

The Role of Photography in Conceptual Art in Iranian Artist

Dianat Fereshteh

Department of Graphic, Faculty of Art, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract: One of the new art forms that followed independently is “conceptual art”. Since, photography is always considered as a document and approaches to reality, it is considered as a main component in different new art forms specifically in conceptual art. As photography plays an essential role in the first artworks of conceptual art called “one and three chairs” by Joseph Kossuth, it made me to address this question: “to what extent photography can play an essential role in conceptual artworks?” It was not very late after rise of conceptual art that Iran was in line with these new developments. Therefore, it is tried to study the role of photography in conceptual art through investigating Iranian artist’s art works. Here, it is tried to review two main exhibitions of conceptual artworks held in contemporary art museum of Tehran during 2001-2002 as well as field study approaches about artworks in other galleries, to achieve the said goal. The present study attempts to define conceptual art beside a quick review of the first photos that apparently effected formation of conceptual art in Iranian artist’s artworks.

Key words: Photography, conceptual art, new art, illustrate, Iran, Iranian artist’s

INTRODUCTION

In line with emergence and spread of different fields of new art during 60’s and 70’s, Iran was also affected with this flow and though was not very successful to execute all fields due to differences in cultural, ethical, economic conditions and so on, it deed noticeably well in some other categories. One of these categories is conceptual art. Since, there is no boundary for arts and photography is a witness to facts because of its availability, constancy and record of time it is considered to be one the basic media in conceptual art. In this respect present study tries to clarify the key role of photography in conceptual art through explaining this new art category and introducing pioneer artists in conceptual art. Actually this study is conducted among works of Iranian artists. As the only available sources was confined to two books of conceptual art and new art, published by Tehran contemporary art museum, it is also tried to search locally for artworks presented in galleries to study the basic role of photography in forming of conceptual art in Iranian artist works.

Literature review: After several investigations about new art in Iran and since, only some of art categories was developed more than others and welcomed more, I decided to specifically study conceptual art. Studying works of conceptual art and new art exhibition in contemporary art museum of Tehran, also after reviewing the early conceptual art works, it can be concluded that photography plays a very essential role in formation and

execution of conceptual art. Then studying the “conceptual art” book (Marzona, 2005) and the article “art and photography” (Lemagny and Rouille, 1987) it makes more interesting in research and investigation about the role of photography in conceptual art. The aim of this research was to know more about of some foreign artists through h studying “conceptual art” and to review Iranian art works as well.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to the great importance and development of conceptual art during 1960-1970 in Europe and USA, also in regard to impact of this art flow on Iranian art works both before and after Islamic revolution of Iran, unfortunately there are no useful information about published and unpublished art work resources during 1978-1988, to analyze the role of photography in conceptual art in Iran. So, I was forced to merely refer to works exhibited in two exhibitions of conceptual art and new art held in contemporary art museum of Tehran during 2000 and 2001 as the basic statistical society in this study. Then, Iranian artworks in conceptual art were studied and compared them to artworks of artists in the globe, to analyze the role of photography in Iranian artworks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

New art: If we consider new art to be formed out of postmodern art, began after modern era, nearly all art

fields that formed after 1960 can be titled under the category of new art. Some of these fields include conceptual art, land art, video, installation, performance, happening, body art etc.

New art was borne due to different factors: to start with new art formed from a kind of interaction between new innovations in art and rise of new art institutions. Modern art museums, having half a century experience, faced a severe identity crisis during seventies. Most of artists and audiences in these museums, believed that introducing art works in modern era with a view to the past criteria is a kind of aristocratic reactionary and dislike their lack of active presence in contemporary culture and art fields. In this respect contemporary art museum formed in order to introduce new efforts and evolutions of artists and provide a new arena to broadcast new art. As new art demands for new art centers and these centers support and encourage new and different art categories. The other factor that strengthened motivation of ideas to achieve evolution in form and structure of contemporary art is comprehensive interest of artists in social and current issues. New art constantly insists on important international issues such as freedom, environment, nuclear dangers, feminism, technology and alienation of man and machine, human disasters, world war massacres, using all its new features and tools. The third factor in emergence of new art is stunning development of communication technology and expansion of new media such as photography, video and internet (Locie, 1995).

Conceptual art: Conceptual art is a movement that prizes ideas over the formal or visual components of art works. An amalgam of various tendencies rather than a tightly cohesive movement, conceptualism took myriad forms, such as performances, happenings and ephemera. From the mid-1960's through the mid-1970's conceptual artists produced works and writings that completely rejected standard ideas of art. Their chief claim that the articulation of an artistic idea suffices as a work of art, implied that concerns such as aesthetics, expression, skill and marketability were all irrelevant standards by which art was usually judged (Wikipedia). The title of "conceptual art" was first introduced by Sol LeWitt (in his writings about conceptual art) in art forum journal "as it was mentioned by Wood (2002) in order to achieve the goal of conceptual art we should disregard two main specification and historic factors in the art of west, it means producing tools to be observed and the observation itself" as in conceptual art the importance of artistic object or the subject is not important and finally this is the idea of the artists which is of main concern. In fact conceptual art

tries to emphasis on opinion and mental aspect of an art work which is the result of the intention of the artist. This idea have not be verified by all audience and each person can impress his personal idea or to extend the concepts of that art work as his desire. "Ready-mades" by Marcel Duchamp is also one of the backgrounds of conceptual art. Among artists that pioneered this movement we can remember such as Douglas Huebler, Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Kosuth and Robert Barry who's their conceptual art works was exhibited during 1969 and 1968. Photography and conceptual art conceptual art benefits from all imagery and visual constituent elements such as perspective, light changes, even speech and language in order to convey what the artist intents to and think about. Therefore, tools and materials used in an artwork, its formation process and final outcome all denote and emphasize on the concept of work and the artist. All the elements used to form the artwork aim to align its visual aspect with mental intention. On the other hand, sometimes variety of forms and application of different tools and mediums beside a combination of them is obvious in an artwork.

