

Forword for

Analog Iran, a photobook by Ali MC

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*"...from the number of imaginable cities we must exclude those whose elements are assembled without a connecting thread, an inner rule, a perspective, a discourse. With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else." **

When in constant communication with travelers, you realize the one who decides to go off the beaten track and leave the exotic cities for the 'tourists', is somewhat out of the ordinary; for they are in search of something that lies within the deeper layers of a culture.

There is always something tempting about visiting the pink mosque in Shiraz for its spiritual light in the morning, the glory of the remains of a three-thousand-year old empire, or the silver sky of a desert in Iran. But the constant attention to these cities leads them to a whole new reality through the storytelling of their admirers that makes it hard for the traveler to believe.

On the other hand, this land carries a deep secret in its memory of the wounds it has survived through the years of resistance throughout its past, that left a mark on its sorrowful face. Yet Iran is even more than this; for there is no such thing as a single truth.

There lies a precious memory deep in the heart of the tormented history of these cities, and the traveler can only discover a small trail of such reality, while the reality dissolves itself into history and the stories it hears.

All of these cities continue to go through a collective socio-political crisis, even after they have been captured by the camera for this project. The reality of the cities are constantly changing just like a magical staircase changing directions to mislead travelers. Whatever the reason, it becomes a true challenge to discover the truth of these cities that hides themselves below the surface.

The lives of people continue from inside to outside; it is just another part of the change that a city offers to the eyes of the stranger. A contradictory thread that connects 'in' to 'out' flows the city between a balance of these two facing sides: a transitional existence.

The tendency of discovering this journey from the inside to the outside below the surface is what kept Ali MC wandering between these cities. It might be a little hard to the eyes of the viewer to comprehend such a harmonious dichotomy between these two sides; for the reality is the intersection of both. An image can offer a piece of the story but not the whole.

Through each departure, the traveler will feel a deep connection to their origin and destination. The encounters of a photographer with a city is akin to an intimate relationship. Both sides are in deep desire to overawe one another at the beginning; it is love at first sight with the beauty of their exotic being that drifts you into their hidden secrets.

Ali MC remembers that the wounds the city revealed in front of his eyes doesn't make it less of an attraction, but the opposite. The city opened up and that is something worth remembering, if only for a fleeting moment, captured on camera.

* Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino