is ‘popular’ or ‘people-made’, ‘independent and refractory’ and shaped with the kind of materials, i.e., it is ‘material-based’.

Material-based architecture in Tehran can be identified for 40 years; yet the radical type has been seen for 30 years. While the rising middle and upper classes in the 1970’s were building out of stone produced by imported technology, the poorer classes were using off-cuts (10 cm width at variable lengths) from factories or leftovers from explosions from stone quarries to build facades in the south of the city resulting in what became known as ‘10 cm horizontal white marmarite architecture’.

At the same time in order to present a native alternative, Iranian architects were attempting to

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associate modern architecture with the motifs of tradition. They used the color and appearance of brick, which was the prevalent texture of existing traditional buildings, in their new projects. Available new technologies made it possible to produce bricks with a thickness of 3 centimeters, which were cheaper but gave the building a fresher look. Many people began to cover their existing facades with a layer of these new bricks.

All this coincided with the last years of Pahlavi rule. The years that according to Bernard Orchard were the years of emerging young citizens who were to play an important role in the revolution.² Orchard suggests that Iran's revolution occurs as a reaction against Pahlavis' modernization plans. Excessive growth of population had caused irregular development of Tehran. The Shah, having departed from the tradition, that is, the governmental citadel, the mosque, and the bazaar, and migrating to the north of the city, had actually given the clergy and the traditional inhabitants of bazaar, the merchants the chance to reconstruct and reshape those neighborhoods. Ideologues influenced by leftist thoughts became the theoreticians who directed the revolution, a revolution that had a regressive look towards religious principles. And so there occurred the biggest "postmodern' movement" of history. Jahanbagloo quoting from Dariush Shayegan says that it was a point at which "tradition changed into ideology,"³ traditional prototypes were used as standards, therefore, traditional architecture was interpreted as Islamic architecture and formal structure and traditional motifs were used. Here, there was another event that Orchard calls the emergence of "revolutionary habitat."⁴ The poor who triumphed in the revolution concentrated in the center of the city instead of their ramshackle neighborhoods. Orchard considers this phenomenon as a symbol of the invasion of Tehran by its inhabitants: "The city is ours and we

determine the law, therefore we can build in the lands that we have (illegally) bought or confiscated. Tehran is our home."⁵

According to Islamic rules, anyone who improves a land can claim its ownership. Thus, there were new areas and confiscated lands in which ill considered construction began to prevail. Brick facades were a symbol of 'Islamic Architecture'. This meant the excessive production of 3 centimeter bricks, which were used in the construction of a large number of buildings, resulting in the previously mentioned '3 centimeter brick architecture' of Tehran.

With the occurrence of the Iran Iraq war and the deterioration of economic conditions due to the costs and damages of the war estimated at 1,000 billion US dollars, construction work diminished significantly or was done in the poorest possible conditions. As a result, one could see a lot of unfinished or inferior quality buildings at different sites. After the war and with the beginning of a new development and reconstruction period, once again a lot of middle class provincials began to immigrate to Tehran. With the government's policies for improvement of economical conditions in this period, there emerged new capitalist classes and neo-bourgeois that were idiomatically called 'post revolution haves'.

This period coincided with the emergence of 'Post Modern' architecture in Europe and the United States which featured techniques like exaggeration and abstraction of traditional motifs in architecture. In Iran a vacuum was created by the lack of identity and confusion of architects due to the closing of universities (paradoxically for the 'good' of The Cultural Revolution). This was re-inforced by revolutionary ideological thought and civil conflicts and war. It seemed a good opportunity for architects to seek similar patterns in traditional and Islamic architecture revered by the government. Here again,

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there appeared odd combinations of prevalent cubic forms with motifs of traditional architecture used by the poor and the middle-class, as they wished. Iranian architects resorted to a post-modern that had not comprehended the modern.

That is to say, the resulting departure from modernism was without consideration for modernity's critical wisdom. And thus, there appeared a new trend that was the result of the misconceptions inherent in post-modernism. In fact the line of people-made architecture in this period (1980's) was spread all over the city and was not confined to the poorer neighborhoods. In combination with such motifs, the 3 cm brick architecture eventually developed into what became known as 'white cement architecture' with Classical western decorations such as carved capitals and pediments. Different combinations of every taste were applied and, to some extent, are being applied even today. Construction was flourishing in Tehran but since there was no coherent program, and the comprehensive plan of Tehran, which was prepared 5 decades ago was not efficient any more, the desirable facades hiding a severe qualitative decline; . Due to the increase of the prices of land Material-based architecture in Tehran can be identified for 40 years; yet the radical type has been seen for 30 years. While the rising middle and upper classes in the 1970's were building out of stone produced by imported technology, the poorer classes were using off-cuts (10 cm width at variable lengths) from factories or leftovers from explosions from stone quarries to build facades in the south of the city resulting in what became known as '10 cm horizontal white marmarite architecture'. At the same time in order to present a native alternative, Iranian architects were attempting to associate modern architecture with the motifs of tradition. They used the color and appearance of brick,

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Tehran is our home.”⁵ According to Islamic rules, anyone who improves a land can claim its ownership. Thus, there were new areas and confiscated lands in which ill considered construction began to prevail. Brick facades were a symbol of ‘Islamic Architecture’. This meant the excessive production of 3 centimeter bricks, which were used in the construction of a large number of buildings, resulting in the previously mentioned ‘3 centimeter brick architecture’ of Tehran. With the occurrence of the Iran Iraq war and the deterioration of economic conditions due to the costs and damages of the war estimated at 1,000 billion US dollars, construction work diminished significantly or was done in the poorest possible conditions. As a result, one could see a lot of unfinished or inferior quality buildings at different sites. After the war and with the beginning of a new development and reconstruction period, once again a lot of middle class provincials began to immigrate to Tehran. With the government’s policies for improvement of economical conditions in this period, there emerged new capitalist classes and neo-bourgeois that were idiomatically called ‘post revolution haves’. This period coincided with the emergence of ‘Post Modern’ architecture in Europe and the United States which featured techniques like exaggeration and abstraction of traditional motifs in architecture. In Iran a vacuum was created by the lack of identity and confusion of architects due to the closing of universities (paradoxically for the ‘good’ of The Cultural Revolution). This was reinforced by revolutionary ideological thought and civil conflicts and war. It seemed a good opportunity for architects to seek similar patterns in traditional and Islamic architecture revered by the government. Here again, there appeared odd combinations of prevalent cubic forms with motifs of traditional architecture used by the poor and the middle-class, as they wished. Iranian architects resorted to a post-

