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The Role of Photography in Conceptual Art in Iranian Artists

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Abstract

Conceptual art is one of the new independent art forms of modern times. Photography is one of the areas where this art form appears since it is always considered as a document and reflection of reality. As photography plays an essential role in the first conceptual artworks of Joseph Kossuth, this research questions “to what extent photography can play an essential role in conceptual artworks?” It was not very late after rise of conceptual art that Iran was in line with these new developments. Therefore, it is tried to study the role of photography in conceptual art through investigating Iranian artist’s art works. Here it is tried to review two main exhibitions of conceptual artworks held in contemporary art museum of Tehran during 2001 to 2002 as well as field study approaches about artworks in other galleries, to reveal the importance of photography in conceptual artwork. The present study attempts to define conceptual art beside a quick review of the first photos that apparently effected formation of conceptual art in Iranian artist’s artworks.

Keywords: Photography, Conceptual Art, New Art, illustrate, Iran.

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Introduction

In line with emergence and spread of different fields of new art during sixties and seventies, Iran was also affected with this flow and though was not very successful to execute all fields due to differences in cultural, ethical, economic conditions and so on, it has done noticeably well in some other categories. One of these categories is conceptual art. Since there is no boundary for arts, and photography is a witness to facts because of its availability, constancy and record of time, it is considered to be one the basic media in conceptual art. In this respect, present study tries to clarify the key role of photography in conceptual art through explaining this new art category and introducing pioneer artists in conceptual art. Actually, this study is conducted among works of Iranian artists. As the only available sources was confined to two books of conceptual art and new art, published by Tehran contemporary art museum, it is also tried to search locally for artworks presented in galleries to study the basic role of photography in forming of conceptual art in Iranian artist works.

Research History

After several investigations about new art in Iran and since only some of art categories was developed more than others and welcomed more, I decided to specifically study conceptual art. Studying works of conceptual art and new art exhibition in contemporary art museum of Tehran, also after reviewing the early conceptual art works, it can be concluded that photography plays a very essential role in formation and execution of conceptual art. Then studying the “Conceptual Art” book (Marzona, 2005) and the Article “Art and Photography” (Lemagny & Rouille, 1987), it makes more interesting in research and investigation about the role of photography in conceptual art. The aim of this research was to know more about of some foreign artists through studying “conceptual art” and to review Iranian art works as well.

Methods

Referring to the great importance and development of conceptual art during 1960 to 1970, in Europe and USA, also in regard to impact of this art flow on Iranian art works both before and after Islamic revolution of Iran, unfortunately there are no useful information about published and unpublished art work resources during 1978 to 1988, to analyze the role of photography in conceptual art in Iran. So I was forced to merely refer to works exhibited in two exhibitions of conceptual art and new art held in contemporary art museum of Tehran during 2000 and 2001 as the basic statistical society in this study. Then, Iranian artworks in conceptual art

were studied and compared them to artworks of artists in the globe, to analyze the role of photography in Iranian artworks.

New Art

If we consider new art to be formed out of postmodern art – began after modern era – nearly all art fields that formed after 1960, can be titled under the category of new art. Some of these fields include conceptual art, land art, video, installation, performance, happening, body art etc.

New art was borne due to different factors: to start with, new art formed from a kind of interaction between new innovations in art and rise of new art institutions. Modern art museums, having half a century experience, faced a severe identity crisis during seventies. Most of artists and audiences in these museums, believed that introducing art works in modern era with a view to the past criteria is a kind of aristocratic reactionary and dislike their lack of active presence in contemporary culture and art fields. In this respect, contemporary art museum formed in order to introduce new efforts and evolutions of artists and provide a new arena to broadcast new art. As new art demands for new art centers and these centers support and encourage new and different art categories. The other factor that strengthened motivation of ideas to achieve evolution in form and structure of contemporary art is comprehensive interest of artists in social and current issues. New art constantly insists on important international issues such as freedom, environment, nuclear dangers, feminism, technology and alienation of man and machine, human disasters, world war massacres, using all its new features and tools. The third factor in emergence of new art is stunning development of communication technology and expansion of new media such as photography, video and internet (Smith, 1995).