In this respect, often photography became the main object to exhibit the artwork as well as being a media to keep a record of it. Also, the development of media and their easy accessibility especially photography made it more attractive to be used in the works of other artists as well. The other factors in conceptual art are: normal and everyday objects which are meant to be used other than art fields that are replaced from their proper usage and instead are used in an alien field which is art and this is exactly what you can see in photography as none of artistic objects shown in a photo never produced merely for photography or conceptual art issues rather they are everyday objects which are dispatched from their place and structured an artistic texture. In fact this is the idea that is praised for including everyday object and moving it from its place to holds it in a subcategory of artwork. "It is claimed that this art is considered as a stem that nearly all contemporary art works relay on" (Wood, 2002).

One of the first samples of this artistic movement is "one and three chair" by Josef Kasouth (No.4-1) (Locie, 1995). As we might know well this artwork is one the first samples of conceptual art, the role of photography is undeniable. The role of photography is apparently clear in conceptual art. Although, sometimes delineation and demarcation to include works in this category seems impossible, the role of photography and its presence both as a media to be used or a primary or secondary material is undeniable. "The question a conceptual artist must ask oneself, am I translating what I see in visual terms as well

as is possible? In other words, to be able to communicate the communicator must know his craft, both technical and organizational. These are the mechanisms that help him communicate clearly (Hurn and Jay, 2001).

Conceptual art in Iran: Conceptual art is a branch of new art with too many adherents. This category of new art is also followed more or less in Iran and every day the number of those who anxiously follow it adds up. This article attempts to present more example about the obvious role of photography and shows that photography is a media to exhibit the artwork and herewith emphasis the relation between photography and conceptual art.

Photography is a media with one most important internal feature of being a silent mirror in front of a fact and it can be used for many various concepts and objectives. Besides there is less material aspect in photography despite painting and sculpture and in this respect proximity and simulation of tactile and sight senses is the main reason that makes photography to be used in different forms of art. Among these works we can mention "Seven sycamores" by Kiarostami which is executed by Tavakoli Farsani (Fig. 1).

This art work is held in the second story of artists house in middle of the corridor. It includes some trees which are placed on a green mat which is actually higher than ground level and surrounded with a fence just like a little garden. It seems the bodies of trees are just placed here for beauty. These trees which are of same length reach to a fake ceiling which is exclusively designed for them and there is attached a photo of sky with white clouds. This three dimension artworks suggests the feeling of cut trees-trees that seem to be aligned from earth to heavens. Trees are a combination of several photos of trees, some of which illustrate memorials dug on trees. Though, induction of reality is too sharp that we cannot get this picture without our tactile sense. In this artwork, the artist benefited from space and tactile sense through photography for execution. In the research of "longing and belonging" by Valamanesh which was held in 1997, an old Ghashghaee carpet which the artist have reside on it for more than 20 years and his child is brought up on it, was spread on a beautiful natural location in Australia. Valamanesh set a fire just in center of the carper to let fire blow a new soul to his life and connect his past and present.

This research illustrates his effort to coordinate his memories with the new place he is living in. In another exhibition held in Tehran contemporary art museum on 2001, 10 this carpet was once again spread on the floor



Fig. 1: Kiarostami, Abbas; Seven sycamore, 2005, artists house (a photo by researcher)

and almost covered by black velvet. Then a photo of the carpet when in fire, hung on the wall just beside the carpet. Recording the reality in a photo, made Valamanesh apply photo to testify the action (burning carpet). Actually the proximity of photo and carpet links the process in the photo with the carpet beside it. Here photo is a witness to a past action that pictorially narrates the story. Taghizadeh also placed an image of a mass grave on a wall across from a camera on a camera tripod on the shadow of an umbrella that flashed every 30 sec in his "For Bam" collection (Internal News 2003). In this artwork, conducted on 2003, she located a camera on a tripod in downstairs of artist's garden (Bagh Honarmandan) with a text installed on it as: "wedding photography accepted". Taghizadeh aimed to illustrate regular repetition of this TV images making them look ordinary as well as indifference of photographers and reporters in recording this horrible story (Bam earthquake) and convey it to the audience. In this artwork photo is applied to make this unpleasant and deadly feeling due to this unexpected natural phenomena.

In works of Taghizadeh normalization and abundance of unusual events and murder is evident. Somehow the reason to this normalization and indifference feeling is mass of images shown in different media. Access to photographs through TV shows, magazine, newspaper and report moments changed obscenity to a routine and part of our daily life which is inevitable. In fact photography works as a watch that is always with us and shows passing time something obvious that presents death, events or horrible news to something ordinary and routine.

