

FORMAT 2024

FORMAT International Photography Festival happens every other year in Derby. As a part of FORMAT's off year programme the festival has partnered with LCB Depot to celebrate its 20th anniversary, bringing amazing international photography to Leicester!

Venues across the city are hosting exhibitions from **25th March - 26th April 2024**. Find out more about the exhibition venues and artists involved at <https://lcbdepot.co.uk/event/format24/> or @lcbdepot



HUNTER

Mona Sartoveh

photography

"HUNTER" is a poignant exploration of the societal expectations imposed on women, encapsulating the essence of my childhood and the evolving narrative of womanhood in an ideological society. The series delves into the challenges of navigating gendered views, the constant scrutiny of one's body, and the subtle yet powerful forces that shape one's identity.

The narrative begins with a reflection on the societal norms that dictate how women should present themselves – from their appearance to their behaviors. It captures the essence of growing up in a society that molds its women according to predefined standards. The imagery of guards symbolizes the societal forces that vigilantly enforce these standards, leading individuals to internalize the responsibility of self-protection.

As the geographical backdrop of my life changes, the narrative takes an unexpected turn in Boston. The encounter with a green car triggers a visceral response, reminiscent of the moral security police cars in Iran. This moment becomes a catalyst for a new chapter in the story, where the past predators resurface in a different form. The struggle shifts from unconscious acceptance to a conscious effort to mock and defy these hunters.

"HUNTER" becomes a visual manifestation of my journey – a struggle against the implanted predators within me. The series aims to expose and ridicule these hidden forces, bringing them into the light of awareness. Like a child revealing the obvious hiding spots in a game of hide and seek, I uncover and confront the societal expectations that once concealed themselves within my subconscious.

Ultimately, "HUNTER" is more than a photographic series; it's a visual documentation of empowerment. It portrays the awakening of a woman who, with newfound awareness, challenges and ridicules the societal constructs that once dictated her identity. Through this project, I strive to share the universal experience of breaking free from cultural norms and embracing individuality, inviting viewers to contemplate the impact of societal judgments and the empowering journey of self-discovery.

\$1 500

Artist Bio

Born in Tehran in 1982, Mona embarked on a remarkable journey as a photographer, earning her B.A. in photography from the Art and Architecture University of Tehran. As a self-employed photographer, she delved into social topics, gaining extensive experience as a film photographer, art director, and scriptwriter.

In 2017, Mona created her first photo series in Boston, titled "Unity in Difference," earning recognition at the IPA in New York and winning first prize. Tragically, her return to Iran for family reasons coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of her father. This challenging period inspired her next series, "Pertaining to Losses," capturing her husband's battle with the virus and their son's efforts to save him.

Despite facing adversity, Mona found solace in photography, continuing to capture moments, including documenting the Women-Life-Freedom movement in Iran. This commitment to showcasing powerful narratives, especially those challenging societal norms, came at a significant personal risk, considering the sensitive nature of the movement in Iran.

Despite the challenges she faced, including potential threats to her safety, Mona persisted in using her lens to highlight the struggles, aspirations, and strength of women within the Women- Life-Freedom movement. This courageous pursuit of truth and justice eventually led to her making the difficult decision to leave the country with her family, prioritizing their safety.

Through these challenging experiences, Mona's artistic resilience and determination shine through. Rather than succumbing to adversity, she found inspiration in the stories she uncovered and the impact her work could have on raising awareness about social issues. These experiences further fueled her passion for storytelling through photography, emphasizing the transformative power of art even in the face of adversity.

"HUNTER" is Mona's latest photographic series, delving into the complexities of societal expectations imposed on women. Drawing from her own experiences, Mona captures the struggle of breaking free from cultural norms and embracing individuality. This series invites viewers to contemplate the impact of societal judgments and the empowering journey of self- discovery.

Instagram: [@mona.sartoveh](https://www.instagram.com/mona.sartoveh)