

Istanbul Modern Photography Gallery presents photographs of Turkey's recent history

From the Nar Photos archive: "On the Road"

In the exhibition "**On the Road**", a compilation from the archive of **Nar Photos** between 2003-2013, **Istanbul Modern Photography Gallery** presents a panorama of events and situations which took place in Turkey's recent history or whose effects are still felt today. Throughout the course of an unpredictable journey, "**On the Road**" keeps record of stories which have been left in the shadows. Curated by **Sena akırkaya**, the exhibition will be on view between **May 28-November 9, 2014**.

Nar Photos is an independent collective which, since 2003, has been bringing together the diverse viewpoints in Turkey through their egalitarian, democratic approach and their stance for freedom. Using photography as a visual tool to understand and express the world, the agency chooses to question rather than accept facts as they are presented. By exposing the different situations in life, they create a collective memory of the recent past as well as a broad area for discussion. Eliminating the borders between art photography and photojournalism, Nar Photos powerfully merges aesthetics and content through their feature stories and the impressive images they capture in their photographs. Through the feature stories and news photography by the agency, the exhibition touches upon major events that have happened in Turkey while also objectively reflecting authentic snapshots from around the country.

The exhibition's curator Sena akırkaya notes that "the photographs do not show facts as they are presented to us; rather, they display steps of a journey toward questioning the things that are accepted as facts. This visual archive does not look from without; with its sincere approach, it intervenes, rather than standing by as a mere witness. It invites us to confront and reckon with our times. The photographers in the collective take on an active role that triggers change by creating a social consciousness. Having an autonomous structure, the collective provides a stage for issues which are not shown or sufficiently spoken of to be represented."

The exhibition features **75 photographs** that deal with various subjects: the city and urban transformation, public transportation, the İnönü Stadium, Gezi Park, immigrants, and night life; celebrations such as circumcisions, henna nights, Newroz, and the Kafkasör Festival in Artvin; panoramas of diverse geographies such as Kars, Ardahan, and Ararat; Armenians, Kurds, Greeks, Assyrians and their ceremonies; seasonal workers, denim sandblasters, paper scavengers, and strikes; the street with its LGBTQI and International Women's Day marches. In addition to these photographs, the exhibition also features **6 videos** produced collectively: Auction, Kalanda, İnönü Stadium, Lübbey, Akhuryan Station, and the North Istanbul.

The exhibition "On the Road" features photographs by 20 artists: Adnan Onur Acar, Ahmet Şık, Aylin Kızıl, Barış Sever, Eren Aytuğ, Erhan Arık, Fatma elik, Fırat Aygün, Gençer Yurttaş, Gülşin Ketenci, Hüsamettin Bahe, Kerem Uzel, Lezgin Kani, Mehmet Kaçmaz, Özcan Yurdalan, Ruben Mangasaryan, Saner Şen, Serpil Polat, Serra Akcan and Tolga Sezgin.

Aiming to expose living conditions in people's lives, Nar Photos' member artists believe that the function of images comes before their plastic or aesthetic value. Members of Nar Photos prefer to produce photographic interviews which have the potential to promote change. Stating that each of their photographs has a different story, they explain how they made the selection for *On the Road* as follows: "*Rather than asking "what is happening in Turkey?" we*

preferred to ask ourselves the questions “What was it that we saw? What was of value and importance to us? What were the events and facts that had an impact on Turkey’s social and political life?” First of all, we are not people who are interested in photography per se. Rather than photography’s mechanical, aesthetic, or formal aspects, we are interested in its function, in the fact that it is a tool. The second and more important part is the question of what our photographs will change in both our and other’s lives. Our premise is that every photograph is taken for other people. When you show someone a picture, you want to effect a change in that person. We know we can’t change the world through photography, but we do question whether we could, at least, create some shift in opinions, make up for missing information, and whether we could make ourselves, and also the viewers, take a more critical look at the subjects we deal with, a look that is more concerned with the world; and a more critical look at ourselves as well. This actually has more to do with the way we relate to life than with photography itself.”

Mostly focusing on topics in Turkey which remain invisible or are left in the shadows, Nar Photos is interested in what is really happening and tries to filter these out by attempting to show reality without distorting it in the images they capture. One thing to which they attach as much importance as the shooting process is how to select the photographs and what long sentence these will form once they are put together: *“What we do may not be of any value today, but we do realize that we have to accumulate, to be aware of the times, and to look at those times not from today’s perspective but by projecting them forward and looking at them from that point; and we can feel that we are gradually gaining this ability. We believe that all that we go through during this process will acquire a different significance in the future and will serve as real data for the next generation and the one after that.”*

Within the scope of the exhibition **“On the Road”** an event titled *A Conversation with Nar Photos* will be held on **Thursday, May 29 at 18:30** at Istanbul Modern Cinema. **Adnan Onur Acar, Serra Akcan, Erhan Arık, Eren Aytuğ, Mehmet Kaçmaz,** and **Kerem Uzel** will participate in the conversation which will be moderated by **Orhan Cem Çetin**.