Mehdi Hosseini



ABOUT

Mehdi Hosseini is a documentary photographer, graphic designer, and book designer. His work focuses on documenting social issues — from people living with HIV and drug addiction to Sufi mystical rituals. In his projects he serves as photographer, project designer, graphic designer, and video editor, carrying each collection through from research and photography to book design and exhibition layout.

PORTFOLIO

Skills & Expertise

Project Lead & Researcher • Graphic Design • Documentary Photography • Book Design & Layout • Video Editing • Film Director

EDUCATION

• Master of Arts (M.A.) in Art Research
Pars University of Art and Architecture, Tehran, Iran (Alumnus)
• Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Photojournalism
Press University, Tehran, Iran

Exhibitions

- Exhibition One – "The Gaze"

Subject: Mentally and physically disabled people

My position in this project:

Project Lead & Researcher • Graphic Design • Documentary Photography •





- Exhibition Two – "SILENT WAR"

Subject: The shortage of medicine in Iran

My position in this project:

Project Lead & Researcher • Graphic Design • Documentary Photography • Book Design & Layout •





My position in these projects:

Project Lead & Researcher • Graphic Design • Documentary Photography • Book Design & Layout • Video Editing • Film Director

• Exhibition Three – "THIS IS NOT A STORY"

Subject: The lives of HIV patients in Iran









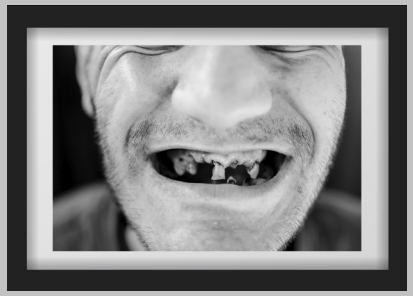


• Exhibition Four – "HARM"

Subject: Drug addiction in Iran











- Exhibition Five – "THEY AND THEIR HAIR"

Subject: Curly hair







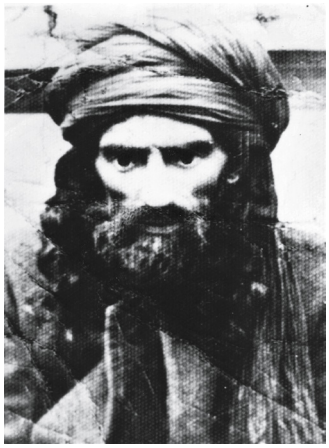




My position in this project:

Project Lead & Researcher • Graphic Design • Photography

















My position in this project:

Project Lead & Researcher • Graphic Design • Documentary Photography • Book Design & Layout • Video Editing • Film Director

• Exhibition Six – "SEMA"

Subject: Visual ethnography of the Qadiriyya Dervishes of Kurdistan, Iran, and their ritualistic whirling.

Books

Book One – "SILENT WAR"

It all started in the last few days of 2012, when I heard the sad news of my father's illness. He was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis. I did not know what had caused his fatal disease, but I knew one thing for certain: I was watching him grow weaker day by day. His doctors, however, held great hopes for him. They assured us that certain treatment procedures could slow or delay the progression of his disease.

Being banned from conducting international financial transactions drove many pharmaceutical companies to bankruptcy and sent drug prices soaring. The disappearance of these companies from the market was no longer merely the concern of their owners; it was the concern of thousands of patients whose lives depended on those medications. A quick glance at Iran in those days revealed an invisible bond among people, born of the pain and challenges they shared. These harsh conditions made life unbearable for ordinary citizens — and above all for patients and their families — so much so that at times getting through a single day seemed to take a century.

This collection seeks to portray not only these patients and their serious chronic illnesses, but also a social phenomenon born of so-called "scraps of paper" and sanction statements. It is clearly just one example among the many silent wars people have faced over the past decade or so.

Book Two – "THIS IS NOT A STORY"

There is no difference between us. From a certain perspective, every one of us carries known or unknown viruses. One of these is HIV — a disease that can profoundly change the nature of a person's social relationships. Men and women who contract the virus through their relationships, and children who have lived with it since birth, are all fighting the same battle against HIV.