“In photography presence of an object (in a particular moment in the past) never is a metaphor and in regard to living creatures their living is not metaphoric, except in photography of dead corps by the way and what makes it terrific is the similarity that testifies this dead corps as a corps, seems alive: in other words this photo is a live image of something dead. As stillness in a photo is to some extends reflection of an unreasonable line between two concepts: one a real issue and the other a living one. It means that photo acknowledges that this subject was real and due to the illusion that makes us to consider a superior value and mortality for a reality as well as secretly developing this believe that photo subject is alive and relating this reality to the past, the photo conveys this fact that it is already dead” (Barthes, 1993).

“Imagery impressions that happen with the field of photography, today considers issues that might be painting as well as sculpture and even decoration (setting a decoration). Photography is a kind of junction that nearly all practices of art meet there” (Mille, 2006).

Another example is an untitled work by Shams in 2007 (Fig. 2). These photos artworks are accompanied by artist’s comments which properly are expressed the mindset of the photographer. In fact, photos shows the photographer everyday her life. It is interesting to say that in this artwork photography and writing have made a story in an excellent manner. Therefore, any individual enjoys accompany with them. These type of photography as applied representation to reflect everyday life, emphasizes the reality and combination of routine objects such as plants, shadows, dolls as well as bed with literature. This should not forget to mention that the display of these photos are very amazing on the grounds that some part of the picture first to show and after that all part would be shown with photographer comments. In this way the artist make a question for their viewers. In fact the situation of the photos besides photographer’s comments insist how photography act as a contemporary media can combine with other fields. This photography artworks are very similar to Valamanesh artworks as well, photo and carpet were used to narrate and emphasize on reality. These works can be considered as a collage. A collage that combines a photo with memories, time and diary. For instance, in one of the photos, the photographer complains about the hardness of this plant. Some part of the photo is visible, after that we can see the rest of the photo. In photo No. 3, the photographer comments “I was standing here, the time I see him for the first time”. Photo No. 3-a shows just shadows while in the photo No. 3-b, we can recognize the place that the photographer is refer to. In this artwork, photos with comments deliver the concept. In Shams photo collection,

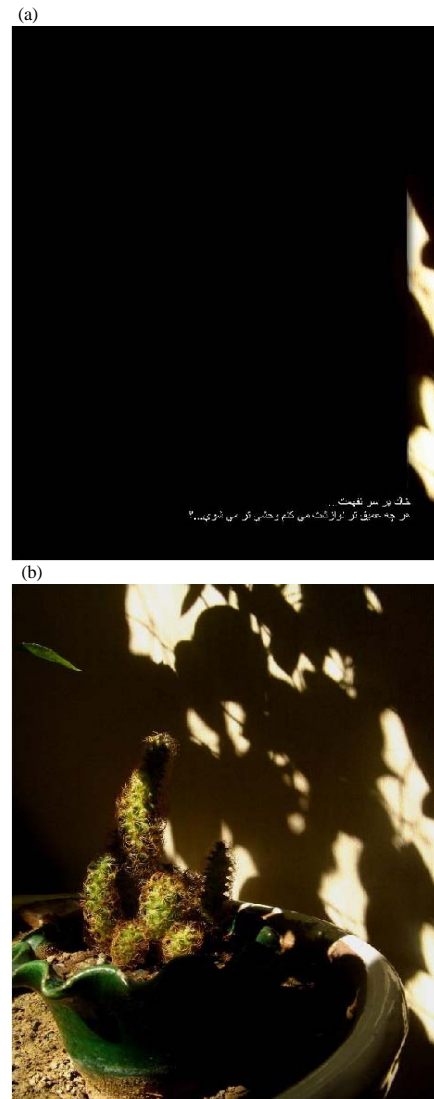


Fig. 2: Shams, Soheila; Untitled, 2001, photo from artist personal collection

the photographer takes the advantages of both picture and comments, starts to convey her senses toward the world, especially, objects or places which are memorable to her. Berger in his book “ways of seeing” explains: If the new language of images were used differently, it would, through it use, confer a new kind of power. Within it we could begin to define our experiences more precisely in areas where words are inadequate. Not only personal experience but also the essential historical experiences of our relation to the past: that is to say the experience of seeking to give meaning to our lives, of trying to understand the history of which we can become the active agents. In an era when some of the most heralded contemporary photographers have relinquished a relation

