



Film still from *The Deers (Gavaznha)* by Masoud Kimiai, 1974, courtesy narrative projects, London

The Unity of Time and Place

Mahmoud Bakhshi

27th January – 11th March 2017

Private view: Thursday 26th January, 6-8pm

narrative projects is pleased to present *The Unity of Time and Place* by Iranian artist Mahmoud Bakhshi. The artist's second show at the gallery sees the space transformed into an immersive installation centred on the infamous Cinema Rex fire in Abadan, in southern Iran. The cinema was set ablaze killing over 400 people on 19 August 1978, and is considered to have triggered the revolution of 1979.

The interior of the cinema is replicated at the gallery with vintage furniture and carpet adorning the floors and walls, displaying emotive films that inspire a connection with the time and place of the event. Drawing inspiration from the political and social issues surrounding him, Bakhshi invites the viewer to reflect and consider this pivotal moment in history. The artist uses the historical events and archival footage to construct a story, with no claim of conducting an investigative enquiry. Without connoting a viewpoint, the artist highlights details that have escaped the public's attention to date.

The project feeds into the wider focus of artistic inquiry in Bakhshi's practice: both the role and impact of an artist today, as well as the effect and reflective nature of an influential work of art on society. In this light, the Cinema Rex fire is particularly poignant. The building was set on fire during the screening of an iconic movie *The Deers (Gavaznha)* in Persian by Masoud Kimiai, which highlighted a deep social divide in the Shah's Iran and called for the direct violent action against the authorities. To this date, *The Deers* remains one of the most important films of Iranian cinema. During the project, Bakhshi interviewed Kimiai on the subject, the outcome of which is a film displayed at the gallery alongside other found material relating to the events.

The Unity of Time and Place also refers to the coup d'état, which happened on the same day as the fire on 19 August, 25 years earlier, in 1953. Both events had a crucial impact on the history and transformation of not only Iran but the entire region, drawing parallels on both their date of occurrence and location. Abadan, an

oil-producing city in the south of Iran, was an epicentre of the coup d'état and is also where Cinema Rex was located.

Mahmoud Bakhshi (b. 1977, Tehran) studied BA Sculpture at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran. His previous exhibitions include: *Endless Celebration*, temporary intervention at the former site of the Lenin monument (solo exhibition), Kiev (2016); *The Great Game*, National Pavilion of Iran at 56th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, *All the World's Futures* curated by Okwui Enwezor, Venice (2015); *Recalling The Future: post-revolutionary Iranian art*, Brunei Gallery, SOAS, University of London, London, (2014); *Love Me, Love Me Not, Contemporary Art from Azerbaijan and its Neighbours*, The 55th Venice Biennale, Venice (2013); *DISASTER*, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris Pantin, Paris (2013); *Transformed Visions*, Tate Modern, London (2012) and *The Engaged Artist: Influences of Graphics on Sculpture in the Middle Ages*, Saatchi Gallery (solo exhibition), London (2010). He also received the MOPCAP award, was a resident artist at the Delfina Foundation, London, and is a Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, alumnus. His studio and artist book publishing project, BON-GAH (established in 2004), is located in a warehouse style space just outside of Tehran. Bakhshi's upcoming exhibitions include: *Mohammed Afkhami Collection - Rebel, Jester, Poet, Mystic: Contemporary Persians* at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, accompanied by a book to be published by Phaidon, London, in February 2017.

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