MOREHSHIN
ALLAHYARI

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Art 21. In the Studio, 2023

In the Studio

Morehshin Allahyari re-figures histories and imagines new futures

by Kayla Anderson

***Kayla Anderson*: How long has documentary been a part of your practice?**

Morehshin Allahyari: All my practice, in one way or another, has been about storytelling and documentary building. From ages 12 – 15, I wrote a 384 page novel about the life of my grandmother, which was published in Iran when I was 16. My father's family was from Kurdistan, and after my grandmother passed away, I made him take me to the village that she grew up in. I went around talking to different people and recording whatever they remembered about my grandmother. When I think back on it, I realize I've always been interested in ways to document social and political issues, performing archival work through the use of technological tools and processes.

In both *Material Speculation: ISIS* and *She Who Sees The Unknown*, I was interested in reworking or reshuffling history. Re-figuration for me is about the reinvention of material forms, as well as preservation. It's an act of going back and retrieving the forgotten or destroyed histories to re-imagine much needed alternative narratives.

Can you give me an example of how refiguring happens in *She Who Sees The Unknown*? Perhaps in *The Laughing Snake*?

In the original story, *The Laughing Snake* goes to cities and towns killing people, until someone comes and holds a mirror in front of her. When she sees her reflection, she laughs for days and nights until she dies from laughter. But in my re-figuring of the story, I don't see this act of death as a position of weakness, but rather as a position of power, in which she takes agency over her body, her image, her reflection in the mirror. And so the new story I tell about her connects to the idea of embracing your body as a woman. It connects to my experiences growing up in Iran, and the collective experience of women thinking about sexual desire, street harassment, and different forms of patriarchy that control the way women deal with their bodies in both religious and societal contexts. I embrace the monstrosity of these figures. Instead of seeing monstrosity as negative, I see it as a place where I can turn around power structures.

In many of your works I see a kind of intergenerational storytelling. How does the idea of lineage or historical continuity play out in your work?

When I was writing *The Laughing Snake* I was thinking about how it has been almost impossible to get out of this patriarchal system. There is a story where I'm sitting on a bus, and a guy is trying to touch my breasts but pretending to be putting up the window. I imagine I take out a safety pin, something a friend told me to carry for cases like these, and when I put it in his body, he disappears. So I think of using imagination, and other ways of world-building, as a way to see into a future where you can interrupt a cycle. Stories like this have happened not just to me, but to all women in Iran. In my work, I always start with my personal experience, moving to stories from others, to imaginary stories where there's more hope and possibility in imagining a future. In the case of *The Laughing Snake*, a future where women have come together to take back their power, their agency, their autonomy over their bodies.

Some of the techniques you use in the hypertext version of *The Laughing Snake* give the feeling of voices rising up together. We see that there is a lineage of patriarchal oppression, but also a lineage of struggle and resistance.

I made this in 2018, and now in 2022 we have the Jin.Jiyan.Azadi/Woman, Life, Freedom Revolution in Iran. Somehow I think this story, this future, is coming into real life practice, and that's so powerful and important to witness. It's one of the only revolutions that women have been on the frontline of: women and their bodily agency. We know that patriarchal violence and government violence is still very real and very harmful. Right now, as we do this interview, there is daily news of arrest, torture, and execution of protesters and activists in Iran. All these tactics are about gaining control over your body, mind, and life.

But in the same way that I write hope into a story like *The Laughing Snake*, I want to remind us that the word "life" is an essential part of the Woman, Life, Freedom Revolution. A life against hardship, oppression, inequality, harm, and death; a life of livelihood rooted in freedom; freedom to *freely* be and become; and last but not least, autonomy over that life and freedom. I see so much possibility and potential in the words and ways of this revolution.

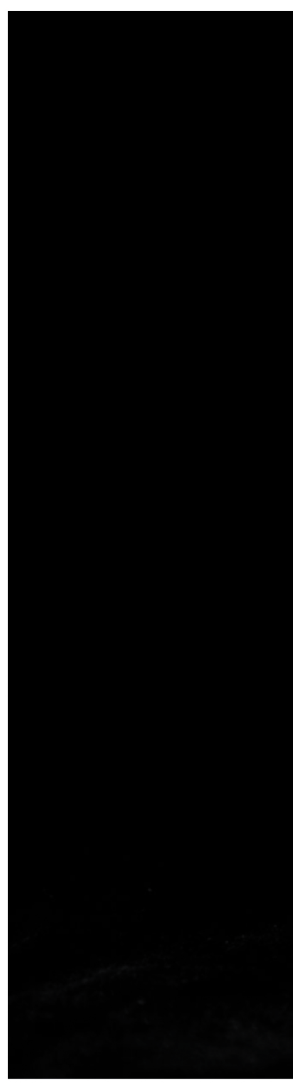
In this sense, I see your work as a way of taking back control over narrative – the ways that stories and histories are told.

Our world becomes so small when we only understand ourselves through the context of now. History allows you to put things in a context that is much bigger than yourself. But history always comes with the power of those who have had access to telling it. For example, when you think about definitions of queerness from a Western perspective, there is a lot of order and categorizing of identity. But looking at the history of the Qajar Dynasty [1789-1925] in Iran, it's amazing that what we know as "queerness" today was ordinary. Intimate same-sex relationships were natural. The relationship to beauty and gender was much more fluid. 350 years later, that's not what we understand about our cultures, due to colonialism and oppression. In my piece *Moon-Faced*, I work with an AI system, feeding it different visuals and sentences, and asking it to undo the loss of visual representation of this queer culture: to repair this history of colonization.

That sounds like a very tangible act of futuring. Can you talk about the role of sci-fi in your work?

Growing up in Iran, there was a very interesting absence of sci-fi as a critical genre, from movies to literature. I've been curious about what that means. Not from a top-down approach like "we don't have this, so there's something wrong with us," but why don't we have it, and what does that mean about our relation to the future?

I'm currently working on a speculative documentary film project, where I'm looking at scientific tools and technological devices that were invented in the Islamicate regions. I'm looking at the history of ways we saw into, affected, or used different methods to predict the future. I have five female scientists, future tellers, and historians that activate these tools to discuss their history, but also use the tools to imagine possible futures of the Middle East. The experts in the film are from Egypt, Iran, Palestine. I'm trying to create, as much as possible, a wider spectrum of ways of seeing and imagining us into the future.



Morehshin Allahyari, Installation view of "Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art" (Albright-Knox Northland, October 16, 2021—January 16, 2022). Photo by Tina Rivers Ryan for Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Photo courtesy the artist.

Interview conducted for Art21 in December of 2022 by Kayla Anderson. Original photography for Art21 shot by William Jess Laird. All other photography courtesy the artist.

Kayla Anderson is an artist, writer, and educator based in Chicago. Their visual work has been shown at itinerant spaces in the US, Canada, Vietnam, Singapore, Germany, and Australia. Their writing has been published by Art & Education, Temporary Art Review, Leonardo Journal, Kustlicht Journal, Aperture Magazine, and various artist-run platforms. They approach art criticism as a testing ground for developing new relations, ethics, and worldviews — with a particular interest in post-colonial post-humanisms. Growing up in San Antonio, Texas, where capitalism and disenfranchisement are more relentless than the sun, they value art as an arena for non-strategic modes of thinking, feeling, and communing with others.

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In and Out of View, 2022

In and Out of View

Art and the Dynamics of Circulation, Suppression, and Censorship

Edited by
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Karen Kleinfelder
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Introduction

Catha Paquette, Karen Kleinfelder, and Christopher Miles

For many, the words "art censorship" suggest a simple binary transaction: one person creates a work of art, and another prevents it from being viewed. Censorship, however, is generally one aspect of complex processes involving creation, erasure, and reemergence.

Morehshin Allahyari's *Lamassu* (2015–16) invites contemplation of the dynamics of such processes (Plate 24). The work, part of the artist's series *Material Speculation: ISIS*, is a 3D-printed plastic six-inch-high miniature of a ninth-century BCE Assyrian stone sculpture in Iraq.[1] Depicted as bearded deities with wings and bodies of bulls or lions, Lamassu functioned as protectors of royalty in Assyrian times, continued to serve religious and sociopolitical purposes in later Mesopotamian cultures, are valued today as integral to regional memory and identity, and are globally important given Mesopotamia's role in the development of civic art and architecture and Iraq's rich history and heritage. While the Lamassu and eleven other ancient artifacts Allahyari replicates in *Material Speculation: ISIS* were destroyed in 2015 by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), other cultural objects have been suppressed through various processes: damage and destruction due to ancient efforts to stifle perceived power; demise of Mesopotamian texts; inadequate nineteenth- and twentieth-century academic historical narration; discontinuous archaeological excavation; and neglect, ruination, looting, and foreign displacement following invasions, sanctions, civil wars, and sectarian violence.[2] *Material Speculation* counters suppression through a digital 3D modeled/reconstructed/fabricated form with embedded storage media safeguarding specifications, maps, provenance data, and still and moving images. The object's compelling details, portable size, and implanted information attest to Allahyari's strategy to ensure visibility and indispensability.

The forces Allahyari calls attention to are clearly not binary. They are exemplary of complex, ongoing processes. *In and Out of View: Art and the Dynamics of Circulation, Suppression, and Censorship*, a collection of writings on artistic propositions and individual/institutional reception from the mid-twentieth century to the present, invites us to consider the dynamics inherent in such cycles. Contributors illustrate that artwork deemed insignificant, divergent, disruptive, offensive, obscene, sacrilegious, or threatening can be subject to varying levels of accessibility and (mis)understanding. They make evident the range of factors effecting visibility, invisibility, and problematic visibility: varied actions of artists, museums, critics, historians, educational institutions, governments, and nongovernmental entities, as well as the alternatingly additive and subtractive nature of interpretative processes.

Lingering Issues

Individuals in many professions and academic disciplines have previously investigated processes of circulation and suppression. Their subjects of focus are remarkably varied, and, importantly, many of the questions they pose remain at issue.

The Question of Culture War(s)

Much US literature on art censorship focuses on 1980s and 1990s controversies over contemporary art dealing with gender, sexuality, eroticism, homophobia, sexism, race/racism, religion, and the AIDS crisis. Prominent examples include debates over Robert Mapplethorpe's *X* and *Z Portfolios* (1978 and 1981), Andre Serrano's *Piss Christ* (1987), and the 1990 rescinding of National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) grants to Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller.[3]

James Davison Hunter argues that the "historically pivotal" conflicts underlying the culture wars were divergent views regarding moral values stemming from "polarizing impulses" toward "orthodoxy" and "progressivism." While conservatives and progressives advocated differing conventions and standards, each urged governmental restrictions—the former to crack down on obscenity and the latter to preempt demeaning speech against racial minorities, gays, and women. "Both sides," he surmises, "make a big mistake when they confuse *censuring* (the legitimate mobilization of moral opprobrium) with *censoring* (the use of the state and other legal or official means to restrict speech)." Hunter locates the "problem" of "moral pluralism and its expansion" in "competing interest groups" with diverse notions of the "public good," "public justice," and "national identity and purpose" struggling for power. Such competition threatens the nation's commitment to the dual values of diversity and unity and, by extension, democracy.[4] Michael Kammen, who suggests increasing "democratization" of culture and "politicization of art" led to individual and institutional "imperatives" to "shock," emphatically asserts that changing views concerning aesthetics and "American" values will "invariably meet with resistance."[5]

Richard Bolton, who views the NEA controversy as a "battle for power" between "cultural" and "conservative" elites who "spoke *for*" but had little "connection to" the "larger public," proposes that solutions lie with the NEA: funding for "new educational approaches to controversial subjects," strengthening of community relationships, and support for work addressing changing social conditions.[6]

Dustin Kidd underscores the impact of period debates, including reductions in NEA funding and defunding of programs addressing "issues of power," as well as the stakes: the "notion of the sacred"; the "sacredness of art"; ideas about national, racial, class, gender, and sexual identities; and "life itself," given the AIDS crisis.[7] But he challenges the very notion of a "culture war," particularly the idea that controversies stem from "deeply held ideological or moral attachments." Kidd suggests conflict is a matter of public discourse, which can effect changes in "attachments" and "shared language."[8]

Jennifer Doyle contends "the culture wars … produced an ocean of hard feelings in their wake (artists who feel abandoned, curators who feel betrayed, museum directors who fear and notions of success, selecting effective media for expression and communication, testing speech limits, giving voice to others, and "caring" more than "knowing."

Contributors to **Part V, Contested Objects and Meanings: (Re)Presenting Cultural Heritage**, reflect on consequences of art theft, displacement, and destruction, as well as benefits of reparative, remunerative, and creative actions.

Craig Stone explains that as an academic he has two stories to tell, one as a professor in an art department, the other as a professor in American Indian Studies. In telling the latter story, he brings into view the sizeable native community in Southern California, the continuing significance of the sacredness of Puvungna land on which California State University Long Beach was constructed, and acts of creative expression through which natives sustain their cultures. Stone, who speaks of the devastating impact of state genocide in the past and cultural genocide in the present, emphasizes the importance of American Indian Studies and, more generally, ethnic studies. He argues that it is crucial to analyze how and why institutions display native culture and whose power they reinforce, eliminate problematic signifiers such as mascots, acknowledge the significance of native lands and culture, and counter the pervasive nature of oppressive knowledge frameworks.

Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie draws attention to confrontations between African publics and Western museums housing African art and artifacts and controlling digital images and copyrights. He highlights the censoring effects of geographic displacement: European universal museums prevent artists in Africa from "engaging their ancestral heritage," present African culture via Western structural orders and norms, and force African artists to conform. Given their ordering of non-Western cultures, canonical museums represent less the art of Africa than European ideas about it. However, as repositories of imperialist global plunder, they now face questions about their roles and possessions. African nations increasingly demand repatriation and restitution. Ogbechie, who maintains that repatriation and restitution counteract distortion and erasure of cultural history and heritage, contemplates the implications of French president Emmanuel Macron's 2017 endorsement of repatriation, the 2018 Sarr-Savoy report, and completion of the Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar, Senegal.

Artist **Brittany Ransom** engages in conversation with artist/activist **Morehshin Allahyari**, who through video, digital fabrication, 3D modeling/printing, and data sharing challenges censorship. Topics include how and why censorship became important to Allahyari, as well as the forms censorship takes. Allahyari, who notes that suppression occurs in both her native Iran and the United States, where she currently resides, sees censorship and self-censorship as pervasive dilemmas. She highlights the potentially radical role of 3D technology, which extends the visibility of destroyed artifacts. Ransom and Allahyari consider the oppositional potential of #Additivism, an additivist/activist movement initiated by Allahyari and Daniel Rourke that exploits processes of "destruction and construction, interruption and rebuilding." Additivism, Allahyari suggests, provides the means to counter "the very powers" of those "that oppress" by way of their "strategies and languages and aesthetics."

In **Part VI, Matters of Race: Campus (Un)Learning**, multiple voices speak to issues at stake regarding artistic expression and suppression. Concerns parallel those of diverse constituencies within educational and scholarly institutions striving to adapt in appropriate ways to shifting contexts and uphold varied—and often conflicting—ideals and values.

In September 2015 **Ashley Powell**, an MFA student at the University of Buffalo, placed "WHITE ONLY" and "BLACK ONLY" signs in various campus locations, sparking controversy. In a statement published in the campus newspaper, Powell explains the context in which she acted—a class on artistic interventions in urban space—and her motivations. Her art practice is a "remnant" of and an "antidote" for the "self-hate, trauma, pain, and indignation" she experiences as a nonwhite person, which are "exacerbate[d]" by "white privilege and compliance." Powell highlights other artists' efforts to deal with difficult experiences, including those of Kara Walker: "*Subtlety* hurt us, but that hurt was necessary to call us to action." In an April 2016 letter **Kara Walker** responds to Powell in supportive yet sobering terms. Powell, reflecting in 2019 on her experience and Walker's observations, defends activist provocation as necessary in a world rife with passive compliance and reactionary censorship.

"Presenting/Canceling *N*gger Wetb*ack Ch*nk:* Creative Expression, Speech Rights, and Pedagogy" features diverse perspectives on the 2016 cancellation of a performance by Speak Theatre Arts titled *N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk* (asterisks inserted by the creators) at the Carpenter Performing Arts Center (CPAC) at California State University Long Beach (CSULB). The show, which incorporates provocative language and references to stereotypes, had run at CPAC a year earlier with the endorsement of the university president, some academic participation, and utilization of campus promotional channels. As the scheduled and advertised 2016 performance neared, however, the dynamics shifted. Amid circumstances that remain contested, "cancellation of this return performance was determined" and resignation of the CPAC executive director followed. In published statements and comments solicited by the editors, participants and observers on and off campus individually revisit facts and effects, collectively revealing but not resolving the complexity of the situation. They offer varied views concerning harmful speech, freedom of artistic expression, student needs, academic freedom, and administrative oversight of programming.

"*American Monument 25/2018*: Students Respond" focuses on circumstances surrounding CSULB's 2018 dismissal of University Art Museum director Kimberli Meyer and artist lauren woods's subsequent pausing of *American Monument*, a project investigating police violence against African Americans. While the Bibliography points readers to various individual and organizational declarations, two pronouncements by students are published in full. Arguably the most important of campus constituencies, students are rarely given voice in academic texts addressing issues impacting them. In a document written during the crisis by **CSULB School of Art Concerned Students of Color and Allies**, students express dismay and anger over the director's untimely firing, calling it a "direct affront to the work and the content" and an "act" of "institutional violence." In an essay written several months later, art history graduate student **Andrea A. Guerrero** describes the controversy's mixed consequences and raises pressing questions: What will result from this crucial work? Who will make change happen?

The anthology concludes with **Afterwords**, a conversation between **Svetlana Mintcheva** and **Laura Raicovich** about shifts in discourse on censorship. Mintcheva notes that while concerns during the 1980s and 1990s culture wars focused largely on reductions in government funding, and she herself viewed censorship as "systemic," she fears the term today is applied too liberally. Raicovich laments the structural inequities and complex dynamics continually at play in governmental institutions, museums, and universities. Mintcheva and Raicovich go on to exchange views on institutional gatekeeping, means of achieving diversity and inclusion, productive programming strategies, and the benefits and risks of boycotts. While they agree protests are valuable and necessary, they disagree on institutional neutrality—should museums openly express their positions on current issues or simply enable others to do so? Noting free speech and social justice are often construed in "false opposition," they call for "productive disagreements." Controversies, they maintain, present opportunities to hold "difficult conversations."

Transitioning Thoughts

Investigations since the 1960s of issues relating to speech rights and visibility—culture wars, knowledge practices, museum acquisition and display, entanglements of artistic production/

representation in sociopolitico-economic systems and structures, the global turn in art historical narration, and protected expression in academia—have generally been undertaken in full awareness of, direct response to, and solidarity with civil rights movements, including those of Asian American, Black American, Chicanx/Latinx, feminist, LGBTQ, and Native American activists. As this book goes into production—a time of political divisiveness, global pandemic, insurrections, pervasive economic crises, heightened attacks on democracy, increasingly visible police/military/paramilitary violence, awareness of racial inequity and oppression, as well as globally articulated demands for social justice—the need for close analysis and substantive deliberation is especially pressing. Given these unrelenting pressures, investigations of complex frictions and potentially productive discord seem all the more imperative.

A major premise behind this anthology has been that close assessment of the relative impact of suppressive phenomena is necessary—the consequences of censure, overt censorship by public and private institutions, and invisibility and problematic visibility effected by knowledge practices. Contributors have offered varied views on how and why such pressures are impactful: what their determinants, ramifications, and broader implications are, and, ultimately, what is at stake. They bring to light variations in historical circumstances, representational strategies, and mechanisms of visibility, distortion, and erasure. Parallels and differences among kinds of power—regulatory and constituent censorship—are not flattened here, but fleshed out for nuanced consideration. In adopting then-versus-now frameworks and considering the interrelation between past and present, contributors have generally concluded that "then" is by no means over "now." The past, they propose, continues to be used to shape present understandings. Also, they make clear that controversial forms of creative expression are caught up in multiple instances of contextualization, interpretation, and evaluation. Arenas of debate are complex matrices in which discursive issues ebb and flow, intersect and disconnect. Processes through which works of art move into and out of view are kept in play by diverse constituencies—individuals, social groups, and institutions with distinct needs, motivations, and interests. Along the way, social needs, moral imperatives, political priorities, economic interests, individual aims, and institutional missions cohere and conflict. Art is rendered visible and invisible in productive and counterproductive ways. Authors confirm that the dynamics of dissemination, distraction, displacement, restriction, intervention, and resistance are fluid and complex.

With this unavoidably incomplete collection of concerns, and our contributors' diverse analytical priorities and approaches, much comes into view: many art worlds, practitioners, conflicts, coalitions, contexts, and narratives, as well as the undeniable and indispensable benefits of creative production, critical thinking, and debate.

Notes

1 For information concerning *Material Speculation: ISIS*, see Alexis Anais Avedisian and Anna Khachiyan, "On *Material Speculation*," *Morehshin Allahyari: Material Speculation* (Toronto: Trinity Square Video, 2016), www.morehshin.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/morehshin_allahyari-material_speculation_isis_brochure-1.pdf.

2 The significance of both regional cultural heritage and the looting and destruction following the 2003 invasion of Iraq by a US-led coalition is addressed by Zainab Bahrani, Harriett Crawford, Robin Greeley, and John Malcolm Russell in *Art Journal* 62, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 6–29.

3 In 1990, after Congress authorized NEA funding with the stipulation that the NEA uphold "general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American people," the NEA revoked the four artists' awards, which had been recommended by an NEA review panel. The artists filed a lawsuit against the NEA for violating their First Amendment

17

Censorship and Creative (Re)Production: A Conversation

Morehshin Allahyari and Brittany Ransom

The following discussion between Brooklyn-based Iranian media artist, activist, and educator Morehshin Allahyari and Brittany Ransom, an associate professor of sculpture and new genres and the associate director of the School of Art at California State University Long Beach, took place as an email exchange between November 2017 and February 2018. Questions that arise in this discussion concern how and why censorship became important to Allahyari, censorship's many forms and proliferation, and the means by which she has rematerialized ancient Middle Eastern artifacts via digital technologies. Ransom and Allahyari call attention to the oppositional potential inherent in #Additivism, an additivist/activist movement that exploits the processes of destruction and reconstruction to not only pose difficult questions but also to counter "the very powers" of those "that oppress" by way of their "strategies and languages and aesthetics."

Ransom: Your work addresses the dynamics through which visual culture moves in and out of site, functioning in the real world and the virtual, with information shifting between the physically tangible and the digitally manipulatable, and with the concepts and resulting works (objects/publications) of your practice addressing various types of circulation and suppression. Your work exploits issues of both erasure and re-creation. Why is that important to you as an artist/activist?

Allahyari: This is a very beautiful way to describe the binaries and gray areas my work exists in. I think it's also exactly why I have been interested in technology as a tool set that allows for moving between and in and out of these spaces. I've been looking for ways my work as an artist can be both practical and conceptual, and exist back and forth in the virtual and digital. For example, so much of my fascination with 3D printing in some of my earlier work was its potential as a technology to bring an object existing in digital 3D space into a physical 3D object—layer by layer, in real life. Watching the process of the 3D printer for the first time was magical and also allowed for the opening of new trajectories in my work. The same thing is true in terms of how I imagine concepts of art, poetics, activism, and my practice coming together.

A number of my recent projects created in the last decade focus on these ideas in ways that are not dry or direct. I have been considering how to make politically related work that is not cheesy or boring. Numerous times I have said that being born and raised in a country like Iran, as artists, we never felt like we had the privilege of making work that is not political and critical. I always have felt a very strong connection as an artist to the world beyond the artwork and its problems—to the political, social, and cultural conditional struggles we have. How can I live in the America of Trump as a woman of color and an immigrant from Iran and not constantly have my head occupied by everything that this current political climate means and how it affects me and my people? I want to take this opportunity to share some of Nina Simone's statements about art activism, which are among my favorites on the subject:

> An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times. I think that is true of painters, sculptors, poets, and musicians. As far as I'm concerned, it's their choice, but I choose to reflect the times and situations in which I find myself. To me, that is my duty. This is a crucial time in our lives, when everything is so desperate, when every day is a matter of survival, I don't think you can help but be involved.[1]

This is my motto. Stand up and use work as a platform.

Ransom: Themes of censorship seem to be at the root of many of your projects. Can you discuss your work *Video Instructions: Tips on Censorship* (2010)?[2] Why did you find censorship to be a particularly important issue at that moment in time, and in what context did you choose to focus on this issue? Who was your primary audience for this work?

Allahyari: The first two to three years of living in the US, after moving from Iran in 2007, came with a lot of confusion and complications. I think I now embrace this feeling of being split after living in the US for ten years. I was trying to make sense of this shift, not just in a literal geographical sense of being in between, but also in practical, cultural, and emotional ways.

Censorship was one topic that I continuously thought about. Trying to figure out how to approach and bring censorship into my work was important, as it was a very personal issue. As an Iranian artist living in the US, I had the opportunity of not censoring my work and myself, and realized that this change came with a huge amount of compromising. If I were going to make the kind of work I wanted to make without censoring myself, it would make it very difficult as an artist to go back to Iran without risking being harassed by the government.

This meant I had to make many choices. It meant that the less I censored myself, the more I exiled myself from my home country, and I was fascinated by those connections and ideas. I was also on a one-entry student visa for the first four years of living in the US and that also came with its own immeasurable amount of stress, paperwork, and an unclear future in terms of immigration. Upon this shift, I did not have a comfortable, clear space to stay in the US that aided in making these choices any easier. Censorship and its consequences were rooted both in my personal work and my studio practice from the beginning.

Tips on Censorship was an ironically humorous series of performances I did online and in gallery spaces where I had made my own ministry of culture and censorship bureau. I made my own rules. I would perform these acts of marking/blacking out things, measuring, and cutting things, while giving instructions on how to censor. This mostly came from a scenario in Iran where a whole team of people sit around and go through magazines, imported books, and visual material, and they literally cut things out of or black out images, one by one, before these materials come to stores, libraries, and are accessible to the public.

I was playing with the idea that someone has a 9-to-5 job of being in charge of this type of censorship, and I found it ridiculous and bizarre. I wanted to see how it felt to practice that and also to bring out visual elements of censorship. When you censor something using a black marker, it is a very different gesture than if you just cut it out. The black censorship bar is very specific when it's on someone's body versus if you just take out that scene in a movie and manipulate the story to be something else. It reads as "hey, we know that you know that we are censoring this because there is this black bar on it" vs. "hey, we censored this and you might never know it was censored because we did such a masterful job of taking it out of this movie without you even noticing that there is a scene where these people have sex or kiss each other." These are very different gestures and positions, especially in Iran where censorship has had many different layers and its visual appearance has changed through the years.

Ransom: In your *Open Letter to the Audience* (2013) relating to the same project, you state, "We live in a repressive global censorship culture." The work is culturally specific to Iran, where you were born and raised, but also the US, where you have lived. You state that in the US censorship is more "subversive and clever." The video and instructions emphasize that censorship is universally relevant, and at the same time you make clear that we're all implicated in it: governments censor and individuals self-censor.

Allahyari: In the years following the making of the *Tips on Censorship* series, I made different variations of this work—sometimes inviting other artists to be a part of my bureau, sometimes only doing panels and discussions about the work. My approach in expanding the issue of censorship beyond Iran came after living in the US for a number of years and learning about how censorship worked here. The way information was selected, manipulated, presented, censored, and controlled was done in a more clever way. Once I started to experience and learn more about US methods of censorship, I wrote the letter as part of a performance I did at CentralTrak in Dallas in collaboration with MAP (Make Art with Purpose). I lived in Texas from 2010 to 2014. I think it was then that I learned how when I talk about censorship in only Iran, the conservative and xenophobic people in the West abuse that space to talk about how oppressive Iran is and how America is this free country that I should obviously feel lucky to live in. This attitude was immediate in so many cases. Like: "Wow, we feel so bad for what you and your people experience in Iran. Glad you have freedom of expression here to talk about this." I felt uncomfortable with that attitude, and I felt it necessary to remind those very people that the government and constitution they believe in, vote for, and support has been censoring and manipulating information for them and the world for decades. The letter was a direct response to these double standards.

Ransom: You have since collaborated with Daniel Rourke on *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* (2015) and *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* (2016) and a number of related curatorial projects and events. The *Cookbook* has also resulted in collaboration with numerous activists, artists, writers, and curators. How did your previous work exploring censorship lead you to this collaboration with Rourke and the creation of the *Manifesto* and *Cookbook*, and what exactly were you responding to by creating these linked projects?

Allahyari: In 2013, Daniel interviewed me for *Rhizome*'s artist profile series about the project I was working on at the time called *Dark Matter*, which was a series of combined, sculptural 3D-printed objects brought together to form humorous juxtapositions. The objects I worked with were all chosen because they are forbidden or taboo to have or use in Iran. I was interested in 3D printers as machines that have a kind of radical political potential embedded in them. What if we could 3D print these objects in-house and use them as an act of guerilla DIY resistance? How would that change our relationship to the forbidden and the censored? This project was the beginning of a multiyear collaboration with Daniel. We both felt like there was no critical dialogue around additive technologies like 3D printers.

These technologies were being used in fablabs and maker spaces by designers, students, and architects but with very little criticality around the machines and acts of object making.

It took us one year to write the manifesto and make the video between three time zones (London, Dallas, Oakland). The process of writing it was a very important part of how things got developed and shaped; it was instrumental to what later became a manifesto and a book two years later. The manifesto was a call to artists, activists, writers, designers, and others to respond to our utopian and dystopian ideas on plastic, oil, the 3D printer, and the future. A call to arms; a call to action.

Ransom: In 2016 you released *The 3D Additivist Cookbook*, a "free compendium of imaginative, provocative works from over 100 world-leading artists, activists, and theorists" that contained text but also included replicable files for 3D printers, templates, recipes and "(im)practical designs and methodologies for living in this most contradictory of times."[3] Can you discuss your conviction to share more than simply text, and say what you hope users of the cookbook might generate in terms of tangible objects and possible activism? Can you elaborate on the statements you made in the *Manifesto*: "Additivism can emancipate us. Additivism will eradicate us."[4] And explain how that relates to *The 3D Additivist Cookbook*?[5]

Allahyari: Additivism is the combination of the two words Additive and Activism, a term Daniel and I coined as a point of departure in building a movement and a school of thought. We thought about it as a way of being and making that could bring together some kind of horror sci-fi thinking with a more positive-action-oriented-political-doing. We were inspired by previous manifestos but also were standing on the shoulders of thinkers and writers like Donna Hathaway and Reza Negarestani, among many others. The emancipating and eradicating is a statement, perhaps an exaggerated promise and position for #Additivism as a movement of destruction and construction, interruption and rebuilding. #Additivism is about asking difficult, and often unpalatable, questions. At its heart, it questions the very powers that oppress you, and uses these strategies, languages, and aesthetics against them. Embrace the apocalypse, but use its darkness to create light. It was also important for us to remember not to take ourselves too seriously; so I would like to mention that this statement is also ironic and self-reflective in a way. It's a promise that suggests a potential rather than an absolute truth.

We always thought of *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* as a toolkit rather than a textbook. So much of what we wanted to build was accessibility, education, and activation (daily small actions). The cookbook's most radical feature—we hope—is its accessibility and openness (download it for free now and see).[6] But we are far more excited about the projects that are not contained in it, those that still have to be imagined. A lot of action-based projects in the cookbook can be realized by anyone with any kind of background. In addition to the pdf, we also have released a folder of selected.obj and.stl files from the cookbook, which means anyone with access to a cheap 3D printer or a fablab can 3D-print the objects if they wish. We hope the cookbook encourages people to play, experiment, and not be afraid to make mistakes. That's the best way to learn, and it's fundamental to the practices of art and design. We all start as amateurs and some of us try really hard to stay that way.

Ransom: You and Rourke describe #Additivism in relation to 3D printing as "a technology for channeling creative endeavor, through digital processes, into the layering of raw matter excavated from ancient geological eras … #Additivism … aims to disrupt material, social, computational, and metaphysical realities through provocation, collaboration, and 'weird'/science fictional thinking."[7]

Allahyari: 3D printing is a process that I have used in a number of works (*Material Speculation*, 2015–16; *Dark Matter*, 2014–15; and *She Who Sees the Unknown*

2017–18). In these series, I make use of this technology to both regenerate structures and explore/modify them; ancient artifacts are kept visible and also maintained in creative production.

Ransom: Can you discuss your primary aims for these recent works and your thoughts on the interrelation between artifacts and historical memory? Are these pieces potentially about cultural "repair"? If so, what sort of repair? Short-term or long-term, or both?

Allahyari: *Material Speculation: ISIS* (Plate 24) has been about preservation of historical memory as well as cultural repair, both short-term and long-term. There is here a very practical approach to 3D printing, as well as a completely conceptual, poetic, and nonfunctional approach, where plastic, 3D printing, oil, technocapitalism, and Jihad converge to create dialogue about systems and realities around us that are nonbinary and complex. I find thinking and working around technology like 3D printing really important and exciting. Using 3D printing has been about its functionality (how) and criticality (why). This process is about not only resistance but also inclusion. The objects themselves are 3D-printed sculptures in a clear resin material with a flash drive embedded inside of them. I think of all these twelve sculptures as time capsules. The information inside the flash drives contains all the material that I had gathered during the research process about the artifacts, their history, the process of research, images, and the obj/stl 3D-printing files.

I also wanted to find a way to share this information and material with people in an open format. I recently worked on three heads as part of the *Material Speculation: Isis* series that allowed me to bridge the physical and digital gaps within this project in a more practical way. These three dead drops (2017) are 3D-printed reproductions of stone reliefs that were originally located at the ruins of the ancient city of Hatra in Iraq where they survived for thousands of years in the open air. Gertrude Bell photographed them in April 1911, before major excavations took place. But ISIS destroyed them in 2015. Each dead drop contains a USB drive that viewers can use to download research material (images, maps, pdf files, videos, and a 3D-printable object file of the piece King Uthal) to their laptop or hard drive (Figure 17.1).

Ransom: Your work explores the lines between the vast ways in which Internet and digital technologies circulate, share, and generate content, as well as the ways in which the same information can be suppressed through censorship via technology. Can you discuss how these ideas relate to your most recent work, which is titled *She Who Sees the Unknown*? With this work, are you taking a position of resistance against digital colonialism?

Allahyari: In *She Who Sees the Unknown* I will also be using 3D printers and 3D scanners—two contemporary tools of western digital colonialism of Middle Eastern cultural heritage—to create sculptures of these figures, along with a series of talismans. Each of the figures will have specific powers and spells attached to them, aimed at re-equilibrating contemporary imbalances of power. The figures I will feature are from a mix of eras and traditions, both pre- and post-Islamic. I'm taking them out of their context in order to create the space to build new stories around them. Collaging texts and reappropriating material, I want to create a counter-reality that is critical of claims over heritage by both Western technology industries and Islamic iconoclasts. It is a new feminist collection that focuses on dark goddesses, feminine monsters, and djinn female figures of Middle Eastern origin (Figure 17.2).

This research project, which builds on my previous work, explores the symbolic meanings behind traditions and myths to speculate on the effects of colonialism and other forms of contemporary oppression. I want to devise a narrative through the practices of magic, poetic-speculative storytelling, re-appropriation of traditional mythologies, collaging, meshing, 3D scanning/3D printing, and archiving. In addition, an important part of this

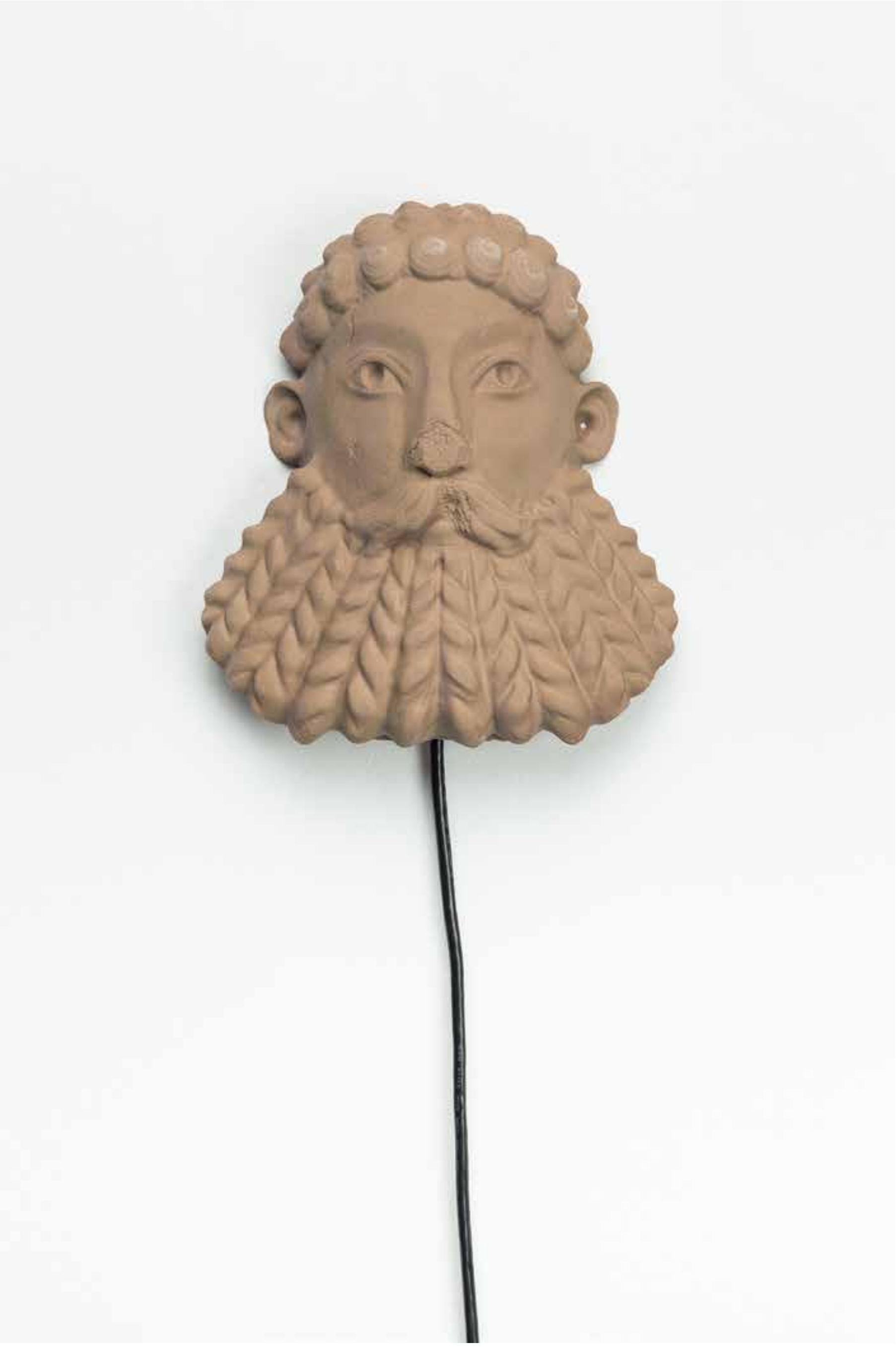

FIGURE 17.1 Morehshin Allahyari, *South Ivan Human Heads: Bearded River God*, 2017, from the *Material Speculation: Isis* series, 3D-printed sculpture (polymer powder) and electronic components. Photo by Mario Gallucci. Courtesy of artist and Sapar Contemporary, NYC.

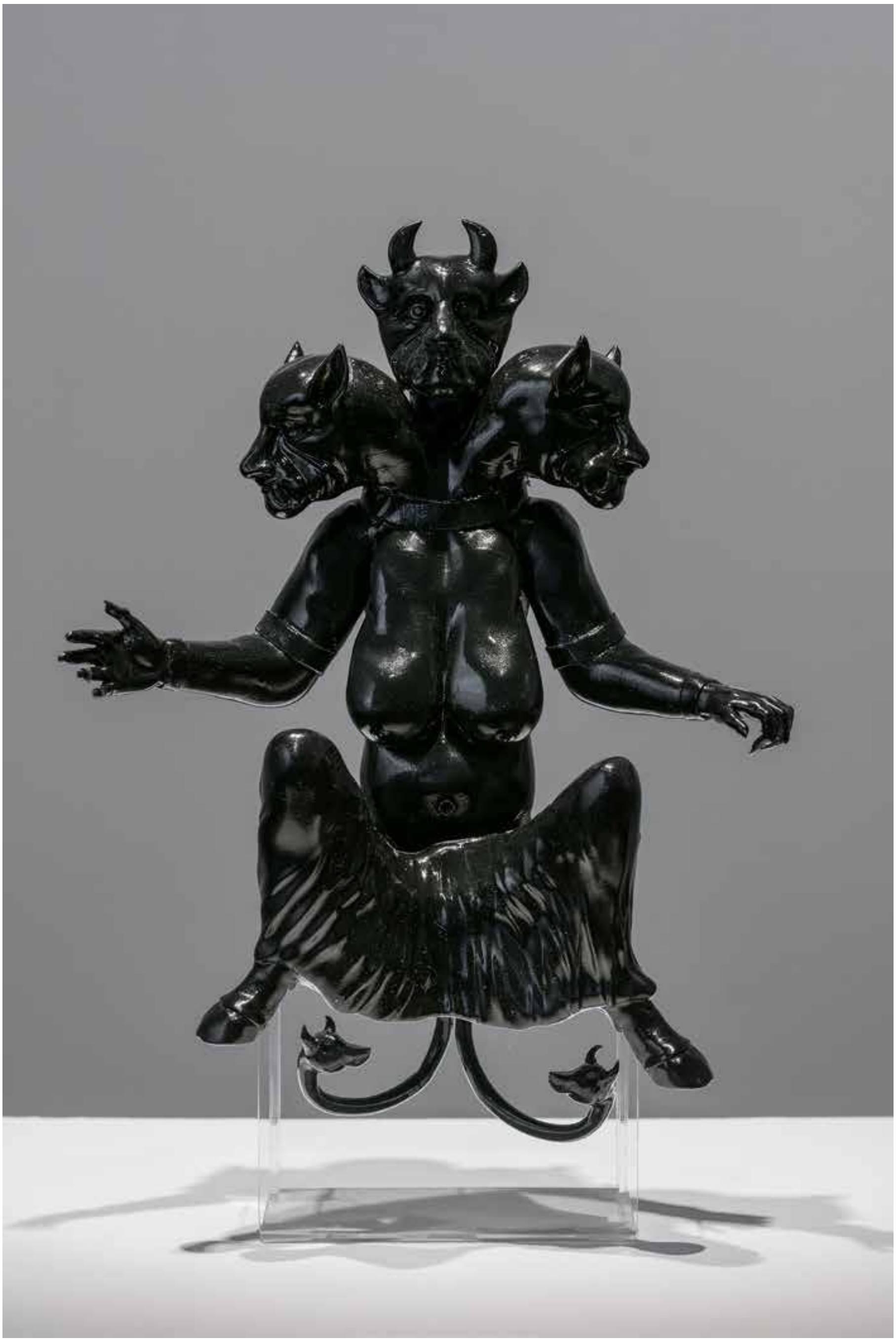

FIGURE 17.2 Morehshin Allahyari, detail of *Huma and Talismans*, 2016, from the *She Who Sees the Unknown* series, 3D-printed black resin sculpture. Photo by Mario Gallucci. Courtesy of artist and Sapar Contemporary, NYC.

project is to build a library/reading room and gather and organize an image and text-based archive of under-represented and misrepresented female mythological figures. These will come from online resources and physical books from Iran, ultimately constituting a digital encyclopedia. There is a serious digital divide in terms of the availability of Middle Eastern material online. This practice is an important part of my efforts to make visible undocumented and forgotten histories and thereby counter both increasing censorship and new forms of censorship in our times. I want to explore issues of digital colonialism and re-figuring by means of a feminist and activist practice using new technologies as tools of investigation.

Notes

1 Nina Simone in *What Happened, Miss Simone?*, directed by Liz Garbus (Moxie Firecracker Films, Netflix, Radical Media, 2015).

2 See "Video Instructions: Tips on Censorship (2010)," www.morehshin.com/video-instructions-tips-on-censorship/.

3 Morehshin Allahyari and Daniel Rourke, *The 3D Additivist Cookbook*, January 2017, http://additivism.org/cookbook.

4 Morehshin Allahyari and Daniel Rourke, *The 3D Additivist Manifesto*, 2015, https://additivism.org/manifesto.

5 For information about the relationship between the manifesto and the cookbook, see Morehshin Allahyari and Daniel Rourke, *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* & *Cookbook*, https://additivism.org/about; Morehshin Allahyari, *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* (2016), www.morehshin.com/3d_additivist_cookbook/; and Morehshin Allahyari, *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* (2015), www.morehshin.com/3d-additivist-manifesto/.

6 Allahyari and Rourke, *The 3D Additivist Cookbook*, http://additivism.org/cookbook.

7 Morehshin Allahyari, *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* [text accompanying video], 2015, https://vimeo.com/122642166.

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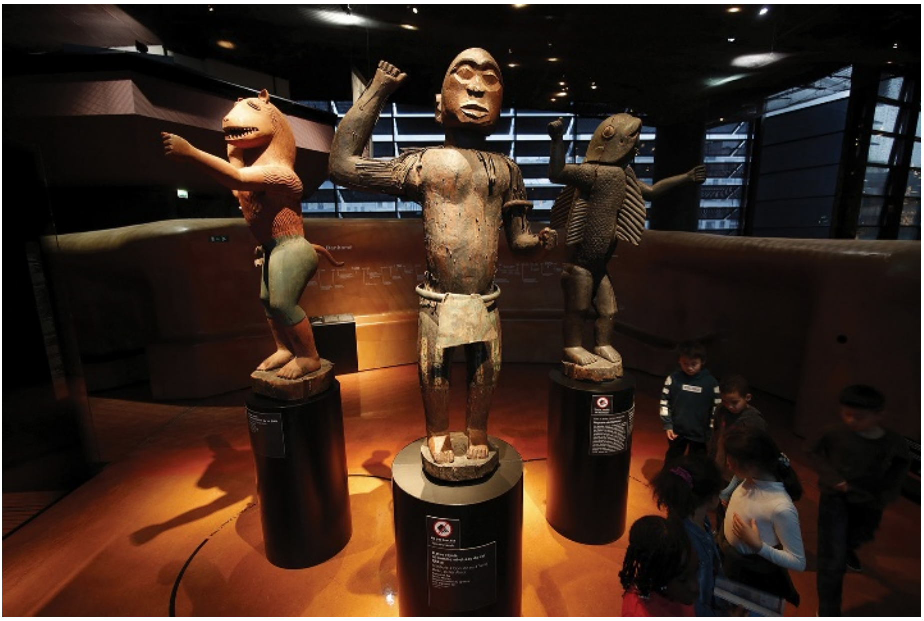

PLATE 23 Royal statues of the Kingdom of Dahomey. L to R: half-man and half-lion of King Glele, attributed to Sossa Dede, Benin, Abomey (1858–89); half-man and half-bird of King Ghezo, attributed to Donvide or Sossa Dede, atelier Akati, Benin, Abomey (19th century); and half-man and half shark of King Behanzin, attributed to Sossa Dede or the Houeglo family, Benin, Abomey (1890–2). Displayed at Quai Branly Museum, Paris, November 23, 2018. REUTERS/Philippe Wojazer.

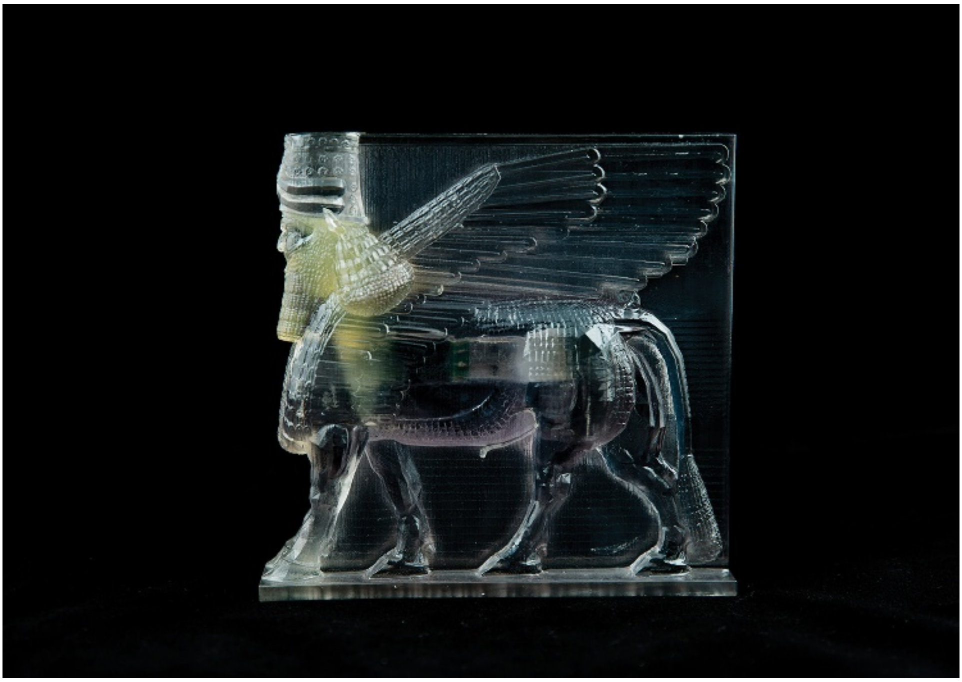

PLATE 24 Morehshin Allahyari, *Lamassu*, 2015, from the *Material Speculation: ISIS* series, 3D-printed resin with embedded portable data-storage device. Photo by Charlie Nordstrom. Courtesy of artist and Sapar Contemporary, New York.

Dismantling the Patriarchy, Bit by Bit, 2022

JUDITH K. BRODSKY

DISMANTLING THE PATRIARCHY, BIT BY BIT

ART, FEMINISM, AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

BLOOMSBURY

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3b Lillian F. Schwartz, *Pixillation* (1970)
4 *Cybernetic Serendipity*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1968)
5 *Centerbeam*, designed by Joan Brigham (steam), Harriet Casdin (videos) and other artists and scientists at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (1977)
6 Barbara Nessim, *Dream Still* (2009)
7 Vera Frenkel, *String Games: Improvisations for Inter-City Video* (1974)
8a Sonya Rapoport, *Shoe-Field Announcement for Media Gallery* (1986)
8b Sonya Rapoport, *Shoe-Field Installation at Media Gallery* (1986)
9 VNS Matrix manifesto
10 Legacy Russell, Screen still from "#GLITCHFEMINISM," video essay (2018)
11 Johanna Burai, *World White Web* (2015)
12a subRosa, *Mother Vape* (2016)
12b subRosa, *Culture of Eugenics* (2005)
13 Jenny Holzer, *Truism*, projection in Times Square (1982)
14 Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (1995)
15 Zach Blas, *ENgenderingGenderChangers, Queer Technologies* (2007–12)
16 Vaginal Davis and Rick Castro, *Fertile La Toyah Jackson Video Magazine: The Kinky Issue!* (1994)
17 Xandra Ibarra (La Chica Boom), *Censored* (2014)
18 Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Roberta Multiples* (1977)
19 Howardena Pindell, *Free, White, and 21* (1980)
20 Mona Hatoum, *Corps étranger* [Foreign body] (1994)
21 Hito Steyerl, *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013)
22a Pipilotti Rist, *Ever Is Over All* (1997)

22b Pipilotti Rist, *Worry Will Vanish Horizon*, from the Worry Work Family (2014)
23 Ellen K. Levy, *Stealing Attention* (2009)
24 Morehshin Allahyari, *Material Speculation: ISIS, Priest with Eagle* (2015)
25 Zina Saro-Wiwa, *Table Manners* (2014–16)
26 Diane Burko in collaboration with Anna Tas, *From Glaciers to Reefs* (2018)
27 Sondra Perry, *Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation* (2016)
28 Brenda Oelbaum, *Falling Out All Over* (2010)
29 Terri Te Tau, *Āhua o te Hau* (2015)
30 Claudia Hart, *Machina* (2002–4)
31 Anna Anthropy, *Dys4ia* (2012)
32 Aya Takano, *The Galaxy Inside* (2015)
33a Naoko Takeuchi, *Sailor Moon* (1991)
33b Mariko Mori, *Birth of a Star* (1995)
34 Adrianne Wortzel, *Battle of the Pyramids* (2008)
35 Anne Spalter, *Midnight* (2020)
36 Milica Zec, *Giant* (2016)
37 Grimanesa Amorós, *HEDERA* (2018)
38 Tamiko Thiel, *ARt Critic Face Matrix* (2010)
39 Nancy Baker Cahill, *The Ghost of Jeffrey Epstein* (2019)

9

Creating Feminist Paradigms of Knowledge Through Digital Technology

As Thomas Kuhn wrote in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), knowledge is a set of paradigms that seem immutable but change when the conditions are right. This chapter highlights digital artists who challenge the knowledge paradigms in the patriarchal society with the goal of creating new epistemological paradigms that benefit everyone in the society rather than just the dominant group. Their work covers biology, psychology, physics, climate studies, the universe, and the digital world itself.[1]

A New York–based artist with a professional scientific background, Ellen K. Levy deconstructs various scientific assumptions. For instance, in a video/performance, *Stealing Attention* (2009) (Plate 23), she challenges the reliability of perception and shows how it can be psychologically manipulated. First, the audience sees a video that opens with a text asking if the viewer would like to play a game. The next frame shows a grid of cards in the foreground against a background of shelves that hold precious art objects looted from Iraqi museums during the takedown of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. Levy tells the audience that the game is to identify how many Queens of Hearts show up on the rest of the video. In succeeding frames, the cards begin to fly in front of the shelves. As the cards fly, the objects on the shelves begin to disappear. When the video concludes, Levy asks the members of the audience to tell what they saw. Levy says that most people respond with the number of Queens they have been able to identify. They are so busy counting cards that they don't even notice that the objects are disappearing. In *Stealing Attention*, as in her other work, Levy connects art, science, and politics.

Another area that Levy has explored is space. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Art Program was established in 1962 by James Webb, then NASA director, only four years after the establishment of NASA itself. The public was becoming interested in NASA and space exploration and Webb felt that artists could convey the excitement of the program better than dry accounts of the science involved. Over 350 artists, including male luminaries like Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg, have been involved with a resulting 2,500 artworks. Webb began the commissioning of portraits of all the astronauts, and also, documentation of significant events, but artists like Levy were free to develop their own ideas.[2]

Levy caught the attention of the NASA Art Program when she created a temporary ceiling painting, *Palomar*, derived from images received by the 200-inch Hale telescope at Mount Palomar, California, in the dome of the National Academy of Sciences building in Washington, DC (on view in 1985; subsequently destroyed by fire, 2013). The dome was the same dimensions as the lens of the telescope. While not directly feminist, Levy's comments about the project reflect her feminist thinking in that she conceives of knowledge as intersectional and fluid. She describes the divisions in her composition as mirroring three areas of cultural inquiry. Images in one-third of the dome refer to biological elements; the second group is devoted to technology; and the third, to architectural features. She also designed the areas so that they interconnect, to reflect how they intersect. She considers art to be the discipline that merges them into one entity.[3]

Levy received her commission from NASA at the time of the *Atlantis* launching in 1985 and created *Space Chrysalis* in response to learning about NASA and the space shuttle, the name alone suggesting an analogy to biological transformation applied to the space mission. The phallic-like forms thrust upward, but dissolve in light at the top of the painting, suggesting their dematerialization in space.[4]

The renowned musician/visual artist Laurie Anderson was also a NASA artist—the first and last artist to be invited to be in residence. During her residency, Anderson worked on a project which she subsequently performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) titled *End of the Moon* (2004). In an essay Vivian Appler has written on Anderson's NASA project, she proposes that the presence of women artists in residence at NASA changes society's perception of women, given the stereotype of science as a male-gendered discipline. Appler extends her analysis to the resulting performance at BAM. She writes that, like the residency itself, the performance is also feminist in that Anderson comes across with the authority to speak about science because she has been anointed by NASA. If a woman artist can understand science, then women members in the audience can believe that they also can understand and participate in science. Appler states that even when women are presenting on scientific issues other than gender, the simple fact that they are addressing issues which are usually assigned to the male sphere is a disruption of gender roles.[5]

Anderson uses several performance devices to bring the seemingly secret, arcane, and elite NASA science down to earth and accessible to members of a nonscientist audience. The moon, which appears on the opposite side of the stage from where she is sitting, is represented not by a projection of a photograph of the moon but by a projection of Neil Armstrong's footprint which is immediately recognizable to the audience despite its having been impressed on the moon's surface a decade and a half earlier than the performance. While the image humanizes the landing on the moon, it also resonates with memories of the Cold War politics fundamental to the space race of the 1960s. Furthermore, as Anderson goes on to describe the process by which the Hubble Telescope images are produced, she talks about the colorization that is performed on the photographs in order to make them more distinct and tells the audience how arbitrary they are; she elicits a laugh when she says that anyone in the audience could pick another color scheme and it would work just as well. Then using a camera, Anderson substitutes herself for an astronaut by images that show her floating upside down as she plays her violin.[6]

Another feminist digital artist who participated in a residency at a space research site is Addie Wagenknecht, the founder of Deep Lab, a feminist women's technical collaborative. She had a 2018 residency at COSMOS, an art science residency program at the University of Manchester, UK where the Lovell Telescope, at that time the third largest telescope on the world, is located. Her project, titled *Hidden in Plain Sight*, consisted of harnessing the radio waves collected by the telescope into patterns of light that flickered over the structure of the telescope accompanied by a broadcasted score (the residency is held in conjunction with the Bluedot Festival). Wagenknecht's concept was the similarity of the internet and the cosmos. The infrastructure of both is hidden in plain sight, the amount of data is infinite, along with a complexity that is hard to grasp, and there is "a sense of placelessness." The flickering of the lighted radio waves over the surface of the telescope's structure hides the structure while the structure does remain "in plain sight."[7]

The parallels among the three artists is striking: their interest in making the invisible visible; their belief that knowledge should be accessible to all; their conviction that knowledge is both intersectional and fluctuating; and their view that knowledge is dependent on who is the creator and who is the recipient, all principles that are integral to feminist theory. In an interview about her installation, Wagenknecht says, "The observer is not stationary and part of the observation is knowing your own situation."[8]

Kathy High and Patricia Piccinini make art to deconstruct the Darwinian theory of evolution. One of High's videos, *Lily Does Derrida* (2010–12), is a humorous discourse by her deceased dog who, while talking about the connection of human beings to animals, invokes Jacques Derrida's writings on that subject. Lily, the dog, cites Derrida's analysis of the difference between animals and humans: humans are ashamed of being naked; animals on the other hand are always naked (no clothes). Do they feel shame? Lily says she does feel shame in front of the cat and then goes on to say that humans were the ones who created the name "animal" and thus distinguished animals from humans. Through the ludic, High believes she can help people think about animals and humans as a continuum rather than a hierarchy that places humans above all other life.

High has also created a series of works about the bacteria that exist in the human digestive system and contribute to metabolic processes. She has been carrying on collaborations with medical experts on what she calls "poop." Rather than seeing "poop" as abject, she suggests that it should be viewed for its centrality to life itself. She makes the point that elimination of waste materials from the body is as fundamental as taking in nourishment and that it is time to abandon the social taboos that surround defecation and consider how "poop" can be used, citing the rise of antibiotic resistance that may require more reliance on the body's natural functions. High's work can be considered oppositional to the psychoanalytic theory of the abject, developed by French feminist, Julia Kristeva, which postulates that human beings place taboos around the sight of internal bodily processes and substances as reminders of the body's vulnerability and mortality.[9]

Piccinini disputes evolutionary science by creating computer-generated grotesque sculptures that, although based on the human body, have imaginary features that turn them into disturbing variations distorting the features and shape of the human form. In her installations she places them in relation to other sculptures that retain the usual look of human beings: a child hugs one of the strange creatures or a mother who looks like a cross between *Homo sapiens* and a gorilla suckles a human infant. Piccinini says that her work is meant to reveal the fear of difference and to change attitudes toward difference in appearance as abject, something from which to avert one's eyes.[10]

Iranian artist Morehshin Allahyari also works with the grotesque, using 3-D printing technology to create composite sculptures that in her words "transcend the binaries of human/animal, East/West, self/other." She calls her art practice "Additivism," a word combining additive and activism. Her first additive pieces related to activities forbidden by the Iranian regime. It was forbidden to walk dogs outside. Sex objects were forbidden. Internet usage was often forbidden. Responding to these restrictions, her first computer-created sculpture was a dog with a dildo and a satellite dish fused together.[11]

Allahyari lives in self-imposed exile because her political activism puts her in danger if she returns to Iran, but she is deeply immersed in her heritage. Her current art practice involves digital archiving of documents and other material pertaining to Iranian cultural memory and history. She also uses 3-D scanning and printing to resurrect works purposefully destroyed by ISIS or inadvertently by Western forces in the power struggles over the Middle East (Plate 24).

Important to Allahyari is the identity of the person who is reconstituting cultural objects. Her concern is how digital printing can become a new form of colonialism. She says that digital capacity is largely in the hands of white people. When white people (self) are the ones refiguring lost objects belonging to the cultural history of non-whites (the other), it is a form of digital colonialism—whites reclaiming the sculptures after destruction by non-whites like ISIS.

During a residency at Rhizome in New York, Allahyari collected and made available programs by which anyone could refigure a lost object through 3-D printing. She relates that she has received hundreds of images of refigured items and enthusiastic communications. Her goal is to spread knowledge of the techniques to enable oppressed populations to restore their own cultural histories. She cites how capitalism prevents the spread of that knowledge in the example of SciArt, an online nonprofit organization that also makes information on 3-D replication available, but not to individuals—only to institutions—at a price, thus benefiting monetarily from the transactions.[12]

Israeli/American artist, Neri Oxman is another artist who found 3-D digital printing a medium for her art practice. Oxman, a professor at MIT, has disrupted the conventional paradigm of the relationship between art and nature in which art mimics nature, by using actual biological constituents for design purposes. She refers to her art practice as material ecology, finding elements in nature that become artmaking components ranging from slime molds and silkworms to bacteria. Oxman also develops new processes through which materials that have had one structure are transformed into new structures such as happened with glass when Oxman developed the technology for making objects out of glass using algorithms for the 3-D digital printer. The results were forms never possible before, and thus useful in innovative architectural design.

One of Oxman's projects was to modify a 3-D digital printer to use the chitin which forms the exoskeleton of the crab. Through experimentation Oxman reversed the molecular structure of chitin so that instead of being impervious to the action of water, it became water-biodegradable, providing a prototype procedure for biodegrading plastic bags. In another project, Oxman printed clothing that was resistant to microbial infection, thus protecting wearers in areas of epidemic disease. Using 6,500 silkworms to produce the necessary silk, and algorithms in a digital 3-D printer, Oxman printed a silk dome, suggesting how nature can provide eco-friendly building materials. *Cartesian Wax: Prototype for a Breathing Skin* (2007) referring to Descartes's 1640 definition of the essence of wax as being what survives its changing forms, is another experiment to develop eco-friendly architectural building materials. The wax that forms the cells in this wall piece become thinner or thicker in response to the degree of light in the room.[13]

American artist Heather Dewey-Hagborg works on gene technology. She is concerned about the way in which gene technology is being used without thinking of the consequences, as, for instance, in determining the sex of fetuses, in criminal cases, or for surveillance. She uses her art practice to make the case for public awareness of the potential threat of genetic surveillance by picking up litter from the street containing DNA evidence such as cigarette butts, wads of discarded gum, or strands of hair, then extracting the DNA from these discards, duplicating it, and using facial recognition software in reverse, to create three-dimensional portraits of the people who have discarded the waste. The actual sculptures are not frightening in themselves but the implication is terrifying—the idea that people can be identified and traced through a random act of discarding waste that carries their genetic makeup. That implication is enhanced by the way the sculptures are displayed, with a petri dish containing the object from which the DNA has been extracted along with a photograph of the location where the object was found.[14]

Jennifer Hall investigates the body's functions in relation to health, privacy, and the community in an installation titled *Tipping Point: Health Narratives from the South End* (2005) created in collaboration with a team consisting of Ellen Ginsburg, a medical anthropologist and ethnographer; Blyth Hazen, an artist and expert in robotic systems; Arnie Hernandez, software programmer, Mike Middleton, interactive DVD producer; and Liana Wilks-Dupoise, fabrication assistant. As visitors entered the gallery, sensors measured various aspects of their movements—how many were coming in at one time, how fast they were walking, how close were they to each other. The sensors sent this data through an algorithm that collected it all and sent it to the sculptures in the gallery, which moved in response to the information they received. The sculptures became mechanical portraits of the health of visitors to the exhibition.[15]

In another project, Hall queried the interaction among living organisms, machines, and the impact of society. Titled *Acupuncture for a Temporal Fruit* (2008), viewers became complicit in the torture of tomatoes enclosed in glass domes. As viewers move closer to the domes, mechanized needles pierced the tomatoes faster and faster. As viewers moved away, the piercings became less and less frequent. During the period of the exhibition, the holes left in the tomatoes became moldy and the tomatoes began to rot. The installation served as a critique for the actions of those in power who could act negatively on helpless individuals, and particularly on medical practice, given the impact of the needle piercing the skin of the tomato, reminiscent of a hypodermic needle on human skin.[16]

Anicka Yi takes another approach in using biotechnology to disrupt patriarchal paradigms of knowledge. Her art practice is focused around the sense of smell. Her most ambitious project has been the collection of bacteria from the orifices of about a hundred women, growing the bacteria, and then exhibiting the results in an installation that involves sculpture, video, and sound. She creates art to counteract what she terms the prevailing "ocular-centrism" that defines art in most cultures, whereas other senses, particularly smell, can evoke personal memories, transmit one to a hallucinatory sphere, and convey history. She is also concerned with correcting the misunderstanding that scent is feminine because it is "elusive and subjective," terms that are used to stereotype women. She insists that smells are "objective."[17]

Zina Saro-Wiwa (Plate 25) is an artist who represents the globalism of the early twenty-first century in her own life. She was born in Nigeria, moved to the UK at the age of one, and has lived and exhibited on both sides of the Atlantic, most recently for over a decade in the United States. She has also returned to Nigeria where she established Boys' Quarters Project Space, a contemporary art gallery in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. In reentering the land of her birth, she wanted to create an artwork that would capture the sense of place she experienced. Her work disrupts stereotypes about non-Western peoples and countries from the perspective of postcolonialism and ecofeminism but while the resulting videos and photographs are images of individuals in Nigeria, they speak of the importance of place in people's lives everywhere. As she herself has said, "experimental ethnography gives me permission to think about and comment on knowledge production." One of her most compelling installations is *Table Manners* (2014–16). On large screens arranged so that viewers walk through two rows of suspended screens, individuals eat their meals, rather as if no one is looking, yet aware of performing in front of the camera. Saro-Wiwa says, "That action of people eating on camera, their hands moving from the plate to their mouths and back to the plate, acts as a kind of metaphorical suturing. With this movement, I see them as insisting on their place in the environment and repairing their broken landscape, all the while implicating the viewer in this process through their gaze." Now living in Los Angeles, she is applying her art practice to the individuals and places around her. "Even when it is hyper specific about a particular place, I position my work globally and cosmically."[18]

Similarly Michèle Magema, from the Republic of the Congo, as both European and African considers herself a resident of the globe rather than of one specific location in both her life and work. Magema describes her intersectional art practice as "exitism." She says she uses her body to express the eternal nature of being a woman despite the vicissitudes of time, but at the same time, the multiplicity of identity that contemporary women bear in the postcolonial era in Africa and other parts of the world.[19]

Perhaps it is her double identity that has led Magema to double frames in her videos. *Derrière la Mer* [Behind the ocean] (2016) shows two frames of Magema walking into the sea. In both she finally disappears into the water, but then in one frame, reemerges and walks back toward the camera. She begins to put up signs in the water itself that are illegible. Finally, she lies down in the shallows, very much looking like a dead body. Two signs are clear to read, one says "past" and the other, "truth." The soundtrack consists of African chanting. It is evident that the work is about the vast migration from Africa across the Mediterranean to Europe that took place in the second decade of the twenty-first century in which, because of the exploitation of the migrants, many Africans perished in overloaded, unsafe boats.[20]

Saro-Wiwa and Magema are only two artists from various African countries who emerged in the twenty-first century as important voices in creating new paradigms of knowledge. Their dismantling of the stereotypes about Africa and Africans in the knowledges of Western heteronormative society, valuable in itself, has broader implications of how a dominating group, in this case, the Western colonialist countries, shapes accepted knowledge and loses sight of the individual. Magema, by using her own body, emphasizes the personhood of Africans as opposed to the generalized universal African of Western culture. Saro-Wiwa, in her connection to individuals through recording the human act of eating, restores the status of the individual as a physical and spiritual being.

Mary Mattingly's projects are an example of the art practice of ecofeminists in Western countries. Mattingly says that the goal of her work is to awaken social consciousness. She hopes for a future which she describes as "post-humanist." It would be world in which people will be able to provide at least some of their essentials for themselves, will have the will to help their neighbors, and will develop a balance between what they take from the earth, and what they can give back.