modern that had not comprehended the modern. That is to say, the resulting departure from modernism was without consideration for modernity’s critical wisdom. And thus, there appeared a new trend that was the result of the misconceptions inherent in post-modernism. In fact the line of people-made architecture in this period (1980’s) was spread all over the city and was not confined to the poorer neighborhoods. In combination with such motifs, the 3 cm brick architecture eventually developed into what became known as ‘white cement architecture’ with Classical western decorations such as carved capitals and pediments. Different combinations of every taste were applied and, to some extent, are being applied even today. Construction was flourishing in Tehran but since there was no coherent program, and the comprehensive plan of Tehran, which was prepared 5 decades ago was not efficient any more, the desirable facades hiding a severe qualitative decline; . Due to the increase of the prices of land and apartments in Tehran, balconies that used to have a calculation ratio of 1/3 to 2/3 of the area of the internal space were omitted or became too narrow, sometimes shrinking to only 60 centimeters. Maximal use of land and building in a given plot was, and still is particularly considered as the most important point, therefore, apartment houses of affordable small units with closed plans and limited skylights appeared everywhere. Non-standard decorative fireplaces and open kitchens that were in no way compatible with the traditional structure of Iranian society became fashionable. Newspapers were, and still are, full of ads for open kitchens fireplace and arc makers. Municipal rules regarding the provision of enough parking space for the buildings (on the basis of one apartment/one car) dictated the form of the structures and thus the plans were limited and similar, leaving no possibility of innovation. Violations of building codes, which

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can be seen in many buildings, were dealt with as a trivial nuisance by simply paying the related fines – another sign of lack of feeling for citizenship. Building codes such as the possibility of using 60% of the length of a lot plus 2 meters of projection with a bevel of 45 degrees (so that it could not overlook the neighboring homes, which is considered sinful according to the Islamic codes) imposed similarity and monotony on the form of the buildings. Interestingly, the bevel could be omitted with formal permission from neighbors and thus about 1 or 2 meters would be added to the area of the building – an advantage regarding the high prices of the apartments. Allowing unconsidered accumulations and overlooking the standards and citizenship rights as well as the lack of a comprehensive 3 dimensional plan of the city for construction of high buildings caused infra structural, traffic, and environmental problems for Tehran. The problems still persist but are more controlled. All these problems were due to investment in construction which directly and indirectly involved 70% of businesses. Growth of capitalism and the new found wealth of neo-bourgeois who craved for noble architecture changed some neighborhoods. One could witness the demolition of a building everyday to transform eventually into alleys of uniform apartments with an amalgam of classical and ‘Iranian post-modern’ facades (as is called in Tehran). With the possibility of cutting and producing granite stones, which were quite expensive at about 50 US dollars per square meter, there appeared facades of granite at the lower parts of buildings and white cement compounds with decorative carvings at the higher parts. Due to the high cost of black and dark green granite and limited possibilities of production, they were produced in a width of 40 cm and unlimited length to minimize the remains. That created the ‘40 cm granite architecture’.

With the increase of people’s wealth and the simultaneous crisis the country was facing, there began a flow of Iranian investments in the United Arab Emirates. People who had traveled to Dubai for recreation (because of the lack of similar spaces in Iran) and shopping (because of the absence of foreign brands of clothes and household appliances) were impressed by the construction work in the young country that had attracted foreign investments. This architecture soon influenced the work in Tehran and in a decade has managed to transform the look of the city. Glass facades have appeared in Tehran without observance of the building codes and standards. A lot of both worthy and unworthy old facades have been combined with layers of glass. Recently other types of false facades intended to look modern have changed the appearance of the city. New coverings of different types of aluminum composites are also being used to give the buildings a more modern look. Tehran can be called an architecture museum, since one might find everything in it though not much could be considered valuable, identity possessing, or even architectural. Recently, with the provision of more exacting codes, the town council is trying to control the construction work. But at present, the regulations are only applied to the internal areas of buildings and to reinforcement against earthquake which if happens, it is expected to claim the lives of more than a million citizens. This is because the people, and not the experts, have built the city. Tehran is a city with vast active fault lines. With all its contradictions and inconsistencies, contemporary Tehran is a city built by its inhabitants, but not in a great social participation. They have built self-centeredly and as a kind of avoidance of social participation and urgency. New globalization is affecting Iran and its capital Tehran. This is an opportunity for change which will occur with or without consideration for the structure of the

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city. If the present trends continue the changes will be superficial as they have been in the past. Tehran is in need of urgent and new city planning strategies which must happen with the consent and participation of its inhabitants.

// Arash Mozafari is an architect living in Tehran. Footnotes:

1 Ali Madanipour, Tehran, The Making of a Metropolis (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1998)

2 Bernar Hourcade, Interview Ramin Jahanbeglou with Bernar Hourcade, Iran and Modernism (Tehran, Goftar, 2000)

3 Ramin Jahanbeglou, Iran and Modernism (Tehran, Goftar, 2000)

4-5 Bernar Hourcade, Interview Ramin Jahanbeglou with Bernar Hourcade, Iran and Modernism (Tehran, Goftar, 2000)

Looking for a Missing Employee

Abih Mroué

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Monday, September 30, 1996 - The first news: It appears in both al-Nahar and al-Safir newspapers: "Call from the wife of a missing employee" / "Wife appeals to the 3 presidents to reveal the fate of her husband". What are the three presidents? In Lebanon, we mean by the three presidents the president of the republic who is Maronite; the head of the Parliament who is Shi'ite; and the Prime Minister who is Sunnite. What is W.S., the wife of the missing employee, saying?

W.S.: "O you saviors of Lebanon from all the catastrophes that have plagued it, o you messengers of freedom, o you founders of a rightful state in the face of the law of the jungle, rescue me from this suffering that I'm enduring second after painful second. Last Wednesday, on September 26, 1996, my husband R.S. disappeared, leaving his family behind. If the authorities have him, it is my right to know. If some other faction disposes of him, it is also my right to know. His disappearance is the hardest of sufferings, the most extreme case of human and civic carelessness. All I ask is for my right to know, I beg you to grant me that right." The following day, on the 1st of October, 1996, a small piece of news appears, related to the case of the missing employee from the Ministry of Finance, R.S.. The article says there has been an embezzlement of funds, estimated to be 3.5 billion Lebanese pounds plus 25,000 American dollars.

October 2nd, an article appears claiming there has also been an embezzlement in the Customs and Excise Department, as well as the Ministry of Finance. What's important in this article, is that it determines the exact amount stolen from the Ministry of Finance to be 4.5 billion Lebanese pounds. The same day, in al-Nahar, R.S. is accused directly of having stolen the money. The authorities were able to locate his car near Beirut, containing

notes from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, as well as a cheque book.

October 3rd, R.S.'s wife publishes a reply against al-Nahar saying that her husband is not a thief.

October 4th, the first two big articles on R.S. are published in Al-Safir newspaper. Two pictures are featured in the article, one of himself, and the other of his wife. The first article is written by Ms. F.K., and the second by Mr. F.Kh.. In the first article, Ms. F. states that the official sources have determined the amount of embezzled money from the Ministry of Finance to be 35 billion Lebanese pounds, not 4.5 Billion. In the second article, Mr. F. writes that R.S. has escaped to "Jazzin", and the missing money is there with him. In those days, "Jazzin" was still under Israeli occupation. He further states that the money found in S's car, amounts to approximately 3 billion pounds.

