

THE SYMPHONY OF AN IMMIGRANT'S LIFE

by

Maedeh Asgharpour

APPROVED BY SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Xtine Burrough, Chair

John J. Pomara

Marilyn Waligore

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To my family
and my beloved husband

THE SYMPHONY OF AN IMMIGRANT'S LIFE

by

MAEDEH ASGHARPOUR, BA, MA

THESIS

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Maedeh Asgharpour, MFA
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Supervising Professor: Xtine Burrough

The focus of this thesis paper will be the connection between writing and illustration in order to create a narrative that expresses the experience of my life as an immigrant in the twenty-first century. To reveal such connections, I will share poems that I have written in conversation with art works I created, in addition to works of contemporary artists who use language in their work.

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CHAPTER 1

ARTISTIC IDENTITY

The Symphony of an Immigrant's Life is a creative exhibition and visual installation.

Conceptually, my art interrogates how my identity is shaped by my culture, time, family, and country. I am inspired by my status, which can put me at odds with myself as both an artist in contemporary North American society and an immigrant student in the twenty-first century. I am constructing my artistic identity by finding myself in a foreign culture whose values and traditions are different from my own. Such tensions and disruptions create new opportunities for creating my narrative imagery. These works explore the psychological and emotional aspects that surface in my process of displacement.

A series of my poems and short writings, inspired by my experiences after leaving my country, create the platform upon which I use my art to narrate my situation after immigration. These poetic narratives reveal small events (such as trying new foods) and large events (such as pursuing a successful career) as I live my life in the U.S.A. Such events, in combination with hopes and dreams, sometimes push my literary character forward and sometimes stop her from taking actions (Figure 1 and Poem 1).

This journey has put several people on my path who have helped me to remove huge obstacles. When there is an effort to reach the goal, the way will open spontaneously. Consequently, the solutions will be plotted one after another. My thesis project reflects my journey. For instance, Figure 2 shows an image of an angel spreading her skirt, which takes the form of a fishing net. The angel takes care of a fisherman for whom, in his view, there is no fish

in the river. Here the fisherman, whose details are not seen in the picture, expresses his helplessness. An angel has come to his aid to answer his prayers, even if it seems impossible. The fish, symbolizing various human goals, volunteer to be trapped by the angel's net although they did not even exist in the river from the fisherman's point of view. This angel is the symbol for one of my personal angels, someone who has helped me achieve my goals throughout this process (Figure 2 and Poem 2).



Figure 1. *Backpack*, oil on canvas, 48x36 in, 2021.

Poem 1:

I took everything I have to take with me,

The sun was setting,

You did not fit in my backpack!

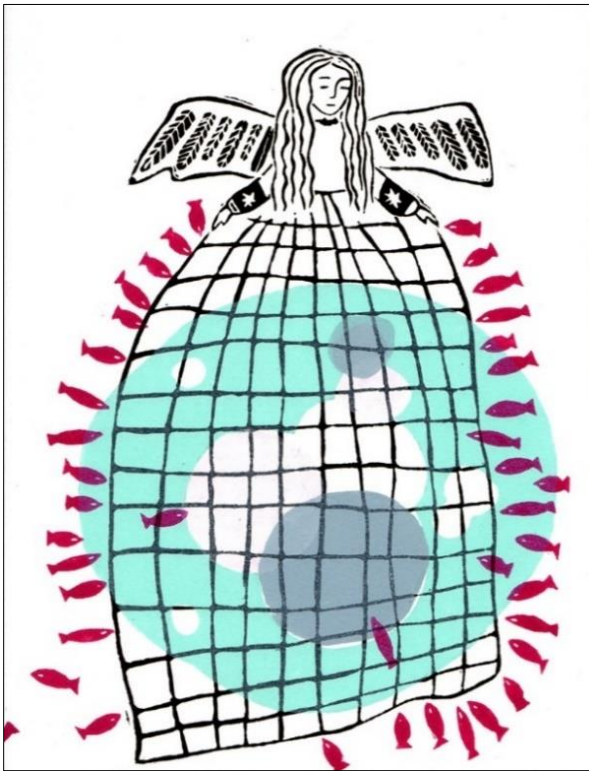


Figure 2. *Your Angel*, printmaking, 8.5 x 11 in. 2021

Poem 2:

The fisherman told his angel,

There is no fish in the river,

Today I have no food to take home for my children,

The angel spread her skirt over the river,

The fish volunteered to be trapped.