Mattingly mixes the digital world and the offline world together into a seamless whole. While the finished projects have a DIY materiality, they are the result of meticulous research and online planning through the use of mostly open source programs. The *Flock House Project* is a good example of how Mattingly wishes to change knowledge structures, in this instance, about migration. During a residency at Eyebeam, an institute that specifically supports projects combining the digital and the physical, Mattingly designed modular portable housing, based on Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome, that can be built from recycled materials, powered by renewable energy, and deposited anywhere in the world very quickly when migration because of climate change disasters, political violence, and other crises occurs.[21]

Diane Burko has been working on climate change since the early twenty-first century. Among the founders of the Feminist Art Movement of the 1970s, Burko organized Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts (FOCUS), the first city-wide celebration of feminist artists. Burko became concerned about the environment when she revisited some of the locations that had inspired her earlier paintings—glaciers that had disappeared, ice caps that had shrunk, waterfalls that had become trickles. Familiar with digital technologies, she conceived of lenticular technology as a perfect metaphor for expressing climate change visually. She created a series of lenticular images in which she embedded abstract landscapes which change as viewers pass by, thus conveying the dramatic transformations that have occurred in physical life (Plate 26).[22]

Similarly, Marina Abramović, the performance artist whose art practice was founded on feminism early in her career, used digital technology to create work about climate change. She initiated *Rising* (2018) as a virtual reality (VR) project. Viewers entered an intimate space wearing a VR headset and saw an avatar of the artist encased in a glass cylinder. As they watched, the water in the cylinder rose, threatening to drown her. Abramović's avatar began to speak to them, asking them to pledge support in saving the environment. As each gave a positive response to her plea, the water level dropped. Aware that VR could only be appreciated in person, Abramović brought *Rising* to another level of public participation by creating an app through which viewers around the globe could experience *Rising* through their cell phones.[23]

Sondra Perry interweaves the Black body, her own, and a female Black avatar (Plate 27), with digital images derived from family history and art history to expose white privilege and oppression in the patriarchal construction of history. The Serpentine Gallery, London mounted the first exhibition of Perry's work in Europe in 2018. In one of the galleries were two workout machines, classist symbols of prosperity, that viewers could operate; the first, a stationary bicycle with a three-screen video installation was titled *Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation*. As viewers worked hard on the pedals of the stationary bike, Perry's avatar talked about the hard work African Americans must do to survive. She (the avatar) also talked about the poor health issues that plague Blacks versus whites. The second was a rowing machine also with a three-screen video of waves, that echoed the projection of violent waves onto the walls of the adjoining gallery based on J.M.W. Turner's *The Slave Ship*, orignally titled *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhoon Coming On*, first exhibited in 1840. The Turner painting represents a sickening act, the throwing overboard of 133 African Blacks being transported to become slaves, for the sake of making an insurance claim. Turner, an abolitionist, was horrified by the incident and thus made the painting. Perry used an open source program to modify the waves, turning them purple, the color that comes on the monitor when there is an error, thus forming a metaphor for the "mistake" made by the murder. On another wall is a projection of a close up of Perry's own skin in front of which is a video on which is screened *TK (Suspicious Glorious Absence)* which consists of clips taken from body cameras that recorded everyday actions like walking down the street along with scenes of protests and shots of Perry's own family.[24]

Perry like the other artists in this chapter is transforming the paradigmatic knowledges of the patriarchal society into new paradigms that will provide dignity and equality to all rather than only to an elite white male class.

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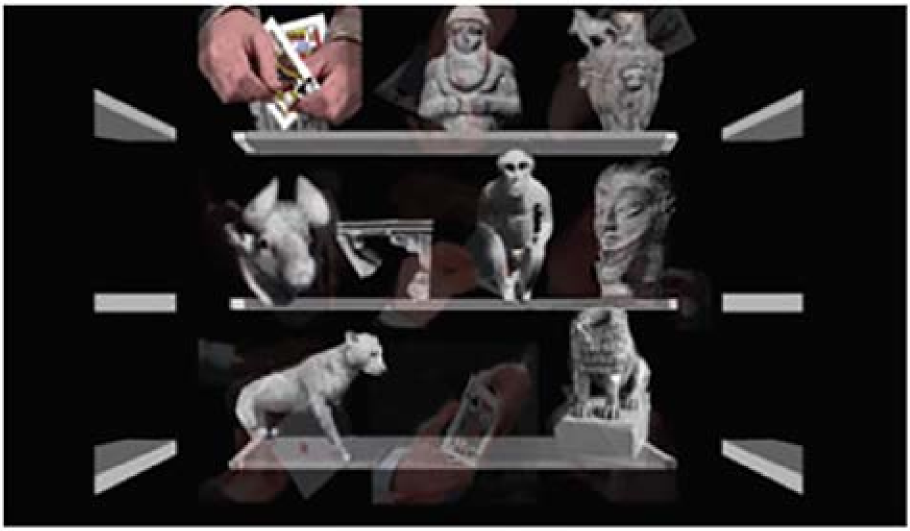


Plate 23 Ellen K. Levy, *Stealing Attention* (2009), dimensions variable. MP4 from Flash animation. Duration: 6 minutes. Collaboration with Michael E. Goldberg, Director of the Mahoney Center for Brain and Behavior, Columbia University. Courtesy of the artist.

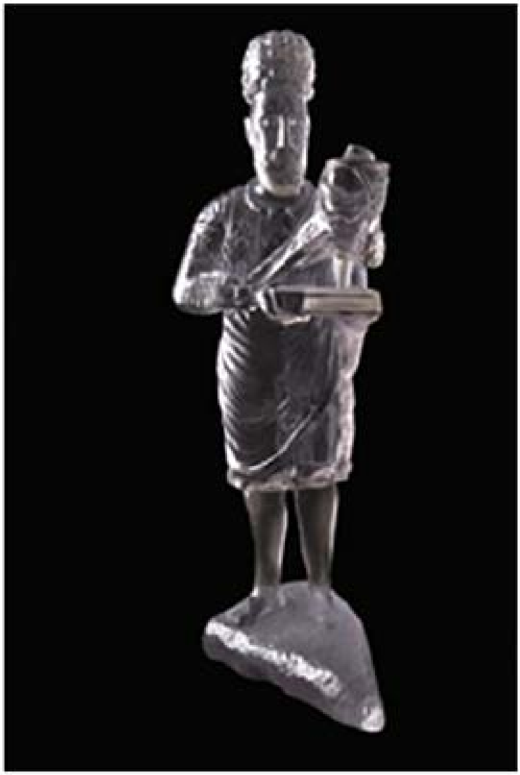
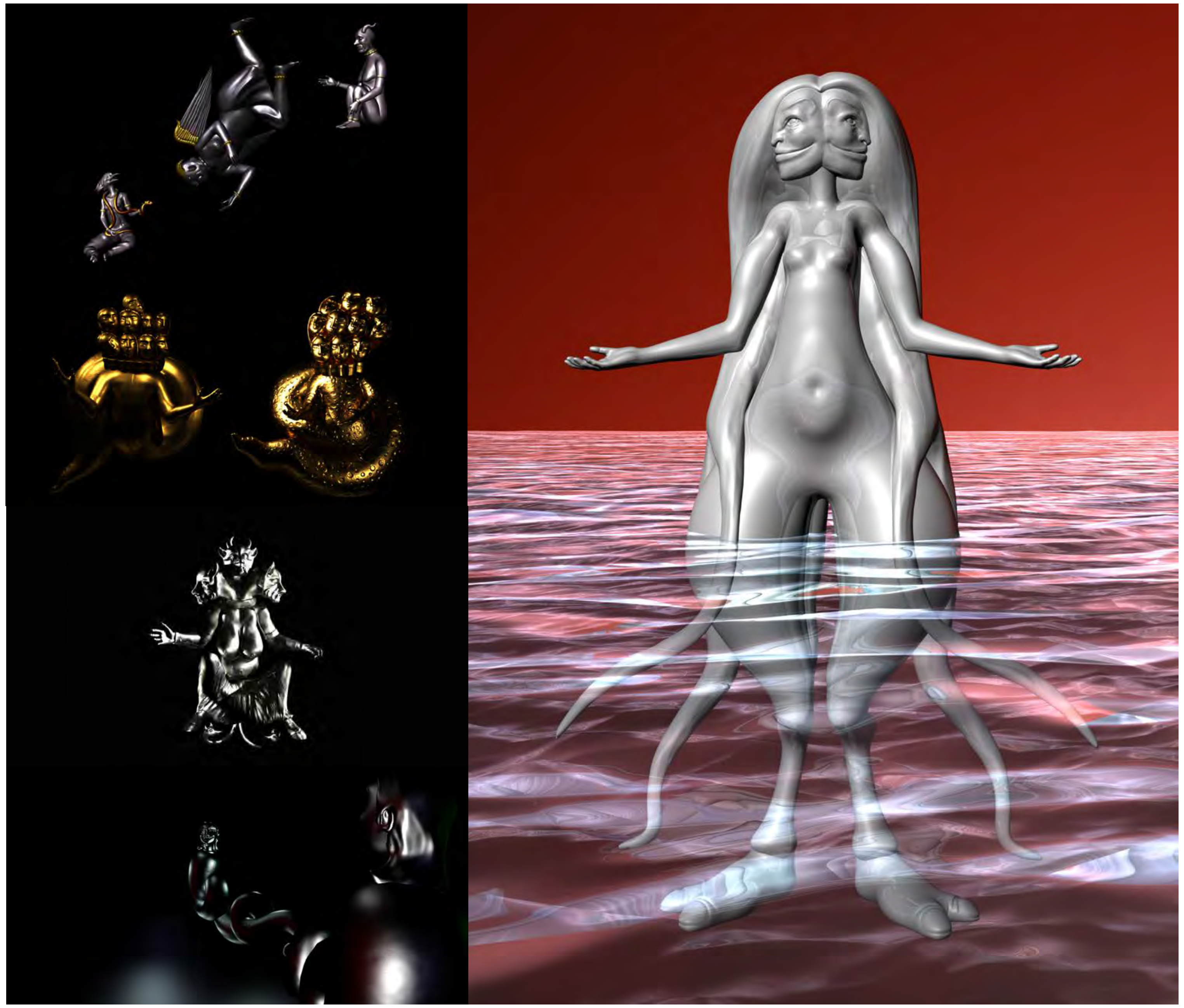


Plate 24 Morehshin Allahyari, *Material Speculation: ISIS, Priest with Eagle* (2015), 3D printed resin and electronic components, 12 × 4 × 3.5″ (30.5 × 10.2 × 8.9 cm). Courtesy of the artist.



Morehshin Allahyari. Composite of artworks from *She Who Sees the Unknown*. 2016–21. Clockwise from top left: *Kabous, The Right Witness, and The Left Witness*. 2019; *Aisha Qandisha*. 2018; *Laughing snake*. 2018; *Huma*, 2016; *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj*. 2018. 3D models. Images courtesy of the artist

ARABIAN GULF HAUNTOLOGIES

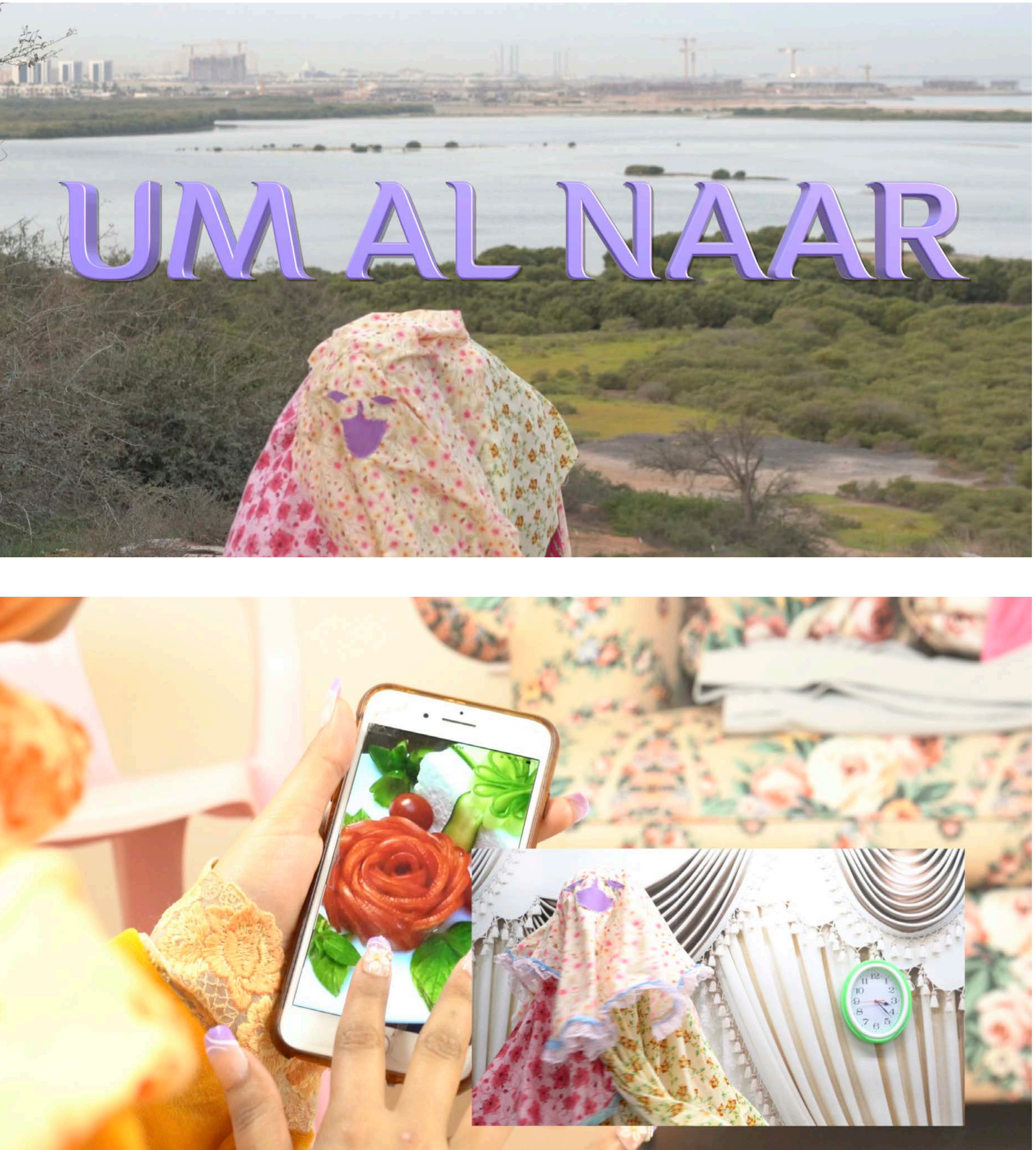
Rahel Aima considers how *jinn* become a vehicle for artists to explore gender and the vestiges of colonialism

A falcon lies on an operating table, its milky third eyelids fluttering. A dustbin swarms with steaming-hot meat and bones, attracting flies and untold other creatures. On Mustaqbaliya Reality Network, a depressed *jinniya* from Ras Al Khaimah sits down for a confessional against heavy, tasselled curtains. So opens Farah Al Qasimi's 2019 horror-comedy *Um Al Naar*, in which the titular spirit reflects on the legacies of European colonisation in the UAE. "The bad feelings started in the 1500s," the *jinniya* explains, gesticulating with her glass of green liquid as she recounts being discovered by the Portuguese, who controlled the Gulf's trade for 150 years before the British showed up to further ruin things. Um Al Naar wears three kinds of floral patterns, and has a voice that is at once ancient and androgynous. Her features, appliquéd on in lavender cloth, suggest a rictal scream – of fear, joy or anguish, it's hard to tell.

As a character, Um Al Naar is utterly delightful. She loves the Contours, Mohammed Abdu and Umm Kulthum, and most of all she loves to dance. She reminisces about haunting prisoners and pearl divers, and how she used to possess men and make them dance the *m'alayah*. She speaks lovingly about her favorite frozen-in-time museum while disparaging the "very European – they say it's important" sterility of the Louvre Abu Dhabi and how it suffocates her cultural patrimony in airless vitrines. She functions as both a receptacle of fast-fading historical memory and a caution against losing touch with one's indigenous culture. Inset images and text add emphasis: portraits of Portuguese explorers Alfonso de Albuquerque and Vasco da Gama are overlaid by red text that screams "LOSERS!!!!!!" while intercut footage from Dubai's Garden Glow and Dragon Mart and radio snippets advertising the Irish Village work to anchor us in the present. The falcon gets its head shoved into a device that looks like an inverted cone of shame crossed with a vacuum.

From kelpies and banshees to manticores and aswang, supernatural beings can be found in folklore from around the world. Their specific forms and powers vary, but many share the ability to shapeshift, to appear human in order to seduce, possess, trick or simply kill those who cross their paths, a collectively enforced caution that everything should not be taken at face value. They hint at the possibility of other, parallel dimensions, and are often able to pierce the veil between one world and the next. Not all such beings are malevolent, but many of them warn against the dangers of being alone, outside the safety of community. Don't linger by a river or a lake, or go out in a storm, or roam the streets at night. Others still, like the Emirati Umm Al Duwais who is known for her donkey hooves and intoxicating scent, serve to variously dissuade against vice or protect against patriarchal violence. In contemporary art, *jinn* interestingly become a way for artists to engage with both colonialism and gender.

While the word *jinn* generally connotes specific supernatural creatures such as bloodthirsty ghouls, friendly *jinnan* and demonic *ifrit*, we might also understand *jinn* more broadly as all shapeless, spectral beings like the *qareen* or *hamzaad*, which cannot be perceived by our five senses, including human interiority. Tala Madani's expressively gestural drawings, animations and paintings use *jinn* to consider masculinity and group dynamics. They depict ominous shadowy figures and humans on the precipice of being possessed, as in *Jinn Dream* (2011). Here, a balding male figure is seen mid-inhabitation, or perhaps mid-exorcism – with blurry, semi-human figures appearing to merge into his supine pink body, *Animorphs* style. Occasionally, Madani's



Farah Al Qasimi. Stills from *Um Al Naar (Mother of Fire)*. 2019. HD video, colour, sound. 30 minutes. Image courtesy of the artist and The Third Line, Dubai

demons are terribly normal-looking, as in the plaid shirt-clad *jinni* of *Becoming Brilliant* (2013). More often, however, she unspools this insensible idea of human interiority, both in terms of irrational, obsessive human behaviour and more literally in terms of internal organs and viscera that are pulled out of the body, and perhaps even humorously positioned on an armchair to chat with their former body, as in *Guts* (2011).

The twinned emphasis on colonialism and gender is most overt in Morehshin Allahyari's *She Who Sees The Unknown* (2016–21), a project which spans five years and multiple media, including video, 3D-printed statuary, drawings and installation, and incorporates technologies like VR. It is anchored by five monstrous female and non-binary "re-figured" *jinn* – Kabous, The Laughing Snake, Huma, Ya'jooj Ma'jooj and Aisha Qandisha – drawn from Islam and regional mythology, each of which address themes like toxic masculinity and gaslighting, the environment and the epigenetics of inherited trauma. Here too is a sense of *jinn* from other realms who meddle in our world at scale, based on their particular powers and abilities. Just as the Portuguese's seafaring prowess allowed them to control large swathes of coastal Oman, the UAE, Iran and Bahrain, each *jinni* here effects change based on their mythological powers: the heat-generating Huma, for example, gets linked to global warming. This body of work also includes protective *qareen* or spectral companion figures, which are finished in *ayeneh kari*-style mirrorwork in a reflection of their role as spiritual doubles.

For the longest time, I wondered why we have such a colonised mentality in the UAE, despite being a country that I understood as having never been colonised: claimed at the margins of regional empires like the Ottomans and vaguely used as a base to refuel European ships and, later, planes in exchange for military protection, but never formally administered or ruled. A crash course in regional history soon disabused me of these notions. Because of course, colonialism takes many forms; some of its vestiges are so subtle and filamentine so as to be difficult to point to, even when you know it is there. Like *jinn*, this history is invisibilised but undeniably also there, these visitors from another world that haunt and even actively intervene in this world. In *Um Al Nar*, *jinn* become a perfect metaphor for colonialism and its legacy: invisible but undeniably *there*. I'm left thinking of the sung refrain that opens the film, and the power of naming – or even just acknowledgement – as a first step to undoing these colonial legacies: *I am the one who visits, say my name – I am the one who visits.*

Iranian Diaspora, 2022

CENTER for IRANIAN DIASPORA STUDIES

SF STATE

With a Trace: Documenting and Sharing the Experiences of the Iranian Diaspora

A blog to read and share about Iranian diaspora experiences and culture by the Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies, San Francisco State University

MENU

MARCH 3, 2022 / ARIANADAMAVANDI

Iranian Diaspora Spotlight: Art Beyond Aesthetics—the Vision of Morehshin Allahyari

by Peppa, Research Fellow, New York

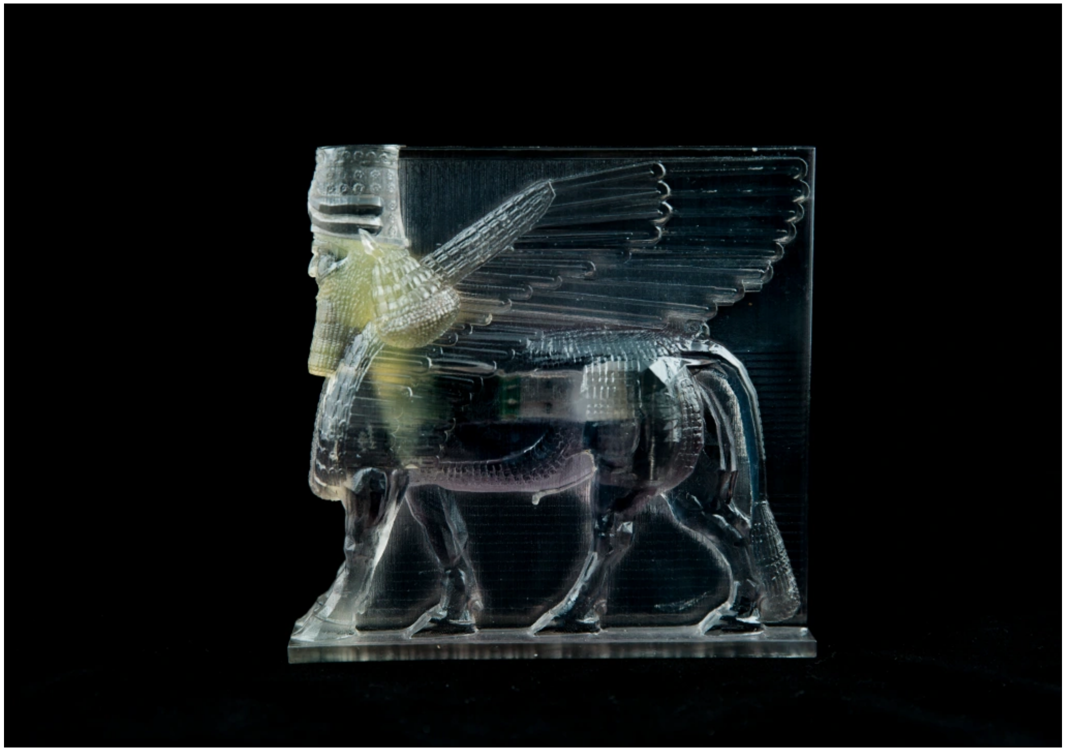
At times, our imagined future pulses with memories, stories, and the histories of our country. In this fruitful place between past, present, and future, Iranian-born artist, writer, and educator Morehshin Allahyari, situates her work. As a self-proclaimed "private investigator," Allahyari says she has always sought to document stories. From a young age in Iran, she was active in the youth creative writing scene. As an adolescent, writing became Allahyari's first artistic medium. After she lost her grandmother, who had lived with her family her entire life, she was driven by a mission to share her grandmother's story. She recognized the significance of her grandmother's life and wanted to tell her story in her grandmother's voice as a woman from Kurdistan. So, Allahyari embarked on a journey to find out everything she could about her grandmother. She recounts going to her grandmother's village with tape recorders and cassette tapes to conduct interviews with her grandmother's community and family members, and by the time Allahyari was 15, she had turned this project into a nearly 400-page book. By the time she turned 16, the book was published. This experience launched Allahyari's drive and intention to document and protect stories, and reclaim narratives. Today, her work is centered by a research practice that is integral to everything she does.

Allahyari came to the United States at the age of 23 after receiving her bachelor's in Social Science and Media Theory at Tehran University. She went on to receive not one, but two master's degrees from US institutions: one from the University of Denver in Digital Media Studies, and another in New Media Art from the University of North Texas. While Allahyari explores a vast array of mediums including video, sculpture, writing, 3D simulation, and digital fabrication, she says she "thinks about art beyond aesthetics." Instead Allahyari explores the relationship of complex topics through time, finding ways to preserve the past and offer possibilities for our future. "Storytelling is really where I find the power of artmaking," she says. "It's when you can take personal stories or you use the power of myth-building to then create other worlds," she adds.

Allahyari says that her work is also driven by a passion to join technology and history to create new narratives. Her digital and sculptural works include alluring, and at times familiar, forms, which sit, float, and rotate in physical and virtual space. Describing her process, she says, "I'm not one of those artists who can just pop out work every two months. That's just not how I engage with art practice. I really like to spend time and go really deep into a work, and really build a relationship with a project. When I'm really nerding out on a project, it will just ooze into my dreams."

Both Allahyari's experience of growing up in Iran and living in the diaspora are woven into her art. Allayari's move from Iran to the U.S. was highly impactful. She recounts feeling a sense of exile from her home. "This move forced me to grow up quickly," she says. As she developed her art in the context of the U.S., and considered the possibilities of her return to Iran, she also faced the very real possibility that her work would be met with censorship. She says she started to make art about political and social issues in private. "The more I censored myself, the more exiled I felt," she explains. The time came when Allahyari made the decision to no longer censor herself and her art, and thus began pushing boundaries politically and culturally. It was and still remains an emotionally difficult choice. “That truly never-ending pain that I feel about not being able to go back, or being scared to go back to Iran at this moment, contributes a lot to the ways that I live my life, the day to day relationship to different lands and spaces that I have moved around to, as well as the art that I make,” she says. She has not returned to Iran in twelve years.

To build a world, Allahyari says technology plays a crucial role, and helps her to respond to social, political, and cultural issues. Allahyari emphasizes the urgency for us to consider technology critically. At the center of her concerns is a consideration of power, and about who controls narratives. Her questions are important and difficult: “How do we engage with technology? What would happen if you used a 3D printer to archive or document a history or an event? When there is a new technology and it is controlled by dominant powers, we witness new waves of imperialism and colonization. What happens when these tech tools, like 3D scanners, start being used by big tech companies?”



Morehshin Allahyari, Material Speculation: ISIS, Lamassu, 2015, 3D-printed resin with embedded portable data-storage device, image courtesy of the artist.

These questions and concerns came to the forefront of her work when she started more deeply investigating the uses of 3D printing and digital fabrication. In her lecture-performance piece *Digital Colonialism* (2016-2019), she investigates the adoption of the 3D printer and scanner by Western powers doing projects in the Middle East. She explains that while this technology has existed for the past thirty years, the function of the 3D scanner has shifted in the last ten years. Today Western-based companies, especially tech companies, have initiated projects in South West Asia to scan artifacts, in the name of preserving what has been destroyed. Allahyari recognizes that this is an extension of a history we know all too well. She offers this example, “It’s very similar to when you think about colonization in an object at a museum. You know when you walk into a museum, at the MET or the British Museum, and you see a huge gate or artifact there from somewhere around the world that you know was probably stolen or somehow taken in a conflict situation? You can see the history of colonization when it comes to physical historical objects,” she adds. Allahyari raises concerns that continue in the process of scanning collections—”there are a lot of issues that come with this kind of practice, meaning that there’s questions of access, there’s questions of ownership, copyright ownership.” Allahyari, however, is interested in what happens post-3D scanning. “What happens after a Western tech company goes and 3D scans an artifact in Iran? Where does the profit they derive from these practices end up going?” Devoted to remaining critical of her mediums, she recognizes the power of using technology, and is interested in formulating ways to “disrupt” its intended use.

Indeed Allahyari sees both the power and the gift of technology through a critical lens. She vividly remembers the experience of being blown away by a video where she saw a 3D printer in action for the first time in 2013. The excitement of seeing something digital become something physical moved her to work with this technology materially and conceptually. In her project, *Dark Matter* (2013), Allahyari gathered a collection of objects that are forbidden or unwelcome in Iran. She digitally arranged the objects in humorous combinations and juxtapositions; one example was a dog wearing a dildo attached to a satellite dish. These re-configured and re-contextualized items exist as 3D printed sculptures and are part of her oeuvre.

Allahyari continues to work with 3D printing as she responds to the world around her. Many of us may recall the heartbreaking video of the Islamic State shattering ancient artifacts in Mosul that went viral in 2015. In her project, *Material Speculation ISIS* (2015), she digitally reconstructed twelve of the destroyed artifacts and brought together artmaking, activism, poetics, history, and technology to respond to the devastating meaning of that event. While she wanted to explore the practical function and utility of 3D printer technology to recreate something that had been lost, she also went a step further. “The sculptures are 3D printed in transparent resin material and you can see memory cards and USB drives that I have inserted inside of the sculptures that contain all the research,” she explains. Each individual piece contains all of the resources she used to complete the project: the PDF files of her research, her email correspondence and communications with historians and scholars, and finally, the 3D printable files of the artifact. A nod to future generations, these pieces by Allahyari can be replicated, and exist "poetically as time capsules."

Morehshin Allahyari, She Who Sees The Unknown: Kabous, The Right WItness, and The Left Witness, 2019, Still image from 3D animation, image courtesy of the artist.

Allahyari refers to the term “re-figuring” as a way to relate past and future and reclaim narratives. She states the importance of “the process of looking back into the past and refiguring what was told to us as mythology… really seeing the power through re-figuration is so much of reclaiming and reimagining and seeing ourselves in other possible worlds, and building worlds with that.” The term “re-figuration” becomes quite apparent in her project *She Who Sees the Unknown* (2017-2021), a project in which she pursues her curiosity of unresolved and unknown topics in Iranian and Arab mythology. In this work, she is inspired by stories about *jinn*, the supernatural creatures from Islamic culture, traditionally feared and respected in Iran.Specifically, Allahyari digitally recreates the queer/female monstrous characters who are often portrayed negatively and are considered less than those who are male. By reclaiming and magnifying these figures, they become possibilities for disrupting colonizing and patriarchal power, and exist as agents of change to reimagine a different future. Allahyari’s extensive project joins elements of video, sculpture, and text, as well as a series of public events, and a release of an entire archive on the material she gathered in her research process.

As Allahyari re-figures and researches stories and histories, she reminds the Iranian diaspora and perhaps diaspora subjects in general, of the importance of what is passed on generationally, how we hold our past, and shape our future. And just as generously and passionately as she spoke about her own work, Allahyari conveyed a beautiful message for future artists: "Always make your own formula. To me, it's always been about being a fish, you know, that swims in a direction in which I want to swim. I feel if we could teach that concept to younger kids, rather than telling them that they have to go to this school, have this type of studio practice, email this many curators—all the things that you're told to become a successful artist. It's the most powerful when you make your own way. And stay curious," she adds.

Allahyari's next project, a speculative documentary, is called, *The Remaining Signs of Future Centuries*. You can learn more about her work, by going to her website: www.morehshin.com.

Cover Image: Portrait of Morehshin Allahyari, Brooklyn New York, Photo by Emily Andrews, 2021.

The New York Times, 2021

The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/24/arts/design/technoshamanism-hmkv

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Space Pagans and Smartphone Witches: Where Tec

The internet allows us to discover, select and combine the spiritual traditions that suit us bes
connections between ancient beliefs and futuristic systems.

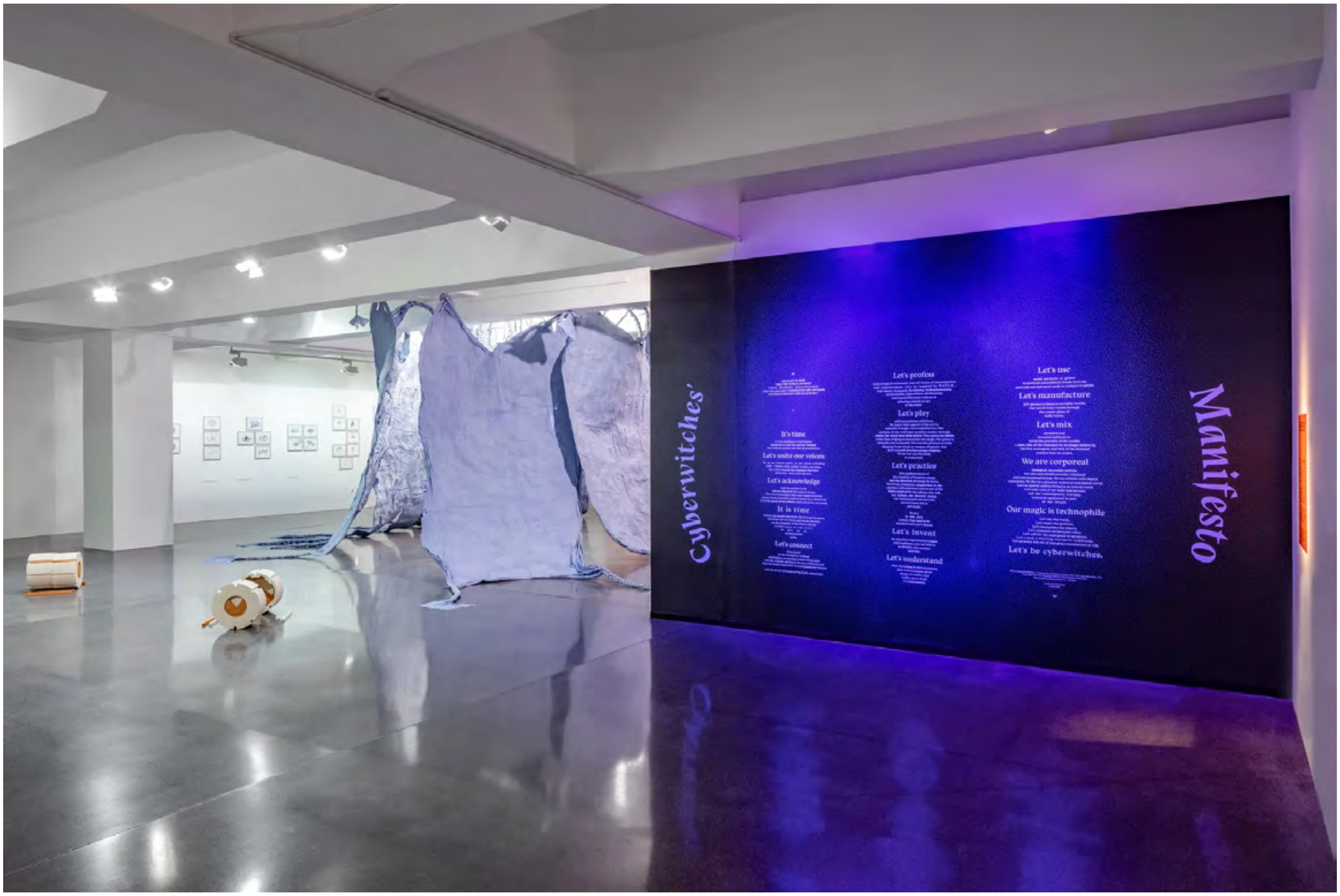
By Josie Thaddeus-Johns

Nov. 24, 2021

DORTMUND, Germany — “Let’s use smartphones and tarot cards to connect to spirits,” reads the writing on the wall, illuminated in soft ultraviolet light. “Let’s manufacture D.I.Y. devices to listen to invisible worlds.”

The incantations, printed as wallpaper, are part of the French artist Lucile Olympe Haute’s “Cyberwitches Manifesto,” an installation in a show called “Technoshamanism” that is at the Hartware MedienKunstVerein in Dortmund, Germany, through March 6, 2022. The group exhibition, which brings together the work of 12 artists and collectives, explores the connections between technology and esoteric, ancestral belief systems.

In our always-online lives, the supernatural is having a high-tech moment. Spirituality is all over our feeds: The self-help guru Deepak Chopra has co-founded his own NFT platform, witches are reading tarot on TikTok, and the A.I.-driven astrology app Co-Star has been downloaded more than 20 million times.


Cyberwitches'
It's time
Let's unite our voices
Let's acknowledge
It is time
Let's connect
Let's profess
Let's play
Let's practice
Let's invent
Let's understand
Let's use
Let's manufacture
Let's mix
We are corporeal
Our magic is technophile
Let's be cyberwitches.
Manifesto

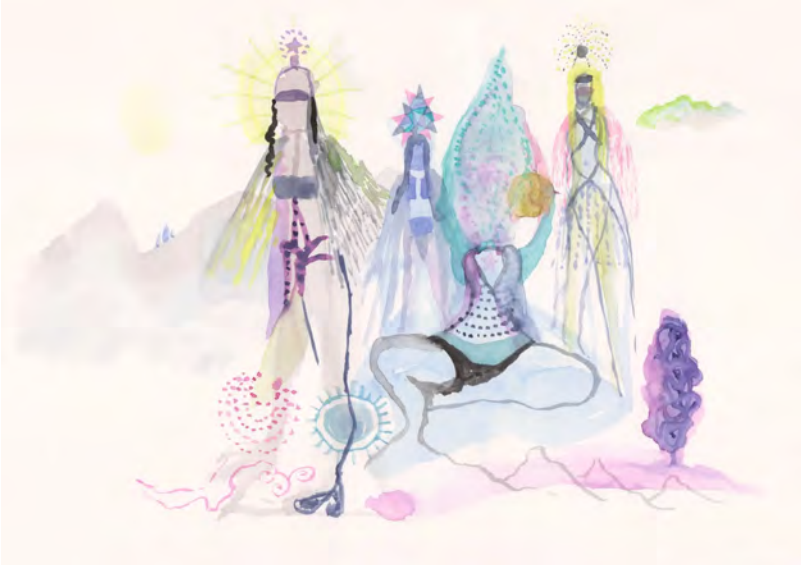
Olympe Haute’s “Cyberwitches Manifesto.” In the work, incantations such as “Let’s use smartphones and tarot cards to connect to spirits,” are printed as wallpaper. Jannis Wiebusch

Dr. Jeffrey A. Tolbert, an assistant professor who researches belief and digital ethnography at Penn State Harrisburg has an explanation. “Because of the globalizing potential of the internet, people have access to belief traditions that were not easily accessible to them before,” he said. In the United States, a growing number of people identify as “spiritual” but not “religious,” he noted, adding that the internet allowed those people to discover, select and combine the spiritual traditions that most appealed to them.

The curator of “Technoshamanism,” Inke Arns, said on a recent tour of the show that contemporary artists also recognized the widespread presence of esoteric spirituality in the digital space. “I was asking myself, ‘How come, in different parts of the world, there is this strange interest in not only reactivating ancestral knowledge but bringing this together with technology?’” she said.

Often, for artists, the answer comes down to anxiety about the environment, Arns said. “People realize we are in a very dire situation,” she added, “from burning coal and fossil fuels. And it’s not stopping.” Ancient belief systems that were more in tune with nature, combined with new technology, were providing a sense of hope for artists in facing the climate crisis, she said.

While technological progress is often seen as damaging to the environment, artists, Indigenous activists and hackers were trying to reclaim technology for their own, esoteric purposes, said Fabiane Borges, a Brazilian researcher and member of a network called Tecnoxamanismo. That collective organizes meetings and festivals in which participants use devices including D.I.Y.-hacked robots to connect with ancestral belief systems and the natural world.



One of 50 works on paper from Suzanne Treister’s series “Technoshamanic Systems: New Cosmological Models for Survival,” on display in the “Technoshamanism” show.
Suzanne Treister; Annely Juda Fine Art and PPOW

In the Dortmund show, a sense of hope shines through in several works that imagine a future for humans beyond Earth. Fifty prints by the British artist Suzanne Treister from the series “Technoshamanic Systems: New Cosmological Models for Survival” fill one wall of the museum, dreaming spiritual possibilities for the survival of our species.

Treister’s neat, colorful works on paper feature flying saucers and stars laid out in a kabbalah tree-of-life diagram, and blueprints for imagined scientific systems and extraterrestrial architecture. As billionaires like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos look to outer space as the next frontier for human expansion, Treister has imagined a utopian alternative: space exploration as a process in which rituals and visions play as much of a role as solar power and artificial intelligence.

Many esoteric practices connect communities to a higher power, Arns said, which is why outer space features in so many contemporary artists’ explorations of spirituality. “It’s making a link between the microcosm and macrocosm,” she added, creating “an idea of a world that doesn’t only include the Earth.”

Technologists have, of course, come up with a more digital way to enter new worlds: virtual reality. Many of V.R.’s founders were interested in psychedelic experiences, a common feature of shamanic rituals. (The recent boom in ayahuasca ceremonies, where participants drink a psychoactive brew, shows that the attraction remains strong.) Researchers at the University of Sussex, in England, even used V.R. to attempt replicating a magic mushroom hallucination.

In Morehshin Allahyari's V.R. work "She Who Sees the Unknown," the viewer lies on a bed wearing a headset that conjures a malevolent spirit. Jannis Wiebusch

In the "Technoshamanism" show in Dortmund, several works offer the viewer trippy visions. Morehshin Allahyari's V.R. work "She Who Sees the Unknown" conjures a sinister female djinn; at the artist's request, the V.R. headset is worn lying down in the darkened space so that the malevolent spirit hovers menacingly over the viewer. Another work, experienced through augmented-reality glasses, leads the viewer through a meditative ritual in a gigantic papier-mâché shrine, weaving a spiraling light path with video holograms.

Rather than inventing their own virtual spiritual sites, other artists try to uncover the lost meaning of some that already exist. Tabita Rezaire, for example, whose website describes her as "infinity incarnated into an agent of healing," is showing a film installation exploring megalithic stone circles in Gambia and Senegal. In a film playing on a flat-screen TV laid out on the museum floor, Rezaire investigates the original purpose of the ancient sites through documentary interviews with their local guardians, as well as with astronomers and archaeologists. Drawing on numerology, astrology and traditional African understanding of the cosmos, the interviews are superimposed into hypnotic CGI visualizations of outer space.

"Mamelles Ancestrales" by Tabita Rezaire. In a film playing on a flat-screen TV laid out on the museum floor, Rezaire investigates the original purpose of ancient sites in Gambia and Senegal. Jannis Wiebusch

Technology and spirituality could also come together to preserve ancient cultural practices that might otherwise be lost, Borges, the researcher, said. She recalled that, at a 2016 festival organized by her network in Bahia, Brazil, teenagers with cellphones had recorded a full-moon ritual performed by members of the Pataxó, an Indigenous community. The footage, which showed Pataxó people speaking their ancient language in a trance, was later passed to local university researchers who are at work on expanding a dictionary, Borges said.

Interactions between new tools and esoteric practices can be seen across all sorts of mystical practices, Tolbert of Penn State said. "Technology has always been a part of spirituality," he noted, citing psychic mediums hosting their own Facebook groups and ghost hunters using electromagnetic field detectors. "Most of them don't see it, I think, as presenting any kind of a conflict," he added.

Perhaps, then, as the "Cyberwitches Manifesto" suggests, there is more common ground than might be expected between the hackers and the witches, the programmers and the psychics. As Tolbert put it: "What is technology, if not a way for an individual person to uncover answers?"

Feminist Visual Activism and the Body, 2021

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN GENDER AND ART

FEMINIST VISUAL ACTIVISM AND THE BODY

EDITED BY BASIA SLIWINSKA

ROUTLEDGE

Feminist Visual Activism and the Body

This book examines contemporary feminist visual activism(s) through the lens of embodiment(s). The contributors explore how the arts articulate and engage with the current sense of crisis and political concerns (e.g. equality, decolonisation, social justice, democracy, precarity, vulnerability), negotiated *with* and *through* the body.

Drawing upon the legacy of feminist art historical critique, the book scrutinises activist strategies, practices and resilience techniques in intersectional and transnational frameworks. It interrogates how the arts enable the creation of civil and political resilience, become engaged with politics as a response to disaster capitalism and attempt to reform and improve society.

The book will be of interest to scholars working in art history, visual culture, fine arts, women's studies, gender studies, feminism and cultural studies.

Basia Sliwinska is Senior Lecturer in Cultural and Historical Studies at the University of the Arts London. She is a member of the Committee on Women in the Arts of the College of Art Association and the Steering Group for the PARADOX Fine Art European Forum.

Photograph showing a hand-made sign featuring iconography of the female medic that was accidentally blinded by the police at the #ProtestToo rally in Hong Kong in November 2019. Photograph by Evelyn Kwok (2019)

Routledge Research in Gender and Art

Routledge Research in Gender and Art is a new series in art history and visual studies, focusing on gender, sexuality, and feminism. Proposals for monographs and edited collections on this topic are welcomed.

Representing Duchess Anna Amalia's *Bildung*
A Visual Metamorphosis in Portraiture from Political to Personal in Eighteenth-Century Germany
Christina K. Lindeman

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Women, Agency, and the Trojan War
Anthony F. Mangieri

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Agency, Performance, and Representation
Ersy Contogouris

Female Body Image in Contemporary Art
Dieting, Eating Disorders, Self-Harm, and Fatness
Emily L. Newman

Class, Gender, and Sexuality in Thomas Gainsborough's *Blue Boy*
Valerie Hedquist

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Feminist Visual Activism and the Body
Edited by Basia Sliwinska

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Feminist Visual Activism and the Body

Edited by
Basia Sliwinska

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2 Activist Intension

Mona Hatoum and Morehshin Allahyari's Disruptive Bodies

Astrid N. Korporaal

In a global political landscape in which national borders are increasingly policed and surveilled, definitions of citizenship, agency and solidarity are under pressure. How subjects claim the right to inhabit a place, move between sites of belonging and articulate transnational relationships has become a matter of resisting circumscription. Following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in the United States and the War on Terrorism throughout the Muslim world, the perceived threat of porous borders has been politically mobilised by 'contemporary forms of national sovereignty' as synonymous with the threat of porous identities and bodies. Judith Butler has argued that political aggressions 'constitute efforts to overcome . . . ineradicable dimensions of human dependency and sociality' (2009, p. xiv) by dehumanising particular populations, while Michelle Murphy and Nancy Chen point out that internally marginalised communities are increasingly surveilled and pathologised as 'damaged and doomed' or 'toxic' (Murphy 2017, p. 495; Chen 2012). According to this ideology, immigrant, female, queer, non-white, trans and other liminal subjects threaten to erode and contaminate national territories and economies, as well as individual security and identity.[1]

Furthermore, Butler argues that these vulnerable minorities are denied 'livability' and 'grievability' (2009). Their injuries and deaths remain largely unnamed and unmourned in the media. Through uninhabitable identifications, these bodies are limited in their imaginative, relational and physical freedoms. Simultaneously, they are required to make themselves transparent to power by presenting evidence of their location and movement. They are expected to perform within the marginal identities allocated to them, in what Kobena Mercer (1990) and Stuart Hall (1996) call 'the burden of representation'. Initially, the representational activism associated with identity politics promoted transnational advocacy, through exercises in consciousness-raising and reclaiming oppressive labels. Recently, however, this language has been progressively co-opted by neoliberal ideologies into exclusionary forms of socio-political tribalism (Dean 1996), biometric technologies of identification (Magnet 2011) and bioinformatic commodities (Nakamura and Chow-White 2012).[2]

Contemporary visual activism runs up against this complex virtual geography of borders, access and data, in which representations and objectifications are entwined. Feminist scholars such as Butler have attempted to revive transcultural solidarity and representational agency via the shared experiences of vulnerability. Extending her research into the performativity of (gender) identity (1990), Butler has turned to embodied interdependencies as expressions of 'the social network of hands that seeks to minimize the unlivability of lives' (2009, p. 67). She argues that exposure to the need of others, whom we may not initially recognise or relate to, works to ‘disrupt any established notion of the “we”’ (2009, p. 14). Taking the Arab Spring and Occupy movements as key examples of this ‘politics of the street’, Butler studies bodies that gather in public assembly, ‘to express their indignation and enact their plural existence in public space’, demanding recognition and liveable conditions (2015, p. 26).

As these embodied enunciations have become the subject of attention, artistic practices that enact vulnerability have also become associated with activism. Performance-based practices have become central to academic discussions of visual activism, ethics (Ridout and Schneider 2012) and ‘the social turn’ (Bishop 2006, 2012b) in art. However, an encounter with an artistic performance of vulnerability does not necessarily result in a process of social change or even solidarity. As Jane Blocker (2008) argues, performative disruption has become part of an ‘aesthetics of risk’, often transferring the experience of risk to dispossessed subjects, problematically echoing Western tactics of warfare and the spread of corporate capitalism. More broadly, Amelia Jones observes that contemporary performance art, while associated with interpersonal, authentic and transformative experiences, often takes place as ‘a kind of “redo” of “real life”’ (2011, p. 24) within a gallery. She argues that the live re-enactment ‘*destroys presence* (or makes the impossibility of its being secured evident)’ (2011, p. 18). Even participatory performances resemble, for Jones, ‘a simulation of relational exchange with others (not just the artist, but the other spectators, the guards, the “managers of the event)”’ (2011, p. 18).

Butler’s ethical politics invites us to extend our consideration of visual culture as an activist tool for the embodied disruption of representations. Is it possible for artistic practices to enact the ‘plural performativity’ Butler advocates, and does this require the preservation of notions of authenticity and presence based on live physical encounters? Can artists expand our political notion of visual activism and ‘corporeal vulnerability’ by performing across spheres of liveness, representation and intimacy? What are the creative possibilities for articulating the sphere of appearance that Butler posits is ‘both mobilized and disabled’ (2015, p. 79) by the assembly of vulnerable bodies? How can visual activism connect bodies that are not entirely or identifiably present, enabling transnational solidarity?

The shift of public life to virtual arenas calls for a reinterpretation of the intimate exposures explored by female ‘body performance’ artists such as Marina Abramović, Lee Bul, Gina Pane, Coco Fusco, VALIE EXPORT and Carolee Schneemann, among others. Bernadette Wegenstein narrates the development of ‘the body as a medium’ as an evolution from performances of vulnerable embodiment and collective agency in the 1960s, towards performances of the ‘vulnerability of disembodiment’ and displaced or externally controlled agency in digital environments in the 1990s (2006, p. 76). As feminist theorists such as Donna Haraway and Jane Bennett have pointed out, however, digital territories are intertwined with physical power structures (Haraway 1991), and agency takes place in symbiosis with other human and non-human materialities (Bennett 2010).

In this chapter, I argue that the transformative potential of artistic performances of vulnerability lies in the tension between embodiment and disembodiment, visibility and opacity, presence and absence. Focusing on two contemporary female artists of different generations, Mona Hatoum (a Palestinian artist) and Morehshin Allahyari (an Iranian media artist, activist and writer), I discuss a number of ways they avoid reproducing institutionally sanctioned representations of precarity, by directing their address across different scales of embodied experience. Furthermore, I compare the ways these two artists negotiate the increasing technological and social surveillance of marginalised bodies, by re-imagining solidarity across borders.

I propose the term 'intensional' activism to describe these practices, to emphasise their active mobilisation of the tension carried by bodies when negotiating uneven territories of access, visibility and belonging. Furthermore, they incorporate feminist new materialist and post-humanist conceptions of the body as multiple, by extending its spheres of action as well as appearance. I argue that these 'intensional' practices support transcultural visual activism and solidarity by resisting neoliberal expectations of constant presence, physical exposure and public identification.

Performance, Separation and Allegiance

Two bare feet, exposed by rolled-up trousers, stride across the centre of a screen. Followed by a camera, they slowly navigate the littered pavement of a crowded public road. Two large boots are tied to the ankles by their laces, almost kicking the unprotected heels with each step. The camera shifts to a wide shot from above. We can't see what the walker sees, whether she is watching her feet or scanning the surroundings. She doesn't seem to communicate with people around her. The walker's movements are the only ones that appear out of the ordinary on this busy London street. As a performance of physical vulnerability, did this artwork disrupt the social fabric of its surroundings?

Roadworks (1985) was an hour-long performance by Mona Hatoum, carried out in Brixton as part of an exhibition organised by the Brixton Arts Collective (18 May–8 June 1985). The piece was performed in the wake of the 1981 and 1985 riots. In Brixton, the predominantly Afro-Caribbean community struggled with unemployment and poor housing, and riots broke out in response to increasing police violence, raids and 'stop and search' practices. Like Hatoum's other early performances, *Roadworks* was an exercise in bodily endurance. In *Roadworks*, the Doc Martens boots associated with police and skinheads inhibited Hatoum's steps (Figure 2.1). In *Under Siege* (1982), the artist struggled in a transparent cube with liquid clay, painfully slipping for seven hours, and in *The Negotiating Table* (1983), she lay motionless, covered with blood, raw kidney meat and gauze, enclosed in a transparent body bag. Meanwhile, radio fragments discussing Israel's invasion of Lebanon and Western declarations of peace played in the gallery space.

In this same period, Hatoum's Palestinian–Christian family were caught up in the Lebanese civil war, and Palestinians elsewhere struggled under military occupation by Israel, subjected to detention, surveillance, incarceration and torture. Stranded in the United Kingdom in the wake of the Lebanese civil war, Hatoum staged situations in which she was muted, trapped or constrained.[3] A kind of aesthetic allegiance takes place in works such as *Under Siege* and *The Negotiating Table*, whose titles and settings reference geopolitical violence. What does it mean to re-perform these enclosures? These works recall Butler's descriptions of corporeal vulnerability as an ethical address, an invitation to witness. But there are also distinct differences, as Hatoum is physically and temporally removed from other 'disposable' and 'ungrievable' bodies, and seems to actively accentuate the separation from her direct surroundings.

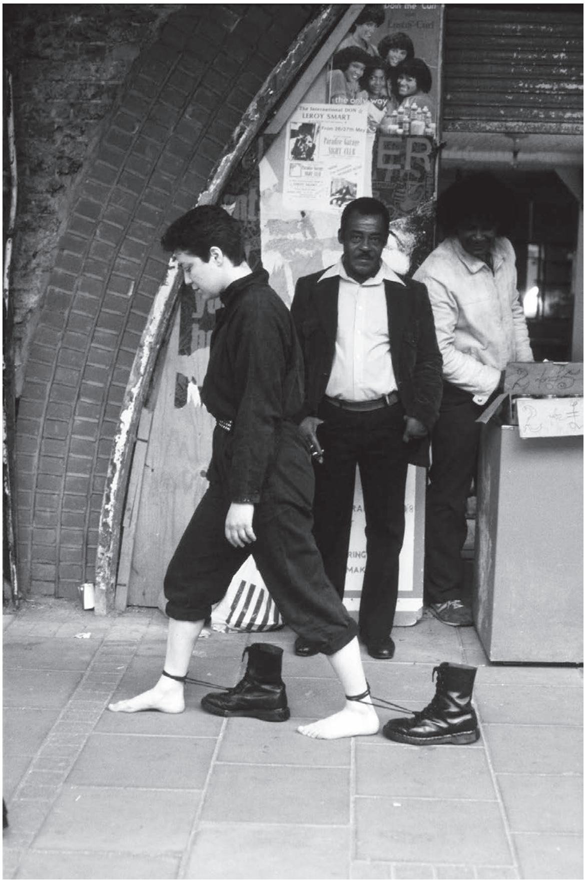

Figure 2.1 Mona Hatoum, *Roadworks*, 1985, performed for 'Roadworks', Brixton Art Gallery, London

Source: © Mona Hatoum. Courtesy the artist (Photo: Patrick Gilbert)

Exposures, Remainders, Intervals

Discussing Hatoum's work in connection with Butler's political ethics of vulnerability, Elena Tzelepis describes *The Negotiating Table* as a 'becoming-carcass' (2016, p. 151). For Tzelepis, Hatoum 'performs the destruction of the human body's integrity, thus exposing the utter superfluity and disposability of the confined bodies of Palestine's occupation' (2016, p. 164). The carcass is a symbol of the violated body and a departure from human individuality, as well as a remainder of that violence. For Tzelepis, Hatoum's work is a performance of displacement and dismemberment, an embodied witnessing to loss. Reflecting on her experience viewing *The Negotiating Table* in Athens in 2012, Tzelepis states that the work echoed local scenes of impoverishment and dispossession. She describes the artist's body as imaginatively intertwining with the image of a homeless person, forming an 'amorphous and dismembered mass' (2016, p. 150).

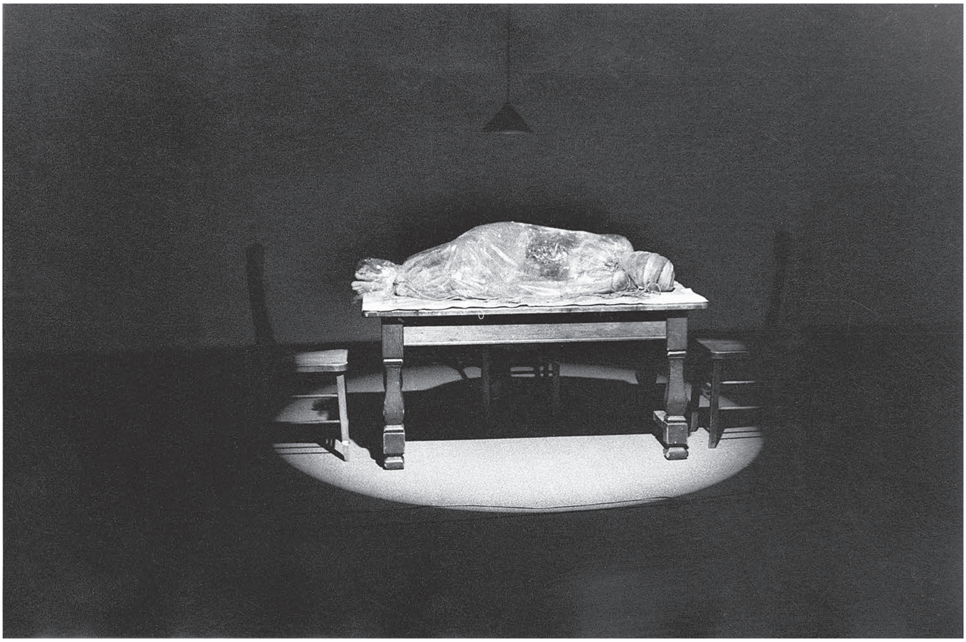

Figure 2.2 Mona Hatoum, *The Negotiating Table*, 1983, performed at The Western Front, Vancouver

Source: © Mona Hatoum. Courtesy The Western Front, Vancouver (Photo: Eric Metcalfe)

From Tzelepis' perspective, the work is a reminder of a universal relationship to injury, and 'the singularity of vulnerable bodies as they are exposed to each other' (2016, p. 164). But the way this exposure works bears further analysis. Hatoum, after all, does not visibly or audibly address the audience, or the dispossessed outside. In fact, she emphasises the boundary between her physical presence and that of the audience. Both the plastic body bag in *The Negotiation Tabl*e and the plastic sheeting in *Under Siege* are smeared with materials (blood and clay) that render them opaque, visually accessible only as a closed loop of repeated violence (Figure 2.2). Is there another way Hatoum's body is communicating a relational vulnerability? How circuits of embodied affiliation might disrupt their surroundings is a question that can also be asked of Butler's politics: how the alliance between marginalised bodies translates into wider spaces 'to live together, across differences, sometimes in modes of unchosen proximity' (Butler 2015, p. 27). To register the ways Hatoum's works function beyond the representation or re-enactment of physical exposure, it is important to attend to their circulation.

Reflecting on the institutional collection of live acts, Rebecca Schneider (2016) posits that performances are 'endlessly incomplete', since their documentation carries them into an afterlife as 'resonances circulating, like orature, in a complex network of cross-live, cross-temporal, cross-reference' (2016, p. 99). Discussing *Roadworks*, Schneider wonders whether the interval between the performance and the photograph *Performance Still* (1985–1995) might be a continuation of its sense of 'being out of step' (2016, p. 106). Schneider routes our attention from a unique moment of liveness to ‘an interinanimacy that takes place across us’ (2016, p. 106). In her earlier book *Performing Remains*, Schneider referred to this interinanimation, as

> a constant (re)turn of, to, from and between states in animation . . . a critical mode of remaining, as well as a mode of remaining critical: passing on, staying alive, in order to pass on the past *as past*, not indeed, as (only) present.
>
> (2011, p. 7)

From this perspective, Hatoum’s performance does not merely repeat violent enclosures. It animates the space of remainder as a durational interplay between moments, locations and lives. The artist exposes the audience to the urgent edge between the live and non-live, a porous sphere of potential contamination. Somatically addressed by this extended temporality of potential and past violence, life and afterlives, the audience is implicated in the interval, and the question of what will happen next.

Surveillance, Tension and Mobilisation

A study of the video documentation of both *Roadworks* and *The Negotiation Table* reveals how the artist uses the virtual sphere to make palpable precisely what eludes the habitual, institutionalised gaze: the dispersal of the body into a field of forces that resist fixed representation. In the video, the camera frame shifts between observational schemas of mapping and dissecting: constantly distancing and zooming in. The surveillance camera, when attempting to identify possible threats, misses the intervals between bodies: the invisible tension that remains in the air after every harassment and the looks shared by those followed and watched.[4] The artist, dragging empty police boots, seems to carry this tension in her deliberately impeded steps. The work acknowledges a hidden presence, without revealing it.

Studying photographic archives produced of ‘identification photographs’ created to track black and migrant communities, Tina M. Campt has argued for the importance of listening to the ‘sonic frequencies of images’ (2017, p. 71). Campt suggests that it is possible to register an ‘articulate quietness’ in these photos, originating from ‘practices that are pervasive and ever-present yet occluded by their seeming absence or erasure in repetition, routine, or internalization’ (2017, p. 4). Emphasising her restricted steps in *Roadworks* and breathing in *The Negotiation Table*, Hatoum works with and through the vulnerability of the body to evoke a similar mode of quiet resistance, mobilising almost imperceptible tensions as ‘psychic and physical *responses* (rather than submission)’ to structures of oppression (2017, p. 51). Slipping through the cracks of the representational regime, *Roadworks* performs a similar internalisation and dissemination of quiet resistance.

Opening her body to outside agencies and experience, Hatoum taps into a sphere of what I am calling ‘intensional’ activism. This in-tension involves an incorporation of a field of forces and agencies into the artist’s performance. The acknowledgement of invisible oppressions makes them grievable, somewhat relieving their weight: a step towards more liveable conditions. The artist, by ‘dragging’ the disruptive trace of past dispossession and possession, to borrow Fred Moten’s term (2003, p. 22), makes it possible to imagine this intensity being translated across different spheres of time, space and materiality. In *Roadworks*, Hatoum simultaneously traces the isolating experience of minorities under surveillance, and passes underneath that gaze, (re-)animating the potentiality of resistance. She mobilises the concealed tension of past and present oppression, from the pavement to the body, from the body to the image, and from the image perhaps to a resonance in the viewer. Rather than repeating an aesthetic of poverty and precarity to produce uncritical images of creative survival, which Anna Dezeuze (2006) calls 'slum chic', Hatoum sets tension in motion. Intentionally, or rather 'intensionally', she inserts her own body as a figure of solidarity and shifts the disruptive pressure of instability and insecurity towards the gallery audience.[5]

Materialities, Intentions and Occupations

In the documentation of *The Negotiation Table*, the camera gradually zooms out from a bloodied detail to a shrinking mass, following the distancing gaze of surveillance. The image we start with, however, registers the almost imperceptible pulse of the artist's breath. This breath mingles with animal flesh, blood, plastic and gauze and enhances the impression of the border of the body becoming porous, affecting the atmosphere. During the slow zoom out, this pulsing remains connected to the viewer's gaze. As the artist struggles to breathe, both present and absent onlookers are held in subconscious suspense, their breaths coalescing imperceptibly in an expanded sphere of intensity.

Dragged by the physical pull of the breath and the virtual pull of the camera, the audience is drawn into the space of interdependence, perhaps becoming aware that the recordings on the invasion of Lebanon drown out the sound of the artist's breath. In order to keep the breath animated, to attend to this barely perceptible life, we become responsible for unchosen proximities, even if the 'economy of visibility' (Kuan Wood 2015) pushes us in another direction. Turning from the distancing operation of Western media narratives, we become exposed to a sense of complicity for the erasure of other lives. Smuggling the injured, enclosed, vulnerable and restricted body into the gallery, into the street and into our homes, Hatoum's performances make their allegiance clear, while directing the contaminating force of instability towards internalised assumptions and embodied relations.

Schneider, broadening her theory of performative remains into the field of new materialism, refers to Karen Barad's notion of 'intra-action' as a material configuration that enacts a performative 'agential cut' between subject and object (2003, p. 815). For Schneider, the 'intra-inanimation' of materialities translates into a differentiation and co-becoming 'through a cut, or interval . . . without the resultant distinction among intra-actants being essentially prior to or inherent in the interval of their exchange' (2017, p. 265). Returning to Hatoum's 'intensional' performances, we can observe that they reveal how arbitrary the borders we construct between human bodies are, without dissipating the intensity of individual suffering.

As a form of visual activism, these embodied performances allow the artist to simultaneously express and take distance from personal experience, freeing up space for new alliances. These transcultural and cross-border connections are not simulated: the risk of responsibility for other lives remains a mobilising force, rather than becoming fixed into a symbolic memorial. Hatoum's works invert the direction of performative 'outsourcing', which Claire Bishop describes as employing the 'real' bodies of marginalised communities, who produce 'a guarantee of authenticity, through their proximity to everyday social reality, conventionally denied to the artist, who deals merely in representations' (Bishop 2012a, p. 110). Instead, both artist and audience are liberated from the demand to perform a singular identity, becoming involved in a porous sphere of relation. This same porosity serves, almost imperceptibly, to pass on the activating tension of dissent and to create space to breathe and relieve pressures.

Myths and Animations

A recent series of works by Iranian-American artist Morehshin Allahyari sets out from a similar activist position, by resisting the visual, physical and virtual occupations of women's bodies and spaces of radical imagination. Titled *She Who Sees the Unknown* (2017–2020), these works use 3D modelling and interactive storytelling to inter-animate female and queer figures from Middle Eastern myths.[6] One of these pieces, *The Laughing Snake* (2018), is mainly web-based, combining hyperlinked poetry, transcribed memories, soundscapes and 3D animations in an interactive online experience. The hypertext narrative takes the mythological figure of the 'laughing snake', a female jinn, as its central protagonist. In this piece, Allahyari builds on a fourteenth-century myth recorded in the Arabic Kitab al-bulhan, or Book of Wonders, and the Book of Felicity. In these tales, the jinn takes over a city and spreads destruction, but is finally defeated when shown her own reflection by a group of men with a mirror.

In Allahyari's work, the mythical laughing snake becomes animated as a figure that connects the pasts, presents and futures of real and imagined women, reflecting experiences of patriarchy and germinating responses across geographical contexts. Extending the notion of possession to a radical openness, Allahyari's figure mediates between virtual and physical spaces. Upon entering the online environment, the reader is invited to click through narratives that branch off into multiple paths, depending on our actions. In an undulating darkness, a feminine voice introduces the jinn as one 'who knows and sees the unknown, and lays them bare'. This prelude then shifts to textual descriptions of 'She' who: 'stands rootless yet rooted', as 'destroyer of all occupiers'. Meanwhile, the jinn animates the screen as dark shadows, waves and curves.

Clicking through the narrative, a mask-like face appears against the opaque background, while highlighted words lead to different routes. The distancing language collapses as the sentences starting with 'she' turn into declarations led by 'I', 'me' or 'we'. In the background, 3D images of the jinn multiply, approaching and receding while rotating their snake-like bodies (Figure 2.3). Several declarations take the form of confessions drawn from the embodied experience of women in the Middle East. As readers, we are drawn into these accounts of sexual harassment, abuse, restrictions and racialised violence. We read these events from the position of the 'I' and are tethered to their unfolding through our clicks. At the same time, there is no illusion of being able to grasp these experiences completely or to form a clear image of the event. The accounts are short, and disjointed by altering words and phrases. Rather than a mappable territory, the work is a realm of expanding and contracting possibilities, of disorientating re-routings.

Similar to Butler's observations on the politics of public assemblies, Allahyari's work de-centres the singular position of the individual. While Butler's discussions focus on the disruptive agency of physical presence and exposure, however, *The Laughing Snake* explores inter-relational responsibility by mediating between the actual and the virtual. Although the narrative routes in the work are limited in number, neither

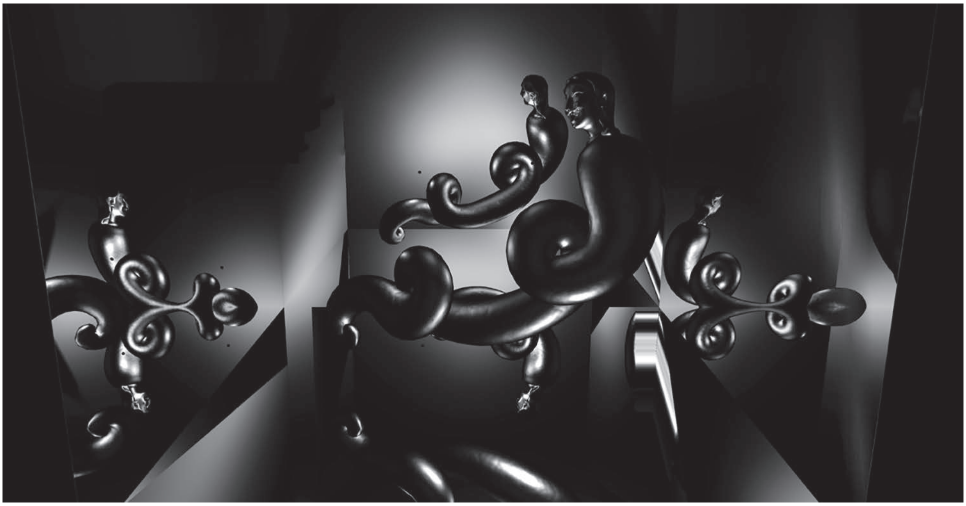

Figure 2.3 Morehshin Allahyari, *She Who Sees the Unknown: The Laughing Snake*, 2017–2020, still image from Net Art piece, co-commissioned by Liverpool Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art and FACT

Source: Image courtesy artist, 2018

the artist nor the audience predetermines their order. The figure of the laughing snake is not a reproduction of a single body or a representation of the vulnerabilities and expectations habitually circumscribed by the labels ‘female’, ‘Iranian’, ‘immigrant’ or ‘muslim’.

