

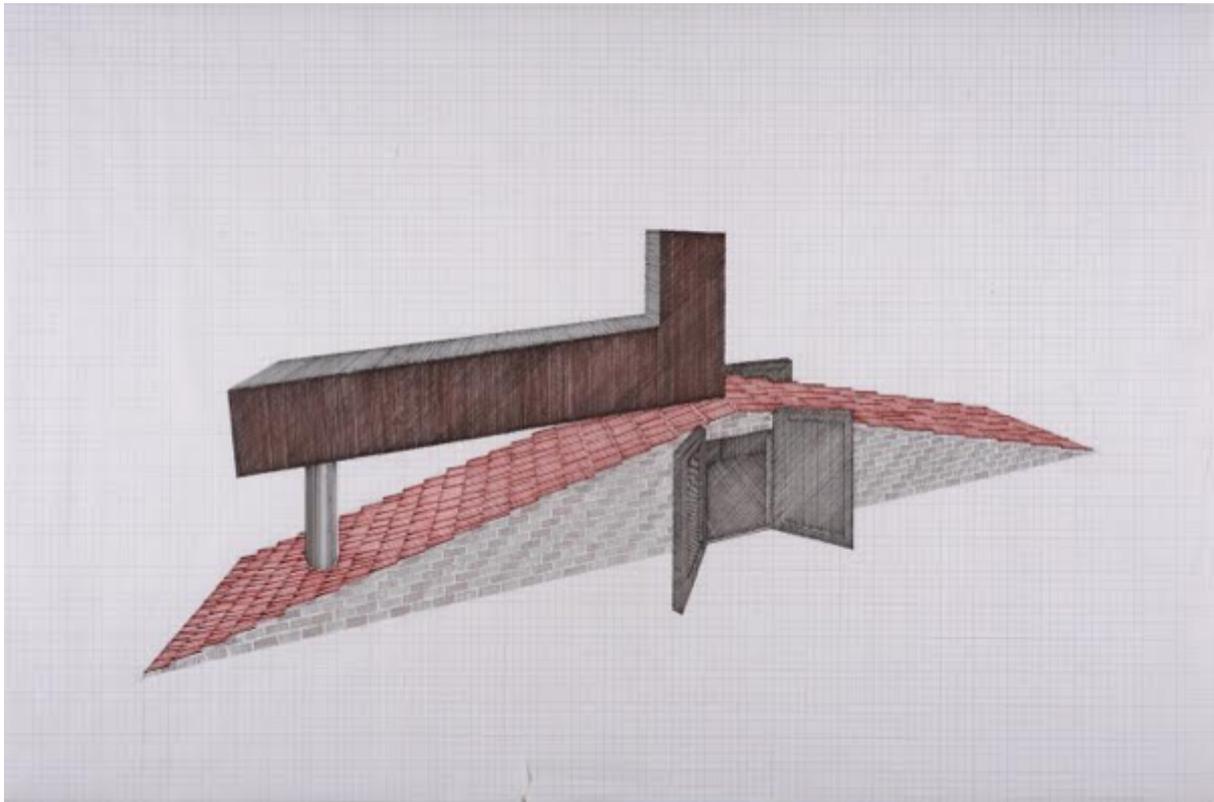


**MASS INDIVIDUALISM: *A Form of Multitude***

**Siah Armajani, Shahab Fotouhi, Babak Golkar, Shirazeh Houshiary, Y.Z Kami, Avish Khebrehzadeh, Arash Mozafari, Timo Nasserri and Newsha Tavakolian.**

**Dates:** 15 April – 20 May 2016

**Private View:** 15 April 2016, 2-8pm



Siah Armajani, *Tomb for Neema*, 2014, Felt pen on graphic paper, 61 cm x 91 cm  
image courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York.

