

Dana Nehdaran's ability to recreate a photograph on a blank canvas and bring that photograph not only back to life but reexamine it and reinterpret it, is what makes this series of works so sensational. The candidacy of the moment combined with Nehdaran's flawless attention to detail merge together to create a vision so captivating it relishes the viewer to a time where only mere memories remain. Nehdaran uses his innate talent to draw a connection between these images and his own heritage thus allowing him to create an ancestral bond so strong it almost feels familiar, as if he himself were to be present in the images of the past.

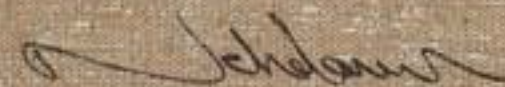
His attention to detail and awe inspiring technique allow him to recreate memories that transcend language, becoming universal in their ability to communicate and pay ode to the longstanding history and elaborate culture of Iran. His paintings provide a mode of storytelling that incorporates ideas of truth, reality, cultural value systems, and perception, playing largely upon their transcendental qualities, ultimately leaving the viewer with an almost eerie feeling, like that of being haunted by fleeting moments of the past.

Dana Nehdaran's paintings are a vivid look into the lives of old Iranian families providing the viewer with an insight into the established traditions and customs passed down through generations. By working off of old photographs, the artist has given himself the ability to decontextualize the images thus engaging his own perception and understanding in his final creations. He achieves the accurate blend of past and present within the borders of his canvas deliberately manipulating certain aspects of the original images while further emphasizing parts of another, ultimately changing the former discourse, and furthermore providing the viewer with sensations that bridge both space and time, reorganizing perception and replacing subjectivity.

RIRA Gallery

Esther's Children

When I first started painting the images of the photograph collection, "Esther's Children" by Houman Sarshar, I was only thinking about the origins of a tribe who immigrated to Iran during the Achaemenid Empire. At this point, I subconsciously added some faces to the photos, and took out some others; the reason for this is still not clear to me. The next stage was searching myself in those paintings. Nevertheless, after the painting process was over, a feeling grew in me, which is more important to me than any other experience during working on this series: it was the connection that those people in those old images were making with me, and thinking that they could very well be my own ancestors. I started seeing signs of their presence at home. Perhaps those signs had always existed, and I only noticed them after I did the paintings and experienced the feelings that followed them.