Conceptual Art

The title “conceptual art” was first introduced by Sol LeWitt (in his writings about conceptual art) in Art forum journal (Wood, 2002) as it was mentioned by Paul Wood, “in order to achieve the goal of conceptual art we should disregard two main specification and historic factors in the art of west, it means producing tools to be observed and the observation itself” (Wood, 2002). As in conceptual, art the importance of artistic object or the subject is not important and finally this is the idea of the artists which is of main concern. In fact conceptual art tries to emphasis on opinion and mental aspect of an art work which is the result of the intention of the artist. This idea have not be verified by all audience and each person can

impress his personal idea or to extend the concepts of that art work as his desire. “Ready-mades” by Marcel Duchamp is also one of the backgrounds of conceptual art. Among artists that pioneered this movement we can remember such as Douglas Huebler, Lawrence Weiner, Joseph Kosuth, and Robert Barry whose their conceptual art works were exhibited during 1968 and 1969 (Gharebaghi, 2001).

Photography and conceptual art

Conceptual art benefits from all imagery and visual constituent elements such as perspective, light changes, even speech and language in order to convey what the artist intends to and think about. Therefore, tools and materials used in an artwork, its formation process and final outcome all denote and emphasize on the concept of work and the artist. All the elements used to form the artwork aim to align its visual aspect with mental intention. On the other hand, sometimes variety of forms and application of different tools and mediums beside a combination of them is obvious in an artwork.

In this respect, often photography became the main object to exhibit the artwork as well as being a media to keep a record of it. Also the development of media and their easy accessibility especially photography made it more attractive to be used in the works of other artists as well. The other factors in conceptual art are: normal and everyday objects which are meant to be used other than art fields that are replaced from their proper usage and instead are used in an alien field which is Art and this is exactly what you can see in photography as none of artistic objects shown in a photo never produced merely for photography or conceptual art issues rather they are everyday objects which are dispatched from their place and structured an artistic texture. In fact this is the idea that is praised for including everyday object and moving it from its place to holds it in a subcategory of artwork. “It is claimed that this art is considered as a stem that nearly all contemporary art works relay on” (Wood, 2002).

One of the first samples of this artistic movement is “One and Three Chair” by Josef Kasouth (No. 1-4) (Smith, 1995). As we might know well, this artwork is one the first samples of conceptual art; the role of photography is undeniable.

The role of photography is apparently clear in conceptual art. Although sometimes delineation and demarcation to include works in this category seems impossible, the role of photography and its presence both as a media to be used or a primary or secondary material is undeniable.

Conceptual art in Iran

Conceptual art is a branch of new art with too many adherents. This category of new art is also followed more or less in Iran and every day the number of those who anxiously follow it adds up. This article attempts to present more example about the obvious role of photography and shows that photography is a media to exhibit the artwork and herewith emphasis the relation between photography and conceptual art.

Photography is a media with one of the most important internal features of being a silent mirror in front of a fact and it can be used for many various concepts and objectives. Besides there is less material aspect in photography despite painting and sculpture and in this respect proximity and simulation of tactile and sight senses is the main reason that makes photography to be used in different forms of art. Among these works we can mention “Seven Sycamores” by Kiarostami which is executed by Tavakoli Farsani (Fig.1).

This art work is held in the second story of artists house in middle of the corridor. It includes some trees which are placed on a green mat, which is actually higher than ground level and surrounded with a fence just like a little garden. It seems the bodies of trees are just placed here for beauty. These trees which are of same length reach to a fake ceiling which is exclusively designed for them and there is attached a photo of sky with white clouds. This three dimension artworks suggests the feeling of cut trees – trees that seem to be aligned from earth to heavens. Trees are a combination of several photos of trees, some of which illustrate memorials dug on trees. Though, induction of reality is too sharp that we cannot get this picture without our tactile sense. In this artwork, the artist benefited from space and tactile sense through photography for execution.

In the work of “Longing and Belonging” by Valamanesh which was held in 1997, an old Ghashghaee carper which the artist have reside on it for more than 20 years and his child is brought up on it, was spread on a beautiful natural location in Australia. Valamanesh set a fire just in center of the carper to let fire blow a new soul to his life and connect his past and present (No photo).