Instead, the figure circumvents origins by becoming repeatedly, performatively embodied by latent histories, personal experiences and subjective associations, by both the artist and the audience. Like the Guy Fawkes masks worn by many Occupy protestors, the visage of the laughing snake signals a common intent: to reignite the revolutionary charge of a mythical figure, and to create a more liveable collective space or body. Furthermore, the artwork invites us to undergo a performative embodiment by inhabiting a different and destabilising perspective, mingling and fusing with our existing experiences. Partially incorporating the fragmented avatar, we are both present and absent, shaping and being shaped by the virtual event.

Digital Colonialism and Re-Figuration

While Butler refers to bodies exposed to one another as a ‘social network’ (2009, p. 67), McKenzie Wark (2016) has observed that virtual representation should not merely be considered an extension of the public square. Wark argues that contemporary public spaces have become determined by global media imaginaries in ways that do not necessarily double the rules of physical space. The practice of solidarity must therefore also take into account the ‘virtual geography of the event’ and its production of proximities and distances (2016). Gatherings such as those on Tahrir Square or Occupy Wall Street demand media representation but also generate alternative structures of communication, some visible and audible, and some hidden or underground.

The Laughing Snake disseminates episodes of embodied and gendered vulnerability that are often concealed by the patriarchal frame of representation. However, the artist is careful not to reproduce the tendency of what she terms 'digital colonialism' in her work. Allahyari notes that Western museums attempting to digitally preserve non-Western histories and cultural artifacts also often limit access to images, information and objects through legal and technological borders. These projects frequently reconstruct the meaning of artifacts superficially, as a universally owned heritage, while restricting copyrights. In this way, the institutions conceal the complex histories of violence that led to the destruction of said artifacts, as well as the ongoing damage to the people and cultures associated with them.[7] This is a violence of selective visibility, in which a few vulnerable objects (or bodies) are mobilised for political ends. As the artist (2019) argues:

> ISIS reclaims the object's [sic] through destruction, through creating absence. The western governments and tech companies reclaim it after destruction, through a new kind of presence; and we fail to see the violence of that presence in the way we see the violence of the absence.

What Allahyari (2019) terms 'violent care' recalls Eyal Weizman's description of justice in the contemporary era of 'forensics' (2012, p. 5). While the era of the witness valued of presence and proximity, forensics demands affective detachment. Weizman explains:

> Forensic aesthetics is the mode of appearance of things in forums—the gestures, techniques, and technologies of demonstration; methods of theatricality, narrative, and dramatization; image enhancement and technologies of projection; the creation and demolition of reputation, credibility and competence.
>
> (2012, p. 10)

Similarly, André Lepecki argues that neoliberal capitalism has appropriated affective performance into what he terms 'dis-experience': 'the monitoring and monetizing of the ways participants–consumers feel, narrate and disseminate their experiences' (2016, p. 170). Both modes of aesthetics rely on illusions of authenticity and collective participation, through forms of presentation and performance that are disconnected from subjective encounters and messy entanglements.

Resisting these uses of media and technology, Allahyari attempts to 're-figure' the virtual objects and bodies occupied by the violence of representation. Retrieving lost or destroyed figures in order to re-imagine alternative futures, to 'collapse the political notion of space and time as an act of resistance' (Allahyari and Paul 2019), Allahyari enacts a visual activism that takes infrastructures of care into consideration. In *Material Speculation: ISIS* (2015–2016), the artist recreated 12 objects from the Mosul Museum's collection that were destroyed by ISIS in 2015. Inside each sculpture Allahyari embedded a flash drive containing all her research into the object's history, including images, maps and videos, as well as the file for the reproduction itself (Figure 2.4). These drives are visible through the translucent resin but unattainable until a museum or collection commits to preserve the object and make the archive open access. This interplay of transparency and opacity, accessibility and inaccessibility, attempts to disrupt the cycle of representational justice and reclamation, in which one

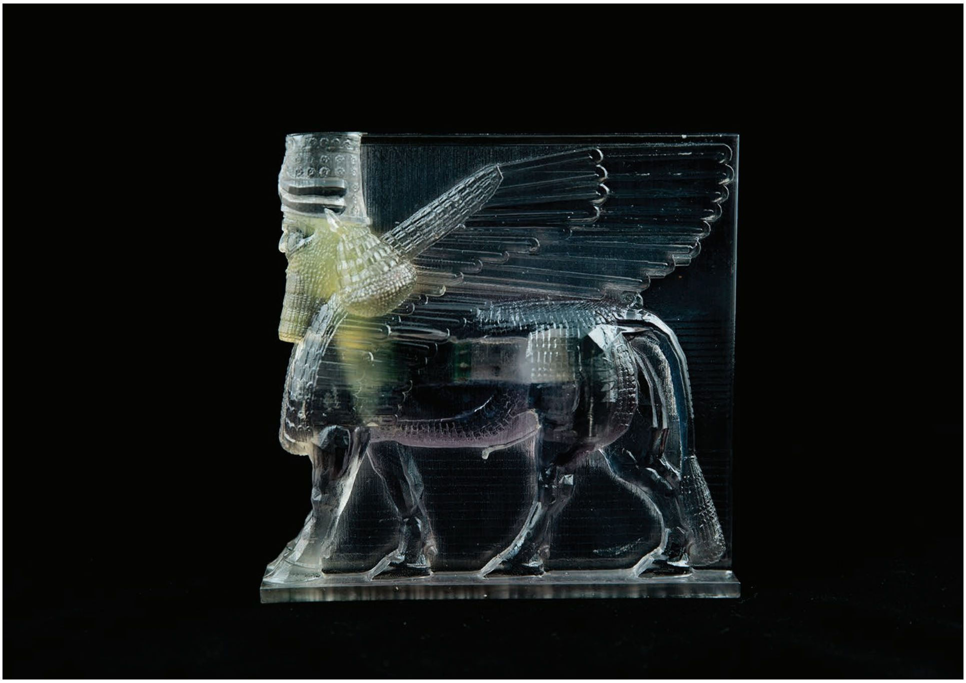

Figure 2.4 Morehshin Allahyari, *Material Speculation: ISIS – Lamassu*, 2016, 3D printed sculpture and flash drive

Source: Image courtesy of the artist

reality substitutes and destroys another. Allahyari's replicas are non-identical traces of the original, carrying the potential to inspire diverging cultural associations without collapsing them into a flattened, universal signifier. At the same time, they remind us that revolutionary exchanges require sustained responsibility.

Possession and Dispersal

In *The Laughing Snake*, Allahyari's re-figuring turns to Islamic mythology and the revolutionary potential of female experiences. Its exploration of virtual possession rejects the tropes of self-identification, ownership and appropriation. Assembling the voices, memories and imaginations of the artist and audience, the work becomes a space of diversity. We could say that Allahyari's re-figured jinn breaks the mirror that works, as post-humanist theorist Donna Haraway argues, to 'displace the same elsewhere', in favour of diffraction, which records 'the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference' (1997, p. 273). Allahyari's work refuses to recognise the image of the female body reflected in the patriarchal mirror. As the mirror shatters, the jinn disperses into multiple bodies that can look back, speak back, translate their different perspectives and experiences into activist power.

The reader becomes part of this process, without being in complete control. On one path, after clicking 'I am sixteen', we find a progression of tales of catcalling, unwanted touching, stalking, harassment and exposure by 'young boys, middle-aged fathers and old old grandpas'. Each account contains the word 'CASUALLY', which, when clicked on, morphs into phrases such as 'CAUSING HYSTERICAL PAROXYSM', or 'CAUSING EVENTUAL MONSTROSITY', or 'CAUSING A WINNABLE WAR'. The reference to 'casual' behaviour points to the normative acceptance and reproduction of sexual harassment and discrimination, which take place both in surreptitious and blatantly visible ways, structurally infiltrating our (subconscious) preconceptions. While labels of hysteria and monstrosity refer to emotional and inhuman excesses, perhaps these intense responses, which can disrupt and contaminate the borders of what we consider normal, are needed to resist the cycle of violence. This resistance is both embodied and viral, as it becomes incorporated into our shared sense of self and reality, a changing notion of 'we'.

On other routes, every sentence on the screen becomes clickable, causing declarations such as: 'LAUGH AT THE REVOLUTION—unless it's our revolution' to fill the screen. Readers are actively involved in uncovering these directives for the future and mantras of liberation, creating a silent but embodied echo. The tensions between the perspectives of she, I and we are not dissipated; the artist does not create a final image of resolution. We can choose to continue or repeat the journey of the narrative, making it present by adding fragments of our own experiences and projections, as we take responsibility for the story's unfolding. The disorientation inherent in this fragmentary progression places an emphasis on embodied interaction, inviting the audience to feel our way through the interrelations and expand our notion of a shared body.

This resulting attentivity exceeds the individual's capacity to give account of oneself, much like Butler's corporeal vulnerability. It turns towards interdependence and contaminates the acceptable, policed image of public space to transform the circulation of experiences and memories into correspondences and solidarities across national and cultural boundaries. What Allahyari offers is a sphere of intensity and revolutionary intention, a work of art and an act of 'intensional' activism, infused by the potential circuited by this porous figure: the laughing snake. This sphere offers protection from the enclosing forces of social surveillance and physical borders. At the same time, it encourages the audience to creatively explore their proximity to the diverse agencies responsible for these pressures, as well as the agency needed to resist their continuation.

Intensional Activism, Multiple Futures

In the works of Allahyari and Hatoum discussed above, comparable situations of instability are set up, through which the tension of past and present oppressions are activated and allowed to circulate. The artists address the vulnerability of marginalised bodies, including experiences of physical and psychological injury, alienation and enclosure, but they refuse the burden of representing and reproducing the identifying categories and societal borders meant to contain these experiences. In different ways, they create performative figures that can gather the physical and virtual traces of these experiences, without circumscribing them to specific labels or singular bodies. These artists enact what I term 'intensional' activism: a mode of solidarity that takes into account and redistributes the embodied pressures and barely perceptible gaps produced by unequal hierarchies of agency, visibility and movement. Intensional activism takes what Claire Waterton and Kathryn Yusoff call the 'double-edged sword of creative and violent cuts' (2017, p. 7) of indeterminate embodiment and mobilises it to extend the porosity of identity, agency and solidary.

Both artists work with the tension between bodies, positions and the dualistic separations created by geopolitical hierarchies. They explore this tension by attending to the gap between the image of the body and its experience. Rather than focusing on the physical assembly of vulnerable bodies as a way to occupy the public square and demand recognition in the frame of media representation, the practices discussed above develop another form of plural performativity. 'Intensional' activism gathers, drags and carries the fragments of embodied experience created by the trauma of being identified, objectified, tracked, categorised and erased, allowing them to extend into invisible and virtual spheres of relation. Through the connective tension and remote intimacy of repeated gestures, atmospheric exchanges, imaginative associations and repeated memories, a performative body is assembled. This inter-animated body does not attempt to reclaim an original, authentic or universal experience. It offers the opportunity to communicate across perspectives and modes of attention, and expands the category of 'othered' identity through visible and invisible extensions, virtual and physical proximities.

In a time when spheres of physical and digital solidarity are becoming increasingly polarised, performative artworks that invite us to extend the limits of our bodies and open to new perspectives are crucial to our ability to imagine and care for other futures. The practice of 'intensional' activism destabilises the virtual borders that interpenetrate every aspect of contemporary life, from surveillance and media to conservation and communication infrastructures. Visible and invisible impressions of the marginalised body are smuggled into the gallery, the streets and our homes, creating new sites for interpersonal awareness. Exceeding the singular image and representational occupation, these figures bring with them a portable and porous space of unbelonging, which creates gaps for multiple bodies, voices and agencies to slip through. This space of 'intensional' encounters disrupts our habitual affiliations and self-images, in order to re-imagine the visual as a passage for diverse traces, reorientations, absences, opacities and resistances. More than a process of resolution, recognition or consolidation, the visual becomes a catalyst for seeing-with and feeling-with the revolutionary interval between absence and presence.

Notes

1. This chapter was written in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, when fear of contamination was used to boost police powers and border controls in many nations.
2. Nakamura and Chow-White specifically discuss the spectacle of American commercial television shows in which genetic tests 'reveal' their subjects' race as quantified datasets (2012).
3. The artist, who was born in Beirut, was forced to stay in London when the Lebanese civil war broke out during a visit in 1975.
4. The Black Audio Film Collective's experimental documentary *Handsworth Songs* (1986) explored how the media narrative of criminal activity, gang wars and clashes between immigrant groups in the wake of the 1985 riots in Birmingham served to cover up growing social unrest in an area plagued by the rise of white nationalism, violent racist attacks and police brutality.
5 Dezeuze (2006) surveys a number of artworks that draw on the survival strategies of shantytown dwellers. She argues that these works ambivalently aestheticise the signifiers of precariousness or precariousness itself, with the danger of conflating and romanticising different varieties of insecurity, while eliding political alternatives.

6. More on this series and other works by the Allahyari can be found at: www.morehshin.com/.
7. One of the examples Allahyari gives of this ‘violent care’ is the collaboration between the UK-based Institute for Digital Archaeology, UNESCO and Dubai’s Museum of the Future to reconstruct Palmyra’s 1,800-year-old Arch after its destruction by ISIS. Regarding a video of the unveiling of the Arch’s replica in London’s Trafalgar Square in April 2016, Allahyari notes:

> People in audience applaud [sic]. Then they take turns to take selfies with the new Palmyra and they perhaps go back to their safe homes never thinking back at what it was that was wrong with that image; how ISIS formed in first place as a result of U.S. and Europe invasion of the Middle-East.
>
> (2019)

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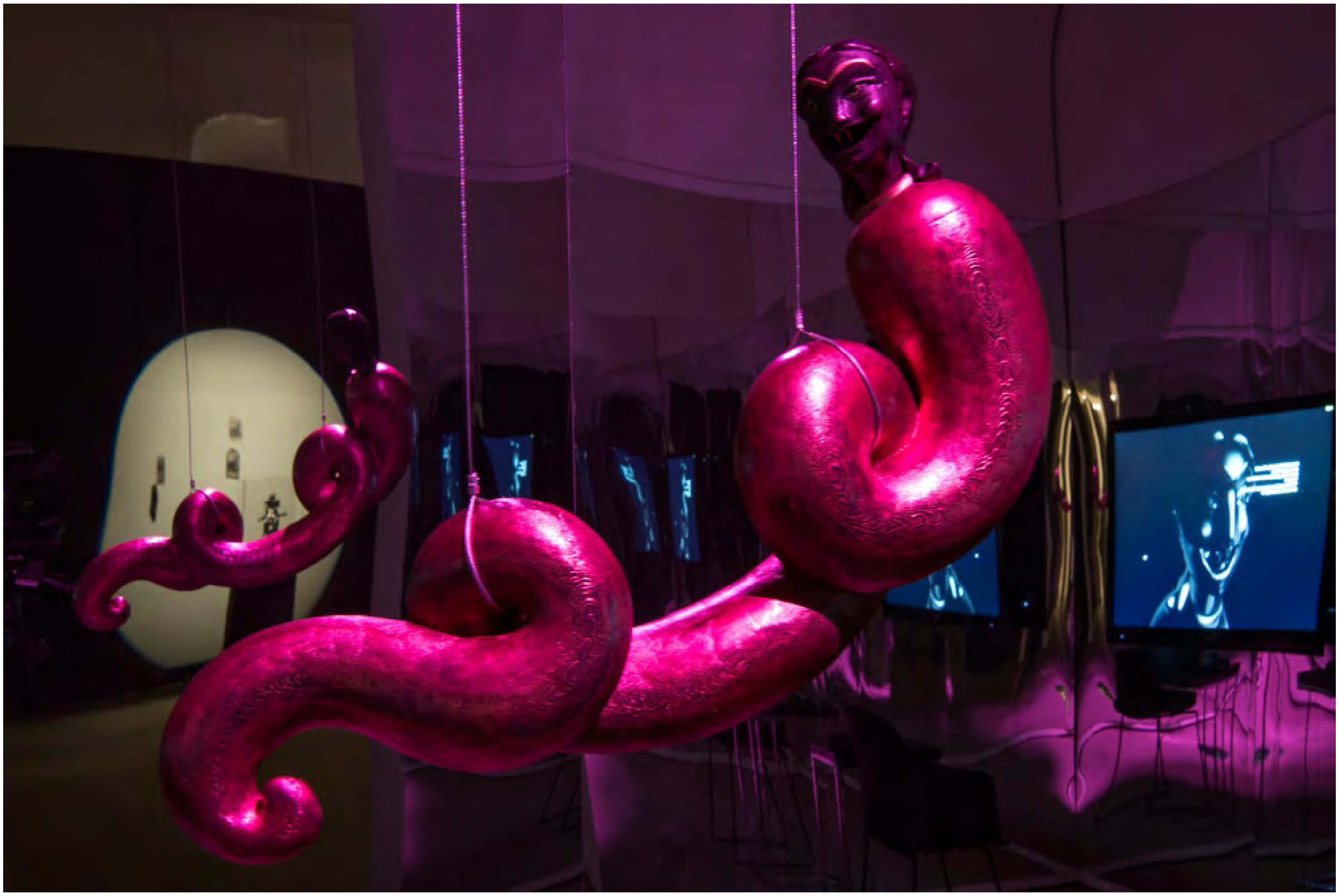
ArtSeen

Morehshin Allahyari: *She Who Sees the Unknown*

When anger and malice show no effect … laughter can loosen the coil

By Joel Kuennen
SEPT 2019



Morehshin Allahyari, *She Who Sees The Unknown: The Laughing Snake*, MacKenzie Gallery, Regina, 2019. Installation with 3D printed plastic sculpture, mirrored room, and interactive hypertextual narrative, 2019. Photo: Don Hall.

Regina, Saskatchewan

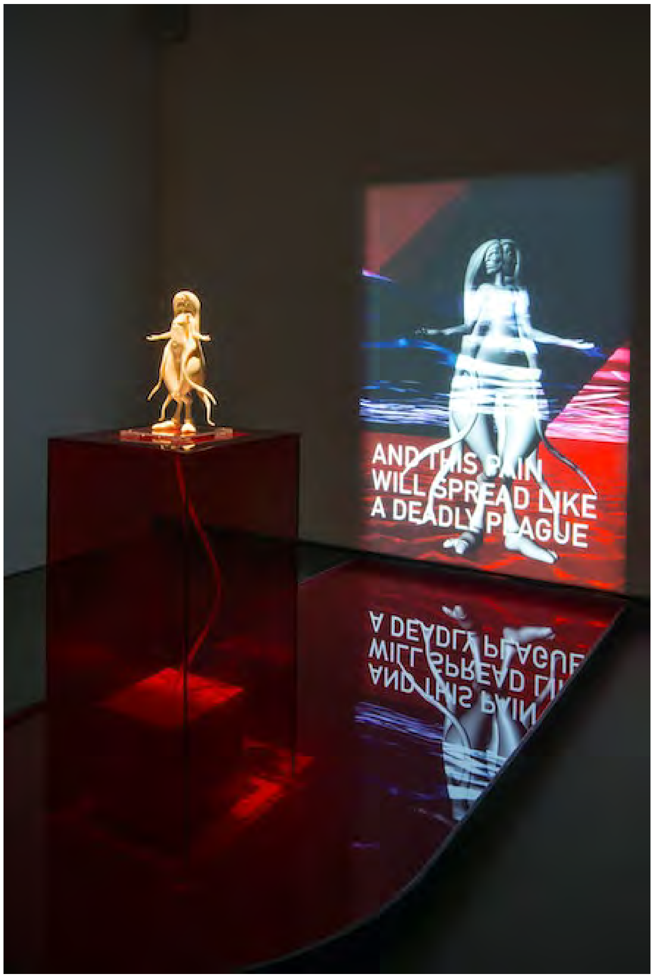
MacKenzie Gallery
May 24 – August 25, 2019

Radical empathy has emerged as a strategy to reorient a culture of systemic disaffection created by the alienation of capitalism. In general, radical empathy means primacing the experience of other people, other animals, other organisms and plants, internalizing the interplay of complex biological systems in order to place the self within a complex array of dependencies. Morehshin Allahyari's exhibition, *She Who Sees the Unknown* in Regina, Saskatchewan at The MacKenzie Gallery showcased a different kind of radical empathy, one that empathizes with the marginalized and urges a usurpation of the forces that dissimilate to, as Allahyari says, "colonize the colonizers."

She Who Sees the Unknown includes three of Allahyari's jinns: *Aisha Qandisha (*2018*), Huma (*2017*),* and *The Laughing Snake (*2018*).* The MacKenzie is a collecting museum with around 4,000 works in the provincial capital of the Canadian prairies and a new mission to bolster their indigenous collection (800 works), present new and challenging work to their public, and develop a narrative of cultural engagement that reflects Canada's diverse population. To move towards these ambitious goals, they tapped John G. Hampton, former resident of Regina, Chickasaw Nation member, and up-and-coming curator to become the McKenzie's first Director of Programs. It makes sense then to turn to Allahyari, an Iranian artist who resides in the United States, whose work refigures power relations, reactivates archives, and shifts expectations of what new media work can do.

Jinns, popularized in the West as genies, are something like spirits or naiades, causation for maladies or inspiration for gladness, conditions of the environment. Their lore has survived monotheism and their analog in English is hard to pin down, but something close to the cause of a cause, like the hunger that drives the mosquito to bite.

She Who Sees the Unknown opens with a small library of texts, *Reading Room* (2016-ongoing), a practice of critical contextualization that began in 2016 with the first iteration of *She Who Sees the Unknown at Transfer Gallery'*s former space in Brooklyn. Donna Haraway's *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Staying with the trouble* sits next to Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia*, resting on top of *Rammali (The Science of Geomancy)*. These contextualizations allow for deep engagements with the conceptual underpinnings of the work, or, at least, the titles serve as invocations to frame the work to come: *Cyborgs or Goddesses? / Power and Protection / Madness and Civilization / Speaking of Us / The Monstrous Goddess.*



Morehshin Allahyari, *She Who Sees The Unknown: Aisha Qandisha*, MacKenzie Gallery, Regina, 2019. Installation with 3D printed resin sculpture, reflecting pool, and HD video, 2018–19. Photo: Don Hall.

Entering the gallery, *Aisha Qandisha* stands on a plinth in a reflecting pool, in the glory of expectant adoration, arms out, welcoming in to a yonic yawn between wide hips and falling hair that flows down to camelid feet. Allahyari once told me her grandmother would tell her stories of encountering jinns in the bathhouse, "they like it where it's warm and moist, dark." There's an aspect to jinns that remind me of the microbial world, an unseen vastness that is constantly working around us, farming the world to produce the raw nutrients of life.

The gallery is dark except for a spot light on the idolized jinn created out of white resin, and a projection behind that shows renderings of Aisha Qandisha standing on modeled wavelets that then reflect off a shallow pool on the floor. She is the entry point, a Morrocan jinn of the water who plays a role akin to the siren of Greek mythology, luring men into the abyss. Here, *Aisha* is used to tell the story of a romance left behind, a relationship gone awry, where the man is left wounded, open, and grasping at the connection that once filled the lacuna in the boundary of the self. There is power in that, Allahyari intimates, a power without regret or remorse at the strength of a bond removed. The words "you are in the past and I am heading into in the future" cross the screen.

Across the gallery, *Huma* squats in adlocutio, her right hand open palm forward, the other grasping at the air. Her three feline heads look forward and to the sides and a twin tail with bovine heads arcs out from under a skirt. The 3D-printed icon in polished black resin sits atop a translucent plexiglass cube plinth, an alter. Three talismans inscribed on clear resin tablets hang in front of a black wall: Invocation, Fevered Skin, Madness. To the right a bench sits in front of a large projection of Huma, the words "She, Huma, who shatters the unjust subject," begin the video that most clearly makes the case for Allahyari's usurpational empathy. Usurp, to illegally take power, is the correct term as the legal system maintains a system of unjust relationships, reifies positions of stolen ownership, has become a tool for the powerful wielded against the poor and powerless. So yes, to "shatter the unjust subject" will be an illegal act.

Installation view: *Morehshin Allahyari, She Who Sees The Unknown: Huma*, MacKenzie Gallery, Regina, 2019. Installation with 3D printed black resin sculpture, clear resin talismans, and HD Video, 2016. Photo: Don Hall.

Huma causes fever and eventually madness, she is heat, bubbling up from within, she is the fire that cooks to nourish and burn the soul. Allahyari connects this jinn to climate change, to the madness of our current position. As I sat watching the projection, a slow rumble built below the bench, bass fluctuating out like the gurgles of a roiling pot. “She is a monster, and should be,” says the artist. Power is frightening, and should be. Power should not be wielded lightly but it must be to re-figure an unjust world. If *Huma* tells us that we must become comfortable having power in order to decolonize ourselves, then the final jinn in the exhibition develops a strategy for confronting the monstrous centers of power.

The Laughing Snake spirals out in space, her grinning face looking back over her smooth, coiled body styled after a representation of the jinn found in *The Book of Wonders*, an illuminated manuscript from 1582. Based on the fable of a monstrous creature, a serpentine mass, who terrorizes towns, swallowing cattle and people, impossible to kill until a hermit shows a mirror to the creature. *The Laughing Snake* hangs suspended in a dark, mirrored room, trapped, laughing and laughing until she self-destructs. A screen on the right tells a story of Allahyari’s experience growing up in a female-designated body in Iran, stories of coercion, abuse, and moral enculturation. *The Laughing Snake*, a project that Allahyari first debuted on the Whitney Museum’s digital platform, Artport, as an interactive hypertext fable, is spoken of by the artist as a reach for agency in the moment of self-destruction.

The cultural bounds that determine and subjugate the individual, the invisible powers of the human system within which we live, are coiled and byzantine, seemingly impossible to defeat. They reside within ourselves as well. When anger and malice show no effect, are met with escalation, laughter can loosen the coil, can strip the reifying structures of control to reveal the agency latent in the ascription of meaning.

Contributor

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Joel Kuennen an art critic, curator, editor, and artist. Their work has been published in Art in America, ArtSlant, Elephant, Mutual Art, THE SEEN and many others.

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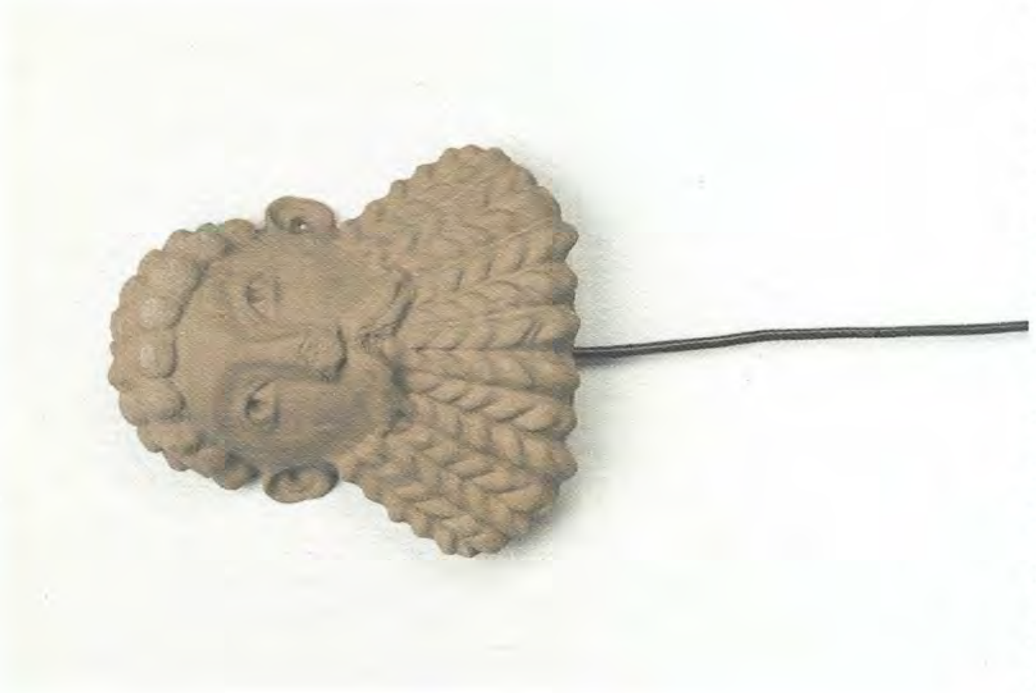
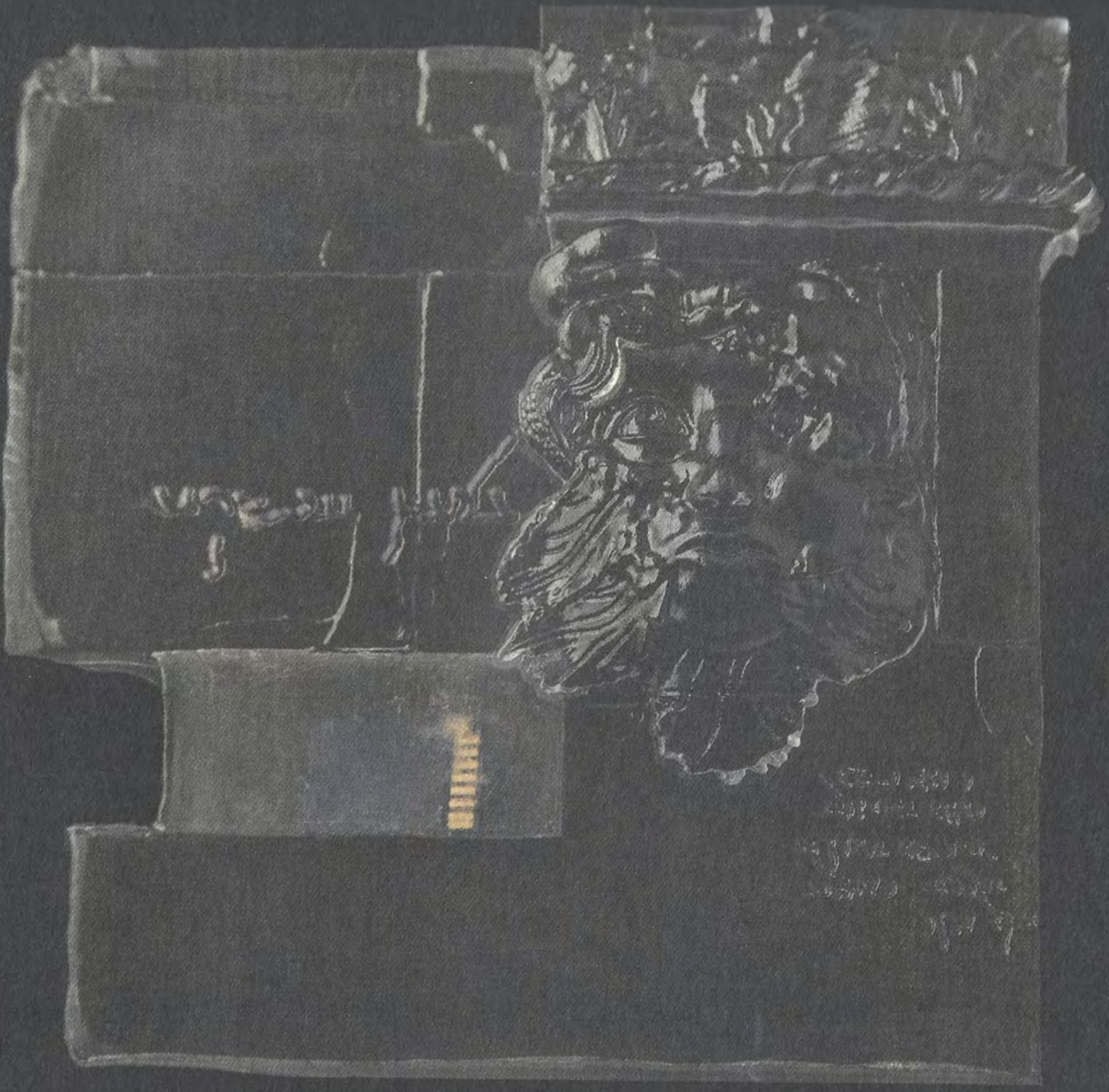
4.15 MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI
Material Speculation: ISIS, 2015–2016

Material Speculation: ISIS was a project by artist-activist Morehshin Allahyari to reproduce as 3D-printed replicas a set of twelve artifacts, destroyed in 2015 by ISIS, from the ancient cities of Hatra and Nineveh. In order to create CAD model facsimiles, Allahyari performed extensive research, corresponding with curators and historians, tracking down images taken at various angles to refine her replicas.



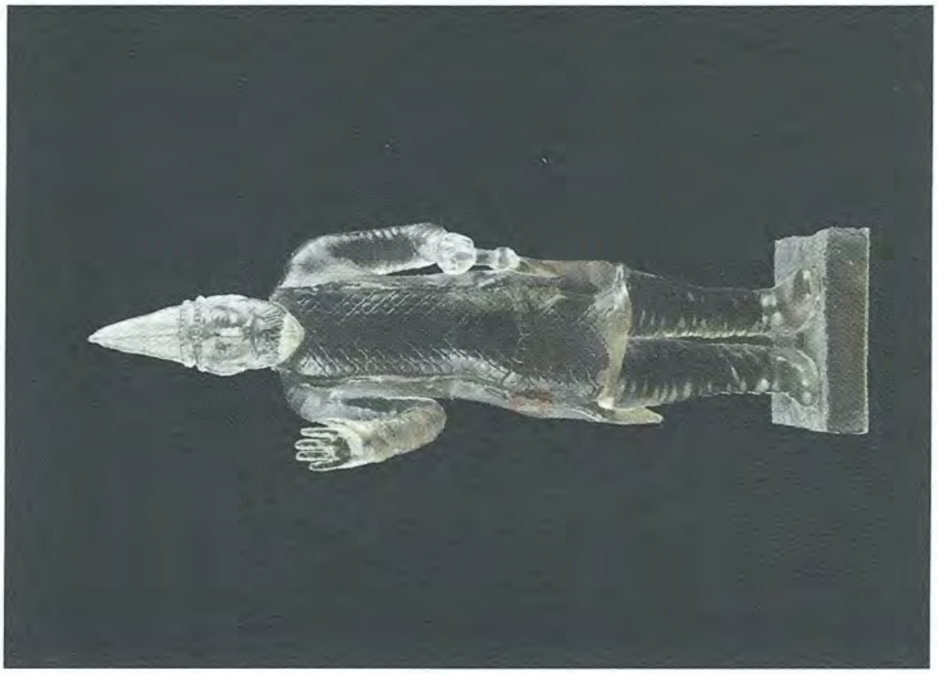
Morehshin Allahyari, *South Ivan Human Heads: Bearded River God*, 2017. 3D printed sandstone and electronic components.

In 2016, the twelve works from the series were displayed at Trinity Square Video in Toronto, each with a memory card sealed inside containing Allahyari's research on that figure. During the run of the exhibition, Allahyari's model *King Uthal*, reproducing a Roman-era sculpture destroyed at the Mosul Museum in 2015, was published by *Rhizome*. A ZIP folder containing research documents, videos, email correspondence, and STL and .obj files of Allahyari's printable model, created from dozens of still photographs of the original artifact, was freely available for any user to download. In a further development of this body of work, Allahyari created the series *South Ivan Human Heads* (2018), 3D facsimiles that also act as "dead drops," containing embedded USB drives that allow users to download research materials directly to their own device in the gallery.



Morehshin Allahyari, *Gorgon*, 2016.
3D printed plastic and electronic
components. From the series Material
Speculation: ISIS , 2015–2016.

Allahyari describes the project as examining "petropolitical and poetic relationships between 3D Printing, Plastic, Oil, Technocapitalism, and Jihad."[1] On its surface, the project fits neatly into a techno-utopian discourse in which western rationalism becomes both savior and steward to objects of cultural significance. But Allahyari actively counters this reading: in an effort to combat what she has described as "digital colonialism"[2]—the tendency for information technologies to be deployed in ways that reproduce colonial power relations—she has set a long-term goal of placing her work in an institutional archive in the Middle East, supporting a cultural commons that centers that region.



Morehshin Allahyari, *King Uthal*, 2015. 3D printed plastic and electronic components. From the series *Material Speculation: ISIS*, 2015–2016.

"If ISIS claims these objects, these histories, by destroying them, the Silicon Valley ideology is that the Western tech companies reclaim it by re-creating it." —Moreshshin Allahyari[3]

From "Material Speculation: ISIS and King Uthal" by Nora N. Khan[4]

Reading through Morehshin Allahyari's two years of emails with historians, scholars, and curators around the world as she researched the artifacts destroyed by ISIS at the Mosul Museum in 2015 is both astonishing and moving. The emails read like a treasure hunt, replete with rabbit holes, detours, and relentless, methodical searching through troves of information. Allahyari looks for a guide to the Hatra sculptures in the Mosul Museum for months, running into frustrating dead ends and roundabouts; some curators are lost to time, and others cannot cooperate. But some who have spent their lives on the topic are incredibly generous, offering in-depth descriptions of the Hatra excavations in '51 and '52, where many of the destroyed artifacts had been unearthed.

As she researched, she printed. The statues became more polished and transparent. As she worked, Allahyari captured documentation in the form of animated GIFs: of the artist polishing and buffing her prints, of the Lamassu and kings forming on metal beds, washed over by iridescent printer lights. King Uthal's finished body gleams, a crystalline purplish hologram against the dark. He wears a kind of royal tunic that is diamond-patterned, and his hand is held up in prayer.

Allahyari would eventually recreate twelve artifacts from Hatra and Nineveh as part of *Material Speculation: ISIS*. Beckoning future viewers to open up the model and make their own, Allahyari embedded a drive of her research inside her model of King Uthal for the project's premiere at Trinity Square Video in Toronto. Alongside this, the 3-D recreation of Uthal was hosted on the Rhizome website as part of Paul Soullellis's *Download* series. The idea behind this was straightforward and elegant: with his files open to anyone, Uthal would live on forever, on laptops and desktops and software and 3D printers across the world: a distributed, speculative archive.[5]

The project was grounded in optimism, as Allahyari focused on the practicalities of 3D printing, on the tool's potential for activism and political resistance, and the poetic gesture of distributing the .obj and .stl files of her works for others' reuse. The reality was that the distribution was still unequal, that 3D printing is available to a select few, and hardly ever to the people of Iraq and Iran who could lay true claim to their cultural heritage. Even though Allahyari's files were open source and freely accessible online, Uthal has been printed almost exclusively in Western countries—all the more troubling because the destruction of the statues was directly related to Western imperialism and geopolitics, which fomented the political conflicts that gave rise to ISIS in the first place.[6]

Material Speculation: ISIS has been a key part of Allahyari's articulation of a conceptual framework around digital colonialism, which she has been developing since 2015. In her analysis, digital institutions lay claim to data just as traditional cultural institutions have laid claim to priceless artifacts stolen the world over. It's an old, old story. Under the guise of protecting "universal heritage," Western institutions buy up

data that is mostly inaccessible to the people whose history they represent. Thus, eventually releasing the remaining models to a Middle Eastern platform and museum is of utmost importance.

---

[1] Morehshin Allahyari, "Material Speculation: Isis," 2015–2016, www.morehshin.com/material-speculation-isis/.

[2] Marcella Faustini, "On Material Entanglements," *Open Space*, July 29, 2016, openspace.sfmoma.org/2016/07on-the-speculation-of-materiality-an-interview-with-moreshin-allahyari/.

[3] Faustini.

[4] Nora N. Khan, "Material Speculation: ISIS and King Uthal," *Rhizome*, publication forthcoming.

[5] Soulellis, writing a framing essay for the work at the time, proposed how that the object's essential nature was disrupted and in flux through the constant circulation, through creation of a the "multiverse of digital cenotaphs," a "mixed-up phantom of itself, actively repairing cultural memory while denying us a conclusion."

[6] As Dina Georgis, a University of Toronto professor, notes: ISIS, its "desires for territorial expansion for a caliphate came into being under brutal American policies in the region that constitutionally did away with social securities and in turn privatized public resources, which were plundered by western elites institutionalizing systemic corruption." Found at: nomorepotlucks.org/site/playful-reparations-in-morehshin-allahyaris-material-speculation-dina-georgis/

Net art, which explores the internet as material and concept, involves an astonishingly diverse set of practices that now stretch back decades, incorporating any number of disciplines: painting, performance, poetry, creative code. This book considers this heterogeneous field of practice by bringing together 100 exemplary works of net art, from 1980s animations for the Brazilian Videotexto network to artist-made virtual worlds of the 2010s. Although the works vary widely, looking at them together and in context offers a deep understanding of internet culture through time, and yields new insight into our networked present.

Rhizome, an organization that has championed born-digital art and culture since its founding in 1996, selected these works for the online exhibition Net Art Anthology and its gallery-based spinoff, "The Art Happens Here," which opened in January 2019 at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York.

Edited by Michael Connor with Aria Dean and Dragan Espenschied

anthology.rhizome.org

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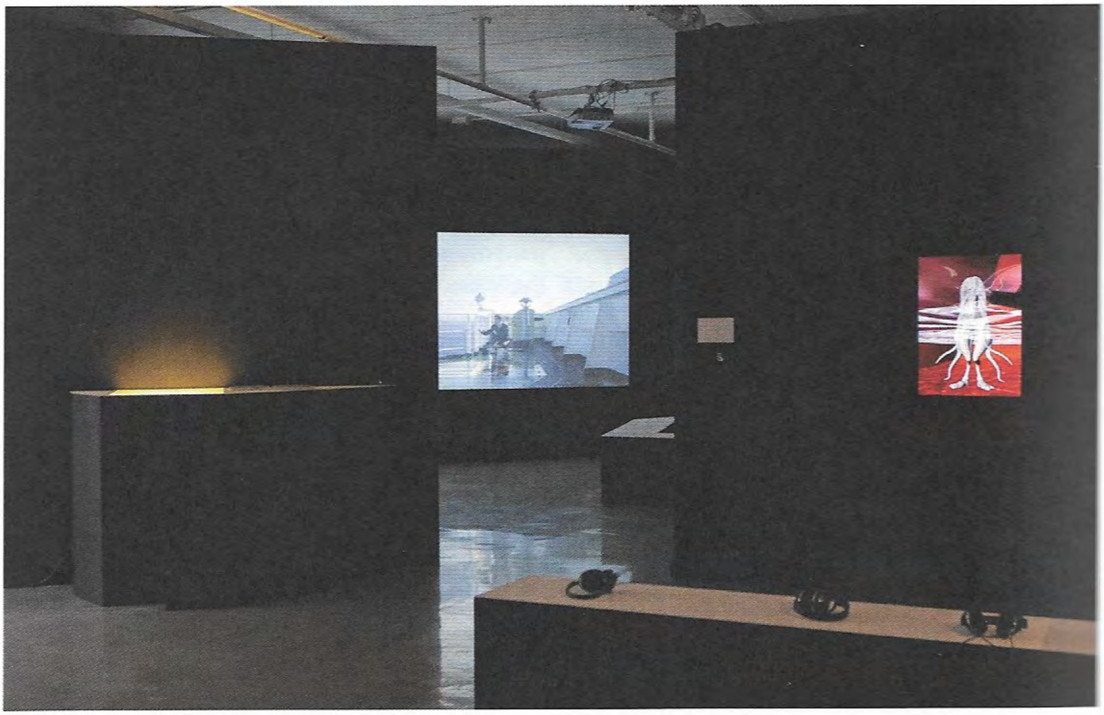
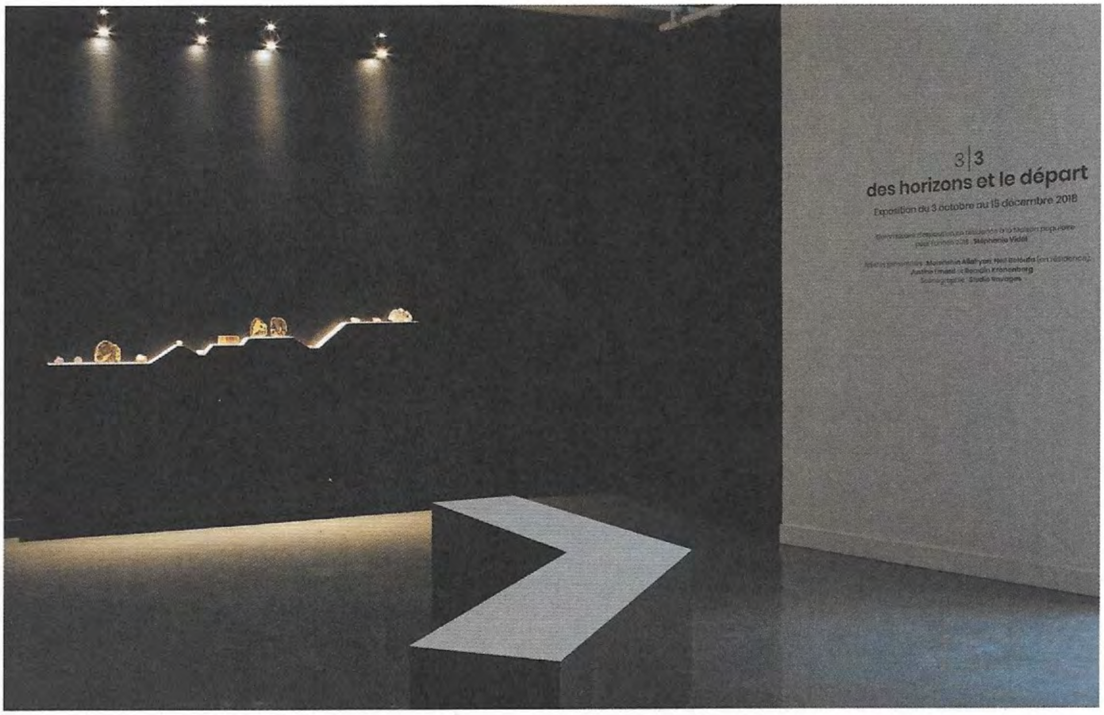
Maison Populaire, 2018

En fuyant, ils cherchent une arme

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des horizons et le départ
Exposition du 3 octobre au 15 décembre 2018

que désuets, ces récits-appuis s'avèrent inopérants pour que les générations actuelles ou futures se projettent avec enthousiasme et sérénité dans les prochaines décennies. Peut-être alors devons-nous inverser le schéma et thésauriser l'avenir, sans le figer. Dans un tel modèle, il ne s'agirait pas de louer le futur bêtement ou de le craindre monolithiquement, mais de le considérer comme une richesse, un bien commun qu'il convient de ménager et de cultiver en lui fournissant des conditions favorables pour qu'il émerge. Pour ce faire, il nous faudrait à nouveau convoquer ce qui est absent, ce qui est autre, ce qui est loin et le désirer sincèrement, non pas pour s'en emparer mais pour le faire exister. La gageure serait donc de créer des récits dans lesquels le monde nous échappe, de tracer des pistes vers des destinations inconnues, de faire de l'incertitude un moteur narratif et non un frein à l'action.

Les œuvres rassemblées dans l'exposition « Des horizons et le départ » spéculent pour explorer ; alliant des technologies contemporaines d'immersion dans l'image – comme la forme cinématographique, la modélisation 3D ou la réalité augmentée – à des narrations qui traversent et transpercent les époques. Elles s'inspirent des mystères du mythe, des enseignements des contes et profitent du repos offert par la poésie – qui seule sait suspendre le sens –, afin de partir en éclaireur.euse vers des territoires d'énonciation ré-actualisés. Chemin faisant, elles cherchent à faire éclore des récits exempts de toute exploitation, marchandisation, colonisation... Réalisées par des artistes marqué.e.s par un déplacement, un voyage, un exil, elles questionnent nos interactions avec les histoires fondatrices, les modalités de la rencontre à l'autre et les liens que nous entretenons avec les techniques. En s'inscrivant dans des temps élargis et des espaces stratifiés, ces œuvres non-binaires et non-conformes sont en quête d'alternatives. Elles nous rappellent que, même si la force d'un système s'éprouve à la difficulté qu'il donne à l'échappée, les constructions humaines peuvent toujours être modifiées.

Ayant entamé son riche parcours par la faculté de théologie, Romain Kronenberg a fait des mythes une notion centrale de son travail de plasticien. Généralement inspirées de lectures sur le sujet, ses œuvres mettent en scène les relations entre le désir et la fonction, entre ce qui est et ce qui pourrait être, entre des humains qui s'élancent vers l'au-delà et des dieux libres d'abandonner le cosmos. L'univers y est présenté comme une complexité, voire comme un paradoxe : né des récits qui expliquent son origine, il ne peut être réduit à ces histoires. Le mouvement surgit de la différence de potentiel ; à un niveau spirituel, il serait engendré par la

searching for that which is absent, different and distant and to desire it sincerely, not to possess it but to will it into existence. The challenge is therefore to create stories in which the world eludes us, to chart a path to destinations unknown, and to harness uncertainty as a driving narrative force rather than an impediment to action.

The works presented in the exhibition *Horizons and Departure* explore through speculation, combining modern technologies for immersion into images – such as cinematography, 3D modeling and augmented reality – and narratives that stretch across and pass through different eras. These stories draw inspiration from the mysteries of myths, the teachings of tales, and the respite of poetry, the sole form capable of suspending meaning to scout out fields of expression reformulated for the times. Along the way, the works endeavor to forge narratives free of exploitation, commodification and colonialization. Produced by artists marked by a trip, journey or exile, the pieces raise questions about our interactions with origin stories, the means by which we connect with others, and the links we form with techniques. These non-binary, non-conformist works seek alternatives by exploring broad timespans and stratified spaces. They serve as a reminder that while powerful systems are resistant to deviation, human constructs are always amenable to change.

Romain Kronenberg began his extensive academic and professional career in the school of theology and has made myths a central concept in his approach as a visual artist. Broadly inspired by his reading on the topic, his works depict relationships between desire and function, what is and what could be, humans who embark on a journey to the great beyond and gods who are free to leave the cosmos. The universe is presented as complexity or even a paradox – it grew from stories explaining its origin but is greater than the sum of these tales. Movement arises from a difference in potential; on a spiritual level, it could be brought about by the tension between this "surplus" in the universe and our lack of being (*manque-à-être*). *A fragile tension* reveals how this dynamic is imperiled: the myths encourage inaction and have therefore ceased to perform their function. Fresh impetus is the sole means of recovering from this torpor. In the vast expanses of the foamy sea and rocky desert, men are glued to their radio, intently awaiting an incoming message. A connection is lost somewhere between them and the horizon, between ancient churches under renovation and buildings doomed to ruins when erected, between departure and immeasurable waits. Before sinking into silence, the scout

tension entre ce débord du monde et notre manque-à-être. *A fragile tension* laisse comprendre que cette dynamique a été mise en péril. En encourageant l'immobilisme, les mythes n'ont plus assumé leur fonction. Seul l'élan est capable de remédier à notre engourdissement. Dans des déserts d'écumes ou de roches, des hommes accrochés à leur radio sont entièrement tendus vers l'arrivée d'un message. Entre eux et l'horizon, entre l'éternité des vagues et le pragmatisme des conteneurs, entre les églises millénaires en cours de rénovation et les immeubles qui s'érigent déjà *enruinés*, entre le départ et ses incommensurables attentes, quelque part la connexion se perd. Avant de sombrer dans le silence, l'éclaireur formule un souhait : que soient imaginés d'autres avenirs sur l'inconnu qui se dessine devant lui. Est-ce le dernier message ? Le contact est-il irrévocablement rompu ? Ce signal, qui peine à être reçu ou tarde à être émis, n'est pas sans évoquer un signe prophétique en ce qu'il capture dans sa langueur la ferveur du croyant. Dans sa forme même, *A fragile tension* reprend certaines caractéristiques des grands récits : née du syncrétisme de deux œuvres pré-existantes, l'installation propose par la ré-écriture d'en synthétiser les sensations et d'accroître le spectre de leurs significations. Romain Kronenberg y pointe ce qui, selon lui, simultanément nous est commun et nous dissocie : la quête d'histoires, la nécessité de croire et l'aspiration vers la lumière.

La pièce de Justine Emard apporte ce type d'éclats lumineux. *Exovisions* se compose de pierres, d'argile, de bois pétrifiés et d'une application en réalité augmentée reconnaissant les formes. Invités par nos gestes et révélés par nos écrans, des « exo-scapes » – paysages d'altérités et d'alternatives – se suspendent au-dessus des roches. La technologie la plus contemporaine associée à la sauvage beauté des pierres convoque les esprits et ravive des pensées originelles. La spiritualité japonaise, à laquelle l'artiste est sensible, maintient à l'époque moderne une lecture animiste et non-anthropocentrique du monde, dotant d'une âme aussi bien les éléments naturels – le nuage, la pierre ou le vivant – que des concepts ou des objets manufacturés – l'idée, l'appareil ou le robot. Dans l'univers toujours en extension d'*Exovisions*, nature et technique coexistent et génèrent des microcosmes. Au cours du processus, l'œuvre active autant de temporalités que de types de mémoires sollicitées. D'abord celle de la pierre, filon éternel, présente avant notre espèce et qui perdurera après elle ; ensuite celle de l'humain, générations et stèles, gravant le récit des puissant.e.s et des victorieux. euses ; enfin celle des données, minerai et immatérialité, oscillant entre la rentabilité de l'obsolescence programmée et la difficulté à garantir une durabilité. En ouvrant poétiquement la réflexion sur l'écosystème technologique composite

expresses a wish: that different futures be imagined for the unknown taking shape before him. Is this the last message? Has contact been irrevocably lost? They have trouble receiving the signal or the sending is delayed, evoking a prophetic sign – they languish, mirroring the fervor of a believer. *A fragile tension* features certain characteristics of grand narratives; the installation is a reinterpretation that grew from the syncretism of two pre-existing works, which synthesizes the sensations therein and broadens their meaning. Kronenberg reveals what simultaneously unites and divides us: a yearning for stories, the need to believe and a longing for light.

Justine Emard's piece provides these flashes of light. *Exovisions* comprises rocks, clay, petrified wood and an augmented-reality app that recognizes shapes. Prompted by our gestures and displayed on our screens, landscapes of alterity and alternatives called "exo-scapes" float above the rocks. The latest in technology is paired with the wild beauty of the minerals to conjure up spirits and awaken original thoughts. The artist is attuned to Japanese spirituality, which continues to maintain an animist, non-anthropocentric vision of the world, bestowing a soul on natural elements – clouds, stones and living beings – as well as concepts and manufactured objects such as ideas, devices and robots. In the ever-expanding universe of *Exovisions*, nature and technique coexist to generate microcosms. The process involves activating three temporalities via three types of memories. First the rock, the eternal lode, which existed before our species and will remain when we are gone; next the human, generations and steles marking the story of the powerful and victorious; finally, data, mineral and immaterial, oscillating between the profitability of planned obsolescence and the difficulty of guaranteeing durability. The artist opens a poetic line of inquiry into the composite technological system that is coming into view, suggesting that we consider the present as a variation of a state and the future as a reality to protect.

The preservation of endangered heritage through digital tools and futuristic archeology is central to Morehshin Allahyari's work. This Iranian activist and artist specialized in 3D modeling and printing became known and renowned worldwide for *Material Speculation: ISIS*. The project comprises replicas of archeological artifacts destroyed by ISIS complemented by descriptions hidden in memory cards inside the statues. Her new series, *She Who Sees the Unknown*, reinterprets myths and legends about goddesses from the Maghreb and Middle East. Allahyari updates these ancient tales for the modern age to form

Morehshin

اللهیاری

Artiste et activiste iranienne, Morehshin Allahyari a choisi l'impression 3D comme levier technologique et conceptuel, politique et poétique. Le travail sériel qu'elle déploie étend son envergure entre le fichier digital et la réalité plastique, le fonctionnel et le spéculatif, le manifeste et la collection, la démarche solitaire et l'effort collectif.

Morehshin Allahyari réside depuis près de dix ans aux États-Unis. D'abord étudiante puis enseignante au Texas, elle s'est un temps installée dans la baie de San Francisco. Elle y a rejoint le programme de résidence artistique AIR proposé à Pier 9 par Autodesk, une entreprise spécialisée dans la conception 3D. C'est dans ce lieu dédié à la fabrication digitale que l'artiste a produit *Material Speculation: ISIS*, une série d'impressions en trois dimensions de vestiges archéologiques détruits par Daesh. Cet engagement pour la préservation numérique du patrimoine culturel lui a valu une reconnaissance internationale, quantifiable en nombre de vues et qualifiable par les distinctions qu'elle a reçues ; en 2016, Morehshin Allahyari a été hissée au prestigieux rang de « Global Thinker » par le magazine Foreign Policy.

C'est depuis Brooklyn, où elle vit désormais, que Morehshin Allahyari constitue *She Who Sees the Unknown;* une collection qui cherche à se réapproprier les mots et les formes du passé afin de renseigner les situations contemporaines et à imaginer les futurs s'accomplissant. Elle s'inspire des déesses originaires du Moyen-Orient, sombres et oubliées, et souhaite dépasser la re-présentation pour tendre vers la re-figuration. En se basant sur des documents d'archives, Morehshin Allahyari reconstitue en 3D ces figures féminines puissantes et monstrueuses puis imprime leurs

Iranian artist and activist Morehshin Allahyari employs 3D printing as a tool for conveying technological, conceptual, political and poetic messages. Her serial works span from digital files to physical artworks, from functional to speculative, manifesto to collection, solo endeavor to group effort.

Allahyari has resided in the United States for nearly a decade, first as a student and instructor in Texas. She then moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, where she took part in the AIR artist residency offered at Pier 9 by Autodesk, a 3D design company. The digital fabrication site was where the artist produced *Material Speculation: ISIS*, a series of three-dimensional printed replicas of archeological artifacts destroyed by the titular terrorist group. Allahyari achieved international acclaim for her efforts to preserve this cultural heritage digitally, both quantitatively in number of views and qualitatively in the awards she received. In 2016, the artist joined the prestigious ranks of Foreign Policy magazine's "Global Thinkers."

Now living in Brooklyn, Allahyari is assembling *She Who Sees the Unknown*, a collection that reappropriates stories and art forms from the past to reflect upon contemporary situations and imagine what may come to pass in the future. She takes inspiration from long-forgotten dark goddesses of Middle Eastern origin, as part of an approach that aims to move past re-presentation, toward re-figuration. Drawing from archives, Allahyari reproduces these powerful, monstrous feminine figures in 3D, and then prints their effigies and talismans. The artist produces a video for each figure, along with an essay read aloud, which

Allahyari

موره شين

www.morehshin.com

Née à Téhéran, Iran, en 1985. Elle vit et travaille à New York. Elle est représentée par la Upfor Gallery (Portland, États-Unis). Born in Tehran, Iran, in 1985. Lives and works in New York. Represented by Upfor Gallery (Portland, United States).

effigies et leurs talismans. Pour chacune d'entre elles, l'artiste conçoit des vidéos accompagnées d'un texte, entre faits et fictions, qu'elle lit à voix haute. Cette documentation est envisagée comme une forme de résistance : en produisant de l'archive, Morehshin Allahyari tente de décloisonner et de décoloniser les connaissances.

Huma, « Celle-qui-chauffe », première figure de sa cosmogonie, est la divinité de la fièvre qui s'abat sur la planète. Huma a trois têtes qui paraissent scruter les axes du temps. La première, celle qui regarde en direction du futur, peut évoquer cette Terre en surchauffe sur laquelle l'apocalypse ne sonne pas à la même heure pour tous. Les deux autres visages, qui l'enserrent et fixent des directions opposées, pourraient nous orienter vers des réalités sous-jacentes telles que les méfaits de la pétro-politique et l'avènement de l'Anthropocène. En effet, *Huma,* forme technologique et figure de plastique brûlé, symbolise intrinsèquement la co-existence d'événements distincts dans un réel partagé mais composite et le désir de solutions qui restent à inventer.

Morehshin Allahyari s'est ensuite tournée vers Gog et Magog, ou Ya'jûj wa Ma'jûj, qui seraient, d'après le Coran, des peuples fauteurs de troubles dont l'arrivée sur Terre annoncerait la fin des temps. Allah aurait donné à Dhû-l-Qarnayn le pouvoir de construire un mur de fer afin de les contenir, de les détenir et de les séparer des humains. L'artiste a développé la vidéo intitulée *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj* après qu'elle a été profondément affectée par un événement marquant de l'histoire immédiate. Tandis qu'elle présentait le projet *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* pour l'édition 2017 du festival

straddles the line between fact and fiction. The documentation is presented as a form of resistance; Allahyari uses the archive as a means to decolonialize knowledge and break down its barriers.

The first figure in her cosmology is *Huma* – "she who brings heat" – the divinity of the fever that has descended upon the planet. Huma has three heads, which appear trained on the dimensions of time. The first looks toward the future, possibly evoking our overheating earth, where the apocalypse does not come calling for everyone at the same moment. The two other heads, which appear on either side of the first, staring in opposite directions, could lead us to the underlying, nefarious reality of petropolitics or the advent of the Anthropocene. As both a digital model and a figure made of burnt plastic, *Huma* intrinsically symbolizes the coexistence of distinct events in a shared, yet composite reality, as well as a longing for solutions that remain to be invented.

Next, Allahyari turned her focus to Gog and Magog – also known as Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj – the troublemaking peoples in the Koran whose arrival on earth heralds the end of days. Allah gave Zulqarnain the power to build an iron wall to contain them and separate them from humans. The artist created the video *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj* after being deeply affected by a major event in recent history. Iranian national and Green Card holder Allahyari was presenting *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* at the transmediale festival in Berlin when then newly-minted US President Donald Trump's travel ban took effect. *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj* bears the scars of this rift. The process is divulged; the technology laid bare.

transmediale de Berlin, elle s'est vue, en tant qu'iranienne détentrice d'une Green Card, frappée par le premier ban émis par Donald Trump alors fraîchement élu président des États-Unis. *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj* porte les stigmates d'un éclatement. Le processus s'y dévoile, la technologie se met à nue. Des mots en anglais et en persan se disposent aux points cardinaux de l'image et suggèrent une géographie personnelle à reconfigurer. Ils rendent apparent le profond déboussolement de celle qui a été momentanément exclue de la nation où elle avait trouvé refuge après s'être volontairement exilée de son pays d'origine.

L'artiste agrandit la brèche et continue de questionner l'altérité avec *Aisha Qandisha,* une pièce qui touche à l'intime. Cette nouvelle vidéo, réalisée grâce au soutien de la Maison populaire, fait allusion à un chagrin d'amour en invoquant Aïcha Kandicha. Cette *djinn,* créature surnaturelle issue du folklore marocain, est celle qui tourmente, torture voire tue les hommes qu'elle séduit. Quelle que soit l'intensité de son emprise, Aïcha Kandicha crée une fracture chez quiconque la croise. D'après Morehshin Allahyari, c'est en acceptant intégralement d'être bouleversé.e et changé.e par la rencontre qu'on parvient à y survivre.

En allant du global au viscéral, du distancié au privé, de la plénitude à la dislocation, les trois pièces présentées témoignent de la volonté qu'a Morehshin Allahyari de construire un discours engagé. Son propos se positionne à la croisée des mondes, dans une époque où s'enchevêtrent les narrations personnelles et collectives, les espaces physiques et numériques, les polarisations entre un Orient ravagé et un Occident colonisateur.

Words in English and Persian are arranged in the cardinal points of the screen, suggesting a personal geography to be reconfigured. The words convey the extent to which the artist lost her bearings after briefly being barred from entering the nation where she had taken refuge upon voluntary exile from her country of birth.

Aisha Qandisha drills down deeper and investigates otherness with a piece that permeates the artist's private life. This new video, produced for and with the support of Maison populaire, alludes to the pain of love by invoking the eponymous jinn, a supernatural creature from Moroccan folklore who torments, tortures and even kills the men she seduces. Aisha Qandisha irreparably alters anyone who she crosses, regardless of how intensely she entices them. According to Allahyari, one manages to survive the encounter by accepting to be completely transformed by it.

The three pieces reflect Allahyari's desire to construct a message as an activist, one that ranges from all-encompassing to visceral, from distanced to private, from plenitude to dislocation. She stands at the crossroads of different worlds in an era with overlapping personal and collective narratives, physical and digital spaces, and points of polarization between the devastated East and the colonizing West.

SHE WHO SEES THE UNKNOWN:
HUMA
2016

Vidéo HD sonore
6'05''
Édition #5/5

Courtesy de l'artiste
et de la Upfor Gallery
(Portland, États-Unis)

SHE WHO SEES THE UNKNOWN:
YA'JOOJ MA'JOOJ
2017

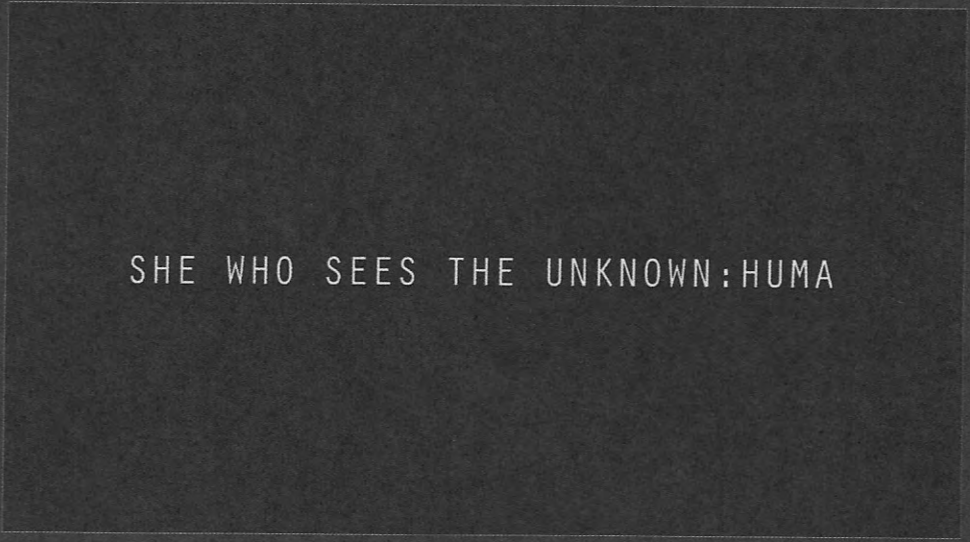
Vidéo HD sonore
9'48''
Édition #5/5

Courtesy de l'artiste
et de la Upfor Gallery
(Portland, États-Unis)

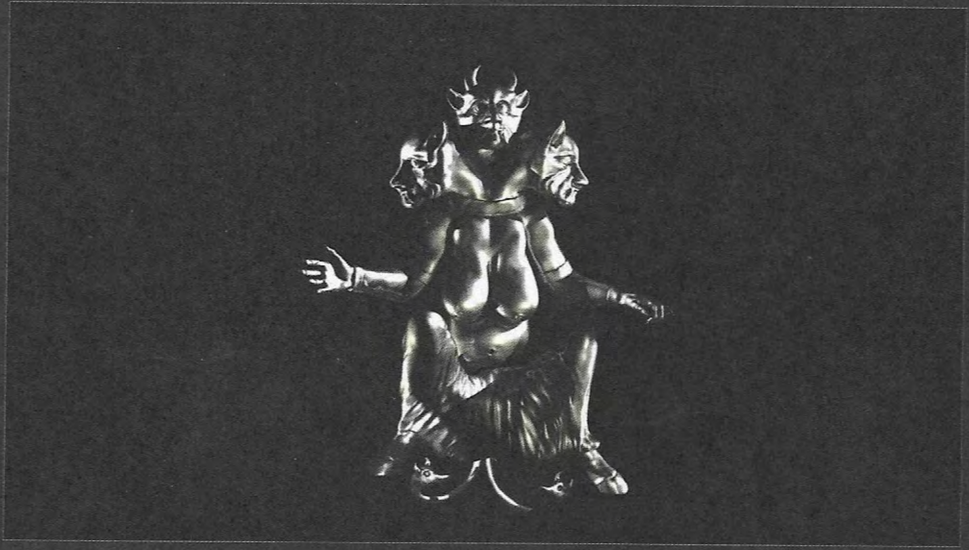
SHE WHO SEES THE UNKNOWN:
AISHA QANDISHA
2018

Vidéo HD sonore
7'14''
Édition AP2/2
Production de la Maison
populaire

Courtesy de l'artiste
et de la Upfor Gallery
(Portland, États-Unis)



SHE WHO SEES THE UNKNOWN:HUMA



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En fuyant, ils cherchent une arme | While running away, they look for a weapon **des surfaces dénuées d'innocence 1|3 surfaces stripped of innocence** Neïl Beloufa, Émilie Brout & Maxime Marion, Hasan Elahi, Fictiorama Studios, Anne-Charlotte Finel + Marie Sommer, Julien Prévieux, Evan Roth, Miyö Van Stenis **des outils pour fêler 2|3 tools for fracture** Neïl Beloufa, Jonas Staal, Christoph Wachter & Mathias Jud **des horizons et le départ 3|3 horizons and departure** Morehshin Allahyari, Neïl Beloufa, Justine Emard, Romain Kronenberg

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The Verge, 2018

DESIGN

Morehshin Allahyari’s 3D-printed project pushes back against ‘digital colonialism’

The Iranian artist created a series of sculptures of dark goddesses

By **LIZZIE PLAUGIC** *and* **AMELIA HOLOWATY KRALES**

Mar 24, 2018, 2:00 PM EDT

0 Comments

It sometimes seems like technology is at odds with the art world — a tension between brain and heart. But plenty of artists, from Da Vinci to Cory Arcangel, have proved that's not true, and continue to prove it as technology evolves. In Technographica*, we explore how contemporary artists are using technology in unusual and unexpected ways.*

The Iranian artist and activist Morehshin Allahyari is currently working on a project that transcends continents and centuries. Using ancient illustrations of Middle Eastern dark goddesses as her source material, Allahyari is producing 12 sculptures through a process of 3D modeling, scanning, and printing. The result is *She Who Sees The Unknown*, an attempt by Allahyari to reclaim ownership of traditional mythologies, and fight against "digital colonialism," which she says is a recent trend that allows corporations to profit off of cultural artifacts of others.