A part of the narrative of my stories as a student who has immigrated to follow her dreams comes from missing my family and country, which is a common experience for immigrants who are far away from their families. My works stem from my experience in the culture of the

country in which I was born. This is a different culture for American audiences, and I encourage the viewer to investigate it. I come from Iran, where the percentage of immigrants is much lower than in the United States. The number of immigrants and the narrative of their lives is prominent here, and the number of people who witness this transition in their lives is even greater. So, there is a more pronounced need to know more about the narrative of an immigrant life, particularly the challenges that immigrants are facing. Since January 17, 2017, the popular narrative of Iranian immigrants in the United State has changed. Since then, Iranian immigrants, especially students, have been facing more difficulties. Not seeing their families for more than five years and the difficult financial situation that US sanctions imposed against Iran has made it very challenging for student families to financially support their children (In 2017, several Iranian students were affected by new regulations that severely restricted people from specific countries including Iran to visit the United States. Based on such rules, many Iranian students who were not previously able to travel home to visit their families due to the difficulties of obtaining a visa to return to the U.S., lost the chance of getting a visa for their family members to come to the U.S. even for a short visit. In addition to that, more financial sanctions on Iran made it is extremely difficult for Iranian students in the U.S. to receive financial support from their families especially in the cases that they may need money urgently). People who do not hold an immigration status may understand the situation of an immigrant's life after seeing my works. Therefore, the audience in the host country (more specifically in North Texas), with more knowledge about the story of immigrant's life, can be more active in improving the conditions of immigrants. I am not the first person to experience such events and will not be the last one, but through my creative practice I provide an experimental mode of communication about this topic.

I have been photographing birds on power transmission wires since 2010. For me, taking photos of the birds on trees, buildings and the wires could address feeling of emptiness. I had no idea that at later time a part of my life could be similar to the life of a migrant bird. Migration is an annual process in the lives of many birds. I have always been amazed by their ability to withstand extreme weather conditions and lack of food. Responding to a particular subject can influence changes to one's life. Poetically, when I immigrated, I faced all the hardships of a bird's life as well. The art works inspired from those birds positioned on the wires stand in for my experiences as an immigrant. In art and popular culture, birds are also used as a metaphor for immigration. For instance, Banksy painted a mural depicting several birds holding anti-immigration banners, while an isolated colored bird looks strangely at the group of birds that hold the banners. This image was removed by the local council as they received a complaint claiming that it was offensive and racist. Later, the local council stated that they did know it was Banksy's work and offered to have an appropriate Banksy original on any of their seafronts (BBC News).

CHAPTER 2

POETIC NARRATIVE PROCESS

A piece of writing can be translated into a drawing, painting, or a photo through illustration to aid the interpretation and explanation of the subjective matter. Illustrative images convey ideas and information for a specific purpose. Such transformations are full of visual signs that express a literal or metaphorical subject (Doyle et al.). An illustrator, in an aesthetic manner, puts the image in front of the text to complete the transmission of the meaning of the text. For the first time, the connection between text and image was formed in books. Before photography, illustration was the only visual aid that came with text in books. Sometimes texts can hardly convey an important meaning without an image, and in some cases the concept is conveyed vaguely to the viewer. On the other hand, the image creates ambiguity in the viewer's mind without the words. The combination of the words and images make the viewers notice a certain point and allow them to understand the image from the author's point of view.

Converting verbal information to images is a crucial aspect of the work. Sometimes the text lacks some important information that should be shown in the image to expand the concept. In the text, sometimes there are some imaginative elements that do not appear the form of words. The text may speak of a meaning or characters that do not exist in the story, while the image comes to the aid of the viewer and solves the riddle (Doyle et al.). The illustrator assumes what is not told in the text and places it in the illustration. For example, when a text refers to a rainy city, it does not say what the city contains. The illustrator depicts a rainy city using visual element, such as people who are holding umbrellas.

Throughout history, art and text have been interwoven. Sometimes the text has been the main motivation behind creating artworks such as the illustrations included in the medieval manuscripts. In some other cases, the text has taken over the main role to be the focal point in a piece of artwork. A prime example of such a case was when René Magritte (Allmer and Magritte), the famous Belgian surrealist artist wrote *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, or *This is not a pipe* (Doyle et al.)- on his painting. This painting initiated philosophical discussions on how we define reality in terms of methods of representation based on the relationship between words and objects. There have also been several pieces of artworks whose creators were inspired by poetry and literature. Prime examples of such artworks are the illustrations of Dante Gabriel Rossetti which are inspired by his poetry as well as the poems of his sister, Christina Rossetti (Ash and Rossetti). The viewer of the artworks, inspired by poetry, communicates with the work profoundly and sometimes develops a personal feeling with the artwork. Such relationship between the text and art makes the viewer travel back and forth between the illustration and the poem. The poem sets the mood of the painting and the details of the picture intensify that. The poem without the painting can generate as many visual images as the number of readers' minds, but the painting picks just one specific image: the one pictured in the painter's mind. The viewer feels a connection between himself/herself and the artist and looks at the objectives of the poem from the artist's standpoint. There are several other examples of the masterpieces inspired by poems including Salvador Dalí's *Mad Tea Party* (1969) as well as Pablo Picasso's *Don Quixote* (1955).