This work illustrates his effort to coordinate his memories with the new place he is living in. In another exhibition held in Tehran contemporary art museum on 2001, this carpet was once again spread on the floor and almost covered by black velvet. Then a photo of the carpet when in fire, hung on the wall just beside the carpet. Recording the reality in a photo, made Valamanesh apply photo to testify the action (burning carpet). Actually the proximity of photo and carpet links the process in the photo with the carpet beside it. Here photo is a witness to a past action that pictorially narrates the story.

Taghizadeh also placed an image of a mass grave on a wall across from a camera on a camera tripod on the shadow of an umbrella that flashed every 30 seconds in his “For Bam” collection (Internal News, 2003). In this artwork, conducted on 2003, she located a camera on a tripod in downstairs of Artist’s Garden (Bagh Honarmandan) with a text installed on it as: “wedding photography accepted”. Taghizadeh aimed to illustrate regular repetition of this TV images making them look ordinary as well as indifference of photographers and reporters in recording this horrible story (Bam earthquake) and convey it to the audience. In this artwork photo is applied to make this unpleasant and deadly feeling due to this unexpected natural phenomena (No photo).

In works of Taghizadeh normalization and abundance of unusual events and murder is evident. Somehow the reason to this normalization and indifference feeling is mass of images shown in different media. Access to photographs through TV shows, magazine, newspaper and report moments changed obscenity to a routine and part of our daily life which is inevitable. In fact, photography works as a watch that is always with us and shows passing time something obvious, that presents death, events or horrible news to something ordinary and routine.

“In photography presence of an object (in a particular moment in the past) never is a metaphor; and in regard to living creatures, their living is not metaphoric, except in photography of dead corps; by the way, and what makes it terrific is the similarity that testifies this dead corps, as a corps, seems alive: in other words, this photo is a live image of something dead. As stillness in a photo is to some extends reflection of an unreasonable line between two concepts: one a real issue and the other a living one. It means that photo acknowledges that this subject was real and due to the illusion that makes us to consider a superior value and mortality for a reality, as well as secretly developing this believe that photo subject is alive; and relating this reality to the past, the photo conveys this fact that it is already dead” (Barthes, 1993).

“Imagery impressions that happen with the field of photography, today considers issues that might be painting as well as sculpture and even decoration (setting a decoration). Photography is a kind of junction that nearly all practices of art meet there” (Millet, 2006).

Another example is an untitled work by Yadolahi which was exhibited in conceptual art museum in 2001 (Fig. 2). These artworks illustrate the contrast of industrial and traditional worlds. The audience passes a narrow hallway to enter a burnt room which walls is covered by paled paintings and photos of everyday life entangled with iron and plastic. In fact this challenge with iron and plastic points to our living environment and the objects we use daily. Music composed by Khalatbari which is a combination of traditional, Bach, and electric guitar

is played in the room. Yadollahi employs trivial stereotypes to illustrate the conflict between tradition and modernity. Here photography as a representation applied to reflect everyday life, emphasizes the reality and combination of routine objects such as radio, toilet, hang dolls, and clothes with black blood stains beside a hanging fish bowl by a metal wires, to illustrate our everyday objects being lifeless, heterogeneous and energy depleted.

Objects that imprisoned us instead of facilitating our life to be more calm and relaxing, in a way that we missed benefits of both traditional life as well as modern. On the other hand photography as a modern media and its social function homogenously links photo with everyday objects. In fact placement of photo beside objects and reflecting part of a time forms a visual structure that accomplishes this setting. Here photo is a bed for life that any of the objects can be used it there. Here again just like artwork of Valamanesh, proximity of photo and carpet is applied to narrate and emphasize on a reality. These works can be considered as a collage too that combines photo with memories, time and everyday objects.

