

Tahmineh Monzavi, born in 1988 in Tehran, is a socially conscious photographer. She began her professional career as a documentary photographer in 2005.

Tahmineh Monzavi received the Sheed Award for excellence in social documentary photography (independent non-government award with internationally renowned photographers as the panel of judges). Her works have been exhibited nationally and internationally: Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), MAXXI museum of Roma, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and many others.

Tahmineh Monzavi is also known as a film director and producer. Sometimes her photography and film work merge into one continuous subject of artistic exploration. For example, the *Grape garden alley* series in 2010-2012 developed into a feature length documentary film about a shelter for addicted women in Tehran. As a co-director Tahmineh received international recognition with the film *About the Salesman* (2018).

Tahmineh Monzavi lives and works in Tehran. She is represented by galerie Eric Dupont, Paris.

Photography

In 2007-2008 with the series *Guilty or innocent* Tahmineh started to explore the ghettos of Tehran and the hidden from the public eye life of the transsexuals. A subject that is not only considered taboo from the country's religious point of view but also challenges the established cultural norms. The harsh living conditions, drug abuse and prostitution are the basic facts that shape the daily reality of the small community. The combination of the grotesque and the normal shifts the preconceptions and prejudices and allows a chance for a social reconciliation.

The series of photographs *Brides of Mokhber al-Dowleh* of the same period explore a different subject, that of the ordinary life of the working class community. Tahmineh portrays the bridal gown tailors in south Tehran; workers from deprived social classes whose poor work conditions testify to their meager livelihood. The juxtaposition between the beautiful white of the wedding dresses, the apotheosis of the traditional female dreams, and the rough hands of the working class men doing the sewing and stitching provokes feelings of wonder and contemplation.

Another tragic social reality, that is usually either ignored or denied by the authorities, captured Monzavi's attention in 2008. *Grape garden alleys* is an extensive series, shot over a period of 4 years, that is dedicated to women addicts, who stay in a rehabilitation facility in south Tehran.

In 2013 Monzavi's outlook on her work was changed after a month of imprisonment in Tehran. In the absence of human contact she started to doubt her existence. In that dark hour of forced isolation Tahmineh was desperate for a company and started to fantasize being pregnant, which resulted in the video art piece *OXYS in black and white*.

A year after the event, she produced the series *All About Me: Nicknamed Crown Giver*. It shows a strange fantasy realm where every woman is crowned Miss Iran. Her inspiration comes from an old beauty pageant, *Spring Girl*, held in Iran from 1965 to 1978, just before the revolution and its restrictions took hold. Almost forty years later and Iran is in the top ten countries for cosmetic surgery. To be Miss Iran or 'the most beautiful girl' of any country is an absurd notion for a young girl, it creates a world where appearance is everything. As an artist Tahmineh is looking for a way to objectify this desire and renegotiate its context through the artistic practice.

In the series *Past Continuous* the artist is documenting the historical architecture of Iran and Afghanistan and the post-war shift in the perception of home and heritage.

In 2018 Monzavi started a new photography series *Red Soil, Cold Soil*, which offers a fascinating contrast of colours and textures of two completely different regions of the world, an Iranian island in the Persian Gulf and a Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. Hormuz island in the south of Iran and the world's northernmost settlement Longyearbyen in Svalbard are both located in areas of high political tension, but for the artist it was an encounter with the mysterious nature, that initiated a deep desire for the exploration of the dramatic landscapes and the everyday life of the islands inhabitants.