

Unsettle me

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23-08-2026 // 09:14

R said: this is not a real chain.

You look at the brightly coloured plastic links cordoning off the basement stairs and you think: why wouldn't it be?

The question stays with you. You walk past.

11-09-2026 // 17:47

The chandelier is on the floor. That is the first thing. Not a chandelier that has fallen. One tensioned between the floor and the ceiling, caught in the act of its descent. It has a small chrome-like platform beneath, a grid, and the lamps or flames or whatever they are have been held in the slow motion of slanted fall. Your eyes follow the steel chain upward to the ceiling. Some links are 3D printed. They look provisional. They hold.

The original crown moulding up there has almost stopped existing. Layer over layer of latex paint, white slathered onto white, year over year, until the sharpness is gone. You think of the building's other lives, the years it was a butcher's, before that, whatever came before the butcher. You can't imagine a chandelier appropriate to any of it. The moulding is still there and almost not.

You turn. On a small display in the corner: webcam footage from the basement. Grainy. Silent. The 3D printer in the lower right of frame, steadily making something. A few minutes ago you were there, standing in front of the camera mounted on the beam, wondering where the image would go. You remember staring into it. Trying to meet something. Here is where the image went. Here is where you went.

You think of yourself in that place of not knowing. There is no way to have known, standing downstairs, whether anyone was in this room seeing your gritty image on this screen. Whether your eyes were ever met from this side. There is no way to know now. The footage has already moved on.

In the basement: the 3D printer works. Has been working. It produces continuously and fails occasionally and the failures stay. A collection of organically shaped tubes, left behind by the things they once held up. Small experiments you can't place. Some of the failed prints are still on the surface where they were abandoned. You don't touch them. You look at them for a while.

On the corkboard on the wall: photographs bearing the margins of Instagram screenshots, a repository of peculiar and ambiguous images Babak and Sohrab have been collecting. A horse in a living room. Or a car. A chandelier. You don't know yet that the chandelier made its way from this board into the mirror, into the video, into this room. You don't know most of what you are looking at. The images felt simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, they told you later. It was Iran, but also not the Iran they knew. The longer you look at them, the less they cohere. You know that feeling. You carry it with you when you walk around the exhibition.

The top half of a horse, partially assembled, stands on a low shelving unit in the main space upstairs. Printed in sections and put together, it is not a perfect replica of what it was designed from. It has been cut into little blocks of ever so slightly ribbed plastic, with little bits missing, almost pixel-like gaps everywhere, as if it is

trying to build itself but also falling apart. It carries its own incompleteness visibly, the way a body does after something, and still stands.

11-09-2026 // 21:03

Later that same evening, or earlier, the order is not right anymore, the timestamp knows something you don't, you are in the main space with MJ and R. MJ is showing you one of the mounting brackets used to hang the large photographic work at the far end. The three of you express surprise, not at the result but at the method. What you share is a more direct way of working: wooden beams, chipboard, paint or paste. Fast. Babak and Sohrab came at it differently. Things were plotted. Extra help was arranged. The result is one of the smoothest and most form-fitting installations you can remember in this room.

You ponder whether it was necessary. You can't deny it worked. You appreciate such material execution. Sometimes that is all it is.

The timestamps on the photographs near the main entrance door are forged, Babak tells you. One from the very start of the studio period. One arbitrary. One set in a future that hasn't happened.

You look at the photographs again. Nothing in the images has changed. The dates beneath them mean everything and nothing simultaneously.

18-09-2026 // not recorded

The second opening. You speak to Sofia, who works with you and shares a studio with Babak. She says he has been working non-stop. You nod quietly and look around the room. The effort is visible not in quantity, not in how much, but in solidity. The world Babak and Sohrab have built does not fall apart when you look

closely. What you appreciate, you realise slowly, is that it doesn't resolve either.

The vibe is unsettling. This continues to comfort you. In an age when most exhibitions resolve into climate discourse, ecology, sappy insistence on hope, this eerie between-nothing space provides something else. You are nowhere. Levitating. It reminds you of hours inside a video game when you were going through something that also went unnamed. Where the interactive horrors on the screen meant nothing but a dopamine rush. All the while people around you were crashing out in their lives. You engaged. Nothing got through.

The aesthetics are the same: dark, ominous, atmospheric. No text on the wall to tell you what to feel. You move through it and something is asked of you that isn't resolution.

As down in the mouth as you are, you force open those locked jaws and manage small talk. Your hollow eyes scan the room as words float past you. You nod at the right moments. You are here in a professional capacity and the professional capacity is the only one anyone can see. This is what the work requires: a body in a room, and the body is supposed to be invisible. The other one, the one that is crumbling, has nowhere to go but further in. You carry it with you into every room. You set it down briefly beside the failed prints, the horse assembled from its own gaps, and pick it up again when you move on. There is a particular exhaustion in this: the weight of the object and the weight of pretending the object is not there, stacked on top of each other, both yours to carry alone.

You move aside the black velvet curtain to the back space. The beanbags spread across the space are very flat. You splay your crumpling, resisting body across them anyway. You are nearly flat on the floor in the dark.

The video takes you through their storage, hovering through black voids, confronting mirrors that show things you can't see in the room when the camera turns, tiles that remind you of apartments in Iran, the diamond plate floor from the main space spotted in a corner of the video as if someone picked up a sheet of it

and kept it, like a memory.

Your personal life and your professional life and your health are all imploding simultaneously, you can feel your chest straining against the pressure of it trying to fold you inwards into nothing, and the techno music comes in and the dark in the room sits exactly on the dark in your chest. You reach a hand to the cold steel plate beside the beanbag. You have always liked that. Solid. The thing it always is. You don't move.

What Helia Rafie said once comes back to you: in Iran, the internet has a different meaning than it does in the northwest of Europe. These two artists from Iran are showing you the virtual as a philosophical position. Theory made material, made fallible, made present. You know this. You just can't open up to it right now.

You let yourself be hovered through the video twice.

From the tips of your fingers and toes, you slowly pull in your extremities. You put your hands on the cold steel plates and push yourself up. Your body is not a willing thing, but it holds. You push the curtain aside. It is brighter in here.

Back in the main room: the large photographic work mounted seamless on its frame. The shiny horse in the image. You turn to the 3D printed one beside it. It looks nothing like it. Cut into little blocks of ribbed plastic, pixel-like gaps everywhere, as if it is trying to build itself and also dissolving. Your crumbling carcass feels similarly so.

Babak told you: it was designed in the virtual space first. You can see it in the video, in the photograph. They wanted to print it in parts. Assemble it. It is not perfect. It feels unstable.

That instability touches something in you. You don't name what. That should stay outside of the exhibition. It doesn't belong here. But it is there with you.

After the show comes down, Babak says, he will wrap the items in the virtual storage in plastic. He has done this before. Items cared for, even the ones without bodies.

23-08-2026 // 09:14

R said: this is not a real chain.

You stand again at the top of the basement stairs. The plastic links, brightly coloured, arranged across the threshold. They cordon something off. They do what a chain does. Whether or not the material matches what a chain is supposed to be made of is not a question the chain is asking.

You think of all the things that have been cared for in the weeks you've been coming and going from this space. The printer working, failing, starting again. The failures left where they are. The horse assembled from its own gaps. The body that keeps arriving. The items in the storage, soon to be wrapped and held. The crown moulding still there under all that white.

After the show comes down, the virtual storage will be sealed. What is digital will be wrapped the way objects are wrapped when someone cares whether they survive.

You look at the chain.

You look at the basement.

It is not not a chain.