

ORDERLY CONDUCT

Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad

ORDERLY CONDUCT

© 2008, Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad

ISBN 978-0-9559411-1-5

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means, including photocopying, recording or information storage without written consent from the publisher.









IN PLAIN SIGHT

There is a palpable feeling of unease generated by Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad's images once we become aware of their riddle. They touch upon something we cannot clearly define; a doubt arises from an analysis of each photograph and the way in which it refers to our modes of existing in the world. Hashemi-Nezhad has selected a few locations around London, transitional places where he has positioned his camera and, relentlessly and patiently, taken photos of passers-by at different intervals. Outside the frame he has observed, connected and revealed small obsessions, personal rites and compulsive behaviours that characterise city life. Collapsing any given notion of time, the pictures are the result of an overlaying, cutting and pasting process, in which Hashemi-Nezhad has selected and exposed a particular behaviour shared by the anonymous subjects of his pictures. People listening to MP3 players, talking on a mobile phone and carrying documents to a meeting are some of the rituals the designer has used to present and question urban daily life.

Hashemi-Nezhad's work is surprising and disturbing. We like to think of ourselves as unique, as well as cognisant of the risk of homogenisation that we face at a time of exposure. Suddenly, with these photographs, we are confronted with the predictability of our actions and behaviours. Of course, the categories have been chosen by Hashemi-Nezhad, and time compression is a powerful tool to reveal what the designer calls "the overlooked" in the daily life of a city. He has been on location, he has abandoned any preconceived notions and he has chosen to shoot after observing how various people move through that space, highlighting an unconsciously shared response to each specific place at a specific time.

These behaviours, more than being directly shaped by the city, seem to highlight common human attitudes and responses generated by certain situations. The subjects of the images seem entrapped in a series of similar mechanical actions. Moreover, these photographs expose behaviours that we consider private, even if carried out in public. It is as if we are being spied on while asleep, observed while at our most vulnerable. We are under constant monitoring by CCTV cameras, and yet we live in and move about the city oblivious to such surveillance. Hashemi-Nezhad's photos serve as a reminder of this penetrating yet hidden gaze.

What if this categorisation of our actions is also occurring on a more official level? From a passive system of surveillance, CCTV has become a producer of information. Multiple individualities are reduced to standard categories through a different concept of the city and its relationship to its users. The interplays between subjects and places could be pinned down to limit or defeat any unexpected behaviours. All information is useful, all individuals identical. They - we - are all "possible terrorists" (as argued by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in *State of Exception*), public enemies in potentia, that can be retraced (or tracked down) and identified just in case. We should feel safer; we should feel grateful for this networking system. Still, as Hashemi-Nezhad shows, we could suddenly become the starting point for a new set of transformations of space and of our attitudes; we could become information. As information is power, we could become even further subject to the coercive nature of power. Is there any way out? The answer cannot be straightforward, but a possible escape can be found inside Hashemi-Nezhad's pictures. The photographer shows us the potentialities - and limits - of the photographic medium. He intervenes conscientiously on the pictures; he makes them reveal something that cannot usually be captured. He makes us realise that what we tend to perceive as transitional spaces - or non-places - are locations in which communal behaviours are generated and then developed in myriad different ways. These pictures, through their ambiguity, pose many questions, but also push us to reconsider the ways in which our attitudes form and are informed by the city.

Hashemi-Nezhad says that in the same place at different times, different yet homogenised attitudes are revealed by the passer-by. The city's schedule reveals itself, and at the same time it uncovers the different ways thorough which to cope with it. Awareness of our state of being in a place is the most powerful tool that we can gain through these pictures: to being able, the next time, to stop our steps, take a breath and observe what is actually happening around us.

by Stefano Collicelli Cagol

Previously based in Venice, Stefano Collicelli Cagol is currently a PhD candidate in the Curating Contemporary Art department at the Royal College of Art, London.



Thank you!

My family, Jürgen Bey, Martino Gamper, Justine Parker, Stefano Collicelli Cagol, Filip Tydén, Il Gu Cha.

.

The paper for this publication was kindly sponsored by Arctic Paper.

Designed by Filip Tydén, filiptyden.se

Printed by Impact Print in June 2008

Paper inside: Arctic Paper, The Gloss

Paper cover: Munken Lynx

Typeset in Trajan Pro, Plantin MT Schlbk
and Plantin MT Schlbk Untalic.



ARCTIC PAPER

Orderly Conduct

© 2008, Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad

ISBN 978-0-9559411-1-5