October 5th, in Al-Diyar, there is a new appeal from R's wife, under the title: "A story to reflect upon: are we allowed to think? If we are, then why not? Why not think of the crisis that I'm going through? R.S. is an artist, a Fine Arts graduate, he teaches sports, he was champion of Lebanon in several Arab championships, a dedicated employee at the Ministry of Finance, an ideal husband, and a giving father. He disappeared from his office on the morning of Wednesday the 25th, September 1996." So, it wasn't on the 26th, as she told us at first.

(...) October 9th, how did Mrs. W. find out about her husband's disappearance? She says: "My husband is a home loving man. He was late, so I called him on his mobile phone. It was turned off. I got worried. I called his brother, and told him that R. is late, and his mobile is turned off. Could you please go to the Ministry, find out if he's still in

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his office? The brother goes there, finds the office closed, but without the security chain. He gets scared. He thinks, what if something's happened to R's health? He asks the guard, to let him jump through the window and see if his brother is there. The guard accepts. He jumps through the window, but finds nobody there. By now, we are extremely worried. We contact all the hospitals, all the police stations, nothing! The next day, I go over to the Ministry, and tell the General Director that R. has disappeared. There is confusion and chaos at the Ministry. The General Director gives the order to break into his office. They break down the door, go in, then they come out, and say: there's 31 million missing, R. is a less-than-ordinary man. His belongings are obvious to the eye. Everyone knows what clothes he wears. The grocer knows what he spends. Suddenly, the world goes mad, and R. turns into a big thief. I said, so be it. To the government, I say, my husband is a thief, so bring him in, and let's put him on trial. Where's my husband? R. is fond of his home, gentle, sociable, he likes to have fun. His philosophy in life is to 'spend what's in your pocket today, and let tomorrow bring what it may'...

October 10th, the price of Al-Diyar newspaper goes up to 1,250 pounds, its price increases by 250 pounds, while the case of R., on the other hand, lands on the table of the Parliament. Minister of Defense interrupts the speech of Minister of Finance, and accusations start flying. Minister of refugees, in turn, gets involved in these accusations, as well as Minister of Information and Minister of Tourism... Accusations, accusations... They don't agree on anything, but a parliamentary decree has to be issued eventually, so they consent at least on one sentence, which is the following: "The Administration is corrupt, and an end must be put to this decay"

Also on October 10th, R's wife is arrested for two reasons: one, the hiding of information concerning her husband, and two, covering evidence on the embezzlement of funds. In Al-Nahar, the amount of stolen money, according to the latest sources, is said to be 42 billion pounds. Judicial sources confirm that the whole case will be resolved within 48 hours.. October 11th, in Al-Diyar, R.S. has escaped to Egypt. They state that 48 hours before his disappearance, R.S. had obtained a visa. Interpol is on his trail, because they fear that he might go to Brazil. In the Ministry of Finance, the first inventory concerning the embezzled money is done. The result is, and this time for sure, 10 billion Lebanese pounds. October 12th, the two presidents, the Head of Parliament and Prime Minister, come on the scene. Head of Parliament states that "this case is a big one, and I want to pursue it 'til the end, and I want to uncover all the details, and make those that are guilty account for their deeds". Of course, here he is hinting at the Minister of Finance, in order to put pressure on the Prime Minister. Why? Because the Minister of Finance is part of the Prime Minister's 'clique', and this is something from me to you. But the Prime Minister replies to the Head of Parliament, saying: "I'm going to open the case of the Council of the South, and I'm also going to pursue it to the end. There is information concerning the wasting of funds, and going directly into some people's pockets. This money belongs to the State, and the guilty ones are going to account for their deeds." Here, the Prime Minister is also hinting at the 'clique' of the Head of Parliament, to put pressure against him. This information is also from me to you. Also on the same day, October 12th, R.S's wife is set free after 3 days' arrest.

(...)

October 16th, in Al-Nahar, an article by Emile Khoury, dealing with corruption and the case of

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the Ministry of Finance, states: “We all know who’s stealing from the State... so why bother asking?” In al-Nahar, there’s nothing new concerning the stolen funds, with the exception of a small report, published in both al-Safir and al-Nahar, which claims there are no new developments, except that definitive judicial sources indicate the stolen funds range from 10 to 16 billion pounds.

Al-Diyar headline: “Will the government end its rule with a session of scandals?” Prime Minister addresses his ministers: “Today, our country is in the middle of three major scandals. The Ministry of Finance, Radio Lebanon, and the expansion of the phone network. I demand that each Minister explains what is going on with his Ministry.”

As soon as the Prime Minister finished, the session turned into a fist fight, a battlefield, a miniature civil war, and accusations started flying from all fronts. Eventually, one of them kept insisting to know how much money was missing from the Ministry of Finance. Not too happy, the Minister of Finance replies: “40 billion pounds”. The Minister of Agriculture blows a long, long, long wolf whistle. Prime Minister turns to him and says, “What’s the matter with you, man? Don’t you read the newspapers?”

On page 17, the Minister of Finance says something completely different. He insists that the stolen funds are much less than the reports say. He warns us: “Everything you read in the newspapers, everything you hear in the media about this particular case, is not true at all, there is no proof to sustain it.” What does he mean by that? Should we believe what we hear about other cases? I don’t know, maybe we have to ask about this..

October 17th, a short news brief says that the government is ending its rule with a huge scandal in the Ministry of Finance, while at the same time its President is being decorated. (...)

Nothing Will Ever Happen Here, Nothing Has Ever Happened

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Theran, virtual time: “Iran’s capital moved to other location”

Female performer(urban specialist):“The idea of moving the capital was proposed by the government in 1991. but due to resistance from certain entities in the establishment, the plan was halted. The moving of the capital or its replacement in the current situation is, due to economic, social and security reasons impossible. But at the same time the uncontrollable expansion of this 200 years old capital and all its problems has made its citizens anxious about their lives in this city.”

Female performer: “I am a middle aged woman, living in Gharchak, in the southern outskirts of Tehran. I go out to the city every day, working as a domestic helper, cleaning, cooking, etc. We moved to Tehran where we had some relatives who had come before. My husband learned to work as a plasterer. He was killed in an accident on the construction site. Without him, I have had to bring up our eight children on my own. I had rented a room in Afsariyeh, south-west city. Life in that house was really difficult. My elder son managed to buy a piece of land in Gharchak and with the help of his cousins built a home for us. I take the bus every day. All my time in this city I have had to travel to various places, where my clients live. God knows how I got used to this huge city, which has no beginning and no end, after coming from our little village. Two of my children live in Mashhad, a city I love. I have gone there a few times to visit. I can go to the Imam Reza’s shrine to pray, with its large golden dome and many grand halls. I have often wished to be able to live in Mashhad.”

Female performer(urban specialist): “Moving the capital ... to where? it’s all very difficult and expensive, and what about the other cities ...

provincial capitals like Tabriz, Mashahd, Shiraz, and so forth? I mean, the whole country is seismic ...”