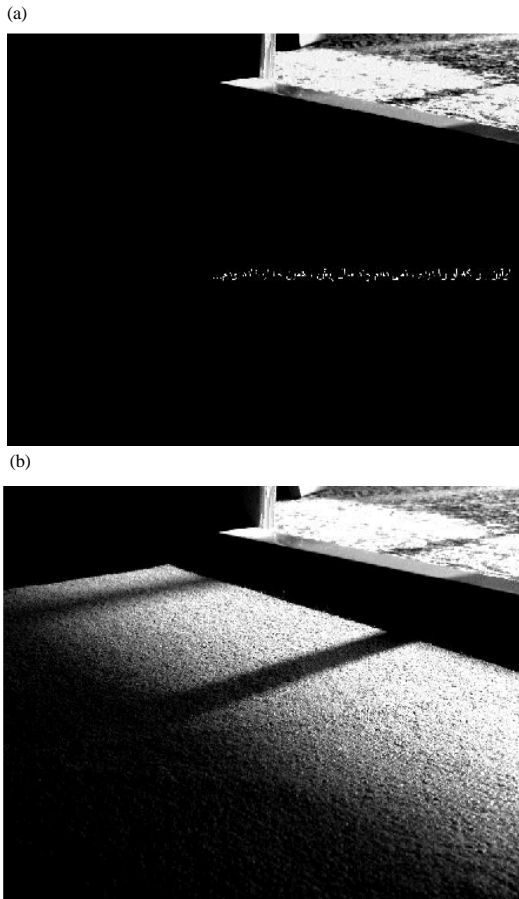


Fig. 3: Shams, Soheila; Untitled, 2001, 3. A left, photo from artist personal collection

to the world and systematically eroded the evidential aspect of their medium, it seems truly significant that a number artists, film makers and even writers have turned toward photography or at least the idea of photography as a powerful emblem of truth and proof. Indeed in a moment when practitioners and theorists of photography have sought to serve the medium's ties to the world beyond the lens or the frame, it seems remarkable that there are a number of artists working in other media who do precisely the contrary. Whether in contemporary film or video, painting or drawing, or literature, despite the waning claims to its foundational analogic function as mechanically captured, chemically recorded trace, the photograph or the vestigial idea of the photograph has asserted itself as a guarantor of identity and stubbornly material form of evidence (Fig. 3).

Another artworks that conveys the imprisonment of human being in everyday life is "Aquarium" by Taghizadeh, held in Tehran contemporary art museum, conceptual art exhibition in 2001 (Fig. 4). In this research in a glass cylindrical container, filled with water, some cut portrait photos attached to body of the container. In some



Fig. 4: Taghizadeh, Jinous; Aquarium, 2001, a CD by contemporary art museum of Tehran

of them there is only an eye in some other a profile or the whole face is apparent. In all photos, seems to be taken from a sculpture, eyes are closed or half open. Eye reflects energy or represents life. This energy is not conveyed due to most eyes being closed or half open. Also, similarity of all these photos and their placement in an aquarium filled with water somehow addresses sinking in everyday life. Whereas an aquarium full of water is a representative of flowing life for fish and some people take it to their home as a symbol of natural flowing life. Cylindrical shape of the aquarium with that photo of faces with closed eyes that shows no sign of living to some extent points out human living places and towers which in spite of their beauty have no element of life in them and even in face of people living there. Also, this life style works as a robot maker machine which results in homogenization of all human being they life style and their living area. As today human attempts to modernize his life style this method little by little drowns him in a way that there is neither a way to scape to a chance to return to past. On the other hand, the glassy and fragile texture of aquarium despite human living place which is formed with iron, concrete and steel, conveys this meaning that human being gradually forgets his spirit and imprisons himself in his home despite improving his habitat and applies tools and materials which are even strong when facing natural phenomenon. The stronger their habitat, the more frail their spirit become. In this artwork photo have a symbolic function through pointing to and criticizing our social life as well and due to reflecting the reality, arouse the sense of choking in current life in audience.

The work presented by Razavipour and Fotohi in 2003 which was held in semi-finished towers of Atisaz complex in Tehran titled census is another sample for



Fig. 5: Razavi poor, Neda and Shahab Fotouhi, Census, 2003, CD presented by contemporary art museum

application of photography in conceptual art (Fig. 5). Actually, this artwork is brilliant among all other similar works in regard to execution and attraction to ordinary and expert audiences. These two artists placed 70 photo of face of different ordinary people with the size of 150×160 cm, on the empty windows of tower number 13 of Atisaz complex and then applied a timer to light each picture in a random fashion. This feature made the work strange and surprising. It seems these people are living in the rooms and watching out. In this special sample, life and real and fake perspective meet together. A conjunction between buildings which are living or working places filled with photos of people who are real and in live in these building in real life. The combination of photography and buildings is so, evolving that in which photograph is not merely a setting but rather form a part of work and emphasizes the reality in our social life. On the other hand photos are placed in a big highway with too many audiences who pass it rapidly. At first they get shocked and then get entangle with concept of the work that illustrates solidarity and imprisonment in spaces that is self-wanted and self made. But when we pass them by for the second time these buildings looks ordinary just like other thousand buildings, even though they contain symbolic people looking from windows and this is exactly what a photo does. Photography makes something odd, surprising, impossible or even unbelievable at the first sight, to look ordinary. Audiences seem to know the people on photos very closely and share their isolate happiness or sorrow. Actually each picture is the audience himself (the photo works as a mirror) so there is nothing to fear of, we are not alone they are all the same as us with same conditions. They are imprisoned in their living place, just as we do.

