

# different samās

**New Perspectives in  
Contemporary Iranian Art**



**Editor**  
Hossein Amirsadeghi

**Essays**  
Hamid Keshmirshakar  
Mark Irving  
Anthony Downey



## **Different Sames**

### **New Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art**

Editor: Hossein Amirsadeghi

With essays by Hamid Keshmirshekan,

Mark Irving and Anthony Downey

Long considered a bastion of creativity in the region, Iran is currently experiencing a remarkable artistic revival in the middle of the most challenging of circumstances. Iranian artists – whether based inside or outside the country – are creating remarkable works that reflect their country's social and political environment, while incorporating their own personal worldviews and those of their adopted homelands. Seen together, these works form a new and exciting movement that can only gain in importance in the coming years.

*Different Sames: New Perspectives in Contemporary Iranian Art* catalogues this new movement, capturing its brilliance and creative energy. Packed with wonderful images, it is an important and lively compendium of thought-provoking essays, historical context and profiles of the leading artists, whether well-established (such as Parviz Tanavoli and Monir Farmanfarmaian), internationally recognized (such as Shirin Neshat, Y. Z. Kami or Mitra Tabrizian), or emerging (such as Ali Banisadr or Tala Madani). Exclusive interviews with the key artists, collectors and curators offer fascinating new insights, and allow the book to explore the differences and similarities between current international movements in art and the art produced both in Iran and by artists of the Persian Diaspora.

Art changes the way we look at the world, and *Different Sames* is an attempt to explain today's Iranian art movement in this spirit.

With 586 illustrations

On the jacket:

front

**Timo Nasser**

*Epistrophy #1*, 2008

Polished stainless steel, 150 x 150 x 100 cm

© Timo Nasser, courtesy galerie schleicher+lange, Paris

back

**Mehdi Farhadian**

*Twins*, 2008

Acrylic on canvas, 190 x 150 cm

© Mehdi Farhadian, private collection, London



For Ali Asghar Amirsadeghi  
Father, salt of the earth

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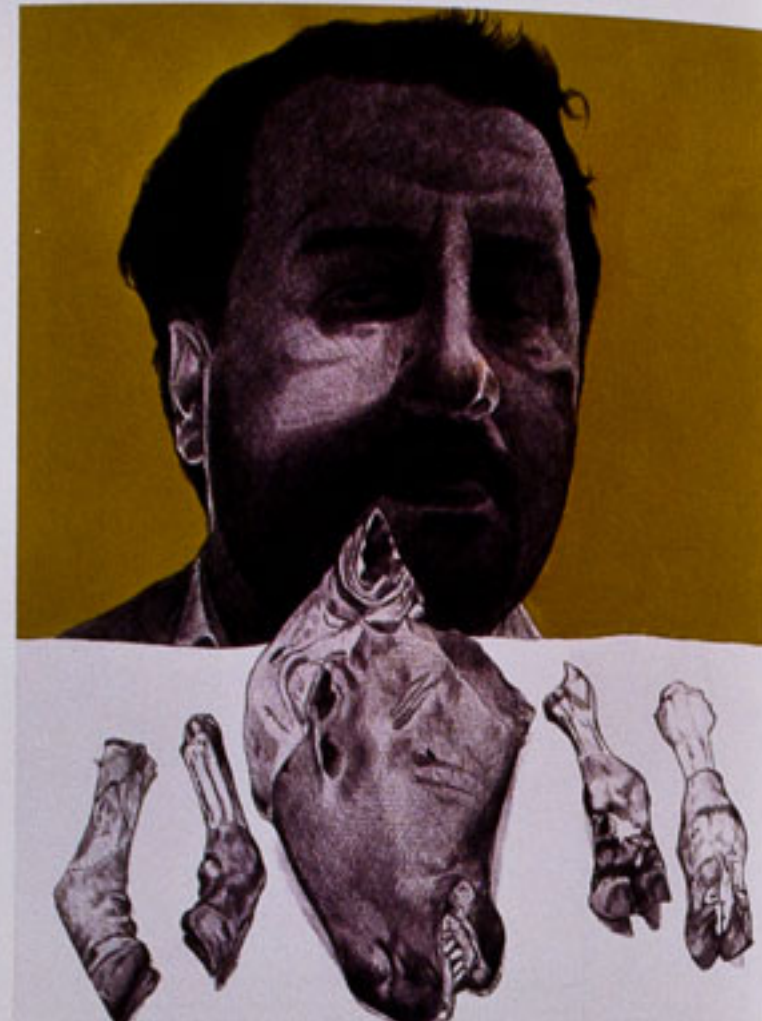
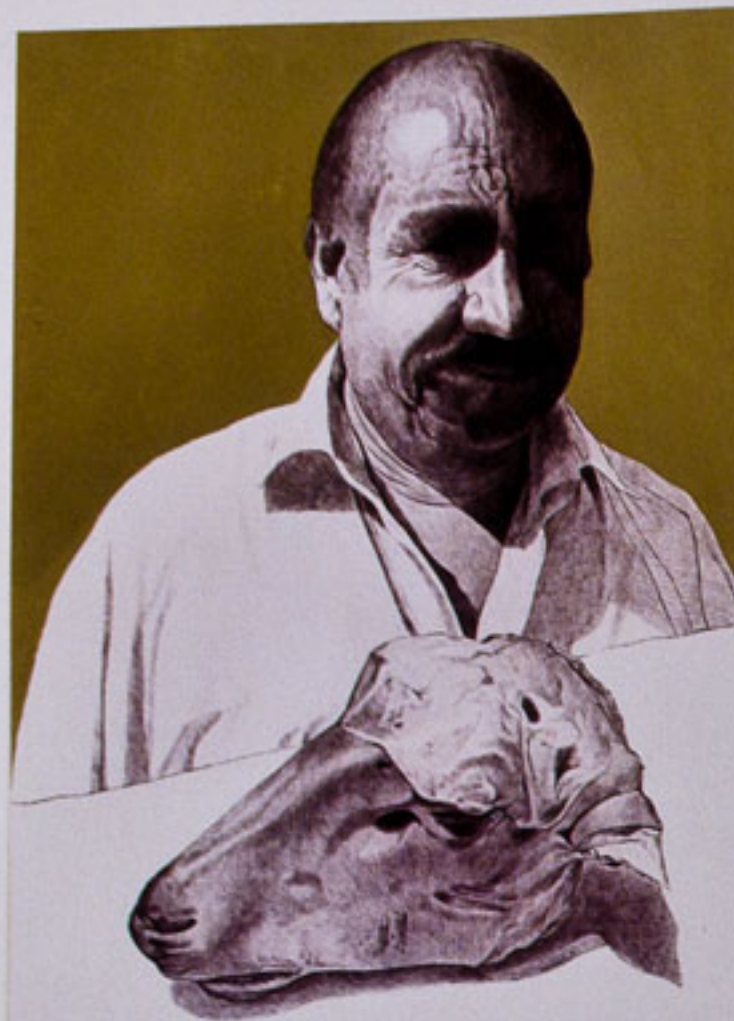
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previous page  
**Hassan Sarbakhshian**  
From the 'Daily Life' series  
Photograph  
© Hassan Sarbakhshian  
Courtesy of Hassan Sarbakhshian and  
Silk Road Gallery, Tehran