8



30

14



32



16



34



18



36



19



38

20



40



22



42

24



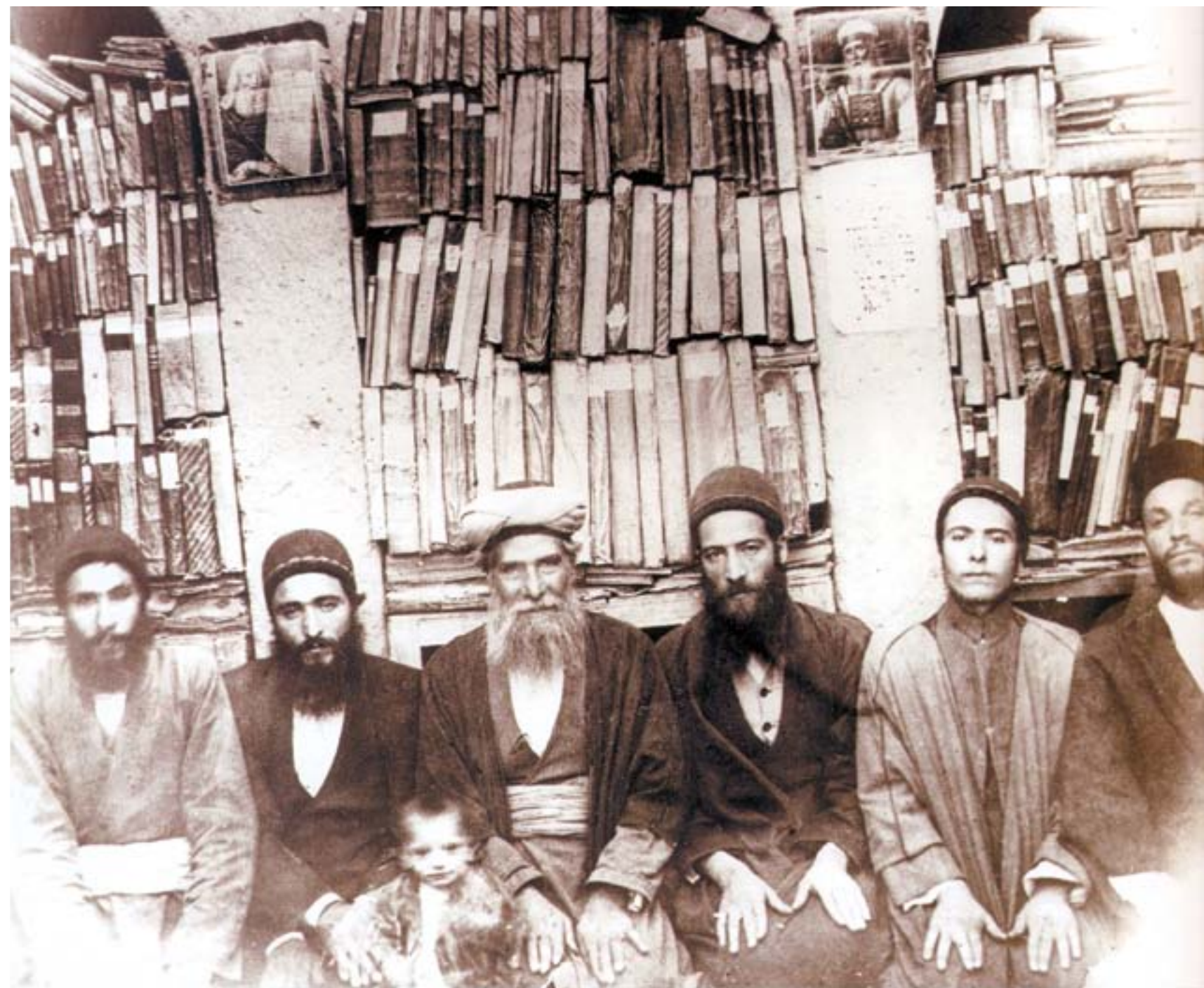
44



26



The Kahan family from Golpaygan, Oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm, 2010



Photograph # 1037, *Esther's Children* book