Ramin in sociological foundations of art believes that: “all we do happen within our social structures and thus is affected relatively. It does not mean that if we want to be free we should free ourselves from social structures and act out of boundaries. But rather these structures and

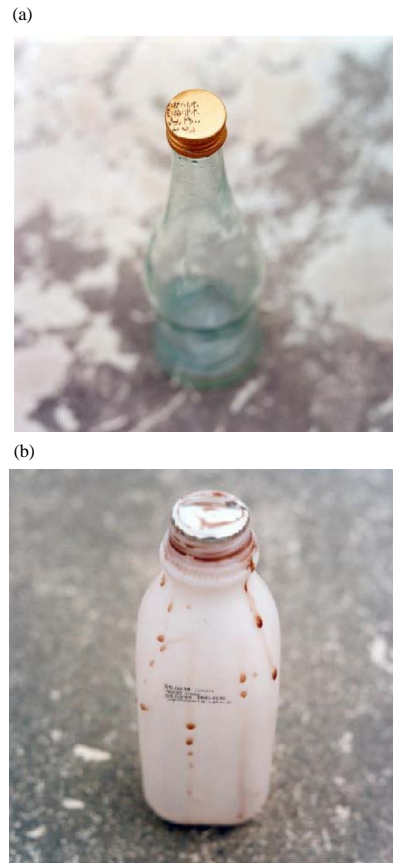


Fig. 6: Mohajer, Mehran; Ball and past history, 2006, photo from artist personal collection

institutions provide the chance to act and this sentence is evidently proved for all actions both in accordance with social norms and rebelling operations with norm conflicts” (Ramin, 2008). Bastide mentioned in 1931: “Social and intellectual environment decisively affects artworks, not taking for granted the impact of personal characteristics and physical and mental abilities. In this respect human is creator of beauty but this beauty is only possible when the creating human reacts to social actions in his living environment. Thus an artwork springs from society and its characteristics and on the other hand from the creator and his personal talent in reacting to social simulations in his living area. Some years later, one of the prominent students of bastide stated that living environment is an element in creating artwork, an element that should be studied not only for its visual value but also for its explanatory value.

Mohajer is another Iranian artist that most of his photography works are challenging between image and language due to his interest in photography and linguistic literacy. One of his collections is “ball and past history” which was exhibited in silk way gallery in 2006, Fig. 6 in which he photographed a series of plastic bottles which are known as wasted materials.

The material in bottles is spent and their advertising labels removed. The only remaining title in these bottles is the consumption validity date which is mentioned in bold on these photos as the main subject. Objects which after consumption turn to garbage now are our main subject matter to mention dates. Dates such as begin and end of a war, a work, a love and so on. What we seek at first sight on these objects and feel its absence is advertising label because the thing that most attracts us to a product is advertisement rather than a date printed on it or even the product itself.

Actually here photo used as a media to state the topic. Exhibition of daily objects that we are somehow related to and de-visualization is a tool to express social realities. This is what Adorno calls “commodity culture” and believes: “Culture is something enigmatic. Culture is full of exchange regulations that cannot be used no longer and thus interwoven with commercial advertisements. The more advertisement loses its essence in an exclusive system, the stronger culture became. Cultural incentives are economical enough. No doubt, human being can reside without culture industry and boredom and damped feeling in consumers as a consequent of the said industry is too much. This industry has no supporting resources to overcome this shortcoming. Advertisement is a life panacea. However, since, its products always keeps the commodity it promises merely as a promise, culture industry eventually turns to the advertisement it is laid on as it is not capable of creating Joy and happiness” (Vergine, 2002).

Mohtasham is one of the Iranian contemporary artists, one of his collection entitled: “your reality is finished” in this artwork, Mohtasham tried to narrate the reality of the world which has been experienced by him. Photography is an object helps him to depict and show scenery which have changed during years. Unfortunately, now they become ugly and thoughtful areas. In order to show this concept, he used a cold and straight forward view to the scenery. It should not be forgotten to mention that they are without people. In fact these gray photos talk about the opinion of photographer to the world (Fig. 7). Sontag in her valuable book “On photography” says: “Cameras start to work exactly the time that humans forward scenery were changing with high speed. While, many visual gregarious was near to destroy an object starts to work in order to register mortal things (Sontag, 2010).

The collection of “windows” has been captured by the researcher, Dianat (Fig. 8). In modern architecture, windows, only offer outside of the world view. These rectangular openings frame a view, like a tableau, display on the walls of every house. While the interior of any



Fig. 7: Mohtashan, Romin; Your reality is finished, 2010, photo from artist personal collection

(a)



(b)



(c)



Fig. 8: Dianat, Fereshteh; Windows, 2008, photo from my collection



Fig. 9: Tabrizian, Mitra beyond the Limits, 2000, photo from Herfeh: honarmand Magazine, No. 11, Spring 2005

house is the result of carefully selected objects, the outside shows the efforts of city planners. Often covered with curtains, windows serve as a glass barrier between privacy and publicity. This duality is often displayed in sharp contrast. The outside world gray, polluted and covered in cement is not in harmony with the highly-decorated, colorful interior. The photographer has selected the triptych form for her images to show this contrast. The interior of a house with closed curtains, shows the personal taste of its owners while the opened curtains underscore the difference between these two spaces. The view of the outside world, reflected without the presence of the inside interior, offers a glimpse of the city of Tehran. In fact, a photographer use a camera to talk about everyday life in other way. In other word, camera gave special ability to display a photographer point of view to the world. "I'm an eye. A mechanical eye. I, the machine show you a world the way only I can see it. I free myself for today and forever from human immobility. I'm in constant moment. I approach and pull away from objects. I creep under them. I move alongside a running horse's mouth. I fall and rise with the falling and rising bodies. This is I the machine, maneuvering in the chaotic movements, recording one movements, recording one moment after another in the most complex combinations. Freed from boundaries of time and space, I co-ordinate any and all points of the universe, wherever I want to be. My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus, I explain in a new way the way unknown to you (Berger, 2008).