Creating such a connection with the viewer is what I am attempting to do through my art. My poems reflect my personal experiences especially as an immigrant student. I want the viewer

to see my world via the back and forth travelling between my poems and my artworks associated with them. An important aspect of my artwork is that I do not provide a realistic image of my poems similar to Rosetti's works. I do not want to limit my viewer's imagination with a realistic image. My artworks are still ambiguous enough to give the viewer more flexibility in terms of incorporating an aspect of his/her own personal experience as well as imagination. To achieve this goal, I used the symbols that arose in my mind when I was picturing my poems and dreams.

I create half of a work with words and the other half with illustration. My present situations trigger my poems, which take shape from the combination of words. My feelings and events that happened to me have been significant elements in my poetry. Deep sadness or joy are combined in the form of words. I feel that the words are put together in my mind spontaneously. If I do not write right away, they will be completely erased from my mind, as if they never existed. Sometimes the nostalgic feeling prompted by a memory or by being in specific situations that remind me of something in the past put words together in my mind, such as the rainy weather that reminds me of the city where I was born. But regardless of all the nostalgia, the future is always a lantern that keeps the bright light of hope in my mind. In such a state, all nostalgia and bad feelings come to an end. The hope that has ignited in my mind finds its way to paper to illuminate the path that is unknown for the ones who are in similar situations to mine and to give them confidence to reach their goals.

Illustrating the poems is the stage of the completion of my thoughts. Choosing the keywords of the poem or paying attention to the meaning of the poem are two important factors in shaping my illustration. The keywords connect to the process of ideation and the completion of the text. Paying attention to the meaning of the poem does the same thing, with the difference

that sometimes it can be contrary to the image that the audience forms in their mind after reading the poem. It is worth mentioning that the idea for some illustrations was formed in my mind before writing the text. But the roots of such images are still related to the feelings and events of my life; only the image was created earlier than the poem. In this case, after illustrating, I express the feelings related to the image in the form of words.

Finding an idea from a text and creatively depicting it requires knowledge of the basics of graphic design. My background in the field of graphics has significantly helped me in the process of ideation as well as the consideration of the audience. I create, organize, and visualize elements based on the text and present them in the form of illustration. In Figure 3, we see the design principles such as repetition, emphasis, and focal point, but more importantly the objects are mixed in a manner that is not normally seen in the real world. The girl's eyes are not shown to make the viewer focus on her mind, which is trapped by a cage. The bird, being a symbol of thoughts, wants to be released. The poem conveys a message that the doors of our minds are open. We just need to release the bird of our thoughts.

The process of creating a narrative for the audience outside my native country requires a commitment to creativity in terms of both the generation of an idea as well as the methods to communicate that story. I have tried to create participatory artworks so that the audience personally gets involved in *The Symphony of an Immigrant's Life*. Moreover, I have depicted the silence seen in the text. In the process of illustrating the texts I have written, relying on content is my goal in creating the images. I have tried to convey the ultimate purpose of my writings to the viewer through an image in the most efficient way I could achieve through my own style.

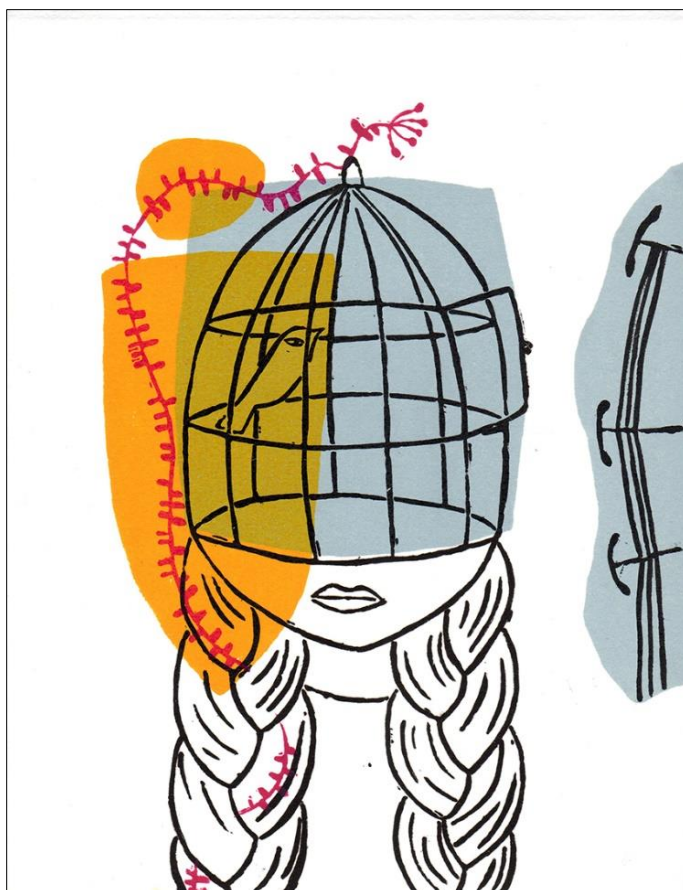


Figure 3. *On Top*, printmaking, 8.5 x 11 in. 2021

Poem 3:

The door of your mind is open,

Fly,

You will find it!

