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Document: Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles Opens June 6 at the Fowler Museum at UCLA



By Parisa Taghizadeh, 2009

From October 2009 through January 2010, four documentary photographers—Farhad Parsa, Arash Saedinia, Parisa Taghizadeh, and Ramin Talaie—focused their lenses on second-generation Iranian-Americans of Los Angeles, the world's largest population of expatriate Iranians. *Document: Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles*—on view at the Fowler Museum from June 6–Aug. 22, 2010—offers a selection of images by each of these photographers which consider the everyday lives of their subjects. The exhibition also addresses the processes of documentation and how they relate to the photographers' understandings of their own hyphenated Iranian identities.

The photographs capture the varied lives and interests of LA's Iranian-American community—from toddlers at play to an acupuncturist in the office of her Los Feliz practice, from a young man break dancing to a young woman at prayer. There are also a few recognizable figures such as public intellectual Reza Aslan and comedian Maz Jobrani.

"In cultivating this collaborative project, I wanted to examine documentation as a representational process by offering four Iranian-American photographers' perspectives on who we are, stressing the importance of including multiple voices in documenting our own Los Angeles communities," says guest curator Amy Malek.

About the Photographers:

Farhad Parsa received a BFA in Photography and Film Production from the California College of Art in 2000. In 2007 he released his first photography book, *Cue the Strings*, filled with ten years of photographs exploring the people and events that shaped his life. Also in 2007, he began *1234 NYC*, a ten-year project focusing on forty New Yorkers, including students, small business owners, and workers in creative industries.

Arash Saedinia was born in Esfahan and raised in Los Angeles. He earned a bachelor's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies and Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, a master's degree in English at California State University, Northridge, and a law degree from Harvard University. He is an artist and educator.

Parisa Taghizadeh is a freelance photographer based in Los Angeles. She grew up in London where she completed a BA Hons degree in Fine Art and went on to work in film and television. She has

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worked as a photographer for arts organizations such as Artangel and the Serpentine Gallery, as well as on numerous films and documentaries including Michael Winterbottom's, *In this World*. Taghizadeh's work deals with personal and cultural identity, such as in *Make-Up, Iran*, a long-term project dealing with women living in Iran and their relationship to make-up and its rituals. She is also working on *Mother*, a series of portraits of mothers without their children.

Ramin Talaie is a documentary photojournalist whose work ranges from everyday portraiture in the streets of New York to AIDS-infected and chemical-dependant prisoners in a dilapidated treatment facility in Tehran. Talaie has covered various presidential campaigns including the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama and the 2009 contested elections in Iran, which precipitated deadly protests and demonstrations. He is the founding editor of Document Iran Images, a news and stock photo agency based in New York City.

More Information:

Document: Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles has been organized by Amy Malek, UCLA Anthropology Ph.D candidate, with Susan Slyomovics, faculty advisor, under the auspices of the G.E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies (CNES) at UCLA and through generous funding from the UCLA Council on Research (COR), UCLA Center for Community Partnerships (CCP), the Farhang Foundation, and CNES. The exhibition will be on view in the Goldenberg Galleria.

The Fowler Museum at UCLA is one of the country's most respected institutions devoted to exploring the arts and cultures of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas. The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, from noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA Arts, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$10 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310/825-4361 or visit fowler.ucla.edu.

Related Program:

Sunday, June 6, 12–6 pm

Opening Day Programs

Document: Iranian-Americans in Los Angeles

A panel of scholars will discuss issues relating to the Iranian diaspora and visual anthropology. Next, exhibition curator Amy Malek is joined by the four documentary photographers whose work is featured in the exhibition—Farhad Parsa, Arash Saedinia, Parisa Taghizadeh, and Ramin Talaie—who will discuss their experiences documenting the everyday lives of second-generation Iranian Americans in Los Angeles. A gallery tour with Malek and a reception follow. Please check fowler.ucla.edu for a detailed schedule.

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