Male performer: “I am a young man. I used to be a teacher in Kabul, Afghanistan, but had to run a way because of civil war in my country. Here I have had to work as a construction worker. It is very hard and nothing in my previous life had prepared me for this job. I wish I could go back to Kabul and have an ordinary, more dignified life. Here some people don’t like Afghanis. They think we take work opportunities away from the locals and get paid less for the same work. I live with six other Afghani workers in a small section of an old, crumbling house in the middle of Tehran. Some parts of Tehran have buildings with fancy shapes I had only seen in the movies. One good thing about being in the city is that a lot of things happen here. There are so many people from everywhere that nobody bothers us about our documents. If I don’t get a job for a day, I just wander around in the city centre, looking at thousands of passers-by and at the street vendors, shops, and places. I can get some rest in a mosque or go to one of many cinemas near by. I like these cinemas, although in this country they don’t show many Indian films, which are very popular back home. Despite all this, for me Tehran is an alien place.”

Male performer(urban specialist): “It is only a matter of time until a major tremor strikes Tehran. The city itself is located by the North Tehran Fault, which is to the north, and several faults to the south, as well as numerous faults crisscrossing the city. The possibility of an earthquake measuring more than 6 on the Richter scale occurring now in Tehran is about 90 percent, and the possibility of an earthquake measuring more than 7 is about 60 percent. But these are mathematical estimates, and

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the complications of geology and seismology do not let us exactly know whether these estimates are correct or not.

Male Performer: "I am a retired man, living in Elahiyeh, north city. I used to be a senior civil servant before the revolution. My house is large, to be honest too large for me and my wife. Our two children live in California. Last time we were out there to visit them, my wife was keen to see if we could stay there, to be near them. We reckoned if we sold this house, we could buy a good house over there and put some money in the bank to keep us going. I can easily sell this house for 1 million US dollars. But we both thought it would be hard for us to live in another country at our age. Our standard of life here is definitely better, despite all the problems of the past 25 years. Most days I go out for a walk in the park or visit my friends. I rarely go to the city, as the air is so polluted. Some days children and the elderly are specifically asked to stay at home. Our part of the city has been a very good neighbourhood for many years. Houses are all large, with good-sized courtyards. But these days things are changing, with high-rise buildings cropping up everywhere. Just imagine next door a large garden disappears and you are confronted with all these new flats looking into your house. Suddenly your street becomes crowded with noisy cars and people. In one or two cases people have been able to protest against the building project. But mostly the municipality wins, because they and the developers make a lot of money out of it. If it happens to me, maybe I would sell at a very good price and buy one of those flats."

Male performer(urban specialist): "In the 1976 earthquake in Tangshan, approximately half a million people were killed. For Tehran, with 12 million-plus population, heaven knows. It's easy to

guess, but it is scary, I don't want to think about that ..."

Female performer: "I am a middle-aged housewife living with my husband in Amiriyeh in the south of Tehran. We are both originally from Shiraz and came to Tehran many years ago. We have lived in this house for more than 30 years. I know all the shopkeepers in our street and they know me. In the past, they were more friendly and looked after us. Nowadays they seem to have so many customers that they don't care much about any of them. At the time of the war rations, the butcher and the grocer and many others all felt like god on earth. I'm glad those war days are gone. The city would go completely dark and you could hear these missiles landing in and around the city. One fell not far from here. The war days are gone now but most subsidies are also gone. The city has become much noisier and dirtier. We used to sleep on our roof in the summer, enjoying the cool breeze from the mountains. Now if we sleep outside, in the morning our sheets will have become dirty with chunks of soot. Once I knew almost everyone who lived in this street. Now very few of them have remained. Most people we used to know have moved out to other parts of the city, many to the north. Some of their children have gone overseas ..."

Female performer: March 27th 1830, the first earthquake in Tehran, 7 on the Richter scale.

Male performer: Every 150 years a devastating earthquake, probability 95 percent.

Female performer: Catastrophe, 172 years after the last earthquake.

Male performer: Catastrophe, the gathering of one sixth of Iran's population in Tehran.

Nothing Will Ever Happen Here, Nothing Has Ever Happened

Arta Group in collaboration with Pages Magazine

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Female performer: All-affecting crisis, destruction of skyscrapers, skyscrapers that are built without the consideration of security measures.

Male performer: the destruction of 800 residential units, and 124 billion Dollars of material damage in the early hours.

Both performers simultaneously:

Male performer: I had crept into my shell. I was praying, I was thinking, I was talking to myself. I had been waiting behind the door for a long time. I wanted him to let me visit him for a moment. I needed his help. "Alas, Babylon, that large city, was destroyed." "Alas, that large city was destroyed in the blink of an eye." I told him that he could come in. It was myself. He entered and said that he was Alexander the Macedonian. He said that he had failed to conquer Darband fortress, which was a den of thieves and bandits. He said that he had besieged the place for forty days and nights but had not been able to bring down even a clod of the wall of the fortress. I failed, I was defeated, I thought I could only gratify myself with the prayer of a devout anchorite. "Alas, that large city was destroyed in the blink of an eye." "Alas, that large city, with all its beauty and wealth was destroyed in the blink of an eye." We sat in front of each other: I and I and the anchorite and Alexander. And I prayed. He prayed. He closed his eyes for a while in silence and prayed. "And blessing abandoned the lands; fishes dried in the seas and grass dried in the meadows, and the earth refrained from receiving its dead ever since." Darband fortress collapsed. "The bread had defeated the wonderful power of the prophetic mission. The hungry and wretched prophets fled from the promised lands of God. And the lost lambs never again heard any shepherds' calls in the awe of the plains" I, Alexander, conquered the fortress

and erected a huge dam so that people could live in security forever. And I, the anchorite, kept on praying and praying. "Alas, Babylon, that large city with all its beauty and wealth was destroyed in the blink of an eye." When I went back home I saw that it was engulfed by water. In that day the whole Shemiran was engulfed by water. There was a flood. Tajrish Bridge was totally destroyed. A lot of people had died. I sat down and began to pray: O God, protect this city, don't let it be destroyed again. I just sat and prayed. What else could I do? O God, the only salvation for this city is its destruction. O God, destroy it. In the blink of an eye eliminate it.

Female performer: This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran. "Come nearer, come nearer", I was indicating to myself repeatedly. I had approached a door bearing a note saying: This door opens to Vacuum. This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran. I saw myself again as standing a bit ahead, signalling to myself to open the door. I opened the door, entered, and went onward. He/she never opened that door. He/she never entered. I proceeded and reached a staircase, a long staircase the end of which could not be seen. A signboard in front of it read: This staircase does not lead to anywhere. This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran. I never wanted to climb those stairs, never wanted to open that door. I was climbing the stairs not as only one body, hundreds of 'I's were climbing the stairs. I too climbed to accompany my fellows. At every few steps that I ascended, I wanted to return. None of us descended the stairs. She never climbed that stairs. At the tenth step I wanted to descend. At the twentieth step I wanted to descend. I didn't see much. I was not sure where I was going and why the others, and I, were ascending. Despite my hesitation, my steps were becoming faster and faster and I was proceeding. This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran.