Another artworks that conveys the imprisonment of human being in everyday life is “Aquarium” by Taghizadeh, held in Tehran contemporary art museum, conceptual art exhibition in 2001 (Fig. 3). In this work in a glass cylindrical container, filled with water, some cut portrait photos attached to body of the container. In some of them there is only an eye; in some other a profile or the whole face is apparent. In all photos, seems to be taken from a sculpture, eyes are closed or half open. Eye reflects energy or represents life. This energy is not conveyed due to most eyes being closed or half open. Also similarity of all these photos and their placement in an aquarium filled with water somehow addresses sinking in everyday life. Whereas an aquarium full of water is a representative of flowing life for fish and some people take it to their home as a symbol of natural flowing life. Cylindrical shape of the aquarium with that photo of faces with closed eyes, that shows no sign of living, to some extent points out human living places and towers which in spite of their beauty have no element of life in them and even in face of people living there. Also this life style works as a robot maker machine which results in homogenization of all human being, their life style and living area. As today human attempts to modernize his life style, this method little by little drowns him in a way that there is neither a way to escape to a chance to return to past. On the other hand, the glassy and fragile texture of aquarium despite human living place, which is formed with iron, concrete and steel, conveys this meaning that human being gradually forgets his spirit and imprisons himself in his home despite improving his habitat and applies tools and materials which are even strong when facing natural phenomenon. The stronger their habitat, the more frail their spirit become. In this artwork photo have a symbolic function

through pointing to and criticizing our social life as well; and due to reflecting the reality, arouse the sense of choking in current life in audience.

Ramin in *Sociological Foundations of Art* believes that: “all we do happen within our social structures and thus is affected relatively. It does not mean that if we want to be free we should free ourselves from social structures and act out of boundaries. But rather these structures and institutions provide the chance to act, and this sentence is evidently proved for all actions both in accordance with social norms and rebelling operations with norm conflicts” (Ramin, 2008).

Bastide mentioned in 1931: “Social and intellectual environment decisively affects artworks, not taking for granted the impact of personal characteristics and physical and mental abilities. In this respect human is creator of beauty, but this beauty is only possible when the creating human reacts to social actions in his living environment. Thus an artwork springs from society and its characteristics and on the other hand from the creator and his personal talent in reacting to social simulations in his living area. Some years later, one of the prominent students of Bastide stated that living environment is an element in creating artwork, an element that should be studied not only for its visual value, but also for its explanatory value (Bastide, 1997).

Actually here photo used as a media to state the topic. Exhibition of daily objects that we are somehow related to and de-visualization is a tool to express social realities. This is what Adorno calls “commodity culture” and believes:

“Culture is something enigmatic. Culture is full of exchange regulations that cannot be used no longer and thus interwoven with commercial advertisements. The more advertisement loses its essence in an exclusive system, the stronger culture became. Cultural incentives are economical enough. No doubt, human being can reside without culture industry, and boredom and damped feeling in consumers as a consequent of the said industry, is too much. This industry has no supporting resources to overcome this shortcoming. Advertisement is a life panacea. However, since its products always keeps the commodity it promises merely as a promise, culture industry eventually turns to the advertisement it is laid on as it is not capable of creating Joy and happiness” (Adorno, 2002).

Tabrizian is another Iranian artist who is preceding her artistic experiences out of Iran. Her photos, which contain both internal concepts and facial imagery, mention human societies which are captured in daily life. For instance, please refer to a photo from her collection “Lost Time” (Fig. 4).

In this photo there is a man sitting by a bed with official clothing. His loose tie knot, the way he sit, his face, hands, and his cool look all points to his routine and profound lack of interest

in his life. This room with a cold color tone of blue – violet suggests a cold atmosphere, a feeling like a room in a hotel or a resting room in an office. Closed window shades and lack of a landscape, white seen on TV, the absence of telephone as a communication tool all suggests disconnection and isolation of the man. Tabrizian attempts to mention a period in Europe when bad economic condition forced many manufacturers and owners of big companies to broke and lose all their assets. A bad trauma as a result of said conditions, forced these people to dress up every day as ever before, and leave home early morning to keep their families unaware of the matter. Then spent all day long in a hotel or a place like that until working hours finishes.

The other example of Tabrizian works is one of her photos from her “Beyond the Limits” collection (Fig. 5). This photo illustrates a couple who are intended to spend their weekend in nature. In this special photo, sheep (simulated images) convey pristine nature. Though laptop mentions an era in which spending a living day even as a holiday out of urban area seems impossible without communication tools and media. This image is a setting in form a photo suggesting human loneliness even during pick of his joy and being together, detachment from communication and dependence to mass media. Pointing these issues seems to visualize a fact that we are dealing with in our society today and there is no escape. On the other hand it criticizes media that provoke isolation, loneliness and indifference of human beings instead of improving relations and facilitate accessibilities.

