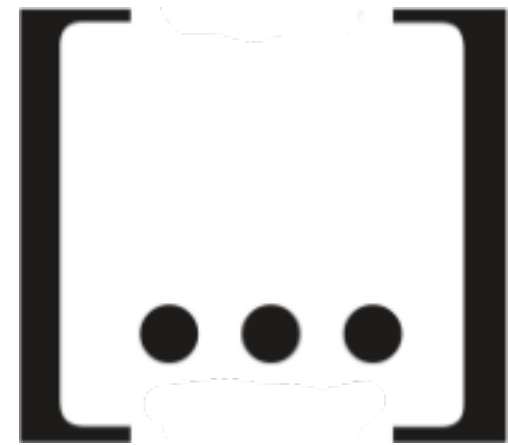


AN EXHIBITION ON ARTIST PROFILING

Curated by Shirin Zeraaty, Tabitha Nagy



The Istanbul Exhibition

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Introduction

The exhibition “[...] an exhibition on artist profiling” is the result of a six month long project initiated by TheArtCornerofTehran in collaboration with arthereistanbul and the class of Hermann Pitz at The Academy of Fine arts in Munich. The exhibition takes place at arthere and online.

During these six months, Shirin Zeraaty and Tabitha Nagy have worked with 12 artists to curate an exhibition on the topic of Artist Profiling, exploring the relation of the life of the artist and the artwork and the interpretation of works based on the context created by texts, like the biographies. The result is 12 artworks and the documentation of the process.

Each of the artists wrote a biography under an alter ego name. The biographies were swapped and the artists made an artwork impersonating the artist whose biography they received. The process was documented in interviews.

Shirin Zeraatys

Interview with

Arie Amaya-Akkermans

SZ: As a curator, is the Biography more important, or the artwork?

AAA: I think that it's a combination of factors. Generally it is no longer possible to rely on the literal or objective interpretation of an artwork without considering the context in which it was produced.

If you look at the basis of classical art, I mean classical art in the sense of European art, that they were anonymous, they were commissioned by patrons from artist whose names we don't really know. There was no concept of an individual self before the 19th century, as a self independent of possible civil society, independent of family, depending on systems of production. That process already began in the Renaissance, so 500 years ago.

We would say, that the artwork should be the primary objective of the work that curators do. But we know this to not always be the case. Especially because art is not something that exists independently of the world, but it exists only in a system of functional relations, which are intellectual, but sometimes they're also economic or social, political and sometimes belong to a systematic, institutional context.

SZ: As a curator, considering that you will look at the biography of the artist as well as the artworks, which parts of the biographies do you consider to be most important?

AAA: I personally tend to look at things holistically. I'm looking at the artwork and the context, the biography, the location. So there are many things which have to be considered together.

Generally I would say that from a institutional perspective, the way curators look at artist biographies, their place of birth is very important. So whether they belong to certain geography, or not. Now we are in this constantly evolving conversation about decolonization rather than the post-colonial electing, which feels a little bit outdated now. Curators are expected to bring with them a cadre of artists of different backgrounds, which reflect the locations in need of decolonisation and the support of minorities. So for example for the USA, that would be African-American artists, in Turkey, that would be Kurdish artists.

When I'm looking at an artist's biography, I would say that it's not why we're looking at them, but the contemporary art context is framed in such a way, that we are forced to look at the identity of the artist.

SZ: Even if it's not seen in the artwork? Would the artwork be interpretet a certain way because of the artists identity?

AAA: The context in which this discussion is being held on the artist biographies, it's not necessarily a real interest in people's stories, but on how those stories fit within the current idea of the museum.

The biography of an artists as a contemporary will seem out of context, or it responds to the politics of the day and then it is a lot easier to provide space and funds of some sort. It is easier to make an exhibition about, for example women artists from Western Africa, than it is to actually welcome them in your collection and provide funds for artists to travel, provide a real tools of exchange. This is necessarily, but you can see with time that it is more of a commercial gesture, than it is an actual interest in a biography and an artist.

SZ: How much is it the choice of the artists to be part of, one of these labels? To say „I don't want to be indicated as a female artist or as a middle Eastern artist“, is that a possibility?

AAA: Do artists choose to identify with certain labels? I guess that artists generally wouldn't want to, but they see it as a necessity in order to be able to explain the work better. So in order to take part in the game I think that some of these labels are necessary.

I think it is very difficult, to find artwork that reflects artist biographies, in the sense you're talking about. It's not that common to find completely autobiographical art. Contemporary art is more like a system of relationships. This made it possible for art to exist outside of certain historical spaces and in order to be more free. To make art without context actually, essentially means nothing because contemporary art is generally almost about nothing.

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So the context is the work in contemporary art?

SZ: Have you been chosen to curate exhibitions because of your biography and life?

AAA: I think that this has not happened to me personally. I think I managed to avoid it. If I was a very intelligent person, very ambitious and very career driven about these things, I would always highlight the fact that I'm Jewish in a Muslim country, that I'm homosexual that I grew up in Columbia during the craziest years of the civil war. However, I don't do it. In exhibitions I am a rather invisible figure. I have a suspicion of it, of taking a specific aspect of identity and highlighting it. I find it not too progressive. And I think this is different for artists. Curators are mediators and mediators should not have too much power. They are supposed to guide artists and provide serious criticism. And they should be able to produce good research.

AFRA MIRFARSI/ NIMA TAVANA

change of gender in the new alter ego name

My name is Nima Tavana. I was born in 1991 in Tehran, Iran.

Reading, making puzzles, and painting were my hobbies during childhood. I never had many friends but I always did have one close friend which was some kind of a mentor to my eyes. I find communication hard and always a challenge for me.

I studied Graphic in high school and yet chose sculpture at university. I felt there is more potential and possibilities to three dimension objects and soon I realized what I find interesting about sculptures is how tied up it is to space and how varied it can act in different atmospheres.

use of the word "space" is so different in art context

Creating a "moment", on the other hand, has always been one of my interests, and moments are a lot about spaces as well. Making sculptures also gives me some freedom to be more daring through the process, physically and mentally.

I can think more personally, more symbolic, and also more intuitively.

I learn about myself during the process of creating and I define "success", the ability to recreate my most personal perspective so that others can experience something as well.

After graduation from Tehran University of Arts, I applied for a Fine Art major at some university in Germany. I got in, but then changed my mind and chose to stay in Iran and try to build my career as an independent artist in my hometown.

How does this reflect the artwork?

Human emotions, societies, morality, and culture have always been my concerns. Nature, poetry, music, cinema, outsider artists, and learning about great people in history are my main inspiration.

