

To a passerby
Arash Hanaei

2016

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From his Iranian background and education (originally in documentary photography and visual arts) to his recent relocation to France, Arash Hanaei developed his very singular look and practice, in and out of Iran. Thus he expanded his archaeology of the urban landscape into a transnational approach, following also the rhythm of the artist's travels to the different exhibitions where he took part, both in Europe and the US. He has become a key protagonist, in contemporary visual arts, especially when it comes to urban dwelling and rethinking documentary practices. His landmark work-in-progress, the Capital series (2008-on-going) acts as a visual sampling machine, recording the city's transformations and layers of memory attached. It performs a palimpsest of Tehran, through the isolation and multiplication of streets, traffic, billboards, buildings, highways but also unexpected wanderings.

Hanaei's recent work *To a Passerby* applies a similar type of micro experience to the city of Paris. It again submits photographic material to digital "remix", but in a much more allegorical sense. The seemingly comic-strip aesthetics unfolds more potentialities than certainties. The accumulation and fragmentation of preposterous details and loose connections encourage the beholder into wandering: alike the protagonists within the multi-layered set of images who seem to be on an unexplained journey. The reference to Charles Baudelaire's *A une passante* ("To a Passerby") sonnet (from *Les Fleurs du mal*), an absolute emblem of modernity and metaphorical dance between the city, the crowd and the "flâneur", seems to be reincarnating the urban experience or seeking the implicit "body" behind the city itself. The "flash" of the image suddenly stands for dissolution of memories into a near future or suspended time experience. A post-photographic visual statement that dramatizes the gaps and blurred lines of our digital condition: in the way we share information, circulate images and design areas and much more.

By Morad Montazami

Installation views

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The End of the World, Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci

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Digital print
332, 95 x 970, 99 cm
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