Tabrizian is another Iranian artist who is preceding her artistic experiences out of Iran. Her photos which contain both internal concepts and facial imagery, mentions human societies which are captured in daily life. For instance, please refer to a photo from her collection "beyond the limits" (Fig. 9). This photo illustrates a

couple who are intended to spend their weekend in nature. In this special photo sheep (simulated images) convey pristine nature. Though lap top mentions an era in which spending a living day even as a holiday out of urban area seems impossible without communication tools and media. This image is a setting in form a photo suggesting human loneliness even during pick of his joy and being together, detachment from communication and dependence to mass media. Pointing these issues seems to visualize a fact that we are dealing with in our society today and there is no escape. On the other hand it criticizes media that provoke isolation, loneliness and indifference of human beings instead of improving relations and facilitate accessibilities.

This photo reminds the quotation by Adorno that: "Citizens can be imagined as people whose life is divided by business and privacy and their private life is divided by maintaining their social appearance and intimate relationship and their intimate relations divided by hostile partnership in marriage and pacifying the mere bitter isolations, incompatible citizens with constant contention with themselves and even others, all of them are potential Nazis who are unmotivated quarreling people or at the same time modern urbanized people that consider friendship a kind of social relation without any emotional connection inside. The only reason why culture can successfully manipulate individuality is that individuality has always reproduced cracked nature of society within itself. Pretense and fake individuals today no one believes in on face of real people and film protagonists which categorized on cliché on magazine coverings basis, lose its face. Love to hero models empowers by hidden satisfaction and thus our efforts to achieve individuality eventually results in imitation, a breath taking effort". (Vergine, 2002). Actually Tabrizi specified the boundaries of everyday life, too much use of media and criticizing both.

"Ashora" a cooperation of the late Mr. Tirafkan and Mr. Hassanzadeh that is held on conceptual art exhibition in 2001 in contemporary art museum of Tehran is a good example of photo application or the role of photo in conceptual art (Fig. 10). In this research symbolic and traditional elements of this ritual filled one of big spaces in the exhibition through painting and photography media. Big photos of Tirafkan while bearing black flags of Ashora on his shoulders in a mourning figure, covered walls of the hall; In the middle of the hall, colorful cloths are fastened in a row as a sign of prayer for plights (an old tradition). Besides, paintings and polished curtains with the subject of Taziye (a kind of play to narrate the story of Ashora) are installed on the wall. Static photos of Tirafkan help to convey an artificial atmosphere. In fact photos



Fig. 10: Tirafkan, Sadegh and Hassanzadeh, Khosro Ashoora, 2001, photo from artist personal collection

accomplish the work by reminding the memories and evoking reality and presence of objects in order to better narrate the story and run the ritual. Sadegh Tirafkan mentioned in his interview: “It takes a while that Ashora is making such an atmosphere in Iran and is considered as a conceptual art itself. I mean all religious ceremonies and rituals all around the world are conceptual art”. Hassanzadeh also adds to his interview that: “I have never seen a photo to be used in this ritual (Ashora). We are providing a design to let people conduct Ashora rituals with these specifications even in future (Danesh, 2001).

However, Sol Lewitt describes conceptual art as follows: “idea or the concept is the most important aspect of an artwork. In case an artist applies conceptual art method in his works, it means that all arrangements have been effected beforehand and execution is something that can be flipped over” (Wood, 2002). He also adds: “conceptual art is not necessarily reasonable; it does not need complicated ideas. Most successful ideas are ridiculously funny” (Wood, 2002) we can also add is that ideas are fresh and novel in simplicity. Western conceptual art samples never apply rituals in their works.

In art research of Wii naming “Air pollution in Iran” “installed in Niavaran cultural club, eight flags were placed on a canvas. The big size of flags at the first sight made audience to wonder whether they are real flags or paintings. As audience always saw flags with their epic meaning, swinging over the cities they doubt to accept these dirty flags as an artwork even though they are placed in an exhibition as a representative of many flags out there. The dirty marks on flags are different due to their different swinging duration in cities. Presence of flags in this exhibition is indulging logic profile. Also, there are some plastic cameras which at first sight look like

something plastic. But when you look through camera visor we find images that make us doubt their plastic appearance as there are many images of Kaaba, different holy shrines and so on which are constantly changing. On the other hand, there is a hole on a wall across from one of these cameras that when looking through them we can see some photos of graves in some of which a group of people are buried and in some other, the artist herself, illustrated own grave, wearing a shroud. There is also a puzzle of photos of the artist in green background of flag, while eating a melon and smoking, though red color in melon covers lack of red color in flag and finally the image of flag fills the page. Readily prepared flags, cameras and photos is directly related to photography and recording an image of something present. In addition, emphasizes that presence of objects are real in photography and you cannot photograph something that is not present. Also in this artwork readymade objects are used including flags, cameras and photographs to install the research. On the other hand, exhibition of flags on wall of exhibition which is actually drawn from up to down, represents something dirty and ugly across from audience similar to what photography does by unity and halo of artwork and make it something available through proliferation in books, magazines and etc. Which reduces its venerability? The other element that is apparent in photography is using ready-made objects. This intrinsic characteristic of photography is also evident in artworks of Mahmoud Bakshi Moaakher (Fig. 11).