I love mystery, exceptions, and things that you can't explain with words.

Interview with Tabitha Nagy

TN: How did it feel for you trying to impersonate a person based on the text of the biography, and trying to make a work as this person?

AM: When I read through the biography a few times, I tried more to concentrate on imagining or creating a state of mind or a mood or an atmosphere, rather than a person who wrote the biography. I thought it could even be a fiction, you know you wouldn't see a face, you wouldn't hear a voice and there were even no handwriting. It was a typed biography, a very short one. And or also the other thing was that there were also some words and phrases that she used in the biography that helped me to create that state of mind easier.

And the words were things like, emotions, dreams traveling collecting free mind and trying to make sense of things.

And the phrases were things about how she investigates on her own perceptions or events that happened in her past and trying to make sense out of things and stuff like that. I kind of saw the situation, like in the, in a very moving and smooth atmosphere, I don't know how to explain this, but I thought that it would be great if I can grow an idea or, do the project while traveling. She talks a lot about changes and moving and exploring and collecting and being on the way and traveling.

Afra Mirfarsi was sent the biography of Elona von der Pahlen, the alter ego of Luise von Cossart

TN: What do you imagine this person to be like?

AM: She said that she's German and she's 23 years old, but even the biography is in English. So there's also this translation in between. And she doesn't talk a lot about the nationality or her gender. She talks more about more personal concerns. Trying to figure things out or the events or what happens in her personal life.

I actually find the biography a lot, like myself and like the one I wrote because of the exact reason I said it's more about her point of view, how she sees the world. Not the circumstances or things like nationality or gender. I don't think I can ever imagine a person here. Because it's very abstract and it's also very short and I can't really track the time in the biography. It's just the definition oneself at a specific time. So that's how she defines herself at this time. So it's more like a situation for me, not a character.

TN: Do you have an imagination of the art?

AM: I don't know if the imagination of mine is true or not. But somehow I can imagine her artworks or drawings or the jewelry made up from things she finds in nature or just the materials around us.

TN: Would you write your biography the same way now?

AM: I think, what I wrote in that time was also a lot about the mood I was in and how I defined myself at that moment, how I saw myself and how I saw the world. It can change over time.

TN: What kind of artwork have you planed?

AM: It's an installation made of two photographs. And fabric and some corals. I tried more to represent a feeling. Some sacred, smooth feeling of, what the sea would bring or take from you.

TN: Do you have anything you want to say?

AM: It was actually a very good challenge for me, this project. I was going through a very hard time. I still am. I lost my father two months ago. Somehow this project helped me a lot to keep up with what I believe in and to stay connected to myself and to art. It was also a very good challenge for me to try to put myself in someone else's shoes at the exact time of going through a very hard time in my personal life. So I always had to just keep imagining a different situation for myself. I think it's helped me a lot to knowing a lot more about life and myself and what I am doing and everything.



ALEJANDRA RINCON

Medium
Concept
Lived
experience

I would like to paraphrase what the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges said about poetry: poetry is born from language because each language is a way of feeling the world; each language is a possible literature.

At the beginning of my career, I was impressed by audiovisual language. I wanted to show others “a way of feeling the world”. So, I focused on the everyday objects and experiences that caught my eyes. I usually used a video camera to capture these experiences. I recorded anything and everything. Naturally, it all started with an observation of the world and the understanding of the audiovisual language itself: time and movement. Then I started to be interested in slow writing, so slow that it makes things seem stopped as if it was the same frame. I was fascinated by minimal movement, expressing the idea that “nothing happens here” but something does indeed happen: time passes.

Recently I have started using words. I have become more interested in text writing. I want to break the rules of narrative, for creating unstable writing, leaving behind temporal sequences to explore abysses, which appear in writing as in layers of different elements: events, tensions, counter positions, quotes from other authors, comparative elements from different eras, and memories, among others.

I approach writing as a constellation or as an atlas, as independent sequences that are part of a whole and which generate images with poetic and symbolic power. This atlas is similar to a phenomenology of memory, which is underlain by the weight of history and geography, as well as issues involving human affections, such as love, distances, emptiness, suspension, and impotence, death.

My writing speaks of affective human responses, so that, the effect is not only the subject but also the writing itself, being form and content simultaneously.

I increasingly feel the urge to write and publish, while at the same time I continue to think about images. One of the main objectives at the moment is to generate spaces where the two languages can live together, video installations that involve both visual writings and writings with words.

I also dance, dancing I realized I have a body. A woman's body crossed by movement and time. So, I also write about anatomy matters.

Interview with Shirin Zeraaty

SZ: Hello, and welcome to our little talk. You joined us a little bit later than the other artists, but we are so glad to have you. How did you feel when you tried to impersonate a biography that you received from another artist?

Method of Facing the Bio seems to be similar for everyone

AR: It was a big challenge. The first time I read the biography, I thought that I needed more information. But I knew that is impossible because the idea is to just work with the information on the biography. So I needed to read it a lot of times. Each time I got more information. This was the first step. The second step was to try to imagine how the artist thinks. What kind of tools does she use in order to create something? So I found a lot of words, important words, that made it possible for me to create something new.

Alejandra Rincon was sent the biography of Reyhaneh Mirjahani.

SZ: Could you maybe tell us some of these sentences or words that helped you with the work that you created?

AR: Okay, I highlighted some words. The first one was "I will be able to say based between Tehran and Gothenburg." That sentence gave me information about where she lives. Another one is "Objectify and materialize" which is related to her background of being a sculptor. The third one was "relationship between objects in an installation work" so I started to think okay she works as a sculptor but she is interested in installation work too.

And another important sentence was "My work was read based on my nationality" this sentence was very interesting to me and helped me a lot to think about my work. Because I always have this question: What is the meaning to be from any country? In my case, to be from Columbia? How to define a person with a name of a country?

And the last one which is the most important sentence in the biography, Was "I focus on questioning and challenging our daily position in the entangled political contemporary life we live in-" That is the specific sentence that gave me the power, that gave me all I need in order to create something.

SZ: From the text that you read, I'm sure you tried to imagine how this person is or how her artwork might look like? Could you tell us how you imagine this person's personality to be like?

AR: The mention of feelings, at the beginning gave me the idea of her maybe. I thought that maybe she was a romantic person, that idea that art is something that you can romanticize. At the end of the biography, that idea changed a lot. It was really opposed to the first reading. She is a very strong woman. She has a real conscience about what is her position in the world. She has a real commitment to the social changes, social and political moment that the world is in. I don't know exactly how she is. But I think she is a strong woman.