This photo reminds the quotation by Adorno that: “Citizens can be imagined as people whose life is divided by business and privacy and their private life is divided by maintaining their social appearance and intimate relationship and their intimate relations divided by hostile partnership in marriage and pacifying the mere bitter isolations, incompatible citizens with constant contention with themselves and even others, all of them are potential Nazis who are unmotivated quarreling people or at the same time modern urbanized people that consider friendship a kind of social relation, without any emotional connection inside. The only reason why culture can successfully manipulate individuality is that individuality has always reproduced cracked nature of society within itself. Pretense and fake individuals –today no one believes in– on face of real people and film protagonists which categorized on cliché on magazine coverings basis, lose its face. Love to hero models empowers by hidden satisfaction and thus our efforts to achieve individuality eventually results in imitation, a breath taking effort.” (Adorno, 2002). Actually Tabrizi specified the boundaries of everyday life, too much use of media and criticizing both.

"Ashora" a cooperation of the late Mr. Tirafkan and Mr. Hassanzadeh that is held on conceptual art exhibition in 2001 in contemporary art museum of Tehran, is a good example

of photo application or the role of photo in conceptual art (Fig. 6). In this work, symbolic and traditional elements of this ritual filled one of big spaces in the exhibition through painting and photography media. Big photos of Tirafkan while bearing black flags of Ashora on his shoulders, in a mourning figure, covered walls of the hall. In the middle of the hall, colorful cloths are fastened in a row as a sign of prayer for plights (an old tradition). Besides, paintings and polished curtains with the subject of Taziye (a kind of play to narrate the story of Ashora) are installed on the wall. Static photos of Tirafkan help to convey an artificial atmosphere. In fact photos accomplish the work by reminding the memories and evoking reality and presence of objects, in order to better narrate the story and run the ritual. Sadegh Tirafkan mentioned in his interview: "It takes a while that Ashora is making such an atmosphere in Iran and is considered as a conceptual art itself. I mean all religious ceremonies and rituals all around the world are conceptual art." Hasanzadeh also adds to his interview that: "I have never seen a photo to be used in this ritual (Ashora). We are providing a design to let people conduct Ashora rituals with these specifications even in future (Danesh Pajouh, 2001).

However Sol LeWitt describes conceptual art as follows: "idea or the concept is the most important aspect of an artwork. In case an artist applies conceptual art method in his works, it means that all arrangements have been effected beforehand and execution is something that can be flipped over" (Wood, 2002). He also adds: "conceptual art is not necessarily reasonable; it does not need complicated ideas. Most successful ideas are ridiculously funny" (Wood, 2002). We can also add that ideas are fresh and novel in simplicity. Western conceptual art samples never apply rituals in their works.

In art work of Wii naming "Air pollution in Iran" installed in Niavaran cultural club, eight flags were placed on a canvas. The big size of flags at the first sight made audience to wonder whether they are real flags or paintings. As audience always saw flags with their epic meaning, swinging over the cities, they doubt to accept these dirty flags as an artwork even though they are placed in an exhibition as a representative of many flags out there. The dirty marks on flags are different due to their different swinging duration in cities. Presence of flags in this exhibition is indulging logic profile. Also there are some plastic cameras which at first sight look like something plastic. But when you look through camera visor we find images that make us doubt their plastic appearance, as there are many images of Kaaba, different holy shrines and so on which are constantly changing. On the other hand, there is a hole on a wall across from one of these cameras that when looking through them we can see some photos of graves in some of which a group of people are buried and in some other, the artist herself, illustrated own grave, wearing a shroud. There is also a puzzle of photos of the artist in green background of flag, while eating a melon and smoking; though red color in melon covers lack

of red color in flag and finally the image of flag fills the page. Readily prepared flags, cameras and photos is directly related to photography and recording an image of something present. In addition, emphasizes that presence of objects are real in photography and you cannot photograph something that is not present. Also in this artwork readymade objects are used including flags, cameras and photographs to install the work. On the other hand, exhibition of flags on wall of exhibition which is actually drawn from up to down, represents something dirty and ugly across from audience; similar to what photography does by unity and halo of artwork and make it something available through proliferation in books, magazines, and etc. Which reduces its venerability? The other element that is apparent in photography is using ready-made objects. This intrinsic characteristic of photography is also evident in artworks of Mahmoud Bakhshi Moaakher (Fig. 7).

