

**SETAREH SHAHBAZI: SPECTRAL DAYS**

29 October – 29 November 2013

Gypsum Gallery is delighted to present its inaugural show Spectral Days, a photo-based exhibition by Setareh Shahbazi. Spectral Days is a deeply personal project that delves into a loaded family history. It conjures up memories of Shahbazi and her family’s exile from Iran following the revolution and of her eventual return back to the land she was once forced to leave. It is an introspective look into the past that started in 2009 when Shahbazi began her forage into thousands of family photographs retrieved from her home in Tehran. A long process of scanning, cropping, layering and manipulating ensued. The outcome is a series of more than forty haunting images in various sizes that form a stylistic departure from her signature comic strip visual aesthetic – a collection of photomontages that resides in the hazy transition between the past and its remembrance.

Cool flat surface has given way to a dense compression of translucent layers. The vivid palette of Spectral Days modulates between midnight and blazing sunset. The exception is a handful of soft rose tinted pictures of group family photos, foliage and abstract color field prints. The overall effect is delicate and bewildering.

Spectral Days quietly questions the sanctity of the photographic medium both as an artistic form and as a record of the past. Shahbazi’s handling of the source material is irreverent. The scanning is rough; the image is often pixelated. Fragments of pictures are duplicated within the same frame while positive and negative images are used interchangeably. Shahbazi plays with the conventions of linear narration by transforming analogue physical objects into transient digital spaces, and back. The images become fluid animated spaces, reimagined each time you look at them, rousing a train of memories in which the logic of reality does not exist.

**Biography**

Shahbazi was born in Tehran in 1978 and moved to Germany in 1985. From 1997 to 2003 she studied Scenography and Media Arts at the State Academy for Art and Design in Karlsruhe. Her solo exhibitions were held at Karlsruher Kunstverein **/2004;** Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Hamburg and Montgomery, Berlin **/2006;** Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara **/2008** and 98weeks Project Space, Beirut **/2010.** Her group shows include When It Starts Dripping from the Ceiling, Kadist, Paris, curated by Bassam El Baroni **/2012;** Jostari dar Salighe va Ehsass, Asar Gallery, Tehran **/2010;** Whenever it starts, it isn’t the right time!, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, curated by Chus Martinez **/2007;** Rainbow at Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Beirut; J’en rêve at Fondation Cartier, Paris **/2005** and Iranian Pool, Rooseum, Malmö, curated by Chus Martinez **/2003.** A one-year Daad postgraduate residency brought her to Beirut for the first time in 2003 to collaborate with the Arab Image Foundation. She has further been invited for residencies at Townhouse Gallery, Cairo **/2005** and Villa Romana, Florence (guest artist 2011). Shahbazi received a publication grant from Stiftung Kunstfonds, Bonn for her artist book Spectral Days **/2011** and her catalogue Oh, no, no, ... – The Crystal Series was awarded The Most Beautiful Swiss Books **/2005.** Setareh Shahbazi lives and works in Berlin and Beirut and travels regularly to Iran.

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