A family from Tehran
Oil on canvas
190 x 160 cm
2011





A family from Russia who Lived in Iran, Oil on canvas, 160 x 190 cm, 2011





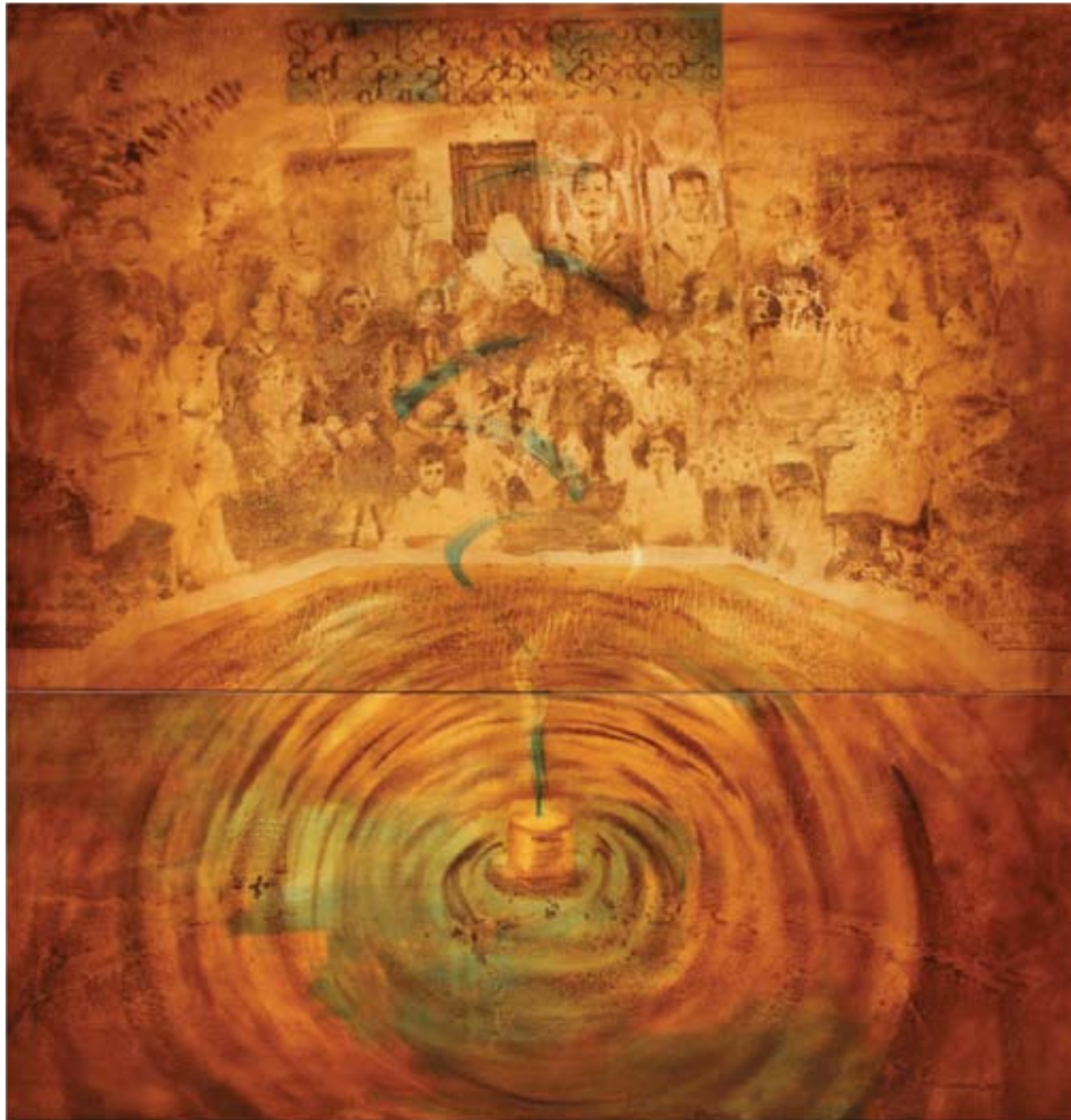
A family from Mashhad, Oil on canvas, 190 x 190 cm, 2011

