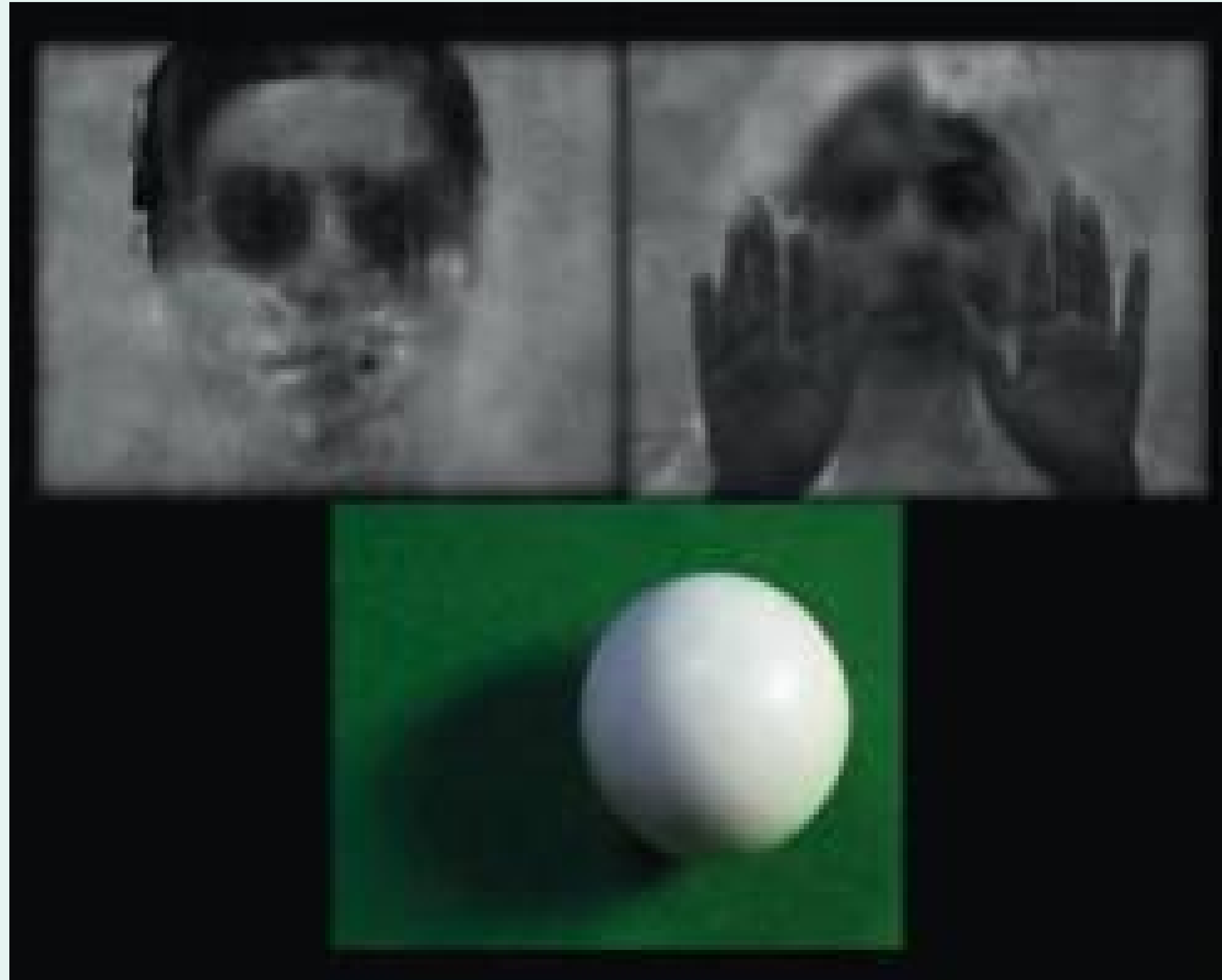


6 VIDEO ARTIS

Mania Akbari's 6 Video Arts - Self, Repression, Sin, Escape, Fear and Devastation, shot between 2003-2007



