

## On Confidence

By: Kiarash Alimi - Fall 2010



Third Caption Image: No.3: *Purdahs of silencell* (From *Confidenceries* #8). More of a contemporary expressio towards Iranian ongoing bclash up on national petrol industries, Ettehad recalls a cause of his disorientation as he himself has imaginarily lost his identity by a tradition.

*“Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone!  
Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks!  
Moloch whose poverty is the specter of genius!  
Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen!  
Moloch whose name is the Mind!”*  
Allen Ginsberg - *Howl - Part Two*

Ettehad could be seen as the final chapter of eastern mystical esotericism since his work features the whole codex of his ancient Iranian Mithraic heritage merged inside an individual post-modern identity. He begins to narrate with the modus operandi of ancient Persian words, he begins to talk out every man’s daily promises in the 21st century. Every time he creates a work he tends to act as a recorder to

capture sensible everyday notions of humanity, he utilizes ancient elements and textual turbulences most known from Iranian ancient manuscripts dating back over three thousand years of his own ancestry.

Thus, to understand his body of works means to be at a stage where one can break all of the social codes and understand the sense beyond these pictorial presentations. Using this course, both Ettehad and Persian Mithraic traditions, are trying to differentiate their audience in terms of their symbolic knowledge of confidence. Right at this point, he separates his way and makes a complimentary path along with his ancient counterpart. For both of them the communication begins with the knowing of a secret. “The secret defines a silent text made out of unspoken words”. The Mithr is no longer the key notion to the whole universe

since it nor can be used as a knowledge or understanding towards the cosmos neither it can be considered as a still and unbreakable facility in the life of men, the secret is the self-consciousness of each individual about the covenant that had been earlier established between the teacher/master and the student. The practice of confidence is primary power of intuition. Confidence is a key to the cosmos itself. The amount of being involved with the truth of confidence calls for a difference between certain types of readers. The master himself is integrated through the confidence. The student is far more distant to the core of confidence. Very similar to the codex of classified information, one might be categorized as either ‘Ahl1’ or ‘Gheir2’.

Ahl is the native to the secret and Gheir is the other. Ahl for mithr means “I” and so for the confidence and Gheir tries to divulge the ‘I’ whom both the ancient figures are offering as truth. The differentiation circle begins from a spot in the center which is the mithr itself and continues towards infinity. The outer border of the circle encompasses even the lifeless entities. Confidence as an absent



Fourth Captio Image: No.4: *Purdahs of silencell* (From *Confidence series #8*). *Translatio of the original text: Shameo you! The ground you are walkingo is still burning with warmth of my blood! [abusaeed abolkheir (the poet) 967 1048 A.D]*

supposition or a secret written in the heart of devotee, recalls the world of “knowers” and present - Hai3 - as ‘the other’. Hence, both Ettehad’s and his some thousand year old ancestors are suggesting the truth as the speaking spiritual centrality of the world.

The continuation of such textual activity relies on something outside the circle and the text.

On the postmodern edge of the matter, Ettehad is very similar to what our age calls the fragile state of history in the mind of every living being. It may seem strange to find similarities between his work and that of artists like Boltanski.

Once in the heart archive, exhibited in Serpentine gallery, London, some years ago<sup>4</sup>, Boltanski repeated his very prominent role of “H” and “h”. He believes the big H narrates the meaning of the history,

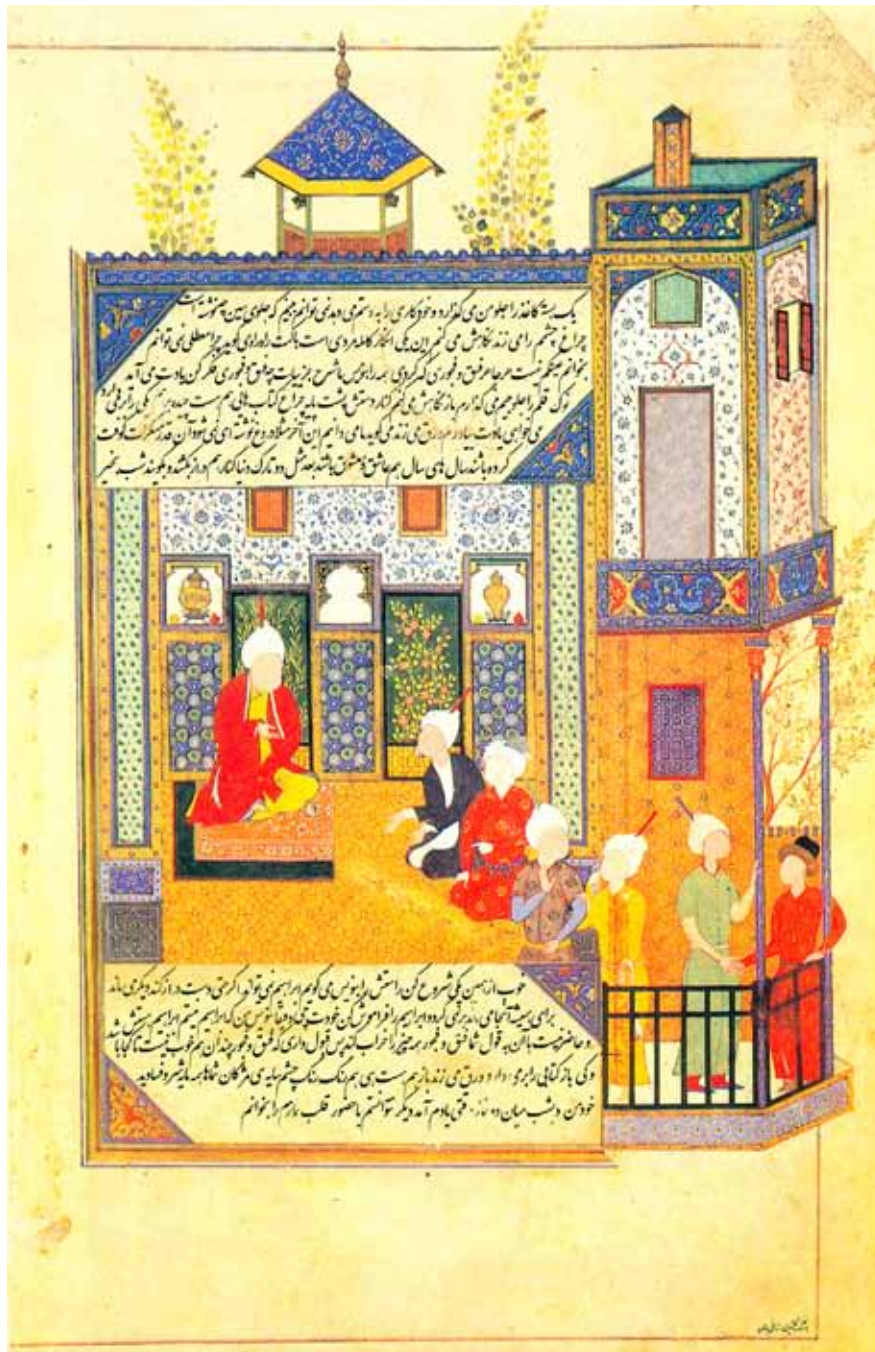
something that can actually be grasped through Althusser’s writings on the philosophy of history<sup>5</sup> when he announces the epistemological coupe of history by the exchanging nature of science of history.