“Boundaries of conceptual art, its artists and their hypothetical research are never clear. Conceptual art is a silhouette that the more you gaze on it, the more it fades. While on the other hand and in a different condition, we can consider conceptual art as an axis round which past reaches to present. Comparing to current post modern era that exhibitions are filled with anything but nothing, from sharks to photographs from waste pile to multi-image videos, full of anything but modern painting (Wood, 2002). Another research that can be referred to is a research by Azarang, entitled “Home” which is published in his collection book “Amnesia” (Fig. 12). In single photo the audience faces a photo with no evocation. But it is accompanied by some words of Azarang as follows.

“I was sitting on a sofa. She squatted, hugging her knees just beside the sofa I was sitting on and was watching TV. My hand was on the sofa very casually just beside her in a way that my middle finger imperceptibly was touching her back, near her shoulders, so, imperceptible that my hand and my shoulder was so, sensitive and strangely chirped. I decided to take my hand. I was afraid, I cannot. I imagined a day when she is no longer there and has passed away then I wish and I

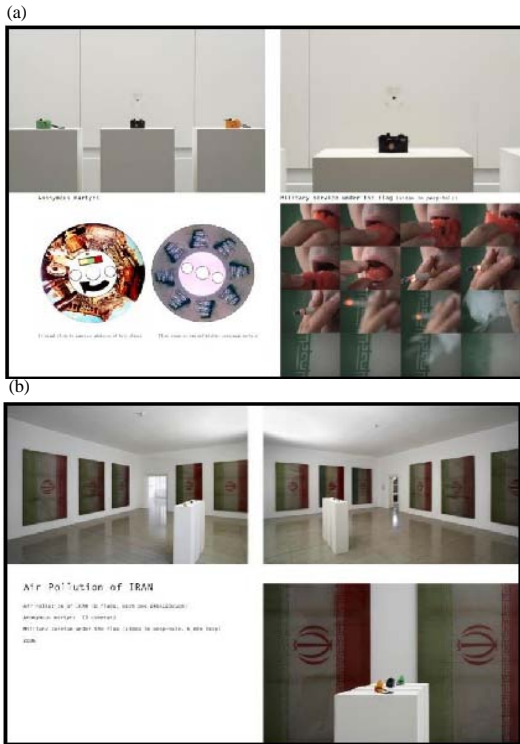


Fig. 11: Mahmoud Bakhschi Moakher, air pollution in Iran, 2006, photo from artist personal collection

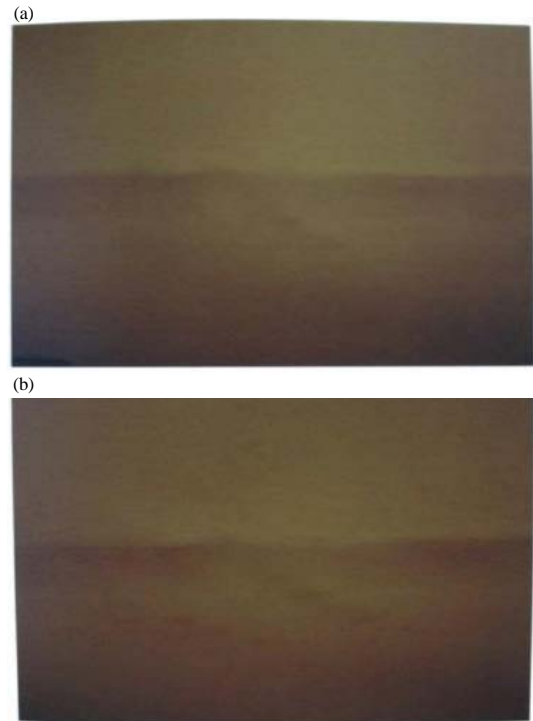


Fig. 13: Hedayat, Ghazaleh; Unheard voice, 2009, London, photo from private collection

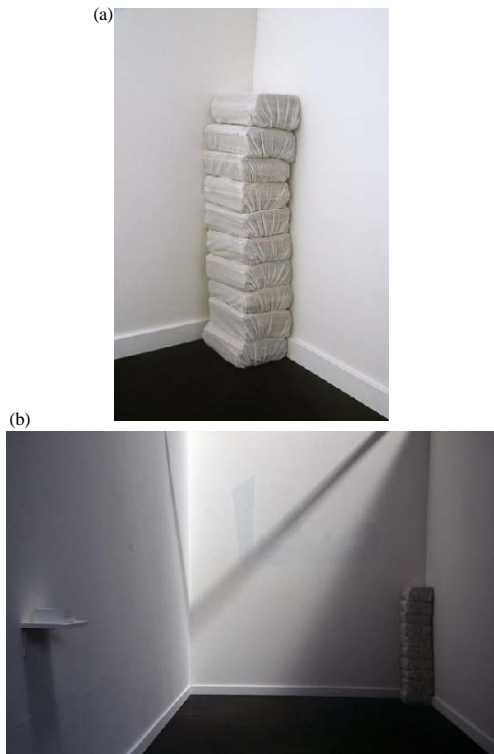


Fig. 12: Azarang, Farshid. Home, 2005, a photo from the book “amnesia” by Farshid Azarang

would be ready to give away all I have to imperceptibly touch her back again to feel calm and make sure of her physical and real presence (the same as holy Thomas). I kept my finger fixed there. I was afraid to hasten her death by removing my finger. Though I was sure that she will pass away sooner or later. Did anyone felt the same feeling toward me?” (Azarang, 2005).