It would not be easy to visualize my writings if the viewers read them alone. My works primarily convey a complementary relationship between texts and illustrations. They add something to each other in a deep fusion. The image is completed with text and the text with the image. The reader needs to engage more with the text and image to understand the subject. When

the viewer sees the images before reading the text, he experiences the illusion of narration. Their thoughts dance in my works and will be eventually clarified by reading the text.

In some of my works the text is sad, but seeing the images takes away the sadness of the poem from the audience's heart and creates a motivation for coping with the difficulties. The illustration alleviates the feeling of loneliness and experience of the difficulties by creating a sense of joy and determination. In some other works, while the text inspires beauty, the image reminds us about what we need to keep in our minds or hearts. In this case, the images go beyond the text and reveal something that is similar to a piece of advice or an opening to the future for someone who has no hope of discovering his desires. She is not in the picture, but her dreams are. It is like depicting the preparations of a surprise birthday party for someone who is not present.

The images in this collection are ambiguous, designed to engage the viewer not with reality but with a fantastic atmosphere. By using visual elements that express the meaning of some words, images are formed in a puzzle. Reaching a pure idea and merging images that are not normally related to each other ripple through my images, such as a cage representing a part of a human head (Figure 3) or placing a bicycle next to a gramophone (Figure 4 and Poem 4). This new way of thinking is rooted in my studies in graphics. For me, graphics and illustration are inseparable, and my works are intertwined to create a meaningful image.



Figure 4. *Gramophone*, Printmaking, Linocut, 2021, 8.5 x 11 in.

Poem 4:

I have tuned my gramophone with my long steps,

Not with small steps,

So, it always plays a happy song.

CHAPTER 3

INSPIRATIONS

My poems are not just a part of life, but specifically an organized sketch of what was and what is supposed to be, and the images come together to show this concept. In general, the viewer may realize the subject as the artist plans, while he experiences the text and the image not individually but together. Text provides the viewer with more information than images.

Rebellious Silence is a photograph by Iranian artist Shirin Neshat which was decorated with words. The writings are a poem by Tahereh Saffarzadeh entitled *Allegiance with Wakefulness*, which is written in ink on the photo. The text is a supplementary and touchable space which is attached to the surface of the image. The tactile materiality of the ink which is written on the print photography interrupts the smooth effect of it (Neef et al.).

The printmaking and paintings of my project are done with linoleum engraving technique and the combination achieved through the printing of different layers of ink transferred from the linoleum blocks. *The Little Black Fish*, 1968 is a book that conveys a narrative illustrated by Farshid Mesghali with the process of printmaking linoleum (Bihrangī et al.), which is my favorite technique. All the illustrations in this book are based on the story. Since my work begins with writing and the visuals are based on my poems, the relationships between text and image drawn by Mesghali inspired my work as well.

The texts accompany the images to help the viewer achieve a richer understanding of the meaning of the work. People, wherever they are, face difficulties in making their dreams come

true. With immigration, a change will also be added to the problems that one has to face in the routine life. Immigrants should alter what they have learned throughout their lives, which affects their entire life, both culturally and economically. There are several reasons in immigrants past lives that persuaded them to immigrate to another country for a while or forever until the future that they have planned in their minds turns to reality. Believing in themselves and striving for opportunity is the key to their success. “You did not need faith to fly, you needed to understand flying”(Bach and Munson) is a statement Chain said to Jonathan in *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach this reminder is a truth in our lives.

I have depicted a part of what is experienced by an immigrant in my work entitled *Hearts* which is a painting together with an illustrated woman's dress (Figure 5 and Poem 5).



Figure 5. *Hearts*, Mixed media, 60 x48 in

Poem 5 :

Hearts see,

Fall in love,

But do not comprehend!

Whatever is painted on the canvas is painted on the dress as well because of the reflection of our beliefs on our lives. In this work, immigrants' beliefs, which are a combination of their past experiences together with their dreams of the future, are illustrated on the canvas and the dress represents the reflection of those beliefs in the present. The canvas framework encompasses what is dreamed and experienced by an immigrant in a two-dimensional space while realizing them is demonstrated in the form of a tangible and wearable object. To elaborate more, the dress is sewn in a size that can be worn by the artist. By wearing the dress, the experiences from the past and the dreams of the future unite in the present moment. For this work, I was inspired by a painting by Sterling Ruby and a dress by Raf Simons in an exhibition titled *Dior: From Paris to the World* in Dallas Museum of Art. ("Dior")

The visual objects of this painting are positioned beyond their place in the real world. The three main subjects of this work, human, bird and fish, are in an environment for which life is impossible in the real world. It is a picture of a human head and his hair floating on the water. Birds fly in the opposite direction under water, and fish float in the opposite direction to the sky. To illustrate this transformation, some symbols, such as poles and electric wires, and lotuses are placed where they are imagined in the ordinary world, to show the unrealistic placement of the main subjects in the image. Such situations are seen in Maurice Asher's works as well. He depicts a world in which the natural laws of gravity do not apply. Also due to the *metamorphosis II* which is created by woodcut technique, birds and fish are moving in opposite directions

(Escher). I was fascinated by Maurice Asher's viewpoint on reality in a letter he wrote to J. W.

