

SHADI GHADIRIAN

Iranian, born 1974



Ghadirian still lives and works in the city of her birth, Tehran. She is a renowned artist who has achieved success in solo shows, group exhibitions, and also at auctions.

She stepped into the international limelight in 2001 with the series *Qajar* and *Like Everyday*, her compelling images linked to her identity as a Muslim woman living in Iran. Her first series of portraits were inspired by old plate-glass photographs from Iran's Qajar period (1794 to 1925) which she discovered while still a student at Akshaneh, a historical archive in Tehran. "Until that time, portraits were forbidden in

Iran for religious reasons," she says, "so the impact of these photographs on 19th-century Iranians was enormous."

The artist has continued to explore the theme of conflict between tradition and modernity, and that of the position of women in a society dominated by male stereotypes. Hovering just beneath the surface appears the whole saga of the relationship between Orient and Occident, set within a world context that sees Iran, pulled between the will to reform and conservative retrenchment, at times placed beyond the pale, at others considered as an unavoidably essential economic and political partner.

Her new series, *Nil Nil* featured in *Routes II*, sees military objects enter the domestic sphere, juxtaposing symbols of potential violence with everyday, anodyne items. The uncomfortable juxtaposition of quotidian culture and war paraphernalia become apparent in photographs such as *Nil Nil 1* where a woman's open handbag reveals bullets discreetly interspersed with make-up. These richly coloured and exuberant images appear at once menacing and delicate, their aggressive qualities being tempered by feminine elements.

Brief Biography

Ghadirian was born in Tehran where she continues to live and works. In 1998 Ghadirian obtained a BA in photography from the Azad Art University, Tehran. She worked at the first museum of photography in Iran, the Akshaneh Shar and managed the first Iranian website dedicated solely to photography.

Ghadirian's work has been widely exhibited across the Middle East, Europe and the United States. Her solo exhibitions include shows at the Leighton House Museum in 1999, the Silk Road Gallery in 2002 and in the same year at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran. In 2003, her work was on view in Greece at the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, in Sweden at the Konstmuseum Goteborg and in France at the Ville de Boulogne. In 2004, she was exhibited at the San Hose Museum of Art in New York and in Germany at the House of World Cultures of Berlin. She has also participated in biennials including the Sharjah International Biennial in 2003 and the Photo Biennial of Moscow in 2004.

Her works can be found in the Saatchi Collection and were most recently exhibited in their groundbreaking exhibition *Unveiled* in London earlier this year. Other collections include The British Museum, London; Musée des Arts Contemporains Centre Georges Pompidou; Driss Ben Brahim; Sheikh Majid Al Sabah and Saeb Eigner.