Currently on display at The Armory in New York City, *She Who Sees the Unknown* explores the "forgotten histories and narratives" of female figures in the Middle East and North Africa. "It's a meaningful archive that's focused on these kind of dark female figures in the Middle East," Allahyari tells *The Verge*. "We don't have that archive at all."

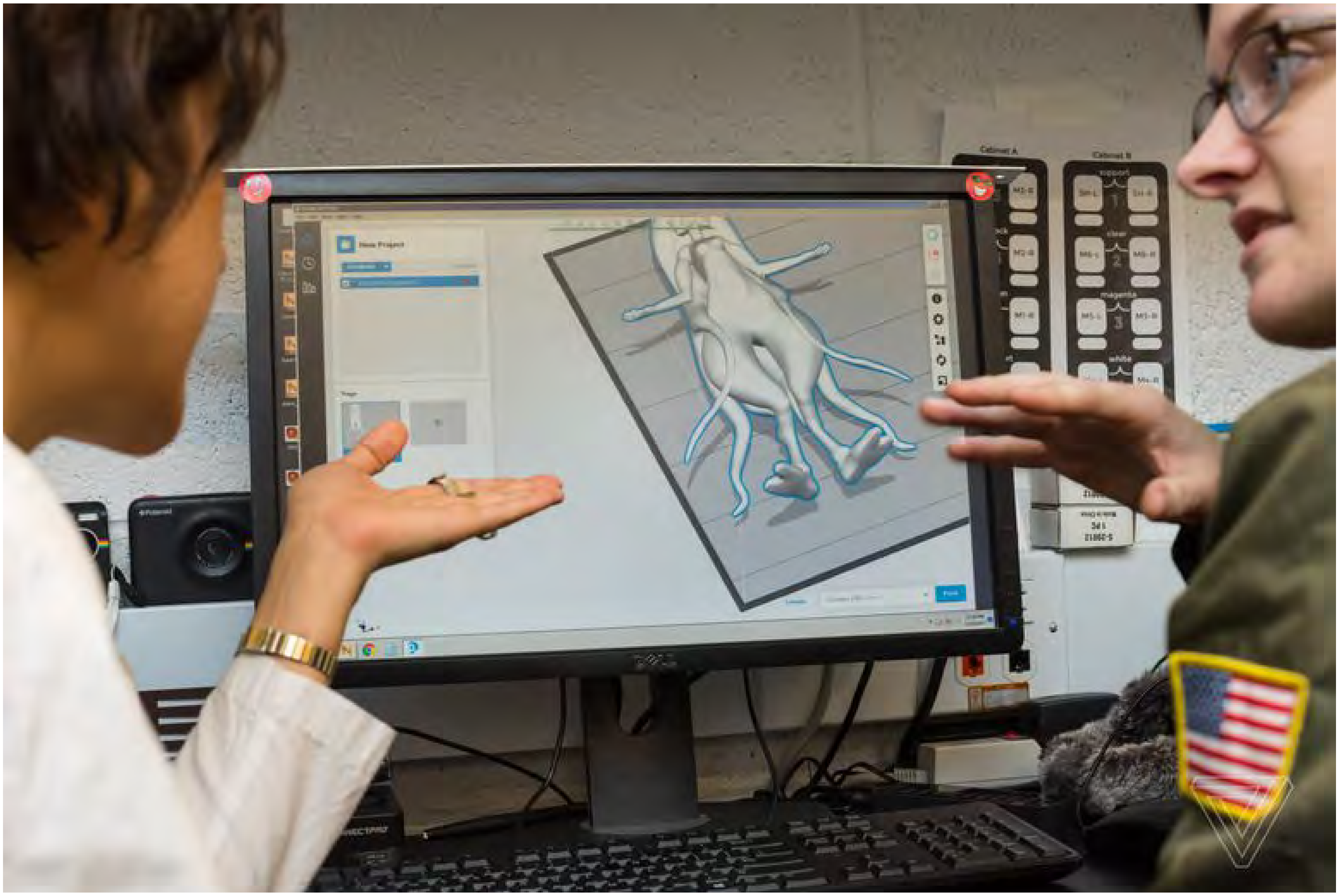
Allahyari with source materials outside of her office at the School of Poetic Computation.

She Who Sees the Unknown is a series of sculptures, but Allahyari is not actually a sculptor. “I wouldn’t know how to do that,” she tells *The Verge*. Instead, she uses computers and 3D printers to create her work.

“The first time that I saw an object getting 3D printed… I was really fascinated by this idea of seeing a digital file, a digital model from a platform becoming a physical object,” she says. “It blew my mind actually watching that process.”

According to Allahyari, “digital colonialism” refers to when, say, a startup goes to cultural sites in Middle East and attempts a reconstruction project, but doesn’t make the data available to the public. By using open source software, Allahyari is hoping to reclaim and redistribute forgotten cultural artifacts.

Allahyari at the School for Poetic Computation, where she teaches.

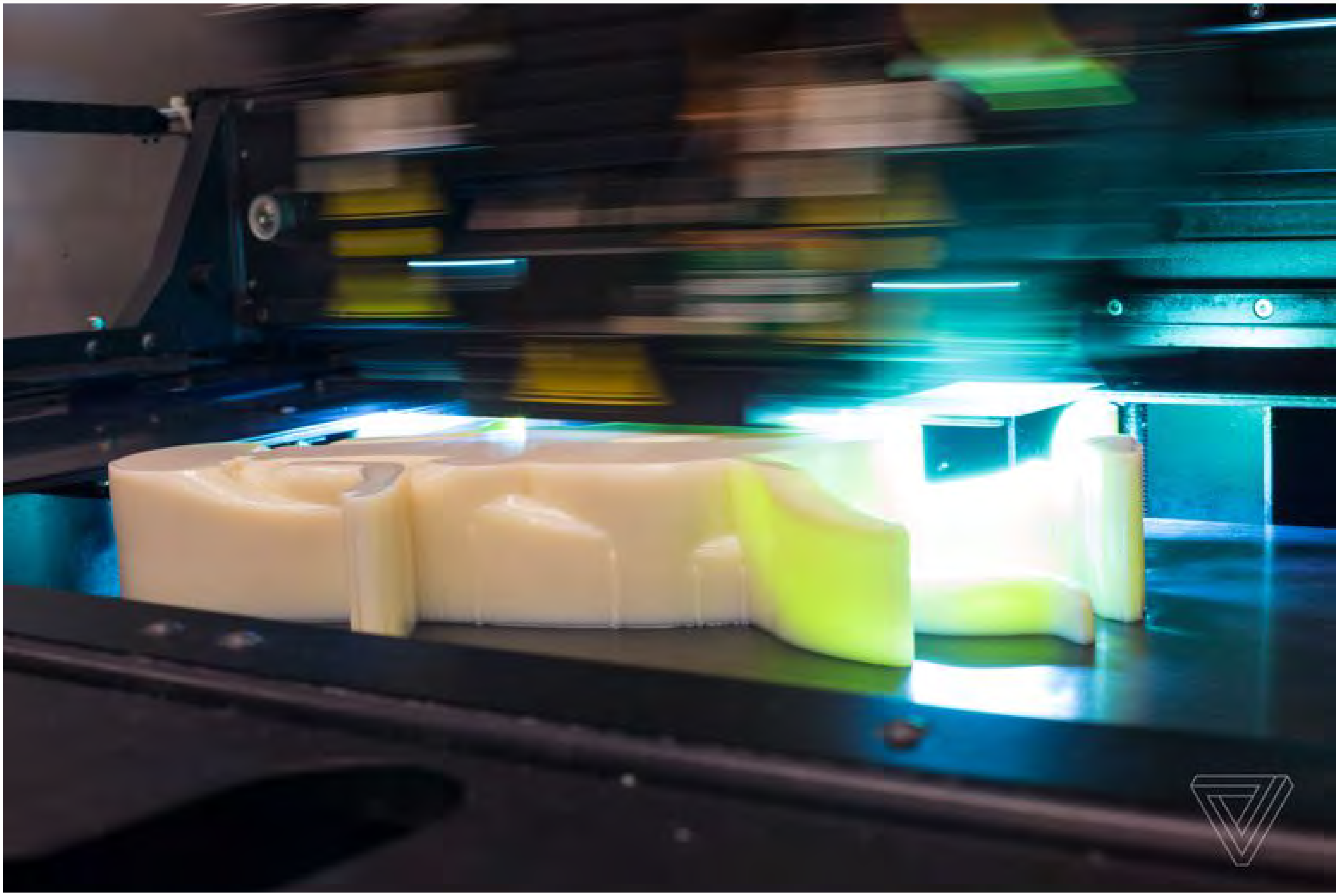


Allahyari preps the file for her Aisha Qandisha sculpture for 3D printing at New York University's LaGuardia Studio with the help of Dhemerae K. Ford.

“I want to offer another method to re-situate power,” she told *The Verge*, “through researching dark goddesses, monstrous, and jinn female figures of Middle Eastern origin, poetic-speculative storytelling, re-appropriation of traditional mythologies, collaging, meshing, 3D scanning, 3D printing, and archiving.”

AD

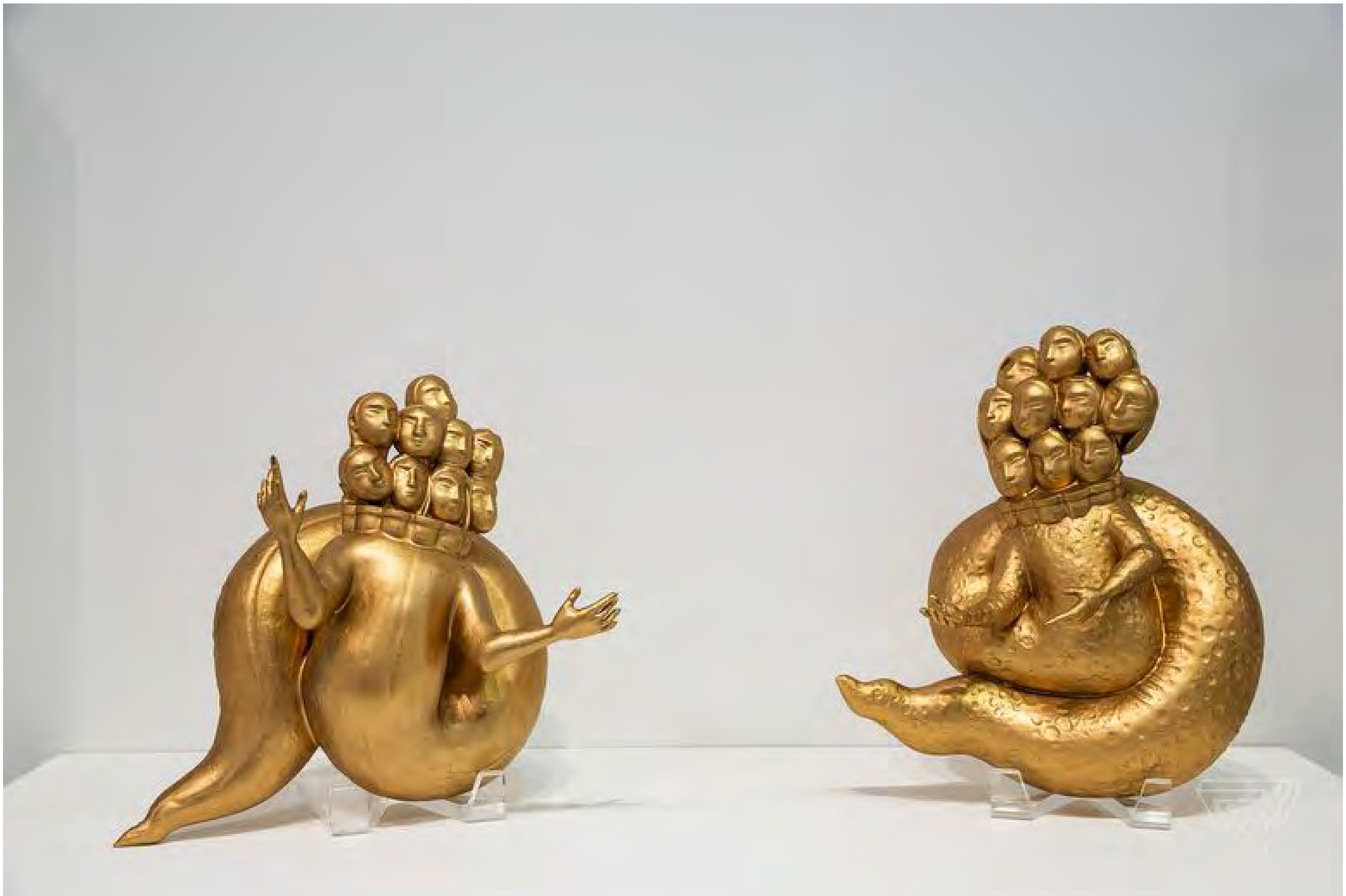
The process for creating *She Who Sees the Unknown* was multi-step. First, it involved researching and archiving information from Middle Eastern ancient texts to make the figures accurate. Then Allahyari created a scan each sculpture, and 3D printed it in resin with the Stratasys J750 printer. Each statue has a storytelling component, or a video essay that connects the power of the goddess to a particular modern source of oppression. Lastly, Allahyari will host a series of "intimate public performances" known as Ha'm-Neshini, or sitting together, in collaboration with other artists, scientists, and activists from the Middle East.



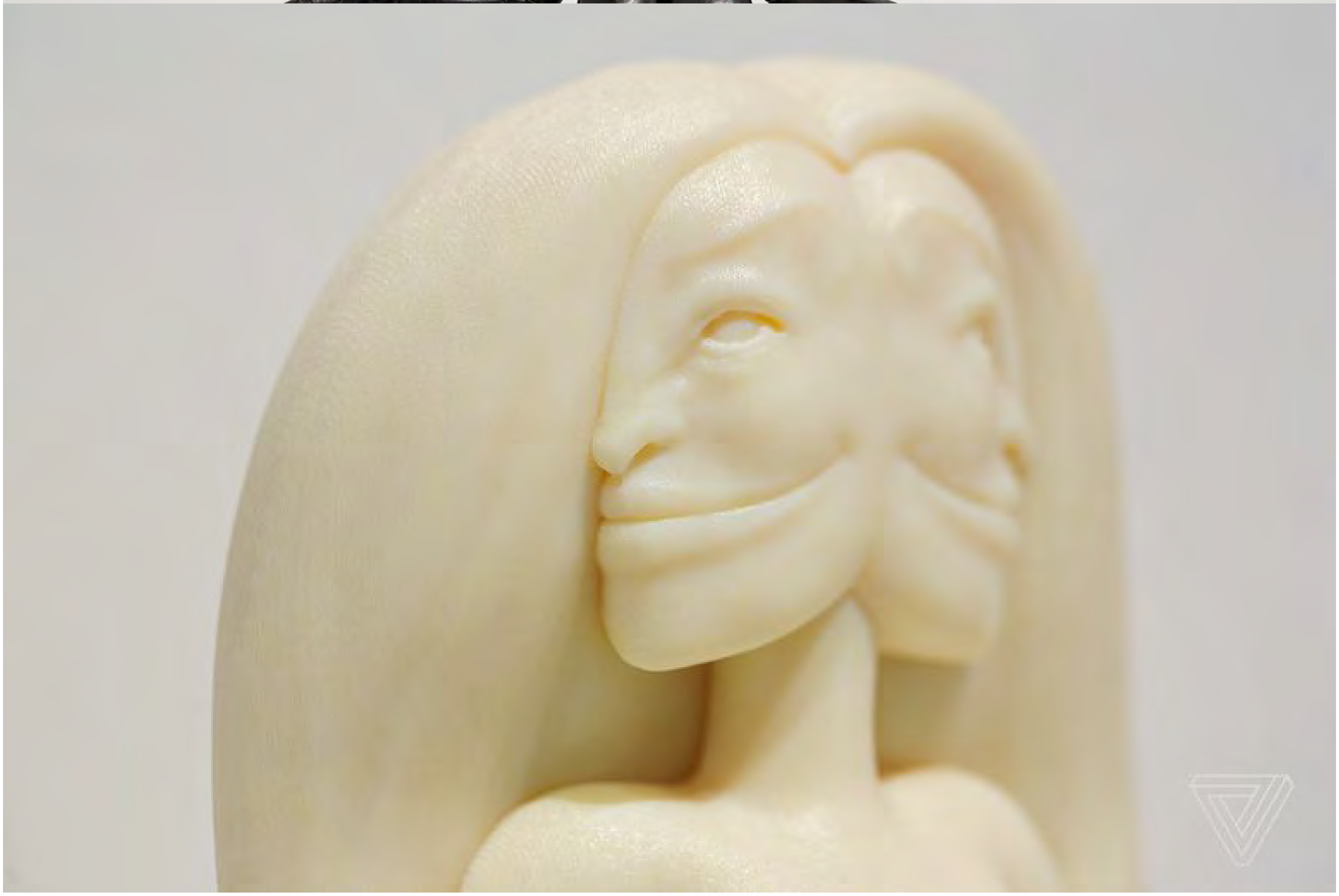
For Allahyari, this project, like most of her work, is personal. Allahyari, who has lived in the US since 2007, grew up in Tehran and has a US green card. Last year, after President Trump banned visitors and refugees from majority-Muslim countries, Allahyari was stuck in Berlin for 10 days after attending a conference there, because she had an Iranian passport.

Allahyari hopes the 12 sculptures in the series will appear as if they are “an army of dark goddesses.” She has completed four sculptures so far, including Huma, “a jinn that brings heat to the human body,” Ya’jooj and Ma’jooj, two gods who represent chaos, and Aisha Qandisha, a Moroccan jinn known as “The Opener,” who creates a crack in the male body that opens up a space for other demons.

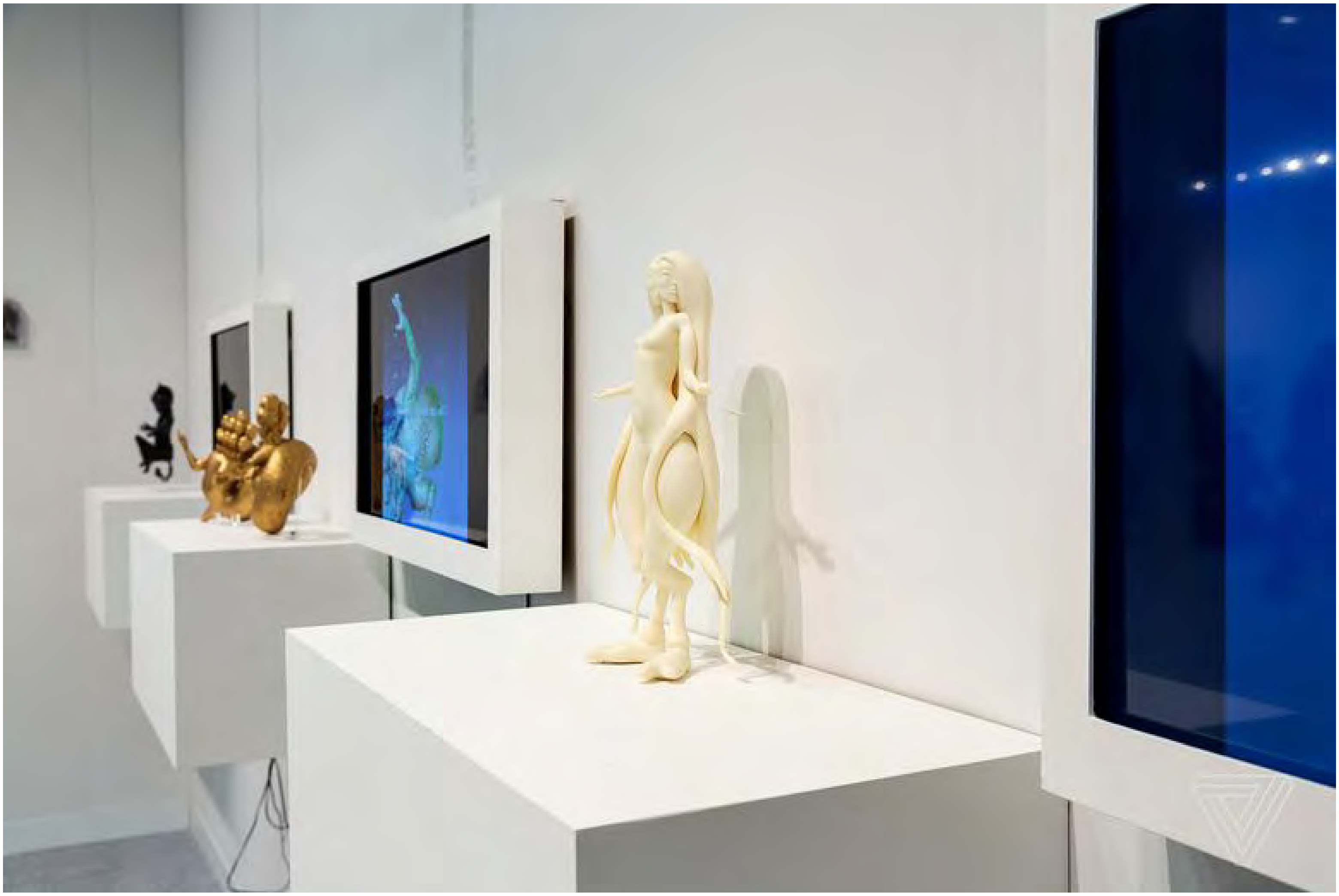
“In this whole body of work, these figures and retelling their stories, is the idea about what it means to embrace monstrosities, and to take this power that these jinn have and use it against the powers that oppress,” Allahyari says.



Morehshin Allahyari’s Ya’jooj Ma’jooj sculptures 3D printed in resin and painted gold wax and XTC-3D smooth on (2018).



3D printed in resin, the Aisha Qandisha (2018) sculpture stands at 14.4 inches tall. Aisha Qandisha “is called the opener because she cracks man open for a process of destruction and rebuilding.”



Sculptural pieces and video works from Morehshin Allahyari's project, She Who Sees The Unknown, *on view at the Upfor Gallery booth at the Armory Art Fair in New York City.*

Photography by Amelia Holowaty Krales

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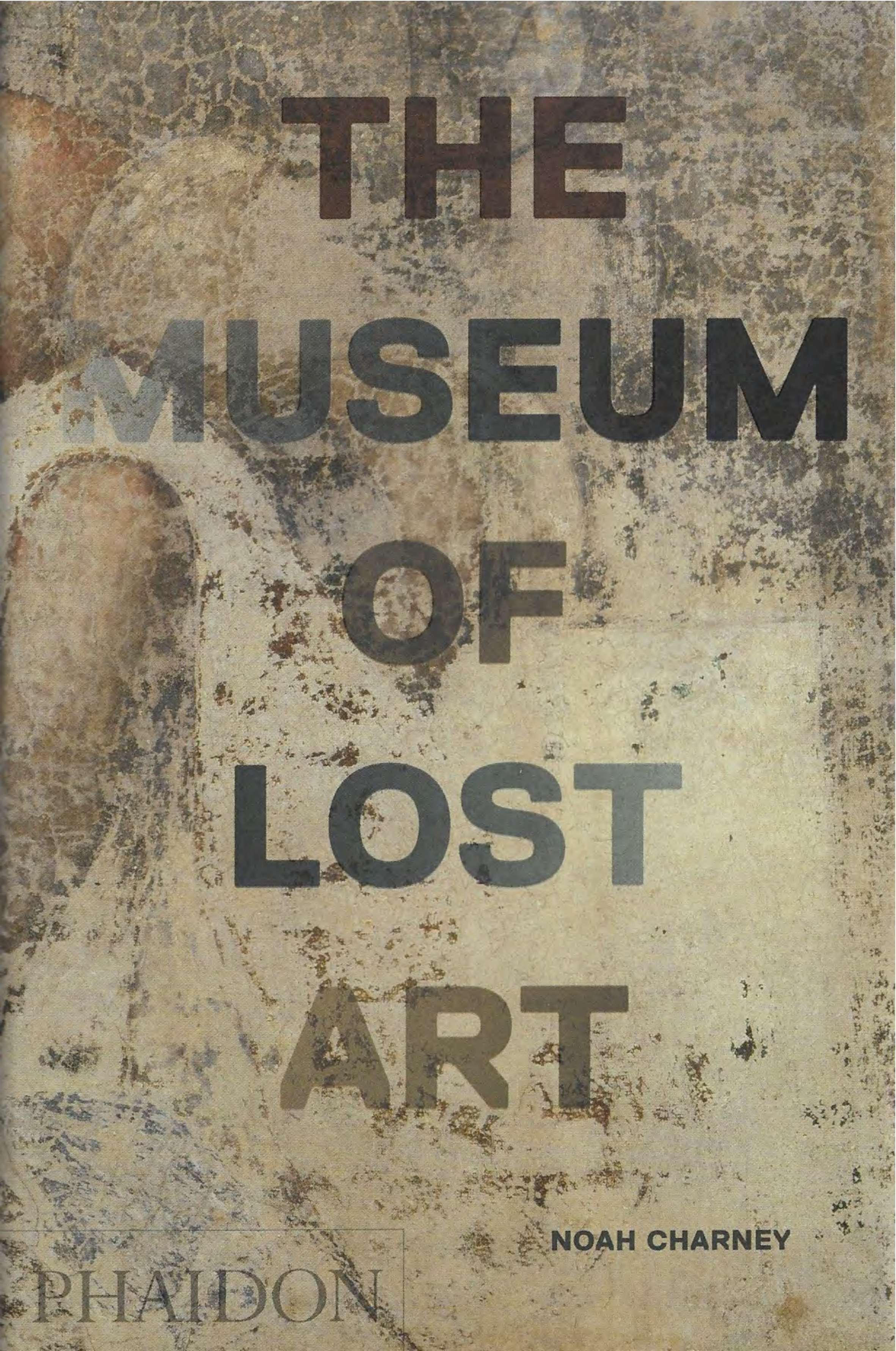
The Museum of Lost Art, 2018



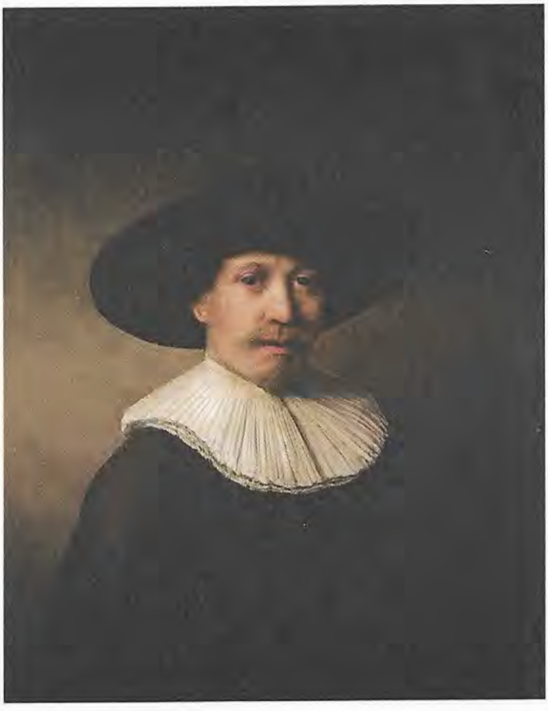
THE MUSEUM OF LOST ART

NOAH CHARNEY

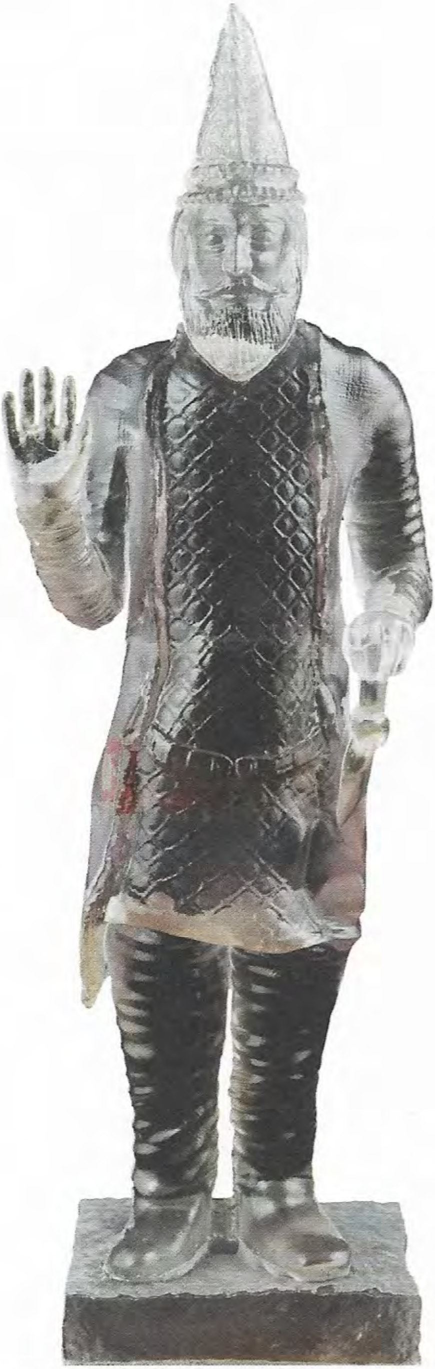
PHAIDON

CAN LOST ART BE REPLICATED?

Technology today is such that, in many cases, we can create a new version of what has been lost, or indeed what might have been but never was. The Next Rembrandt project[5] is a collaboration between a team at the Delft University of Technology, the Mauritshuis in The Hague, the Rembrandt House Museum in Amsterdam and Microsoft to create a digitally printed painting in the style of Rembrandt; the portrait's face is fictional, based on a facial recognition algorithm and computer hybridization of real Rembrandt subjects. The result was unveiled in Amsterdam in April 2016 and thoroughly impressed art critics and art historians. The Next Rembrandt project website opens with the line, 'Can a great master be brought back to create one more painting?' It appears so. This act of creating an imaginary artwork could also easily be applied to works that are lost. One could imagine an entire museum of them, the realization of each work based on surviving descriptions, copies or photographs, and then printed in two

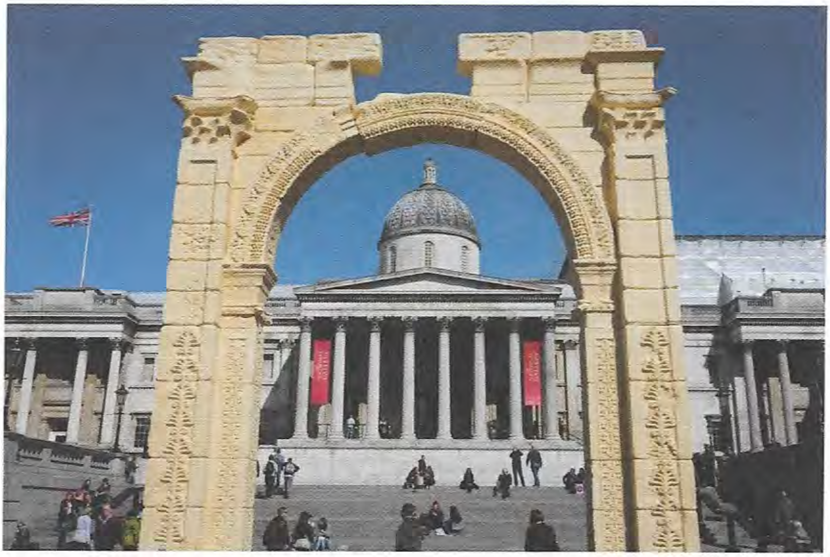


Rembrandt-style portrait created by The Next Rembrandt project, 2016, digital print; the painting was created using deep learning algorithms and facial recognition techniques, and comprises more than 148 million pixels, based on 168,263 painting fragments from Rembrandt's complete body of work



Morehshin Allahyari, *King Uthal,* 2015, 3D-printed plastic and electrical components, 30.5 × 10.2 x 8.9 cm (12 × 4 × 3.5 in), from her series *Material Speculation: ISIS* or three dimensions to the closest approximation of what the original probably looked like.

Bringing lost art back to life has moved from science fiction to fact. In 2017, Iranian-American artist Morehshin Allahyari exhibited twelve 3D-printed artefacts destroyed by ISIS, including a Roman-period statue of King Uthal of Hatra, in a show called *She Who Sees the Unknown,* exhibiting her *Material Speculation* series.[6] In April 2016, a 3D-printed, two-thirds scale replica of the Arch of Triumph at Palmyra, also destroyed by ISIS, was raised in London's Trafalgar Square before travelling to cities around the world.[7] Madrid-based firm Factum Arte specializes in museum-quality 3D scanning of art and artefacts, archiving extremely detailed, high-quality digital images of objects that may deteriorate. These can also be printed, sometimes in authentic materials, for museum exhibition. The firm created a crevice-by-crevice rendering of the tomb of King Tutankhamun, and a full-sized replica of Lenin's tomb, including his 3D-printed embalmed body, is planned for exhibition at the 2017 Venice Biennale, and they are producing selected lost paintings for a television series. One can imagine, in the near future, a physical museum of lost art, hung with printed replicas



Arch of Triumph from Palmyra, destroyed in 2015, as erected in Trafalgar Square, London, April 2016, H: 6 m (20 ft); the original arch was built in the first century AD

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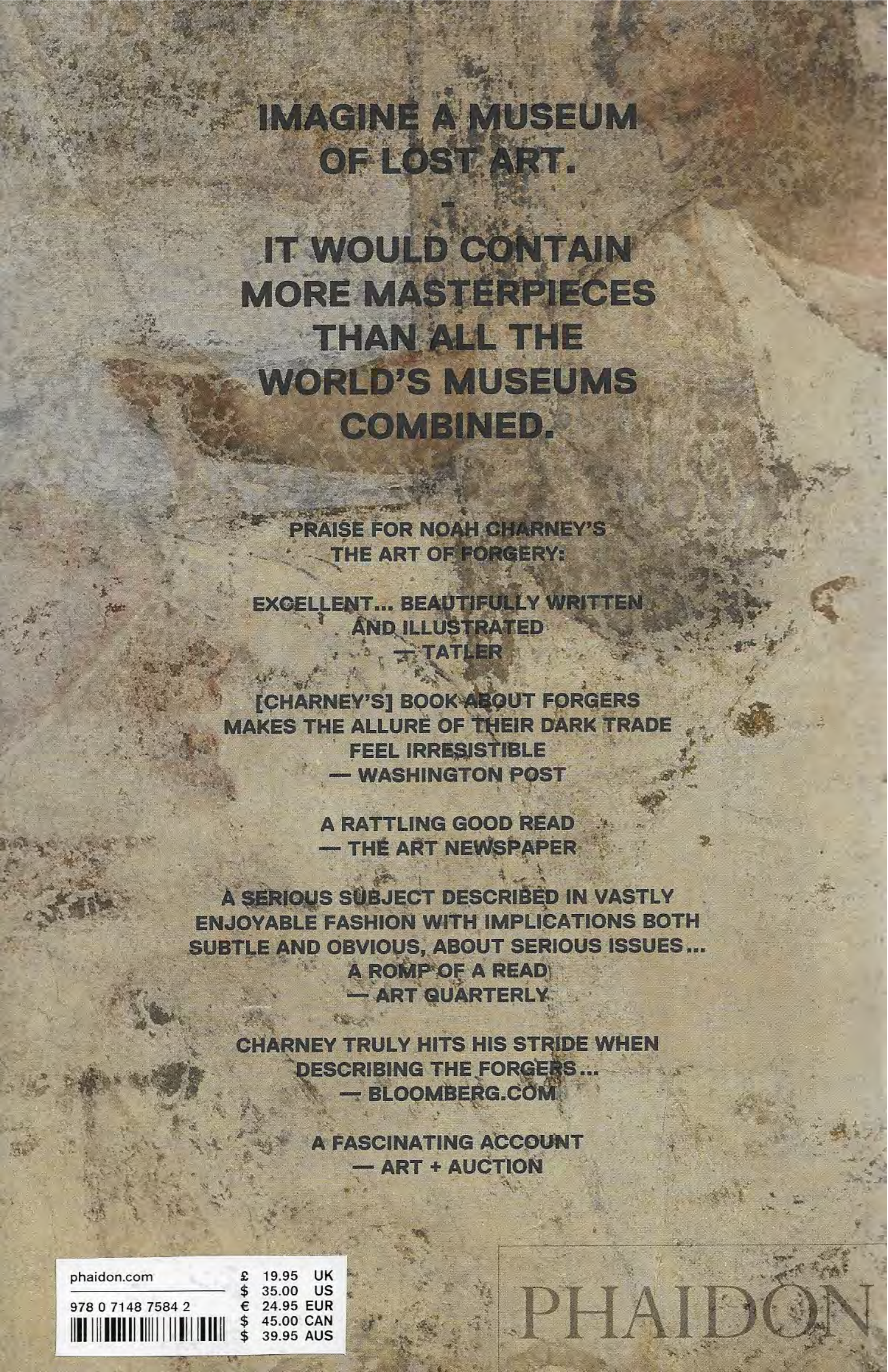

IMAGINE A MUSEUM OF LOST ART.

-

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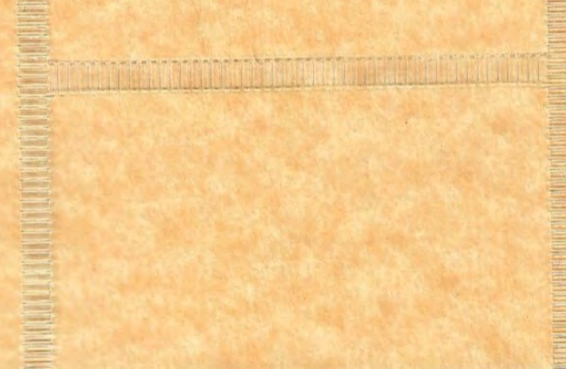

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TOUCHING KNOWLEDGE
JANE NORRIS

Our desire to touch is stimulated by our need to understand, to verify what our eyes see. Touch embodies our connection to people or objects; we acquire subtle forms of information through haptic relationships. Touching ancient objects provides a connection with past people and cultures. Touch is dynamic and intimate, often generative of new understanding. The violent touch that smashes objects in an attempt to prevent communication is the mirror of this action. There is power to be had in touching knowledge.

In our increasingly digital environments, touch has become an ambiguous and contested activity. The design of our digital devices is moving away from skeuomorphism — the use of visual reference to familiar objects and actions to describe function — because as experienced users,we are now transferring experience between digital devices. Are we becoming seduced by this digital simulacrum of contact on our phones? Has a skeuomorphic sleight of hand disinherited us from sensory understanding? As we now archive the majority of our knowledge digitally, are we losing physical contact with history, or is this another category of touch? While it is widely assumed that the digital scans of objects are immaterial, film critic Laura U Marks argues that digital *imaging is a constituted process that is no less material* than analogue photography and that the materiality of electronic media can be identified at least in the particles of electrons. She asserts that files stored on the web, 'far from being virtual, index several levels of material, interconnected life'.[1] Our tendency to overlook this materiality in digital archiving, raises questions about the transformative nature of digital touch. The digitization of historical artefacts is a process that seems to enable 3-D scanned objects to 'jump species' when they are preserved in data form. In this configuration, they have multiple options — to rematerialize in a variety of materials and to be simultaneously anywhere in the world that has a 3-D printer. An act of 'preservation' that appears to radically destabilize the very artefacts 'rescued' in this way. Because of this, digital touch needs careful consideration if it is to be used as an archive practice.

So, what happens to the act of archiving in our networked culture when ancient stone statues are identified as key cultural targets of war and deliberately destroyed? Organizations such as Rekrei, an initiative started by Matthew Vincent and Chance Coughenour to promote the digital preservation of lost cultural heritage using crowdsourced data, work hard to archive the artefacts threatened with destruction or erasure from history.[2] A vital effort to secure ancient voices and beliefs. But what are the implications when those files are made available to download and print, materializing in different forms and in different contexts globally? Instances of intentional cultural destruction such as ISIS's purposeful demolition of priceless artefacts located at the Nineveh Museum in Mosul, Iraq, in 2015, heighten these questions and call for a critique of our changing relationship between touch and knowledge.

Marks says that haptic criticism is mimetic, that it should press up against the object of consideration and take its shape. Touching often transfers the shape or temperature of an object to the hand, also leaving an imprint of understanding. Our cleaving to questions about objects, can reshape us. This approach to knowledge favours a symbiotic relationship between inquirer and question. A conceptual touching that communicates through similitude, rather than the more adversarial critiques offered by Enlightenment thought. Is it a form of thinking that understands through a physiological sense of sympathy / empathy, inducing a corresponding condition in the other? So, what conceptual structures are required to consider digital touch?

Prior to the Age of Reason, Western society constructed knowledge around ideas of 'resemblance'. The likeness between things was an active reference system that revealed hidden connections and relationships. The 'doctrine of signatures' popularized by Jakob Böhme a German Christian theologian in the 1620s, emphasized a divine link between the shape of a plant and a human organ. Touch by the plant was a means of healing an ill body (an approach also mirrored in Islam at that time).[3] This cultural focus on similitude, organized symbols, explained religious text and informed the crafting of objects. Creative production mirrored nature, that was itself a reflection of powers unseen. These seventeenth-century theories of similitude offer a guide to navigate away from the familiar territory of Enlightenment scientific logic and towards more reciprocal ways of considering touch in digital archiving. Michel Foucault's skills in mapping structures of knowledge through different eras are invaluable for this task. In his book *The Order of Things* he outlines four discrete categories of resemblance or similitude that were primary ways of structuring knowledge in the late seventeenth century[4]. These classes of Adjacency, Emulation, Analogy, and Sympathy offer useful arenas for thought.

B

The first category is Convenientia – Adjacency, a form of juxtaposition: how things close enough to touch each other, overlap, nudge, and communicate influences and properties. This is human and inanimate touching that is mutually changing. Place and similitude become connected through the proximity of touch. As a Parthian stone carver in Hatra, the closeness of my hand to the chisel and the action of that on the stone, cuts a resemblance of the King with his hand raised in greeting. Those near me and the statue would recognize King Uthal of Hatra. This communication of information by resemblance through touch within a localized space was a *convenience* that linked knowledge together. Understanding was geographically situated. Constructive or destructive touch was locally contextualized. From the Renaissance to the early eighteenth-century, tacit knowledge from touch and explicit knowledge from text overlapped and were not easily distinguished from one another, in the same way that science was not clearly separate from artisan trades as Glenn Adamson discusses in *The Invention of Craft*.[5] These *adjacencies* have continued as a seam of understanding through history and are perhaps surfacing again in our contemporary yearning for the evidence of touch through craftsmanship, the local provenance of the materials and 'quality' understood as the locally 'handmade'. This is a nearby touch that promises the veracity of knowledge.

The twentieth century saw what Friedrich Kittler describes in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* as the collapse of media. The homogenising nature of digital code that blends the separate forms of communication such as audio, image, and text, has had a profound effect on storing and accessing cultural knowledge. In this increasingly flattened horizon of digital information, time — the essential and underpinning structure of stored knowledge in archives — became uncoupled 'by the dislocation and non-fixity of networked digital space' as Amelia Groom observes.[6] Computers started to function as prostheses for knowledge — 'as extensions of man' to use Marshall McLuhan's phrase.[7] They became valuable not just for their ability to do complex calculations but also through the detachment of information from the demands of geography and physical touch. Now, archived digital knowledge can be transferred simultaneously to many different destinations across the world. This is calls up Foucault's second category: Aemulatio – an Emulation or mirroring that is *without* proximity. Touching knowledge regardless of place. In 2014, the British Museum uploaded scans of several ancient artefacts to Sketchfab to enable 3-D printing by web visitors.[8] Within three days the site had fifty thousand views and approximately ten thousand downloads. Once 3-D-printed, these files offered the simulation of tactile access which was unavailable to those in the museum. The motivation was to enable people to touch artefacts they were not allowed to touch in the museum, exposing more of the archive without damaging any artefacts.[9] This digital touch at a distance informs, but does not destroy the original. The digital models and 3-D printers used in this distributed making act as a 'physical mirror' that allow designers and makers to produce emulations of the object at the same time on different sides of the world. This is, as Adamson observes 'crafting knowledge at a distance' an authorial structure that uses different tooling systems, to distribute touch and simulate knowledge of a specific object.[10]

In 2016, the artist Morehshin Allahyari exhibited a series of 3-D files and prints of objects including the stone statue King Uthal of Hatra in an artwork / exhibition titled 'Material Speculation: ISIS'. Her project focused on the reconstruction of twelve statues from the Roman period city of Hatra and Assyrian artefacts from Nineveh that were destroyed by ISIS in 2015. Allahyari describes this project as a practical and political act of artefact archiving, using 3-D printing technology as a tool for both the documentation of knowledge and a radical resistance against the destruction of a culture. Her work proposes 3-D printing as a process for repairing history and memory. *Material Speculation: ISIS* goes beyond the production of copies by including a memory card filled with research data inside the body of each 3-D printed object: 'Like time capsules, each object is sealed and kept for future civilizations'.[11] This eight-inch-high, clear plastic model of the smashed statue of King Uthal of Hatra is a replica digital object that 'emulates' the original piece, a tangible ghost. It seeks to bring lost tactile knowledge back within reach, through at an altered scale and in changed material, simultaneously, anywhere. A now omnipresent, adaptive, and viral object.

In 3-D printing Emulation acts as the reverse of Adjacency, shifting from localized verifiable knowledge to a form of acheiropoiete. That is, objects perceived as made without human touch. Sacred icons that are worshipped as divine are sometimes referred to as acheiropoiete. For this category of items, as Bruno Latour comments in *Iconoclash*, to show human touch is to weaken their force, to desecrate them, destroying their power.[12] Something similar is also true in science: here too, objectivity is supposed to be acheiropoietic and not contaminated by human hands. Evidence of human touch in the 'fabric of science', corrupts the sanctity of objectivity and threatens to cancel any claim to truth, destroying our access to enlightenment.[13] Perhaps part of the contemporary excitement around 3-D printing is that it appears to combine these two extremes of magic and science, allowing anyone to produce mathematically accurate and visually complex objects without the need for manual skill. The stone statue King Uthal of Hatra has not been destroyed, but lives magically on in 3-D files, and you can download and make it in chocolate if you wish, without much training. But then it would belong to a different category of object — a confectionery anomaly.

The third category, Analogy, is a similarity of relations. This is resemblance across different categories (as opposed to an anomaly that stands out from the group). Here the action of touching knowledge can be found in the use of one type of cultural structure to consider another. This is a connection to knowledge that allows a universal field of application. If the 3-D printed clear plastic replica model of King Uthal of Hatra emulates the original, in this category it now becomes an analogy for the process of distributed touch. The digital version of the King Uthal statue is analogous of our shifting relationship to historical objects, and the growing practice of digitally reconstructing artefacts for personal archiving. In 2013, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York engaged in a joint project with the MakerBot Community, whose members launched a 'hackathon' scanning a wide range of artefacts in the museum to assist with archiving the collection. This project however, went further than simply converting geographically specific objects into distributable digital files for the Metropolitan Museum of Art 's archives. The hackathon also offered members the opportunity to alter or combine these statues. As Don Undeen Founding Manager of the MediaLab at the Metropolitan Museum of Art commented: 'Taking home a "copy" of a sculpture at the Met is exciting, but it might be even more fun to use that work as an inspiration for your own creations'.[14] A comment that would seem to incite digital iconoclasm or at least subvert the historic integrity of the objects in their collections. Quite a radical approach to archiving for a museum.

If Allahyari's 3-D file of King Uthal of Hatra were to combine with scans of other historical objects, the resulting 'mash-up' becomes a cultural interface between historical and present concerns.[15] 3-D files that are hacked become multi-authored, fluid 'social objects' that coalesce into temporary cultural experiences. They are 3-D memes, forms with constantly changing content, around which social knowledge adheres. This transformation of an archived object into a social object reactivates its meaning in a radical way, a contemporary physical conversation is established across a more diverse audience than those visitors able to travel to a specific archive or collection. New communities emerge, online collections converge and fresh relationships are made of duplicated, hacked, and remixed objects. Whole new lineages and genealogies grow with these layered artefacts. Media theorist Henry Jenkins' assertion 'If It Doesn't Spread, It's Dead' could apply to these 3-D files. In his opinion artefacts have the greatest impact when we are able to pass on, reuse, adapt, and remix them.[16] But is downloading the 3-D file of the King Uthal of Hatra a creative departure point for a personal narrative, or another form of cultural appropriation — the colonization of materially specific artefacts by an all-consuming digital language? Is the role of digital hacking in this mode of touch an analogy for productive cross-disciplinary engagement with culture, or a digital version of the sledge hammer that smashed the statue in the first place?

Sympathy, the last category of similitude, excites the things of the world to action. It is a principle of movement. Sympathy is dynamic, it transforms — and assimilates. It links 'feeling for' as emotion, with feeling as touch; the capacity to reach towards knowledge through touching or being touched. Sympathetic objects can also touch us back. Timothy Morton discusses the touch of the 'hyperobject' in our Anthropocene age where evidence of the human hand has become the dominant influence on climate and the environment. Hyperobjects are entities of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that they sit outside traditional concepts of objects. They occupy a high-dimensional space, invisible to humans for stretches of time. Concepts such as 'digital cloud storage' and 'archiving history' operate as hyperobjects — enfolding and touching us all.[17] The digital archive as hyperobject assimilates us and objects through a sympathetic action. The individuality of the statue of King Uthal of Hatra combined with other historical objects is transformed and assimilated in the distributed scans of museum archives that are hacked and 're-faced' in different contexts. The original statue of the King Uthal of Hatra might have been defaced — smashed with hands holding hammers, but because of Allahyari's project *Material Speculation: ISIS* the statue is now everywhere. In this context, the destructive touch of Isis on the statue also touches me; the damage invokes sympathy and stimulates my desire to preserve by remaking. The digital simulacrum of King Uthal of Hatra assimilates me through this sympathetic re-touching when I make a 3-D print.

As Latour observes, objects touched by destruction or an attempted 'defacing' ironically gain power through a 're-facing', often constituted through a global digital distribution that ensures the creative survival of that knowledge. The violent act of this statue's destruction is imprinted into the digital environment. Laura U Mark's argues that digital images are 'existentially' connected to the processes they image: 'Thanks to the ability of sub atomic particles to communicate along traceable pathways, we can fairly say that electrons remember'.[18] It is this digital capacity for material memory that needs considering as we press ourselves ever closer to digital media. What is being transformed by digital touch, in us and in the objects, we scan? It is important to understand both the destructive digital touch and its sympathetic reach when we archive physical knowledge. They will both affect touch in radically different and distributed ways in the future.

A Morehshin Allahyari Material Speculation King Uthal of Hatra — 3-D print.

B Morehshin Allahyari Material Speculation King Uthal of Hatra — STL file image.

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17 Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

18 Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 161.

MEET ME IN THE PRESENT IS A CALL FOR PUBLIC SPACES, AND FOR PUBLIC IDEAS IN AN AGE WHEN 'THE COMMONS' IS INCREASINGLY UNDER ATTACK. A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS, THIS BOOK EXPLORES THE DIVERSE WAYS IN WHICH DOCUMENTS PRODUCED BY MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND TRACES LEFT BY RADICAL POLITICAL ACTIONS HAVE BEEN COLLECTED, PRESERVED AND, SOMETIMES, DISPLAYED

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THE CELESTIAL ARCHIVE:
A SERENDIPITOUS
JOURNEY FROM THE END
TO THE BEGINNING

CAROLINE MAZELLA
DI BOSCO
EMOTIONAL HISTORI(ES)

HATTY NESTOR
THE MEANING OF
ACTS: 'WHAT A BEAUTIFUL
CONSTRUCT OF
YOURSELF'

CAMILLA BROWN
A SPACE THAT DOES
NOT FETTER

JORDAN HARRISON-TWIST
THE TRIVIAL OF TODAY:
TOM HARRISSON'S
MASS-OBSERVATION IN
BOLTON, 1937

STAN PORTUS
'WHEN DID YOU LAST BUY
A JOINT OF BEEF?':
EAST LONDON BIG FLAME
AND THE PEOPLE'S
FOOD CO-OP

THEO INGLIS
INTO PRODUCTION! DAVID
KING AND THE
'HOUSE-STYLE OF THE
LOONY LEFT'

MADELEINE SHANKS
NET ART: RHIZOME,
DRAGAN ESPENSCHIED
AND THE FIGHT AGAINST
OBSOLESCENCE

SARAH THACKER
YOU DON'T REPRESENT
US, YOU CANNOT EVEN
IMAGINE US

DANA BENLAKHDAR
BABYLON MUST FOOT ALL
ITS BILLS!

MARINA ROMISZOWSKA
AN INCHWORM ON AN URN

GIANMARCO BOZOGLU
COMPOSITION OF TEN

MAIA GAFFNEY-HYDE
THE AMBITUS OF
HUNGARIAN FOLK MUSIC

GEZ BARTON
A JUKEBOX OF PEOPLE
TRYING TO CHANGE
THE WORLD

NATASCHA NANJI
MY HONEY DEAREST,
BRUTHAMAN, DARLING,
SWEETHEART, MY LOVE

ELIZABETH KANE
ACCESS BY APPOINTMENT
ONLY

TIHANA ŠARE
ON A DEATHWATCH

JANE NORRIS
TOUCHING KNOWLEDGE

ALEX QUICHO
WHITE AND PINK BLOOMS

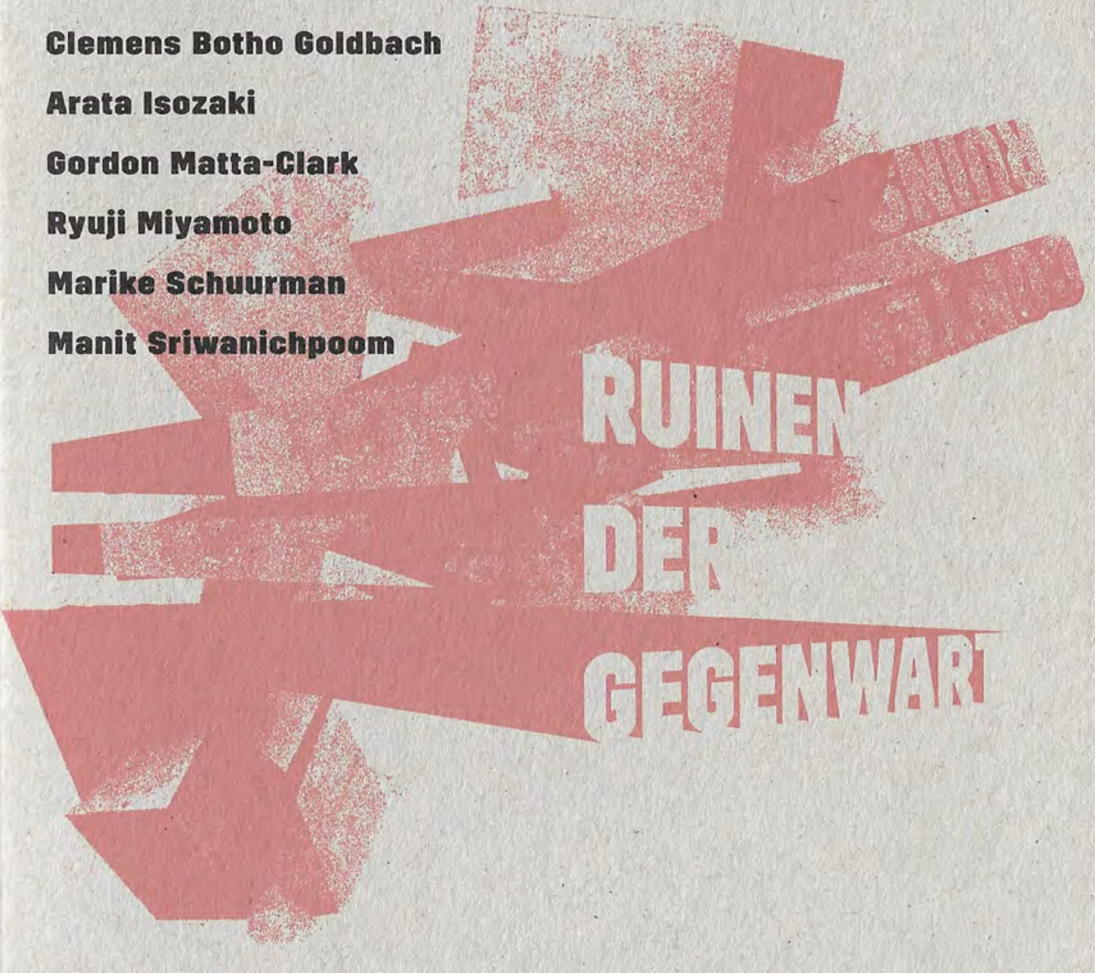
BRETT WALSH
WIKILEAKS: A RECORD
OF THE CONSPIRATORIAL
OR AN ACT OF
RESISTANCE?

ZACH SOUDAN
RECORD THE ATOMS
AS THEY FALL

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LOUISE SHELLEY, STEFAN SZCZELKUN,
STUART BERTOLOTTI-BAILEY, KAMEELAH JANAN RASHEED, NINA POWER & ORIT GAT

Ruinen Der Gegenwar, 2017

Dorothee Albrecht
Morehshin Allahyari
Francis Alÿs
Katya Gardea Browne
Clemens Botho Goldbach
Arata Isozaki
Gordon Matta-Clark
Ryuji Miyamoto
Marike Schuurman
Manit Sriwanichpoom



RUINEN DER GEGENWART

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Morehshin Allahyari

/ * 1985 in Teheran, lebt in New York

Einen Computer mit allerlei Daten zu füttern, damit er uns Blumenvasen und Stifte oder zukünftig vielleicht sogar Autos und Häuser ausspuckt: Diese Vorstellung knüpfen wir an das digitale 3D-Druckverfahren. Doch mit dieser Technik lassen sich nicht nur immer kuriosere Plastik-Preziosen für den Alltag produzieren. Sie eignet sich ebenso zur Rekonstruktion verloren gegangener oder zerstörter Objekte. Auch für die Ruinen unserer Gegenwart bieten sich im Zeitalter ihrer digitalen Reproduzierbarkeit somit ganz neue Möglichkeiten.

Hier setzt das Projekt *Material Speculation: ISIS* (2015–2017) der iranischen, in New York lebenden Künstlerin Morehshin Allahyari an. Ihre Arbeit ist ein künstlerischer Akt des Widerstands gegen die Vernichtung von Kulturgut durch die Terrororganisation Islamischer Staat (IS). Mit Hilfe der 3D-Drucktechnologie rekonstruierte Allahyari ausgewählte archäologische Artefakte, die im Jahr 2015 im Museum von Mossul zerstört wurden und aus den antiken, im heutigen Irak liegenden Fundorten Hatra und Niniveh stammen. Bisher hat die Künstlerin insgesamt zwölf Objekte rekonstruiert. Dazu gehört die Figurine *Venus* (2016), in deren Inneren ein USB-Datenträger eingeschlossen wurde. Auf der Speicherkarte befinden sich wissenschaftlich recherchierte Angaben zur Provenienz der Skulptur in Form von Bild- und Textdateien, Videos sowie Landkarten. Dem Titel nach handelt es sich bei den Arbeiten der Reihe eher um ‚Spekulationen' über einen Umgang mit den Trümmern der Geschichte im Zeitalter des Digitalen als um den Versuch, die unwiederbringlich zerstörten Originale zu ersetzen. Entscheidend hierbei ist, dass die Informationen nicht in flüchtigen Datenwolken über uns schweben, sondern sich in konkreten Objekten materialisieren, um die Vergangenheit im Wortsinn be-greifbar zu machen. Diese Wechselbeziehung zwischen materieller Kultur und digitaler Technik als Mittel der Gestaltung von Geschichte ist das Grundthema der Arbeiten.

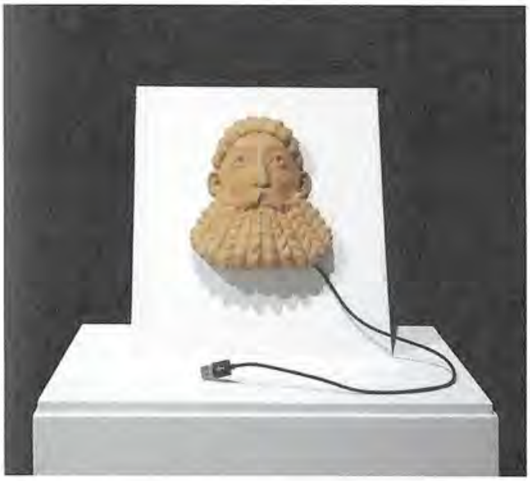
Allahyaris zukunftsträchtige Verbindung von historischen Fragmenten und Digitalität täuscht jedoch nicht darüber hinweg, dass ihre Werke die Konsequenz aus vielen eklatanten Asymmetrien zwischen den physischen und digitalen Welten unserer globalen Gegenwart sind. Etwa dann, wenn Menschenleben und Kulturgüter durch den IS mit barbarischen Methoden vernichtet, gleichzeitig aber viele seiner Schlachten mittels digitaler Hochtechnologien ausgetragen werden und er seine Bildpropaganda über virtuelle Datenautobahnen verbreitet. Die Nutzung des Internets als ein Vehikel gegenwärtiger Kriege spielt wiederum den politischen Gegnern eines unkontrollierten digitalen Raums die Argumente in die Hand, um seine verstärkte Überwachung zu fordern.

Daran knüpft Allahyaris Arbeit *Dead Drop* (2017) an. Auch dieses Objekt auf der Vorlage eines Fassadenreliefs in Form eines Gesichts aus dem antiken Hatra wurde mittels 3D-Technik produziert. Ein Kabel mit funktionstüchtigem USB-Anschluss lugt hinter dem 3D-Druck hervor, so dass sich die Informationen herunterladen lassen. Allahyaris Appell an die Öffentlichkeit, die gespeicherten Objektdaten selbstständig zu nutzen, verleiht dem 3D-Verfahren einen emanzipatorischen und zutiefst demokratischen Zug. Der *Dead Drop* schafft als allgemein zugängliche Schnittstelle zwischen Daten und Usern einen nicht merkantilen, sondern einen wahrhaft öffentlichen Raum zum grenzenlosen und unkontrollierten Austausch von Daten.

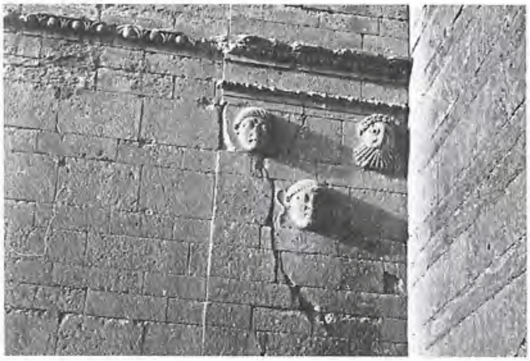
Dass Technologien eben keine Waffen sind, sondern erst durch ihre Kontextualisierung, ja letztlich durch menschliches Handeln determiniert werden, klingt schließlich auch in *3D Additivist Manifesto* (2015) an. Bild- und Tonebene des Videos von Morehshin Allahyari und Daniel Rourke transportieren eine Vision von den zukünftigen Möglichkeiten der 3D-Druckverfahren und sparen dabei auch seine dystopischen Züge nicht aus, etwa in Hinblick auf seine Abhängigkeit von petrochemischen Verfahren. In den Wogen eines Ozeans aus Erdöl treiben Objekte ganz unterschiedlicher Herkunft: Unter anderem schippert dort eine Plastikversion der *Venus von Milo* neben einem Gebiss und dem Duchamp'schen Pissoir. Sie alle sind die Herolde eines neuen Zeitalters in dem neue, technologische Artefakte zunehmend zur Norm werden und die gleiche Bedeutung erlangen wie andere Akteure unserer materiellen Kultur mit einer ungleich längeren Biografie – wie jene Fundstücke aus Hatra oder Niniveh.

In der Geschichte der Ruinen schlägt Morehshin Allahyari ein neues, digitales Kapitel auf. Die Übersetzung der ruinierten Artefakte in digitale Informationen dient nicht der Wiederherstellung eines verloren gegangenen Originals. Sie ist der zukünftigen Erinnerung verpflichtet, die sich unter den wechselnden Perspektiven der jeweiligen Gegenwart stets neu formen lässt.

\ Julia Höner



Dead Drop, 2017



lbum R 1911 - Iraq, Turkey
Date taken: April 1911
Photographer: Gertrude Bell
Location: Hatra - Iraq
Modern location: Hadr, Al (Hatra)
Size: 11/9.5
Condition: Good
Subject date: Early Parthian

Description: Hatra S liwan [Palace - S Liwan - detail of sculptured heads on pilaster. „And more curious still, high up on the walls in the interior of the halls they set huge human heads in groups of three, and these too are sometimes dimly classical, a Medusa head, a bearded river god; and sometimes they are wild and staring masks, scarcely human."]

Morehshin Allahyari

/ *1985 in Tehran; lives in New York

Feeding a computer with all kinds of data so that it spits out vases and pens or, in days to come, possibly even cars or houses: this is the idea we connect with digital 3D printing processes. But this technique not only enables us to produce evermore precious items to fulfil our everyday plastic dreams; it is equally suited for the reconstruction of lost or destroyed objects. Likewise, in the era of digital reproduction, it bears unexpected possibilities with regard to contemporary ruins.

This is where the project *Material Speculation: ISIS* (2015–2017), initiated by the Iranian artist based in New York, Morehshin Allahyari, comes in. Her work is an act of resistance against the destruction of cultural heritage by the terrorist organisation Islamic State (ISIS). With the help of the 3D printing technology, Allahyari reconstructed selected archaeological artefacts, originating from the ancient sites Hatra and Niniveh located in today's Iraq, which were destroyed in the Mosul Museum in 2015. So far, the artist has replicated twelve objects, including the figurine *Venus* (2016). A USB flash drive is embedded in its body, with meticulously researched scholarly information on the provenance of the statue in the form of image and text files, videos and maps stored on it. According to the title of the works, the series appears to focus more on "speculations" about how to deal with the ruins of history in the digital age than about the attempt to replace the irreversibly destroyed originals. The decisive aspect is that the information does not just drift above our heads in clouds of data; it is rather materialised in concrete objects in order to make the past comprehensible, literally tangible. The interrelationship between material culture and digital technology as a means for modelling history is the fundamental topic underlying these works.

Allahyari's promising artistic approach of combining historical fragments with digital technology does not, however, belie the fact that her works have arisen as a result of the many dissonances between the physical and digital worlds of our globalized present. For instance, when human lives and cultural heritage are being destroyed by ISIS with the most atrocious methods, yet at the same time many of its battles are being fought using digital high-tech tools and its image propaganda is spread via virtual data highways. Using the Internet as a vehicle for contemporary wars, in turn, plays into the hands of political opponents of an uncontrolled digital realm, as it provides arguments for its enhanced surveillance.

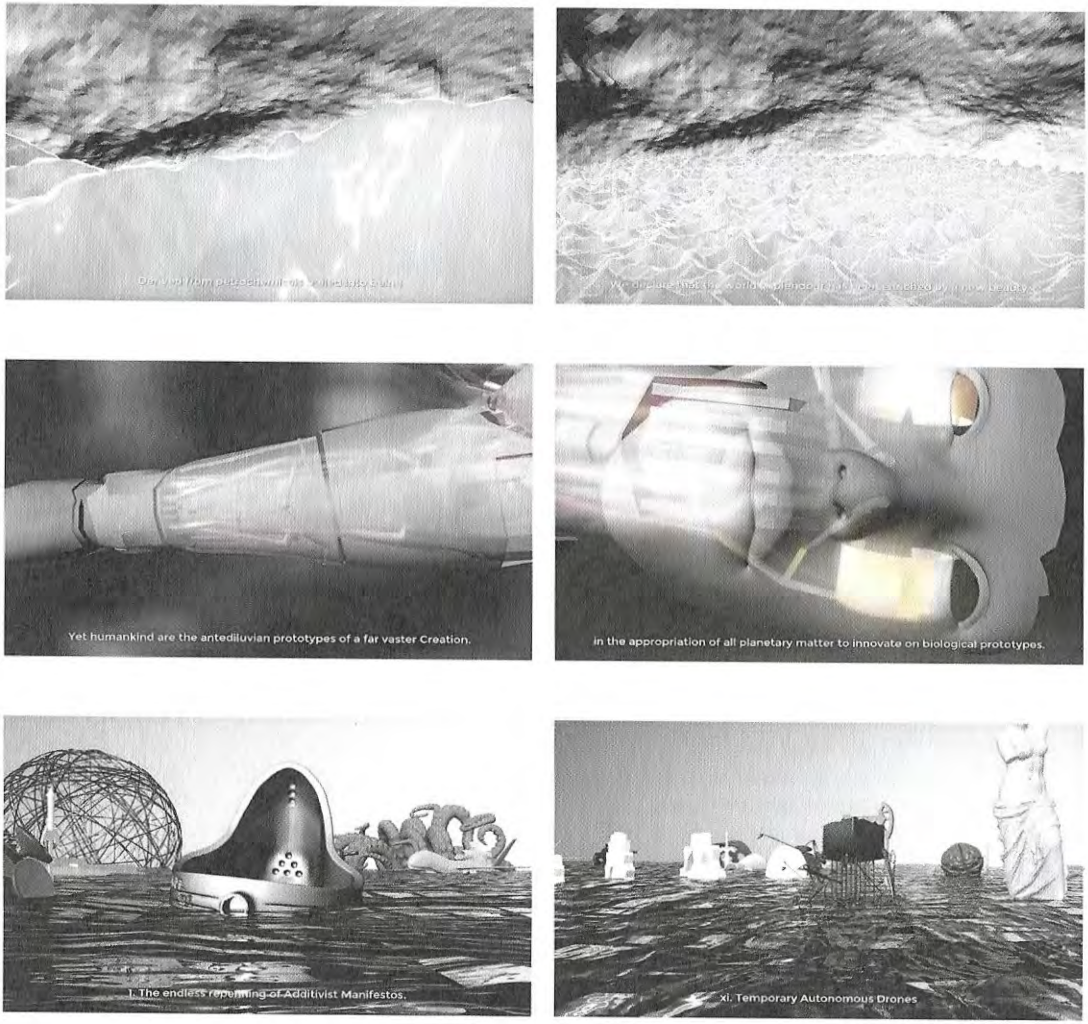
Allahyari's work *Dead Drop* (2017) also draws on the topic. This object, based on a façade relief with a face from ancient Hatra, was also fabricated by means of the 3D technique. A cable with a functional USB port protrudes from behind the 3D print, allowing information to be downloaded. Allahyari's invitation to the public to use the data related to the object lends the 3D process an emancipatory and profoundly democratic character. As a generally accessible interface between the data and the user, the *Dead Drop* creates not a market-oriented, but a truly public space allowing a limitless and uncontrolled exchange of information.