Wagenaar:

"This (for a layman like myself) marvelous game in which my thoughts penetrate into the farthest distance of so-called real space, farther and farther, with now and then a star or a nebula or a spiral galaxy as support and landmark, this game sometimes suddenly turns into the contrary because of the question: what is that so-called reality; what is this theory other than a beautiful but primordially human illusion?"(Escher)

I studied Gary Hill's works who, as a linguist-philosopher, analyzed the relationship between word and electronic images. One of his works, *Disturbance (among the jars)*, 1988, is created based on philosophers Martin Heidegger and Maurice Blanchot texts. The words were displayed in more than thirty different languages. What was interesting for me in his works was creating multiple meanings and evoking human feelings by using language (London). One of my video artworks is also created based on the relationship between human feelings and language. More explanation about this work will be provided in the next sections. As Gary Hill who linked his interest in sculpture with electronic media, I tried to combine mine with my paintings that have roots in my printmaking. I investigate the projector as a digital media display, imaginatively and physically, the realm that philosopher Jacques Ranciere referred to as the "surface of design". This media connects our understanding of different spaces and move between art forms that Vachel lindsey described as "painting-in-motion" (Iles). By using video on the painting, I was able to integrate the static space of the canvas with dynamic video/animation for better understanding of the narration.

One of my paintings entitled *The Clock of My Life* involves two panels that are installed next to each other; a girl who is biking on the seconds handle of the clock is animated on them. It

shows the journey of an immigrant as well as the passing of time. Farideh Lashai's work, *Prelude to Alice In Wonderland*, 2010, oil and acrylic on canvas with animation projection, is ambiguous, symbolic, and poetic, pointing out the inner struggles of humankind. The symbolic and poetic sense of her works are similar to mine. She was also an Iranian immigrant artist who lived in New York. She used new media to add animated elements to her works. (Leila Heller Gallery) How she used motion character on her paintings motivated me to explore more about mixing new media (Figure 6).



Figure 6. *The Clock of My Life*, Mixed media, 72 x48 in

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTED WORKS AND TECHNIQUES

A collection of printmaking, paintings with projecting animation and video, animation, video art, handmade book with recorder, and a series of short poems are presented in this project.

PRINTMAKING AND PAINTING

Gaining new experiences has always been exciting as you will be willing to do anything to reach your goal. In this journey, good and bad events together with the happiness and sadness associated with them are the companions of many immigrants. Only the taste of reaching the goal reduces the burden of such journey. With my writings and illustrations that complement each other, I tried to convey this feeling to a society full of immigrants and introduce them to this kind of life. Before starting the journey, the immigrant is familiar with the difficulties of his journey and what others have said and heard, and yet it becomes a dangerous journey. The inhabitants of the destination country are usually unaware of the suffering that an immigrant would face. I have portrayed the hardships of this journey in a surreal atmosphere. I take the viewer away from the real world to introduce him to the unknown world of immigration. In this world, birds come to the aid of the migrant as a symbol of migration and sometimes as carriers of good feelings (Figure 7 and Figure 8). These works have been done with linoleum engraving technique and printing of different layers of linoleum.

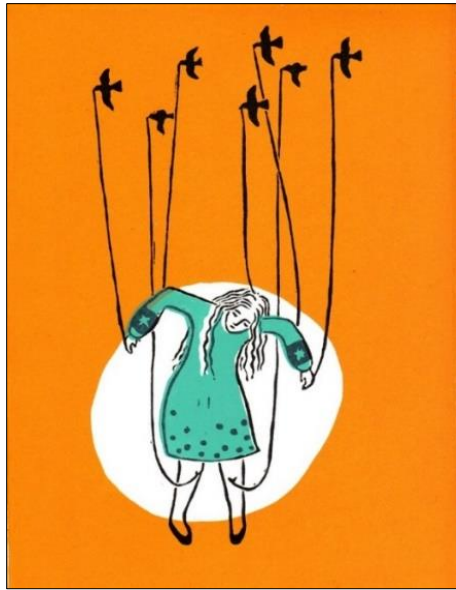


Figure 7. *Loneliness* (printmaking, linocut, 8.5 x 11 in. 2021)