IRAN

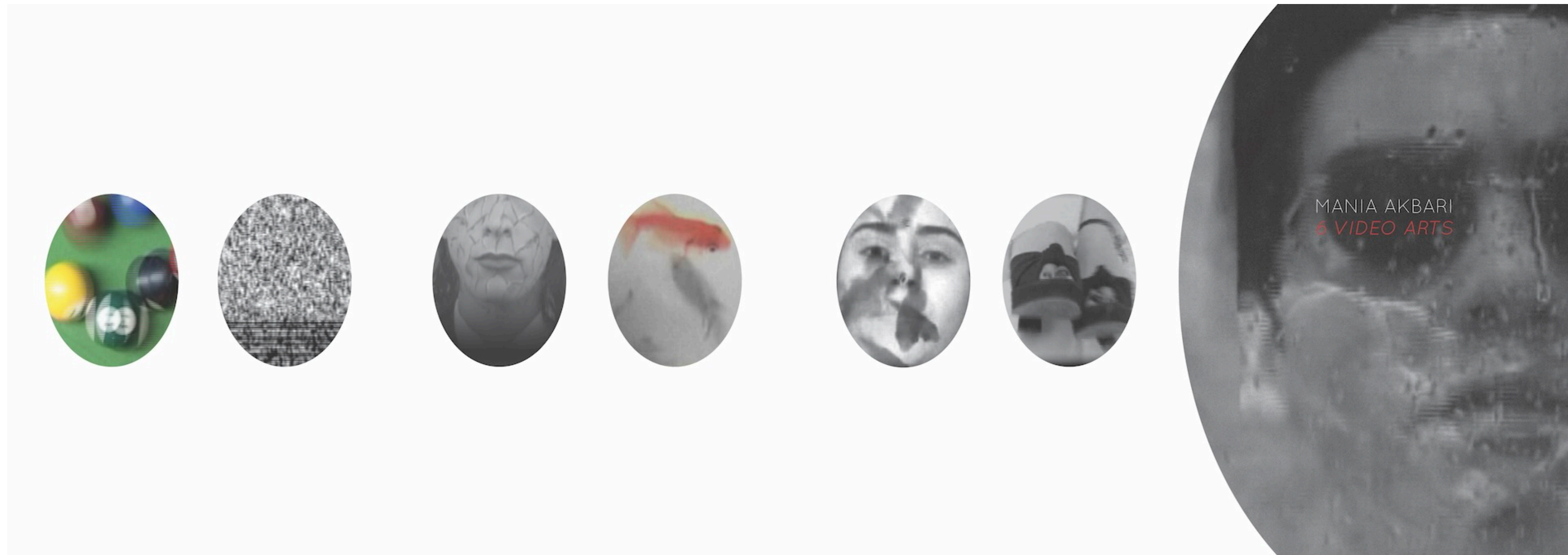
37 Mins

Directed by:
Producer:

MANIA AKBARI
MANIA AKBARI

Mania Akbari's 6 Video Arts - Self, Repression, Sin, Escape, Fear and Devastation, shot between 2003-2005 – come as a project which no longer cherishes such (idealistic?) hopes. There's even more to it: its artistic credo is expressed and constructed literally on the scraps, very tiny pieces. The basic means of expression used by the authoress in every single of the six videos is the so-called 'split-screen', the combination of a several smaller, separately framed images – scraps – within the same action. Sometimes such images are only two, sometimes they multiple into dozens. Although most of these images are symbolic, at some points even abstract but always monotone and repetitive (so that it could be probably better watched as an installation or live picture in a gallery) – this time Mania would have serious problems denying the explicit and primary political context of all six videos. Their individual titles speak for themselves, and every doubt left is definitely dispelled by Mania, broken to pieces; the only protagonist of every moving picture, and her alternatively raged/scared/provocative/ dead look that stares directly at the spectators' eyes which this time – whether they want it or not – take on the role of the tradition or the man on the dock from the 20 Fingers. Various situations that Mania puts herself in or creates directly evoke the issue of (female) dependency and forced restraint – not necessarily in the Middle East, but maybe even easier in the domestic backyard. It seems as if Mania had dreamed her videos while shooting 20 Fingers: so that she could have dreamt out everything that could interfere with the movie's status of allegory; and the other way around: she filmed 20 Fingers so that during the shooting she could dream out 6 Videos, i.e. elaborated in details six mordant social statements.

