

CCQ

a creative conversation



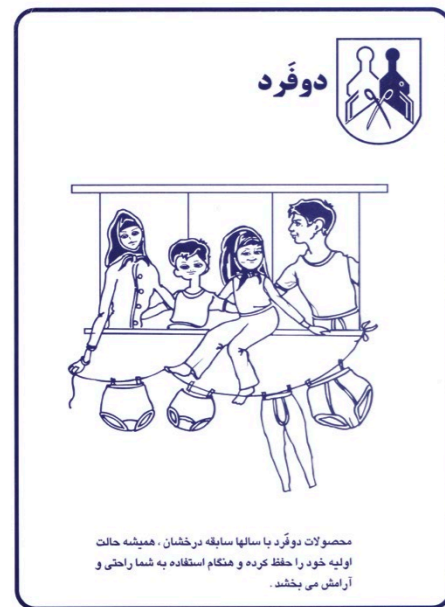
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Simon Callery | Marko Mäetamm | EVA International**



issuu.com/ccmag £5.95 €8

A Visionary Iranian-German Underpants Trade Relationship

Since 2013, Art Brussels has given selected non-profit spaces carte blanche to develop experimental projects. Ric Bower spoke to Anahita Razmi about her 2016 presentation, which involved selling Iranian underwear in a Western art-space. CCQ, in collaboration with Razmi, commissioned Paul Avis to photograph meticulously-crafted, Iranian-made smalls, during the Art Brussels 2016 weekend.



above:
DO FARD sales illustration

opposite:
DO FARD shop, central bazaar
of Tehran, Anahita Razmi, 2013,
photograph

2nd and 3rd spreads:
Untitled (Anahita Razmi: DO
FARD) Underwear Tehran -
Berlin), Paul Avis for CCQ at Art
Brussels 2016, photographs





Ric Bower: Selling underwear at an art fair is a provocation to the art world; selling Iranian underwear in the West, however, seems to invite a more complex dialogue...

Anahita Razmi: I like that the underwear is both familiar, in one sense, and strange, in another. The Iranian brand DO FARD ['two individuals' in English] is superficially similar to Schiesser underwear, or American Apparel: it has beautiful pastel, candy colours and is made of good quality cotton. If you see the designs, I guess no one would ever

refer to them as a typically oriental products – they're not carpets or pistachios, after all – they subvert expectation. For 75 years, the original DO FARD shop has been located in Tehran's Grand Bazaar; it has rows of old shelves stacked right up to the ceiling with underwear and other artefacts, which date from both before and after the Iranian Islamic revolution.

I exported the underwear from Iran before the signing of the nuclear deal; strict trade sanctions were imposed on the country then and there was no legal way to transfer money to Iranian bank accounts.



By opening a DO FARD franchise, with [non-profit gallery] State of Concept at Art Brussels, I hoped to highlight the difficulties of this macro-political situation by presenting it on a micro level. I had to go to Tehran in person, pay DO FARD in cash for the underwear, and then bring five suitcases of underwear back with me on the plane. Of course, this doesn't make sense from a trade and sales perspective, or from the point of view of a genuinely globalised market. It does, however, invite further questions like: Where are present day oriental products actually exported from and to? What does 'Made in Iran' actually mean? And

what are we expecting from the nuclear deal and its promise of better relations between the West and Iran?

I loved selling inexpensive pants and vests, complete with price tags, alongside what is commonly regarded as high art. As an act, it seemed to question the fundamental validity of the art marketplace, a space that seems to value mystery and speculation over practical mundane realities.

RB: What is your own relationship with Iran? —>



AR: My father is from Iran and I still have relatives living in Tehran. I was born in Germany and grew up there; my father never went back after he left. I have always had a deep interest in what is happening there, maybe because there has always been this sense of having a close relationship with the place, but which, at the same time, due to the circumstances, was also quite abstract and remote. In my early twenties, I began going there regularly. I made very good friends in Tehran, and began collaborating and initiating art projects there.

Iranian culture is rich, diverse and complex; but it is also deeply

conflicted – the country's political system, the Islamic Republic, is peculiar and interesting, but it is also very sad. We are speaking of a country with no freedom of expression, no compliance to human rights, absurd restrictions of people's lives, and, furthermore, there are grave economic problems in the country. My projects, in general, are an attempt to work within these contradictions, without being didactic. I make connections between different contexts and the stereotypes related to them, pulling things together from different sources.

The *DO FARD* project is not trying to recreate the shop in Tehran; it



is making a version of it – a western-style, art-context franchise, which is taking advantage of all the possibilities that this relocation offers; and an advertising campaign, with sexy models wearing the underwear and a hip shop interior, for instance. And then, there is the confusion about what this shop actually is. Is it an artwork and an installation, or a functioning shop and a way to make money?

Is it a visionary Iranian-German underpants trade relationship, or an open discussion space for all the above?

The customers don't have to bother with any of these apparent dichotomies though. It's perfectly possible for them just to buy their underpants, and then they can just walk away and wear them—**CCQ**

anahitarazmi.de
dofard.com
stateofconcept.org

The 35th Art Brussels runs
21 - 23 April 2017
artbrussels.com