

CHAPTER NY

For immediate release

Asal Peirovi

Passing through Alborz Range in 3' 20"

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To have penned down a log of one's travels often denotes an early concern, a prior dissatisfaction transcending expectations, and a fixed will to discern the condensed experience of temporal motion. By an intention to 'travel' and move between and towards destinations, we implant in ourselves an unattainable reward—an upcoming change that is guaranteed to stem from the very act of leaving where we are, perhaps never returning, while pre-assuring ourselves that things will certainly be different once we embark on the journey, continuously learning along the way.

Following the old tradition of oral retelling of journeys, written travel accounts, and the long history of narrative tools, perceiving our own journeys as fictional allegories has become almost instinctive. And more often than not, such a reading of the traversed path forms once it is being reviewed. This is one of the ways which Asal Peirovi probes into her repeated experience of moving between two cities, and a more distant past that although does not directly belong to her, she has appropriated by contemplating over throughout the years of making the journey. In that sense, she makes seemingly singular and accessible images, landscapes, and details, like when sketching out the route on a map, aiming to convince herself of the distances she regularly travels while staying focused on delving ever so deeper into an event that took place somewhere along the same path, before she was born.

Moving out of her hometown Sari, the capital city of Mazandaran Province in Northern Iran, to study Painting at Tehran's Shahed University in 2004, she regularly boarded the train to travel between the two cities. The train route, often described as the greenest and most beautiful of the Iranian railroads, combines some of the most striking scenarios of forests, mountain ranges, plateaus, small villages, and roads, making up some of the most fascinating landscapes a traveler could wish for. Departing Sari, the slow but determined train stirs into the ancient Hyrcanian forests, under the mythical Alborz mountain range, and slowly enters the vast metropolitan area of Tehran. There are so many natural views to watch for, yet it is difficult not to carefully watch the train go across the rail tracks on the iconic Veresk Bridge, or revel in the darkness of Gadook Tunnel, both once-under-threat relics of a strangely unfamiliar time in the country's past.

However, such details perhaps only digress, since a key subject of Asal's work is not buried in such a distant past. Near the masonry arch bridge of Veresk is the small village of Veresk, presently home to some fifteen hundred people. Before Asal's birth, Shahla, a relative of hers who had moved to this small village from her hometown of Sari, passed away in mysterious circumstances, leaving behind only photographs, a handwritten will, anecdotes, and memories. Discovering these, every time she traveled between Sari and Tehran, inevitably crossing Veresk along the way, Asal would feed her half-real half-fictional ideas of Shahla and her life, mixing the landscapes and their details with things left behind by Shahla.

Her imagery, now almost a decade in the making, grew as facades—plates that would somehow blend into the sweeping backgrounds, waved and curled like the differences in the speed of movement or acceleration when traveling on a train. The platforms at the stations, the ambiguous continuous walls

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seen from afar, the enigmatic architectural details, the abundance of trees that form continuous patterns, and the play of light and darkness make up flat configurations that layer by layer construct her compositions. They work almost like surfaces in a Classical Persian Painting that while confining the composition within a boundary, can contain an unbound space as well as multiple narratives scattered across time. The details in these paintings, while almost looking generic, have been meticulously processed into textural units that make up the image by combining with each other and stacking up to form the different layers in a landscape, while all looking considerably distant from the eye.

Usually, it takes three minutes and twenty seconds for the train to pass through Gadook Tunnel under the majestic weight of Alborz mountains, and in the meantime, there might be enough time to use the stretch of darkness to fill in for the things the eye and memory were unable to preserve. Afterwards, as long as one does not need to record its absolute position, it is tempting to isolate each element seen and imagine it in a past tense, asking how it outlived the first person to pass it, and marveling at how one's present can obsess over things it never observed.

– 'A Companion in Continuity' on Asal Peirovi's *Passing through Alborz Range in 3' 20"*
by Ashkan Zahraei

Asal Peirovi (b.1985, Sari, Mazandaran Province, Iran) is a graduate of Painting from Shahed University (BA, 2009) and Tehran Art University (MA, 2014). Previous exhibitions include *One Plus One* (2020) and *Curtains II* (2019) at STANDARD (OSLO), Norway; *Curtains* (2018) and *Travelogue* (2016) at Dastan's Basement, Tehran; and *Shahla's Bridge* (2014) at Shirin Gallery, Tehran. Her work was also included in *The Future* (2020-2021), an online exhibition presented by Gagosian and Jeffrey Deitch.

Passing through Alborz Range in 3' 20" at Chapter NY is Peirovi's first solo exhibition in the United States.