

Arte Contemporanea Milano · THAT'S CONTEMPORARY

— In dialogue with Raffaella Cortese and the artist Nazgol Ansarinia —



Nazgol Ansarinia, *Connected Pools*, 2020 Plaster, pigment color and paint 30 × 57,3 × 26,7 cm Ed. Unique in a series of 2 + 1 AP 2016. Courtesy Galleria Raffaella Cortese

02/04/2021

Through a general presentation by the gallerists, curators and directors of art spaces and insights by the words of the artists involved in some of our selected exhibitions, PREVIEW will guide you on a series of imaginary tours of Milan's galleries.

In this fourth appointment we spoke with the gallery owner **Raffaella Cortese** and the artist **Nazgol Ansarinia**.

Can you tell me about the show, through a series of adjectives / images, to suggest and anticipate what our readers will see in the gallery?

Raffaella Cortese: Nazgol Ansarinia works mainly in her studio, whose **intimacy** is reflected in the usually small scale of her works. The new series presented at our space in via Stradella n. 7, deals with possible **memories** of the inhabitants of her own city Teheran. As in the series *Connected Pools*, in which she found the exact construction year of the numerous **empty** pools of the city, late 1960s, which nowadays are only characterised by a worn out **light blue / blue color**. These **abandoned and silent "voids"**, that have never been demolished or reused, speak of nostalgia and become guardians of the **desires** born in those years

“By dissolving substances, water helps the imagination in its task of de-objectifying and assimilating. Water is the element of dreams, the element that in helping us dematerialize the objective world inspires us to dream.” — Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams*. This is the quote you selected as the introduction to the exhibition press release. What motivated you to choose it and what key to interpreting the exhibition would you like it to suggest to the viewers?

Nazgol Ansarinia: Water or the lack of in the case of the empty swimming pools is what the project *Pools & Voids* revolves around. I am exploring the conceptual significance of water in the Iranian context through the containers that have been build to hold this substance physically. In the above quote Bachelard describes a physical attribute of water that leads to one of its most significant psychological effects and so I thought it provides the most befitting way to enter this new work series.

It is undoubtedly curious, first of all considering the rapidity with which the demolition and construction (or reconstruction) of buildings usually proceeds in the city of Tehran, that these pools, although unused, continue to exist. According to your personal interpretation, the continued presence of these pools expresses “... a desire to be reused in an unexpected future, but at the same time they keep the memory of when they were filled with water and used”. As a result of your research, were you able to discover the real reason why they were prevented from being demolished?

N.A.: Throughout this process, I was less interested in arriving at a defendant answer and more in observing a situation and exploring its various aspects.

Looking at the composition of the *Connected Pools* sculptures, which reflect the shapes of these abandoned swimming pools not only in terms of their perimeter but also in terms of height and depth, it almost seems as if we are looking at a small

utopian/dystopian city. Is there this connection and, if so, how would you imagine such a city?

N.A.: In my research I became interested in the sheer number of these pools and how once brought together their total area would be close of that of a lake. *Connected Pools* are the first step in thinking about how the combination of these forms can represent a collective desire. The connected pools allow for the flow of water and move from the private to the public. I am not sure as you put it, they are a manifestation of a utopian or a dystopian vision but they contains within them some kind of movement as oppose to the current unchanging state of the empty pools.

I would like to talk about *Dissolving Substances*, a video installation supported by two parallel screens. How did this work come about and how does the duality of the support allow you to develop the theme of the work?

N.A.: *Dissolving Substances*, follows the dilapidation of an empty pool over the course of time. As the paint cracks and the sun fades the colour, the patterns created as the result of decay start to resemble the surface of moving water. The videos move back and forth in time and play with the memory of water and the possibility of the empty container being filled.

The exhibition will be open by at Galleria Raffaella Cortese in Milan, via A. Stradella 7, from 4th February to 24th April 2021, for appointments write to galleria@raffaellacortese.com.

 <https://www.thatscontemporary.com/hidden/>