“Boundaries of conceptual art, its artists and their hypothetical works are never clear. Conceptual art is a silhouette that the more you gaze on it, the more it fades. While on the other hand and in a different condition, we can consider conceptual art as an axis round which past reaches to present. Comparing to current post-modern era that exhibitions are filled with anything but nothing, from sharks to photographs, from waste pile to multi-image videos, full of anything but modern painting (Wood, 2002). Another work that can be referred to is a work by Azarang, entitled “Home” which is published in his collection book “Amnesia” (Fig. 8). In this single photo the audience faces a photo with no evocation. But it is accompanied by some words of Azarang as follows:

“I was sitting on a sofa. She squatted; hugging her knees just beside the sofa I was sitting on and was watching TV. My hand was on the sofa very casually just beside her in a way that my middle finger imperceptibly was touching her back, near her shoulders; so imperceptible that my hand and my shoulder was so sensitive and strangely chirped. I decided to take my hand. I was afraid, I cannot. I imagined a day when she is no longer there and has passed away; then I wish and I would be ready to give away all I have to imperceptibly touch her back again to feel calm and make sure of her physical and real presence (the same as holy Thomas). I kept my finger fixed there. I was afraid to hasten her death by removing my finger. Though I was sure that she will pass away sooner or later. Did anyone felt the same feeling toward me?” (Azarang, 2005).

Here the combination of photo and text helps to convey what the artist believes. Actually this image with no special concept at first sight, now turned to a tangible and accessible world. Photography helps the memories to be accomplished, displayed and believable. Photo framework is the most acceptable media to accomplish an idea and makes it believable; to believe in something that is even hard to imagine. Photography helps with visualizing lack,

fear and memory and cry out our feeling in a silent framework. Photography suspends between reality and fantasy, and this is the sensation that grows with in to achieve its ultimate fate.

Azarang believes that: “fishing in not hunting, it is fishing. In fishing you take a creature out of its living environment to another place and make it to die, rather in hunting you kill a creature in its living environment. Photography is similar to fishing... we all hunt the world instead of fishing it” (Azarang, 2005).

The other artwork to talk about is “Unheard Voice” by Hedayat (Fig. 9). This photo illustrates a room that a bunch of packed newspapers are stuffed in a corner and the word “Voice” is written in Persian on the wall. Packed newspapers somehow address articles and posts which never published and always kept enclosed and intrusive so that no one hears the voice of its editor. Silence of photo by its nature and the word “Voice” inevitably let us hear a cry for objection. Here photo works as a symbol of unpublished words and silence of cries. In this work, two main elements of conceptual art including thought and language fit well in a photo. Silent presence of photo, placement of packed newspapers on the corner and the pail word “Voice” on the wall, each suggests the other and they are all in contrast. The second theme that is relatively more evident, is kinship of death and article (Foucault, 1969).

Article is not intended to expose or praise the action of writing not to record a subject within language but rather to create a space to continually vanish the new subject. As stated by Paul Wood, the primary elements of conceptual art are photography, language and the process of forming an artwork. He also mentioned in book of conceptual art that: “conceptual art is a kind of art that mostly composed of concepts more than any other thing” and continues “Since concepts depend on language, then conceptual art is something with main ingredient is language” (Wood, 2002).

“Boundaries of conceptual art, its artists and their theoretical works are not something definite at all. Conceptual art is a silhouette that the more you concentrate on, the more it fades. Although, in different circumstances we can consider conceptual art as an axis, around which past reaches to present. In contrast, in present postmodern era, exhibitions are full of anything and everything, from sharks to photos, from piles of garbage to multi-pictorial videos, accumulated by anything other than seemingly modern painting” (Wood, 2002).