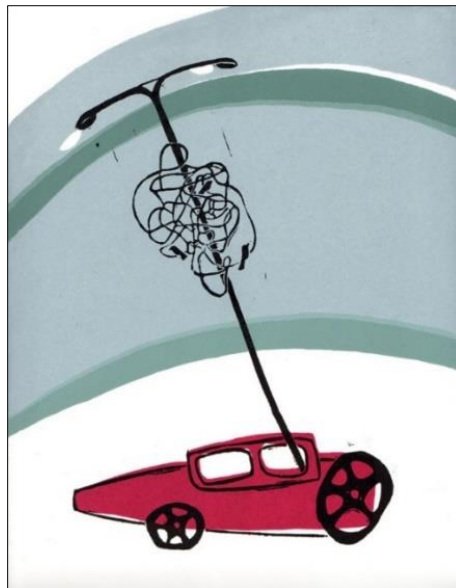


Figure 8. *Fishing Pole* (printmaking, linocut, 8.5 x 11 in. 2021)

VIDEO ART, ANIMATION AND MIXED MEDIA

I had a short journey to my country Iran, and I recorded a twenty-second video from the experience that gave me a sense of nostalgia. I had a plan to create a video art based on my poem about the city where I was born and grew up in North of Iran. My city is near the sea and most of the year it is rainy. People of this city speak a local dialect which is called Gilaki. Later, I was going to a trip in United States, and I was listening to a song (in that local dialect) which is very popular in my city. As the weather is usually rainy in my city, and on the day that I was taking the trip it was rainy too, it mixed with the music and evoked the sense that I was in my city. After about one minutes the navigation said, “Welcome to Oklahoma” and suddenly I awoke and was reminded that I am thousands of miles away from that place. I create this video based on discovering identity and individual narrative through nostalgic signs, images, and my poem.

Embryo is a painting based on one of my writings: “No trust to the midwives, when they kill the embryo of your sprout”. The fantasy caged birds who are well-cared for by their owners are symbols of humans living in their comfort zone. Therefore, they surround themselves in a small world and do not want to discover the outer world. Migrant birds in murmuration are documented in a video that is displayed on top of the work.

In my two-panel painting of an animated girl biking on the seconds handle of the clock, which was discussed earlier, an animation of a clock is designed to be projected on two paintings of maps. Before moving to the US, I used to review Google Maps and find the paths that I thought I would follow in the future. An imaginary journey to the future was being pictured in my mind. I eventually came to the US, but now my imaginary journey through Google Maps is linked to the past and to the country where I was born. I have displayed the routes that I used to

take in my home country as well as the routes that I am already taking in the US and have separated them from the rest of the world. *Map to Not Indicate* is a piece by Michael Baldwin and Terry Atkinson that plays with the geographical borders of the world. This work is completed by a text next to the image that lists the name of all states except Iowa and Kentucky since they are already displayed in the work (Tate). In *The Clock of My Life* different routes are taken from Google Maps and are painted by different colors on each other. One panel is painted based on the routes in my country and the other based on routes in Texas.

Antidepressant pill is a continuation of my practice of creating art through new media. Immigration, with all its beauties and new encounters, brings incredible spiritual hardships that require discovering new ways to resolve. Just as we prioritize financial needs and decide which needs are more important to pay for, so should spiritual needs be given priority. Sometimes the two become entangled in each other and force us to discover a new way to achieve a balanced life. I created an art animation which presents a story about fulfilling a spiritual need of mine as an immigrant. The story begins when the boredom of life put a lot of pressure on me. Suffering from not seeing family for long time, I took refuge in cat photos and videos in Instagram. I understood that looking at them had a great impact on my mood and made me happy. This art animation is created without dialogues. This is about how a kitten opens its place in a human's heart with the indirect goal of positive change in human spirit. This is the story of how an upset person can calm down. The cat plays the role of an important human being for a while and then disappears. Using a cat as a surrogate, I will try to go deeper into aspects of being human by transferring the media culture of Instagram into an introspective spiritually focused art

animation. The main character of the animation is a cat who works miracles to change the human spirit. This animation art was executed with 2D Digital Cell technique.

I was inspired by the moving lines of animations in works of Paul Driessen. I use wiggling lines, as well as simple and monochrome color surfaces in my works. Book illustration has been my entry into the field of art animation and have brought the same style of drawing to my animation with digital pens. Engaging in animation for me is illustrating playful imagery. Humor in the illustration of books is an inseparable part of my work, with the difference that in the animation, it plays a stronger role. *The cat who was a cat inside* by Siri Melchior has used expressive line drawings and simplified geometric styles (Cavalier). Also, the work of Henri Matisse, *Interior with Egyptian curtain*, 1948, Oil on canvas might bear visual similarity to my work. Shapes are clear and solid like the sharp cuts found in collage technique. The simple shapes placed with remarkable balance within the frame represents one of the factors that I deal with in my works as well. I tried to strengthen my artistic style by adopting the use of line and shape presented in these works.

PARTICIPATORY ART

The Moment is a Mix media participatory art with 12 three-dimensional clocks on the canvas (Figure 9). I have set three clocks based on Iran, California, and Texas. Iran is the place where I was born, and my parents reside. California is where my sister lives and, Texas is where I have been living for the last three years. the audience are asked to change the time based on the palaces that their family or relatives live. In this case, the audience views an issue that may have never challenged their minds.