SZ: Could you tell us what you are creating for this project?

AR: I want to say something, that is important for me because I think that it makes the difference. And it's the timing of when the project has come to me. Because I'm a Columbian woman, living in Turkey, just for a couple of months. Now that I have come out of my country, my country is a battlefield. It's not exactly a war but some things are happening in my country. So when the artist in her biography said „I'm interested to think about the entangled world we live in“, I thought immediately about Columbia and the recent protests. Maybe the artist would prefer to work about or think about that kind of thing. Not just in Columbia, but around the world. So I choose one of the most used slogans that were used in the shootings in Columbia during the protest. This slogan, says something like „They wanted to bury us but we were seeds.“ It's popular not only in Columbia but it's popular also in Latin America and Spain. Because its a phrase that has been used especially in feminist marches.

So when I got that information, in my previous researches, I thought that maybe the phrase is important to the artist too. because she's a woman, she's not interested to try to define who is an Iranian woman, but maybe it's important in her work too, so I thought that the phrase was very convenient. Then I was interested to know much more about the phrase, the original phrase, so I did a bit of research and I found out the source of the phrase, and I found out that it's inspired by a poem.

I decided to make a small variation, with a help of a friend, who was encouraged to make a new version, and the phrase became „They buried us alive, but we grew as seeds.“ it's very similar, maybe it's the same meaning, but for me was more interesting because it's a little bit poetic but at the same time it's in the present too. It's a bit shocking, because they buried us alive but at the same time that we are dying, we are growing as seeds, so that meaning for me is very beautiful.

And the idea was to make copies, a lot of copies, maybe 500 copies, in order to create a pile of these posters, and put it on a shelf on a wall and let people come from the exhibition and take a copy of the poster. I want people to feel moved, by the phrase. And if they feel moved of course then they can take one copy. And try to reproduce the copy, or memorize the phrase because they can use it for their own struggle.

SZ: That sounds quite nice, something else, that I think with your work would be even more complex, is that as an artist, when we usually create a work, we have full ownership of the work but in this project, we use someone else's identity and biography and we put something of ourselves in it, and then we create work. In your project, as you described it you also used a phrase, or a version of a phrase, from someone else's poem also, to create the work, I wonder how do you see the ownership of this work in this project?

AR: I like the idea that the work doesn't have a name because I created a work based on the words of another person. It's my creation, but it's not my creation at the same time. That's something that I'm interested in too. Maybe it's one of the reasons, that I have chosen a slogan. Because who is the owner of that slogan? Is it important, who the owner of the slogan is or is it something that you need to say to others? Does that need to be heard by others? So in that way that is the most interesting thing in the work, not only in my work but in the project. But maybe in this case the answer is, that it's not important.

SZ: Do you have any comments or do you want to add something to this talk?

AR: No, I want to say thank you. To both of you. Because it's an interesting project, in a very specific important moment in my life, and in the history of my country. So I think it's a beautiful coincidence in life. And I hope the claim of my people will be the claim of the other people around the world. That is the most important thing in this project to me. So thank you.

**THEY BURIED
US ALIVE BUT
WE GREW LIKE
SEEDS**

[...] AN EXHIBITION ON ARTIST PROFILING, 28 MAY 2021 - ARTHEREISTANBUL
INSPIRED BY ERNESTO CARDENAL'S POEM EPITAPH FOR THE TOMB OF ADOLFO BAZZ BONE AND HELP UP BY PROTESTERS IN COLOMBIA.

ALEXANDRA PAPADEMETRIOU/DANA

Age seems to become
important when she identifies the other artist

gender
↓
Age
↓
Sexual
preference
↓
Medium
↓
Location
↓
Purpose
↓
Lived -
experience
↓
concept

Brief basics: I'm female, 26 years old, a lesbian, and I come from Athens. I used to be a painter, and I suppose I still am at heart, but since moving to Sweden two years ago I've been sort of forced gently pushed into more text- and research-based work. I used to have to do lots of academic drawing and painting as a student so, having grown sick of it, my own painting is rough around the edges and kind of grotesque. I generally try to be funny as a person and in my art, although my humor is often black and/or somewhat dry. I make art as a way to work through stuff that makes me angry at the world.

Something I've been thinking a lot about these past few years is my nationality and my relationship with it. I was born and raised in Athens to a Greek father and an English mother.

My father was usually away for work, and his side of the family lived in a different part of the country, so growing up it was just me and my mother, speaking a sort of Greeklish. It wasn't until I started school that I realized I didn't speak or act like the other kids. As you might imagine I got bullied a lot, both by the other children and by some teachers. At the time, i.e. the late 90s/early 00s, the go-to racist insult in Greece was to call someone "Albanian"; as many Albanian migrants had recently moved in and were of course considered to be "lesser" than the "noble" and "ancient" Greek "race". I remember having that word flung at me and not understanding why I should be insulted by it. In any case, the message was very clear: you are not one of us, you do not belong here. So, over the years I completely rejected greek culture, and sort of idealized England and northern/western Europe generally like this place where I did belong and would someday

"return" to. It was only as an adult, when I finally got to leave Greece for the first time that I realized: Holy shit I'm so greek. My accent is greek, my tastes are greek, my thinking is greek, and I will always be a foreigner here. I know this is pretty obvious, right? That someone growing up in two different cultures would feel like they belong to neither, but it was my new identification with Greekness specifically that surprised me. I also caught myself "playing" the greek, playing with stereotypes; mostly to be funny/entertaining but also to communicate with others (to explain something for example).

It was this sudden change of perception that shifted my artistic focus from my previous subject of queerness to the subject of nationality and the way it's constructed: to how an "us" and "them" is created; to the countless seen and unseen mechanisms that mold people into the right shape to better serve their nation;

to the massive web of internal contradictions inherent within any national identity; to how arbitrary all these things are, and yet affect us so deeply, to the point where we might perpetuate nationalist behaviors even though we consciously know they are absurd.

Underlying all this is the tension between what is considered to be the West, which is the default, or even the ideal, and what is delegated to its periphery, i.e. everyone else on the planet – a periphery in which identity is always filtered through the Western lens and is perpetually engaged in translating itself into the Anglophonic context to be understood.

3rd thing
mentioned
in the
Basic info

→ 4th thing mentioned

Alexandra Papademetriou was sent
the biography of DHA, the alter
ego of Donya H. Aalipour.

Interview with Tabitha Nagy and Shirin Zeraaty

TN: When you were reading the biography was it easy to find a connection to this person?