Conclusion

As it was mentioned above, division and boundaries seem impossible in conceptual art. Though, the role of photography in conceptual art is clearly visible and undeniable. It is

evident that this study tried to talk about examples with more emphasis on intellectual aspect and artist's intention in conceptual art. Of course, said instances ranged based on priority and importance of the role of photography in conceptual art; and, as it was mentioned before importance and emphasis on senses of sight and tactile to visualize two dimensional objects as three dimensional through magnifying reality, symbol, producing perspective and reviewing social and civil life, emphasis on visual aspect and de-visualization, story narration and emphasis on repetition and boredom, work accomplishment, emphasis on living and death experiences, and so on, clearly prove inevitable importance of the role of photography in conceptual art. This is exactly why Valamanesh attached a photo of burning to his work, instead of setting fire on a real carpet in a closed space. As de-visualization of the photo does not hurt to accept the reality. Here it is tired to mention some samples of photo application in conceptual art, though it does not mean that photography is not merely used for this intention in conceptual art; but rather, it is a small part of the role of photography in conceptual art that I studied based on my available works and my personal interest. Works that applied photography to accomplish and give meaning to an artwork, that some of them are mentioned above, can be good examples to prove a quotation by Philip Philippe Dubois about logic profile on photography; because in all mentioned samples camera and photographer should be there to form a photo and the photo is a representative of an already present image. While we are entangled with profile and trace, the matter is the background, and creating cause attracts our attention toward action rather than final outcome. In above-mentioned samples, sometimes there is a combination of photo and daily objects which people are entangled with, and it means admission to reality in photography. Photography works as a reminder of actions happened in the past and now photo is enough to prove its visualization and reality of the incident and thus would free audience from demanding the presence of the object.

Photo does not imposes its idea due to its silence and making an imagery world; also since conceptual art insists on idea of the artist, it applies photography and is aware that all composing elements are from everyday life, and two dimensional images taken, are record of real piece of time, photo is the best media to apply icons, emphasizes on a real issue and comes from living an everyday life experience.

Other application of photography in conceptual art is emphasizing on importance of issues that are ignored due to their excessive exposure. Actually, photo helps decoding concepts and hidden layers of things seemed to be ordinary.

I finish my words by a quotation by Jeff Wall: "photography played a fundamental role in success of conceptual art" (wood, 2002). Then these studies about Iranian artist's art works to form conceptual art in Iran come up with this conclusion that the role of photography is undeniable in conceptual art.

Figure Source:

Fig 1. Kiarostami, Abbas. Seven Sycamore, 2005, Artists House, (a photo by author)



Fig 2. Yadollahi, Arash. Untitled, 2001, a CD by contemporary art museum of Tehran



Fig 3. Taghizadeh, Jinous. Aquarium, 2001, a CD by contemporary art museum of Tehran



Fig 4. Tabrizian, Mitra. Lost time, 2002, photo from Herfeh: Honarmand Magazine, No. 11, spring 2005, P. 91



Fig 5. Tabrizian, Mitra. Beyond the boundaries, 2000, photo from Herfeh: Honarmand Magazine, No. 11, spring 2005, P. 93.



Fig 6. Tirafkan, Sadegh & Hassanzadeh, Khosro. Ashoora, 2001, Photo from artist personal collection.



Fig 7. Mahmoud Bakhshi Moakher, Air pollution in Iran, 2006, Photo from artist personal collection.



Fig.8 Azarang, Farshid. Home, 2005, a photo from the book “amnesia” by Farshid Azarang.

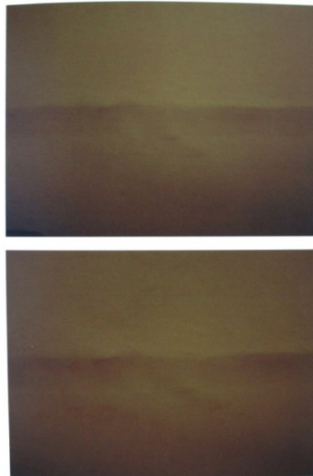


Fig9. Hedayat, Ghazaleh. Unheard voice, 2009, London, photo from private collection.



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