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This is not Tehran. I asked myself, who was stepping calmly and thoughtfully: What place is this? How familiar seems everyone to me, how well I know them all. All along that aimless route/way I was keeping company with them. What place is this? What place is this? What place is this? Everybody thinks that we are crazy. We too think that they are crazy. Everybody is right. This is not Tehran. This is not Tehran. Tehran is not the capital of Iran. Everybody has abandoned/left the city.

The Strait or a Life Full of Holes (1998—2004)

Yto Barrada

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Longitudinally, from the Trafalgar to the Punta Europa meridian (Gibraltar), the Strait extends over 55 miles, which the average freighter crosses in five hours, and the ocean liner, in two. From Cape Spartel (Tangiers) to Cape Trafalgar, the width is 45 kilometers. From Punta Europa in Gibraltar to Cape Santa Catalina in Ceuta, it is 23 kilometers. At its narrowest, from Tarifa to Punta Ciris, it is 15 kilometers.

La Singulière zone de Tanger, V. Vernier, 1955

Even in its collapse, the colonial dream has left us the heritage of an iniquitous regime of managing and perceiving the mobility between the North and the South of the Mediterranean. In this bottleneck known as the Strait of Gibraltar, visiting rights are now unilateral. This territory of the in-between has the astonishing particularity of being marked by the coincidence between a physical space, a symbolic space, an historical space, and finally, an intimate space.

In Arabic as in English, strait conjugates narrowness (dayq) and distress (mutadayeq). In clear weather, the horizon of the Moroccan coasts is Span; but the strait has become a huge Moroccan cemetery. This new immigration differs from the preceding ones. It has its vocabulary, its legends, its songs and rituals. People no longer say “he emigrated,” but h’req: “he burnt,” he burnt his papers, his past. The exploits of the ‘burnt’ crop up everywhere, their stories stoke the desire for elsewhere. An enclave long forgotten by national investments, Tangiers is now the city where thousands of hopes come up short. What I want to show in this city is the inscription of this stubborn urge for departure which marks a people.

I have sought to suggest the metonymical character

of the Strait in this series of photographs, by insisting on the tension between allegory and snapshot. Strait is another word for the temptation of departure, and a commonplace (which has become a common bond), ceaselessly agitating the streets of Tangiers. This gives the streets the form of an imaginary space, into which all the obstinate dreams of leaving the country are engulfed. The would-be immigrant forges a collective identity here, by dint of being legally obstructed from crossing the Strait. This obstacle is not without consequences on the states of dispossession that emerge, and on the indignity attached to the immigrants position. This new immigration (a temporary, individual movement) is perceived in Europe as being closer to a migration (a massive shift of population). We are in the era of suspicion.

Our Moroccan cities are shaped by urban migrations, but also by and for tourism, these two great mass movements which are directly connected to the machinery of globalization. This transformation requires a reconfiguration of the geography of differences, while new trajectories (the rural exodus, the return of Emigrant Moroccan Workers – EMWs – on their summer visits...) imply new identities, identities which themselves are forged in resistance to the domestication of space (cf. the model GRAN ROYAL TURISMO).

When I take photographs in Tangiers, I can hardly ignore the fact that I am in my father’s native city, where my mother came to lose her way. I do not seek to dedramatize the tension and dangers of departure. Yet I’ve never quite known where I am myself when I walk through this city, in what history. I can photograph all the inhabitants who want to leave it, but myself, I always return, and I live there in the comfort of the maternal home. In my images I no doubt exorcise the violence of departure

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(the others' departure), but I give myself up to the violence of return (to home). The estrangement is that of a false familiarity. I photograph temptations, and not veritable attempts, in a reportage-like style. As soon as I am back in Tangiers, I am once again in a state of absence, I become absent. Perhaps there is a relation between my highly personal experience and the situation of a population seeking to leave the country, having not found its place there. I began to photograph my mother's house, the violence of domestic relations; and of course, what I find nearby, much closer, are the people dreaming of absence.

// Yto Barrada is a French/Moroccan visual artist living in Paris and Tangier

"The Straight" is an ongoing project examining the hope of migration, the representations it gives birth to and its influence on the Tangier cityscape.

The text is contributed to the Pages by Yto Barrada and Witte de With, center for contemporary art, Rotterdam. The Netherlands.

The Case of Two American Embassies

Vesta Nele Zarch

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Berlin: In 1989 the government of Berlin together with the United States foreign office decided to move the US embassy from its location in the suburbs back to the city center where it was located before World War II. The original building had been destroyed during the war. The empty site is now framed by the symbol of Berlin: the Brandenburger gate on one side, and a new building for the DZ Bank on the other.

In 1995 a competition was held for the new building and the embassy was moved to a provisional address in the area. The consulate stayed in the suburbs. Nowadays due to new security measures at the American consulate one may only enter the building without bags. Anything that is not necessary for the application of visas is prohibited. The cloakroom, which used to be on the grounds of the building is now located at a sandwich bar in the metro station on the other side of the street. The owner of the sandwich bar is taking care of bags while preparing sandwiches and coffee. On their way back from the consulate some people stop for a snack. The owner seems to be happy with this new arrangement. He has found new customers.

Meanwhile the situation in Berlin city center appears to be different. Here is where the fashionable Café Einstein is located. They are not altogether happy. Especially during the summer when customers have to face concrete and metal fences watched by surveillance cameras. This creates an absurd atmosphere. The land for the new embassy is still empty. In the near future the large fire wall, will be replaced by a new building. Today however, the whole site is closed even to pedestrians. The United States of America fears actions of terror. And so for the past 2 years driving in Berlin city center has become a very confusing affair. Any street could be blocked by large concrete blocks.

The traffic system needs to be re-organized everyday adapting to new barricades according to the changing daily political situation. Bombs in Madrid mean new fences in Berlin, they mean a different way home and a higher number of policemen on the streets. The people of Berlin are accustomed to the situation. They have adapted to the permanent crisis area surrounding the US embassy site close to the largest boulevard in the city. Only a few locals bother to take an interest now. But the tourists do stop. Some ask questions, some look scared (especially the children) and some take pictures. They will be reminded by the police that it is forbidden to take photographs. In spring 2004 at the still empty site of the future embassy in Berlin a number of boys were playing football. Instead of the usual field in the nearby park they had stopped to play here. Well, it is not a bad place for playing soccer, not too many trees, nearly the size of a football field, and of course much more exclusive being situated in the city center as opposed to a park ...

Tehran: In early November 2001, the former US embassy in Tehran was opened to visitors. This happened nearly 22 years after the embassy was occupied by a group of radical students in November 1979. For 10 days people could enter the compound and had the chance to visit the site of the old building. Fresh grass and flowers decorated the southern courtyard, prepared weeks before by the workers of the municipality. Visitors were able to enter the embassy building and watch the code room and telecommunications center protected by nine inch thick steel doors still bearing US federal notices. The interior of the main building was freshly painted in light green, "good for the spirits and a sense of peace" the guide noted. Younger people could take a closer look at what most of them only knew from television and newspapers. For ten days the place became a museum.