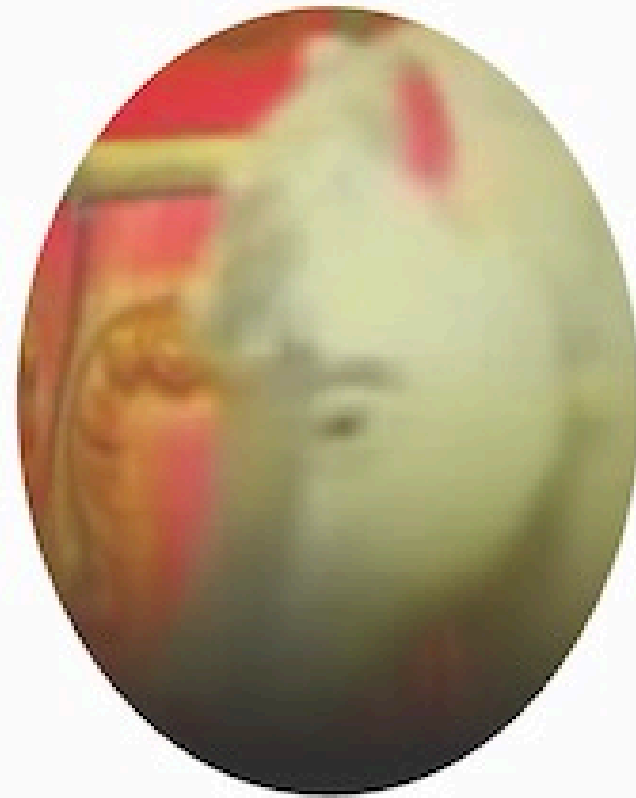
Organisation: City of Women



Between 2004 and 2007 Iranian artist-filmmaker Mania Akbari made six video art works, entitled: *Self* (2004), *Repression* (2004), *Sin* (2004), *Escape* (2004), *Fear* (2005), and *Devastation* (2005). Lasting an average of six minutes each, these films explore the malleability of identity in relation to social boundaries, beliefs and expectations. We are shown the many faces and different personae of the artist, which she links to the shaping emotional impact of family, memories and personal fears and dreams, as well as our desire to break away from the prison of the self. In *Self* Akbari responds to the question 'Who are you?' by adopting both, the appearance and the voice of alternatively a man and a woman, in order to expose the way our public personae are constructed by external signifiers i.e. shaving foam and smoke indicate masculine rituals. Yet it is in the allusions to family – and in particular the father figure – that society's entrapment is most clearly figured (further enhanced by incessant hard breathing in the background). This in turn provokes a desire for liberation from it, expressed most strongly in the sentence voiced by a member of her family in *Sin*: 'It was heaven and you brought us hell', that points to the family's undoubted importance in constituting who we are, as well as the guilt generated by defining ourselves differently to it. This is particularly pronounced in the case of women. In order to represent the barriers women face in Iranian society, Akbari films herself trapped behind a glass with her hands pressed against it as she cries dark tears in *Repression*. Here, the idea of imprisonment and the suffocating lack of 'air to breath' are symbolised by goldfish literally dying out of water. The identification between woman and wife is explored most impactfully in *Self*, where Akbari sits on a swing dressed in white with a pointy hat on her head, symbolising a grotesque form of wedding dress. As the white fabric touches the floor, the sound of dripping transforms into a dark red substance that stains the dress, signifying the loss of virginity. All this is framed by a divided screen which presents the top and bottom part of her body disconnected i.e. separating virtue and sex. This division is most clearly depicted in *Escape*, where a newly married couple are sitting side by side on a merry-go-round each holding a fruit, her a pomegranate, him a banana (the inclusion of this fruit caused the exhibition to be banned in Iran). When the fairground ride starts, their bodies disconnect from their heads and the dismembered parts go round in unsynchronised circles, reminiscent of a fruit machine. But it is in both *Fear* and *Devastation* that the rejection of society's repressive norms vis a vis women is at it most direct. A woman and a man are tied together while women whisper in the background in *Fear*; and the image of a woman with her face painted green and smoking a cigarette (an activity banned for women in Iran by virtue of its sexual connotations) is repeated ad infinitum in *Devastation*.