AP: In a way, yes. A connection through our differences, I suppose, because we are both interested in memory and history and family and what has happened before and how we are carrying these memories. Comparing our two biographies, I think that my position comes from a place of discomfort, And I'm more critical of the past from having this position. But the artist that I received is very fond of the past, she is making works about their family a lot, and they're thinking about the family a lot and they miss them. And there's this sense of nostalgia.

TN: What were the keys that were important to you in doing this?

AP: It was mostly that the visual aspect of it that they talked about, the abstract out of figurative elements.

And then that family scene, which is also quite prominent in the text. If I remember correctly, it's one full, large Paragraph. And also the feeling. because they have been there, that they have been away from their family for six years and this feeling of... is it presumptuous to call it diasporic feeling? I assume they have emigrated. As have I and there is you know such a, again, assuming that they come from a similar background, not too distant cultural context. I know that there's a long history of migration. and I've gone through migration and I am sort of trying to think, or find empathy, I suppose, or points of connection along with that access as well.

TN: How do you imagine this person to be?

AP: I know that they're the same age as me, more or less, I think maybe a year younger. So mid-twenties, female, perhaps a little shy or introverted since their work is also a lot about first and personal experiences and personal interpretations of events. They're familiar with Persian painting. So I assume they are from Persia or Iran more specifically and I suspect they have emigrated to the West, to Europe.

But that is as far as I can see. Then we get into stereotypes of artists, right? And what are painters like, I don't know, and don't necessarily want to repeat these, because I hope I don't fit that stereotype myself either.

SZ: I was wondering if there were parts of this biography that you felt weren't as important or influential to your decision of how you could impersonate this artist?

AP: I would have to look at the biography in general quickly because of course, the things that do not stick are also things that are hardest to remember. But I think even the things that I did not grab on to specifically, they still serve to sort of create a vibe, an image. So I wouldn't say that there was anything unnecessary and I quite liked that it was a full page of text.

SZ: has this process changed the way you see the relation of a biography and artwork and the context that it creates for an artwork?

AP: I think art is a bit more interesting if you have some sort of personal connection with the person that's making it. This biography is a way to create an idea, I suppose, of that sort of connection where you understand where someone is coming from and how. Because art is a process of communication, right? You're translating an experience that cannot necessarily be put into words and then you're trying to communicate it. And a lot of the time in the way the contemporary art world is constructed, there's this disconnect, you just get this very mystifying, obscure, almost object. And sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. I think this sort of thing is really like a case-by-case, project-by-project basis. Sometimes it makes a lot of sense and it's quite interesting and pleasing to have all of this biographical stuff. Other times in some projects it can be a bit self-indulgent. If a project is supposed to be very theoretical, for example, or it's supposed to be examining something external or it's supposed to be about working with other people, and then you have this massive biography... It's like, why don't you calm down a little bit?

How is the process different to the outcome?

How can we create a vibe through biography without using these parts? What is the link?

SZ: Could you tell us what you have planned as the artwork can you describe it for us?

AP: Going by the image of the family dinner that was described in the biography I received and sort of along these lines of thinking about my own experiences concerning the experiences of the person I'm trying to make an artwork on. I was thinking about the family dinners of my childhood and me and my parents who lived in the city, we used to go to the village where my father's family lives and we would go there for Easter and then that's also the biggest celebration in Orthodox Christianity and that's the big Olympic feast. I remember sitting around this round table and, it's a little village house, so there's a garden outside with an orange tree. And my grandmother would always climb up this orange tree and make me orange juice for breakfast. Even though I asked her not to, like, no, you're too old, you might hurt yourself, but she always did it. So it's this memory, but since those golden days, the family has sort of dissolved a bit. I have moved away. My cousins have moved away. My grandfather died a few years ago and my grandmother died a few months ago actually.

And the last time I was there, which was last summer, 2019, I had gone there to do some paperwork, some bureaucratic work and this is the complete reversal of the image I had from my childhood. The house was dark and empty. My grandmother was ill in bed and the night before my arrival, there had been this massive storm and in a very dramatic way, lightning has hit the orange tree and it snapped it in half. So instead of making one big painting of this scene of the big Easter family dinner, I sort of broke it up into six segments. The idea, being both that's the zooming into detail, as forms become recognizable, but also fragmenting the image. It's a bit like how memories are actually constructed in the brain. The way that memory works are that there's a program. your brain reconstructs, the memory from fragments every single time, every single time you remember something, your memory gets a bit corrupted more and more, and it disintegrates. It becomes further from the truth of what happened. that's the painting. And making it, I realize that there were lots of things I hadn't dealt with emotionally. So it was very intense. It was a very intense painting process.



BERK TUNCER/ THE BERG

Location The BERG born as Berk Tuncer (01.01.1998) is a Munich/Istanbul based conceptual artist. BERG was born in a household on the verge of enjoying their cheeses and wines but shortly cut off on the new years' eve of 1997 passing through 1998. The birth was accompanied by lots of Christmas desserts and a huge c-section on his mother's belly. The household that accompanied this early arrival of BERG mainly consisted of three generations of ladies which created the family structure out of pure patriarchy. These four ladies that had a huge role in BERG's life were his mother, grandmother, the sister of the grandmother, and the great-grandmother. These unique characters composed a relatively calm and knotted id for BERG which still to this day offered him the chance to taste the different types of cultures of Istanbul. The house he spent his childhood was located in a neighborhood that was stationed in between old Byzantium walls of the city.

Age

Family BG

Medium

Lived - experience

Education

Site

Concept

These archival structures reinforced his connection to his roots and made him aware of the historical traces of the city which left the impression on him of the state of belongingness to his surroundings. His family which was mainly formed out of doctors and soldiers also had a sense of awareness and practicality for art. The family usually as a post-retirement approach holds on to painting, more precisely nature-mort. Under all of the influences, it was inevitable for him to also practice art in any form; which in his case was painting. By the age of three, one artist relative of The BERG took him to her atelier and placed an empty canvas in front of him. This was his first encounter with the materialized version of painting. By the age of seven, his family sent him to an oil painting course which was thrown by a rather classical oil painter. It was at this moment that the oil paint itself captured his attention in the best way possible.