*There's one other thing about her, I forgot.  
When something hurts, she sings this song.  
There aren't any words, it's just her voice.  
She can't talk.  
When something hurts, she just sings: A-a-a.*

*Svetlana Alexievich (from Voices from Chernobyl)*

AB-ANBAR is delighted to announce *MASS INDIVIDUALISM: A Form of Multitude*, a group exhibition examining the shifts occurring between public and private space through artworks that explore architecture's role in facilitating such transformations. Through a selection articulating this new social, political and technological relationships, the exhibition also comments upon the increasing difficulties individuals are faced with in identifying and perceiving their relationship to each other and to collective (often invisible) social forms.

Aristotle made a fundamental distinction between politics and economics, using two terms to differentiate them: *techne politike* as the faculty of decision-making for the public interest, and *techne oikonomike* as the administration of the private space. Respectively, he drew a clear distinction between Polis (cohabitation of human beings) and Oikos (house), the two derivatives of Politics and Economics. In contrast to the clear distinction between the Hellenic *oikos* and *polis*, our contemporary society is a witness to a distorted distinction between the two. At the heart of this exhibition is a view that in the modern world, especially through the politics of the nation-state, a new realm arises, 'a curiously hybrid realm' called 'society', where private interests enter the public realm, but without an orientation towards *res publica*, 'the public thing', or public interest (Hannah Arendt, 1998).

*MASS INDIVIDUALISM: A Form of Multitude* is framed through four thematic explorations on the formations of public space. Firstly: **public, action and speech**, highlighting the importance of the human voice and its presence through Siah Armajani's *Tomb for Neema* (2014) and Avish Khebrehzadeh's *Edgar + Theatre III* (2010). Armajani's 'The Tomb Series' series embodies humanistic, democratic and populist ideals that have defined his multifaceted vision for over forty years that culminated in the creation of his own tomb. Khebrehzadeh's capsulized public space, *Edgar + Theatre III*, brings together action and speech in quest for a web of relationships among individuals. In this web, however, there is no audience within the space and the actions are voiceless. Babak Golkar, on the other hand, takes us through the introduction of form in urbanism and the concept of **multitude and mass ornamentalism** of individuals in the modern era. This then proceeds into a discourse centred on **technological revolution** through an examining the effect of technology on mass production and, thus its effect on the economies of space and participatory role of individuals in it as explored through Timo Nasserri and Shahab Fotouhi/Arash Mozafari's redefinitions of *muqarnas* (ornamental vaulting) as parametric forms. Technology and its fascination with the production of form brings us to our fourth theme: **interior urbanism**, with Golkar's furniture seen as a sign of merged interior and exterior spaces and thus interwoven private and public domains. This theme is supported by Shirazeh Houshiary and Newsha Tavakolian's take on capsular modes of living, hinting at the dawn of capsular civilizations, an urban phenomenon defining new privatized modes of public life. Finally, Y.Z Kami's individual portraits painted on the ruins of a giant brick wall recalls the quest for immortality of the ancient Fayum mummy portraits as well as Rem Koolhaas's popular definition of modern living conditions, which have turned us all into 'voluntary prisoners of architecture' (Van Schaik and Macel, 2005).

Parallel to the invasion of public space, a new phenomenon is sweeping over our global cities where the importance of the private realm leads to a spread of a capsular civilization taking shape before our very eyes. Faced with staggering technological advances, the suburbanization of our daily lives, and the extreme polarization of our society, we are compelled to return to the capsules of our vehicles, architectural cocoons and urban enclaves, as exemplified by the explosion of shopping malls, gated communities and amusement parks. This process of capsularization plays out against a threatening background of demographic-environmental catastrophe and the militarization of the planet<sup>1</sup> raising questions including: What is public and what is private?

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<sup>1</sup> Lieven De Caeter. *The Capsular Civilization* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: NAI Publishers, 2005).

Are we on the verge of defining a new 'public realm'? Are our privatized capsules the new 'public'? If so, where does art stand in relation to this new concept of 'public realm'?

### **Biography**

*MASS INDIVIDUALISM: A Form of Multitude* is curated by Azadeh Zaferani, an Architect, Urban Designer and researcher who lives and works between Tehran and Toronto. Zaferani, is the founding director of *Platform 28 for Art and Architecture* where varied architecturally-drive research projects and activities take place.

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