Although many associations, institutions, and public figures have tried to raise awareness about this issue, their efforts have not been effective enough, and far more must be done. This is something one can easily sense simply by being in contact with those living with HIV. While the official figures may not be entirely reliable, they indicate that over the past two decades the number of women living with HIV was about one-tenth that of men. In recent years, the dominant mode of HIV transmission has gradually shifted from needle-sharing among drug users to transmission through sexual intercourse. This collection portrays the living conditions of HIV-positive people who acquired the virus one way or another. Of the twenty people who took part in the project...

This book contains several documentary stories of people living with HIV in Iran; single photographs from some of the series appear in this section. To read the book, download it from my website. It should also be noted that this project includes a short documentary film.

This collection exists thanks to the effort, cooperation, and counsel of those who appear in the photographs, as well as all those who lent a helping hand during the photography or the production. I must express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Gelareh Mostashari, Dr. Mohammad Sadegh Shirazi, and Dr. Seyed Ahmad Seyedalinaghi, whose advice was of great importance and whose guidance I followed throughout. I must also thank my professors, who inspired me to move forward: Mr. Farhad Soleymani, Mr. Mohammad Norouzi, and Mr. Saeed Kiaee. My thanks go as well to those whose companionship I deeply appreciated: Mr. Habib Bahrami, Mr. Ali Najafi, Mr. Koorosh Gerami, Ms. Zeynab Mohammadi, Ms. Mahdokht Hafezi, Ms. Neda Badiee, Ms. Sarvar Behravesh, Mr. Ramin Kakavand, Mr. Hirbod Sajjadi, Mr. Masoud Nejat, and Dr. Shahla Mirfakhraee — and last but not least, the "Aeene Mehr," "Simaye Sabze Rahaee," and "Nasime Mehrafrin" institutes, among others.

Book Three – "HARM"

The issue of drug and stimulant addiction has always been of interest to everyone in society. From a behavioral point of view, anything that becomes a habit is called addiction, which tends to endow people with shared characteristics. This collection is the result of study, research, and more than eight years of attending addiction hangouts and camps and accompanying people with addiction — people who live with this disease, some having had it from birth.

The first subject addressed is tattooing, illusion, dreaming, and fantasy, as a common language among people with addiction — a language that is the product of their minds and personalities. Symbols express one's inner dialogue. The signs and targets etched in the mind of the addicted person can surface at any moment, whether in prison or in non-public places. Tattoos on a person's body are made to satisfy the feeling of belonging and the need for others, to attract attention, and to create a sense of worth.

The second subject is the environment of addiction and its effect on people in the hangouts, which sometimes gives rise to conflicts among them. It can lead to harm that sometimes takes the form of self-harm and sometimes the reaction of the addicted person toward others. These behaviors also provoke a mental response in the individual: they may derive pleasure — and relaxation — from seeing blood during an act of self-harm.

The third topic is a study of the interactions that occur after substance use and their effect on the body. Substance use can damage the addicted person's body, for instance the gums and teeth. This collection regards addiction as a disease in which many factors play a role — among them a shared lifestyle and the damage caused by drug use.

Book Four – "SEMA"

"Sema," or "Zikr-e Qiyam" (the standing remembrance), is a spiritual atmosphere — with both temporal and spatial elements of spiritual life — that the wayfarers (dervishes) of the Qadiri Order of Sufism perform as a ceremonial feature of Islamic mysticism, and it represents their artistic, aesthetic, cultural, and religious symbols.

Sema, in creating both a space (atmosphere) and an inner state that finds outward manifestation in the wayfarers' conduct, is formed by the gathering of several members of the community. According to field research, the pleasant sound of the tambourine (daf) and drum, together with the enjoyable human voice, offers Sema to the wayfarer as a "gift." Sema is accompanied by bodily and rhythmic movements. When the dervish is in this state, he sees nothing else in the universe but Almighty God.

When faced with this ceremony, documentarians and photographers are mostly fascinated by it, and at best remain curious about it. However, after studying, observing, and living among the members of the "Qadiri Order of Solaei-Dolab," the photographer-researcher of this collection came to realize that the existing documentation lacks a comprehensive social artwork dealing with the religious and communal dimensions of this ritual.

This book contains several films; it should also be noted that this project includes a short documentary film.

A Commitment
Open Access

All monographs, short films, and photographic projects are freely accessible and downloadable via my personal website:
www.mehdi-hosseini.com/new2/books/

It is my core conviction that the true purpose of these works transcends commercial interest. They are dedicated to fostering public awareness, supporting scholarly research, and making visual knowledge openly accessible to all.

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