He commenced practicing nature-morts, flowers, and landscapes on canvas yet this early age of the traditional way of oil painting also created a sense of ennui in the BERG. As the years passed by, his relation with painting transformed itself into a love and hate relation. He was experimenting but never getting satisfied. He titled the painting itself as an old man. He expressed his feeling towards painting as: "Painting is like having sex with an old man. He is never satisfied, grumpy and so hard to change. He just lays on the bed, demands more and more." After years of this connection with painting he was on the verge of a state of fright to choose art as a career and being too one-dimensional more importantly repetitive. This outcome of constant accompaniment of concern continued as a small study in Istanbul which didn't satisfy him at all. Therefore this newly created artist took on a search of pure motivation, lots of cigarettes,

and two broken sunglasses. The search for belongingness ended up in the city of Munich: A replacement which he could have never imagined. As his last year started to come to an end in Istanbul he packed everything he could; the city, the chaos, the culture, and tried to get inspired by them in Munich. He aimed to epitomize his belongings yet it was cut off short without the fuelling power of the chaotic city. Munich was simply too calm. BERG is now concretized his works evolving around the state of blatant egoism and its outcome as his brand. In other words, he is still concerned with the subject of surroundings yet this time the surroundings have altered themselves in the appearance of a new reflection. Therefore BERG started the state his new argument only this time it wasn't old Levantine buildings that created the BERG yet how BERG created himself in the novelty of Munich.

Berk Tuncer was sent the biography of Armin, the alter ego of Hermann Pitz.

Interview with Tabitha Nagy and Shirin Zeraaty

TN: How did it feel for you, trying to impersonate another person and making an artwork from the point of view of another person?

BT: To be honest, I find that interesting and fascinating in a way, because at some point I'm actually bored of being myself. So now it's relaxing. And when it comes to conceptual thinking, it's also relaxing because then, you know, I'm not drowned in this whole BERG thing. Actually I find it quite liberating. It takes a bit of responsibility away, but also adds a bit of pressure.

TN: How would you describe to the listeners what you mean by being liberated from „this whole BERG thing“?

BT: I don't have to think about the concepts that I'm usually thinking about and it also liberates me to use different aesthetics.

The artist I received is working with aesthetics of reflection and reflective materials or theatrical settings. So it's not very different from my aesthetic. It's a bit more liberating, you know, because then I can play around with these aesthetics and I can break away from my own aesthetic sense. And that's actually where the pressure of it comes in, because then you are in a new field, you are in a trial.

TN: Would you say that you're already used to this sort of practice? Because in your artistic practice, you are also creating an artist persona.

BT: In a way, because I'm basically impersonating myself in my artistic practice. I just take the volume to a ten. So in this case, I'm just impersonating a different person. That's refreshing.

TN: And how was it trying to understand this person from the biography?

BT: In my case, I suppose it was a bit easier to figure out, who the person might be. I didn't check Google for the first two weeks. I tried to base my vision on just the bio.

TN: Except for not Googling for two weeks, how did you deal with thinking, that you know who it is?

BT: I didn't want to be too much of a charlatan. I would like to give myself a bit of a challenge. That's the reason why I didn't really want to dive into Google image search. I'm not sure how conceptually actually did my artist work in the sense of, I'm not sure if he's writing concrete concepts and makes research or readings about it. But from what was written in the bio, I was like, jackpot for a bit of concept reading. So that's the way I choose to work.

TN: What elements were most interesting to you?

BT: There was a phrase in the bio that was something like that the artist is searching in between the imagination of the real and not real. And I was like, „Oh, I like that phrase“.

TN: The difference between your biography and the one you got, the life itself was the most different in the artist exchanges. I would be interested in if you saw connections between you and this person.

BT: Not really, I couldn't see any similarities. My bio was, overblown as if I was telling an iconographic story. The other bio was rather diplomatic and academic. I could mostly see the contrasts. The other bio was more humble.

TN: Do you have any sort of image in your mind of what the artwork could be that was done based on your biography?

BT: I was expecting a constellation of objects. I was imagining it was something small either or I was expecting something huge. But somehow this constellation of objects, this installation actually fits how I would create. That's an interesting thing because maybe you can see a bit of BERGness in the work of me pretending to be him. Maybe in the work of him pretending to be me, I can see maybe a bit of him inside the work.

TN: Let's talk about what kind of artwork have planned.

BT: So what I would like to create is somehow an installation that you can also isolate yourself in from the space and somehow that you can lose the understanding of space. So glass mirrors and light and curtains. All the theatrical elements, which is interestingly, also something I use before, which is also aligned with what he uses.

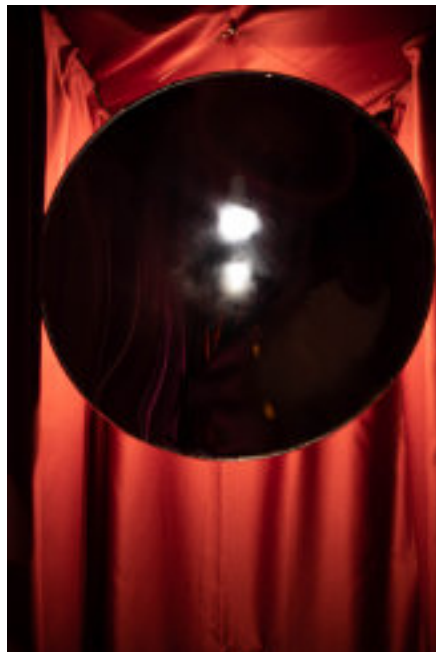
TN: Has your approach to writing biographies changed or the way you think about it?

BT: If this project wasn't about the concept of the biographies and how we interpret them, probably I would also send something a bit more academic and diplomatic. Maybe with this project, I somehow see that there is many possibilities of sending a biography. I was thinking, how much do we get from the biographies? Because usually the biographies in the exhibitions they are, you know, it's a bit stick in the ass. But I was thinking which one of them is more distant?

Maybe my biography could be more annoying in the sense that „Who the fuck does this guy think he is“, but there is still a bit more to grab onto emotionally.

TN: An artist, the artist's life and the artwork: Has your perception of the way you think about this relationship changed?

BT: I'm not sure how much changed. I always say a really good writing can make a shitty work good. The power of the writing effects me, but if I can not really see this approach in the artwork, then I'm still a bit hesitant and I was always hesitant in that sense.



DIOGO DA CRUZ/ RODRIGO DE SOUSA

Age
Location
Education
By
Medium
Concept
exhibitions

Rodrigo de Sousa (b. 1992, Lisbon) is a conceptual artist based in Lisbon and Munich. He received a BA in Sculpture from the FBAUL (2012) and a Diploma in Sculpture from the ADBK München (2016), where he studied with Hermann Pitz, Ceal Floyer, Andrea Fraser and Tyler Coburn. His practice relies on the use of technologies to replicate or imitate, rearticulate and re-imagine unchallenged structures in Western society. He works on long-term projects driven by partially fictive scenarios, often based on scientific findings and referring to past, present and future socio-political circumstances. With an interest in the level of uncertainty that is involved in the construction of human knowledge, the projects interweave scientific research, historical elements, memory and fiction to reflect around 'slowness' as a form of resistance. His work has been shown at numerous exhibitions in Europe, Russia and Uruguay.