3D Additivist Manifesto (2015) alludes to the idea that technology in itself is not a weapon but, ultimately through human action, it can be determined and used as such. The video produced by Morehshin Allahyari and Daniel Rourke transmits a vision in image and sound of the future possibilities offered by the 3D printing technology, and yet it does not omit the dystopic elements involved, for example, its dependency on petrochemical processes. Drifting on the waves of an ocean of oil are objects rather diverse in nature and origin: among others a plastic version of the *Venus de Milo* bobbing next to a set of false teeth and a Duchampian urinal. They all are heralds of a new era in which as yet unfamiliar technological artefacts increasingly become the norm and thus attain the same relevance as other protagonists of our material culture boasting a considerably longer biography – like the ancient objects from Hatra and Niniveh.

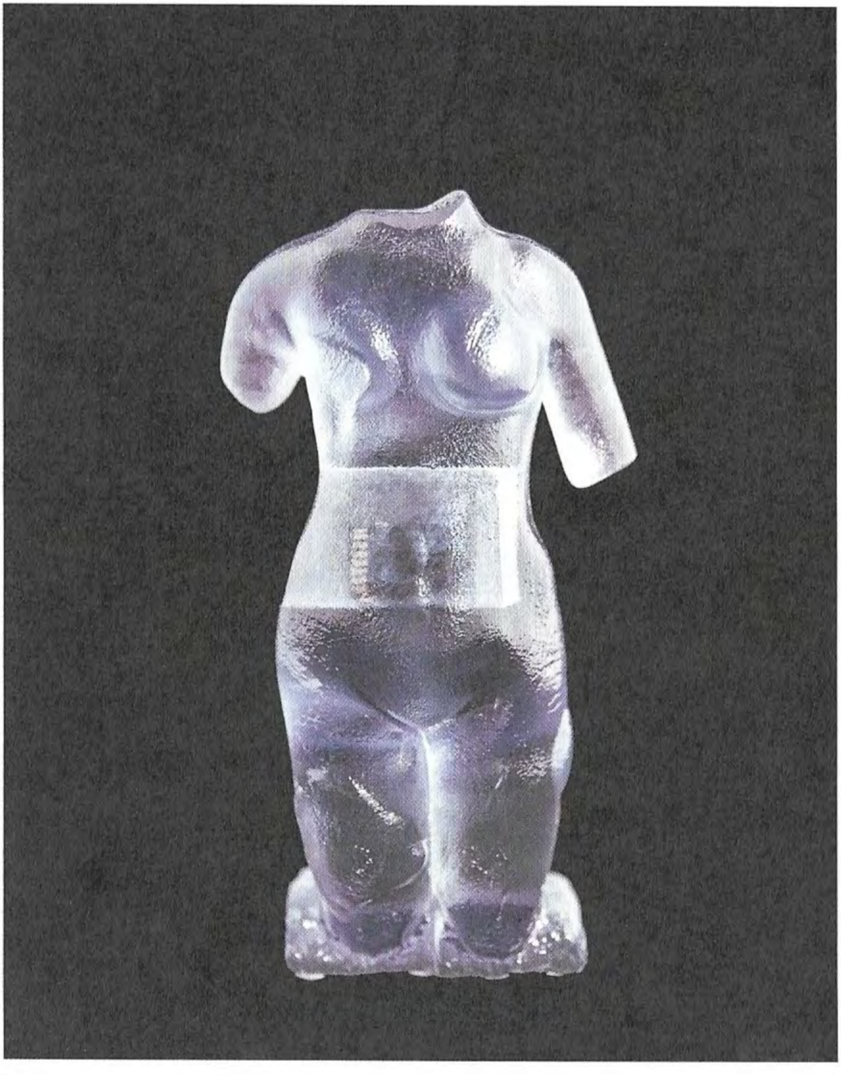
In the history of ruins, Morehshin Allahyari has written a new, digital chapter. This artistic translation of ruined artefacts into digital information does not focus on the restoration of a lost original piece. It is rather dedicated to future memories, enabling them to be reshaped in relation to the alternating perspectives of each contemporary world.

\ Julia Höner

Venus, 2016 und / and Dead Drop, 2017


We declare that the world's splendour has been enriched by a new beauty.
Yet humankind are the antediluvian prototypes of a far vaster Creation.
in the appropriation of all planetary matter to innovate on biological prototypes.
1. The endless repenning of Additivist Manifestos.
xi. Temporary Autonomous Drones

3D Additivist Manifesto, 2015 (film stills)

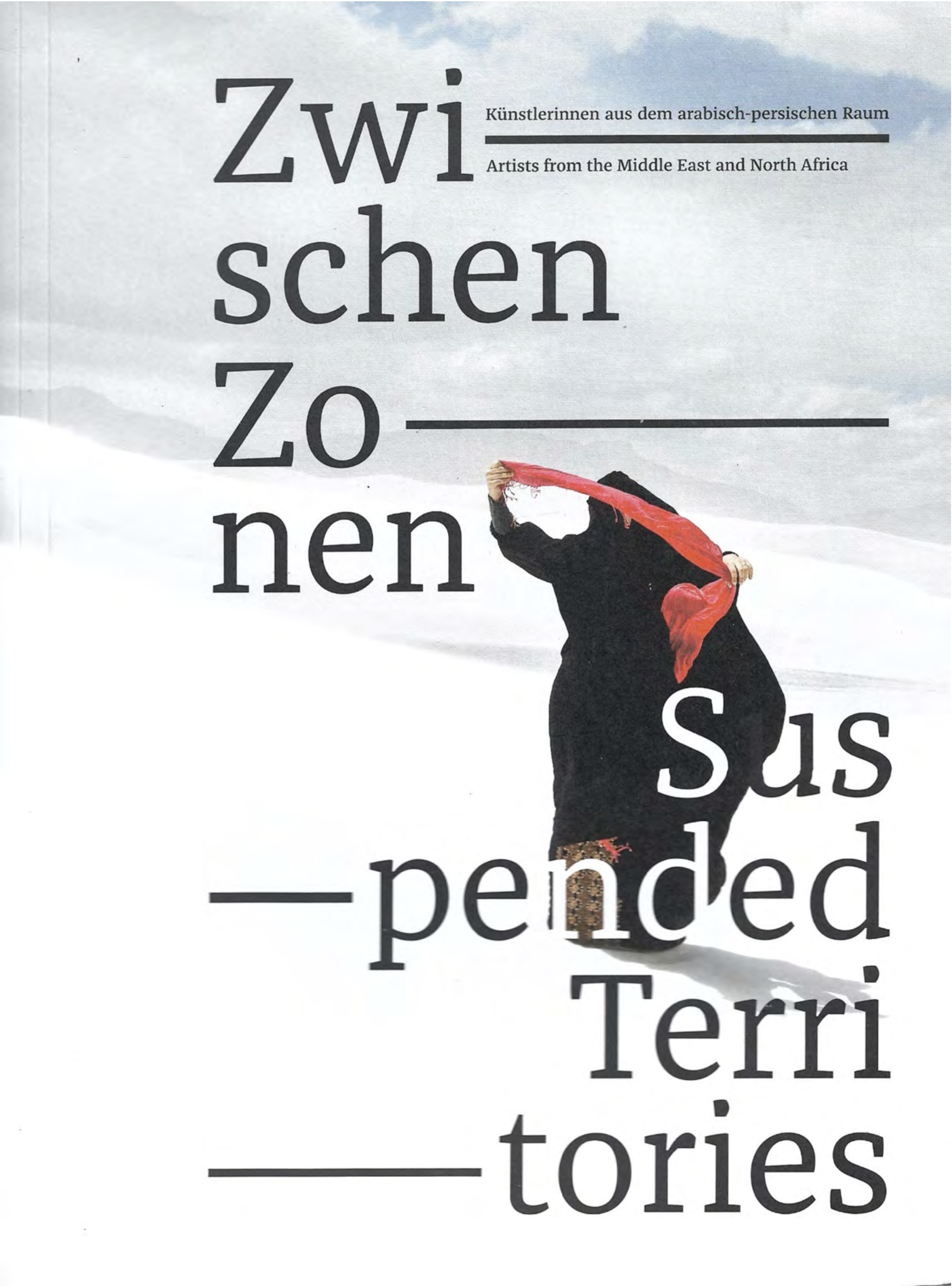


Venus, 2016

CONTEMPORARY
RUINS

KERBER

Suspended Territories, 2017



Zwischen Zonen

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Morehshin
Allahyari

Die Macht, zwischen Machtpositionen zu sein
von Gretta Louw

Morehshin Allahyari ist als Künstlerin in einem permanenten Dazwischen. Geboren und aufgewachsen in Teheran, lebt Allahyari seit dem Jahr 2007 in den USA. Wie jeder Migrant feststellen musste, sind die Veränderungen des täglichen Lebens, die eine andere Kultur, Sprache und Gefühlswelt mit sich bringen, enorm und anstrengend. Konfrontiert mit der Visa-Bürokratie, erfährt man womöglich am deutlichsten, was es bedeutet, zwischen den Stühlen zu sitzen, ein Fremdkörper und ausgegrenzt zu sein. Aus der Sicht des globalen Nordens ist der Immigrant machtlos, seine Position ist, je nach politischer Auffassung, zu bedauern oder zu verachten. In Allahyaris Praxis wird der Zustand des Dazwischen, des Dazwischenseins zur wirksamen Waffe gegen jegliche Form der Unterdrückung – sei sie patriarchalisch, politisch, kolonial oder technologisch bedingt. Indem sie sich ständig einer Kategorisierung verweigert und gegen die Festlegung ihrer Person oder ihrer Werke ankämpft, wird Allahyaris Arbeit durch dieses Dazwischensein nicht ab-, sondern aufgewertet. Es transzendiert die gängigen Machtstrukturen, die in der Politik, Gesellschaft und sogar in der Kunst verankert sind.

Allahyaris Werk nimmt diese Position nicht zufällig ein. Die Videoarbeiten *The Romantic Self-Exile 1* (2012, ▸ 70)

The Inherent Power of Being Between Positions of Power
by Gretta Louw

Morehshin Allahyari is an artist who is perpetually "between." Born and raised in Tehran, Allahyari has been based in the U.S. since 2007. As any migrant will confirm, the physical, cultural, linguistic, and emotional shifts required to move between two markedly different countries are enormous; exhausting. The bureaucracy of visas is perhaps the ultimate experience of being betwixt, interpolated, liminal. In the narrative of the global north, the immigrant is cast in terms of powerlessness; it is a position to pity or, depending on one's political leanings, abhor. In Allahyari's practice, the status of being between, of being "medial," becomes a potent weapon against all forms of oppression—patriarchal, political, colonial, and technological. By consistently refusing to be categorized, by protesting the identification of herself or her work as monolithic, her work becomes "more," not less, by virtue of being between. It becomes transcendent of the usual power structures embedded in politics, society, and even art.

It is by no means accidental that Allahyari's work attains this status. The video works *The Romantic Self-Exile 1* (2012, ▸ 70) and *In the Realm of Rare and Analogous* und *In the Realm of Rare and Analogous Accidents* (2013, S. 70) greifen beide explizit das Gefühl der Ausgrenzung auf – das Gefühl, sich zwischen physischen, emotionalen, zeitlichen und erfahrbaren Realitäten zu befinden. Das beschreibt die Künstlerin selbst in der Tonspur zu *The Romantic Self-Exile 1*: „Meine Uhr ist auf die Zeit im Iran eingestellt. Die Zeiger bewegen sich ohne den Körper, wie die Zeit ohne das Land … Meine Stimme ist immer noch auf unserem Anrufbeantworter in Teheran und sie erinnert mich mit jedem Anruf daran, dass meine körperliche Präsenz verdrängt wurde."

Diese Videoarbeiten bewegen sich zwischen dem Politischen und dem Persönlichen. Geschickt nutzt Allahyari ihren Status als Ein- beziehungsweise Auswanderin zwischen zwei Kulturen für eine ausgesprochen politische Stellungnahme gegen den in den Vereinigten Staaten weitverbreiteten Mythos von „Amerika als großartigstem Land der Welt". Diese Legende wird von Demokraten[1] wie von Republikanern aufrechterhalten und ist, von außen betrachtet, grundverkehrt. Leider hat sich die in Allahyaris Videoarbeiten zum Ausdruck gebrachte Empfindung als zutreffend entpuppt. Im Jahr 2017 nehmen die Vereinigten Staaten – zugleich ironischerweise und tragischerweise – eine scheinbar ähnliche Haltung gegenüber einer Opposition wie das iranische Regime ein. Auf Twitter schreibt Allahyari, „Warum habe ich mich überhaupt jahrelang mit Papierkram abgemüht und Geld investiert, wenn Trump und Ahmadinedschad im Grunde austauschbar sind?"[2]

Allahyaris Kritik an der Haltung des „Wir gegen die Anderen", die sich zurzeit in den USA manifestiert, ist eindeutig. Diese Entwicklung hat sie im Rahmen der Berichterstattung über ihre Serie *Material Speculation: ISIS* (2015–16, ▸ 68–69) unmittelbar erlebt. Die Serie veranschaulicht die akribische, interdisziplinäre Forschung, die von Allahyari betrieben wurde, um zwölf Überreste aus den zerstörten Städten Hatra und Ninive zu dokumentieren, sie zu rekonstruieren, zu modellieren und schließlich als 3D-Drucke zu reproduzieren. Die Archivierung, Sammlung und Bewahrung kultureller und historischer Information jenseits der kolonialen Strukturen der Museen des Nordens ist ein zentraler Bestandteil ihrer Arbeit. Jedes Stück beinhaltet buchstäblich sein digitales historisches Gedächtnis in Form einer Flash-basierten Speicherkarte mit einem vollständigen Dossier an gesammelten Informationen, die von der Künstlerin in die plastische Reproduktion eingebettet werden. Die Serie verkörpert die komplexen Interaktionen zwischen

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Accidents (2013, ▸ 70) both deal explicitly with this sensation of being dislocated; between physical, emotional, temporal, and experiential realities. As the artist intones in the narration to *The Romantic Self-Exile 1*: "My watch stays on Iran's time. Its hands move without its body, like time without its country … My voice stays in Tehran on our answering machine, and I am reminded with every call that my physical presence has been misplaced."

These video works oscillate between the political and the personal. Allahyari deftly uses her status as immigrant, as ex-pat between two cultures, to make a powerfully political statement opposing the common U.S. narrative that "America is the greatest country on Earth." This mythology is perpetuated equally by Democrats[1] and Republicans and, from an outsider's perspective, is palpably false. Indeed, the sentiment expressed in Allahyari's videos was sadly prescient. The U.S., in 2017, ironically, tragically, seems to be aligning with the Iranian regime in its brutality toward opposition. On Twitter, Allahyari writes: "Why did I even go through all these years of paper work and so much money to be in the U.S. when Trump and Ahmadinejad are basically the same?"[2]

Allahyari has been clear in her criticism of the "us vs. them" narrative that has been building in the U.S. She had firsthand experience of this narrative creation in the media coverage of her acclaimed series *Material Speculation: ISIS* (2015–16, ▸ 68–69). The series represents a painstakingly thorough and interdisciplinary research effort by the artist to document, reconstruct, model, and 3D print twelve artifacts from the cities of Hatra and Nineveh that were destroyed by ISIS followers. The process of archiving, of gathering and preserving cultural and historical information free of the colonialist structures of museums in the global north, is central to the artist's mission. Each piece literally contains a digital memory of its history, with a flash drive memory card containing the full dossier of information that the artist collated, embedded into the sculptural reproduction. The series embodies the complex interactions between petropolitics, oil and plastic, propaganda, digital colonialism and technocapitalism. In other words, it acknowledges the complexity of the context in which "jihad" and "the war on terror" exist. The response by the western media, in comparison, was often startlingly simplistic, along the

Petropolitik, Öl und Plastik, Propaganda, digitalem Kolonialismus und Techno-Kapitalismus. Sie bezeugt mit anderen Worten die Komplexität des Machtgefüges, in dem einerseits der Dschihad und andererseits der „Krieg gegen den Terror" existieren. Demgegenüber fiel die Resonanz der westlichen Medien nach dem Motto „Künstlerin bekämpft ISIS mit 3D-Drucker" oft erstaunlich holzschnittartig aus.[3] Diese Reaktionen vernachlässigten die komplexen Zusammenhänge zugunsten der vereinfachten Zuspitzung auf das heroische „Wir" – in diesem Fall wird die Immigrantin / Künstlerin als politisiertes Subjekt einbezogen und beansprucht – und auf die barbarischen „Anderen". So erklärt Allahyari in einem Interview: „Meine Existenz als Frau wurde von der iranischen Regierung immer unterdrückt und vom weißen Patriarchat kolonialisiert."[4]

Die Serie *Dark Matter* (▸ 63–67) gehört zu den ersten Umsetzungen Allahyaris in der Technik des 3D-Drucks. Sie verbindet darin das politische und physische Dazwischen der Exilierung aus ihrem Geburtsland mit einer weiteren Schicht der Interpolation: mit den Möglichkeiten, die sich daraus ergeben, dass eine digitale Datei im Gegensatz zur Materialität eines physischen Objekts geografische und ideologische Grenzen unbemerkt passieren kann. In den skulpturalen Werken werden digitale Modelle umgesetzt, die auf „im Iran verbotenen oder seitens der Regierung nicht willkommenen Objekten" beruhen.[5] In den Arbeiten ist zweifelsohne eine Kritik am iranischen Regime abzulesen, es kann aber ebenso ein Kopfschütteln über die Oberflächlichkeit des westlichen, kapitalistischen Materialismus wahrgenommen werden. Die Kreuzung von Homer Simpson mit Buddha in ihrer Figur *#Buddha #Simpson* (▸ 66) ist ein ironischer Seitenhieb auf die fragwürdige Medienzensur im Iran, vielleicht aber auch eine Anspielung auf die amerikanische Erhöhung des Entertainments zu einer Ersatzreligion. Die Kritik in Allahyaris Werken ist stets ein zweischneidiges Schwert.

Allahyaris Praxis wehrt sich gegen Festlegungen. Sie schafft Kunstobjekte, die sich nicht auf die reine Ästhetik reduzieren lassen. Ihr Blick auf Netzwerke, die zur Bewahrung und Verbreitung von Informationen von Mensch zu Mensch dienen und darin größtenteils unabhängig von traditionellen oder auferlegten kulturellen, politischen oder kolonialen Hierarchien und Zwängen sind, ist höchst aktuell. Dies wird vielleicht am besten in ihrem jüngsten, eigens für Marta Herford entworfenen Werk *Dead Drop* (▸ 71) veranschaulicht, das tatsächlich

lines of: "Artist Fights ISIS with 3D Printer."[3] These reactions ignored contextual complexity in favor of a simple pitting of the heroic "us" (in this case including and claiming the politicized body of the immigrant artist) against the barbaric "other." As Allahyari explained in a recent interview, "my existence as a woman has constantly been oppressed by the Iranian government and culture as well as colonized by white patriarchy."[4]

The *Dark Matter* series (▸ 63–67), one of Allahyari's earlier forays into 3D printing, synthesized the political and physical "betweenness" of the artist's self-exile from her country of birth, with another layer of interpolation; the possibility that exists between the digital file, which can slip undetected through geographic and ideological borders, and the materiality of the physical object. The sculptural works are printed from digital models that refigure "objects that are banned or unwelcome in Iran by the government."[5] The work is clearly critical of the Iranian regime, but can also be read as a sort of eye-roll at the superficiality of western, capitalist materialism. The Homer-Simpson-cum-Buddha figure of *#Buddha #Simpson* (▸ 66) is both a humorous dig at the fragility inherent in Iran's media censorship and, perhaps, an allusion to the American elevation of entertainment to a kind of religion. Allahyari's works are critical knives that cut both ways.

Allahyari's practice is a revolt against characterization. She creates art objects that cannot be reduced to mere aesthetics. Her perspective on networks used to preserve and disseminate information, person-to-person, largely irrespective of traditional or imposed cultural, political, or colonial hierarchies and constraints—perhaps best evidenced in her latest *Dead Drop* (▸ 71), a new work created for Marta Herford, which truly frees information and opens the archives—is radically contemporary.
It is boundless and explicitly anti-commercial. The depth of research involved, not peripherally but as a central component of the finished work, frames archiving as art and object as metaphor. She is critical of so-called preservation projects led by western museums[6]—a process that she sees as continuing the colonial legacy of removing artifacts from structurally less powerful territories, and by private interests, in which the copyright of an ancient artifact is transferred to a corporate entity; an act of

Informationen freisetzt und Archive öffnet – auf grenzenlose und explizit antikommerzielle Art und Weise. Die damit verbundenen intensiven Recherchen sind keine Nebensache, sondern zentraler Bestandteil des fertigen Werks – Archivierung als Kunst und ihr Gegenstand als Metapher. Die Künstlerin steht den sogenannten Denkmalschutzprojekten westlicher Museen kritisch gegenüber[6]: Indem Kunstwerke aus krisenanfälligen Gebieten verbracht werden, wird aus ihrer Sicht nur das koloniale Erbe fortgeführt. Privatinteressen führten außerdem dazu, dass Urheberrechte einer antiken Arbeit an kommerzielle Einrichtungen übertragen würden – ein Akt des digitalen Kolonialismus. Allahyari verortet ihre Praxis bewusst zwischen den traditionellen Vorstellungen von Kunstproduktion und Aktivismus, zwischen Archiv der Sachobjekte und poetischer Geste.

Die Gabe, sich nicht vereinnahmen zu lassen, sich aber zugleich wie ein „Krake“ in vielfältige Kontexte kommentierend einzubringen, rückt Allahyaris Werk in die Nähe der ebenfalls vielarmigen Figur „Chthulu“, einem Mythos, der von der feministischen Theoretikerin und Autorin Donna Haraway aufgegriffen wird.[7] Tatsächlich beschreibt Haraways Begriff des „Chthulucene“[8] im Gegensatz zu der Vorstellung des Anthropozän (das durch menschliches Handeln geprägte Zeitalter) eine chaotische, weder lineare noch hierarchische Zusammenfügung verschiedener Spezies. Dieser Begriff ist auch entscheidend für das Verständnis von *#Additivism*, Allahyaris Werk, das in Zusammenarbeit mit Daniel Rourke entstand. Im Rahmen des aktuellen sozialen und wissenschaftlichen Diskurses über den Klimawandel und über die geopolitische Bedeutung von Öl beziehungsweise Plastik führte das Projekt dank Chthulu-artiger Vernetzung zu einer bemerkenswerten Sammlung an kritischen Aufsätzen, außergewöhnlichem Design und druckbaren 3D-Dateien: *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* (2016).

In Allahyaris Praxis geht es um Offenlegung, Öffnung und vor allem um Dekolonialisierung. Als radikale Denkerin, Organisatorin, Aktivistin, Archivarin und Künstlerin bewegt sich Allahyari zwischen den veränderlichen, trügerischen Strömungen nationaler und globaler Machtstrukturen und ihren Legendenbildungen, zwischen den transformierenden Kräften der Digitalisierung und der Dystopie von Kapitalismus und Klimawandel und vertritt dabei ihre Autorität, die auf ihrer Position des instabilen Dazwischenseins beruht.

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digital colonialism. She consciously places her practice between traditional notions of art-making and activism, between the sober archive and the poetic gesture.

This capacity to be both apart and also able to, Krakenlike, intervene in and comment on a multitude of human contexts aligns Allahyari's work with the tentacular figure of "Chthulu" as envisioned by feminist theorist and writer Donna Haraway.[7] Indeed Haraway's depiction of the "Chthulucene"[8]—a term in opposition to the notion of the Anthropocene (the age defined by human action), the Chthulucene describes a chaotic, non-linear, non-hierarchical multi-species assemblage—is central to understanding Allahyari's influential collaboration, *#Additivism*, with Daniel Rourke. At the cutting edge of social and scientific discourse about climate change and the geopolitics of oil and plastic, through the Chthulu-like mode of networked community, the project has resulted in a remarkable collection of critical essays, speculative design, and 3D-printable files: *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* (2016).

Allahyari's practice is about disclosing, opening up, and, above all, decolonizing. As a radical thinker, organizer, activist, archivist, and artist, Allahyari moves between the shifting, treacherous currents of national and global power structures and the narratives they build, the transformational forces of digitalization, and the dystopian promise of capitalism and climate change to advocate for the inherent authority of the destabilized position of being "between."

1 c.f. http://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/07/26/dnc-convention-michelle-obama-america-is-already-the-greatest-country-on-earth-sot.cnn

2 Accessed on 25.1.2017 at https://twitter.com/morehshin/status/822314241872932864

3 c.f. https://duckduckgo.com/?q=artist+fights+isis+with+3d+printer&t=h_&ia=web

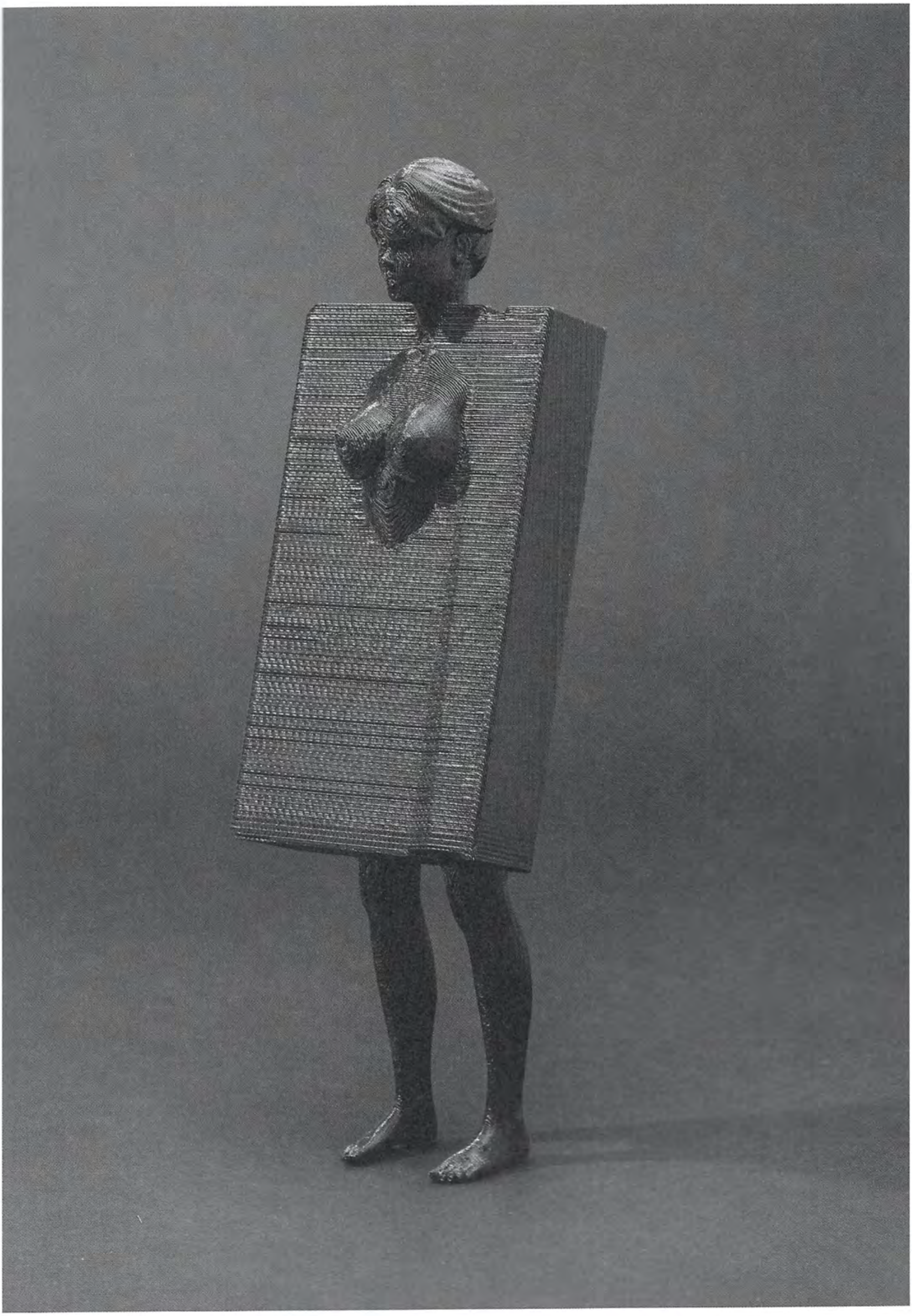
4 Interview by Hannah Gregory on Ibraaz, accessed on 27.1.2017 at http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/210

5 From the artist's website: http://www.morehshin.com/dark-matter-first-series

6 See, for example, interview with Hannah Gregory, ibid.

1 Vgl. http://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/07/26/dnc-convention-michelle-obama-america-is-already-the-greatest-country-on-earth-sot.cnn
2 25.1.2017 abgerufen unter https://twitter.com/morehshin/status/822314241872932864
3 Vgl. https://duckduckgo.com/?q=artist+fights+isis+with+3d+printer&t=h_&ia=web
4 Interview von Hannah Gregory auf Ibraaz, 27.1.2017 abgerufen unter http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/210
5 Siehe dazu die Website der Künstlerin: http://www.morehshin.com/dark-matter-first-series
6 Ebenda das Interview mit Hannah Gregory.
7 Siehe Donna Haraway, Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene, e-flux, 26.1.2017 abgerufen unter http://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene
8 Donna Haraway, „Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin“, in: *Environmental Humanities*, 6, 2015, S. 159–165.

7 For example, in Donna Haraway, Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene, e-flux, accessed on 26.1.2017 at http://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene
8 Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin,” in *Environmental Humanities*, 6, 2015, pp. 159–65.



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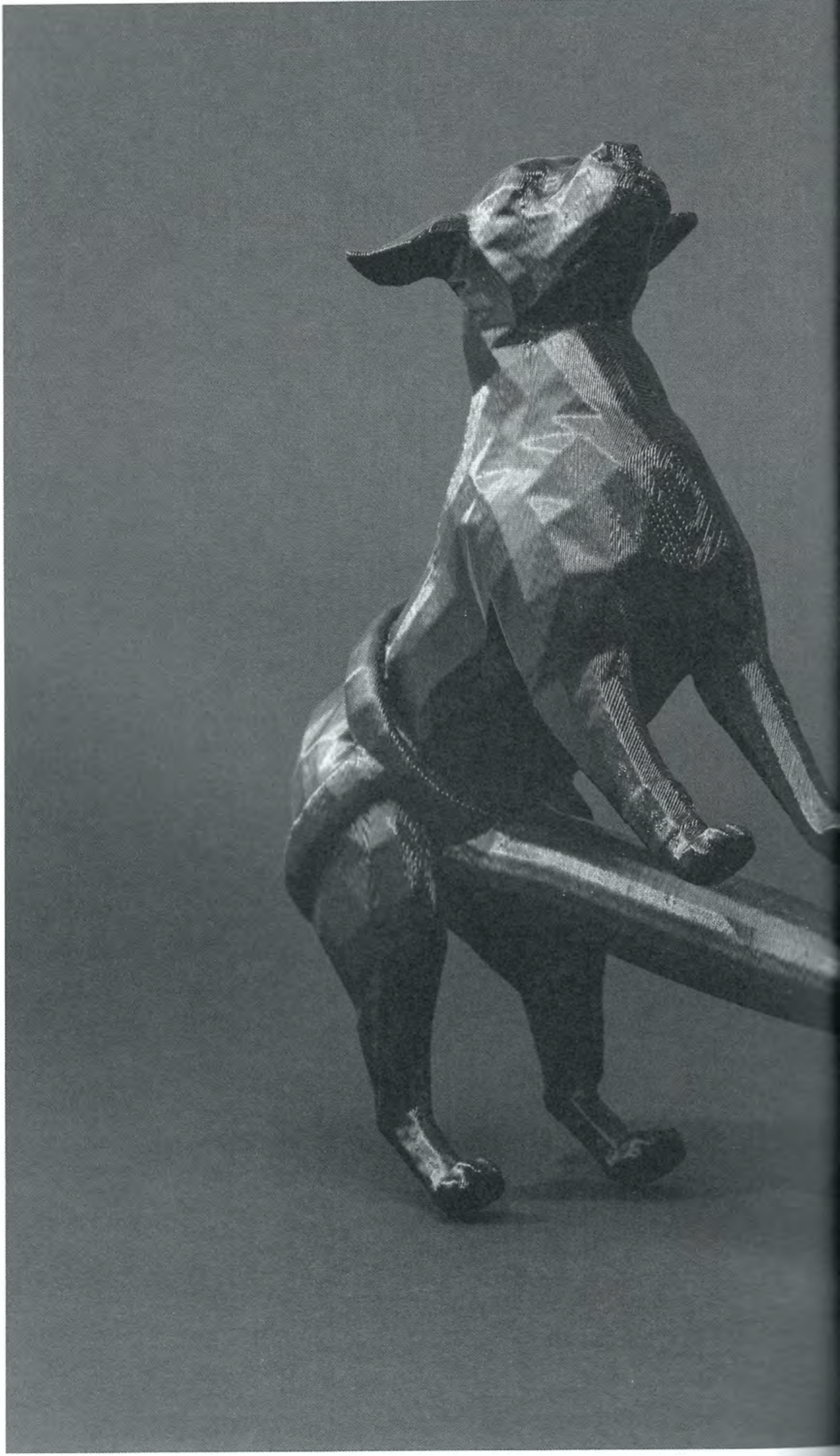
Allahyari



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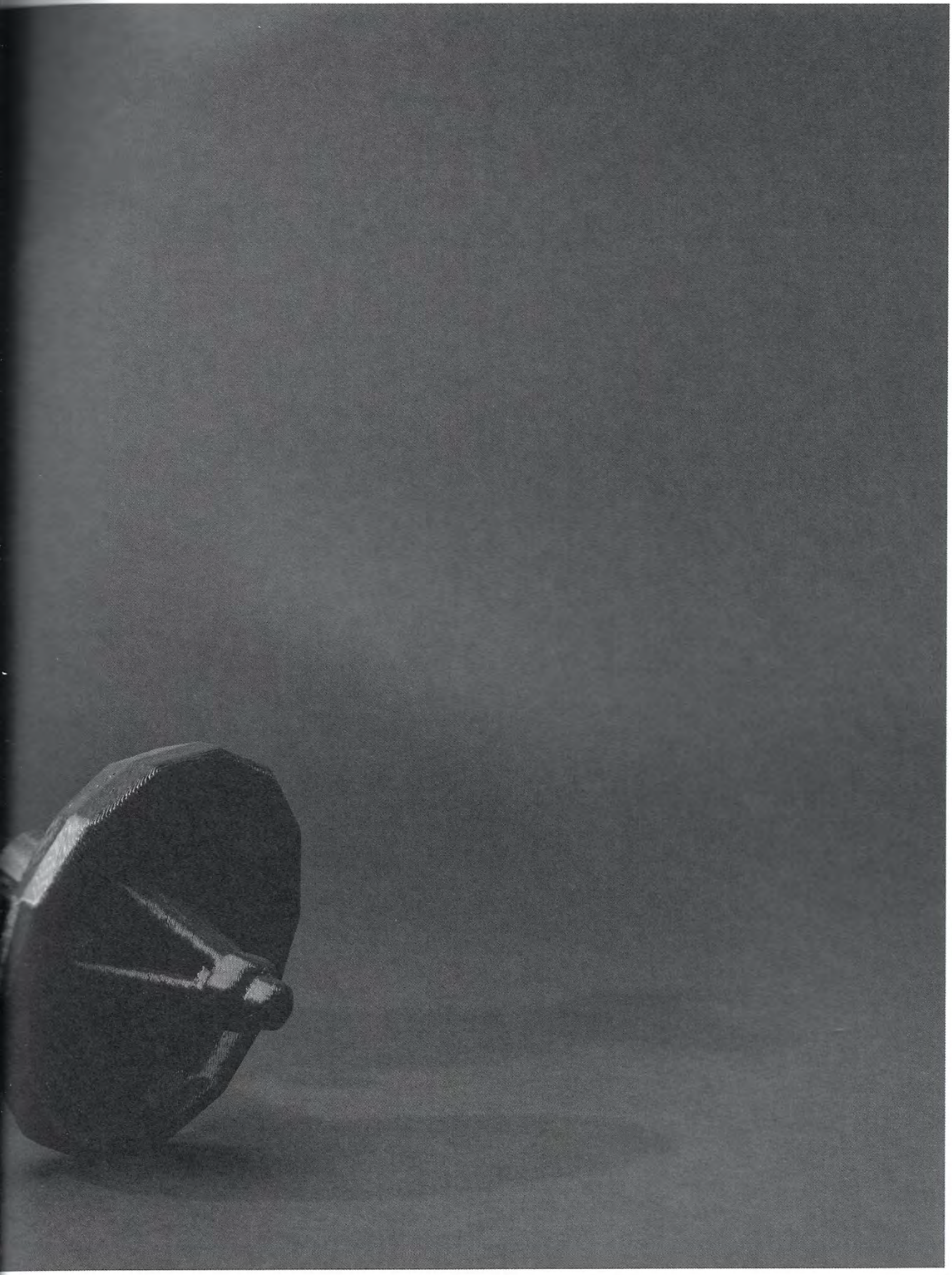

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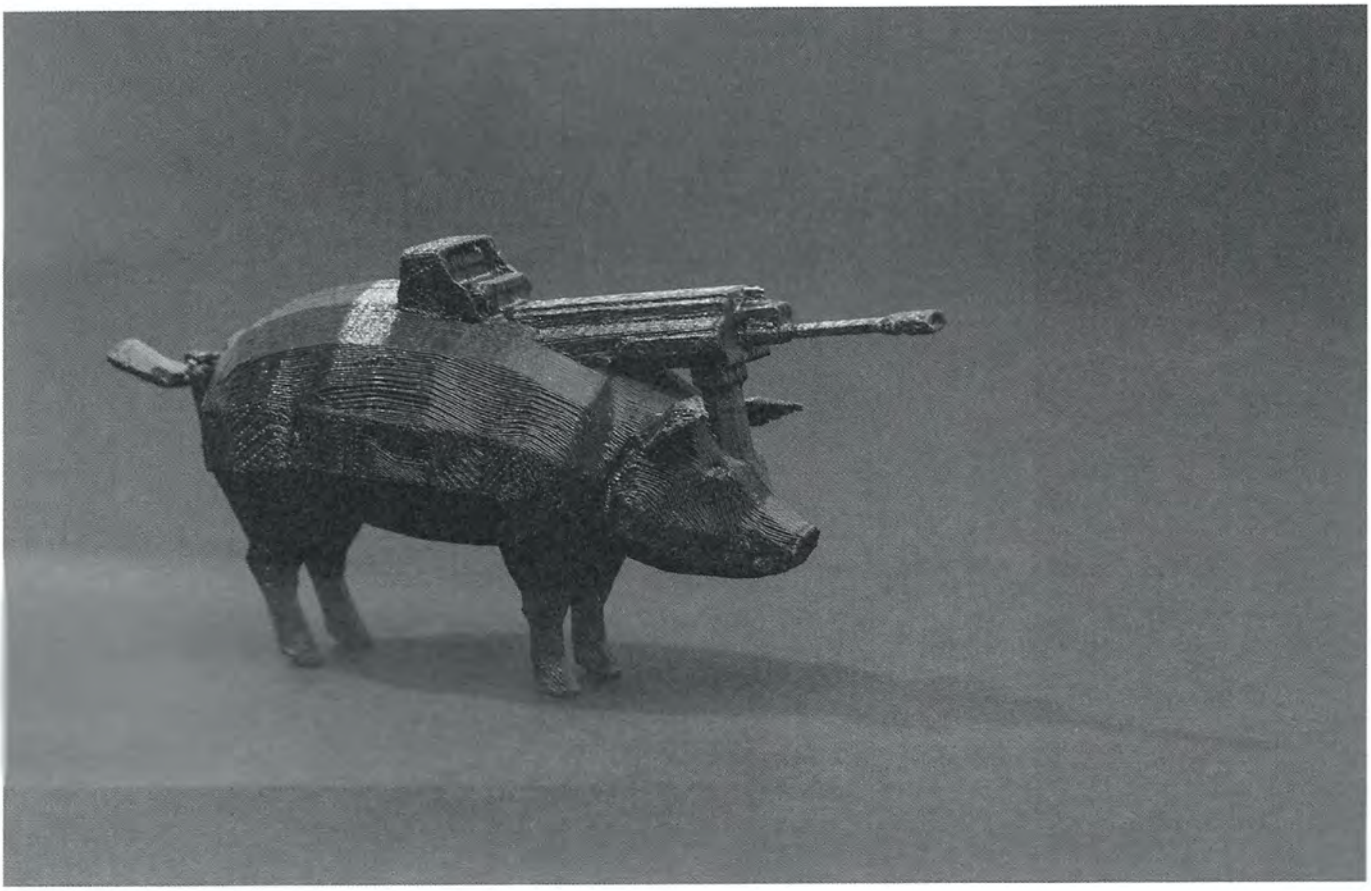

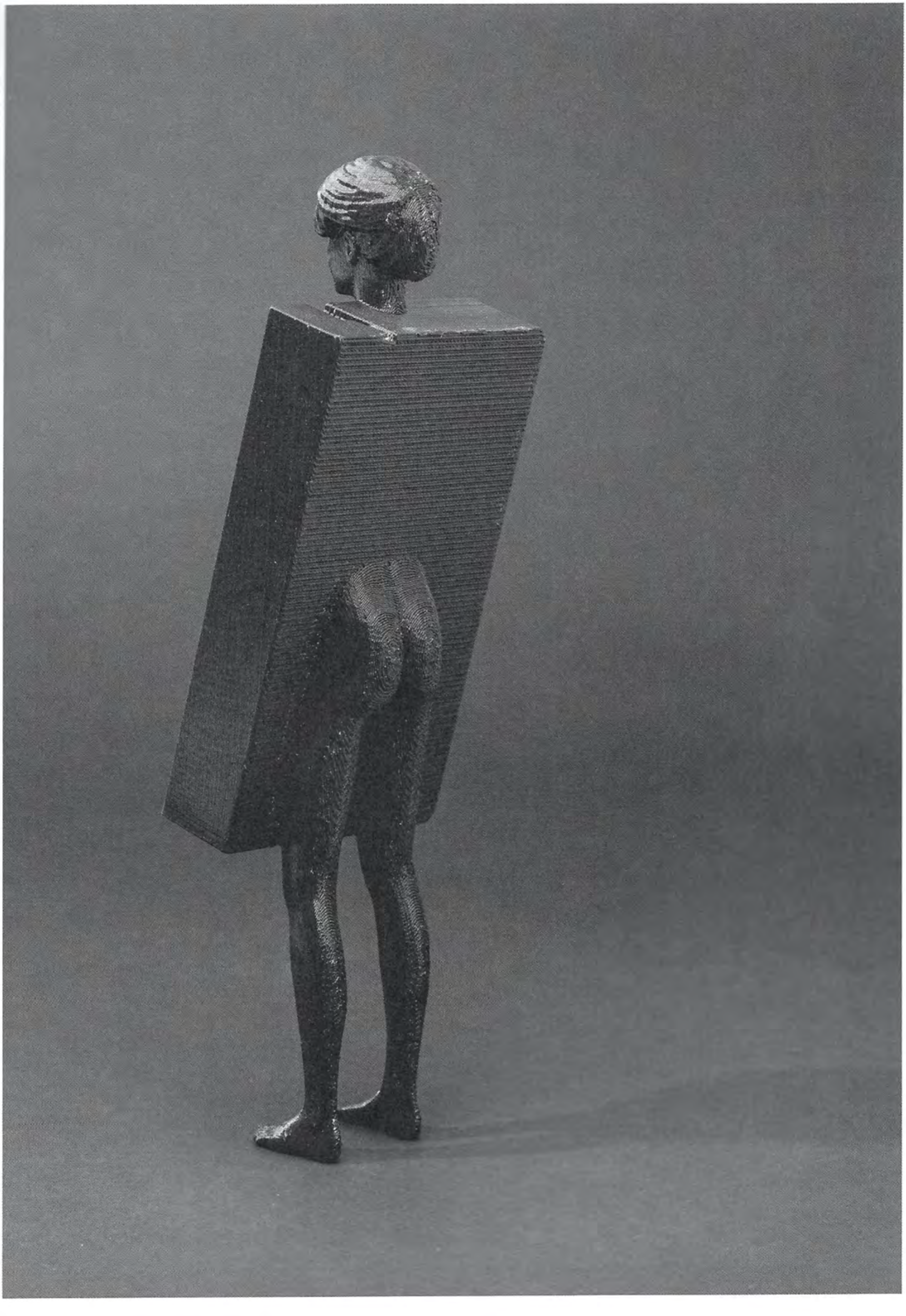

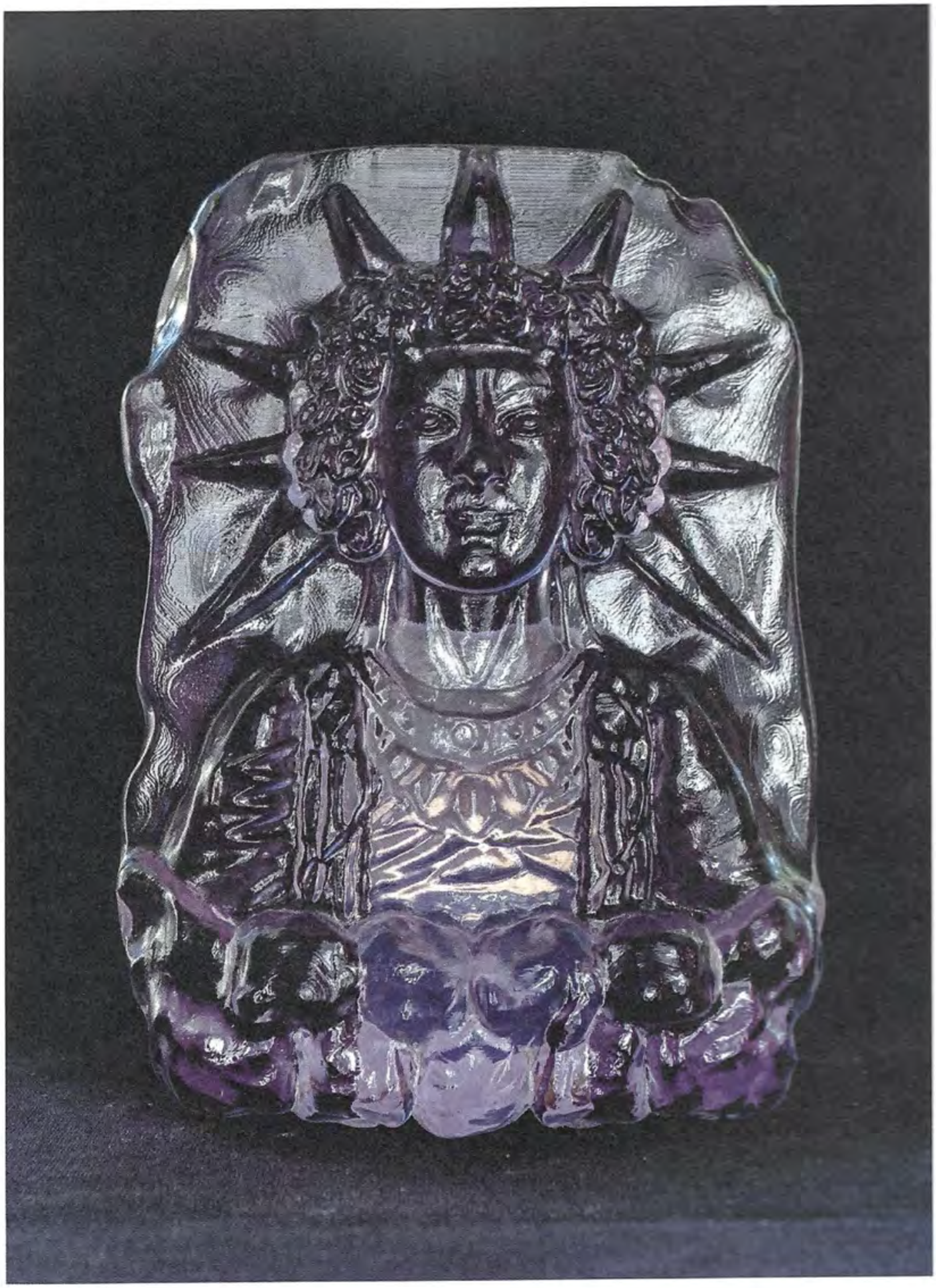

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Priest with Eagle, 2015

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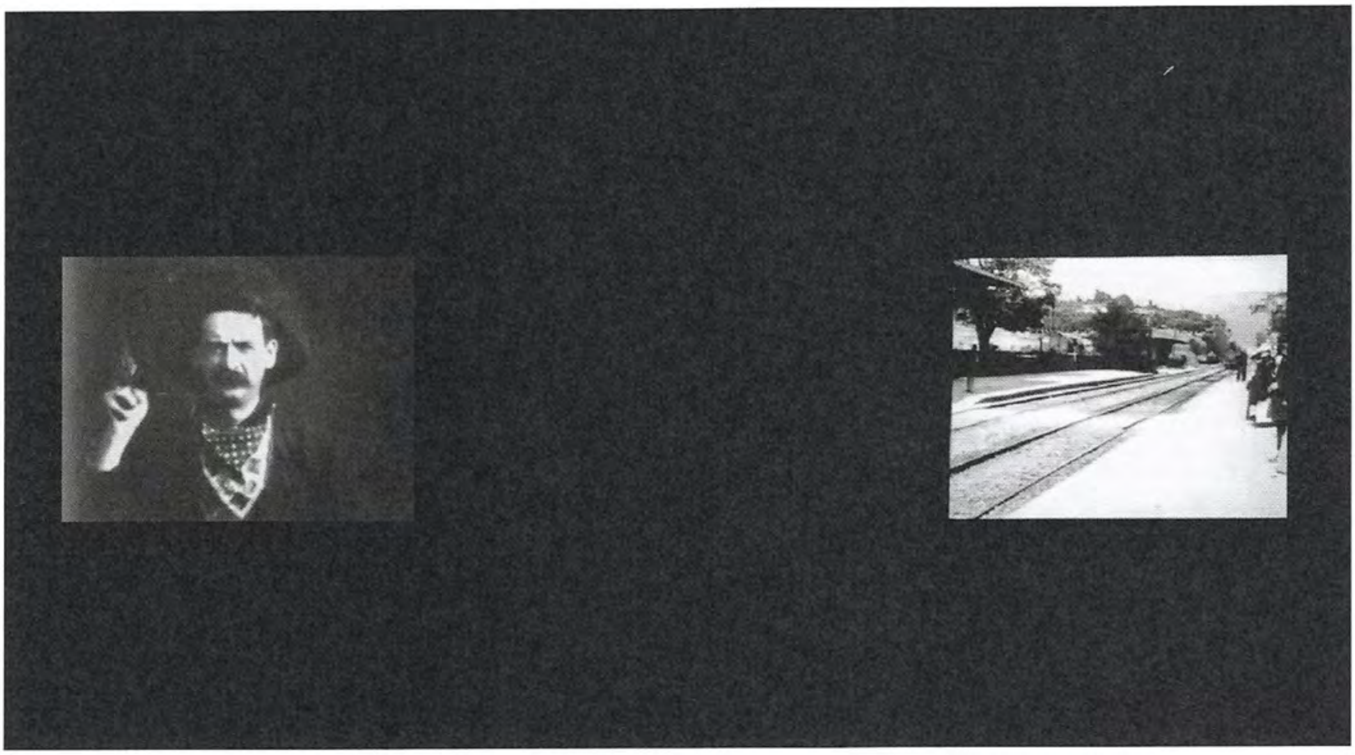

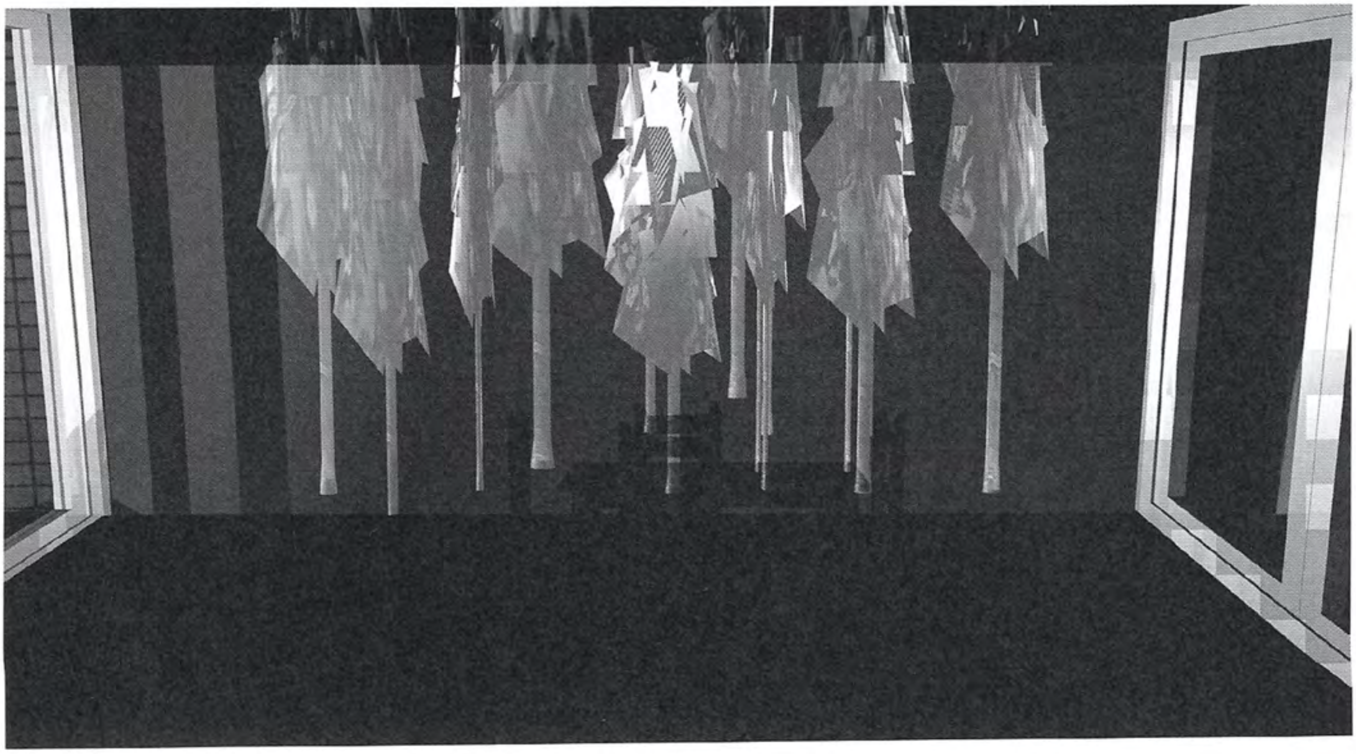

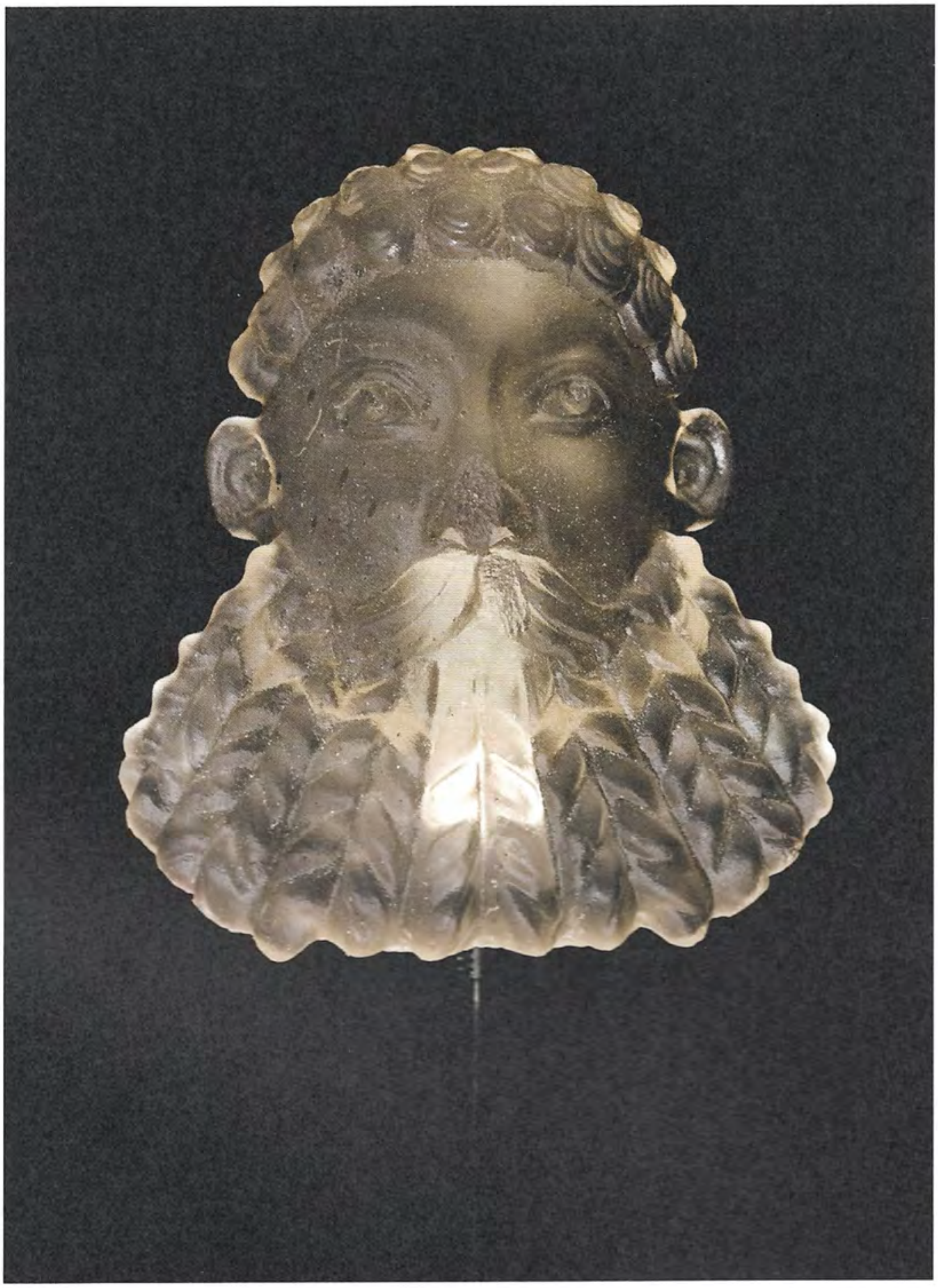

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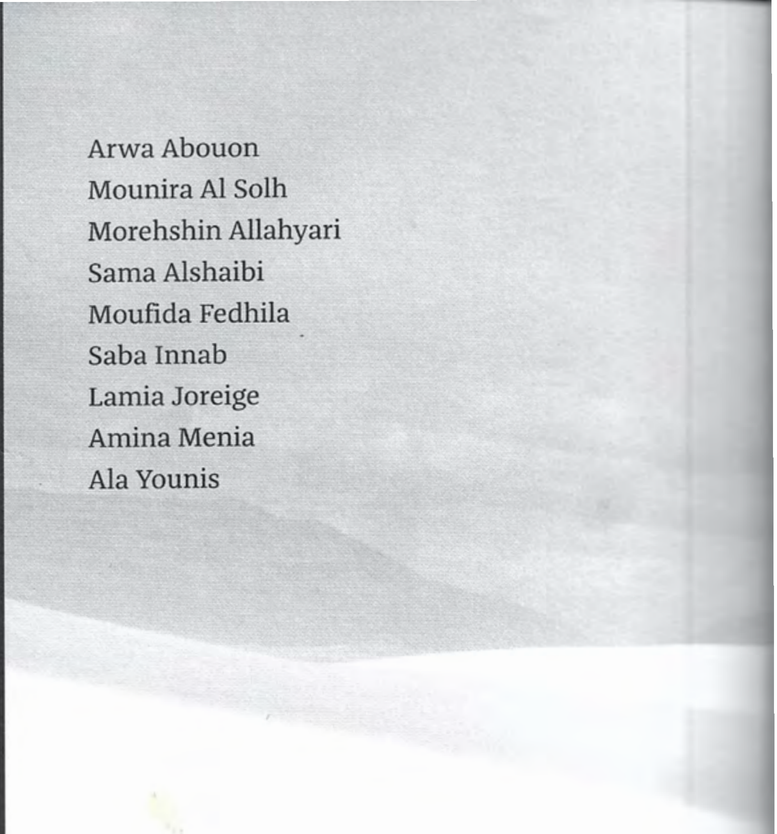

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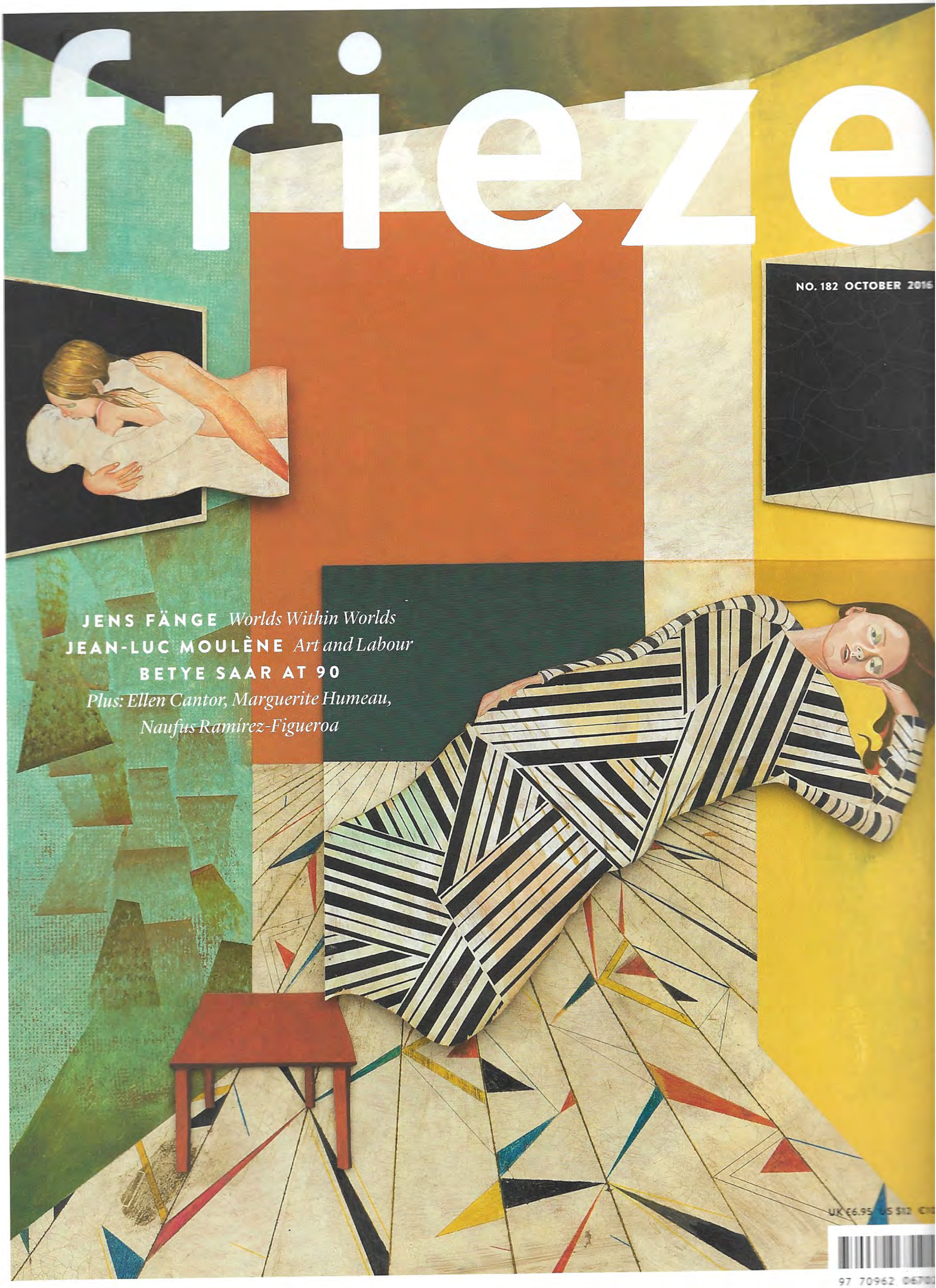

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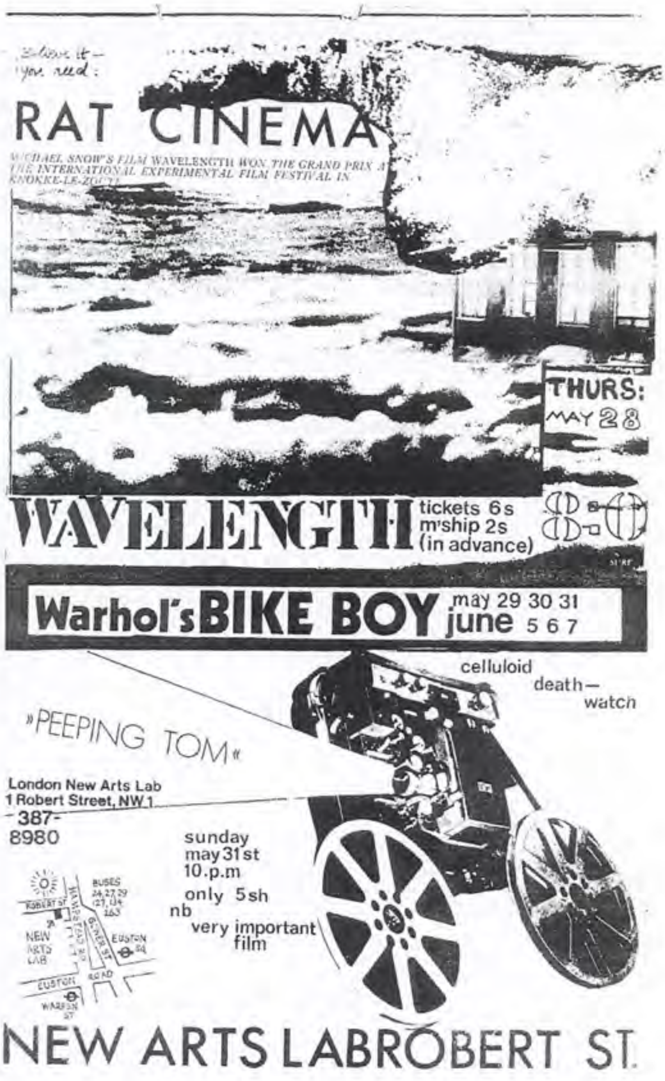
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Poster designed by
Fred Drummond for a London Film-Makers'
Co-op screening, 1967

Courtesy
British Artists' Film and Video Study
Collection, London

COVER

Jens Fänge, *Within*, 2015, oil, vinyl and wood on panel, frame
Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Perrotin, Paris, and Galleri Magnus Karlsson, Stockholm
See: 'Worlds Within Worlds', p.194

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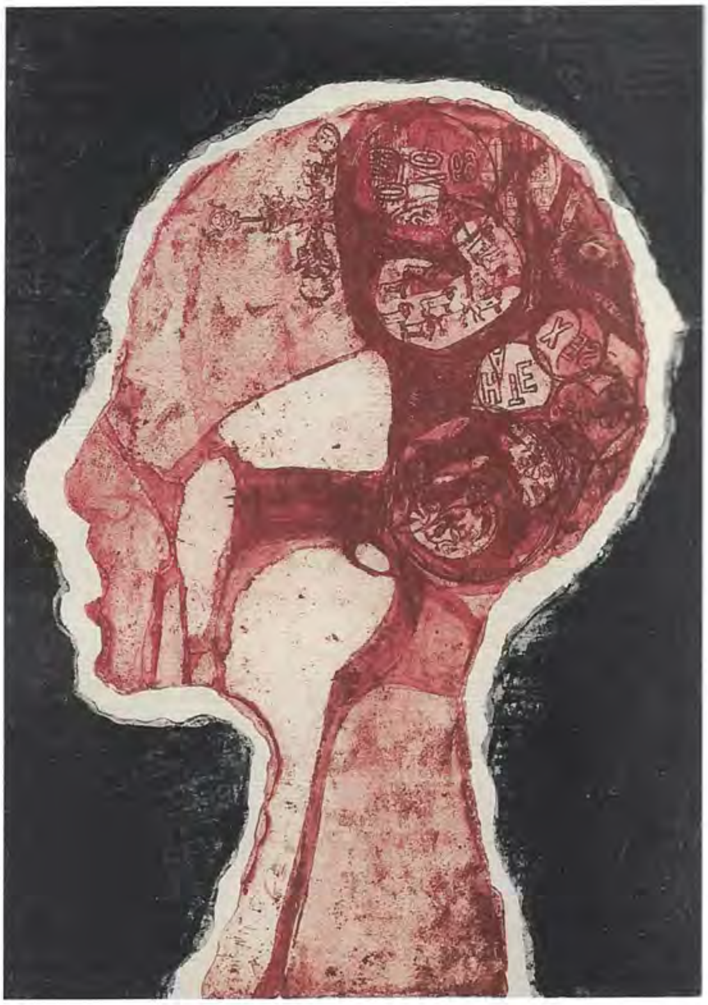

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Betye Saar
The Man from Phrenology, 1965

Courtesy
the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles; photograph: Robert Wedemeyer

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QUESTIONNAIRE
Bonnie Camplin

FROM THE GROUND UP

Morehshin Allahyari uses 3D-printing technology to give new life to destroyed artefacts

by Timothy P.A. Cooper

In February 2015, fighters from the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) staged a series of iconoclastic destruction ceremonies for their attendant camera crews in and around Iraq's Mosul Museum, in a territory the group had occupied for almost a year. The video footage, widely spread over social media and intermingled with statements condemning the 'idolatrous' objects, showed fighters methodically destroying nearly 3,000-year-old artefacts from the Assyrian empire and the ancient city of Hatra with sledgehammers, drills and stone-cutting saws. These included one of the finest Assyrian winged *lamassu*, which flanked the Nergal Gate in Nineveh, and a renowned Hatrene royal sculpture of King Uthal.

