



20/02/2022

For Immediate Release

Art27scotland invites you to the launch event for:

‘We Are Southside’

**An exhibition by acclaimed Iranian photographer and
photojournalist Laleh Sherkat**

When: Friday 25 February, 7PM

**At: Southside Community Centre
117 Nicolson Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9ER**

For press tickets, please email cameron@art27scotland.com or respond directly to this email, stating number of tickets required.



About the launch

Join us at Art27scotland on Friday 25th of February, 7PM at Southside Community Centre, Edinburgh, where we will launch Laleh Sherkat's beautiful 'We Are Southside' exhibition. Come and share in a night of photography, poetry, projection art, and music, to celebrate the cultural diversity of the Southside neighbourhood and the people that live in it.

About the exhibition

'We Are Southside' celebrates our diverse neighbourhood as depicted through the lens of acclaimed Iranian photojournalist Laleh Sherkat. This exhibition emerged in response to Art27scotland's community consultation which asked about the kind of neighbourhood people in this area wished to live in, and how the space at the Southside Community Centre could help. Laleh's skilled street photography captures the shared vibrancy, strength and struggles of the many different communities that make the Southside neighbourhood their home.

About Laleh Sherkat



Laleh Sherkat is an acclaimed Iranian photographer and photojournalist. She is renowned for being one of the first women to document the Iran-Iraq war and captured the experience of female prisoners in Tehran. She is a founding member of the Iranian Photography Society and has juried and curated many photography exhibitions and competitions in Iran and Scotland.

Born in Iran, Laleh's secondary education in Tehran was interrupted by Revolution – a period of profound change that continues to impact our world today. Supported by both Leftists and Islamists, the Iranian Revolution toppled the pro-Western ruling monarchy of the Shah. Radical women joined the revolution, some adopting the Hijab as a symbol of resistance. Their participation was publicly recognised by revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini as central to its success.

In the creative explosion that so often characterises post-revolutionary periods, buildings symbolic of the old regime were repurposed. A casino in Tehran was turned over to artists to educate and inspire the city's young. Amongst the arts offered was

an opportunity to learn photography. It was here that Laleh discovered her life-long passion, street photography, as she was drawn on to the streets to capture the extraordinary energy of revolution. When teachers realised that Laleh was taking the course for a third time to access their equipment, and knowing they had little left to teach her, offered her a teaching role, so consolidating her career path.

Moving on to Tehran University, where she would eventually teach, the conflict with neighbouring Iraq suddenly escalated. Saddam Hussein was urged on by the West to exploit the opportunities post-revolutionary instability offered, and an eight-year conflict began. A group of female art students asked if they could do their revolutionary duty and document the war. Initial resistance to their request was overcome through a personal contact with a high-level general. When they arrived in the war zone, the women found themselves confined to barracks. Undaunted and determined, Laleh's street photographer instincts kicked in and she crept out under cover of night, securing her legendary status as one of the very few women photographers to document the Iran-Iraq war. Her work began to earn Laleh a reputation amongst the new states' most important documenters.

After the war, her photography shifted focus to women's rights, being regularly published in a wide range of magazines. One commission was a female election candidate who also happened to be the daughter of a prominent politician. By the time Laleh got her opportunity, it was the end of an intense day of electioneering and her subject looked exhausted. Laleh persuaded her to allow her to return in the morning, promising to arrive early before she set out on another gruelling day. The wider context was important here, with election posters carrying full images of men while women candidates were restricted to a small passport-style photo in the corner, reflecting a society where publishing full images of women was increasingly prohibited. Pleased with her results, Laleh persuaded her editor to publish in full, calculating that their sympathetic and respectful nature together with the status of the subject's father would offer the magazine adequate protection. They published, there were no official complaints, and women's images slowly returned to the media.



Laleh's reputation gave her access to some of the more sensitive areas of Iranian society including, uniquely, to photograph inside a women's prison. The noise and

commotion of a prisoner giving birth offered an opportunity to wander unnoticed into a restricted area where she took revealing photographs of the conditions encountered. Controversy surrounded the resulting exhibition and Laleh decided it was best to take up an opportunity to go with her husband to Edinburgh, where he had been offered the chance to do his Ph.D. by the University. Putting the welfare of her children first, and as they grew, she prioritised the stability of their education, and Edinburgh became home.

Laleh and her children return regularly to Iran. As part of a wider enquiry into cultural rights in the Southside, Art27scotland commissioned Laleh to capture the spirit and energy of this ever-changing and vibrant place.

“Social relationships are the centre of attention in my photography. This view and attitude toward the surrounding community plays a key role as I try to show the hidden truth of people’s lives. Living in a multi-cultural place, like Edinburgh’s Southside, has given me the opportunity to see how the mutual respect and peaceful co-existence of various nations can establish a successful community” - *Laleh Sherkat*

Notes to editors

For press tickets, please email cameron@art27scotland.com or respond directly to this email, stating number of tickets required.

For access information, please visit: www.art27scotland.org/accessibility.

BSL and other language support is available on request.

For any further information, please send an email to: info@art27scotland.com.

About Art27scotland

Art27scotland is an Edinburgh-based non-profit Community Interest Company. It is inspired by Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that ‘Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, and to enjoy the arts.’ Art27scotland is focused on exploring the powerful and sometimes conflicting relationship between our shared human and cultural rights.

Art27scotland is distinctive in Scotland, as it articulates global shared experiences through its locally-based international Artists in Residence. It aims to celebrate our connectedness to the rest of the world and develop empathy, listening and learning from others’ lived experience. It wants to share this exchange through art in order to stimulate broader democratic discussion and exchange relating to the rights of artistic expression, cultural participation and cultural democracy.

Art27scotland is part of the Culture Collective and funded by Creative Scotland.



For more information, please visit art27scotland.org. @Art27scotland

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Socials: @Art27scotland

WE ARE SOUTHSIDE

an exhibition by acclaimed Iranian photographer and photojournalist

Laleh Sherkat

LAUNCH EVENT
25 FEBRUARY 2022, 7PM-9PM

AT: SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE,
NICOLSON STREET, EDINBURGH, EH8 9ER

Art27  scotland
Visit: art27scotland.org

The bottom of the poster features a row of logos. From left to right: the Culture Collective Co-Chomann Cultair logo, the Creative Scotland logo, the ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL logo, the Scottish Government logo with the text 'Scottish Government Recognized as a Public Body', the EDINBURGH logo, and the Edinburgh Community Centre logo.