←Mentioning names of professors that he studied with, does that mean his artwork is influenced by their art practice?

Interview with Tabitha Nagy

TN: From the biography that you've based your artwork on, what do you imagine this person to be like?

DC: I will try to imagine her character through my experiences. Meaning that we are two years apart. Of course, our backgrounds are very different. She started quite young taking pictures with the analog camera of her dad and somehow that's something that I could relate to. So to define and imagine how she is, I connected her with myself or the friends of mine who also share a passion for analog photography. And of course, also as she referred to in her biography, she comes from Tehran and she talks about how the picture that is shared by the news is not the reality.

She lives in an underground life and that underground culture and subculture are not so different from place to place. I started to see her as a bit rebellious, but in the other way, she's just kind of a young person in this globally connected world.

TN: Were there certain things in this biography, that were key information to you to understand this person, in the way that you understand them?

DC: Still more related about the personality: there is the sense that she's directing this biography to me. She says you are now named this and that's her opening character. It's also directed to the reader. And so I started to think of, somebody that is quite direct in the way and, brave in the way that she poses ideas fast or easy as well, the way that she puts out work. So that's how I thought, you know, somebody that doesn't think twice, type of character.

Diogo da Cruz was sent the biography of Sofi Kiaee, the alter ego of Parnian Ghorbani.

So that's kind of how a little hint formed for me, to get to thinking of a work. I thought I have to think of a work that is in a way impulsive. The studies of photography that she went through, you know, and the use of both of the cameras. So then analog photography started to be also quite clear that my work would be in that medium.

I think that's kind of perhaps the two, three points that gave me a lot of evidence. That's also kind of the reference to literature, knowing how she, you know, she tells this very beautiful joke that when she was six, she bought the same book twice because she liked that book. I'm not so sure how to kind of portrait that in a work of art, but it's just to show us how she is intense about the things that she likes, maybe. So that kind of informed me a bit as well of the way that I imagine the work to be.

TN: You made an artwork that is going to be attributed to this person, that you imagined. How did you go about feeling yourself into this person?

DC: It's interesting, because I ended up in the production of the work using the analog picture that I took when I was younger. I think that also defines a bit how I put myself into her shoes a bit. That I tried to find, how much of this description is similar to me, or to me in a certain time of my life, or to a part of me and try to explore that part of me. I thought about what tools I have, in my folders, in the computer, and my analog pictures and what side of me I could bring on to represent this character. So I think that was the process that I went through mostly.

TN: A little more towards you and your biography you wrote for the other artists to get: do you think you would do it differently now? Because the biographies are very different. Because she had this really direct approach and you had the more general approach.

DC: I mean, the biography that I sent out for the exchange was very institutional almost. So it's the biography slash artist statement that I sent out when I apply for funding or other opportunities.

Does this mean institutional part of art is not looking for the artist's character?

Besides hiding my name or changing my name in the biography, I decided not to change anything in that, because I thought that will be the most interesting exercise. Often you don't get feedback on your biography when you apply it to anything. So I thought through this, I could understand the picture that, perhaps all these jury kind of might make of me before seeing my work. It's very often this biography is next to my portfolio. And in this case, it's not. But this biography and statement should portrait the portfolio as well. So I'm really curious to see what that results.

TN: What did you think then about this language? This really direct language addressing the person who was reading it?

DC: Once I read it, I got the sense that she wrote this text for this exchange. She made a special biography for me, or I got this feeling, at least when I read it. When I read it, I thought, okay, this is an artist who was interested in this exchange, but she's also interested in directing it to me, to the reader. So that's how I saw it. I was very thankful for that. She made it very engaging as well.

My type of biography that is much more institutional could make it harder to really get to grasp that person as a character.

TN: What kind of work do you have planned for the work that you do for the exhibition?

DC: So my contribution as Sophie I'm thinking about doing one, two, three photographic prints. I would use an analog film that I used back, I believe in 2011, 2012, so quite a while ago. I took these pictures that are quite present in my memory. And they are quite strong, somehow formalistic. And I really liked them and I never did anything about them, but somehow I thought Sophie would be very intuitive perhaps a bit different from me at the time. I thought about including a few written texts in one of these prints. I like to print them big and to show them in a more kind of sculptural playful way in the space. I mean that's more or less the description. It's more kind of working on photography, thinking about storytelling and how can the image tell any story, you know, that's also what she's referring to a lot in the text. And she also referred, why is photography 2D? Why it on the wall? Why does it have a front and a back?

So that made me really kind of work to this printed paper of this photography in a very material way. So fold the paper, I would show the backside as well. I would draw on the backside. So I'll try to explore, you know, these little hints that she gave to me in the text.



DONYA H.AALIPOUR/ DHA

Separation between her and her work.

About me:

Age
Education
Bio
Medium
Lived experience
Exhibitions
Concept

I am 25 years old and my birthday is coming soon so I will turn 26. I'm studying painting far away from home. I was also studying piano for almost 3 years before I started studying painting again. It has been six years that I live alone. I always try to be active in the art scene. I have had lots of group exhibitions. I have a small studio space and I go there and paint every day. I am still dealing with the current situation but painting makes me feel better.

About my Work:

My paintings are mostly about my home, friends, family, love, life, childhood, and any moments in my life in general that are special to me. I have always seen painting as an adventure. Every time I start a new painting, it's like I get to understand myself better as a person since I can express myself however I choose. I usually paint what I feel, not always what I see.

If something evident happens to me or my life, I tend to imagine the whole story in my mind and how I felt during that moment. Then I paint it however my mind allows me to. Because of this, my work mostly shows the combination of abstract and realistic elements and the atmosphere of the story in detailed forms. I love having freedom in art, and showing little things that are very simple, yet giving them an abundance of colors and creativity.

My main inspiration for colors is from Persian paintings. I always have my paintings tell a story, however not too directly. I would like people to interpret my work how they see it. I like to incorporate unsolved elements as well, to let people play with my ideas and have them make their own connections.

The paintings are telling my own story from my point of view but I tried to put some space in the paintings for the audience to question it more and put their own story in it. I like to explain a little bit about one of my specific paintings, that for sure you have no idea which one is that.