A family from Hamedan, Oil on canvas, 190 x 190 cm, 2011

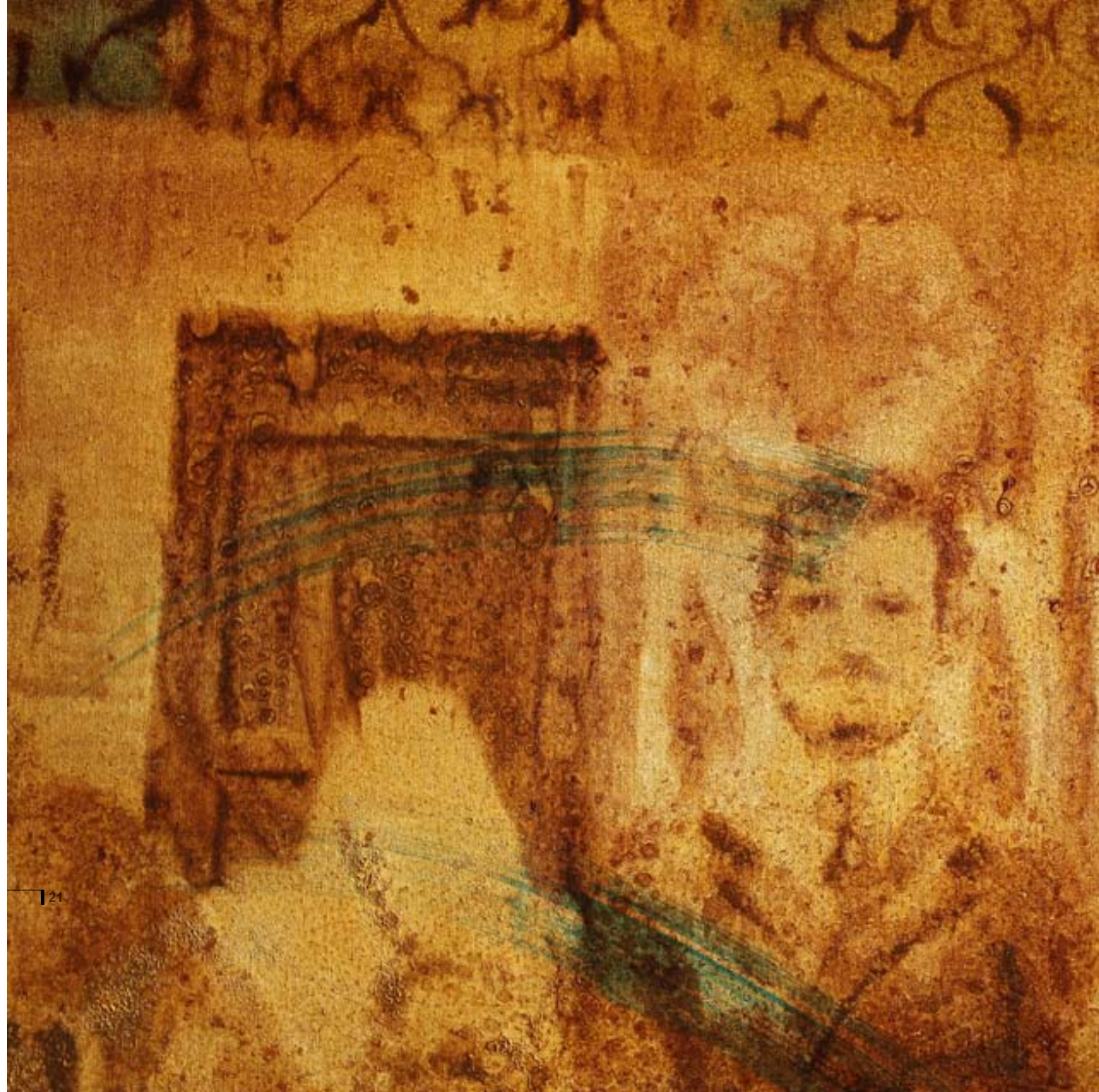




A wedding ceremony - Isfahan, Oil on canvas, 250 x 160 cm, 2011



A family from Tehran, Oil on canvas, Dyptch, Overall: 260 x 250 cm, 2011





A family from Isfahan, Oil on canvas, 120 x 160 cm, 2011



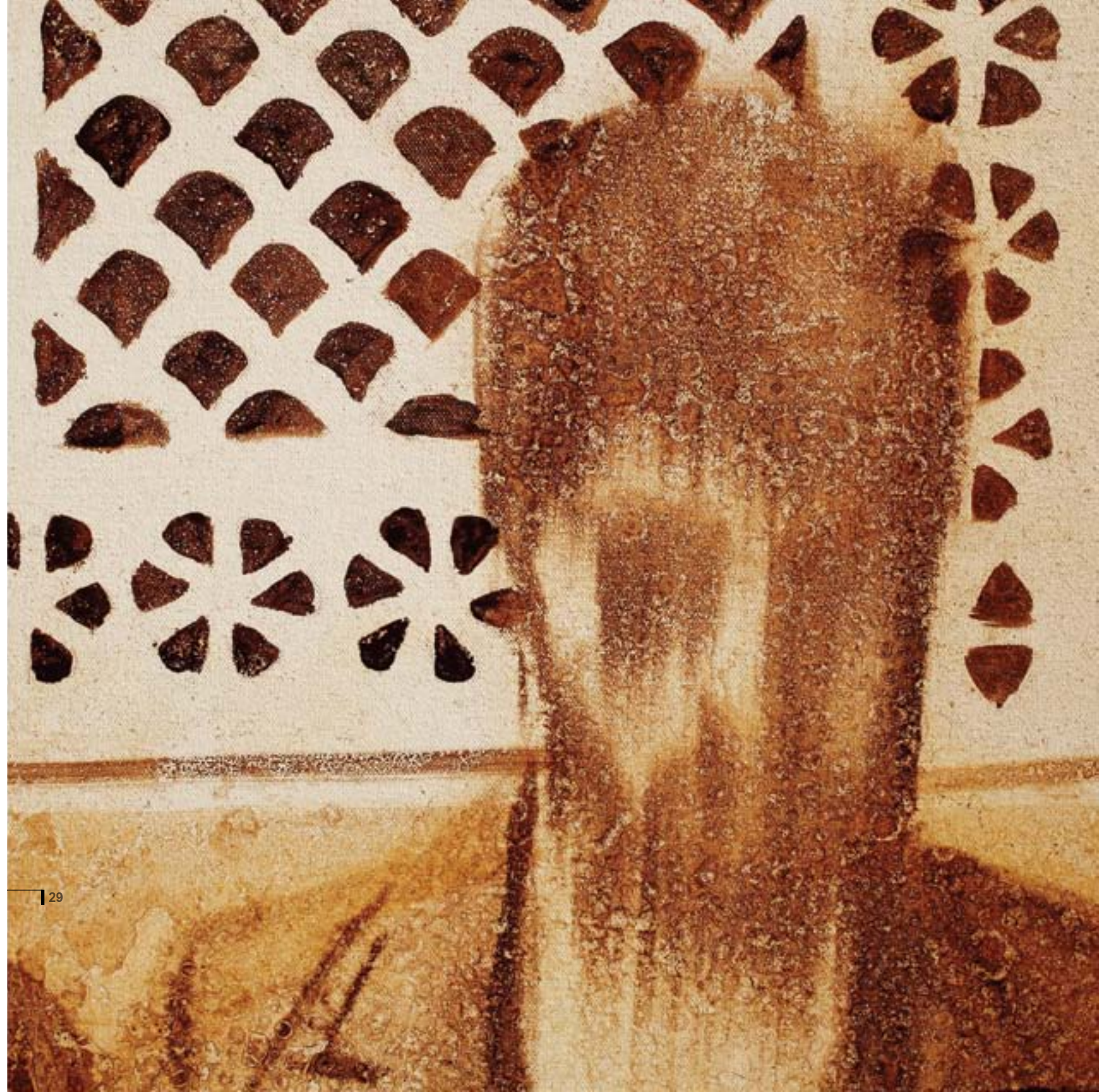


A hospital in Kashan, Oil on canvas, 160 x 250 cm, 2011





A family from Isfahan, Oil on canvas, 150 x 195 cm, 2011





Self portrait, Oil on canvas, 190 x 100 cm, 2011



A family from Hamedan
Oil on canvas
190 x 160 cm
2011





A family from Hamedan
Oil on canvas
194 x 157 cm
2010





Some people from Isfahan, Oil on canvas, 160 x 250 cm, 2011



Tow families from Mashhad, Oil on canvas, Diptych, Overall: 172 x 255 cm, Each: 160 x 120, 2010





A family from Hamedan, Oil on canvas, 160 x 250 cm, 2011





A man from Kashan
Oil on canvas
185 x 140 cm
2011



DANA NEHDARAN (B. Isfahan - 1982)

Education

2007 - BA Painting, Sooreh University, Shiraz, Iran
2002 - Associate degree, Carpet design, Isfahan, Iran

Solo Exhibitions

2011 - Esther's children, Shirin Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2010 - My Mona Lisa, Nar Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2008 - The Inside Layers, Morteza Momayez Gallery, Iran Art Organisation, Tehran, Iran

Group Exhibitions

2012 - WONDERLAND, Sokouh Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2012 - Tehran auction, Parsian Azadi Hotel, Tehran, Iran
2012 - Opening RIRA gallery, Dubai, UAE