The allusions to religion and repression are particularly straightforward in *Devastation*; the green paint is not only Akbari's comment on a country that, in her view 'is full of colour but decides to hide it', but also the main colour used in the ceremony, exclusive to women, to celebrate the honour of the Prophet's daughter, Fatimah. *Devastation* is primarily a withering attack on this celebration of Fatimah as a role model for women. But where there's imposition there's also contradiction - the same ultra-religious women who attend this celebration also smoke in private. Although this dialectic of pleasure and repression clearly fascinates Akbari, the endless multiplication of images of the woman's face in green and an increasing number of cigarettes in her mouth in Akbari's video art ultimately produce a sinister effect. 'This is because Fatimah only means something communal, leaving no space for the individual. For me this is really frightening'.

Mar Diestro-Dópido



Kakhe Niyavaran/ Niavaran Palace Gallery - gallery (Tehran, Iran - 2004)

Locarno International Film Festival – special screening (Locarno, Switzerland - August 2005) 15th Videobrasil (São Paulo, Brazil - 2005)

City of Women International Film Festival of Contemporary Arts (Ljubljana, Slovenia - 2005) Peru International Film Festival - screening (Lima, Peru - 2005)

Salento International Film Festival - screening (Salento, Italy - 2005)

Rochester-High Falls International Film Festival - exhibition (Rochester, NY, USA - 2005) Gijón International Film Festival - exhibition (Gijón, Spain - 2005)

Iranian Group Exhibition (Rome, Italy - 2006)

Tate Modern at Tate Museum - screening of Video Art - Self(2007) (London, UK - 2007) Xerxes Art Gallery (London, UK - 2008)

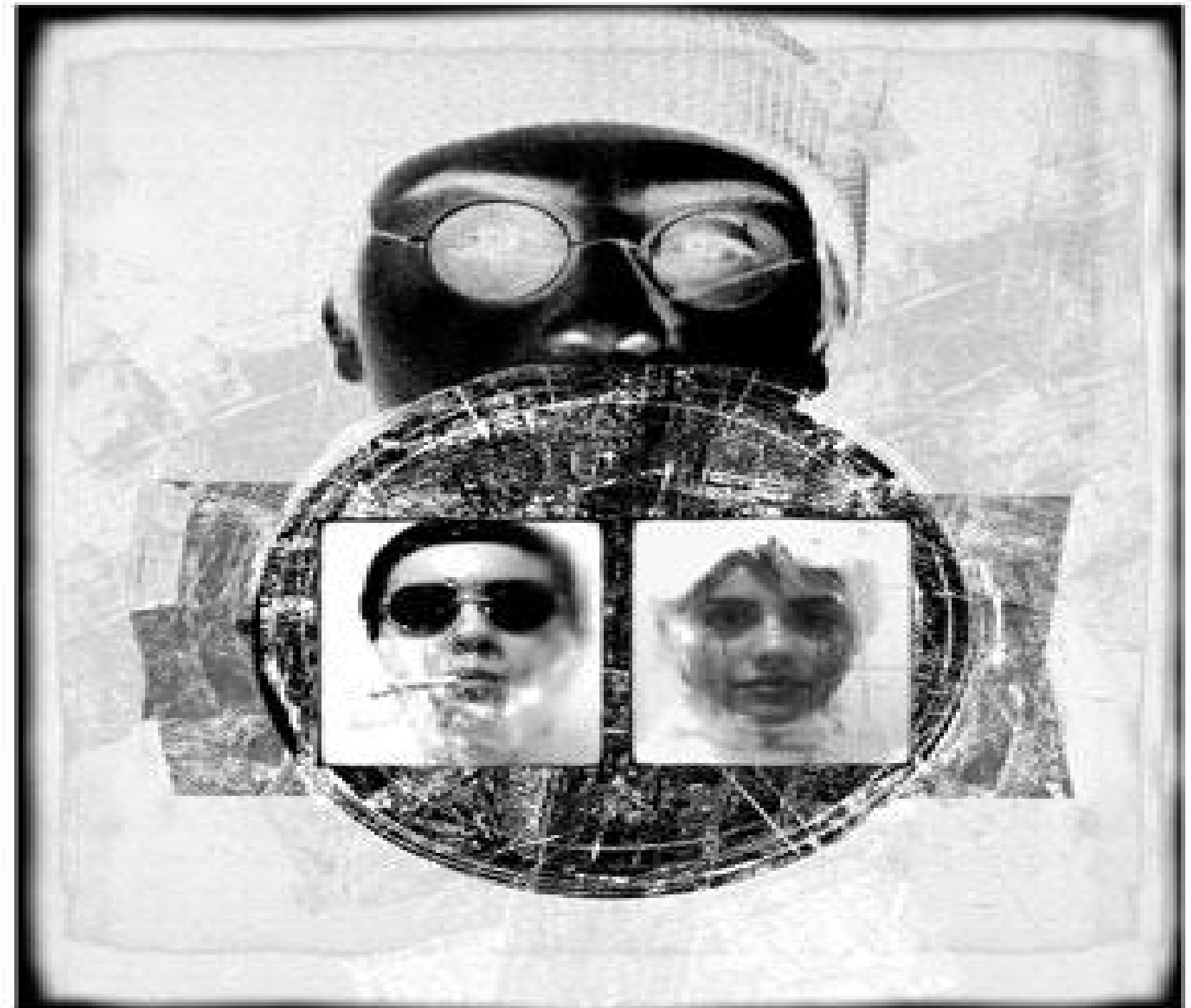
Caledonia Festival - screening (Udine, Italy - March 2009)