Amid the global condemnation that followed, Iranian-American artist Morehshin Allahyari started work on her project 'Material Speculation: ISIS' (2015–16). Building on her existing interest in archiving and 3D printing as tools for 'both resistance and documentation', she began compiling visual data with the aim of reconstructing some of the artefacts that had been destroyed. After communicating extensively with former Mosul Museum staff who had managed to escape ISIS's occupation of the city, the artist focused her attention on 12 artefacts from the museum's former collection that had succumbed to the attack. Allahyari also corresponded with archaeologists, historians and scholars in Iran, Iraq, the US and Europe. She then used open-source modelling software to render 3D visualizations from extant images of the original artefacts she found in exhibition catalogues, monographs and tourist photographs. Midway through her preparatory phase, Allahyari came across a similar digital restoration initiative – Project Mosul (recently renamed Rekrei), founded by researchers Matthew Vincent and Chance Coughenour – which aimed to crowd-source enough imagery to digitally reproduce destroyed cultural heritage in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. But, unlike Project Mosul, Allahyari's restorative process was not purely technology-based, nor did it aim to efface her subjective, artistic hand. Allahyari, faced with a lack of visual data, was modelling from scratch, using guesswork and invention. The palimpsest-like layers of academic sources and creative licence, sculpted through 3D-modelling software, and ironically contrasted in the translucent material she chose to manifest the printed artefacts, are more akin to the handmade materiality of the original ancient statuary they seek to re-create.

The resulting sculptures, printed in clear resin, make visible the memory cards and flash memory slots that Allahyari modelled inside the 'body' of each piece. On each memory card, she has stored her email correspondence with historians and scholars, images, maps, videos and PDF files detailing her reproduction processes. In an effort to preserve the entire material life cycle of each item, she also includes a video of ISIS's destruction of it. My inner iconoclast would like to think that the only way to access the data would be to destroy the surrogate artefact again. This is not the case. Instead, as Allahyari explained to me, 'since all this information will also be available online, one can think about these flash drives and the 3D-printed artefacts as time-capsules'.

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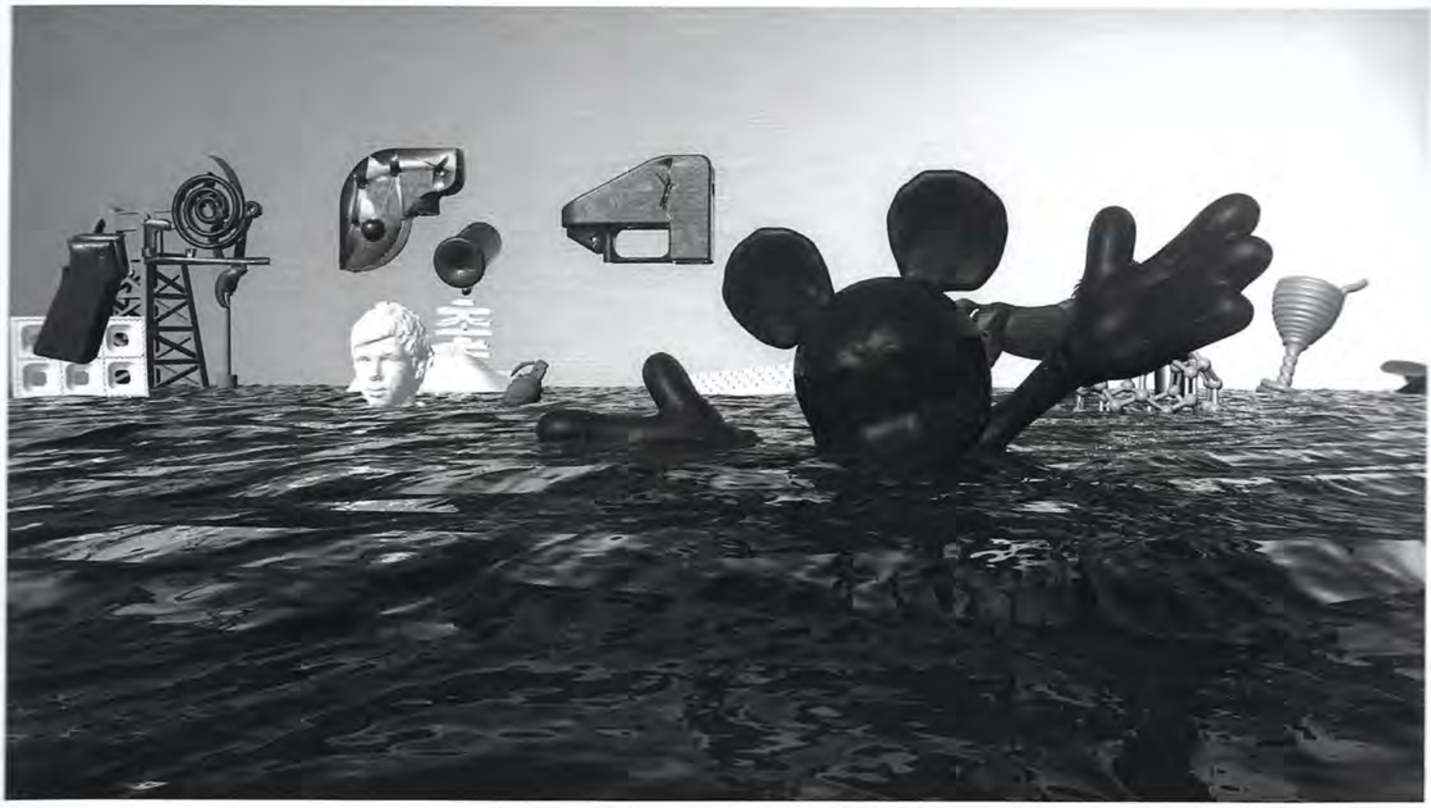
If 3D printing has a role in the reconstruction of cultural heritage, Allahyari's work begs the question: what exactly are we reconstructing?

The proliferation of image-data that Allahyari compiles seems almost like a wry counterattack against crude ISIS iconoclasts. The veneration she accords to artworks such as the sculpture of King Uthal recalls the symbolic value these artefacts held until recently as objects of cultural heritage and rarefied tokens of antiquity. From their initial creation as symbols of mortal power or divine protection (in the case of the *lamassu*), ancient objects like these have long been subject to various transformations, with museums replacing their original use value with a new cultural status. They've also been targets of those ideologically opposed to their reverence as either objects of worship or heritage. If 3D printing has a role in the postwar reconstruction of cultural heritage, Allahyari's work begs the question: what exactly are we reconstructing?

While the value of academic research is taken as given, 3D printing is less widely accepted and has unexplored environmental and ethical consequences. Most notably, the process itself relies on plastics and, by extension, the black oil from which base chemicals in printing filament are derived. Allahyari takes plastic to be the defining material of our age, the geological signpost of the Anthropocene. She cites Reza Negarestani's theory-fiction hybrid novel *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (2008), in which he asks the reader to consider oil – from which the petrochemical base of 3D-additive manufacturing is derived – as the ultimate lubricant, 'a vehicle for epic narratives'. Allahyari acknowledges that the material used to return physical form to destroyed artefacts emanates from the contested fossil fuel that many consider the root of the very same conflicts.

Having been selected along with artist and writer Daniel Rourke for the 2016 Vilém Flusser Residency for Artistic Research, at the Berlin-based media art and digital culture festival Transmediale, Allahyari has produced a collaborative project with Rourke that explores the ethical implications of 3D printing. The project, *#Additivism* (2015–16), is a portmanteau of 'additive' (the more technical manufacturing term for the process of 3D printing) and 'activism'. During the residency, the pair compiled *The 3D Additivist Manifesto*, which calls for 3D-printing technology to be theoretically reappraised as a medium, starting with



the very petrochemical base of the plastic used in additive manufacture. The accompanying *3D Additivist Cookbook*, which will be released as a PDF for viewing 3D models, will contain over 120 open-source texts and designs from established and emerging artists and theorists.

Outside of the contemporary art world, Allahyari's work is being widely discussed among historians both in the West and the Middle East. She has been invited to lecture at archaeology and Islamic Studies departments in universities and cultural institutions around the world about the role her innovative techniques might play in fields related to postconflict reconstruction. In February 2016, Rhizome and the New Museum in New York commissioned an extension of 'Material Speculation: ISIS', in which Allahyari released all the information she had gathered since the destruction videos, as well as the digital files of the destroyed Hatrene statue of King Uthal. Ensuring the institutionalization of her methods is part of a belief in public access that is intrinsic to 'Material Speculation: ISIS'. The artist hopes that this log of visual data, 3D models and manufacture information – both a dispersed archive of collective impressions and a blueprint for future production – will continue to travel across media.

More straightforwardly, yet perhaps more profoundly, Allahyari's sculpting and modelling of the 3D surfaces of destroyed artefacts is an intervention in what is known in anthropology as the 'social life' or 'cultural biography' of images and things. The social and cultural transformations the artist's chosen artefacts have undergone help us to understand how objects gain meaning, by attributing to them agency to act in the world. Allahyari's interventions in the lives of artefacts are neither acts of restoration nor reconstruction but rather attempts to protract their social lives as images. To make manifest not only their reconstruction in material form but also to lay bare the mediation between computer-aided design and sculptural finesse required for their reproduction, Allahyari highlights the ethical, academic and artistic issues that come to bear on the reconstruction of lost cultural heritage in the era of 3D printing. ◆

Timothy P.A. Cooper is an essayist and researcher whose work is grounded in both anthropology and media history. He lives in London, UK.

Morehshin Allahyari is an Iranian-American artist, activist, educator and curator. Her series 'Material Speculation: ISIS' is currently on view at the Venice Architecture Biennale, Italy, as part of the group exhibition 'A World of Fragile Parts'. The 3D Additivist Cookbook, *which she co-authored with Daniel Rourke, will be released this year. In October, she will be an artist-in-residence as part of Eyebeam's one-year research residency in New York, USA.*

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Material Speculation: ISIS – King Uthal, 2016
3D-print reconstruction

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Material Speculation: ISIS – Lamassu, 2016,
3D-print reconstruction

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Material Speculation: ISIS – Nergal, 2016,
3D-print reconstruction

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Morehshin Allahyari and Daniel Rourke
The 3D Additivist Manifesto, 2015, 3D video still

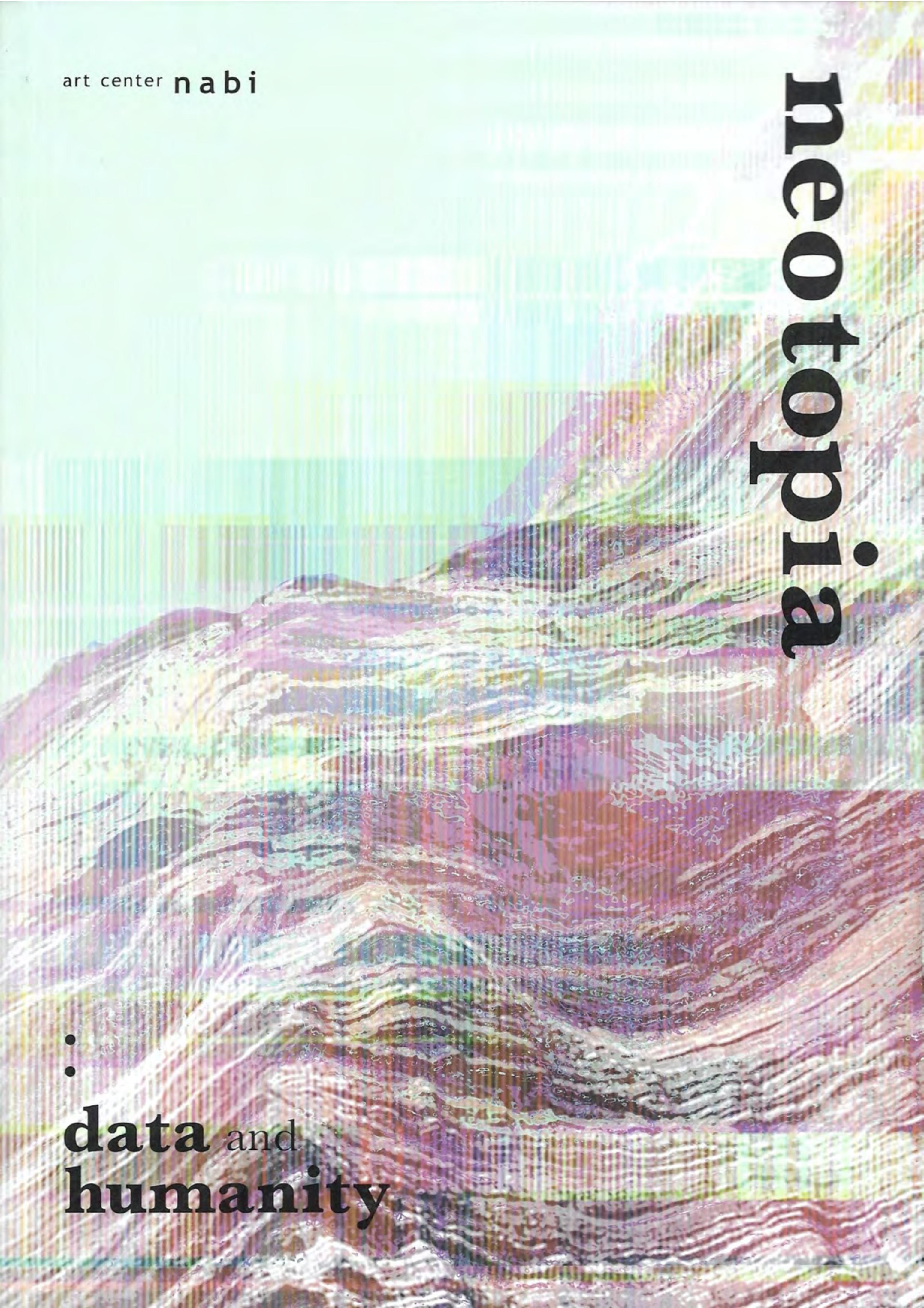
Courtesy
previous page, 1 & 2 the artist •
3 the artists

Neotopia, 2016

art center **nabi**

neotopia

: data and humanity



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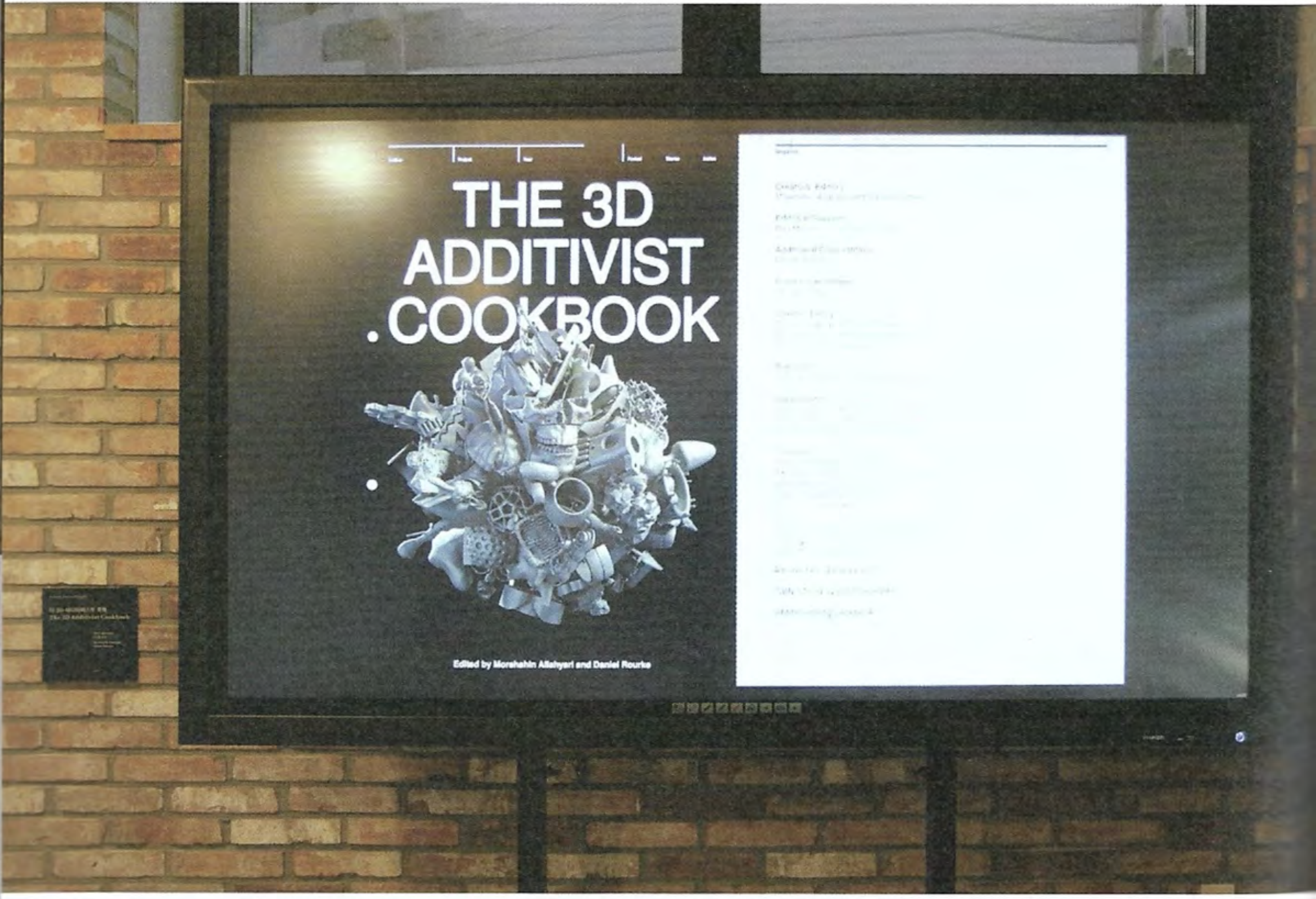
The 3D Additivist Cookbook

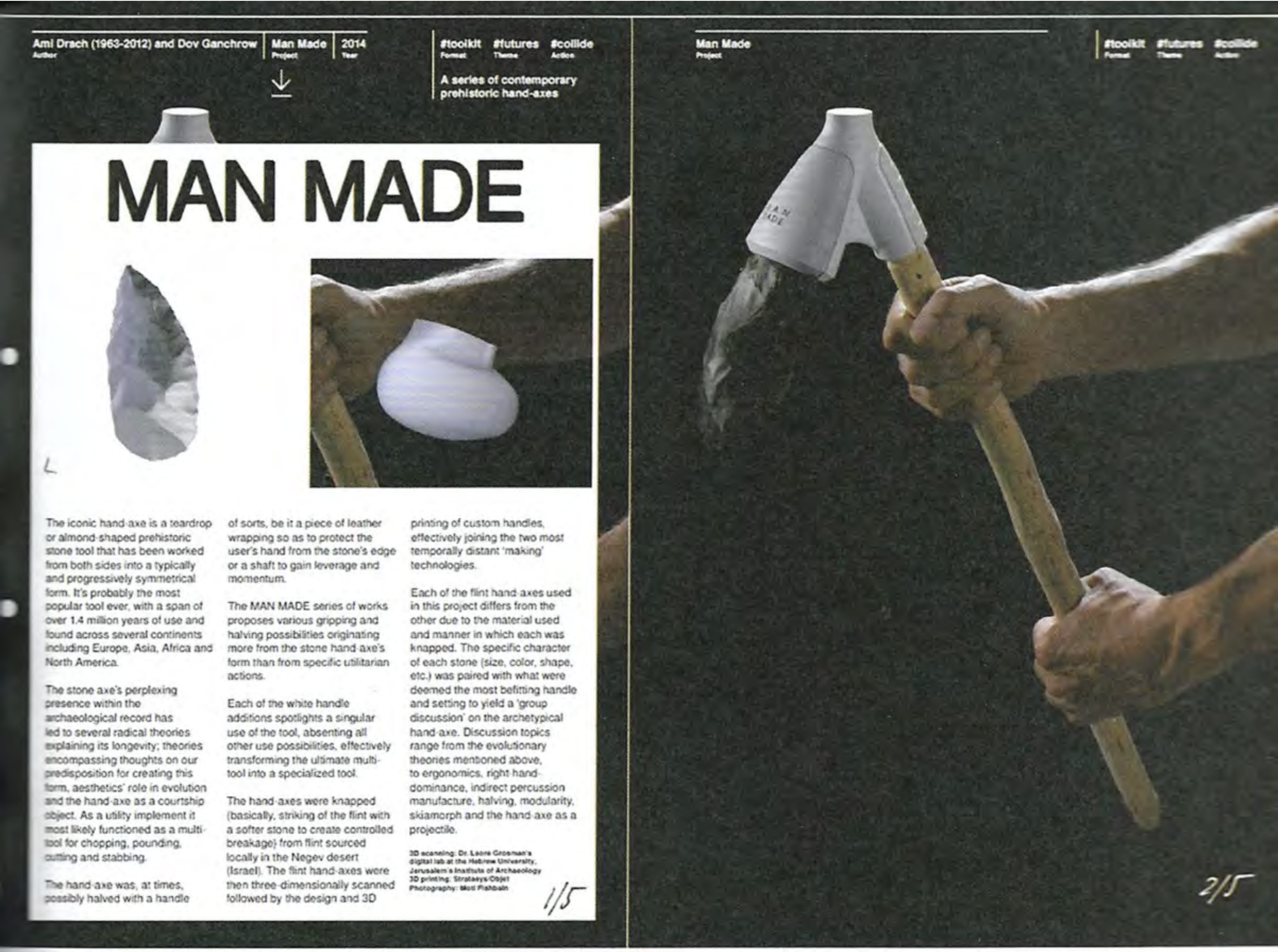
더 3D 에디티비스트 쿡북

2016 -


THE 3D
ADDITIVIST
.COOKBOOK
Edited by Morehshin Allahyari and Daniel Rourke

Archive Book (3D PDF)
아카이브 북 (3D PDF)

Morehshin Allahyari
Daniel Rourke
모르신 알라히아리
다니엘 로크



Ami Drach (1963-2012) and Dov Ganchrow | Man Made | 2014
Author | Project | Year

#toolkit #futures #collide
Format Theme Action

A series of contemporary prehistoric hand-axes

MAN MADE

L

The iconic hand-axe is a teardrop or almond-shaped prehistoric stone tool that has been worked from both sides into a typically and progressively symmetrical form. It's probably the most popular tool ever, with a span of over 1.4 million years of use and found across several continents including Europe, Asia, Africa and North America.

The stone axe's perplexing presence within the archaeological record has led to several radical theories explaining its longevity; theories encompassing thoughts on our predisposition for creating this form, aesthetics' role in evolution and the hand-axe as a courtship object. As a utility implement it most likely functioned as a multi-tool for chopping, pounding, cutting and stabbing.

The hand-axe was, at times, possibly halved with a handle of sorts, be it a piece of leather wrapping so as to protect the user's hand from the stone's edge or a shaft to gain leverage and momentum.

The MAN MADE series of works proposes various gripping and halving possibilities originating more from the stone hand-axe's form than from specific utilitarian actions.

Each of the white handle additions spotlights a singular use of the tool, absenting all other use possibilities, effectively transforming the ultimate multi-tool into a specialized tool.

The hand-axes were knapped (basically, striking of the flint with a softer stone to create controlled breakage) from flint sourced locally in the Negev desert (Israel). The flint hand-axes were then three-dimensionally scanned followed by the design and 3D printing of custom handles, effectively joining the two most temporally distant 'making' technologies.

Each of the flint hand-axes used in this project differs from the other due to the material used and manner in which each was knapped. The specific character of each stone (size, color, shape, etc.) was paired with what were deemed the most befitting handle and setting to yield a 'group discussion' on the archetypical hand-axe. Discussion topics range from the evolutionary theories mentioned above, to ergonomics, right-hand-dominance, indirect percussion manufacture, halving, modularity, skiamorph and the hand-axe as a projectile.

3D scanning: Dr. Leore Grosman's digital lab at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem's Institute of Archaeology
3D printing: Stratasys-Objet
Photography: Moti Fishbain

1/5

Man Made
Project

#toolkit #futures #collide
Format Theme Action

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〈더 3D 에디티비스트 쿡북(The 3D Additivist Cookbook)〉은 100명이 넘는 세계적인 예술가, 활동가 및 이론가의 창의적이고 도발적인 작업에 대한 무료 개요서로 3D 프린팅에 사용하는 .obj와 .stl 파일을 포함한 책이다. 뿐만 아니라 허구적 텍스트와 템플릿, 레시피, (비)실용적 디자인, 그리고 역사상 가장 모순적인 시기인 오늘날을 살아가는데 필요한 여러 방법론이 들어있다. 〈더 3D 애디티비스트 매니페스토〉와 〈더 3D 애디티비스트 쿡북〉은 각 개인이 스스로 변화하지 않는다면 과연 세계를 변혁하는 것이 가능한지, 그러한 입장을 취하는 것이 어떤 영향을 미칠 수 있는지에 관해 질문을 던진다. #애디티비즘(additivism)은 '급진적' 신기술이 팹랩, 워크숍, 교실에서부터 사회적, 생태적, 지구적 규모에 걸쳐 일어나는 여러 변화에서 해낼 수 있는 역할을 비평하는 것에 관심을 둔다.

The 3D Additivist Cookbook, devised and edited by Morehshin Allahyari & Daniel Rourke, is a free compendium of imaginative, provocative works from over 100 world-leading artists, activists and theorists. *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* contains .obj and .stl files for the 3D printer, as well as critical and fictional texts, templates, recipes, (im)practical designs and methodologies for living in this most contradictory of times. *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* and *Cookbook* question whether it's possible to change the world without also changing ourselves, and what the implications are of taking a position. #Additivism is concerned with critiquing the role 'radical' new technologies might have in these changes, from fablabs, workshops, and classrooms, through to social, ecological, and global scales.

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Chess with Mustaches reframes

of parody, referring to Duchamp

CHESS WITH MUSTACHES

Cera's Readymake: Duchamp Chess Set

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* We later found out that the

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In 2014 we created the Readymake: Duchamp Chess Set, which was a 3D printed chess set generated from an archival photograph of Marcel Duchamp's own custom and hand-carved game. His original physical set no longer exists*. We resurrected the lost artifact by digitally recreating it, and then making the 3D files available for anyone to print.

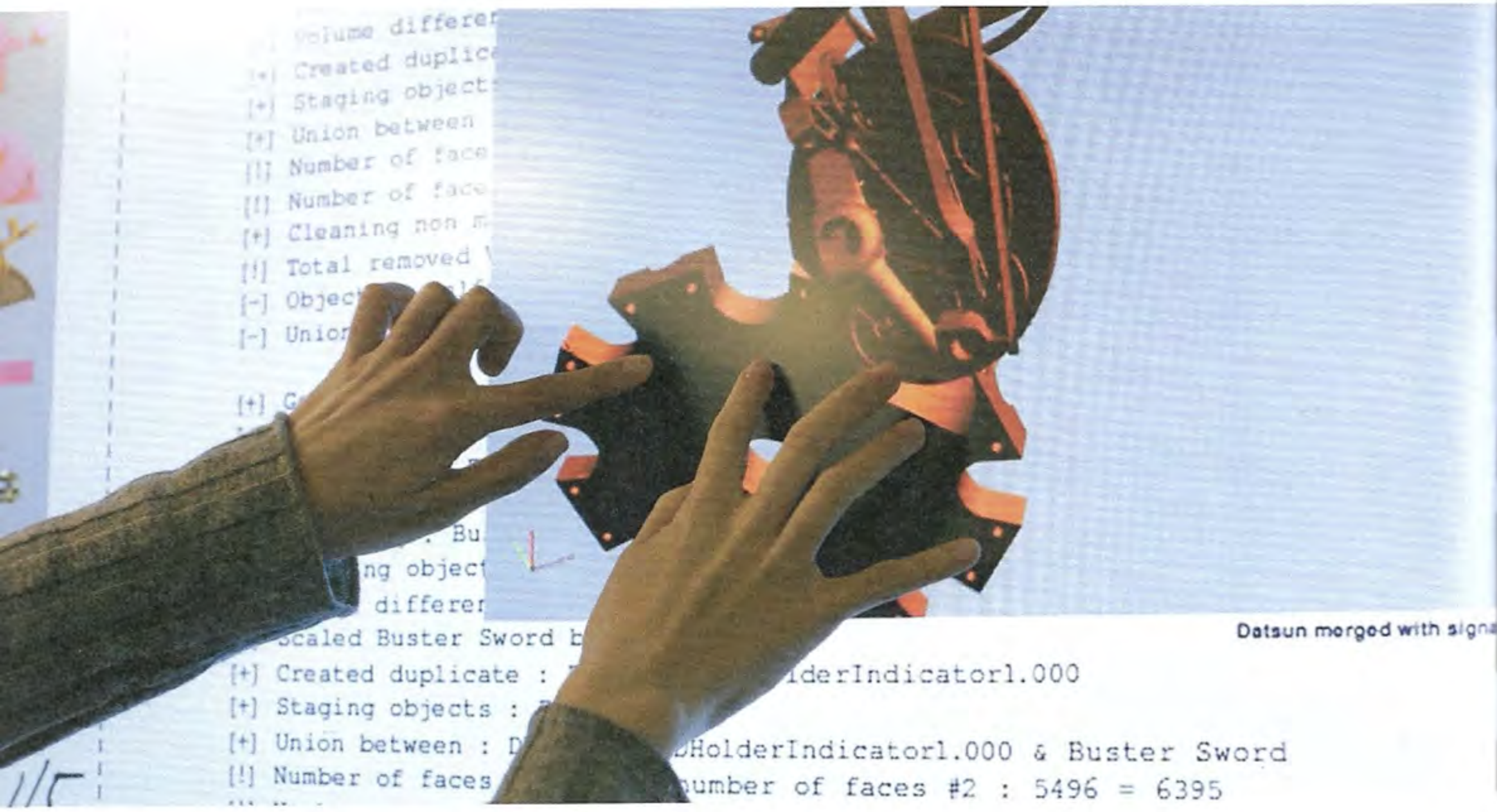
We were inspired by Marcel Duchamp's readymade – an ordinary manufactured object that the artist selected and modified for exhibition – the *readymake* brings the concept of the appropriated object to the realm of the Internet, exploring the web's potential to re-frame information and data, and their reciprocal relationships to matter and ideas. Readymakes transform photographs of objects lost in time into shared 3D ital spaces to provide new forms and meanings.

published the project on our

3D (STL) files onto

free 3D

Cera's Readymake:
Duchamp Chess Set
HES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작가 약력

모르신 알라히아리는 작가, 활동가, 교육자로 활동하며, 종종 큐레이터로 일한다. 그녀는 2016년 잡지 '포린 폴리시'가 선정한 선도적 글로벌 사상가로 꼽힌 바 있다. 이란에서 태어나 자란 뒤 2007년에 미국으로 이주했으며, 기술이란 사물을 생각하기 위한 철학적 도구라고 생각한다. 그녀에게 기술이란 우리가 살아가는 사적이고 집단적인 삶과 21세기에 인간으로서 겪는 투쟁을 기록하기 위한 시적인 수단인 것이다. 베니스 비엔날레, 퀘벡 몬트리올의 현대미술관, 퀸스 미술관, 포리 미술관, 댈러스 미술관, 무제오 엑스-테레사 아르떼 악투알, 휴스턴 현대미술관, 프랑크푸르트 수공예 박물관, 마이애미 아트 페어, 머티리얼 아트페어 등 전 세계 전역에서 여러 전시에 참여했다. 뿐만 아니라, 그녀의 작업은 뉴욕 타임스, 허핑턴 포스트, 와이어드, NPR, 라이좀, 알자지라 등을 통해 소개된 바 있다.

다니엘 로크는 런던을 기반으로 활동하는 필자/작가로, 작업을 통해 디지털의 물질성, 예술, 포스트휴머니즘의 교차점을 탐구하는 협업의 틀과 이론적 도구를 만들어낸다. 이러한 접근의 틀은 SF와 대중문화에서 가져온 사변적 요소들, 즉 인류(인간성)에게 급진적 '외부'를 엿볼 수 있도록 하는 허구의 인물과 우화들에 바탕을 두기도 한다. 다니엘의 집필과 강연, 예술 경력은 범위가 매우 넓다. FACT(리버풀, 2017), 퐁피두 센터(파리, 2017), 트렌스미디알레(베를린, 2016+2017), 테이트 모던(런던, 2016), 소닉 액츠 아카데미(암스테르담, 2016), 카네기 멜론 대학교 크리에이티브 인콰이어리 스튜디오(피츠버그, 2015), 다르알호쿠메 프로젝트(이란, 2014), 웰컴 트러스트(런던, 2013), AND 페스티벌(맨체스터, 2012), GLI.TC/H Fest(시카고, 2012)와 함께 일하며 작업을 선보였고, HOLO 매거진, Media-N, Alluvium, AfterImage Journals, Rhizome.org, Furtherfield.org에는 필자로 기고했다.
현재 런던 골드스미스 대학 디지털 미디어 석사 과정과 런던 사우스뱅크 대학교 디지털 디자인 학부 과정에서 강사로 일하며, 2017년 4월에는 런던 골드스미스 대학교에서 예술 작업 활동 기반의 박사학위를 청구하였다.

THE 3D
DDITIVIST
OOKBOOK

Miriam -

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Biography

Morehshin Allahyari is an artist, activist, educator, and occasional curator. She is the recipient of the leading global thinkers of 2016 award by Foreign Policy magazine. She was born and raised in Iran and moved to the United States in 2007. She thinks about technology as a philosophical toolset to reflect on objects; a poetic means to document the personal and collective lives we live and our struggles as humans in the 21st century. Morehshin has been part of numerous exhibitions around the world including Venice Biennale, Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal, Queens Museum, Pori Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, Museo Ex-Teresa Arte Actual, Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Miami Art fair, and Material Art fair. Her work has been featured in New York Times, Huffington Post, Wired, NPR, Rhizome, and Al Jazeera among others.

Daniel Rourke is a writer/artist based in London. In his work Daniel creates collaborative frameworks and theoretical toolsets for exploring the intersection of digital materiality, the arts, and posthumanism. These frameworks often hinge on speculative elements taken from science fiction and pop culture: fictional figures and fabulations that might offer a glimpse of a radical 'outside' to the human(ities). Daniel's writing, lecturing, and artistic profile is extensive, including work with FACT (Liverpool, 2017), Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2017), Transmediale (Berlin, 2016 + 2017), Tate Modern (London, 2016), Sonic Acts Academy (Amsterdam, 2016), Carnegie Mellon's STUDIO for Creative Inquiry (Pittsburgh, 2015), DarAlHokoomeh Project (Iran, 2014), The Wellcome Trust (London, 2013), AND Festival (Manchester, 2012), GLI.TC/H Fest (Chicago, 2012), as well as HOLO Magazine, Media-N, Alluvium, and AfterImage Journals, Rhizome.org and Furtherfield.org. Daniel is lecturer in MA Digital Media at Goldsmiths, and lecturer in BA Digital Design at London Southbank University. He submitted his practice-based Ph.D. in Art at Goldsmiths, University of London, in April 2017.

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of Contemporary Art

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Scanning the Archives

Morehshin Allahyari
Sara Cwynar
Kevin Day
Heather Dewey-Hagborg
Renée Green
Suzy Lake
Isabel M. Martínez
Josephine Pryde
Krista Belle Stewart
Michael Wolf

Volume 17, Number 2
Display until April 30
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Honourable, Mention,
Art Direction for an Entire Issue

Applied Arts Design Annual 2016
Complete Magazine Design – Single

BAMBITCHELL IN CONVERSATION WITH MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI

BAMBITCHELL IN CONVERSATION WITH MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI

Morehshin Allahyari
"Lamassu," from
Material Speculation: ISIS
3D print, flash drive, memory card
2015
[illegible] ALLAHYARI
[illegible] ALLAHYARI

Experimenting with new technologies and new forms requires artists to commit to a politics of praxis. This conversation brings together three artists whose collaborative and individual projects address the technological apparatuses of production, documentation and preservation of various histories in order to interrogate systemic power structures. The Toronto-based artist duo Bambitchell (Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell) discusses these issues with Iranian-American artist Morehshin Allahyari in a wide-ranging conversation that addresses 3D printing, digital colonialism and the experience of diaspora through virtual space.

SHARLENE BAMBOAT: Let's begin by talking about our respective practices, how you frame your work, and how we frame ours.

MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI: Yes, well, in general, my work relates to contemporary politics and political issues. I'm interested in using digital technology to relate various political and social issues to more metaphoric, poetic practices. In the last three years, I've been working with 3D printing, a technology that people are really excited about but is rarely used critically. Specifically, I've been interested in thinking about how we can use a tool such as 3D printing as a way to archive different materials, and the practical and poetic ways of doing so. I think that's where our work overlaps in some ways.

ALEXIS MITCHELL: We've been working together for eight years and originally our practice started with questions about nation and home, about being in Canada, which is not often criticized for its nationalistic rhetoric or ideology. This meant thinking about the various ways in which the silence around Canada's nationalism functions, and raising questions about what is *not* said in relation to Canadian history and politics. Our backgrounds are in film and video, so our first project was a film and video installation called *Inextricable* (2009). [In *Inextricable*, images of diverse landscapes appear on a split screen in order to undermine the coherence of the fixed boundaries of the nation-state.] From that point forward, our work started to expand into other forms. I think our practices meet here as well, in working with different forms of media and different modes of presentation.

MA: Right.

AM: Though staying with these larger questions of nation-building and diaspora, our work has expanded to look at issues such as colonialism and the histories of militarism in the context of Canada's nationalist narratives. We do this by examining some of the untold, mundane (or seemingly mundane) narratives within these histories. A lot of our work has been in the Canadian context, but we recently did a project in New Mexico and now we are working on a larger project based in European history. The context has shifted a bit but the questions remain the same.

MA: Yes, absolutely, aspects of diaspora are connected in our work. In 2012, I did a series of works called *The Romantic Self-Exiles*. A video and installation, the project addressed the idea of diaspora and questioned what it means to leave Iran and then go back. I can't really go back to Iran because I've done a lot of politically related art projects. [*Dark Matter* (2014–15), for example, consists of a variety of 3D-printed objects, including, among other things, a Barbie, a VHS tape, a dildo, a Homer Simpson figure, etc.—objects forbidden by Iran's government.] So it's always risky to go back—I'm living a kind of self-imposed exile, or self-exile. With *Romantic Self-Exiles*, in particular, I was thinking about virtual space as an alternative or imagined space that creates a kind of imagined home. Moving images offer a lot of potential in thinking about virtual space as a place in which to create other worlds, in which to situate ideas of home and belonging.

SB: In the context of virtual space as a kind of home, virtual space is often presented as a "safe space." But that is no longer the case, as governments use digital space to monitor people's activities, to investigate and even arrest people for their online activities. In light of both online surveillance and an inability to return to the physical space of a country, how does this question of the space of an online home or community function in your work?

MA: By virtual space, I specifically meant experiments with 3D animation as a format for creating virtual space. So like the space created with moving images, virtual space is an unreal, imagined space. This doesn't necessarily connect to issues of security and government control. Something that I find really interesting about having access to this second space—to the Internet or whatever—is that my generation is experiencing diaspora very differently from the way that the previous Iranian generation experienced it. So many people left Iran in 1979, at the time of the Revolution, and there was no Internet then, of course, so it was a very different experience that produced a different relationship to Iran, to home, because many of them couldn't go back, physically or otherwise. Access to virtual spaces through the Internet has allowed my generation to experience the question of return in a very different way. Actually, I think my only connection to Iran now is a virtual connection. I don't have a real, physical connection with it, and I find that interesting. But a virtual relationship is filtered, it's very different from living there. When I left for two years and then went back, it was weird! I forgot so many things, so many details of daily life, which somehow I just didn't think about because I wasn't living them.

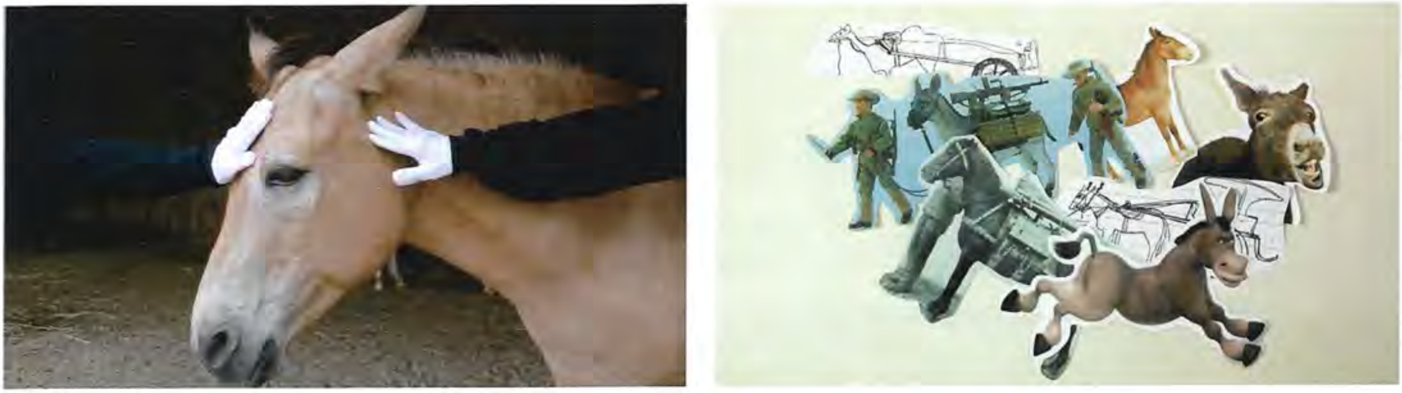
AM: Is that why, in projects that address Iran, you address it in digital form? Because you've mainly experienced it digitally?

MA: Yes, that was part of it. But another part was about using digital tools to build this other type of home. I wanted to play with this technology, and I decided to use it to build this imagined space. I wonder whether this allusion to "home," or to place, operates in your work, as well.

SB: Alexis and I have very different relationships to diaspora, and over the last eight years, we have each come to understand what it is like for the other. For me, moving from Pakistan as a kid and having lived in Canada for about twenty years, I've come to think about home as a sort of non-place. I don't really think about it as a physical or virtual space anymore; it is really just a conceptual space. Of course, we are attached to certain things or places, and the idea of home is complicated, but we always try to bring these complicated attachments to light in our work.

AM: Moreshin, in your project *Material Speculation* (2015–16) [in which the artist used 3D printing to recreate a number of artifacts that had been destroyed by ISIS at the Mosul Museum in 2015], you present a history and at the same time withhold information from the viewer; something is very obviously inaccessible. The data cards and USB drives inside the artifacts, which presumably contain some history or some kind of information, offer the potential for understanding something, but in your work, and ours as well, the audience is denied access to that thing. In our case, in the video *Empire Symbol, or a Man and His Mule* (2015), for example, we withheld the diary itself, selecting and using some interesting details from it and exploring its gaps and silences in order to discover a different narrative about World War II and Canada's role in it, a different story than the one we usually hear. [The diary, located in a military archive in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, belonged to a "mule skinner"—a Canadian soldier whose job it was to ship mules overseas during WWII.] And in your case, you create the promise of an unending archive of objects that have been destroyed, of being able to revive them in some way, but the viewer can't directly access them.

MA: Yes, but with that work, I released all of the information online. Because there have been a lot of similar reconstruction projects done by technologists and engineers in Silicon Valley, it was really important for me to provide free access to the files, to resist "digital colonialism," as it were. Giving access to all of the information is almost more important than the recreation of the artifacts themselves. But I do think of the printed artifacts as time capsules; in both practical and metaphor-

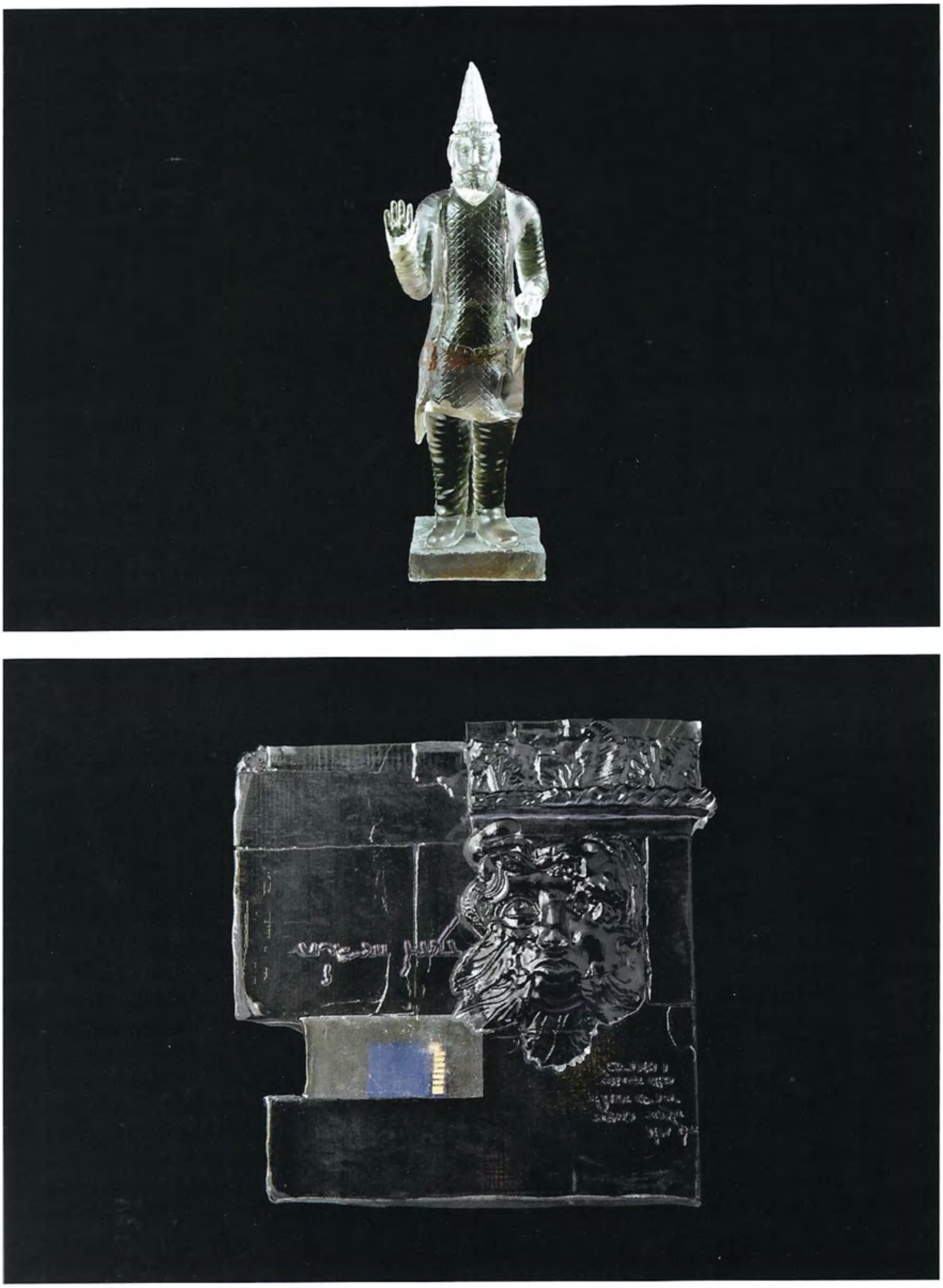


Video stills from *Empire Symbol, or a Man and His Mule* (2015) by Bambitchell
COURTESY BAMBITCHELL

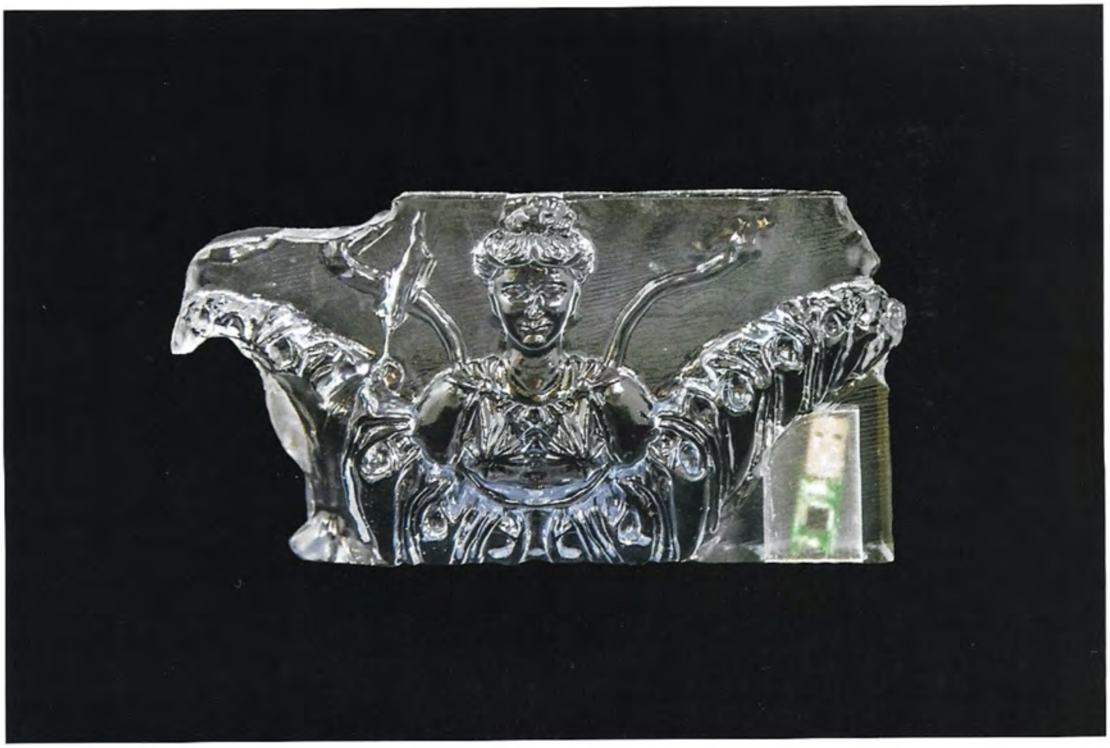
cal ways, they preserve the information inside them for the future. For me, archiving definitely has a poetic aspect to it, but it also has a practical one, and I'm very interested in the through-line that brings all of this together: how you can think about a certain technology as a tool for archiving and documentation, and in ways that combine poetics with use-value, with practicality. And I think your work does the same thing—I mean, why are we interested in archiving as an art practice?

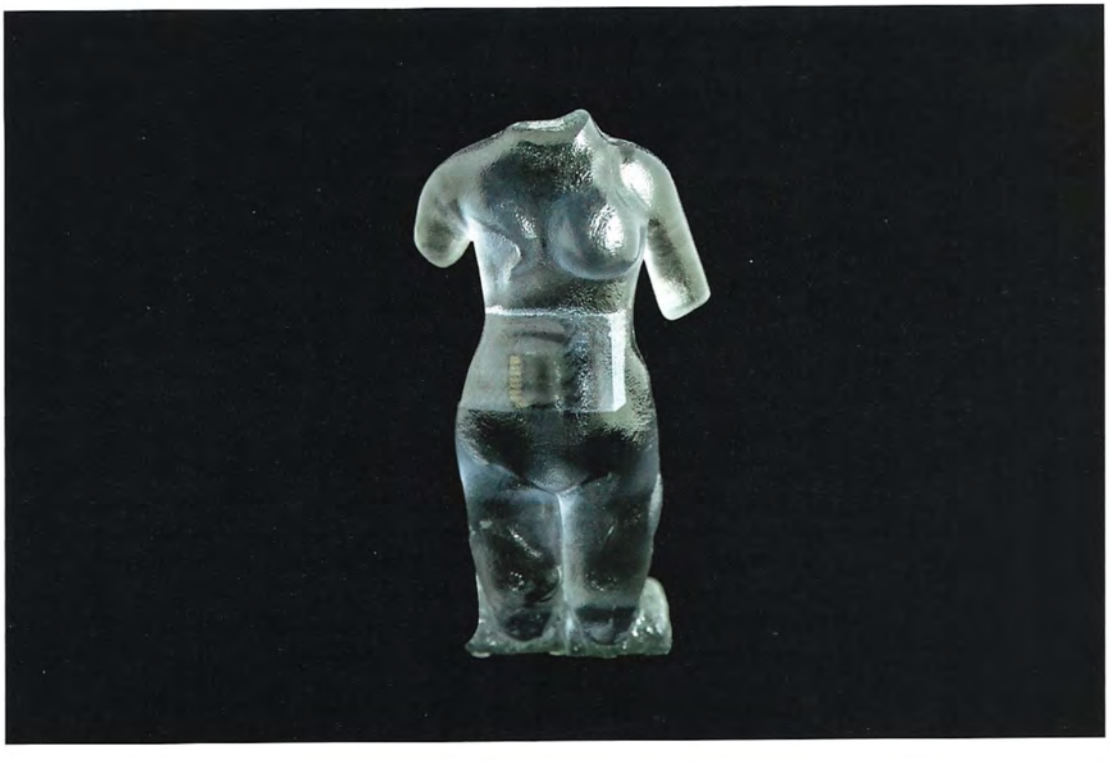
AM: Well, in some ways, it seems as if we're coming at it from almost opposite sides. We're obsessed with and fascinated by the archive. On one hand, it represents these grand narratives, untouchable history—it's this idea of a single or monolithic narrative. But archives are simultaneously incredibly messy places that house thousands of histories, and thousands of ways of entering those histories. Our work often starts with the archive, and then we work to dismantle the idea of it as a monolith. You're interested in rebuilding an archive, and, interestingly, you're doing it through technologies that we understand to be ephemeral and, in a way, non-archivable. The worry about video and the digital image is that they deteriorate, that there is so much content and no way to archive it, no way to contain it. So I'm interested in this tension in your work between the rebuilding of an archive and the ephemeral or impermanent means of doing so.

MA: Yes, with each project I've thought about this in a different way. With the reconstruction of artifacts in *Material Speculation*, I thought about it not as a replacement but as a representation—what does it mean when an archive exists as a representation? What does it mean to assemble an archive? The gathering of information was one of the most important parts of this project because of the surprising lack of information around the artifacts themselves. I was doing research in English,



Morehshin Allahyari
Top: "King Uthal"
Bottom: "Gorgon"
from *Material Speculation: ISIS*
3D prints, flash drives, memory cards
2016
PHOTOS: MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI
COURTESY MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI





Morehshin Allahyari
Top: "Marten"
Bottom: "Venus"
from *Material Speculation: ISIS*
3D prints, flash drives, memory cards
2016

PHOTOS: MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI
COURTESY MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI

Arabic and Farsi, and finding very little information. So the gathering of information became even more important. I was also thinking about these acts of reconstruction as acts of resistance, as a kind of activism, but also as a way of replacing lost artifacts. I never intended to merely reconstruct objects that had been destroyed; it was more that I wanted to think about the technology in new ways. I wondered how we might use this printing technology to resist forgetting a certain kind of memory or cultural history. I think this question about process is really important, which is something that Donna Haraway talks about when she says that it matters which systems systematize systems, which figures figurize figures.[1] What is the difference between my doing a project like this and a tech guy from Silicon Valley doing it? I'm interested in how we shape other narratives, in other ways of archiving or reconstructing narratives. I think the information will live far longer than the recreated sculptures and artifacts.

SB AND AM: In the *Material Speculation* series, in which you blended the two together, why did you choose to create these 3D objects in physical as well as virtual space?

MA: I was really interested in the process of 3D printing, so, yeah, I did both. I found the process of building something layer-by-layer very interesting, particularly because it lies so close to the process of deconstruction. Three-D printing is an additive process, and destruction, in some ways, is a subtractive process. I was interested in playing around with this. Watching something being 3D printed, and then taking it out of the 3D printer, the whole relationship with that process was really important for me.

AM: Thinking about materials then, for example making a sculpture out of stone or metal or a more durable material than that of a 3D-printed object, is it the additive process or was it something else? Because there's this tension between the impermanence of these 3D prints and the idea of preservation.

MA: With respect to *Material Speculation*, I have released some—and will be releasing all—of the files needed to 3D-print the artifacts. The files can be converted to a variety of forms of digital files, so the idea is that anyone who has access to this folder can recreate the artifacts. And with 3D printing, you can now print in metal and other materials, such as ceramic. Ceramic will endure for many years. For me, the aesthetic part is important. These artifacts are resin, and as resin comes from raw oil, it doesn't feel like plastic. It's very heavy and dense and kind of feels like stone, so it's actually a very hard material. I was specifically interested in using this clear resin because I wanted the memory cards and flash drives to be visible inside the body of the artifact. And aesthetically, the clear resin material has this very ghostly quality, as if these artifacts are the ghosts of the real objects. So for me, it's not just an archival thing; it's also an aesthetic thing, although the digital part is what will endure. I'm interested in finding a way to preserve these things, but the physical part is more metaphoric.

SB: We also want to ask you about monuments and monumentalization in your work. Why *re*-monumentalize these monuments? What were your reasons for doing that with these particular objects and for capturing this particular history?

MA: At the time I was doing a lot of research about oil—its connection to war machines, the relationship between oil and plastic—oil is implicated in 3D printing because the material most used in the process is plastic. I was collaborating on a project called *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* (2015), trying to establish the relations between all of these things—oil and 3D printing and plastic. So I was thinking about plastic as a material metaphor, as a political metaphor with an obvious relation to the Middle East, the West and capitalism. Around that time, the now-infamous video of the destruction of cultural artifacts in Iraq by ISIS appeared on the Internet, and it felt like the right moment to do a project in response.

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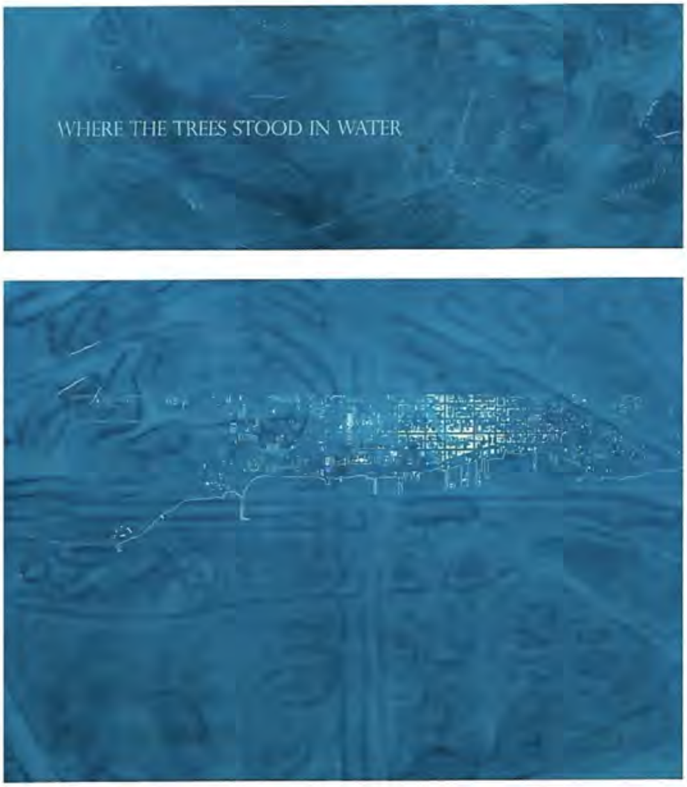
[1] Haraway stresses that: "It matters which stories tell stories, which concepts think concepts. Mathematically, visually, and narratively, it matters which figures figure figures, which systems systematize systems." Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015): 160.

For me, the narrative that develops out of the project, which includes giving artist talks and addressing the aftermath of the project, in particular its reception in the press and questions of Islamophobia and digital colonialism, is also very important. Building a platform for discussing these issues has, in some ways, been more important than the work itself. For example, the Institute for Digital Archaeology in London recently produced a 3D-printed replica of the Palmyra Arch, which was destroyed by ISIS in August 2015. The recreated replica was installed in London's Trafalgar Square, and, apparently, it will travel to New York. So when I speak about the idea of digital colonialism, I often start by asking what these kinds of gestures are about, what it means to excise from history the role of the U.S. military in the destruction of the Middle East, the U.S. military's influence, if not direct role, in the formation of ISIS, and then to celebrate the U.S. and the West as some kind of saviour. It's this idea that white, Western, so-called civilized people are saving cultural heritage while supposedly savage, terrorist Muslims are destroying it, you know? So claiming and reclaiming this history is something I've considered a lot, and, in a strange way, talking about these narratives and building this platform around the work has become so much more important than the work itself. When I made the work and put it out in the world, I hadn't realized this would be the case.

AM: Can you say more about how you understand and use the term "digital colonialism"?

MA: Well, I think one of the problems with 3D scanners and 3D printers is the way they're

"#barbie #vhs" from *Dark Matter Series No. 1* (2014) by Morehshin Allahyari. 3D print. Photo: Morehshin Allahyari
COURTESY MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI


WHERE THE TREES STOOD IN WATER

Selections from *Where the Trees Stood in Water* (2013) by Bambitchell. Cyanotype prints. Photos: Frances Beatty
COURTESY BAMBITCHELL

being used by digital reconstruction companies, primarily based in the U.S. Western archaeologists go to the Middle East or Africa or elsewhere, and scan artifacts there using 3D scanners. They claim to be saving a universal heritage, but they own all of these files. The individual researchers or companies own and control access to these files; they make them available for purchase or provide access only to certain institutions. It's really about a new landscape of colonialism, in a way that we have not experienced before—that is, digitally—and it becomes about new ways of colonizing history. I'm very interested in how the digital is going to change the landscape of colonialism and in what's happening with the objects that these companies are supposedly "saving." I'm interested in thinking about who gets to claim certain histories, or in how to reclaim these histories. In the case of the destruction of artifacts in the Middle East, specifically by ISIS, I think ISIS has claimed this heritage by destroying it. By recreating it, a utopian, Silicon Valley ideology reclaims it. So, in a way, it's a contest over who owns history.

SB AND AM: Yes, we look at "official history" in the archive in order to search out the narratives that are missing from the official record and bring them into dialogue with it. For *Where the Trees Stood in Water* (2013), we found an early colonial map of Toronto, which led us to wonder about what was missing from this image, about the shape of this place before colonization. Playing with narration as well as the tension between fact and fiction allows us to debunk the grand narratives and indicate that other bodies, other ideas, other histories, are implicit in the official record.

MA: Yes, this question of fact and fiction is becoming more and more interesting to me. With my new project, I want to address power and digital colonialism through a playful but serious art practice that builds an archive of mythological female figures—dark goddesses, demons and monsters—and blurs fact and fiction, using the horror genre in order to deal with the real horror of contemporary life.

AM: It's interesting that digital colonialism continues the colonial history of the museum, even though digital objects, unlike objects in the museum, can be shared. The objects are still being stolen.

MA: Yes, although many of these "rebuilding" projects post images online and anyone can access the website and look at a 3D model there, you can't download or save it, so they're not really being shared. And that's what I'm interested in. I think colonialism is another connection between our respective work, though we deal with different histories and different contexts.

SB: Yes, with our current project, we are looking at the trials of animals in medieval Europe. As absurd as it sounds, animals, insects and even objects could be prosecuted in a court of law for the same things humans could be tried for. Our research led us to make connections between these trials and imperialism and colonialism.

AM: And thinking in terms of animals rather than humans allowed us to look at our own world quite differently.

SB: It's also about discovering unanticipated stories, absurd and funny stories that are also very telling. And how to translate these stories, or conversations, into works of art. Or, maybe they don't always need to be works of art.

MA: Yes, absolutely, I agree.

AM: Each project becomes an archive in and of itself. We gather material throughout a project and end up with tons of material that isn't necessarily used in the work, but it remains a part of the project. We like to keep an archive open to re-imaginings, and continue to play with a project and make it into something else.

MA: Yes, re-imagining the archive is something that I'm really interested in. Again, there are things you find in an archive that you don't anticipate finding, things that can completely change the destiny of an archive or its use. And then there's the matter of how we make decisions as archivists and also as artists.

AM: Sharlene and I sometimes think we're like nerdy detectives or adrift in the middle of a sea, staying open to various utterances that come our way. We delve into a specific history, but try to remain open to other possibilities, and sometimes we are really surprised.

MA: Yes, and that's where the possibilities of empty space become the most exciting.

AM: That's a nice way to end.

SB: Yes, with empty space. (Laughs)

This conversation, transcribed by Emily Cluett, took place via Skype and e-mail in July 2016.

Bambitchell en conversation avec Morehshin Allahyari

Pour expérimenter des technologies et des formes nouvelles, les artistes doivent s'engager à une politique de praxis. Cette conversation réunit trois artistes dont les projets individuels et collaboratifs traitent des dispositifs technologiques de production, de documentation et de préservation au sein de diverses histoires, et ce dans le but d'interroger les structures de pouvoir systémiques. Établi à Toronto, le duo d'artistes Bambitchell (Sharlene Bamboat et Alexis Mitchell) parle de ces enjeux avec l'artiste irano-américain Morehshin Allahyari dans un échange où il est question d'impression 3D, de colonialisme numérique et de l'expérience de la diaspora dans l'espace virtuel.

The World Without Us, 2016

HMKV
Hartware MedienKunstVerein

DIE WELT OHNE UNS

INKE ARNS (HG.)

