


VISUAL

LEGAL SIGHTSEEING

## *Dokhtaran -e- khiyaban -e- Enghelab* [The Girls of Revolution Street]

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**Figure 1.** *Left: Vida Movahed atop a utility box in Enghelab street; Right: The municipality have welded a cone-shaped structure atop the same utility box as a preventive measure while people keep leaving flowers at the utility box. Photos unknown on social media.*

On 27 December 2017, outside an iconic pastry shop in Tehran, in *Enghelab* [Revolution] street, Vida Movahed climbed up a municipality utility box, took her headscarf off, tied it to a stick and gently waved it in the air. Like a flag, a torch, a signal. As soon as the video spread, the scene, the monument, the figure was multiplied. The first to respond chose the same utility box for their thorn. Others chose any city structure however minimally elevated from the ground– park benches, curb stones, edges of fountains. These nameless women – old and young, in Tehran and

other cities – are now referred to – in the unauthorized collective memory of a portion of the Iranian people – as *Dokhtaran -e- Khayaban -e- Enghelab* [The Girls of Revolution Street].

Monuments, sights and events of law/resistance, those erected officially carry a desire to manufacture or solicit on the part of their onlooker's sympathy, reflection, or at least move them towards a standpoint.<sup>1</sup> The intentionality baked into the monumentization of law is predicated upon an idea of the universal appeal of the official histories and archives. Yet archives and monuments only carry relevance so far as their context of presentation and preparation allows them to.<sup>2</sup> On the other side of any sight, any memory, there is a counterclaim.

The 1979 Revolution ended the tyrannical rule of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran. The street that formerly was named after the Shah's father was renamed to *Enghelab* to commemorate the people's victory. A month after the revolution's victory, days after the historical 8<sup>th</sup> of March demonstration in Tehran, the victorious revolutionaries began the imposition of compulsory hijab on women. Now the same *Enghelab* and its streets are claimed back by the Girls who resist the orders of the Islamic Republic and demand much more than the freedom to be present in the public spaces as they will. The past—and its contestations over the orders of the space-time of cities—refuses to remain in the past. The counter- monuments/sights/figures such as *Dokhtaran -e- Khayaban -e- Enghelab* or encountering a municipality utility box in Iran, are powerful specifically because they are not materializations of the past curated for an onlooker. They are calls to arms by the *Present*. One can only remake these monuments, be the site/sight itself. The message to be taken for passers-by, here, depends on where on the street you choose to stand—atop a utility box?

<sup>1</sup>S. Stolk, and R. Vos, 'International Legal Sightseeing', (2020) 33 *Leiden Journal of International Law* 1.

<sup>2</sup>F. Vergès, 'Methodology for a Creole Museum, for a Postcolonial Museum of the Living Present', (2008) *Museums and the Web 2008, Archives & Museum Informatics*, available at [www.archimuse.com/mw2008/papers/verges/verges.html](http://www.archimuse.com/mw2008/papers/verges/verges.html).