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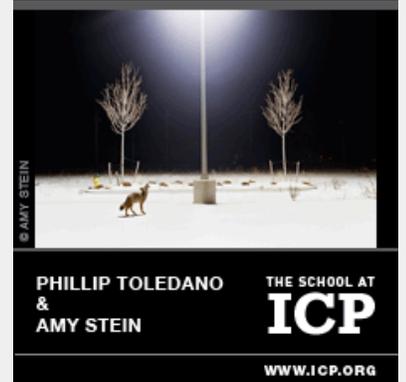
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SHADOWLANDS

In 2007, during the heat of a Tehran summer, photographer and filmmaker Zadoc Nava began a series of Tehran streetscenes, *Shadowlands*, the opening photograph of which shows three individuals on a zebra crossing. The picture is composed, or subsequently cropped, to exclude their faces, and to include the shadows they cast on the street. In strict accordance with the law, their hair remains covered and any tight-fitting clothes are concealed; two of them wear black chadors - they appear here as impenetrable silhouettes.



Nava's title might refer to the blackened shapes of the chadors - certainly they are a recurring motif, not surprising given his interest in photographing Iranian women on the capital's streets. Many of the pictures are taken from waist height, presumably surreptitiously, using available light. Women gathered together in conversation; women being driven (by a man) on a moped, or in a car; women walking, shopping, waiting, even aiming a rifle. Not all wear the chador: there are occasional glimpses of brightly-coloured floral headscarves - or perhaps some hair. Jeans and trainers, designer shopping bags and mobile phones - emblems of lifestyles at variance with post-Revolutionary gendered strictures on probity and modesty. Surely it is no mistake that the most vibrantly dressed woman - startling in green - is pictured away from the city's policed main streets; she stands solitary, overlooking a barren hillscape and power lines that disappear to the horizon.



Reviews

Shadowlands

FY

In the Shadow of Things

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Paul Graham, Photographs 1981-2006

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Explosions, Fires and Public Order



The angle of a headscarf, the length of a coat, the tightness of a belt are here charged with meaning, a political context for which is suggested by *Shadowlands'* photographs of Tehran's huge Revolutionary murals. The Shiite Imam Mahdi cradles a lifeless body: 'The nation is grateful to the martyrs of the war'. Khomeini addresses a crowd gathered at Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock: 'Ayatollah Khomeini, our spiritual leader'. The Stars and Stripes, but with skulls for stars, and falling bombs for stripes: 'Down with the USA'.



Nava's work is no diatribe though, and the series' title might be equally well interpreted to mean a region or land of indeterminacy and uncertainty. Though a contested symbolic war, of sorts, is waged in Tehran's walls and streets, it does not exclude the possibility of quieter, sometimes wry observation. Nava photographs a potted palm, hopelessly inferior to the tropical beach scenes depicted on the side of a nearby escalator; he pictures a character dressed as a cartoon rabbit - one that has seen better days - waiting alone on a pavement; and a child - who has no doubt never even heard of Marilyn Monroe - stands on an air vent and tries to calm a billowing skirt. Moments of understated humour perhaps; ambiguous counters to the city's more strident voices and demands.

Guy Lane

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 My Friend the Mercenary
 The Jazz Loft Project
 Soweto
 Story, No Story
 Room 103 by Jeroen Kramer
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 The Sound of Two Songs
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[Shadowlands by Zadoc Nava](#)
[Black Dog Publishing](#)
Paperback, 144 pages
120 b/w and colour photographs
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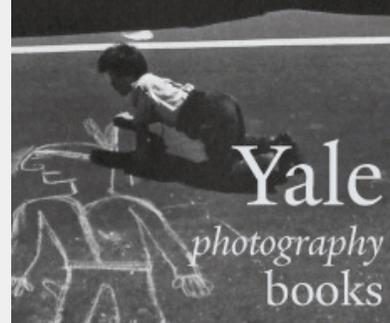
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