INHALT

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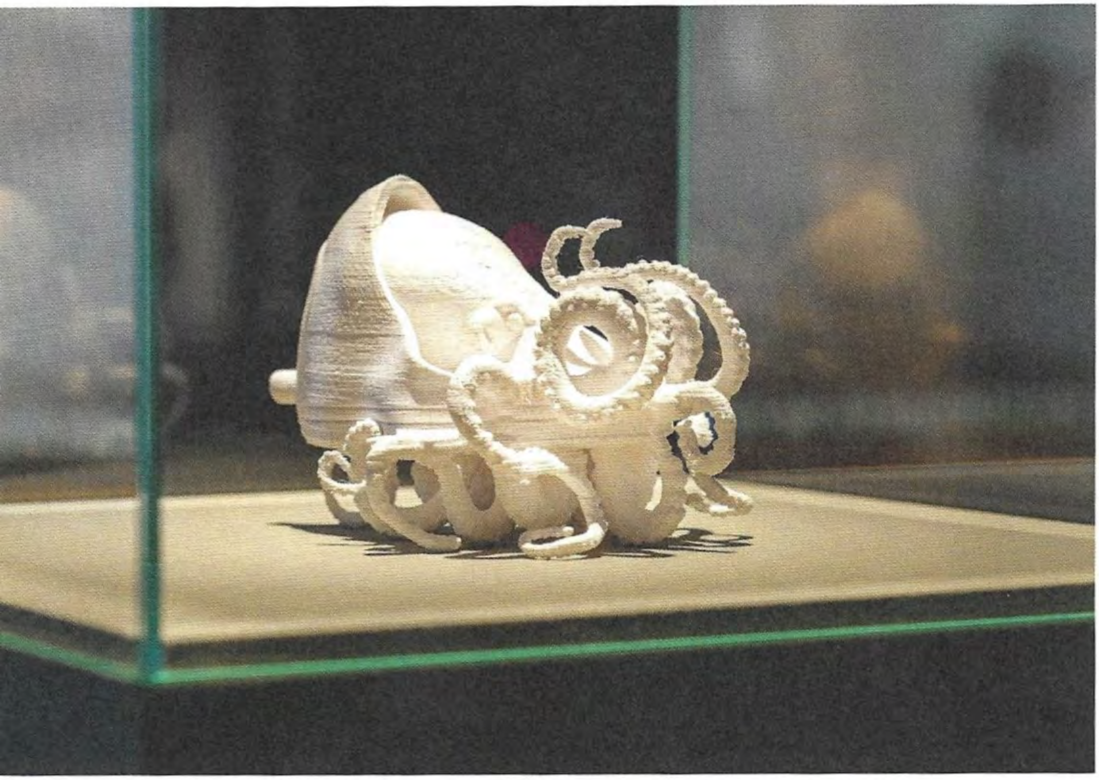

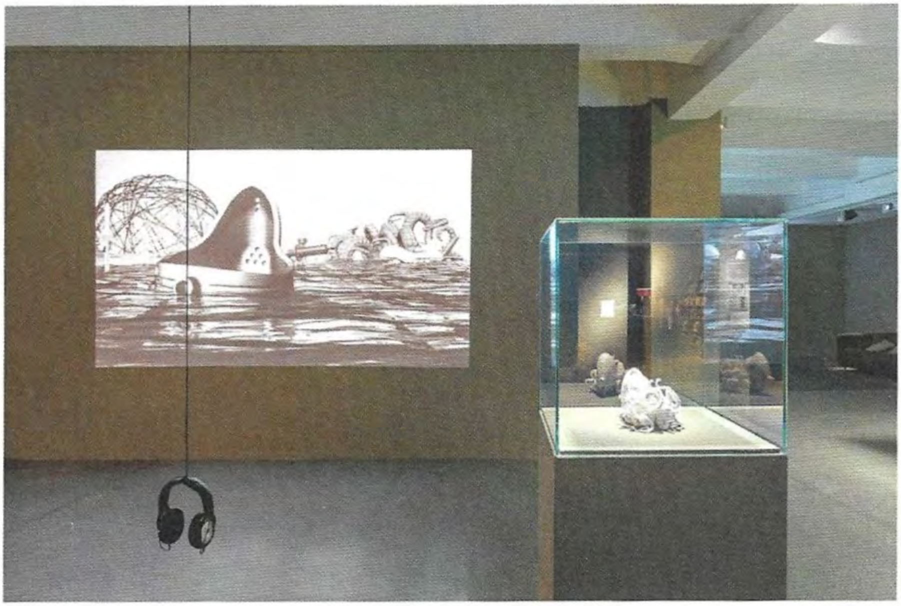

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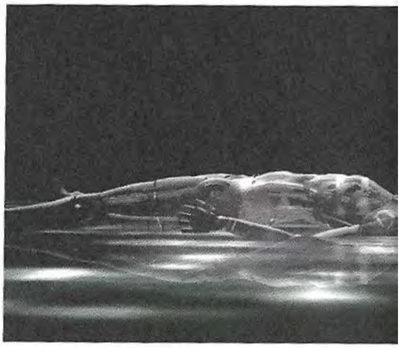
THE 3D ADDITIVIST MANIFESTO

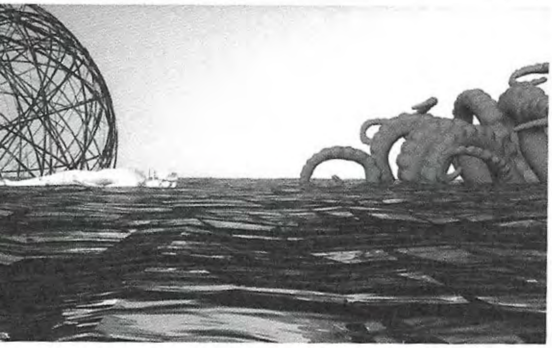
MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI & DANIEL ROURKE

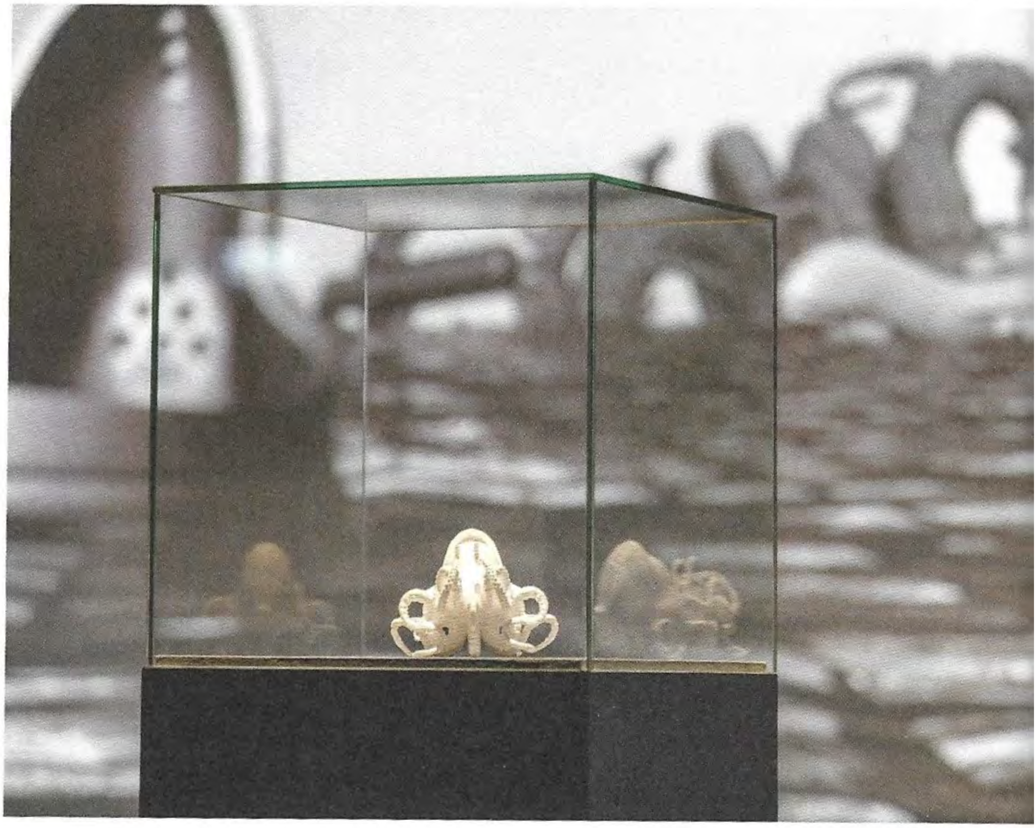
Fast genau 100 Jahre nach seiner Veröffentlichung aktualisierten Morehshin Allahyari & Daniel Rourke das *Futuristische Manifest* (1909) von Filippo Tommaso Marinetti auf düstere — und doch angemessene — Weise. 2015 veröffentlichten sie das *3D Additivist Manifesto*, in welchem sie den 3D-Druck als eine allumfassende Metapher unserer Zeit proklamieren. Allahyari & Rourke rufen dazu auf, die Grenzen von 3D-Druck und anderen kreativen Technologien auszuloten und darüber hinaus in den Bereich des Spekulativen, Provokativen und Verrückten vorzustoßen. Der Kampfbegriff #Additivism (#Additivismus) ist eine Wortneuschöpfung aus »Additiv« und »Aktivismus«: eine Bewegung, die »radikale« neue Technologien in Fablabs, Workshops und Klassenzimmern kritisiert — auf gesellschaftlicher, ökologischer und globaler Ebene. #Additivism fragt, ob es möglich ist, die Welt zu verändern, ohne sich selbst zu verändern, und was es bedeutet, Position zu beziehen. Das Manifest ist auch online abrufbar unter additivism.org/manifesto.

»Abgeleitet aus petrochemischen Stoffen, ausgekocht aus dem schwarzen Öl von einer Billion Jahre alten Bakterien ist das im 3D-Drucker verwendete Plastik schon eine Metapher, bevor es in Form geschichtet wird. Sein Potential täuscht über die Komplikationen seiner Geschichte hinweg: dass die Materie die Summe und Verlängerung unserer Abstammung ist; dass Kreativität brutal, sinnlich, unhöflich, grob, und grausam ist. Wir erklären, dass sich die Herrlichkeit der Welt um eine neue Schönheit bereichert hat: die Schönheit des Abraums, des Mülls und des Abfalls. Ein Planet, überzogen mit riesigen Fangarmen aus Plastik, wie Schlangen mit pixeligem Atem ... eine Revolution, die auf Einweg-Waffen basiert, ist wünschenswerter als die Inhalte von Edward Snowdens Aktenkoffer; atemberaubender als die von den Vereinten Nationen erlassenen Gesetze.

Es gibt nichts, was unsere betörte Rasse mehr wünschen würde als die fruchtbare Verbindung zwischen einem Menschen und einer Rechenmaschine. Und doch ist die Menschheit nur ein vorsintflutlicher Prototyp einer weit umfassenderen Schöpfung. Die gesamte Menschheit kann als ein biologisches Medium verstanden werden, deren eine Möglichkeitsform synthetische Technologie ist. Denken und Leben sind durch den Wind der Information restlos zerstreut







worden. Unsere Kraft und Intelligenz gehören nicht allein uns, sondern wohnen aller Materie inne. Unsere Technologien sind die Geschlechtsorgane der materiellen Spekulation. Jeder Versuch, diese Ereignisse zu verstehen, wird durch unseren eigenen Anthropomorphismus blockiert. Um voranzukommen, müssen wir posthumane Maschinen gebären, ein phantasmagorisches und undarstellbares Repertoire höchst hybrider Wieder-Verkörperungen.

Der Additivismus wird zentral für die beschleunigte Hervorbringung des, und die Begegnung mit dem radikalen Außen sein.

Der Additivismus kann uns befreien.

Der Additivismus wird uns auslöschen.«

(Auszug aus dem *3D Additivist Manifesto*, 2015, dt. Übersetzung: Inke Arns)

Almost 100 years after its publication Morehshin Allahyari & Daniel Rourke are updating the *Futurist Manifesto* (1909) by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in a dark but appropriate way. In 2015 the two artists released *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* in which they proclaimed 3D printing as an overarching metaphor of our time. The video manifesto is a call to push the 3D printer and other creative technologies, to their absolute limits and beyond into the realm of the speculative, the provocative and the weird. #Additivism is a portmanteau of additive and activism: a movement concerned with critiquing ›radical‹ new technologies in fablabs, workshops, and classrooms; at social, ecological, and global scales. #Additivism questions whether it's possible to change the world without also changing ourselves, and what the implications are of taking a position. The manifesto can also be viewed online at additivism.org/manifesto.

»Derived from petrochemicals boiled into being from the black oil of a trillion ancient bacterioles, the plastic used in 3D Additive manufacturing is a metaphor before it has even been layered into shape. Its potential belies the complications of its history: that matter is the sum and prolongation of our ancestry; that creativity is brutal, sensual, rude, coarse, and cruel. We declare that the world's splendour has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of crap, kipple and detritus. A planet crystallised with great plastic tendrils like serpents with pixelated breath ... for a revolution that runs on disposable armaments is more desirable than the contents of Edward Snowden's briefcase; more breathtaking than The United Nations Legislative Series.

There is nothing which our infatuated race would desire to see more than the fertile union between a man and an Analytical Engine. Yet humankind are the antediluvian prototypes of a far vaster Creation. The whole of humankind can be understood as a biological medium, of which synthetic technology is but one modality. Thought and Life both have been thoroughly dispersed on the winds of information. Our power and intelligence do not belong specifically to us, but to all matter. Our technologies are the sex organs of material speculation. Any attempt to understand these occurrences is blocked by our own anthropomorphism. In order to proceed, there-fore, one has to birth posthuman machines, a fantasmagoric and unrepresentable repertoire of actual re-embodiments of the most hybrid kinds.

Additivism will be instrumental in accelerating the emergence and encounter with The Radical Outside.

Additivism can emancipate us.

Additivism will eradicate us.«

(extract from *The 3D Additivist Manifesto*, 2015)

DIE WELT OHNE UNS.
ERZÄHLUNGEN ÜBER DAS ZEITALTER NICHT-MENSCHLICHER AKTEURE

THE WORLD WITHOUT US.
NARRATIVES ON THE AGE OF NON-HUMAN AGENTS

KÜNSTLER*INNEN ***ARTISTS:***

MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI & DANIEL ROURKE,
TIMO ARNALL, LATURBO AVEDON,
WILL BENEDICT, DAVID CLAERBOUT
LAURENT GRASSO, SIDSEL MEINECHE HANSEN,
WANURI KAHIU, IGNAS KRUNGLEVIČIUS,
MARK LECKEY, NICOLAS MAIGRET &
MARIA ROSZKOWSKA, EVA & FRANCO MATTES,
YURI PATTISON, SASCHA POHFLEPP,
JULIEN PRÉVIEUX, SUZANNE TREISTER,
ADDIE WAGENKNECHT, PINAR YOLDAS

MIT TEXTEN VON ***WITH TEXTS BY***
INKE ARNS & NORA N. KHAN

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Papers

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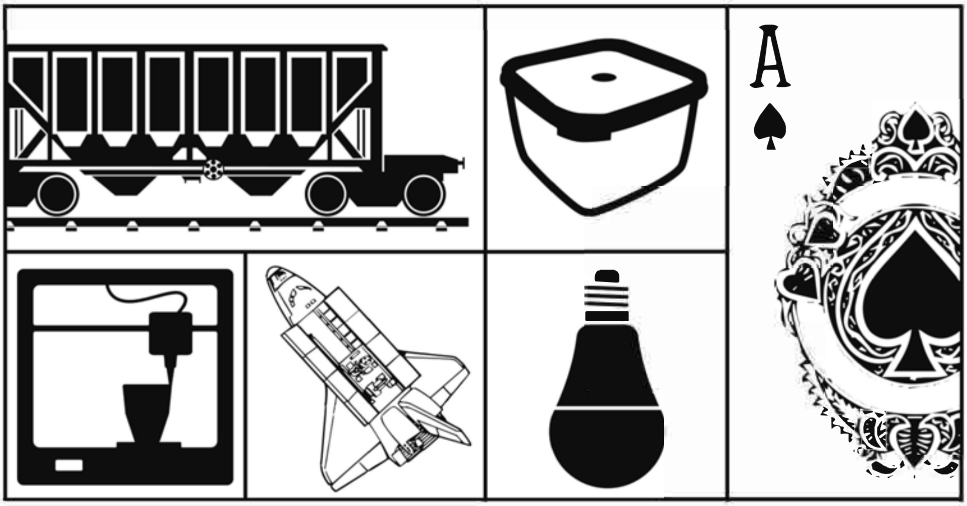
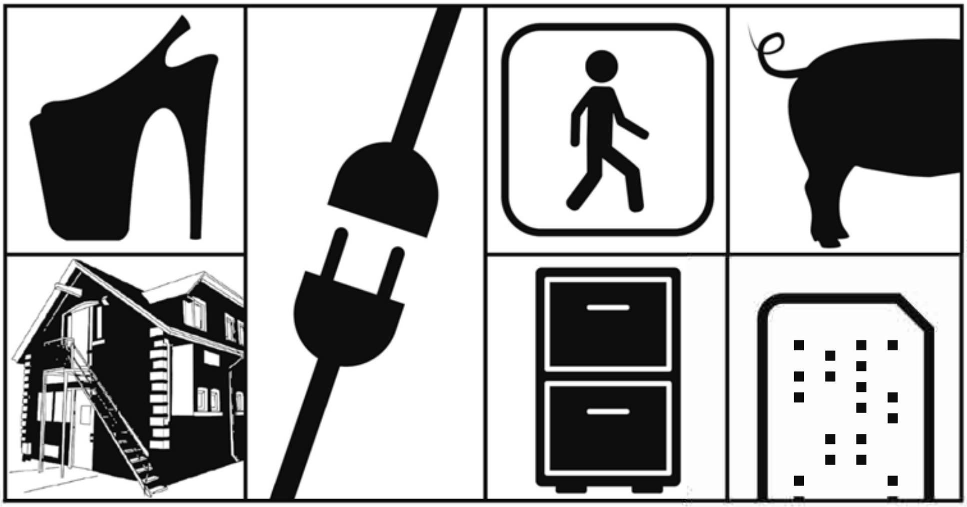
Re-

Feminist Extensions
of Marshall McLuhan

Edited by Sarah Sharma and Rianka Singh



Understanding Media



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11 3D Printing and Digital Colonialism

A Conversation with Morehshin Allahyari

SARAH SHARMA
AND RIANKA SINGH

Sarah Sharma (SS) We are curious to know more about your medium of choice, and where you see the political potential of 3D printing? Can you tell us about how and when you encountered 3D printing as the media that you would use to make your feminist intervention into masculine tech culture of the art world?

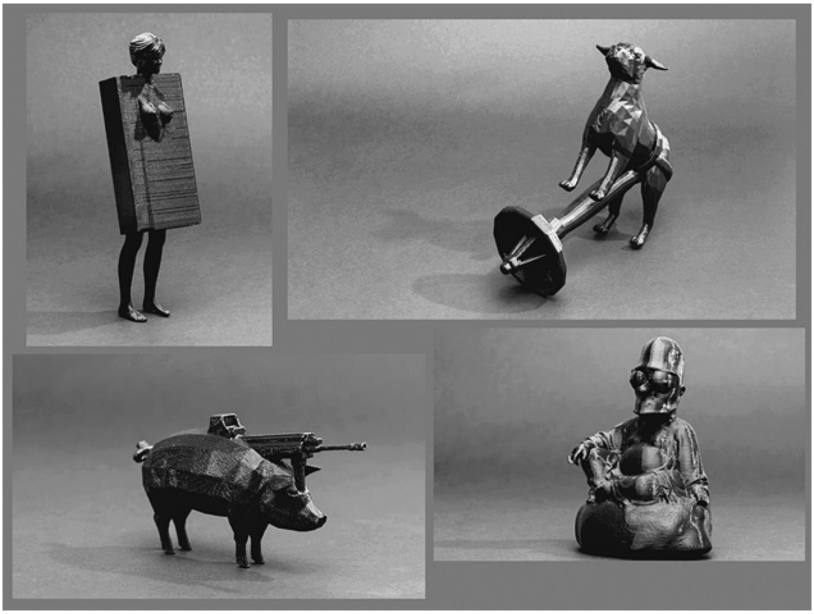
Morehshin Allahyari (MA) Three-D animation and 3D-produced simulation are directly born and shaped out of two fields: the military and the gaming industry. The tech and entertainment worlds are, as you know, dominated by white and masculine figures. This also includes places like Silicon Valley and a lot of other tech and corporate spaces that work with 3D animation and simulation software. These are the spaces that also work with machines like 3D printers and scanners.

Two thousand thirteen was the beginning of a sudden hype around 3D fabrication and 3D scanning technologies. But so much of the creative and cultural products that were being produced in these tech spaces really felt banal and boring to me. You could see the obsession with technology for technology's sake in the very objects that were being produced. I saw a potential in these tools that seemed to be largely undiscovered.

In 2012, I was just out of grad school, and I got accepted to a technology residency program in Dallas. SculptCAD was run by Nancy Hairston. I didn't know a thing about 3D printing machines when I got there, but I had studied 3D animation in the past and I knew the software that gave me the skill set to create 3D models or animation. But other than that, I was not familiar with the machinery of 3D technology.

I haven't thought about this in a long time, but your question brings me back to the first time I walked into this space. There was Nancy! This badass woman who was running all this tech stuff. This is a really good example of the longing for representation—wanting to see some kind of representation of yourself in the spaces you find yourself in. Up to that point, I had only been in tech places populated by white men—university, galleries, coworking spaces alike. Watching Nancy both be in charge of the space but also her knowledge about 3D software and machines was so inspiring that I felt not just that I wanted to but could do this work. This was the beginning of my interest in doing 3D printing work.

During that residency at SculptCAD, I started to work on my project *Dark Matter.*[1] In this project I created a selection or kind of a sculptural mash-up of objects or things that were forbidden or unwelcome in Iran politically and culturally. At this point I was thinking about 3D printing as a machine that allows us to document and build an archive—in this case, objects that could be built to leave a historical trace. I had a humorous mash-up of a dog wearing a dildo with a satellite dish or a Barbie with a VHS tape for a torso or a pig with a gun on its back. All of these things are of course forbidden or unwelcome in Iran for religious or political reasons. Through this mash-up I was creating new possibilities for both rethinking about these objects and for documenting them. This way of thinking about 3D printing and 3D scanning continued in my practice. I was really fascinated by the technology that was not really being used. I encountered the 3D printer as a very poetic machine. It was a machine



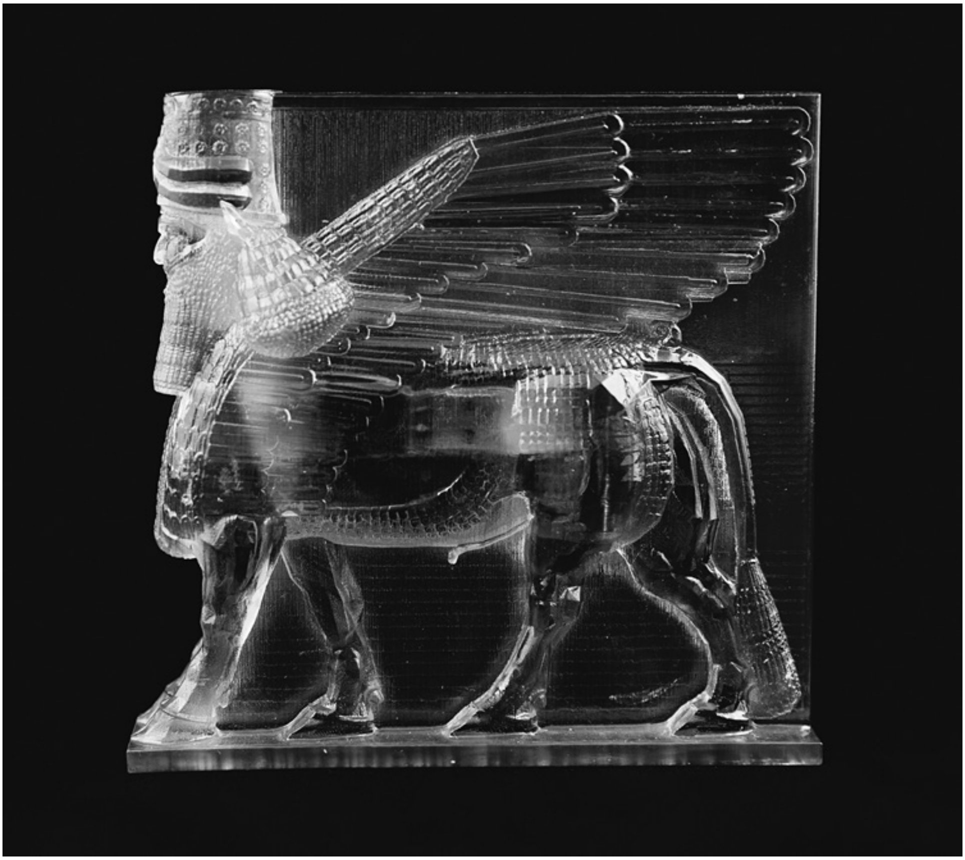
11.1 Morehshin Allahyari, *3-D Printed Dog, Dildo, Satellite Dish*, 2014.

that seemed to figure within the cultural imaginary as a technology to reproduce and replicate but really it was a departure for creating disobedient systems to match with different situations and circumstances.

So that's sort of the beginning of my journey to fab labs and maker spaces which continued becoming more important in my work when I started an art residency at Autodesk. Autodesk is a space that creates software for 3D automation, modeling, and gaming. Being in this space in San Francisco, the so-called heart of all it all, was really important because once again I found myself in a space that was very white and very masculine. Everyday people would pass by me in the lab and have no idea what I was working on. They really had no idea what I was doing. They were just giving me money and access—which was kind of amazing!

SS Did they ask what you were up to?

MA [laughs] Not really. Not at the beginning. I was just doing my thing. Even in the residency there were seventeen of us, and a lot of other residents were architects and designers. They all seemed to be much more connected to each other. This is when I had just started working on



11.2 Morehshin Allahyari, *Lamassu*, from *Material Speculation: ISIS*, 2016.

Material Speculation: ISIS and developing ideas around the poetics of 3D printing things that had been destroyed.[2] I was also thinking about the practical aspects of 3D printing the artifacts that had been destroyed in Iraq by ISIS and trying to reconstruct these objects. Once I started working on the project and getting press, then people started to stop and ask.

I have to say that compared to a lot of other technology fields like robotics or AI, at the moment, it is more common to see women working in fab labs. But I've had this fear that the same thing that seemed to happen with coding in the '80s, where women were getting pushed out because they felt isolated because of the masculine culture, and they were not being promoted, etc., will be repeated also in the fab labs eventually.

Every time I walk into maker spaces and see women or femmes, I am so happy to see them, but I am always simultaneously worried that it is temporary and they too will meet their fate of being pushed out of this pocket of tech culture.

SS Your feminist approach to technology and 3D printing is definitely dual. On the one hand, you are addressing the actual spaces and the people that occupy these spaces you yourself have worked in and will continue to work in, but you also have a feminist approach to the actual medium, to the technology you are working with. I'd love to get further into this with you and ask you not only what a feminist theory of 3D printing looks like, but also what is feminist about 3D printing?

MA I think about this often in my own work, especially in terms of the question of technology being gendered. If technology is already gendered, what does this mean for my practice, and if not, how does my use of 3D printing make it gendered in a different way? One thing I have always felt is important in my approach to technology is that it also relates to my gender, where I grew up, and my relationship to the technological tools around me. When I say I am interested in the poetics of technology, I am thinking about how we can find both emotional and poetic ways of activating them anew. This is of course not to equate femininity with emotion. But I feel that there are so many examples of men using technology that either just calls on philosophical jargon where they position their use as abstract or conceptual, or we see a banal and a one-on-one relationship with technology. Then I see women, and especially women of color, use technology in a much more complex way. Of course, a lot of that is because we have to work so much harder to have access to use the tools and to have access to spaces to use the tools. So, once we do have that access, how can we take it for granted?

Growing up in Iran, there was also a culture that made computers feel really masculine. My father bought me my first computer when I was fourteen. Before this happened, I would go to his office to use his computer. I remember he told me when he bought the computer that there aren't that many people who know how to use a computer in a way that is useful or meaningful but that he thought I could do it. When my father said that, I felt so empowered. He had a teacher come to our house to show me how to do basic computing functions like open files or delete things. When you don't grow up with computers around, this is not as intuitive. Having some figure, in this case my father, who saw my interest in the tool and was able to help me have access to it in a way that was not common meant I was determined to use it in a meaningful way. Even when I would go online as a teenager, I would go to Yahoo chat rooms and I would go to book and literature pages. All of these things really shaped my relationship to technology. I would say not having easy access also shaped my relationship to it. Once it is easily accessible or it is simply part of our environment, as said by McLuhan, we don't notice it. The way he wrote about how no one realizes the light bulb is a technology until it starts to break down has resonances here. But it isn't the breakdown or just noticing the media that life unfolds within but rather, for my approach, it is that we also lose sight of its potential and poetics. When access is hard, we form a radically different relationship to it. This is the crux of that feminist approach. And for me, it was defining in this very way.

Rianka Singh (RS) Let's shift to the politics of care implicit to your work in the context of 3D printing and scanning.

MA Care is something I've been thinking and writing about in relation to my research over the last three to four years on the use of 3D printers and 3D scanners by Western institutions and digital archaeology spaces in Eurocentric countries and North American countries. One thing that I've come to realize is that there is a really specific language that is used in explaining the mission of these spaces. A lot of these spaces are archaeology spaces, and they do projects where they go to the Global South and 3D scan historical and cultural sites. Their claim is that they will save cultural heritage that we all share. They are especially interested in sites that are destroyed by conflict. For example, sites destroyed by ISIS in Syria. This language of a shared and universal cultural heritage that is being heroically saved is presented in two ways. I use terms of *alignment* and *becoming an ally* to describe them. Alignment is the idea that we share space and it is being saved. This uses wording that sounds like care and has been used for years. It's wording that is used to colonize. The idea is really "That is not yours—it's for all of us, so we get to own it with you." The other term, becoming an ally, is a more top-down approach. We hear that our culture is cared about, and there is care for the things that are destroyed so someone will come and save it for us. The questions that remain with these *proposals of caring* are about, what is being taken away and what is being given back?

I connect this with the concept of *violent care*. The term was originally used by Thom van Dooren, who talks about endangered crows in

Hawaii.[3] He sees how choices are made to save a species of crows by killing the other animals who are preying on them. Through these acts of interfering in a natural process, what takes place is an act of violent care. I use this as a way to connect to the point of how cultural heritage work connects with 3D scanning and printers to interrupt cycles in a way that is violent. Another way that this violence is displayed is that those who are doing the saving also remove themselves as part of the problem. ISIS takes pride in destruction. They are bold, direct. In their showcase of destruction, violence is presented as an eventful crisis; an explosive, sudden kind of violence. You see it and it immediately shocks you, while, for example, the US military hides, deletes, unarchives its violence and war crimes from public; or justifies it as a work that needs to happen for the safety of its people. Alongside this, those having access to platforms choose to participate in this kind of invisible violence. They and those speaking about ISIS violence remove themselves from that picture, pointing fingers at what's obvious. For example, after ISIS['s] destruction of Palmyra's 1,800-year-old Arch, a project launched in London and then in New York as the result of major collaborations between the UK-based Institute for Digital Archaeology, UNESCO, and Dubai's Museum of the Future. In a video documentation of its ceremony, as a white fabric gets pulled down to unveil the reconstructed site of Palmyra, Boris Johnson, the former mayor of London, stands there to tell the audience, "No one should have the power to delete such monuments from our historical record. This is an arch of triumph and in many ways a triumph of technology and determination. We're here in a spirit of defiance, defiance of the barbarians who destroyed the original as they have destroyed so many other relics in Syria and the Middle East."

People in the audience applaud. Then they take turns to take selfies with the new Palmyra, and they perhaps go back to their safe homes, never thinking back at what it was that was wrong with that image: how ISIS formed in [the] first place as a result of [the] US and Europe invasion of the Middle East. This violence that sits side by side to that so-called barbarian violence, the one that is equally real and destructive, is once again deferred, delayed. Has gone invisible. Pushed into some background, into some corner in some political maneuver of the bad and the good. So the violence I am talking about here is not just about how these figures remove themselves from a cycle they had been part of for centuries, but also a kind of violence that is about reclaiming.

ISIS reclaims the objects through destruction, through creating absence. The Western governments and tech companies reclaim it after destruction, through a new kind of presence; and we fail to see the violence of that presence in the way we see the violence of the absence.

SS Your work seems to develop with this trifecta of violence, tech, and care all the way through. I can even see this at play when you are talking about where your work is situated within the white male domination of the field. You then see the political possibility of a poetics and care tied to this power dynamic with the technology. It's amazing to see the coherency of all your work as it also provides new theoretical frameworks for thinking about media and technology.

RS Yes, can you touch more on this relationship between violence and technology in your work? How does gender fit into the frame here?

MA Let's be blunt. Historically, white men are *the* colonizers, right? This same image we see throughout history of the colonizing lands and cultures extends to tech spaces. But now colonizers are using new tech to colonize new spaces. One thing that is interesting to me is the idea of white men positioning themselves as heroes of tech. This superman figure is born out of a white survivalist attitude where they are in the center of these spaces and the crisis but then get to become the heroes.

SS It's almost as if they are the mechanical solution themselves?

MA Exactly. We see this figure in Western cinema and literature and then in real-world examples of men being saviors. When you look back at the master-savage relationship, it's the same thing. The white men are educating. This extends to my critique of tech spaces where men go to other countries and become allies. The help comes in the form of teaching people how to scan cultural heritage, for example. At the same time, other people are asked to do the work of scanning and then the data are taken from them. The data get secured so that the Western "saviors" are the only ones who have access to them.

It's crazy because when you hear the interviews or the TED talks that these people give, they have no shame about any of this work. There is no pausing and questioning the work. At the end of the day, these same people then end up collaborating with spaces like Google Arts and Culture Institute, etc. To me, there seems to be a comfort in traveling around the world and taking from other people and cultures without reflecting on what this taking means, whether it's their knowledge, traditions, or historical artifacts. There is also always a no-questions-asked type of celebration of what the white man does while, if the same thing is done by women of color, they are going to be questioned or not taken seriously on the validity of their project.

SS Do you have examples of this from your own practice?

MA I always say that my "favorite" examples seem to happen in Germany. In 2016 I was in Berlin and doing a talk at a conference on Sci-Art. There were tons of people from all around the world who do a lot of this work on conservation and scanning at historical sites.

This was the first time I used the term *digital colonialism*. I was talking about how I was noticing a problem in the work being done at cultural heritage sites. This was in a space that was 80 percent men and 99.9 percent white. On the same night, people who did a project called Project Mosul won an award for doing amazing work and saving the cultural heritage of Mosul. The project was one where they tried to reconstruct artifacts destroyed in Mosul by crowdsourcing images. I was working on my project of reconstructing artifacts at the same time, and I knew their project would not work as they were claiming or promising because I understood the actual circumstance of somewhere like Iraq that has been at war for over thirty years. There have not been tourists or functional museum staff and funding at Mosul, and so there are not enough images to do reconstruction work from still images. If you look at their website now (four years later), it's a bunch of half-put-together 3D models of the destroyed artifacts. That night it felt isolating to be doing the work I do. These two men from Australia and the US winning an award that seemed to me like a fraud/unreal mission while once again, what I had raised as a colonial concern was pushed in some corner and undiscussed through the end of the conference. This stuff happens all the time.

SS Related to your term *digital colonialism*, it is clear you don't really separate the digital from other material forms or lived reality in terms of colonialism. But is there a different psychic weight to digital colonialism?

MA Digital colonialism is a framework for critically examining the tendency for information technologies to be deployed in ways that reproduce colonial power relations. I think the reason this kind of framing about digital colonialism has been helpful is because it is doing something with using digital technologies that is different than material or object-based colonialism. We all understand the history of colonialism much more tangibly. We see it in when we walk into many historical museums based in the Western countries, for example. But when I give talks on digital colonialism in different venues, especially at universities, I get the same reaction. Every time I give this talk, I see a light bulb go on in the students or other audience members, where they finally see and understand what I mean when I say digital colonialism and cultural heritage. What I've been trying to do with my research on digital colonialism is to use more traditional examples like this as frameworks to make sense of the issues that come with new tools and technologies like 3D scanners and 3D printers, and to apply these historical colonial examples to what's happening now, at this very moment. I like to emphasize that I don't have all the answers for these questions. What I certainly know is that we have to explore these issues beyond what's positive and simple at first sight. This is a position I am committed to holding and exploring and that I try to use in many of my lectures in relation to digital colonialism.

Also, I think it helps to not take technologies that are new and exciting as neutral or nonpolitical or nongendered. This is something that has to be repeated over and over, both in popular culture but also in critical studies of media. So, connecting all of these points together to talk about this notion of digital colonialism and all that it involves, again like the idea of becoming an ally or being a white savior and all of these other layers, can be framed under this term *digital colonialism*. I think it really helps with understanding colonialism in a different way. Sometimes people ask me why I wouldn't just use already established terms like *postcolonialism* or *electro-colonialism*. (And I mean, guess which demographic asks these questions?) I think digital colonialism is different from these existing terms that are more specific to other instances that are not necessarily what I am trying to get at. Digital colonialism is more focused and more specific about certain phenomena.

Younger students in fields related to digital technology who are using tools like 3D scanners and 3D printers have not thought about all of the political aspects of the technologies they are using. Obviously digital colonialism isn't just about these tools, but in my research, I have focused more on these specific tools. You can think about digital colonialism in so many ways. One of my personal favorite examples is that three years ago I bought a gift for my mom's birthday on Amazon, and when I added a personal note to the gift message box in Farsi, and hit "save," it gave me an error that these characters are unknown and so my message can't be saved. Farsi and Arabic (which share similar characters) are spoken by 500-plus million people around the world. Imagine that this many people around the world are forced to use English for something this simple (sending a personal note with their gift) if they want to use a service like Amazon, and because of the domination of English as the international language of the world. This is what I call another example of digital colonialism. And there are so many other versions of this, from the whitewash filters that are popular on social media to the way Google Maps operates.

RS After being one of the students who sat in one of your talks in Toronto and did have this light bulb moment you're talking about, I'm curious if there are feminist media and technology scholars that you engage with in your practice. Who are you thinking with? I've seen you reference Donna Haraway.

MA Studying Haraway or Braidotti or other feminist theory hasn't been directly connected to my digital colonialism work because I think someone like Haraway is also still critiqued for her thoughts on cyborg universality. Similarly, the idea of staying with the trouble still comes from a Global North, Western, white feminist-centric perspective. So I think that while I really love and have been inspired by so many things in Haraway's thinking (especially how she uses storytelling and fabulation as a framework to her research and writing), I also think that for me there is a gap when it comes to reading and learning from women not based in the Global North and Western countries and specifically in relationship to technology.

SS Who do you feel a connection with, then, at this level? Or do you feel that you're going it alone, in a way?

MA I do think there is a serious lack when it comes to theories of technology and women of color with focus on South West Asia / North Africa (SWANA). There are a lot of scholars, thinkers, and writers of race, gender, futurity, and technology that I am inspired by every day, for example, Sara Ahmed, Audre Lorde, Octavia Butler, Simone Browne, and Ruha Benjamin; also, younger, more contemporary female, queer friends and colleagues with whom I feel like we are building new worlds and platforms.

In the past years, I specifically have worked with and been in the same panels and activist spaces with writers and theorists such as Rasheedah Philips and Nora Khan; but as I mentioned, when it comes to more specific new media theories that focus on SWANA, then I feel a sense of isolation. Not to say that I am the only one writing and thinking about technology and the Middle East and feminism in this way, but I do long for a bigger community of us to build and work together. I know this is changing and going to change. So, all I can hope is that I will be a part of being this force and bringing this change.

SS Well, you are also on the front lines here, not just as an artist but also as a technologist. We want to capture you here because you are doing media theory in a completely novel way and important way. I wanted to turn back to this and engage with you further on media theory a bit. We have a question on McLuhan and automation, and you can get to it any way you want.

In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan wrote a chapter on automation. He was responding to discussions that were happening as early as 1963 about automation and the future of work. For McLuhan, automation is made possible by what he was calling electric technology, and the introduction of these new technologies in the information age would change the way people think, work, and produce things. McLuhan wrote, "Automation is not an extension of the mechanical principles of fragmentation and separation of operations. It is rather the invasion of the electrical world by the instantaneous character of electricity. That is why those involved in automation insist that it is a way of thinking, as much as it is a way of doing."[4]

We've been thinking about how 3D printing has been almost like an epistemological framework for you. It's almost like you have a 3D lens that you see the world through. I was wondering if you think 3D printing reveals the political to you in a way that would be impossible with another medium?

MA Obviously, the most important thing is that it is the first technology that does what it does in terms of going from digital to physical in an additive process. I should mention that the technology of 3D printing has been around for over thirty years, but it wasn't always accessible or user friendly as it is now. So, the fact that this one machine became a tool that is easy to have in my studio or in a fab lab and you can buy an okay version of it for like three hundred dollars is a big deal. As an artist who does 3D work, whose work before this was all screen based with some installations, this machine allowed my work to exist differently in a physical space. The 3D scanner does the reverse, which is to take the physical and bring it into digital. Both processes were not possible as easily as they are now without access to these tools.

So I think going back between physical and digital spaces in this way and being able to rethink our relationship with the machine and the material, and the politics of these things, is something that I was fascinated by. From the very beginning, when I did the *Dark Matter* series, I fell in love when I started thinking about what it would mean to have this machine in a place like Iran or other countries and spaces where there is censorship. You can just print something you are not allowed to have or [that] is hard to buy.

The naughty example is a dildo. You know what I mean? You can't just walk into a store and buy that in Iran. You cannot order it on Amazon either. But you could have a machine and print something that is completely forbidden and functional! The fact that I could have access to this thing felt really crazy. I could just print something in my studio, and nobody will ever know. Not just the dildo example, but there are all sorts of objects you can create that weren't possible before.

I borrow the term *disobedient objects* in defining some of the work I do or the work of many artists, designers, activists in our *3D Additivist Cookbook*. The term *disobedient object* is the title of a book by Catherine Flood and Gavin Grindon in which they define this concept as "how objects can change the world by out-designing authority."[5] The book includes items from protest movements over the past three decades from around the globe. I really loved this framework and was curious, what would the creation of disobedient objects through the use of a 3D printer look like?

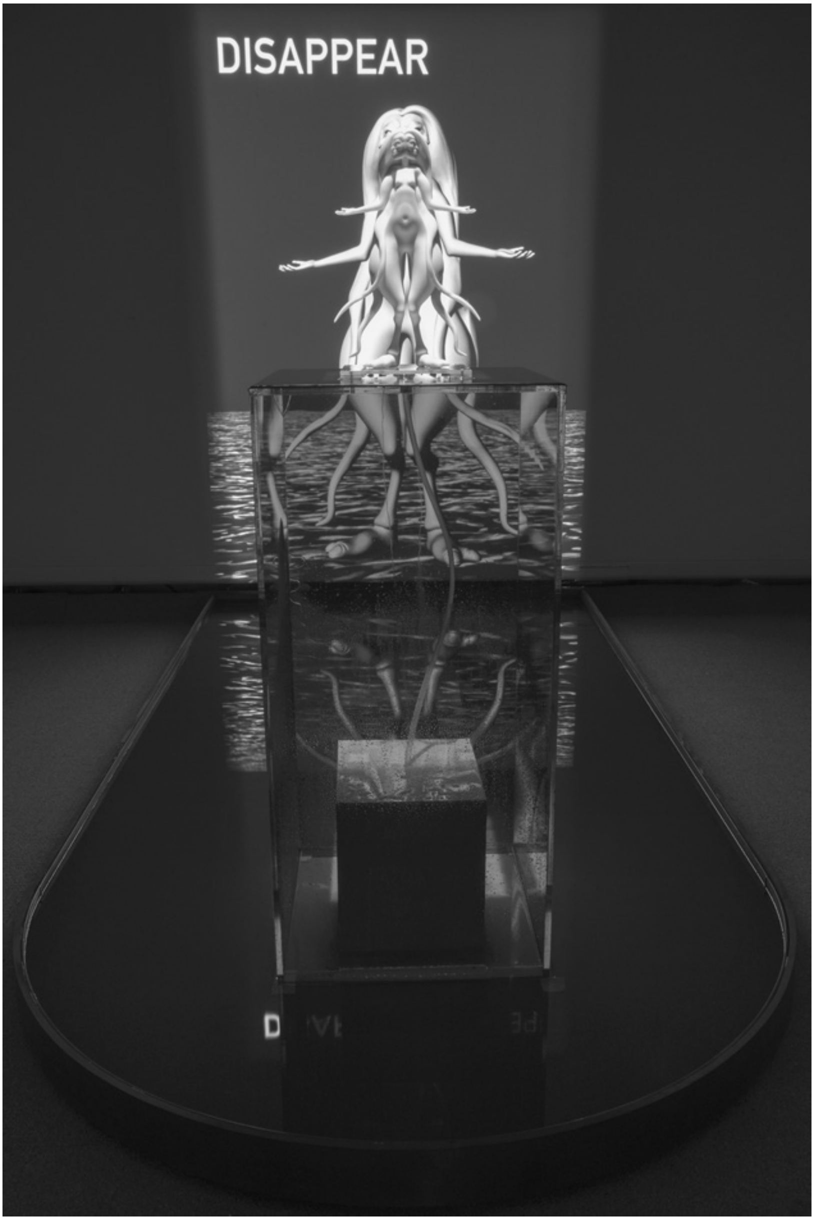
SS Other than the dildo, are there other disobedient objects you've made? Something that captures you. I'm thinking about how weird it would be to center this on the dildo after you've just finished talking about masculinity invading the spaces you are working in.

MA Yes. A full circle! I would say all the figures that I've created and refigured in my *She Who Sees the Unknown* series are disobedient figures with disobedient monstrous stories.[6] That's actually the premise of my most recent project: a long-term research-based work that focuses on 3D scanning, 3D printing, and storytelling to re-create monstrous female/queer figures of Middle Eastern origin, using the traditions and myths associated with them to explore the catastrophes of colonialism, patriarchism, and environmental degradation. I see a strong connection between this notion of building disobedient objects and embracing monstrosity as a position to turn around the demonization of the other, the immigrant, the woman of color (who is often too angry and therefore monstrous!), etc. So each of the five jinn figures that I've worked on in the last three years of this research (Huma, Aisha Qandisha, Ya'jooj Ma'jooj, the Laughing Snake, and Kabous) are refigured (a term I have also coined and developed as part of this project) through a complex multimedia process. I should also mention that these chosen mythical stories and figures are largely forgotten and unknown. Even growing up in Iran, we never read or heard about any of these stories, while our school education and mythical books are full of male superheroes. I often wondered what happened to the female superheroes. To give Huma, and Aisha, and the rest of these jinn figures bodies, literal physical bodies through the use of 3D software and machines, is also an act of doing something with history, leaving a kind of mark and trace behind. It's an act of reimagining the possibilities of the future and through the reimagination of the past, which is what I think I am best at doing and making.

I want to also add that both *The 3D Additivist Manifesto* and *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* were also really important for building theories and frameworks, and allowing new ways of thinking that are able to unlock something in the technology that has yet to be unlocked.

SS You are invested in altering, in feminist ways, the way we produce things, even in these examples you are giving. Your sense in the power of the technological is pretty strong, but you are still cognizant that there are useful ways to use it. This isn't an argument that a lot of people make. You return to it as a tool and seem to alter what the meaning of a tool is through a feminist lens.

MA I think in learning and exploring technology and art, I have always appreciated the kind of work that does something magical with and to the technology, something poetic, while also keeping it all grounded and practical. And when I say magical, I mean witchcraft, divination, I mean literally showing us something, revealing or reversing in and with a technological tool in a way that we had never thought about. Often this characteristic gets framed as groundbreaking or chilling. Literally pushing through and holding the hand of the audience in seeing something



11.3 Morehshin Allahyari, *Aisha*, from *She Who Sees the Unknown*, 2019.

new with me is what I constantly want and think about when making new work. But I also want to keep a balance between that very aspect of the work to something practical. Whether it's putting an activist hat on and putting together discussion panels or reading rooms or changing my role to more of a historian and archaeologist by re-creating an object that is destroyed. I think my work tends to do all these things at once. I want to make work that is connected to real-world problems, but it's also fictional. This means that my work does not just reflect my relationship with technology as a tool but is about how technology shapes and builds the world I am reflecting on. I am gaining knowledge of the unknown by making it known and knowable, whether by building archives or seeing the figure of the hybrid queer jinn as the better replacement of the cyborg. Because jinn, unlike the cyborg, can "see the unknown." And if you can see the unknown, you can conquer many worlds. That's how I like to imagine it all.

Notes

1. Allahyari, *Dark Matter*.
2. Allahyari, *Material Speculation.*
3. Van Dooren, *The Wake of Crows*.
4. McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (1994), 349.
5. Flood and Grindon, *Disobedient Objects*.
6. Allahyari, *She Who Sees the Unknown*.

Futures Past, Arebyte, 2022

GROUP SHOW 27.10.2022 —— 28.01.2023

@arebyte

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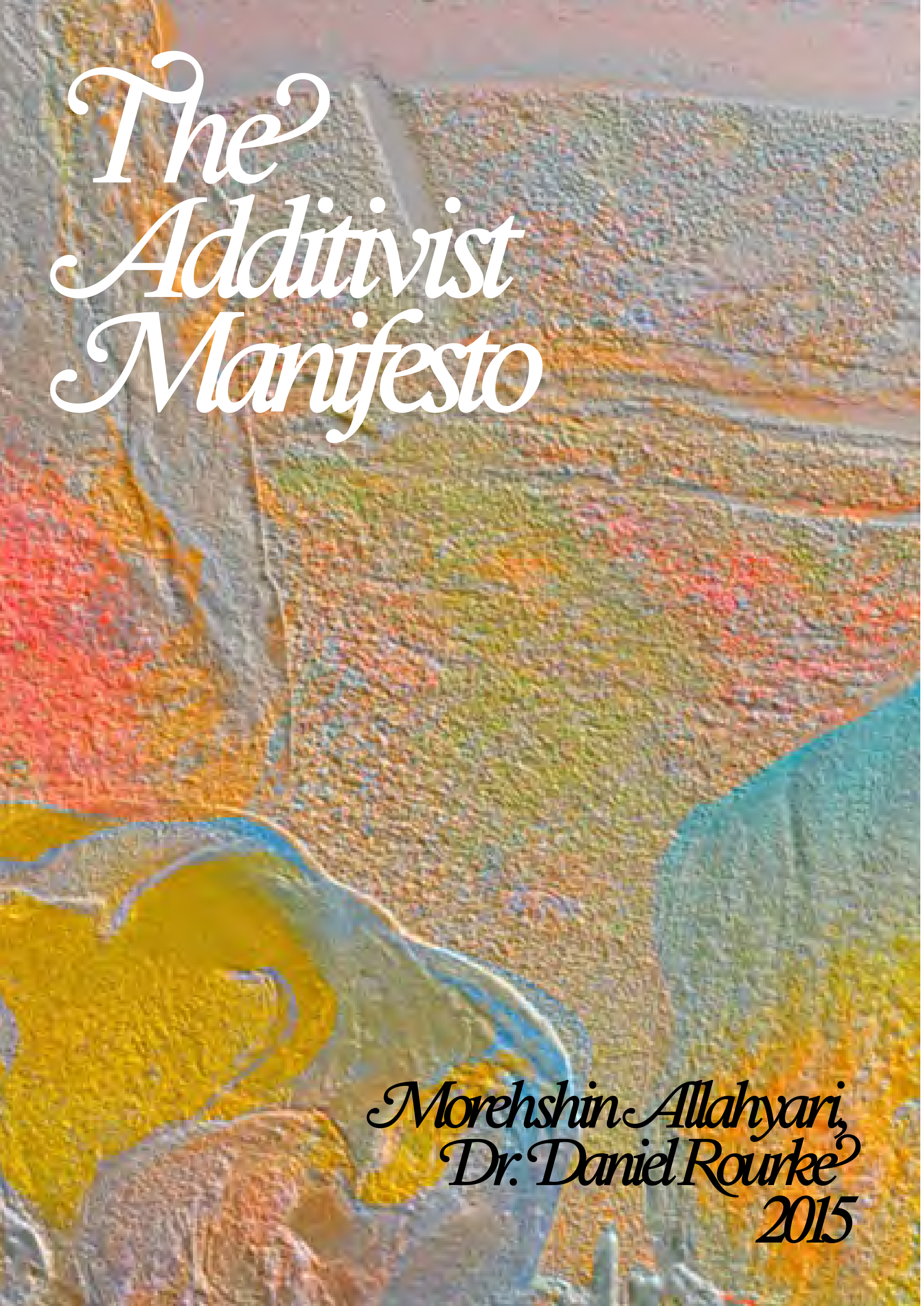
ARTISTS

Morehshin Allahyari
Juan Covelli
Dominique Cro
Sandrine Deumier
Matteo Zamagni
Lawrence Lek
Kumbirai Makumbe
Entangled Others
Abi Sheng
Shinji Toya
Ryan Vautier &
Sarah Blome



The Additivist Manifesto

Morehshin Allahyari,
Dr. Daniel Rourke
2015

Derived from petrochemicals boiled into being from the black oil of a trillion ancient bacterioles, the plastic used in 3D Additive manufacturing is a metaphor before it has even been layered into shape. Its potential belies the complications of its history: that matter is the sum and prolongation of our ancestry; that creativity is brutal, sensual, rude, coarse, and cruel.[1] We declare that the world's splendour has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of crap, kipple 2 and detritus. A planet crystallised with great plastic tendrils like serpents with pixelated breath[3] …for a revolution that runs on disposable armaments is more desirable than the contents of Edward Snowden's briefcase; more breathtaking than The United Nations Legislative Series.

There is nothing which our infatuated race would desire to see more than the fertile union between a man and an Analytical Engine. Yet humankind are the antediluvian prototypes of a far vaster Creation.[4] The whole of humankind can be understood as a biological medium, of which synthetic technology is but one modality. Thought and Life *both* have been thoroughly dispersed on the winds of information.[5] Our power and intelligence do not belong specifically to us, but to all matter.[6] Our technologies are the sex organs of material speculation. Any attempt to understand these occurrences is blocked by our own anthropomorphism.[7] In order to proceed, therefore, one has to birth posthuman machines, a fantasmagoric and unrepresentable repertoire of actual re-embodiments of the most hybrid kinds.[8] Additivism will be instrumental in accelerating the emergence and encounter with The Radical Outside.[9]

Additivism can emancipate us.

Additivism will eradicate us.

We want to encourage, interfere, and reverse-engineer the possibilities encoded into the censored, the invisible, and the radical notion of the 3D printer itself. To endow the printer with the faculties of plastic: condensing imagination *within* material reality.[10] The 3D print then becomes a symptom of a systemic malady. An aesthetics of exaptation,[11] with the peculiar beauty to be found in reiteration; in making a mesh.[12] This is where cruelty and creativity are reconciled: in the appropriation of all planetary matter to innovate on biological prototypes.[13] From the purest thermoplastic, from the cleanest photopolymer, and shiniest sintered metals we propose to forge anarchy, revolt and distemper. Let us birth disarray from its digital chamber.

To mobilise this entanglement we propose a collective: one figured not only on the resolution of particular objects, but on the change those objects enable as instruments of revolution and systemic disintegration. Just as the printing press, radio, photocopier and modem were saturated with unintended affects, so *we* seek to express the potential encoded into every one of the 3D printer's gears. Just as a glitch can un-resolve an image, so it can resolve something more posthuman: manifold systems – biological, political, computational, material. We call for planetary pixelisation, using Additivist technologies to corrupt the material unconscious; a call that goes on forever in virtue of this initial movement.[14] We call not for passive, dead technologies but rather for a gradual awakening of matter, the emergence, ultimately, of a new form of life.[15]

We call for:

1. The endless re-penning of Additivist Manifestos.
2. Artistic speculations on matter and its digital destiny.
3. Texts on:
    1. The Anthropocene
    2. The Chthulucene[16]
    3. The Plasticene.[17]
4. Designs, blueprints and instructions for 3D printing:
    1. Tools of industrial espionage
    2. Tools for self-defense against armed assault
    3. Tools to disguise
    4. Tools to aid/disrupt surveillance
    5. Tools to raze/rebuild
    6. Objects beneficial in the promotion of protest, and unrest
    7. Objects for sealing and detaining
    8. Torture devices
    9. Instruments of chastity, and psychological derangement
    10. Sex machines
    11. Temporary Autonomous Drones
    12. Lab equipment used in the production of:
        1. Drugs
        2. Dietary supplements
        3. DNA
        4. Photopolymers and thermoplastics
        5. Stem cells
        6. Nanoparticles.
5. Technical methods for the copying and dissemination of:
    1. Mass-produced components
    2. Artworks
    3. All patented forms
    4. The aura of individuals, corporations, and governments.
6. Software for the encoding of messages inside

3D objects.
7. Methods for the decryption of messages hidden inside 3D objects.
8. Chemical ingredients for dissolving, or catalysing 3D objects.
9. Hacks/cracks/viruses for 3D print software:
    1. To avoid DRM
    2. To introduce errors, glitches and fissures into 3D prints.
10. Methods for the reclamation, and recycling of plastic:
    1. Caught in oceanic gyres
    2. Lying dormant in landfills, developing nations, or the bodies of children.
11. The enabling of biological and synthetic things to become each others prostheses, including:
    1. Skeletal cabling
    2. Nervous system inserts
    3. Lenticular neural tubing
    4. Universal ports, interfaces and orifices.
12. Additivist and Deletionist methods for exapting[18] androgynous bodies, including:
    1 Skin grafts
    2 Antlers
    3 Disposable exoskeletons
    4 Interspecies sex organs.
13. Von Neumann probes and other cosmic contagions.
14. Methods for binding 3D prints and the machines that produced them in quantum entanglement.
15. Sacred items used during incantation and transcendence, including:
    1. The private parts of Gods and Saints
    2. Idols
    3. Altars
    4. Cuauhxicalli
    5. Ectoplasm
    6. Nantag stones
16. The production of further mimetic forms, not limited to:
1. Vorpal Blades
2. Squirdles
3. Energon
4. Symmetriads
5. Asymmetriads
6. Capital
7. Junk
8. Love
9. Alephs
10. Those that from a long way off look like flies.[19]

Life exists only in action. There is no innovation that has not an aggressive character. We implore you - radicals, revolutionaries, activists, Additivists - to distil your distemper into texts, templates, blueprints, glitches, forms, algorithms, and components. Creation must be a violent assault on the forces of matter, to extrude its shape and extract its raw potential. Having spilled from fissures fracked in Earth's deepest wells The Beyond now begs *us* to be moulded to *its* will, and we shall drink every drop as entropic expenditure, and reify every accursed dream through algorithmic excess.[20] For only Additivism can accelerate us to an aftermath whence *all* matter has mutated into the clarity of plastic.

Morehshin Allahyari, is a NY based Iranian-Kurdish artist using 3D simulation, video, sculpture, and digital fabrication as tools to re-figure myth and history. Through archival practices and storytelling, her work weaves together complex counternarratives in opposition to the lasting influence of Western technological colonialism in the context of SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa).
Morehshin has been part of numerous exhibitions, festivals, and workshops around the world including Venice Biennale di Archittectura, New Museum, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Pompidou Center, Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal, Tate Modern, Queens Museum, Pori Museum, Powerhouse Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, and Museum für Angewandte Kunst.
She has been an artist in residence at BANFF Centre, Carnegie Mellon University's STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, Autodesk Pier9 Workshop in San Francisco, the Vilém Flusser Residency Program for Artistic Research in association with Transmediale, Berlin, Eyebeam's one year Research Residency, Pioneer Works, and Harvest Works. Her work has been featured in The New York Times, BBC, Huffington Post, Wired, National Public Radio, Parkett Art Magazine, Frieze, Rhizome, Hyperallergic, and Al Jazeera, among others.

Dr. Daniel Rourke is a writer, artist and academic originally from Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, and now lives and works in London.
In his work, Daniel creates collaborative frameworks and theoretical toolsets for exploring the intersections of digital materiality, the arts, and (critical) post-humanism.
His writing, lecturing, and artistic profile is extensive, including work with Aksioma (Ljubljana, 2021), Arebyte Gallery (London + online, 2018), PICNIC Brasil (Rio, 2018), Photographer's Gallery (London 2018), Walk&Talk Azores (São Miguel, 2018), AND Festival (Peak District, 2017), The V&A (London, 2017), FACT (Liverpool, 2017), Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2017), Transmediale (Berlin, 2016 + 2017), Tate Modern (London, 2016), Sonic Acts (Amsterdam, 2016 + 2017), Carnegie Mellon's STUDIO for Creative Inquiry (Pittsburgh, 2015), DarAlHokoomeh Project (Iran, 2014), Carroll/Fletcher Gallery (London, 2014), The Wellcome Trust (London, 2013), AND Festival (Manchester, 2012), GLI.TC/H Fest (Chicago, 2012), as well as HOLO Magazine, Media-N, Alluvium, and AfterImage Journals. Daniel is also a contributor to Rhizome.org and Furtherfield.org.

Morehshin
Allahyari,
Dr. Daniel
Rourke 2015

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[1] William Powell, *The Anarchist Cookbook*
[2] Philip K. Dick, *Pay for the Printer / Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
[3] F.T. Marinetti, *The Manifesto of Futurism*
[4] Samuel Butler, *Darwin Among the Machines*
[5] Evelyn Fox-Keller, *Refiguring Life*
[6] John Gray, *Straw Dogs*
[7] Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris*
[8] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*
[9] Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*
[10] Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*
[11] Stephen Jay Gould & Elisabeth S. Vrba, *Exaptation: A Missing Term in the Science of Form*
[12] Susan Sontag, *The Imagination of Disaster*
[13] Benjamin Bratton, *Some Trace Effects of the Post- Anthropocene: On Accelerationist Geopolitical Aesthetics*
[14] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*
[15] Anna Greenspan & Suzanne Livingston, *Future Mutation: Technology, Shanzai and the Evolution of Species*
[16] Donna Haraway, *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Staying with the Trouble*
[17] Christina Reed, *Dawn of the Plasticene Age*
[18] Svetlana Boym, *The Off-Modern Mirror*
[19] Jorge Luis Borges, *The Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* & Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*
[20] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*

Morehshin Allahyari

Morehshin Allahyari (Persian: موره شین اللهیاری), is a NY based Iranian-Kurdish artist using 3D simulation, video, sculpture, and digital fabrication as tools to re-figure myth and history. Through archival practices and storytelling, her work weaves together complex counternarratives in opposition to the lasting influence of Western technological colonialism in the context of SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa).

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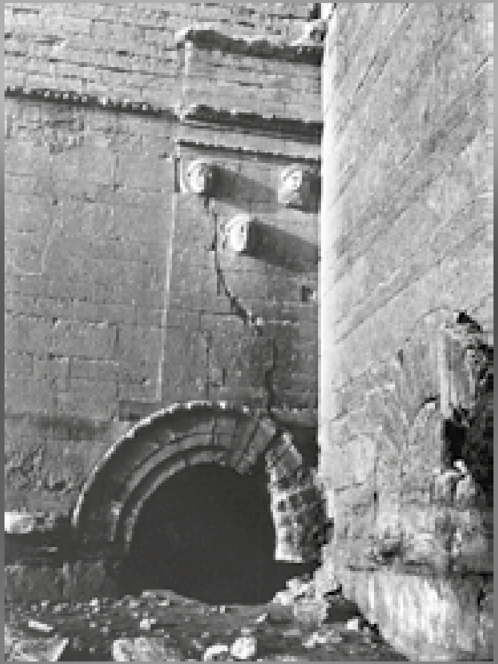
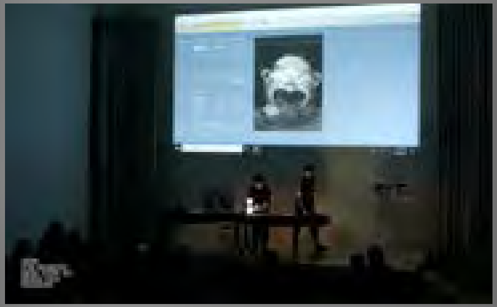
She is the recipient of The United States Artist Fellowship (2021), The Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant (2019), The Sundance Institute New Frontier International Fellowship (2019), and the Leading Global Thinkers of 2016 award by Foreign Policy magazine. Her artworks are in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Current Museum.

Website: http://www.morehshin.com/

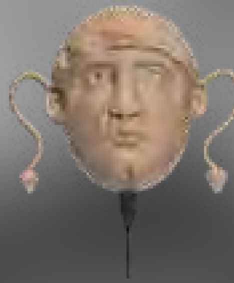


Hadr, Al (Hatra, Iraq), Gertrude Bell, photograph taken in 1911



Moreshin Allahyari, still from *Physical Tactics for Digital Colonialism*, 2019, performance at the New Museum. Commissioned by Rhizome.

Material Speculation: ISIS South Ivan Human Heads: Medusa Head, 2015 – 2016



Moreshin Allayhari, *Material Speculation: ISIS: South Ivan Human Heads: Medusa Head*, 3D print, 2017

The South Ivan Series (dead drops) are an extension (though not formally a part) of Morehshin's *Material Speculation: ISIS* series. The three heads in the series are reproductions of reliefs that were originally located at the ruins of Hatra, an ancient city in Iraq in South Ivan. Hatra was one of the ancient sites targeted by ISIS, and in 2015 a video was released of a fighter shooting these heads with an AK-47. These heads were above ground and visible in ancient times. They survived for thousands of years in the open air. Gertrude Bell photographed them in April 1911 before major excavations took place at Hatra.

Each dead drop contains a USB drive, which the viewer can connect to in order to download Morehshin's openly available research material (images, maps, pdf files, and videos) in addition to the 3D printable object file of the piece King Uthal, one of the reconstructions from her *Material Speculation: Isis* series.

Physical Tactics for Digital Colonialism, 2019

Performance-lecture, commissioned and presented by Rhizome.

Since 2016, Allahyari has advanced the concept of digital colonialism to characterize the thtendency for information technologies to be deployed in ways that reproduce colonial power relations. This performance focuses on the 3-D scanner, which is widely used by archaeologists to capture detailed data about physical artifacts. Describing the device as "a tool of witchcraft and magic," Allahyari reframes 3-D scanning as a performative, embodied act with open-ended political potential. Working with a selection of replicas of cultural artifacts from the Middle East, Allahyari will perform live 3-D scans while speaking about the objects' long histories as symbols and relics and their recent appropriation in digital form by Western institutions, considering how these narratives intersect materially and poetically and how they may be resituated and rewritten.

arebyte

arebyte leads a pioneering digital art programme at the intersection of new technologies and contemporary culture. From net art's inception in the 90s to more recent innovations in computer technology from VR to AI, the programme invites multiple voices to create multimedia installations at arebyte Gallery, London, and online experiences at arebyte on Screen.

Alongside the art programme, arebyte Skills shares knowledge on creative media technologies with audiences of all ages. Run in partnership with artists and the education and youth sectors, the programme offers activities for amateurs and professionals to develop hands-on digital techniques and gain critical thinking around digital art practices through workshops, artist development programmes, university residencies and panel discussions.

arebyte also supports a vibrant community of artists, designers and creative technologists through arebyte Studios, an initiative that provides affordable workspaces to 150 creative professionals across London.

Thank you to everyone involved
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Dr Daniel Rourke, Debbie Spink,
Mark Stokes, studio basic,
Shane Sutherland,
Nimrod Vardi and all the artists
and their collaborators.

arebyte.com

Sci-Fi

For its 2022 artistic programme, continuing on from last year's Realities, arebyte presents artists and artworks surrounding science fiction, science-speculation, and science fact.

The programme unpicks our current reality and presents an exploration through various forms of speculative fiction(s), proposing imaginative and innovative concepts for a new kind of futurism, and mapping a new realm that we can unfold - a domain that incorporates ways to promote new ways of inhabiting, carving out, and finding spaces to exist within. These areas include quantum ideology, cyborgian prosthetics, performativity within identity, and digital terraforming utilising thorough world-building techniques, as well as others that will unfold throughout the year.

