

Archaeology of the Final Decade

# AZ DIV O DAD : FANTASTICAL POLAROIDS OF KAVEH GOLESTAN

Curated by Vali Mahlouji



*Untitled (Az Div O Dad series, 1976), courtesy Kaveh Golestan Estate*

## Kaveh Golestan : *Az Div o Dad*.

The project exhibits the series entitled *Az Div o Dad* (Polaroids, 1976) by photographer Kaveh Golestan, a rare and important series of works unseen since 1978.

Kaveh Golestan (1950-2003) was an influential Iranian pioneer of documentary photography. His photographic practice has hugely informed the work of future generations of Iranian artists. Besides numerous socially motivated projects such as the Citadel of Shahr-e No in the 1970s, Kaveh Golestan documented many major historical events including the conflict in Northern Ireland, the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Gulf Wars. In 1979 he was awarded the Robert Capa Gold Medal for "superlative photography requiring exceptional courage and enterprise abroad". Whilst on an assignment in Iraq, Golestan stepped on a fatal landmine on 2 April 2003. He died in Kifri in Northern Iraq.

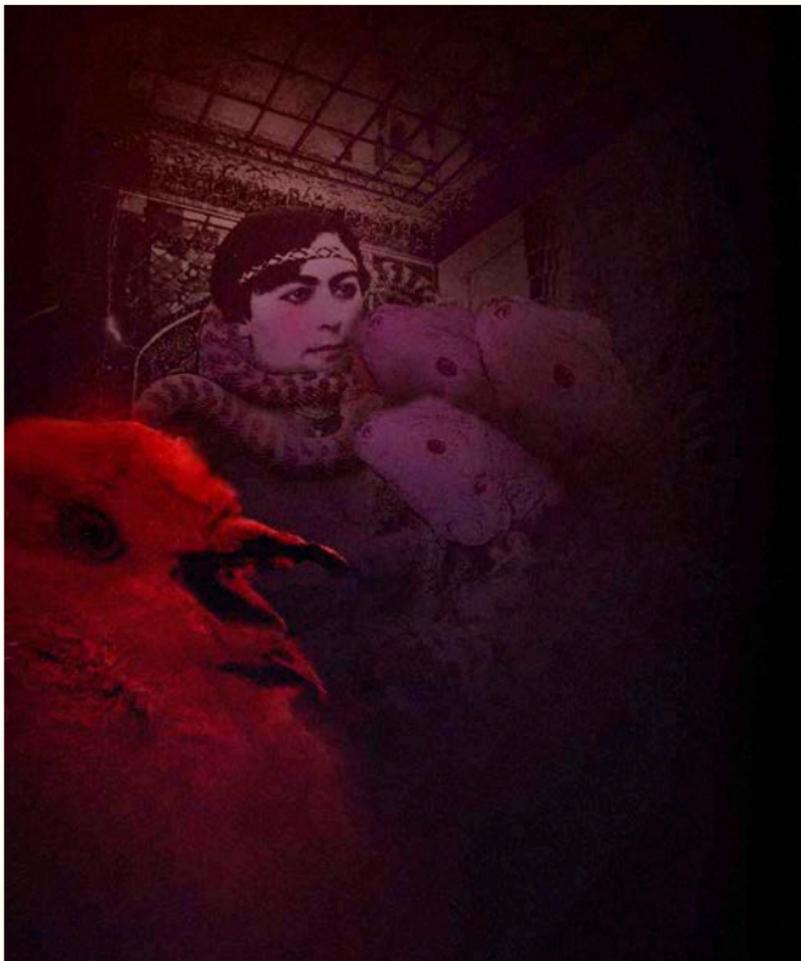
In 1976, Golestan created a series of innovative and striking Polaroids by moving collaged fragments in front of an open shutter over long exposures. The process created fantastical and surrealist works that blend fairytale and history, appropriating found photographs and images from the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The collages depict visions of anthropomorphic, beast-headed uniformed and nude figures set against natural and architectural backgrounds with references to modern and Qajar era histories. These works open a window onto an experimental side of Golestan's practice, which has received little critical exposure to date.

As a medium, the Polaroid is an important photographic format, which was used by artists including David Hockney, Helmut Newton, Ansel Adams, Andy Warhol and Andrei Tarkovsky over a short period of time. The Polaroid company ceased to exist in 2008.

The *Az Div o Dad* series is accompanied by a display of original artworks and collages, which shed light on the processes involved in the creation of the final Polaroids. The artist created these images in series by incrementally exposing the components over longer exposures. The consecutive creations show a gradual transformation of the image across each series.



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Collage used in creating Az Div O Dad series (1976), courtesy Kaveh Golestan Estate

## The Archive.

The exhibition is aimed at raising awareness about the historically significant Golestan archive as a whole. Golestan's artistic career has produced one of the most important photographic archives documenting the social and political history of Iran during the second half of the twentieth century. This archive contains over half a million negatives, most of which have never been seen.

## Archaeology of the Final Decade.

**Archaeology of the Final Decade** is a platform which engages in curatorial and educational programmes, events and publications with the aim of raising awareness about artistic materials from the 1960s-70s, which have remained obscure, under-exposed, over-looked, removed from circulation or in some cases destroyed. AOTFD aims to reincorporate into discourse these culturally significant materials in collaborations with international institutions.

**Archaeology of the Final Decade** aims to raise awareness about the work of Golestan and to encourage support for the conservation, preservation and digitization of this significant historical archive.

## Biography.

Vali Mahlouji is a London-based independent curator and writer, and adviser to the British Museum. His recent curatorial credits include *Kaveh Golestan – The Citadel* at Foam Photography Museum, Amsterdam, co-curator of *Unedited History (Iran 1960-2014)* at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts, Rome. His upcoming curatorial projects will be appearing at the Whitechapel Gallery and Photo London, Somerset House.

Mahlouji has been published by many institutions, including Encyclopædia Iranica; Asia Society Museum; Abraaj Group Art Prize; National Greek Museum of Contemporary Art; and Sharjah Biennial. His upcoming publication *Perspectives on the Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis* is due in 2015 (Black Dog Publishing).



Kaveh Golestan (1950-2003)

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