Ali Ettehad has shown a very interesting body of diaries along with his confidence “core” series.

He narrates the exact same sense of history/lived experience in either a whole expression in a series or as an important part of some of his more Mithraic pieces. From his deceptive code of Ahreeman<sup>6</sup> through the silver oxide<sup>7</sup> of river plates and water fields to his performances and videos he seeks to put this very fragile nature of existence into the centre of the confidence circle. The Ahl becomes the absolute self-conscious lived experience along with the famous old devotion.

Ettehad’s works can be easily divided into a diary-like body, which consists of his personal readings of the social events of his time, focusing on the communication between the author and the reader. Once again he sets the circular plan of confidential information access. He puts a social code in its native appearance for the readers to discover. It is nearly impossible to understand the truth beneath the plates without having experienced it in some way. His dot-less texts and references through Iranian contemporary history are among these diaries. Also, while referring to ancient manuscripts, printing the exact or manipulated miniatures or using ancient texts, he declares his text to be woven amidst the roots of ancient Persia.

In two of his recent shows, The artist Ettehad clarifies the separate identities between the nature of these two factions. In the first series, dating back to the post election trauma in Tehran, where he lives, he tends to speak through his own wounds: the eight year Iraq war, everlasting petroleum crisis and chain murders are among these wounds. He has found similarities between the secret of the plates - the secret that will not be corrupt even in the absence of the peoples faces – and the secret of a text from Iran’s modern literature describing events in literary confidence. The faces of people in the illustrations are empty, pointing to a void other.



First Caption Image: No.1: I which empty space are you standing (From Confidence series #7). The original plate is narrating the famous court of Muslih-id-di Sa di Shirazi, namely one of the most controversial representations of deity i Islamic justice. While the image refers to a actual date i history the removed faces are calling the subject to beamono potent antithesis to this historical narrative. Later i each encounter on e develops a unique notio of this historical event and the subject of thenarrative gets decentralized through rereading. The text alsois a verbatim of Golshirys investigations by revolutionary guards during the chai murders as areference to both the latter and the repetitiv nature of Irans history.

As an invitation (TO WHAT?) he brings a massive load of empty portraits for his audience to fill with his/her will in order to begin a journey to discover their confidence. Each part of the storyline narrates the concluding nature of the set regarding two facts. The first fact is the similar “play” in which History is shaped - texts, pictures and signs - and the consistency of the confidence in every role. Each individual can go as far as he/she wants in confidence and secrecy, it does not matter who he/she is in the text.

In the more diary like series of his recent Purdahs of silence he is not about to put an end to the senses, nor is he trying to conclude a vast field of ancient and current knowledge. He speaks a daily concern: The betterment of men towards the confidence. Being involved with spells and mysticism as one’s spiritual journey towards confidence in the one hand and having a tremendous focus on the disastrous future of Iran in the other, Etehad awakens a sense of responsibility.

Purdahs of Silence is a manifestation of his prophecy: To call the whole universe a jewel for us to keep with total consciousness, a truth that can never be corrupted.

Throughout the text, there are words similar to their usages in western art writing traditions - the Other, the Native, the Absolute etc. They have been carefully selected and the similarities are of intention.



Second Captio Image: No.2: which empty space are you standing (From Confidence series #7).Two lovers their death bed is a very formal plot of a tragedy. The familiarity of such tale illuminates the repetitive nature of tales i general as well as signifying the exotic concept of terror as the essence of a self conscious state. The text belongs to the murder of Forouhar and his wife,also i chai murders. Etehadrefines his notio of the social interpretatio of history once again by having it exposed througho the freewill of each individual while facing the empty sapces i the Negarehs. The exact locatio of the text i reference is noted i the piece.