So here it is: It's been six years that I live alone and far away from my family. I know that I am independent but I am really close to my family and I miss being with them and spend my time with them.

One day my grandma, grandpa, my Aunt, and my cousin went to our home to visit my mother and father and eat some delicious food! So my mother as always cleaned the apartment and cooked lots of food and made some dessert. When they were sitting around the table to start to eat my mother took a photo and sent it to me. I saw that picture that was beautiful. The food looked amazing and my cousin couldn't wait to start eating. The Table is big and it is in a room with a nice chandelier, which is usually dark when we don't have guests. All of a sudden I felt I am there and I could imagine what happens there and what are they talking about. When I am picturing the image that I have in my head from that moment, it is funny because I see lots of abstract elements and a big table, Chandelier, me and my family sitting around the table and talking...

Donya H. Aalipour was sent the biography of Dana, the alter ego of Alexandra Papademetriou.

Interview with Tabitha Nagy

TN: How did you go about feeling yourself into this person, impersonating somebody based on a biography?

DHA: At first it was really hard because I read the text and I couldn't start immediately to paint. I thought about "what should I paint? And what holds the whole atmosphere of this person?" And after some time I had this connection. I tried to, create something about this text that is really close to me.

TN: What made you feel this connection? Was it just the time to passing or was there something different?

DHA: Some stuff that she wrote in the text was really similar to problems that I had before, when I came to Vienna. I just needed the time to have this feeling again, but in her character. This time gave me this opportunity to somehow go back to this feeling, but in another context.

Some other experiences that I had were also similar. I was also born in Iran and I went to school there. And when I was 20 years old, I came here, I studied piano for two and a half years, but I didn't feel happy. And I was a little bit depressed about the whole changing thing about the other culture, other people, and everything. I needed time to find myself. Then I changed my field to painting and felt stronger, more confident.

TN: Did you find other points in the biography that made you feel closer to this person?

DHA: They were three texts for me. The first one was her introducing herself. And in the second text she explained about herself and her situation and about her family and the relationship to the culture and the new culture. And in the third text she talked about her opinion I think. It was a little bit tricky to paint because I had to choose. Do I want to paint what the result is? Or should I paint the artist or the atmosphere or the feeling or the culture? At first that was a little bit too much, but in a good way. I decided to choose the character of her.

TN: What do you imagine this person to be like? And what do you imagine their artwork to be like?

DHA: Oh, I have no idea. But I think it's going to be really interesting. I'm really looking forward. I think we have a lot in common from what I read in the text.

TN: Could you describe what kind of artwork you made for the project?

DHA: I painted on paper. The papers are in a different sizes and it's a puzzle. There is this opportunity that you can change the place of the papers. It's a really big figure. I think it's her. The figure is sort of flying in the air and catching lights with her hands and her feet. There are some abstract elements as well. Elements that I read in the text. I wanted to have them in the painting. I started painting with a spray, then with oil on paper. I didn't do the whole painting all together. I did it like a puzzle. The process itself was a puzzle for me, actually.

It's kind of confusing for me because it's my painting. I made it. But I have this feeling that it's not mine. I have this feeling that I did it for someone else. But it's still mine. I couldn't present this painting like my other paintings. The connection between these three elements, my work, these texts and the painting is really weird.



GEMMA MEULENDIJKS/ JINA HALENBEEKE

	Name:	Jina Halenbeeke	About me/Connection to my work:
Age	Date of birth:	21 10 1991	
Gender	Gender:	Female	I work with my close surroundings, my personal context. Through observations and analyzing these situations I manage to structure what is going on and pour it into a visual form.
Nationality	Nationality:	Dutch	
Education	Education:	Bachelor of Design (NL) Master of arts (DE)	The works or work series are like visual odes to the places and situations I feel connected with.
B.G	Ongoing:	Art teacher - Bachelor (NL)	These best spots - sometimes literal places or documentations of spaces and sometimes moments or ideas - are for me the things that make the most sense out of that specific situation.
Location	Lives in:	Arnhem (NL)	Depending on the context - I put myself into - these works change. My state of being influences the way I look at my surroundings, but also my surroundings influence me - my state of being. It is a two way game to play.
Concept			

Interview with Tabitha Nagy

TN: You prepared snips of the biography that you got that gave you a better idea of who this person is. Could you tell us about what these pieces were?

GM: So that's also a part of that I find interesting, because I'm Dutch and I don't know so much about his music, his nationality background music. So he doesn't want to use it, but I actually want to use it. Because for me, it's unfamiliar and I want to learn about it. So that's why I tried to dive a bit into the structures of what it is, and it's completely complicated.

So I tried to find my own translation of the Persian, and the jazz, that he is interested in, and try to put it together in combination with some of my own, broken beats that I like a lot, which I combined it with.

The part that he says, "I am not interested in my own heritage, but in the others", okay, I don't want to use Dutch music. I want to use other music. So his music, because I wanted to know where his nationality comes from musically wise. And then translated in my own language of music, which he then does with translating it into Turkish and then into Farsi. So that's the structure that I try to use for this music piece.

I didn't want to make something with only jazz or New Orleans or Chicago jazz, because I don't think that is what he's doing. Because he also says in his last sentence, "I believe geographical status makes a big difference on how you perceive your surroundings and translate it in your work". So then again, I think that it's important for him also where you are and where you get influenced by.

Gemma Meulendijks was sent the biography of Arash, the alter ego of Mehdi Farzane.

TN: This biography you got, it was very different from yours. It also provided some family background and a story. What do you think about this language of the biography and how do you imagine this person to be?

GM: Basically, I really don't have a clue. That's difficult. How is he going to be? I think it's a him. When I meet people, I am very personal. I can talk a lot about everything. But if I write something about art, then I sort of take distance from that part. So for me, it was very confusing to read about all of his family history. Because what does this have to do with his artwork? Because I have to make his artwork. And then after a long time, I thought "Oh, maybe he doesn't want to go into Iranian music because his father died as a pilot in the war and war can create very harsh situations. And that's completely something I cannot imagine because I've never lived through that, but he has, and that's horrific. And that could be like the decision to not want to go deeper into his own nationality musically wise. So after I was working more on the project, I understood more why it was actually a logical that he put it in.

While in the beginning I didn't understand. But it's completely different from my way of talking about my works. But I cannot make an image of how he would be right now. I would like to meet him though, because it would be very interesting. To read a biography and then see person in real life.

TN: What kind of image do you think he has of you, with your biography?

GM: That I'm completely impersonal. And the really diehard conceptual.

Do we have to be impersonal, to be conceptual?