Figure 9. *The Moment*, Mixed media, 60 x48 in

The artist is supposed to merge with the people, so the public finds themselves as active players on the stage of generating art (Atkins et al.). I showed the time differences that an immigrant faces to communicate with her family. Robert Rauschenberg created *Reservoir* which is a combination of two- and three-dimensional elements showing the time differences of when

he started working on this painting and when he finished. In this painting we cannot recognize whether the piece is started or completed in morning or night (Rauschenberg). In my image I include multiple clocks to show the time differences that an immigrant is facing for everyday life to communicate to the home country.

All printmaking works are collected in a handmade book including the poems, which inspire each work. A sound card with recording and playing options is set up at the end of this book. The audience can contribute to this work by recording their voice: reading a poem of the book and leaving it for the next visitor. The next visitor, after playing and hearing this voice, would leave his/her voice by choosing a favorite poem and this cycle goes on and on.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

My work is a journey from past to present, from traditional to technological. As I joined ATEC my works became engaged with technology. I gained an extensive amount of experience with innovative styles and digital techniques. I started as an illustrator with a foundation in graphic design. But through MFA program (Creative Practice) I learned about projection mapping, participatory art, video art, animation, and fashion; and I made a deeper connection between my practice as a writer and an artist. I searched for the work as it occupied the between writing and drawing/illustrating. The discipline of classes and labs reawakened my mind, which was immersed in traditional artistic styles, by adopting technologies of the 21st century. I was taught how to look at art freely. A wide field of vision opened in front of me, and I was able to demonstrate my imaginative ideas beyond the surface of the paper. My illustrations were accompanied by video art and animations. They came out of the surface of the paper and were illustrated on the canvas and dress. Now, my mind can fly freely like the birds of my work and go wherever art and beauty can be created.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Maedeh Asgharpour is a visual artist, illustrator, and graphic designer. She was born in Guilan, Iran. She holds a Master of Arts in Graphic Design from University of Tehran. Maedeh Asgharpour has illustrated children's books and magazines. Her works were published in Graphic Wood Book by Rasm Publications. She has also taught Illustration at University of Guilan. She moved to Texas in 2018 and entered the Creative Practice MFA program at The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD). Her works have been featured and won awards at national and international festivals and exhibitions. She won the first and the second prizes in POP-UP Locker Exhibition, "Freedom of expression" at UTD and second place in a group exhibition, "The Road to The Heart" at Irving Art center in Texas. Her work was selected as one of the top 10 finalists in "IV International skylight prize illustration, SkyLight 2017", in Colombia. In 2020, she participated in a novel sculpture installation by the ATEC LightSquad from The University of Texas at Dallas installed at the Eisemann Center in Texas. She has also won the award of the "Best Graphic Art" at '2020 HINDSIGHT', the 6th annual Persian Art Exhibition held by Irving Art Association in Texas.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Maedeh Asgharpour

Email: Maedeh.Asgharpour@utdallas.edu

Website: www.asgharpour.com

EDUCATION

2018-2021: Creative Practice, University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), TX, USA

2014 (MA): Graphic Design, University of Tehran (Department of Fine Arts), Tehran, Iran

2010 (BA): Graphic Design, Nabi Akram Institute of Higher Education, Tabriz, Iran

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Solo Exhibitions:

2021 MFA Thesis Show, 'Symphony of An Immigrant's Life', SP/N Gallery, UTD, TX, USA.

2015 Solo Poster Exhibition, 'Sneer', Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

2014 Solo Illustration Exhibition, 'Illustration works Collection', Hossein Mahjoobi Gallery, Lahijan, Iran.

2011 Solo Illustration Exhibition, '1001 Nights', Kooshyar Institution Gallery, Rasht, Iran.

Group Exhibitions and workshops:

2021 Group Exhibition, '2020 HINDSIGHT', Irving Art Association, Texas, USA.

2020 Group sculpture installation, 'MotherBoard', Eisemann Center, Texas, USA.

2020 Group Exhibition, 'Mirror in Mirror', Irving Art Association, Texas, USA.

2020 Group Exhibition, 'Zarafa Unfolding', SP/N Gallery, UTD, Texas, USA.

2019 Group POP-UP Locker Exhibition, 'Freedom of expression', ATEC, UTD, Texas, USA.

2019 Group Exhibition, 'The Road to The Heart', Irving Art Association, Texas, USA.

2018 Group Exhibition, 'IV International Skylight Prize for illustration', CasaTeatro El Poblado, Medellin, Colombia.

2017 Group Photography Exhibition (94), 'Private Zone', Sane Gallery, Sanandaj, Iran.

2016 Group Illustration Exhibition, '1001 Nights', Iranian Illustrators Society, with collaboration Book House Institute, Niavaran Gallery, Tehran, Iran.