he Royal College of Art - screening of Video Arts Self and Sin (London, UK - October 2009) Gothenburg- (24May 2014)

جنون معنا ، جنون مانیا (بخش دوم) احمدرضا دالوندچاپ شده در مجله گلستان
۱۳۹۰

درباره ویدیو ارتهای

در آثار ویدیو آرت مانیا اکبری ، ریتم صرفاً تفسیری میان سایر تفاسیر نیست . بلکه چارچوب ثابت و مستقلى است که واریاسیون ها درون آن چیده می شوند. درست مثل یک گفت و گوی کوچک موسیقایی . ویدیو آرت های مانیا ، بازتاب سرگشتگی صداها و شکل های اسیر درجهان پرتکرار تکنولوژی است . او " صدا" را به تنهایی کافی نمی داند ، صدا ، متن ، روایت ، حرکت و تصویر را درهم می آمیزد آن هم در زمانی فشرده که تنها با درک " کوارتزی" از زمان قابل دریافت است . در زمان کوارتزی ، ثانیه ها بی درنگ درست پیش از آن که برای همیشه ناپدید شوند ، در کورسویی از نور شعله ور می شوند . ویدیو آرت های مانیا اکبری درست مانند صفحه یک ساعت دیجیتال هستند : ثانیه ها شعله کوچکی می زنند ، اما برای هیچ . هیچ چیز نمی ماند ، هیچ چیز به دست نمی آید . گویی زمان به هدر رفته به سرعت به سوی هیچ در حرکت است . واقعیت این است که مانیا هنرمند دوران دیجیتالیزم است و از این روست که می تواند همه تردستی هایی که دیجیتال فراهم می آورد را در دستکاری های مورد نیازش به طرزی خلاق استفاده کند. در آثار او ، هیچ ردپایی از جاودانگی (زمان سنجی ماقبل کوارتزی) وجود ندارد. در آثار مانیا اکبری ، مسئله هستی به مثابه مسئله ای بی پاسخ مطرح می شود. به همین سبب میل سوزان به معنا بخشیدن ، حتی به لمح ای و به هر چیز گذرنده ای ، گیرم بدیهی و آسان یاب ؛ آن هم در کوتاه ترین فواصل زمانی ، به دستمایه آثار او تبدیل شده است . درفیلم ها و ویدیو آرت های مانیا اکبری ، قصه ازهم می پاشد و تخیل ناممکن می شود؛ اما در عین حال ، طنین صدا ، نقطه گذاری های تصویری ، تقطیع شعر گونه و آهنگ حرکت به آثارش جان می بخشند.



MANIA AKBARI
6 VIDEO ARTS

2004- Directed Video Art self / Dv color / 6min
2004- Directed video Art Repression / Dv color/ 2 min
2004- Directed Video Art Sin / Dv color / 6min
2004- Directed Video Art Escape /Dv color / 6 min
2005- Directed Video Art Fear / Dv color /6min
2005- Directed Video Art Devastation /Dv color/ 6min



MANIA AKBARI
6 VIDEO ARTS



Director & writer MANIA AKBARI *Photographer* H.R.VASSAF, BAHMAN MOTAMEDIAN
Make Up AFSANEH GHOLIZADEH *Sound design* HOSSEIN MAHDAVI, ARASH ESHAGHI