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In former times when the Americans were still in Tehran the building was rather ironically referred to by people as 'Henderson High' after ambassador Loy Henderson. In those days the embassy had appeared more like a high school, and not so much an official and intimidating representative of a foreign power. Now the Pasdaran (Iranian police) use the place as a location for their training academy.

The street in front of the old embassy seems to be normal with heavy traffic as everywhere else in Tehran. Only the colorful graffiti on the walls catch the eye. On closer inspection however, it becomes clear why this special fence became famous as protection for the "Den of spies". Sometimes you can see tourists posing in front of the fence, using it as a background for their souvenir pictures. The US embassy in Tehran, is not an embassy any more. But it is an address recognized by every taxi- driver. You can use it to orientate yourself in the city. While in Berlin if you ask someone for the US embassy you might get the answer: which one do you mean? The old one or the new one .. or the one in the suburbs.

// Vesta Nele Zarch is an architecture student, living in Berlin.

Interview with Steve McQueen

Nasrin Tabatabai & Babak Afraassiabi

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B.A. In your film installations there is a layer through which you approach cinema and its properties. Can you tell us more about the relationship between the subjects in your work and cinema?

S.MQ. Well, I try to answer like this. In some ways it is the ethics, which is the subject matter, and the aesthetics, which is camera/cinema. Bringing them together has to be a situation where both interlock together. One can't work without the other. I think sometimes one is searching for a right way of realisation. For example, I made a film about my cousin, who shot and killed his brother...

N.T. A true story?

S.MQ. Yes, an accident unfortunately ... and how I approached that was through the cinematic way of the still image. And the still image happened to be his head. He was lying on the floor and I took a photograph from the top of his head, and projected the image with the voice over of him talking about what happened on that specific day. So, it was about the whole idea of memory and what he was saying, and how that transforms the images in people's head rather than the image that they were looking at. The still image of his head was just a visual focus, and from there you could go somewhere else. My cousin speaks for 25 minutes nonstop. He is totally engrossed in what he says. He has a way of telling the story, which has so many different layers. As a viewer you go with him through the whole story. So it is almost minute by minute that you get closer and closer into his head.

B.A. Can you say more about this relationship between ethics and aesthetics?

S.MQ. Its just logic for me, the way one has to

approach art in one way or another and it has to be some kind of a foundation of what you are looking at. Therefore one has to interlock with the other. It has its own autonomy in some ways, and that's why it's so difficult to make an interesting piece of work. It is about that balance, not necessarily a balance, it is about that sort of fusion as such, its not even a fusion, its all about that autonomy: it is, it's an IS. And one is always trying to look for that IS within representing in art. Because it's never an illustration, it has to have some kind of ethical and I think fundamentally moral significance.

B.A. In a way it's a kind of strategy to deal with representation?

S.MQ. I don't think it's a strategy. Its like poetry or literature, you use texts or words, you have a whole vocabulary of words, and you want to engross yourself in something, so the aesthetics of the word is intertwined with what you are writing about it is in the work, and it has the autonomy of an IS, its an IS. It's not a style.

N.T. Maybe you can explain all this in the context of your work about your cousin, and that in relation to the ethics and aesthetics of cinema and representation. S.MQ. You know I don't think or care so much about cinema. On the one hand I do because I make films, but my work is never about a certain medium. I tend to forget that in a way. Its like reading: you forget you can read. B.A. Could you tell us more about the image in this piece? I had the sound first, the voice of my cousin talking about the incident that was recorded in a studio. I first was thinking of putting the sound in a room and that'll be it. But somehow I knew that there needed to be a focus point; a situation where the viewers' eyes could focus, maybe on a totally abstract or arbitrary way. And I had this idea of the top of his

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head. I was interested in the image of his head, the oval of his head being the focal point of the piece. I needed the audience participation in the piece to have a focal point, and that for me was the oval of Marcus's head, the top of his head. And through the 25 minutes of the piece your eyes have always something to focus back on.

B.A. I don't want to say realism, but there is a sense of naturalism in that piece.

S.MQ. Sure, but only because of the fact of technology. What I am trying to do is to get the essence of the event. And I am trying to do this with the technology of the everyday, what is available to us now.

N.T. You recently travelled to Basra for a film project. Can you tell us about it?

S.MQ. I was commissioned by the Imperial war museum, in London, to be the so-called official war artist, for the Iraq war. This institution has been going on since the Crimean war, and before. They asked me if I was interested. I said yes I wanted to do it. It was one of those privileged situations. I was of course interested in the economics of the war, what leads people to those extremes. I have never been in a war before, never been in Iraq before. Never been with the military before. It is very strange being with the military, with that sort of mentality. I was being taken around by the British army. The expression I got from the people in Iraq was that they are very happy that they are free of Saddam, but at the same time not happy with the occupation. It is a very strange dilemma.

N.T. How then do you see your trip to Iraq, as a filmmaker, in the light of the above? And the representation overload of Iraq by the media that is

taking place now?

S.MQ. All the information we get of this war is through the media, or media coverage, in whatever form and shape it takes. As an artist, or a person who is trying to deal with something else outside the media, I think there is space for that and I am looking for something within that which is not represented by these news corporations. Something that is not just about the spectacle or the spectacular.

N.T. You think literally being there, one can, as an artist come closer to the essence of the situation?

S.MQ. I asked myself why go there. I think if there is an opportunity to go and look, I don't think you can lose anything from it; in fact you can gain from that. You may in the end come back with nothing. But in the end it can give you a situation where you can take it or leave it.

N.T. You went to Iraq as a British artist, trying to reflect on the situation there' how do you look at the increase of interest in the west towards the art coming from outside of Europe in recent years?

S.MQ. I think the interest has always been there, but has never been so serious in some ways. I think the history of art has to be the history of art, and that has to embrace the world and not just America and Western Europe. The history of art is about the history of the world of art. Thank god people are starting to wake up and realize that there are situations of art making outside of Western Europe and North America and its serious, vigorous and strong. But when you are talking about art in the market you are talking about something else. The artists at the same time have to keep their integrity within this situation, not to be used for certain games by certain people. So, they should use the opportunity wisely.

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N.T. So, after the major steps have been taken in introducing non-western artists in the west, whether by following a certain kind of fashion or in a respectful way. What could now be the next step?
S.MQ. I think for example that events such as the Documenta have to be relocated every 5 years. It can't be stuck in Germany. If it really wants it to be global it has to be like the Olympic games. It has to be like the World Cup. It has to move from this central western position. Next time it should be in Tehran, or it should be Beijing, or Mexico city.

B.A. Political situations in non-western countries play an important role on the global level and inevitably within the art world. But sometimes these are played out to a certain simplistic and homogeneous political exoticism: works that come from the so-called troubled countries or conflict zones are expected to be direct representations of these situations.