Here, the combination of photo and text helps to convey what the artist believes. Actually this image with no special concept at first sight, now turned to a tangible and accessible world. Photography helps the memories to be accomplished, displayed and believable. Photo framework is the most acceptable media to accomplish and idea and makes it believable to believe in something that is even hard to imagine. Photography helps with visualizing lack, fear and memory and cry out our feeling in a silent framework. Photography suspends between reality and fantasy and this is the sensation that grows with in to achieve its ultimate fate. Azarang believes that “fishing in not hunting it is fishing. In fishing you take a creature out of its living environment to another place and make it to die, rather in hunting you kill a creature in its living environment. Photography is similar to fishing. We all hunt the world instead of fishing it” (Azarang, 2005). The other artwork to talk about is “Unheard voice” by Hedayat (Fig. 13). This photo illustrates a room that a

bunch of packed newspapers are stuffed in a corner and the word "Voice" is written in Persian on the wall. Packed newspapers somehow address study and posts which never published and always kept enclosed and intrusive, so that no one hears the voice of its editor. Silence of photo by its nature and the word "Voice" inevitably let us hear a cry for objection. Here, photo research as a symbol of unpublished words and silence of cries. In this research, two main elements of conceptual art including thought and language fit well in a photo. Silent presence of photo, placement of packed newspapers on the corner and the pail word "Voice" on the wall, each suggests the other and they are all in contrast. The second theme that is relatively more evident is kinship of death and study" (Foucault, 1969).

"Study is not intended to expose or praise the action of writing not to record a subject within language but rather to create a space to continually vanish the new subject. As stated by Wood (2002), the primary elements of conceptual art are photography, language and the process of forming an artwork. He also mentioned in book of conceptual art that "conceptual art is a kind of art that mostly composed of concepts more than any other thing" and continues "Since, concepts depend on language, then conceptual art is something with main ingredient is language" (Wood, 2002).

"Boundaries of conceptual art, its artists and their theoretical research are not something definite at all. Conceptual art is a silhouette that the more you concentrate on the more it fades. Although, in different circumstances we can consider conceptual art as an axis, around which past reaches to present. In contrast in present postmodern era, exhibitions are full of anything and everything from sharks to photos, from piles of garbage to multi-pictorial videos, accumulated by anything other than seemingly modern painting" (Wood, 2002).

CONCLUSION

As it was mentioned before, division and boundaries seems impossible in conceptual art. Though, the role of photography in conceptual art is clearly visible and undeniable. It is evident that this study tried to talk about examples with more emphasis on intellectual aspect and artist's intention in conceptual art. Of course, said instances ranged based on priority and importance of the role of photography in conceptual art and as it was mentioned before importance and emphasis on senses of sight and tactile to visualize two dimensional objects as three dimensional through magnifying reality, symbol,

producing perspective and reviewing social and civil life, emphasis on visual aspect and de-visualization, story narration and emphasis on repetition and boredom, work accomplishment, emphasis on living and death experiences and so on clearly prove inevitable importance of the role of photography in conceptual art. This is exactly why Valamanesh attached a photo of burning to his work, instead of setting fire on a real carpet in a closed space. As de-visualization of the photo does not hurt to accept the reality. Here, it is tired to mention some samples of photo application in conceptual art, though it does not mean that photography is not merely used for this intention in conceptual art but rather it is a small part of the role of photography in conceptual art that I studied based on my available works and my personal interest. Works that applied photography to accomplish and give meaning to an artwork that some of them are mentioned before can be good examples to prove a quotation by Philip Philippe Dubois about logic profile on photography because in all mentioned samples camera and photographer should be there to form a photo and the photo is a representative of an already present image. While we are entangled with profile and trace, the matter is the background and creating cause attracts our attention toward action rather than final outcome. In above mentioned samples sometimes there is a combination of photo and daily objects which people are entangled with and it means admission to reality in photography. Photography works as a reminder of actions happened in the past and now photo is enough to prove its visualization and reality of the incident and thus would free audience from demanding the presence of the object.

Photo does not imposes its idea due to its silence and making an imagery world also since conceptual art insists on idea of the artist, it applies photography and is aware that all composing elements are from everyday life and two dimensional images taken are record of real piece of time, photo is the best media to apply icons, emphasizes on a real issue and comes from living an everyday life experience.

Other application of photography in conceptual art is emphasizing on importance of issues that are ignored due to their excessive exposure. Actually, photo helps decoding concepts and hidden layers of things seemed to be ordinary. I finish my words by a quotation by Jeff Wall: "photography played a fundamental role in success of conceptual art" (Wood, 2002).

Then these studies about Iranian artist's art works to form conceptual art in Iran come up with this conclusion that the role of photography is undeniable in conceptual art.

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