2012 - Jinn (painting), Seyhoun Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2012 - Haft Negah (painting), Farhangsara Niavaran, Tehran , Iran
2012 - Magic of Persia, Art Exhibition & Auction Gala, Salsali Private Museum, Dubai, UAE
2012 - Iranian Contemporary Artist (painting), Middle East Art Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2011 - 1st Modern&Contemporary Visual Art Auction, Tehran, Iran
2011 - Cutting Edge Artists (painting), Mellat Cinema Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2011 - Iranian Painter Association (painting), Contemporary Arts Museum, Isfahan, Iran
2011 - The first Tehran painting market: Barg Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2011 - little dancer (painting), Henna Art gallery, Tehran, Iran
2010 - Young Avant-garde (painting), Mellat Cinema Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2010 - Encyclopaedia Iranica (Charity Art Exhibition), New York, USA
2010 - Auto-portraits II, Silk road gallery ,Tehran, Iran
2010 - Untitled (painting), Art Center, Tehran, Iran
2010 - Untitled (painting), Neel Gallery, (Tehran, Iran)
2009 - 1001 Colours (painting), Canvas Gallery, New York, USA
2009 - Colours for the Green (painting), Mellat Cinema Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2008 - Global Generation Freiburg Group Exhibition, Freiburg, Germany
2008 - Untitled (painting), Nar Gallery, Tehran, Iran
2007 - Photography Expo, Esteqlal hotel, Tehran, Iran
2007 - Eternal Papers (photography), Contemporary Arts Museum, Isfahan, Iran