S.MQ. Yes absolutely. It's a romantic notion. There is this romantic idea of the 'third world and revolution'. There are those who want you to express your fears as a 'third world' artist and the society embraces all that.

B.A. You mean in some ways it's a fetishist approach?

S.MQ. I am not questioning people's integrity. I mean there is so many ways of saying and doing things. And if only one way is being followed that's kind of a problem.

//Steve McQueen is a British artist and filmmaker, living in Amsterdam and London. Photo credit: Steve McQueen, 7th November, 2001. Single Slide Projection and Sound. Courtesy Thomas Dane, London

An Eclipse, Which Dropped from the Sky

Maani Pelgar

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It's July 24, 2000 and I started the editing of the film, which actually happened to me: I have always been frightened of blindness and I think it's the worst thing that can happen to me. Maybe, this fear is partially because of my job. How can a filmmaker make films if he can't see... It seems that there's another kind of blindness, because I hadn't seen the subject of this film for quite a while, even though it had dropped down right in front of my camera. Almost a year ago in Aug. 10, 1999 the last eclipse of the century took place. About 2 billion people in the world viewed it through the TV. Some time ago, NASA predicted that Isfahan in Iran, would be the best location for observing the eclipse. On that day I was at Reza's, a friend of mine. I understood that Iranian TV is going to have a simultaneous report from five major eclipse locations. Overall, I am not crazy about Iranian TV's style and standards, but this time, just out of curiosity; I sat down voluntarily in front of the TV, to watch the coverage of the event. I didn't even know that at the time that the low quality of sound and picture of Iranian TV is going to be part of my film.

I listened to what they said and headed home. Reza was recording the whole program on videotape as a souvenir so I told myself, if I miss anything I could see it later. It took me about 20 minutes to get home. On the way back home, I tried to stare at the road, while driving. Though it was not dangerous to look directly at the sun in Tehran...

How come the beautiful halo of the sun doesn't seem to be in focus.

When I got home, I took my camera just to shoot the reflections of light in my yard. While I was switching between the TV and the yard, which had no flowers and plants in it because of the recent renovations, I noticed that...

I've always loved animals since I was a child, and as my cousin was a vet, whenever I saw an injured bird, cat, or dog, I would take them to him to cure them. But this time I was so fascinated by the eclipse, that later based on the time of the camera, I realized that it had taken eight minutes for me to forget about the TV coverage and go to check out the sparrow in the yard. I hadn't even realized that the injured sparrow had dropped in front of my camera, just about 1.5 minutes after the first total eclipse in Iran. I didn't know what to do. Should I completely forget about the rest of the coverage and take the injured sparrow to my cousin? I knew that Reza was recording the whole program and I could later watch it. But what was important is the exact moment of the eclipse. Moreover, it was about 15 years that I hadn't seen my cousin. How could I go to him with an injured bird? Especially since it appeared to me that the little sparrow wasn't in a very bad condition. Perhaps it would be able to survive through the eclipse in Iran.

This time when the sparrow left the house, it again nestled itself near the bars of the window, in its favorite spot. I was still curious about the last moments of the eclipse and was stuck in front of the TV set. Once the eclipse moved away from Iran, I too moved away from the TV and went into the yard to check on the sparrow once again. It appeared to be drifting away. I called my cousin... No one was there... I wondered what would happen during the night. I set out some food for it. It had come inside the house twice before, now I wondered whether to pick it up and bring it in or to honor its decision of staying in the yard. I don't know why I decided to leave everything as it was. During the night I left the kitchen door open... I felt I could not and did not have the right to interfere with reality any further, even considering the risk of a cat discovering the sparrow.

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When I woke up in the morning, there was no trace of the bird.

I recalled that in the old days it was said that an eclipse was the bearer of death and disaster. In Japan, it was a custom to cover the wells so that the poison from the sky would not get into the water. Even in the last century, the ships of the Chinese navy would fire cannonballs towards an invisible dragon. I don't know if the injury of this sparrow had anything to do with the eclipse or not. However eclipse is not considered omen all over the world. For example, in Tahiti it's considered to be lovemaking between the moon and the sun. And the Eskimos believe that the moon and the sun temporarily come down to Earth to look over everything.

In the name of God. My warmest greetings to all Iranian viewers and hello to you Mr. Abdolrashidi in Tehran and all my other colleagues who are based in information centers and will present you with all the latest news on the last total eclipse of the 20th century. I'm bringing you this from the northern end of Chougha hill in Boroujerd; this would be a good opportunity for all the viewers to witness the eclipse, this beautiful natural phenomenon through the TV coverage. I must say to my fellow Iranians and my other colleges, Mr. Abdolrashidi, that about two hours ago I received a fax from Germany, which will hopefully be presented to you shortly. The most interesting aspect of this precise meteorological information we received was that the weather in almost all the European countries is cloudy. And In spite of the attempt of the patrol planes to transmit pictures to broadcasting centers, they have been unable to get clear pictures. According to the same written report, the best spot to view the eclipse, is our dear country, Iran, and we are located in its Broujerd.

We are happy to have you with us. You supplied us with some explanations on the eclipse and the required rituals and prayers in times of natural catastrophes. Thank you for joining us. We are witnessing this eclipse partially in Tehran. As you were coming, what was your impression of the city? What did you see?

The city was quiet!

Yes, that is, the people have gone home...

To the mosques and their homes...

Thank you so much. The more the people stay home and witness the event on TV or go to mosque and other centers to perform the prayers, the better. In doing so, you have both fulfilled your obligations and protected your eyes from exposure to the sun.

You can see, the total eclipse in the Kurdistan region, Marivan, Zarivar Lake, through TV cameras. And the spectacular halo formed around the sun is one of the most glorious beauties of God's creation.

Mr. Eskandari, it seems that all the efforts of our technical team throughout these months were for witnessing this incredible moment and this halo around the sun, which can be viewed at the moment of the total eclipse. Obviously, their efforts were not in vein and this spectacular picture is being transmitted to the world.

Mr. Aligholi, please go on...

A spectacular silence has embraced Broujerd. People are in a state of strange bewilderment. In a few moments, we'll have a total eclipse in Broujerd. [ezza shams e koverrat va ezza nojoomon kaderrat...]

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(verses from the Holy Koran) A few moments ago, the prayers of natural catastrophes were performed in Broujerd. People have raised their hands in prayers towards the Heavens. The city is about to be engulfed in total darkness. The city lights have been turned on and the people are communicating closely with God.

I hope you stay in your homes, do not go outside. It's not possible to see such a scene in an open space.

If you don't mind, let the people witness these beautiful scenes with no comments, I'll go on later...

I can hear you, dear viewers, once again, for the third time within the last few minutes; you observe the total eclipse of the sun and the beautiful halo around it...

I can't hear you...