- 2015 Group Photography Exhibition (94), 'Instagraphy', Ashena Gallery, Shiraz, Iran.
- 2015 Group Poster Exhibition, 'In support of children with cancer and immunodeficiency', Children's Medical Center, Omid Gallery, Tehran, Iran.
- 2015 Group Exhibition, 'Visual records, Tehran Gallery, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.
- 2015 Group Illustration Exhibition, 'Book Gallery', Laleh Gallery, Tehran, Iran.
- 2015 Group Illustration Exhibition (Amazing World), 'Modernism', Arasbaran Cultural Center, Tehran, Iran.
- 2013 Group Illustration Exhibition (Amazing World), 'Kelileh and Demneh (Panchatantra)', Iranian Artist Forum, Tehran, Iran.
- 2012 Group Illustration Exhibition (Amazing World), '1001 Nights', Iranian Artist Forum, Tehran
- 2011 Group Illustration Exhibition, 'Free Subject', Termeh Gallery, Tehran, Iran.
- 2010 Participating in Fictional Illustration Workshop of Javier Zabaleta, Visual Arts Studio of Saeed Ensafi, Tehran, Iran.
- 2009 Group Illustration Exhibition (Illustration with Letters), 'Free School', Tabriz Cultural House, Tabriz
- 2008 Group Illustration Exhibition, 'Zoo', Ou Gallery, Rasht, Iran.
- 2008 Group Illustration Exhibition, '15 × 15 Biologic', Mehrin Gallery, Tehran, Iran.

TEACHING/RESEARCH ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

- Aug. 2020- May. 2021 Teaching Associate, University of Texas at Dallas, USA (Design 1).
- Aug. 2019-Dec. 2019 Teaching Assistant, University of Texas at Dallas, USA (Attitudes and Behavior).
- Jan. 2019 -May. 2019 Teaching Assistant, University of Texas at Dallas, USA (Culture Jamming).
- Aug. 2018-Dec. 2018 Teaching Assistant, University of Texas at Dallas, USA (Freshman Seminar).
- Jan. 2016-Jun. 2016 Institute of Dr. Moeen, Rasht, Iran (Technology and Graphics Studio 2, Computer Graphics 1).
- Jan. 2016-Jan. 2017 University of Science and Culture, Rasht, Iran (Computer Graphics 2, Visual Communications Workshop 1).
- Sep. 2016-Jan. 2017 University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran (Illustration3).

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Illustration, participatory art, identity, printmaking

PUBLICATIONS

- *1001 Nights. Text Abdullatif Tasouji. Iran: Talk. Iranian E-magazine of visual arts. 2010. print*

- *Graphic Wood Book. Text Mehdi Sadeghi. Iran: Rasm. 2011. print*
- *Ninth Grade. Iran: Kayhan Bacheha Magazine. 2012. print*
- *Easy Performances: Oh, Sorry, It Was a Mistake. Text Hassan dolatabadi. Iran: Sooreh Mehr. 2012. print*
- *Namakiha. Text Mohammadreza Yoosefi, Iran: Danesh Negar. 2015. Print*

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Feb-2019 Presenter, “Trust the Grain Field of My Hair”, RAW (Research, Art, Writing Graduate Conference), University of Texas at Dallas, Texas, USA

GRANTS

2020-2021 HASTAC Scholars Program

2020 Research Fellowship Program, The University of Texas at Dallas, Office of Research & Office of Graduate Education

SKILLS

Graphic Design:

Well Acquainted with Graphic Principles Including: Logo Design, Brand Identity Design, Advertising Campaign Design and Consulting, Poster Design, and Design and layout of the book. Well acquainted with Graphic Design Software: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator and Corel Draw.

Illustration:

Illustration Including: Illustration of Books and Scientific Magazines, Illustration of Children Books, Character Design, Illustration with Hand Techniques including: Linocut, Metal Printing, Lithography, Watercolor, Gouache, Pastel, Collage

Animation:

Animation Design Including: Character Design, Background Designing, Animating Acquainted with Anime Studio and Adobe Photoshop Software

Ceramic:

Proficiency in making Ceramic Container

AWARDS & HONORS

2021 Best Graphic Art, '2020 *HINDSIGHT*' - 6th annual Persian Art Exhibition, Irving Art Association, Texas, USA.

2019 First and second prizes in POP-UP Locker Exhibition, 'Freedom of expression', ATEC, UTD, Texas, USA.

2019 Second place in group exhibition, 'The Road to The Heart', Irving Art Association, Texas, USA.

2018 Selected as one of the top 10 finalists in 'IV International skylight prize illustration, SkyLight 2017', Medellin, Colombia.

2016 Selected in 'Dariche' Festival, Department of Arts with the support of Tehran University of Medical Sciences and the Institute of Visual Arts, Leaders Summit Galery, Tehran

2016 Selected in 'Healthy citizens', Graphic Design Festival, Organization of Tehran Beautification, Tehran

2012 Selected in First 'Golestan' Photography Festival, Tehran

2012 Selected in 'Soogvare Sarv' Poster Festival, Organization of Tehran Beautification

LANGUAGES

English, Persian