Professional Experience

2008 - Painter for stage/set for feature film, 'The Remember', Iran
2007 - Painter for stage/set for TV series, The Forbidden Fruit, IRIB, Iran

Membership

Member of the Iranian Painter Association

Competitions

2012 - Selected for 9th Image of the year Festival, Short Film Category for 'Last Supper' Iran Art Organization, Tehran, Iran
2011 - Selected for short list of MOP CAP, Traffic gallery, Dubai, UAE
2008 - Selected for Damoonfar Festival, Tehran, Iran
2006 - Selected for Damoonfar Festival, Tehran, Iran

Awards

2004 - Winner of Special Prize in Persian New Year Photography, Isfahan, Iran
2003 - Winner of Special Prize in Sketching, Hafezieh Competition, Shiraz, Iran



I Searched; Never to Find it!

Nehdaran's newest series is based upon documentary photographs that connect the artist to his ancestors. The artist immediately expresses himself in an introduction to this series:

[When painting the photographs] I could see things in them that I couldn't if I hadn't painted them with such meticulousness. In fact, painting the photographs with brushes, made me see them better.

However, by eliminating old faces and adding the new ones, Nehdaran reaches the point in which his very own portraiture turns up in the paintings: a portrait of the artist in the prime of childhood. This embedment helps the artist to seek for his ancestors: the ancestors whose existence is hardly traceable in the recorded history of Iran. The transformation of images does not fetch up here; rather sometimes a character melts in the background and its presence loses its objectivity seeming more and more like a wandering ghost trying to convey its existence at least in the frame of a painting. These ghosts living in another realm and only intrude our

world from time to time. Such visual traits may be playing the role of an assertion in the unwritten history more than anything. Nehdaran tries to illustrate the nuncupative stories and nominate their heroes as his primogenitors to whom he might not have ever been acquainted but his faith makes him believe in certain cultural links with them.

The figures, or better to say, the humans in these frames weather enjoying a tablature or suffering from being faded –the ones whose mere memories remained- all are ordinary people. Nehdaran portrays a world as it has been in the Old Testament; the place in which “the whole world had one language and a common speech” [Genesis 11:1-9]. From such aspect the name of the series might have a meaning with a bit of humorous flavor. For the artist – as what was written in the Esther's book in the bible – does not assign himself as different and apart from the world. This accent reveals itself in a specific work more than the others. In the picture which this painting has been based upon, the main character is seen sitting beside his acquaintances. Behind them is his bookshelf which the great

rabbi had brought from Iraq to Iran by convoy of camels. In the image Nehdaran painted of this photo all these are the same; but there also is a child sitting beside the main character which in Nehdaran's version had taken the shape of the




childhood of the artist. There is also a portrait of Moses hanging on the bookshelf that Nehdaran consciously altered it with a portrait of Mona Lisa. But why Mona Lisa should be the idoneous substitute for Moses?

It seems the artist intended to emphasize on cultural hybridization in the contemporary world. But apart from that, there is a more obvious interpretation in hand. In his previous series “My Mona Lisa” Nehdaran created various portraits of Mona Lisa rendered with the same technique as his new series. The series starting from the exact image of Mona Lisa has slowly revolved into the image of a Mona Lisa who had a great resemblance to the artist. This

way Dana could obtain collected variations of portraits arraying from the iconic portrait in the history of art to his very own. Thus the substitution of Mona Lisa with Moses not only benefits from the historical function of

Da Vinci's masterpiece which plays a certain role as a humanistic icon in the history of art; but also is a referent to Nehdaran's previous series. It looks as if the artist tries to remember the long-forgotten parts of his history and join it to his lived-life experience. He remembers faces that show themselves for a languishing moment; even though they will be gone in a blink of an eye. He searches for them while quoting this refrain of Solomon in his mind again and again: “so I searched everywhere but did not find him” [Song of Solomon 3:2]. The matter of great importance, of course, is not the discovering but the mere act of searching.

Ali Ettehad, 2011



**Special Thanks to:
Ashkan Zahraie
Nikoo Tarkhani**