As I mentioned before, this scene can be viewed all around the world through satellites and Internet network. At the moment the eyes of all those who are witnessing this eclipse are focused on Islamic Republic of Iran, and our space and sky, as well as the beautiful city of Isfahan. I was told that most of the scientific centers considered this location because of its clear sky and the longer duration of the eclipse. I would like my dear colleagues in Kerman, Ms. Mahnegar and Mr. Mohammadi, to be prepared to provide us with their coverage. Please go on... we and our viewers are ready to witness the...

Is our picture on the air?

Yes, we can hear you, we hope you also have our sound and picture. Do you receive it?

Yes, yes, we are watching you... .

It seems that Mr. Mohammadi has something to say...

Yes, I was going to recite one of the verses of the Holy Koran, which illustrates the magnificence of God, for you dear viewers. [allah-o-akbar- endallah-e- ahsanal khaleghin] In Kerman, we can see the sun disappearing in the light of the day. Haven't you realized that God has entered day into night and night into day and ordered the sun and the moon to orbit in a certain time and within a well-organized system? Don't you know that God is well aware of what we perform? [allah-o-akbar] It's gradually getting darker in Narp City in Bardsir region.

The researchers are busy with their observations and the people with god in their hearts, are kneeling on praise of the almighty. I wish all of you were here to witness the manifestation of the glory of God.

I'm speechless. Wish we always had the insight we acquire in these moments within us, to realize our real place as a small entity and at the same time, great world within the universe. Because it is actually our insight and our awareness, which is the only thing that can determine our real status. Well, as it gets darker, people become more and more excited...

I had promised to give you some related literature on eclipse. I must tell you that Achilles, a Greek poet in 648 BC said that : Never let your hope diminish, Never see anything impossible, Nothing is extraordinary, For Zeus, the father of Olympia, Turned the bright day into night, Concealing the sunlight, And caused terror in People

//Maani Petgar, is an Iranian filmmaker living in Tehran.

Diagram & Rhizome

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Categorization/classification makes unique problems unsolvable and complicated. The mental space of an immigrant is not totally different from the space of destination. The problem with contemporary knowledge lies in its idea based on progress. Architecture and the city are the substance of the locality of human presence, not the space of human presence. The issue of relocation of the capital of Iran is totally different from that of relocation of the city of Tehran. Every space or trend is perceived in relation to the mental space of the individual (presence). This relation would [only] be that of space or trend, and not all the current issues within it.

Categorizations/classifications such as macro-city are only of use in public education rather than being terms [used] in knowledge. The urban space of Tehran has documented the contemporary Iranian problems. A heterogeneous space is not copyable or multipliable... it is unique, wholly and constitutively. Except for earthquake, all other problems of Tehran, which have stirred up different arguments on the relocation of the capital, have been resolvable through urban management and adjustment/improvement of functional zoning in Tehran and in the country as a whole. To be unique is a risk. Today, the space of 'presence' has a lot of variable constituents. One of them is substance. It is with the understanding of that space that the architect creates architecture. The current architectural knowledge in Iran encompasses a sketchy understanding of the issues related to complexity of mental spaces. Heterogeneous space is based on all the constituents in a variable condition. Capital is a governmental issue; Tehran is an issue related to Tehran citizens. Lack of dominant trends in particular conditions can be a context for the growth of alternative spaces. In Iran, the urban space consists of a whole set of spaces related to people and does not relate

to leading dominant trends such as knowledge of capital management or even finding solutions for the problems. Homogeneous cities do not satisfy people. Every problem is unique and can only be studied through its related unique knowledge. In Iran, due to the heterogeneous mental spaces, movements have been individual (and sometimes even unique) and thus no trend appears there. The art is also entirely individual and does not turn into collective trends. Personal architectural projects increasingly lead the substance of the city towards heterogeneity. Relocation of the capital from the earthquake-related viewpoint relates to the life security of the people working in the central departments of the three forces. [legislative, executive and judicial]

Contemporary knowledge in the world has developed a homogeneous space. What the Iranian citizen wants from the city and architecture seems odd and unreasonable to the architects and vice versa. Neither one of them believes in the other. The knowledge of an expert/specialist is about similar and classified issues. If in studying human problems we convert/change them into constituents// reducing them to constituents, the problems themselves would not be understood; they would be missed. There are as many different opinions about an architectural project as there are architects and ; and this is understandable. That sort of knowledge is not teachable. The inclination of living in the capital changed Tehran from a village to a very large city within 200 years. Numerous street layouts in all of the old Iranian textures ... Differences could be factors for relation. It is all about the contemporary space, not the contemporary architecture and urban development. The space in Iran is not clear; it does not have a dominant trend or trends. Man's new understanding, achieved after experiencing different kinds of structures, has helped and will help him in transition from collective structures to individual

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ones. Iran has neither been able to accept the dominant trends, nor been able to find solutions to its problems. This has resulted in an accumulation of cultural, social, economical, ... problems. In some fields, man has become so complex that knowledge has suffered debility or malfunction. On the other hand, in some fields, knowledge has progressed to an extent that man cannot find himself in it. Tehran is a heterogeneous city in the literal sense of the word. It has not been developed through urban knowledge. In recent centuries, emergence of a dominant trend in knowledge has changed knowledge itself into a different phenomenon. There are certain issues that have caused the substance of the city not to be based on current urban knowledge and architecture: That knowledge has not been seriously the concern of even the experts in this country. Also people have not welcomed it, rather, they have sometimes prevented its implementation. To live in a heterogeneous society is a risk. Western space moves according to the dominant trend of progress. In multiplication, transfer, and teaching in a public manner, Knowledge of architecture has inevitably lost its unique properties and has become a set of patterns and formulas. Abstraction has a strong presence in the mental space of the people and in the space of the country; it is not developed by the artist. Presence in the global domain has a direct relation with uniqueness. One reason for the problems of non-western countries remaining unsolved is that they try to perceive the problems and seek its solutions in a western style. The alternative space exists in the collective unconscious of the world. The present issue of the world is a space in which everybody can attend. One of the reasons why phony homebuilders have been successful in Tehran is that they have been able to establish a close contact with the mental space of the inhabitants. Based on a dominant trend (knowledge, progress and development), western space needs programs,

systems, etc, and essentially, a homogeneous trend. Whatever relates to it and is absorbed in it is defined in that structure. In Iran, there has occurred a special and complex understanding, but no trend other than the general trend of life. In Iran, the majority are concerned with the un-Orientalized/un-easternized part of the Oriental/eastern aspect of Iranians or the un-westernized part of their western aspect. They consider this dichotomy a problem or crisis. The main issue is not orientalizing/easternization or westernization or dichotomy of people. Nor is it a problem or crisis. It is a different situation with a long foetal period. In Iran, because of the huge diversity of habitats, different spaces with different cultures and people have come into existence within small distances from each other. Different settled or migrating tribes, rich natural resources and contact with other cultures and customs have increased the differences and have resulted in the absence of dialogue and internal relation and a lack of development of a cohesive trend or trends (with the exception of central governments). Small communities, having their own problems and difficulties, could not develop any trends.