Born in 1973 in Mashhad, Iran, Ahmad Morshedloo is one of Iran's most original painters. He studied first at the Azad University in Tehran, and then in 2001 completed a Master of Arts in Painting. Since then he has exhibited widely, including several solo shows in Tehran and group shows in Europe and the United Arab Emirates. He also teaches at a number of universities in Iran.

Morshedloo's main subject is the human figure, and many of them are depicted naked. In his own words, 'Their nakedness represents their detachment from this world. Sometimes we see some naked children on the street, for instance, to whom nakedness is not an issue for they don't live in this world really.' Some critics have commented that his figures appear to be

burdened and yet tranquil at the same time – ambiguity pervades the works.

The style of these images has been described as 'neo-realist', though there is also a touch of caricature, of exaggeration. What is certain is that Morshedloo is able to handle a large range of media, from charcoal to oil, watercolour to pen, and that his works show considerable technical prowess. However, instead of creating images that are strictly true to life, he attempts to conjure up works that have some humanity, or even humility. There is also a sense of death or morbidity hanging around some of the works: for example, in the sheep's heads that crop up in certain paintings. Even some of the 'live' sitters appear to be only half-alive.

Most of his works, even when relatively simple on the surface, have some symbolism. Of one painting of a man and woman, for example, Morshedloo says that they signify the 'union and solidarity in the Iranian society'. And as for many other Iranian artists, art is also a vital form of self-expression: 'All these paintings portray the emotions and inner feelings of the painter towards human figures,' Morshedloo says. But ultimately, the artist – like some of his figures – carries a heavy burden: 'The artist...is an inevitable presence in society's evolution or its degeneration. His selective gaze puts him in a decisive position.'

top left  
**Untitled, 2007**  
Pen and acrylic on cardboard  
120 x 90 cm  
© Ahmad Morshedloo  
Courtesy of Ahmad Morshedloo and the Assar Art Gallery, Tehran

top centre  
**Untitled, 2007**  
Pen and acrylic on cardboard  
120 x 90 cm  
© Ahmad Morshedloo  
Courtesy of Ahmad Morshedloo and the Assar Art Gallery, Tehran

top right  
**Untitled, 2007**  
Pen and acrylic on cardboard  
120 x 90 cm  
© Ahmad Morshedloo  
Courtesy of Ahmad Morshedloo and the Assar Art Gallery, Tehran





above  
**Untitled, 2007**  
Pen and acrylic on cardboard  
120 x 90 cm  
© Ahmad Morshedloo  
Courtesy of Ahmad Morshedloo and  
the Assar Art Gallery, Tehran

opposite, below  
**Untitled, 2007**  
Oil on canvas  
150 x 400 cm (4 panels)  
Private collection, London