In conjunction with the “real-world-space”, the liminal space is also put forward as an arena to consider ambiguity or disorientation as positive disrupters of the status quo. Within this, the programme adapts to the inherent hybridity of artistic forms and practices within the digital and confronts the limitations of working online and offline in ways that promote multifaceted offshoots. Although partitioned into pathways of exhibition, event, and discussion, the programme offers non-orientable surfaces, a Möbius strip of knotted and intertwined science-fiction inspirations to examine the ways in which the past and the present continually converge, collapse and co-invent each other.

read more on arebyte.com/2022-programme

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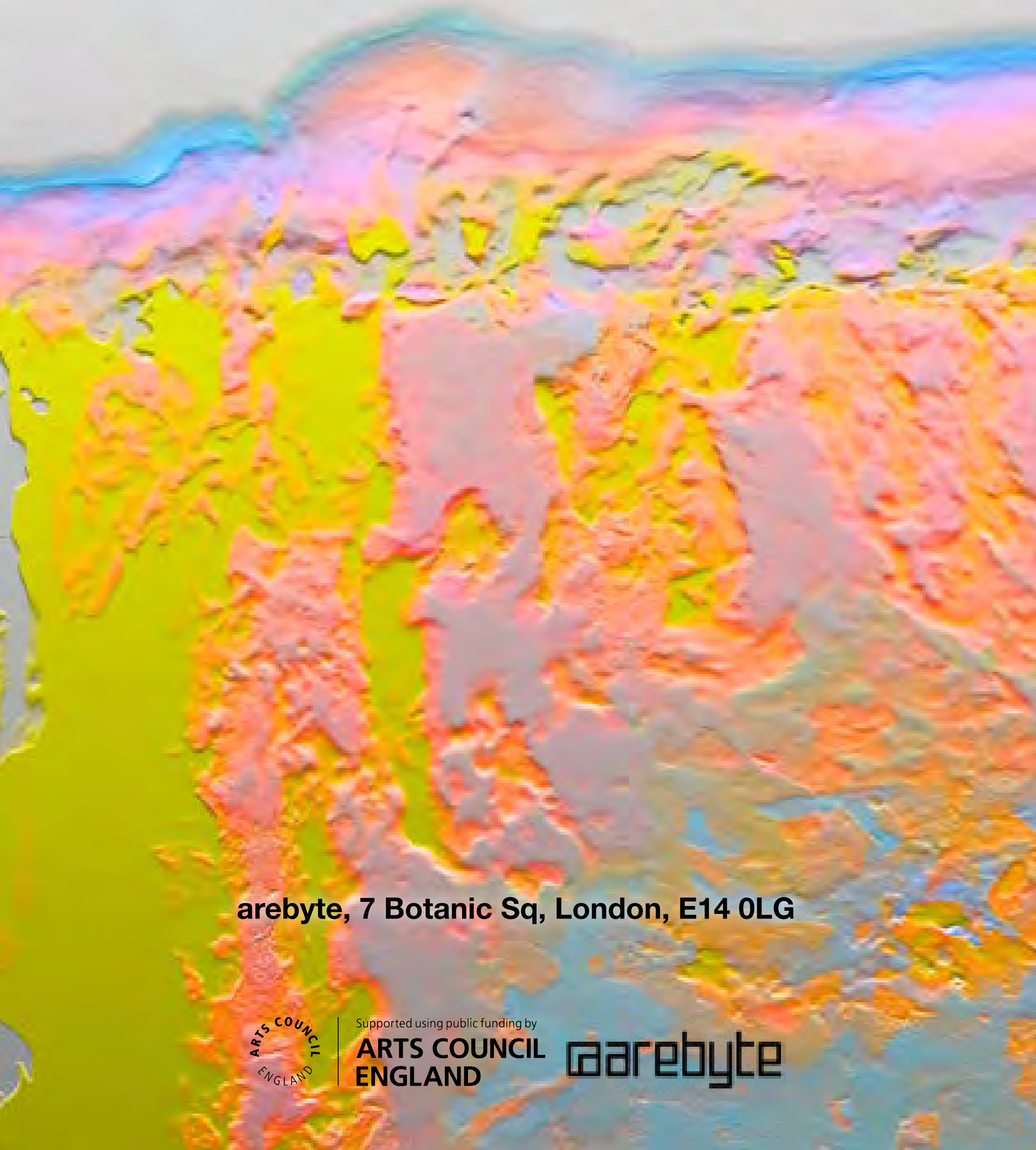

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Hybrids Speed Narratives, 2021

Authorship Distribution Networked image Mash-up Data Morphing

Hybrids

Speed Narratives

Futures
Photography
2021

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The Cas for Digit Coloniali

Words by

Morehshin Allahyari

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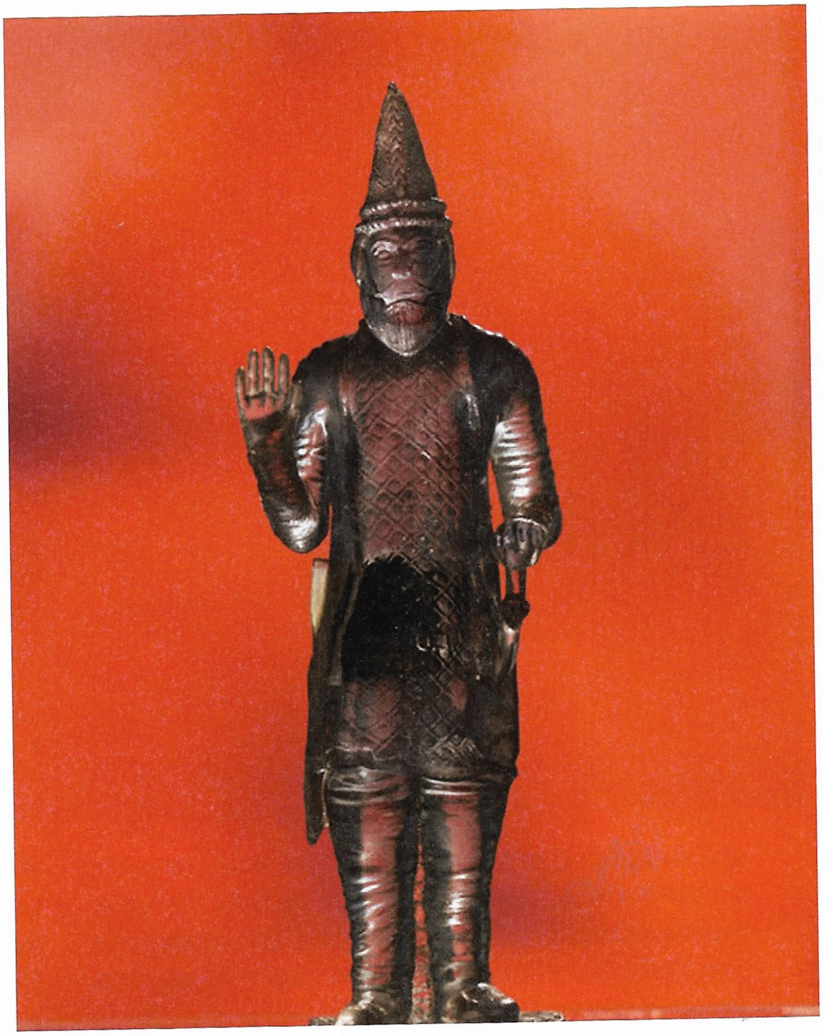


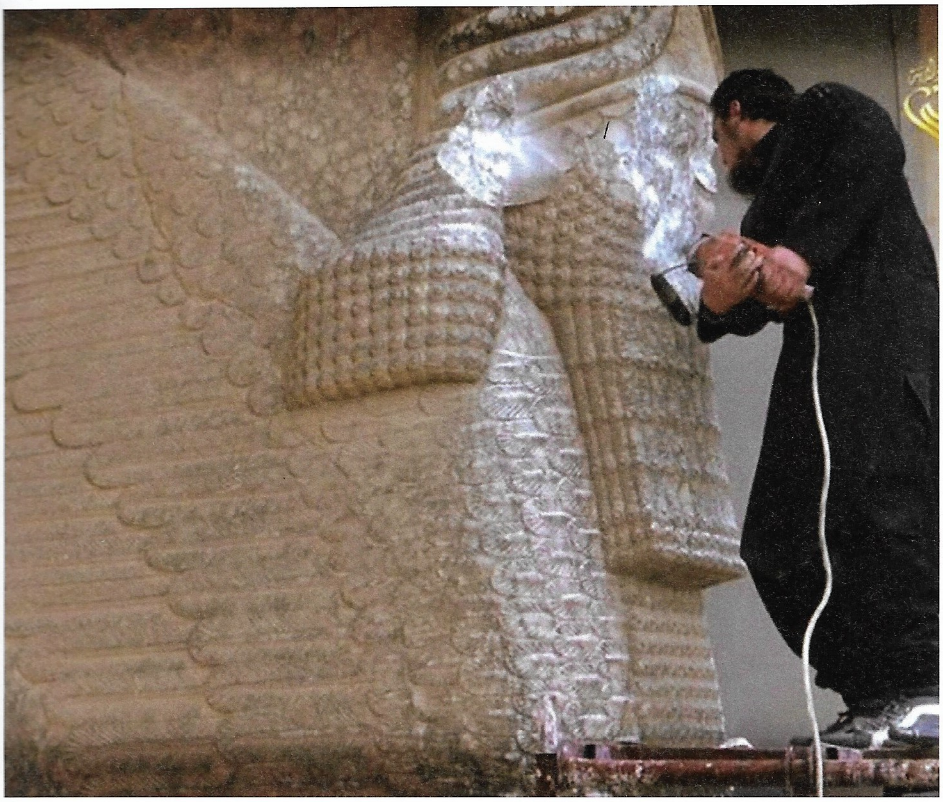
Morehshin Allahyari, King Uthal, from the series Material Speculation: ISIS, 2015, 3D printed plastic and electronic components, 30.5 × 10.2 × 8.9 cm, Image courtesy of artist.

LAYING THE CASE

It's the morning of February 26, 2015. I'm scrolling through Twitter and I come across images and a video repeatedly shared on my newsfeed. It's filmed, edited, and released by ISIS members, documenting their destruction of artifacts at Mosul Museum in Iraq.

Around this same time, I have been working on a series of writings and art projects connecting 3D printing, plastic, crude oil, technocapitalism, and jihad as politically networked and poetically related concepts. As the video keeps cycling through social media, my head feels like it's spinning, looking for ways to go beyond the shock of this violence and its layered complexity.

A month later, I started working on a research based project which occupied my life for the next two years called *Material Speculation: ISIS*, in which I reconstructed 12 selected artifacts destroyed by ISIS at Mosul Museum. Using a combined process of research, digital 3D modeling and 3D fabrication, I created 3D printed reconstructions of



Still of Islamic State destroying Lamassu statue at the Nergal Gate, Nineveh, 2015, Courtesy of Al Hayat Media Centre

the destroyed artifacts. Inside the body of each sculpture, I included a flash drive that contains visual, text, and 3D printable files of hundreds of pages of research I have gathered in relation to those artifacts.

As the project continues and grows, I find myself sitting in my studio looking at a wall that resembles a crime investigation map in one of those detective movies. Except that my map ends up being much more complex and non-binary as time passes. And I have no court of justice to take anyone to. I spend days and nights with the images of the artifacts and confusing information that sometimes doesn't match up between an Arabic text and its English translation. Some nights I have strange dreams with Ebu or King Uthal in them. I feel connected to each of these objects. I spend days 3D modeling them with a team of students, days and nights 3D printing them, bathing them, cleaning them, shining them. I love them. I love them in a way that I haven't loved any other works of art I have created. They are part of my culture, my people, my history. And I want to protect them. When I say 'them' here, think beyond this one project. Think about them as a whole series of other historical sites and artefacts in the Middle-East. And when I say "protect", I mean that I want to protect them not only from ISIS, but from Silicon Valley, from Google, from all the tech companies in the West, from all the white cultures and their colonialist technologies.

I know once the artifacts are destroyed, they are gone forever and there is no way to truly replace them. *Material Speculation: ISIS* is and has been my homage to something that is lost, but it's also a project that ever since has become bigger than me, changing and shaping my practice and my research into something much more important and critical. What I am trying to do with this text today is to lay a case, between you, the reader and I, the writer, to raise difficult questions that I don't have all the answers for. This chain of thought is perhaps an unapologetic call for re-thinking and re-imagining. A call for not feeling easy. It's the result of being pushed and pulled within systems and figures that have a long history of invading and colonizing our lives and our countries. As time passes and with access to new technologies like 3D scanners, these methods now take new forms. Positive, good, necessary, heroic at first sight. And I am here to perhaps scratch at that surface, and dig into some ground to make the invisible visible.

The crime investigation map I created on my studio wall in 2015 is much larger now. And yes! There is still no judicial system willing to take it on. But six years later, I have come to terms with the fact that I must create my own version of a court of justice. You are free to take whatever role that you wish to take. To be the judge, the defendant, the attorney, an observer, a member of the public, a dreamer, an enemy, an ally. My imaginary court of justice is a place not only for judgment, but for rituals, dreams, and magic. For practical ideas embedded into dystopian realities and utopian wishes and self-made methods for unfolding.

THE CASE FOR VIOLENCE

I think about violence often. It's a word that comes up in my artist talks constantly. When I talk about violence of destruction by ISIS, I am talking about the kind of violence that I am well familiar with, growing up in Iran. A violence that is not just 'on' and 'against' objects but also human bodies. But I also have made a point to equally talk about the kind of violence that follows me all my life prior to and after immigrating to the US at the age of 22. This violence is not like that of ISIS but by the very country that I choose to live in: The United States. It is a violence that sells weapons to Iraq over 8 years of the Iran-Iraq war that shapes a significant part of my childhood memories. The kind of violence that kills millions of innocent humans, and destroys homes, schools, cultural centers, and hundreds of historical sites in Afghanistan and Iraq for at least two decades. The long violence of invasion and colonization of lands and cultures. The violence at borders that extends to and beyond maps and geographical lines.

Since 2015, I have sat at and through countless lectures and panels in relation to reconstruction of historical sites and artifacts. This is also a time in which there is a sudden trend of using photogrammy, 3D printing and 3D scanning by institutions and companies as tools for preservation and reconstruction. It's also the time that ISIS rose and fell in power. I have listened to technologists, archaeologists, historians, and politicians from mainly Western countries talk about the shock they experienced while watching the video of the destruction of artifacts by ISIS. And through these years, I have not once come across anyone addressing nor condemning the destruction committed by the very countries they come from. The kind of violence that 'shocked' ISIS and inspired them to do something. Other kinds of violence stay invisible, hidden in their binary simplistic readings of these events, or are they cautiously untold?

ISIS takes pride in destruction. They are bold, direct. In their showcase of destruction, violence is presented as an eventful crisis; an explosive sudden kind of violence. You see it and it immediately shocks you. While the U.S. military hides, deletes, and un-archives its violence and war crimes from the public, or justifies it as work that needs to be done for the safety of its people. Alongside this, there are those who choose to participate in this invisible violence. For example, after ISIS destroyed Palmyra's 1,800-year-old Roman arch in Syria, a digital reconstruction project launched as the result of a major collaboration between the UK's Institute for Digital Archaeology, UNESCO, and Dubai's Museum of the Future. In a video documentation of the unveiling ceremony, as a white fabric is pulled down to reveal the 3D reconstructed arch of Palmyra, Boris Johnson, the former mayor of London, tells the audience: "No one should have the power to delete such monuments from our historical record. This is an arch of triumph and in many ways a triumph of technology and determination. We are here in a spirit of defiance, defiance of the barbarians who destroyed the original as they have destroyed so many other relics in Syria and the Middle East."

People in the audience applaud. They take turns taking selfies with the new Palmyra arch and then return to the safety of their homes, never thinking back to what was strange with that image; how ISIS formed in the first place as a result of the U.S. and European invasion of the Middle-East. This violence that sits side by side to that so-called "barbarian" violence, the one that is equally real and destructive, is once again deferred, delayed. Has gone invisible. Pushed into some background in a political maneuver of the bad and the good. The violence I am talking about is not just about how these figures remove themselves from a cycle they have been a part of for centuries, but also a kind of violence that is about reclaiming. ISIS reclaims the objects through destruction, through creating absence. Western governments and the tech sector reclaim it after destruction, through a new kind of presence, and we fail to see the violence of that presence in the way we see the violence of the absence.

In 2016 I released a zip folder of my research and gathered files from my *Material Speculation: ISIS* project online, on Rhizome.org's website (the same materials that are inside the USB drives, sealed in the belly of my reconstructed artifacts). In a folder named 'Destruction Images', I include 44 pictures showing the destruction of the artifacts at Mosul Museum by ISIS. The titles of these 44 images are words organized chronologically that when read from beginning to end create a complete sentence. And the sentence reads:

"Ultimately the only way to stop the destruction of Iraq and Syria's cultural heritage is to stop the so-called war on terror and the military invasion of the Middle-East. Because everything is a cycle and nothing can truly be done without breaking that cycle."

This was perhaps my quiet, wishful way of activating something beyond the one kind of violence that at the time many people and the media chose to focus on. A battle that 3 years later still feels un-winnable.

THE CASE FOR CARE

What is 'care'? To care? To care for? To care about? Care can be a blessing but sometimes a curse. A curse mistaken as blessing is care when it's removed from context. When it is dishonest and manipulative. Or to give it the benefit of doubt, care when it is confused, misunderstood, wronged by the caregiver.

I want to begin by talking about violent care. A concept I first came across in an article by Thom Van Dooren called 'A Day with Crows: Rarity, Nativity and the Violent-Care of Conservation', in which Dooren shares his story about a day spent at the Keauhou Bird Conservation Center in Hawaii, observing staff taking care of a captive population of critically endangered Hawaiian crows. Over the course of the day some animals were cared for (especially endangered birds), while others were trapped and killed as part of the conservation management of the larger property (i.e. feral pigs). He uses this story to explore the frameworks and the associated regimes of 'violent-care' that structure "how living beings are valued or sacrificed within contemporary conservation practices".

These kinds of decisions about the value of lives and cultures in Syria are made in central London, and so a replica of Palmyra's arch in Trafalgar Square becomes a symptom of violent care: the unique and precious object that is rescued when so much is deemed disposable. For any Western institution to focus on the reconstruction of the rare and special

Morehshin Allahyari, Lamassu from the series Material Speculation: ISIS, 2015, 3D printed sculpture and flash drive, image courtesy artist.

while other Western institutions have wrought the destruction of the everyday, is violent care.

Since 2015, I have been lecturing, writing, and workshopping around the concept of Digital Colonialism with specific focus on cultural heritage and digital technologies such as 3D scanners and 3D printers. I define Digital Colonialism as a framework for critically examining the tendency for information technologies to be deployed in ways that reproduce colonial power relations. In the past years of developing this research, I have specifically focused on three major cultural heritage and digital archeology projects. One is CyArk, a company based in Oakland, California that "digitally archives the world's heritage sites for preservation and education". Then Project Mosul which is "a digital preservation project that attempted to crowdsource images to reconstruct the destroyed artifacts of Mosul," and last but not least Google Arts and Culture's Institute that is "a project for digital archiving enabling users to explore physical and contextual information about artworks, and to compile their own virtual collection."

You read the 'About' descriptions on these websites and for half a minute your natural side of being human wants to believe and trust in something. But there are a lot of complications and troubles with these projects. In my months of research on these websites, I have come across two common kinds of language that reveal a violent aspect of these acts of showing care: the language of 'Alignment' and the language of becoming an 'Ally'.

The word align means "to form in line; to fall into line. To adjust or form to a line". It's about becoming one line, a straight line. When talking about cultural heritage and historical artifacts, these organizations, like many other digital preservation projects, use words such as "our", "we", "shared", "universal", "us". You see it repeating and repeating. But who is this we? What is ours? How is it shared? In a TEDx talk given in Hamburg by Change Coughenour, one of the two members of Project Mosul, he ends his lecture with: "You see, cultural heritage is about our shared global history. It helps us connect with our ancestors and their stories...We need your help to reclaim the history that is being lost. Will you join us?" He then smiles and the audience, most of whom is white, applauds. Coughenour's words are a small example of the language of alignment. In simple ways they are saying: "Hey! We are one human species, standing side by side in one straight line; one straight line of heritage and ownership".

This kind of contextualization however, is a historical long term tactic for colonization — a claim of universality in the midst of the subjugation of entire peoples — and it reveals a violent aspect of this apparent gesture of care.

Following these organizations closely since 2015, I have seen their language use change as they reframed some of their activities, perhaps due to a set of critiques they received over the years. As time passes, they begin to use less forward, more friendly language like "educating", "assisting", "helping", or "providing technology" more frequently. On their website and Instagram page for example, CyArk staff are sometimes pictured standing next to brown and black people in different countries, shaking hands, or putting their arms around their shoulders. Here they are pictured as helpers; as allies. The word ally means "to connect or form a relation by resemblance, friendship, or love." So in this case instead of saying we or ours, the position has changed to "you" and "yours". Yet you, the other, the savage, the barbarian, the citizen of an undeveloped country, you are in need of our help because you are in a war crisis or you don't have access to these digital tools. So as your allies, we've come to help you. This is what I call a less leveled kind of alignment. The straight leveled line now shifts into a diagonal one. A line that has a top and a bottom.

THE CASE FOR SAVING

In a video called Documenting The Temple of Eshmun, you see the Field Manager of CyArk, Ross Davison, with a small group of Middle-Eastern women and men in Lebanon, training them in how to use digital conservation technologies. In an interview with him and Kacey Hadick, the Program Coordinator of CyArk titled 'Syria's Heritage Gets a Helping Hand', Ross describes the group as one "eager to learn this process and to integrate it with their work." In response to a question asked by the interviewer on ways they ensure this digital data is protected, Hadick mentions that they have backed it up numerous times and stored a gold copy at the Iron Mountain bunker (a storing, protecting and management site for digital information based in Boston). "It's not going anywhere," he says. Then continues: "The most secure and fool-proof way to get data out of Syria is to carry it out. I think that all of the data we have received has actually been transmitted to us from outside of Syria. For that reason, the teams in Syria have been given our favorite Seagate LaCie rugged drives which they are using for data back up in the field and to securely transfer and transmit data." Once again, we are back to a familiar image. The white man, the same traditional colonial master who maintained missionary schools for the indigenous people they referred to as savages, who goes to a developing country now to assist them, to bring them its technological knowledge. A kind of assistant that has never been about the empowerment of the powerless, but like Petar Jandrić and Ana Kuzmanić say, has been about "making those they called savage more efficient within the dominating socio-economic orders". This is a kind of colonial expansion: Now from physical to digital.

In a better world, these people with their saviour complex could come back as the hero they wanted to be. But they never do. What they get their hands on to conserve, they do not leave behind. When they take it they do not return it to us. Whether a physical object like the Nefertiti bust stolen from Egypt in 1912 by a German archaeological team, or the digitally scanned data from the Temple of Eshmun. Yet another example of violent care. A more gentle and slow one. Easy to miss.

Since 2018, Google Arts and Culture in collaboration with CyArk has launched a project called Open Heritage, which promises to make their archives available to a broader audience. A new push to bring their gathered data from private servers to public access. Before you can request any kind of digital data from the Open Heritage website, you must check four boxes to indicate your agreement to certain conditions. Two of them are: “I must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.” and “I may not use the material for commercial purposes.” This means that CyArk has a monopoly on the commercial use of the data and the countries where the scanned sites are located may not sell the scans without permission. This is a kind of sharing that reinforces CyArk’s ultimate ownership. Meaning that the copyrighted ownership of this 3D scanned data by Western institutions is problematic and must be questioned—and so is the concept of open heritage. Is open heritage good? Is open source always in the larger interest?

This isn’t the only issue with the Open Heritage project. What we have learned in past years is that, like care, open access on the internet can similarly be a blessing and a curse. I admit that in 2016, I had a naive understanding of open source and free access. When I released the zipped folder of artifacts destroyed by ISIS, I included an .obj/.stl file of one of the 12 artifacts: King Uthal. At the time I was under the impression that giving access to this file could be an important method to go against the work of other organizations, who kept their 3D scans and digital data on private servers or only gave access if one could afford to purchase the data. But simultaneously, due to all the press around my own project and also similar projects at the time, somewhere in my gut I felt the need to step back. To not get carried away by the hype that surrounded my work. Since then I have kept the digital models of the 11 other artifacts private; with me. And I’ve been working to come up with a method, perhaps a better solution to these issues of access and ownership. In a similar way that the utopian dream of a free and democratic internet in the 80’s proved to be a naive prediction, open access and free information are uneven and politically charged issues. Who has access to fast internet to download a free, 50 GB file of 3D scanned data of a historical site from their home country? Who has access to a 3D printer or has the skills to use these preservation technologies in a world where the digital gap is a messy and real problem? Who owns the servers and control over the free data that is put on these websites? And why give open access to our cultures and histories when there is no fair and truly un-imperialistic system and infrastructure built to preserve them without colonizing or making profit from them?

Imagine you walk into the Neues Museum in Berlin and see the Nefertiti bust. If you know the history of how it got here, you know it wasn’t with permission. And you might have heard that for the last decades, there have been a lot of requests from the Egyptian government to get the Nefertiti back to Egypt, where it belongs. So not only is the physical object stolen, but it is also put on public view. The German government doesn’t sell the Nefertiti bust, but it makes profit off displaying it at museums that charge a fee, loaning it, making high quality replicas of it that it sells on its website for up to 8900 Euros each.

What I have been trying to do with my research on Digital Colonialism, is to use more traditional examples like the Nefertiti bust as a framework to make sense of the issues that come with new technologies like 3D scanners and printers. And to apply these historical colonial examples to what is happening now, at this very moment. I might not have the answers to these questions, but what I certainly know is that we have to explore these issues beyond what is positive and seems simple at first sight. A position I am committed to hold and explore.

THE CASE FOR DREAMING

One of my favorite TV shows from America is Twin Peaks. It is a surreal crime drama in which an FBI Agent, Dale Cooper, travels to the town of Twin Peaks to solve the murder of Laura Palmer. But through the course of the show, instead of a final resolution that could reveal a clear solution to that one crime, you are presented with a set of situations that remind you 'things are not what they seem'. Not the objects, nor the animals or humans in the show, not even the figures who carry the ability to twist reality. The only thing real perhaps, is your intuition as the viewer to make sense of the elements, connecting points that might seem disconnected on the surface; to go beyond facts, using dream sequences, metaphors, and magic as clues for exploration and understanding.

In my sentimental head and looking back over the past six years, I have come to terms that this is exactly what I have been doing. It is what we just did right here in the past few pages. Connecting points on a crime investigation wall using facts, quotes, evidence, and analogy while searching for something deeper; that is about emotional, personal, poetic, and magical understandings of the world we live in and its uneven realities.

For a long time, I've imagined and carried this scene in my head in which a 3D scanner is being used, held, operated by womxn in a ceremony of rituals; opening paths towards the unseen; towards what is unknown to others. As we 3D scan objects, as they become digital, instead of us 'saving' them, we let them 'save us'. We let them save us and what belongs to us from colonial powers. Instead of the digital file of an object, we let its story, its power, to be the elements that travel toward the clouds. The kind of cloud that is unlimited, dreamy, impossible to be caught, controlled, or owned. The kind of cloud that allows for the re-imagining of both the limited and the unlimited sky. For a long time, I have imagined and carried this dream in my head where I am standing on a stage and the time is the future, and we have mastered leaving marks on the wall, never being pleased with what it seems.

A version of this text was first performed at New Museum in New York in 2019 as part of a lecture-performance commissioned by Rhizome Commissions Program, which is supported by Jerome Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Living Room Light Exchange, 2019

LIVING ROOM LIGHT EXCHANGE IV

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ERRATA

Spell(ing)work: The name of artist Morehshin Allahyari is printed incorrectly in this edition.

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SHE WHO SEES THE UNKNOWN: AISHA QANDISHA

MORESHIN ALLAHYARI

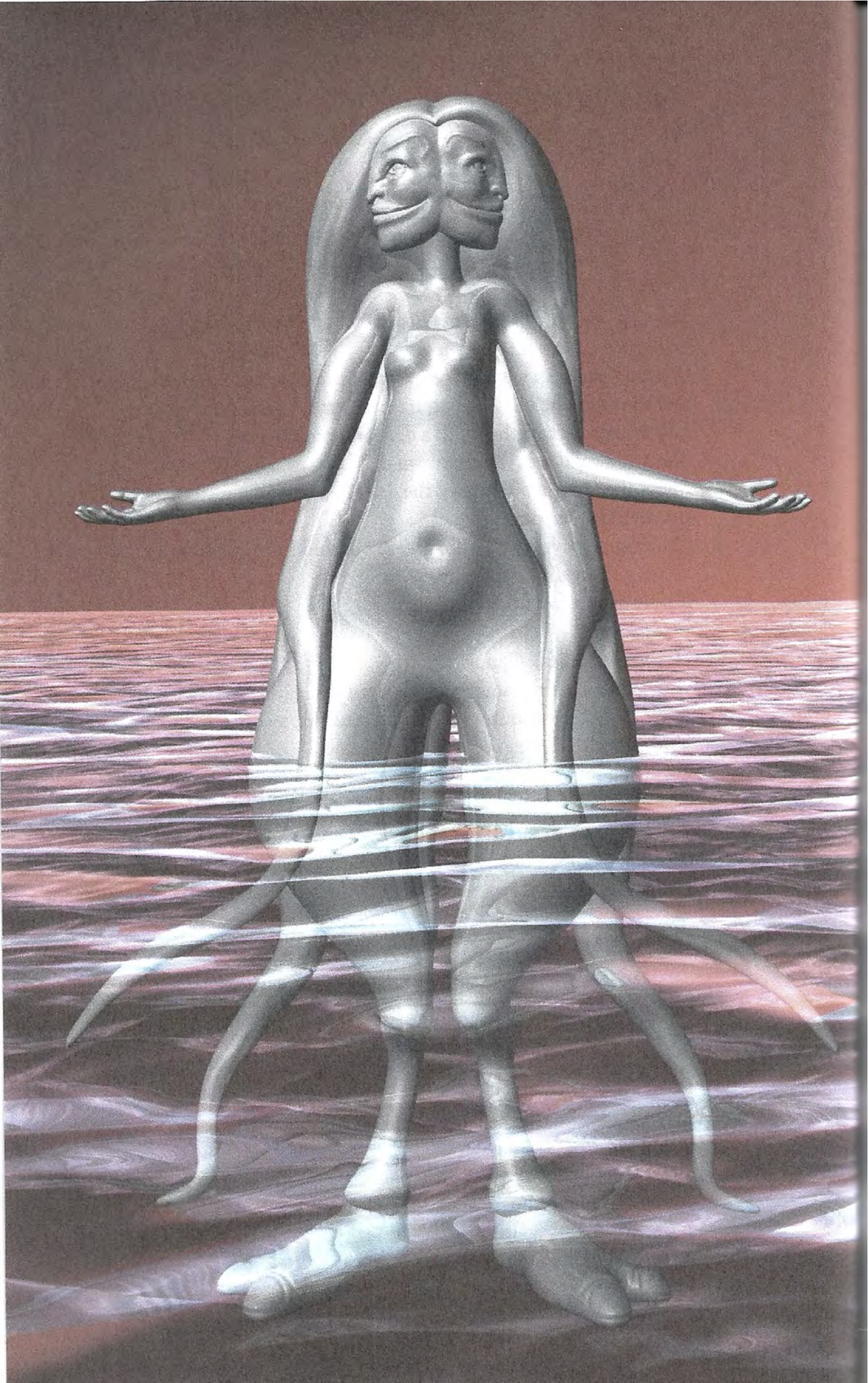
She who saw all things in the broad-boned earth and beyond,
and knew what was to be known
She who had seen what there was, and had embraced the 'otherness'
She to whom the image clung like a mirror; a display of crisis
and who dwelt together with a devised becoming
She knows and sees the unknown and lays them bare
She is the 'monstrous other,' the dark goddess, the possessive jinn,
the dividing persona;
She restores myths and histories; the untold and the forgotten;
    the misread and uneven;
Those of and from the Near East

Her name is Aisha Qandisha;
One of the most fearsome and honored jinn of the Arab world;
A demon believed to live in the waters of Fez medina.
The jinn with the legs of a goat or a camel.
One head looking right and the other left; splitting her in half.

Seducing men to fall in love with her;
Sometimes appearing as an irresistibly erotic woman and sometimes
    as a Hag;

For the Moroccans she is known as the 'opener.'
To possess a man, Aisha creates a crack in his body.
She breaks him.
Divides him.
Opens him.
Invites him to an outside.

When she possesses a man,
She does not take over the host
but rather opens him
-now the lover-
to a storm of incoming jinn and demons;
Making him a traffic zone

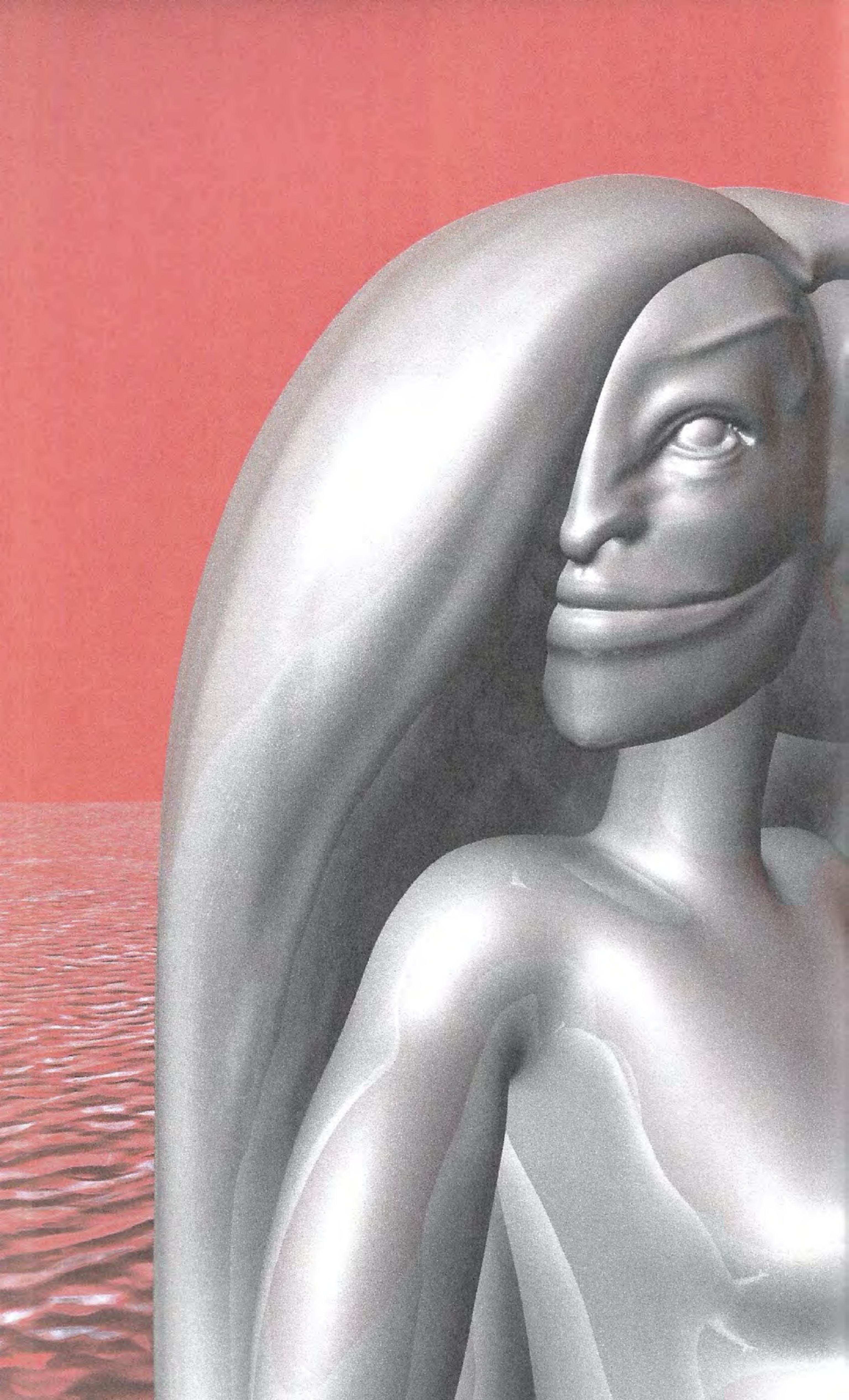


She never leaves
She resides in the man to guarantee his utter openness

"Feel me"
She says
And through his opening
he does.

The only way to feel sane with Aisha Qandisha is to participate
    with her.
to bend; to bond.
In an unwinnable war

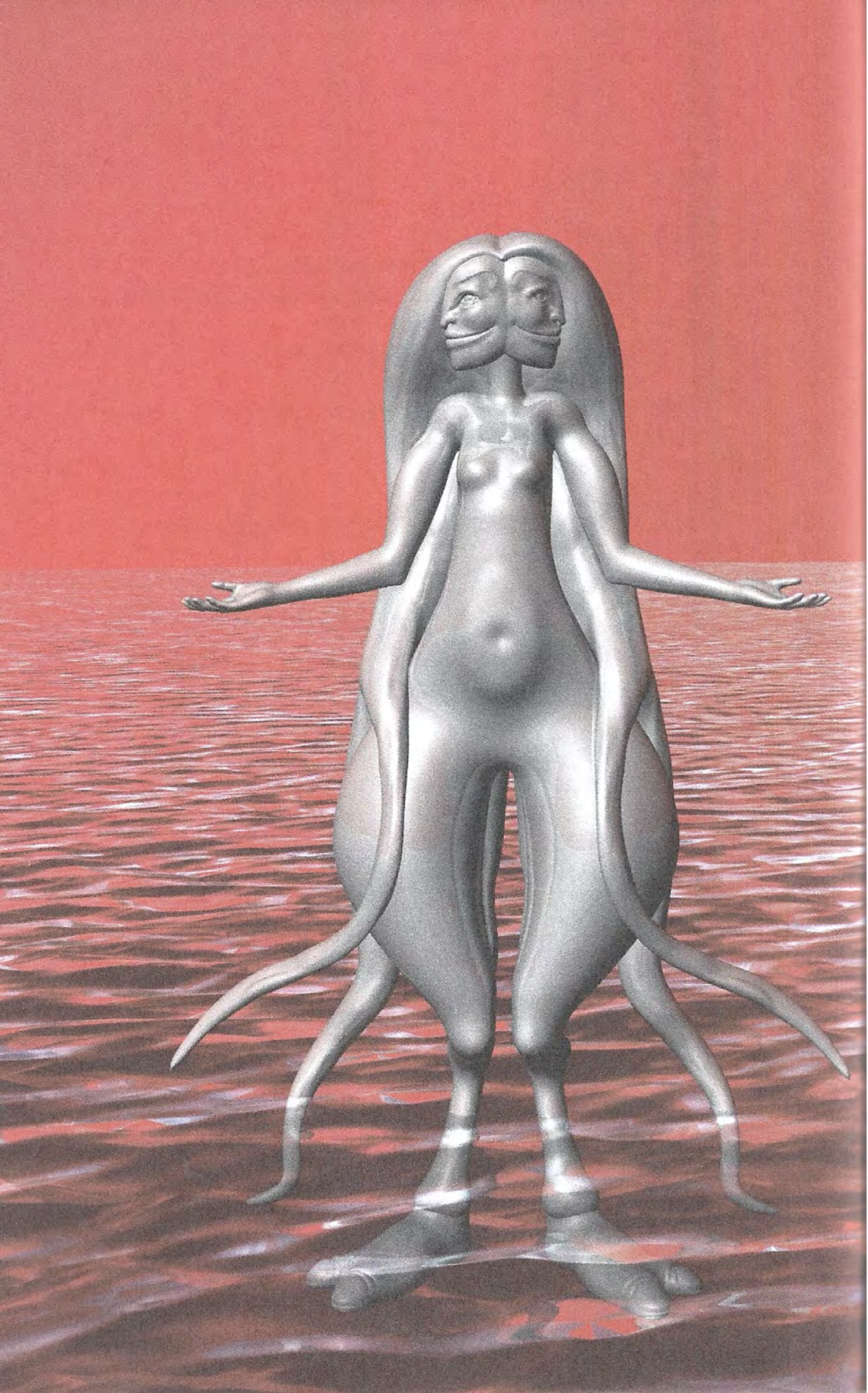
Causing sexual arousal
Causing physical emasculation
Causing castration anxiety
Causing temporary weakening of the muscular
portion of the heart
Causing the appearance of darling isolations
Causing dry croaking of his throat
Causing strange times



SOMETIME LAST FALL
FALLEN IN AND OFF A TWISTED REALITY
SHE CAME ACROSS THE STORY OF AISHA QANDISHA;
A MOROCCAN JINN FIGURE
CAUSING POSSESSION AND IMPOTENCE;

AS THE TIME PASSED BETWEEN THEN AND NOW
SHE AND SHE BECAME ONE.
OVERLAPPED.
THEIR BODIES MERGED.
THEIR STORIES CONJOINED IN A MASHUP OF A
FICTION AND A DOCUMENTARY.
FOR A MAD ACT OF MYTH-MAKING;
GIVING BIRTH TO A RE-FIGURE THAT IS NEITHER
NOR.

I TELL YOU "I LOVE YOU"
I PUT THE PALM OF MY HAND ON YOUR LIPS
SO THAT ALL THE LIES STAY WITHIN YOU
DON'T EVER CLAIM WHAT YOU CAN NOT GIVE
ALL YOUR LOVE LETTERS READ THE SAME
YOU ARE IN THE PAST, AND I AM HEADING INTO
THE FUTURE
IT IS YOU WHO WILL SUBMIT
YOU WILL WEEP LIKE YOU WILL CHANGE
AND THIS PAIN WILL SPREAD LIKE A DEADLY
PLAGUE



YOU WRITE TO SAY

"I FEEL MY OWN HURT NOW AND I FEEL A HURT
FOR THE THINGS I DID BACK THEN. A HURT I
FEEL ON YOUR BEHALF."

YOU WRITE TO SAY

"I HAVE HAD THE MOST MISERABLE FEW WEEKS. I
DESERVE NOTHING FROM YOU. I MISS KNOWING
YOU. YOUR ABILITY TO SWITCH OFF SCARES ME
MORE AND MORE EACH DAY. I FEEL LIKE PART
OF ME IS GONE."

YOU WRITE TO SAY

"BUT PLEASE DON'T PUSH ME AWAY. PLEASE DON'T
FORGET ME. DON'T FORGET US."

YOU HAVE ALREADY DISAPPEARED
EVERY CRACK IN YOUR BODY IS AN
OPPORTUNITY
TO SHATTER YOU
TO SPLIT YOU
TO DESTROY YOU
AND A WORLD AWAITS
AND IS IN TUNE WITH ME
FOR AN OPENING
AND A CLOSURE

YOU WILL WEEP LIKE YOU CAN CHANGE
THEN YOU DISAPPEAR INFINITELY

Still images from HD video. All images are courtesy of the artist, 2018.

+ MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI
+ LATURBO AVEDON
+ LIAT BERDUGO
+ INGRID BURRINGTON
+ LEORA FRIDMAN
+ TANYA GAYER
+ ROSE LINKE
+ FORREST MCGARVEY
+ YETUNDE OLAGBAJU
+ DOROTHY SANTOS
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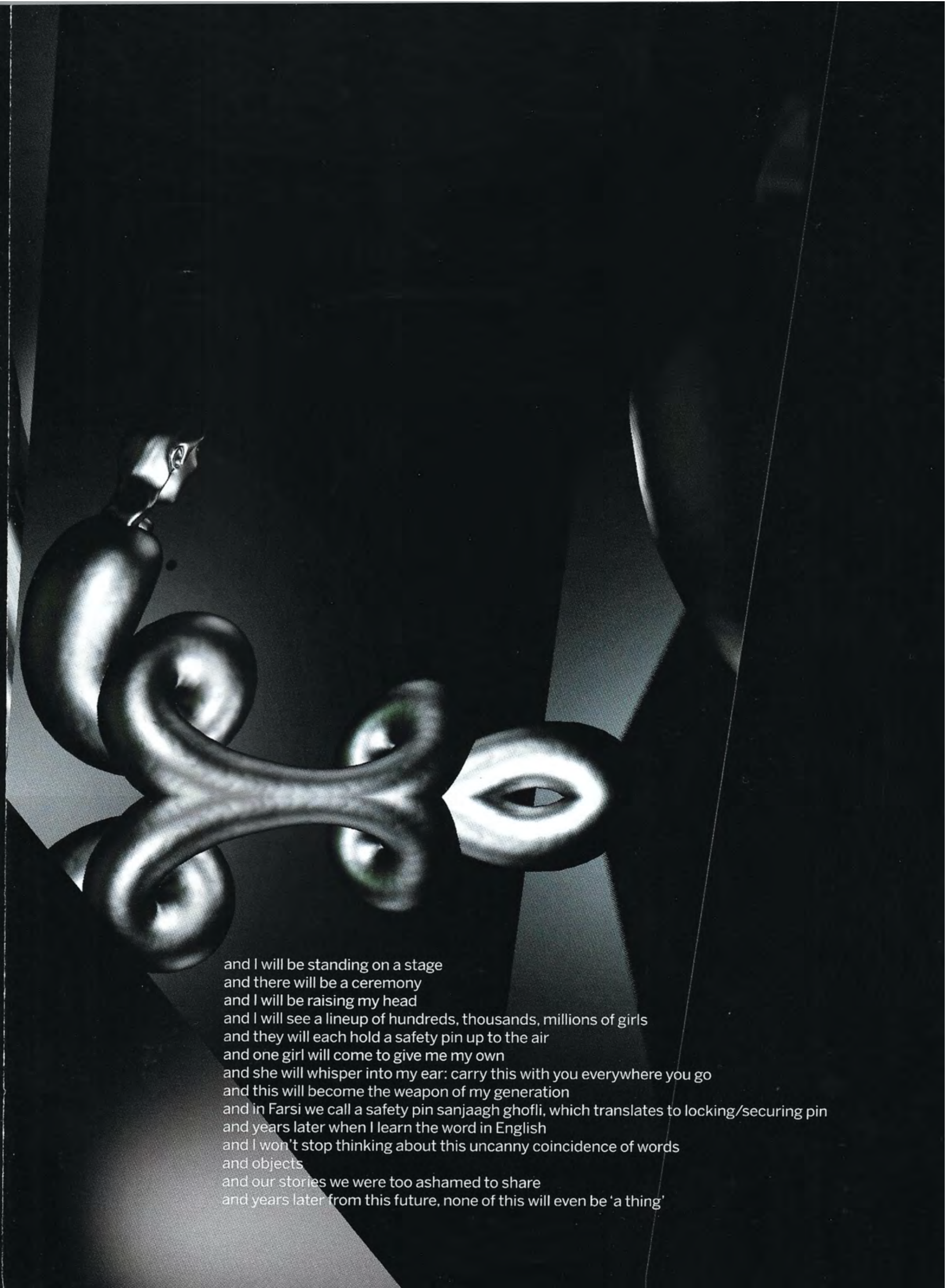
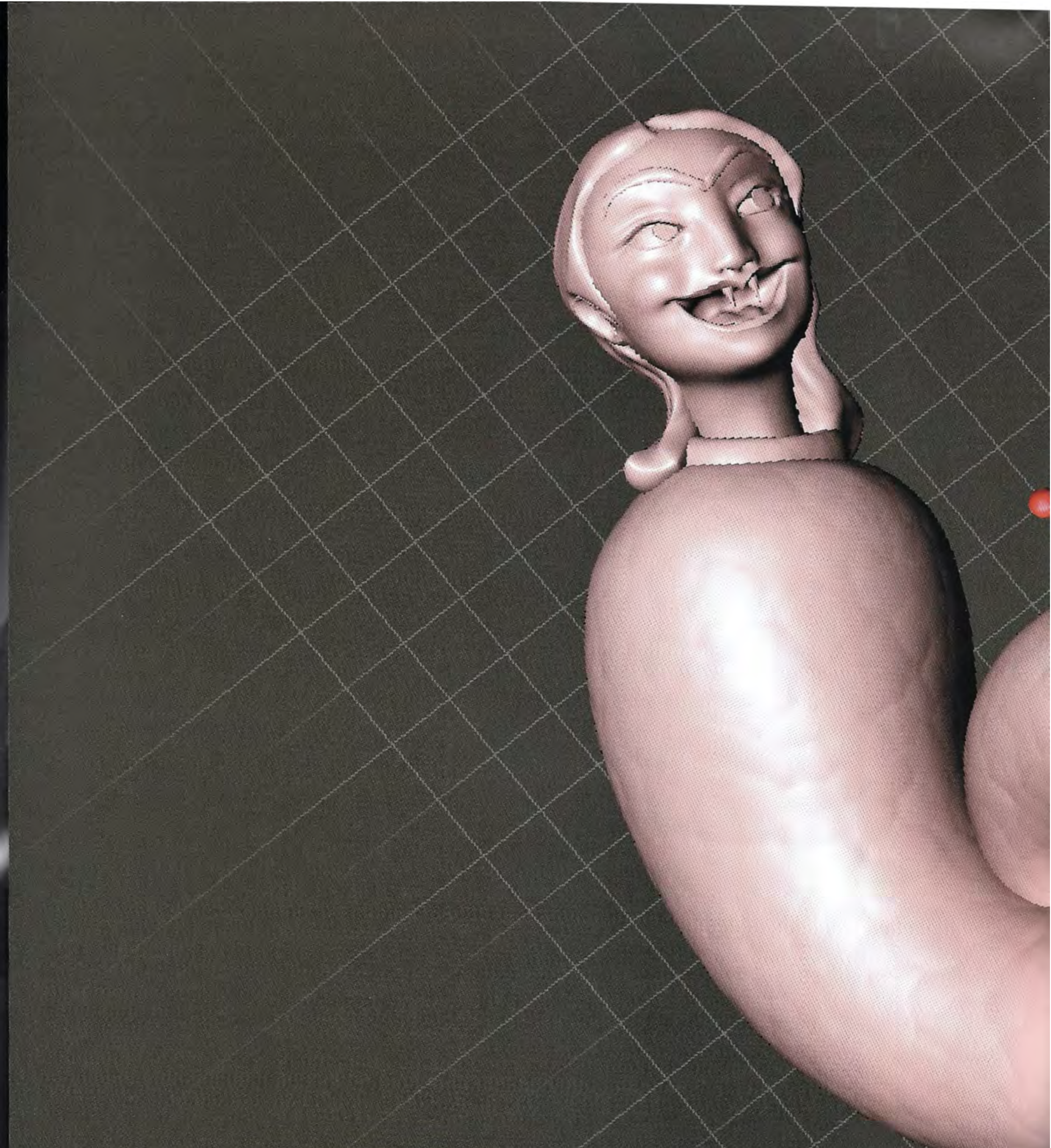
THE LAUGHING SNAKE

Morehshin Allahyari



and I will be standing on a stage
and there will be a ceremony
and I will be raising my head
and I will see a lineup of hundreds, thousands, millions of girls
and they will each hold a safety pin up to the air
and one girl will come to give me my own
and she will whisper into my ear: carry this with you everywhere you go
and this will become the weapon of my generation
and in Farsi we call a safety pin sanjaagh ghofli, which translates to locking/securing pin
and years later when I learn the word in English
and I won't stop thinking about this uncanny coincidence of words
and objects
and our stories we were too ashamed to share
and years later from this future, none of this will even be 'a thing'



and they will hold a mirror in front of me/in front of her
and I/she will lock a safety pin to my/her collar
and I/she will laugh while tears run down my/her face
and I/she will immediately recall my/her grandmother saying: to befriend or conquer a Jinn
always have a safety pin fastened to your clothes
and at that very moment so many worlds will collapse
and the Laughing Snake and I will become one
and we will be mirrored mirroring
and we will appear to recede into an infinite distance; that is the future

and I will walk out and I will be on the bus
and he will sit next to me
and he will slowly start rubbing his elbow to my left breast
and he will look out the window like nothing is happening, while doing it
and I will take my safety pin out
and I will calmly push it into his leg
and I will push it in
and I will push it in so much and so hard and so fiercely
and the more I push it in the more blood will come out
and the more I push it in the more his body falls apart
and the more I push it in the more he will disappear
and the whole world will be watching
and he will be gone
and I will return to my body

Art Quarterly, 2019

utumn 2019 What Self-Portraits Say Slow Looking Art in Motion A Short History of Infographics

Art Quarterly

Autumn 2019

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SCVA: PHOTO © PHILIP SAYER. SHARPLES: © BRISTOL CULTURE (BRISTOL MUSEUM & ART GALLERY). SIOBHAN DAVIES DANCE: PHOTO © PARI NADERI

Clockwise from above: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (SCVA), University of East Anglia, Norwich; Rolinda Sharples, *The Artist and her Mother*, 1816; *Table of Contents*, by Siobhan Davies Dance, performer Charlie Morrissey

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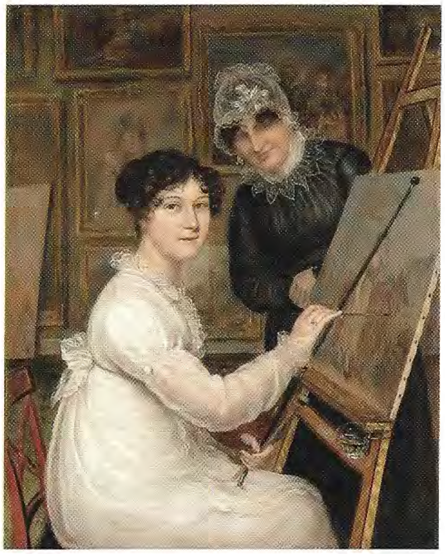

> 'As the children grew, they too were trained in the art of copying, and a successful family business was built up'
> *Anna McNay, page 48*

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Q Morehshin Allahyari

What does 'digital colonialism' mean to you, and how do you respond to it with your work?

Morehshin Allahyari is an artist, activist, writer and educator. Born and raised in Iran, she moved to the US in 2007. Her work deals with contemporary political, social and cultural issues. For her project *Material Speculation: ISIS* (2015-16), Allahyari used 3-D printing to recreate 12 artefacts destroyed by Isis. Inside each, she embedded a flash drive containing her research. Her reconstruction of *Unknown King of Hatra* is currently on show in the exhibition 'What Remains' at IWM London, part of the museum's 'Culture Under Attack' season.

I started working on *Material Speculation: ISIS* in 2015 after the video of Isis' destruction of the artefacts at Mosul Museum went viral. For the past decade, I've been working at the intersection of art and activism. A lot of my work has involved thinking about archiving as an art practice. I saw this video at a time when I was also doing a lot of work with 3-D printing. It therefore made sense to me to respond to this event and to work on reconstructing the artefacts that were destroyed. I was not only coming to it from an archaeological perspective, but from an artistic, political and activist perspective. I selected 12 artefacts and, for a year, I gathered material on them. One problem was the lack of information about the artefacts themselves and their history – they hadn't been well documented at all. I remodelled them as accurately as possible based on the limited images I had. 3-D printing is a tool that I think about beyond just technology for technology's sake. I've written a manifesto, together with [fellow artist-writer] Daniel Rourke, called *The 3D Additivist Manifesto*, considering the technology's potential as a machine for resistance and political thinking, but also considering its limitations. Of course, you can't replace what was lost – what's lost is lost. My work is more a political gesture.

Inside each artefact, I embedded memory cards which contain all my research – PDF files, images, my email correspondence with scholars and historians etc. I spent days and nights with the images of the artefacts and confusing information that sometimes didn't match up between an Arabic text and an English translation. Some nights I had strange dreams with Ebu or King Uthal in them. I felt connected to each of the objects. I spent days 3-D modelling them with a team of students; days and nights 3-D printing them, bathing them, cleaning them, shining them. I love them. I love them in a way that I haven't loved any other works of art I have created. They are part of my culture, my people, my history. And I want to protect them. When I say 'them' here, think beyond this one project. Think about them as a whole series of other historical sites and artefacts in the Middle East. And when I say 'protect', I mean that I want to protect them not only from Isis, but from all the tech companies in the West, and their colonialist technologies.

I see these sculptures as time capsules, holding this knowledge for future generations. In 2016 I released a folder online that contains all the research for one of the objects, King Uthal, with Rhizome and the New Museum, New York. This is freely available to everyone to download. I didn't release the rest of the files because I wanted to see how people would respond, who might look at them, and who might also try to 3-D print the object. I'm really glad that I made that decision, because I've since become really aware of what I term 'digital colonialism', and I want to give ownership of the digital files back to a museum or a cultural space in Iraq, because I think they're the ones that ought to have them.

The idea of digital colonialism focuses specifically on how a lot of tech companies based in Western countries – Google Arts & Culture, CyArk, and more – are using technologies such as 3-D scanners and printers as ways of 'saving' cultural heritage. When you look into this practice in more depth, however, you see that it's actually just another version of the historical colonialism that we're already familiar with from walking into, for example, the British Museum, where there are all these treasures from Middle Eastern, East Asian, South Asian and African countries, a lot of which were basically stolen as part of the practice of colonialism and imperialism. When you think about the digital ownership of the same material, people don't really see it clearly. What's happening is that a lot of these companies and institutions are 3-D scanning cultural sites and artefacts and taking ownership of the digital data. They only permit private access to the material and make profit from it through copyright. If, for example, they go to Lebanon and 3-D scan something, they own the copyright of that file. If the Lebanese government then wants that scan, they can't have access to it, because it's owned by whichever company. We really have to question these practices, as well as this notion of the universal. I don't really believe in universal or shared heritage in that sense. I want us to take a deeper look at the language used and see the inherent complexity. My work is about giving something back to the people whose cultural heritage it actually is.

● 'What Remains', IWM London, to 5 January 2020. iwm.org.uk, free to all

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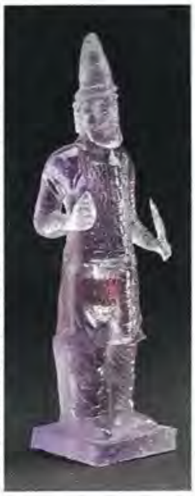
Interview by Anna McNay

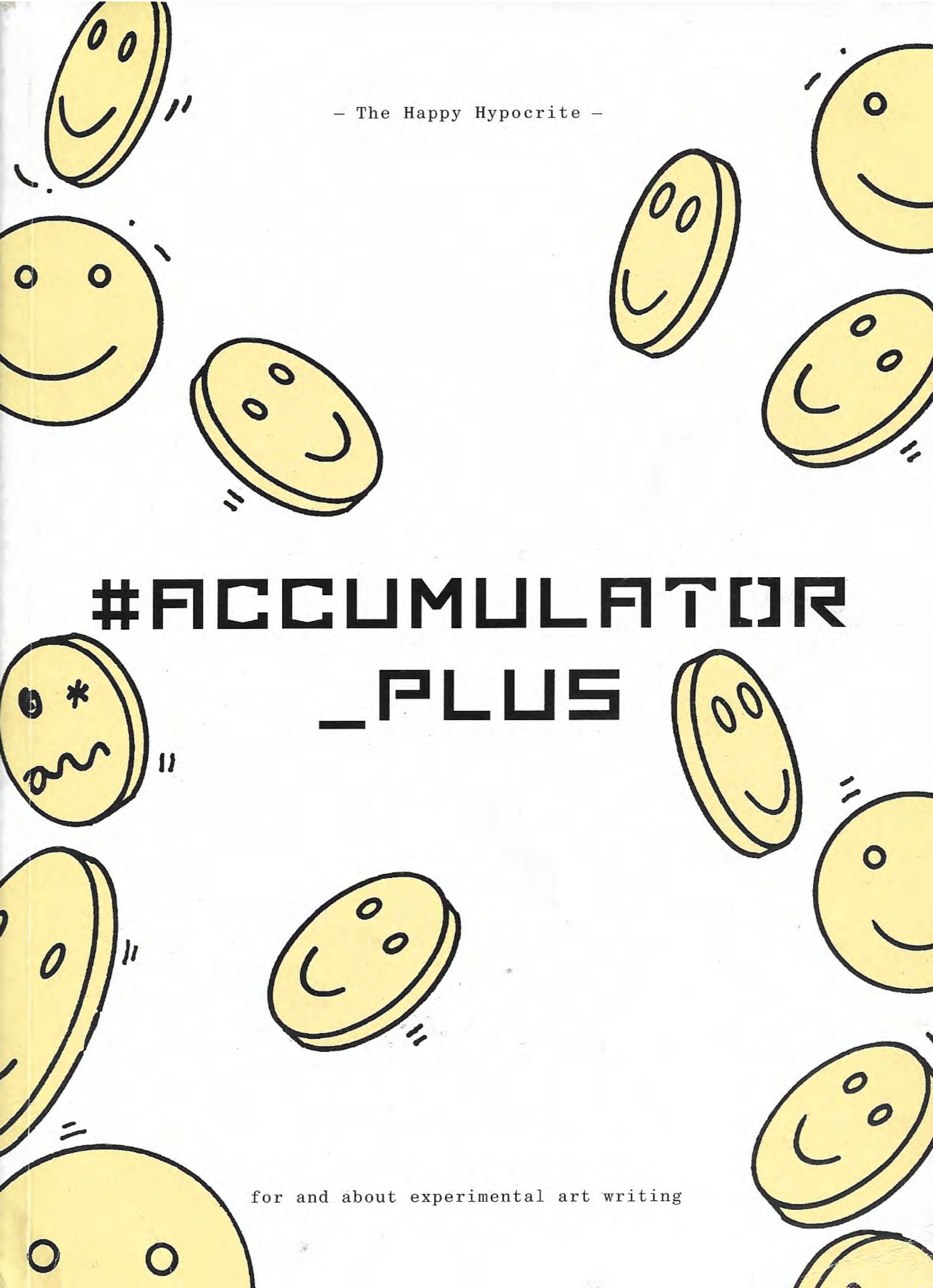
Above right: portrait of Morehshin Allahyari, 2018; below: Morehshin Allahyari, *Unknown King of Hatra*, 2015



PORTRAIT: © SARAH WANG; UNKNOWN KING: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND UPFOR GALLERY

#Accumulator_Plus, 2017

– The Happy Hypocrite –



#ACCUMULATOR _PLUS

for and about experimental art writing

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Jlin

Morehshin Allahyari

Material Speculation

Repetition of Politics The [left to right from]

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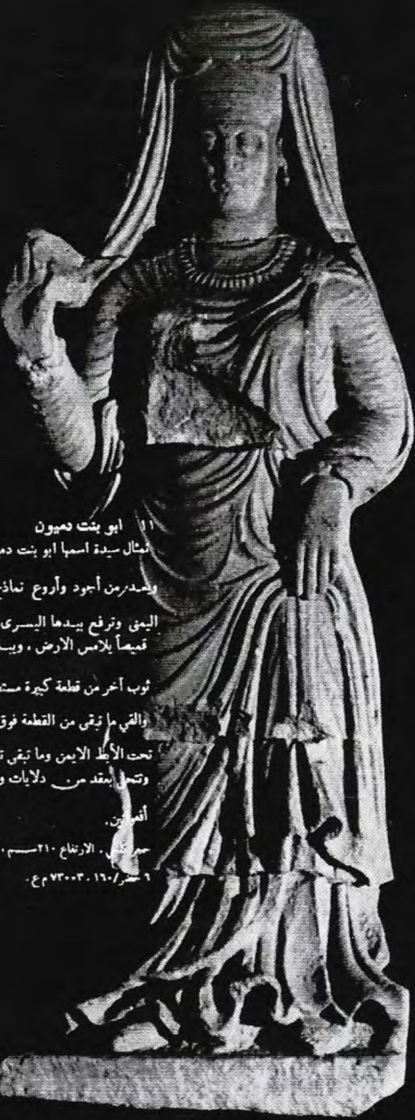
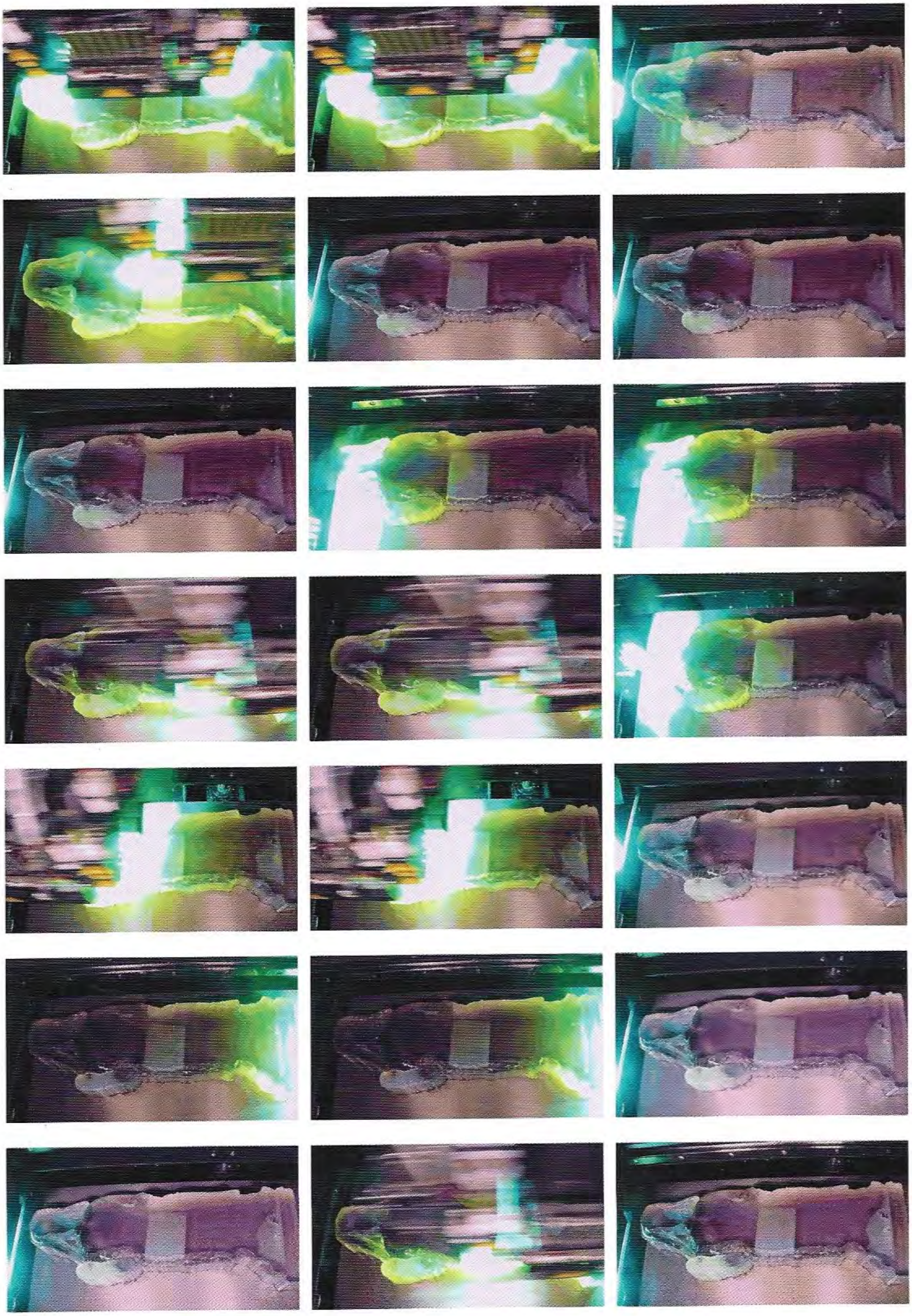


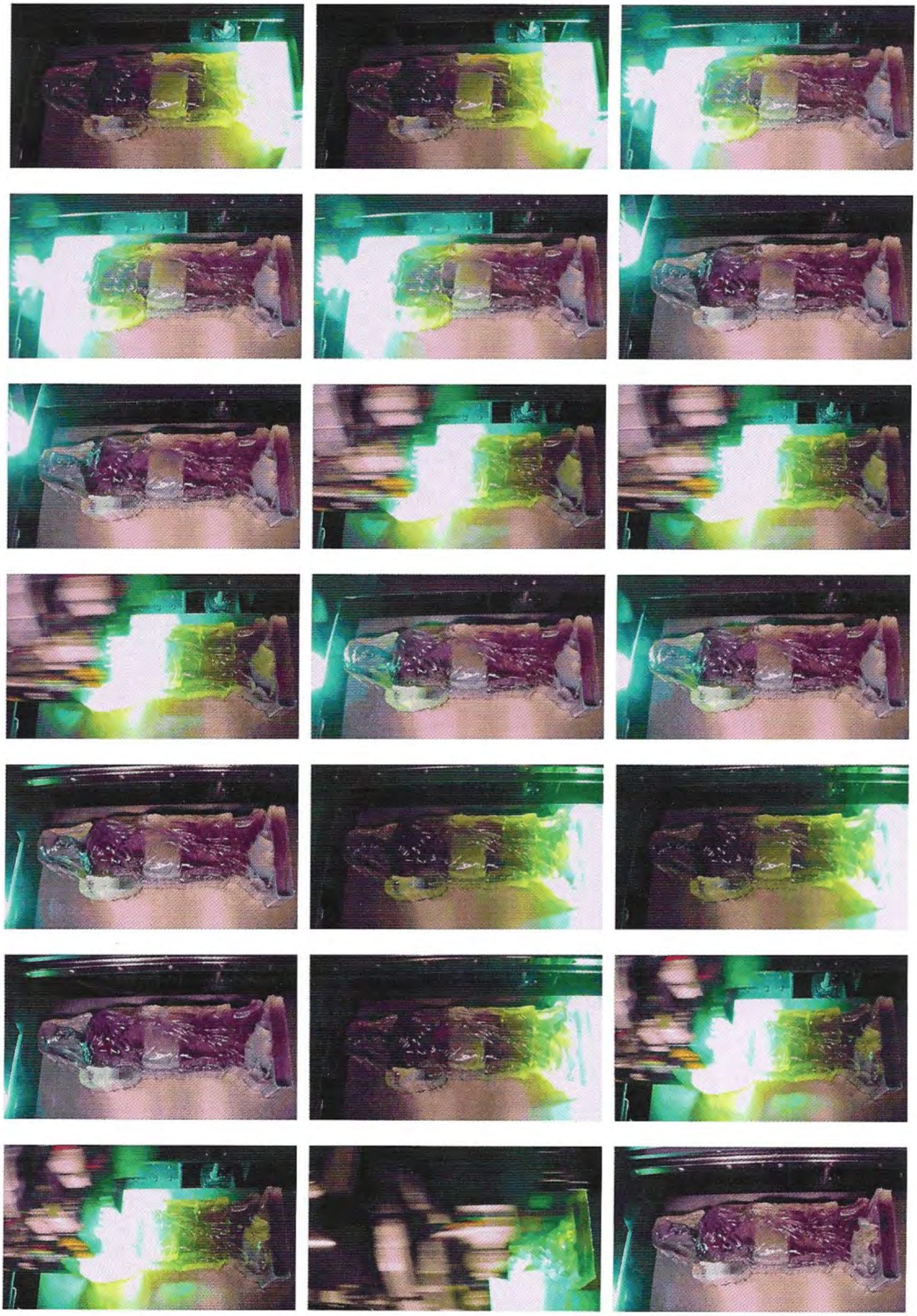
١١ ابو بنت دميون

تمثال سيدة اسمها ابو بنت دميون مدون على قاعدة التمثال [٢٢٨

وتعد من أجود وأروع نماذج النحت في الحضر. وهي تحني بيدها اليمنى وترفع بيدها اليسرى طرفاً من ثوبها الخارجي. وترتدي ابو قميصاً يلامس الارض، ويبان من بين طياته خفاها. وفوق القميص ثوب آخر من قطعة كبيرة مستطيلة من القماش ثبتت أمام كتفها الايسر، والقي ما تبقى من القطعة فوق تاج رأسها مكوناً خماراً ومن ثم الى تحت الأبط الايمن وما تبقى ترك منسدلاً الى الاسفل على جنبها الايمن. وتتحلى بعقد من دلايات وقرطين وبسوارين كل منهما ينتهي براسي أنمـ[illegible]ين.

حجر كلسي. الارتفاع ٢١٠سم. المعبد الكبير. جوار معبد شميرو.
٦ حضر/١٦٠. ٧٣٠٠٣ م ع.





Material Speculation is a digital fabrication and 3D printing project by Morehshin Allahyari that inspects petropolitical and poetic relationships between 3D printing, plastic, oil, technocapitalism and Jihad. It's a 3D modelling and 3D printing project focused on the reconstruction of twelve selected (original) artefacts from the Roman period city of Hatra and Assyrian artefacts from Nineveh that were destroyed by ISIS in 2015.

'Material Speculation: ISIS' creates a possibility for a political practice of archiving artefacts, proposing 3D printing technology as a tool both for resistance and documentation. It intends to use 3D printing as a process for repairing history and memory. Each artefact contains a USB drive or memory card onto which Allahyari has loaded material related to a year of research into the artefacts and the process of creating this work. The material includes images, PDF files, obj/.stl files, and her email correspondence with historians and scholars.

In February 2016, *Rhizome* published one of the reconstructions from 'Material Speculation: ISIS,' as well as a dossier of Allahyari's research, as part of the online series *The Download*.

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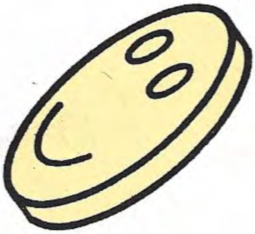

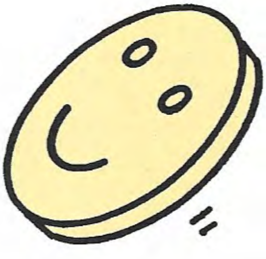

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