TN: What kind of artwork do you have planed for the project?

GM: In short it's a music piece. Since I'm being him, I'm a musician. I'm allowed to make a music piece. Luckily I felt very comfortable doing that, because I am a lot into music lately and I still do visual arts, but not so much. It is a bit on a half pause. So it's going to be a piece of music. For now it's 11 minutes, but I think it might be a bit longer in the end.

TN: Music is not your main medium usually. How was this experience for you, making a music piece for an exhibition?

GM: It's funny. Because usually when I do an exhibition, I have this site-specific work planned for this space. So this is not a site-specific work, but more biography-person specific work. I'm actually sort of making this music piece for him in a kind of way, because he will have to deal with it. It's funny though, because it's a different concentration and the piece has to be finished and I never mastered a piece for example. So I'm gonna ask a friend of mine to help me with mastering. But I don't have a clue, how to present this work, I could not think further then the headphones. So to make it visually attractive is something that has to be done in a way for a music piece, but I'm not quite sure, how yet. That for me is a difficult part because I'm used to thinking in the visual arts; you put it in the air or on a pedestal or you hang it from the wall or you lay it on the ground, you put it against a wall. For this it didn't make sense for me to think of the placing of the work yet.

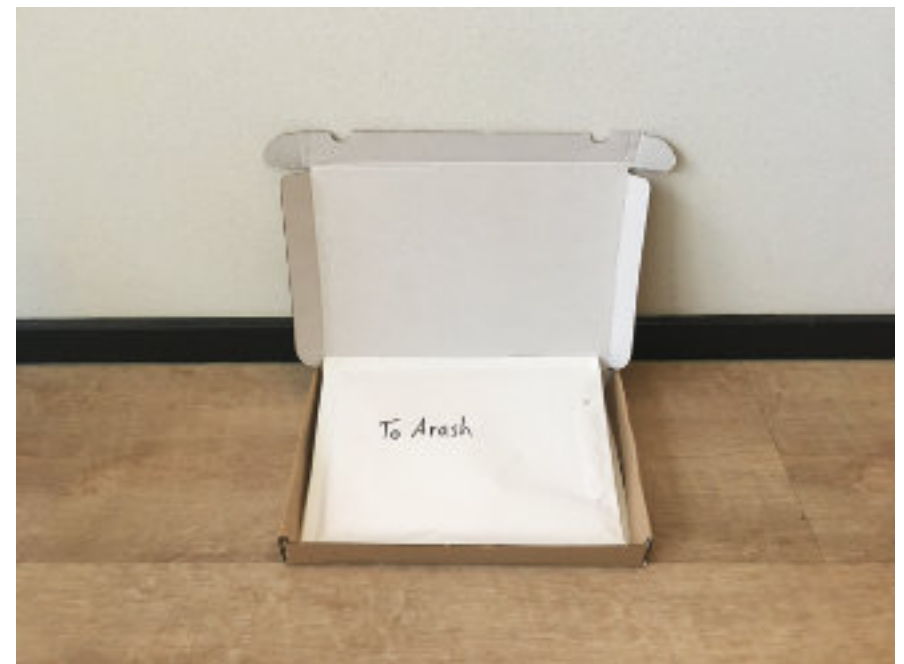
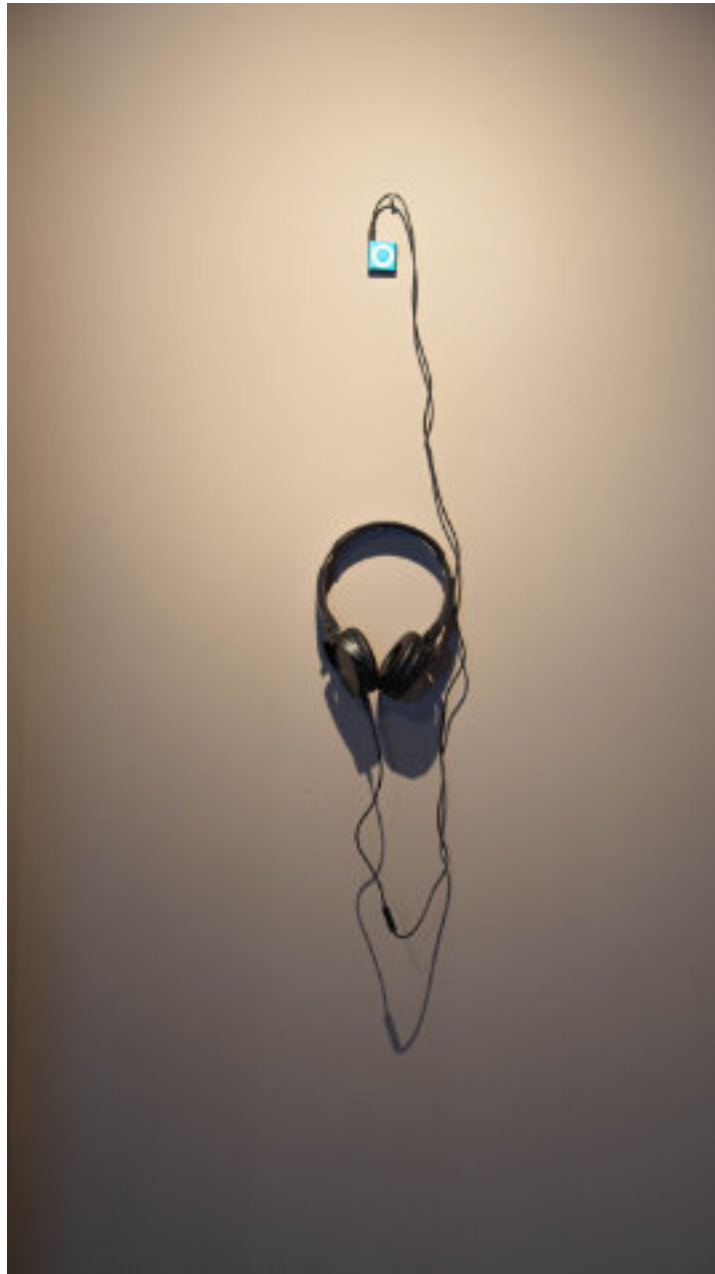
SZ: Has this project changed the way you think about the relation between a biography and the artwork?

GM: Some works, and I'm not talking about my work, I mean just artworks in general, some works are so strong, you can just read them and they are very clear and you don't need a biography from that person. But it could be interesting to read the biography from that person, because then other parts of the work that were hidden in the beginning get more attention and then the work gets set in a different light. It is depending on the work and the context if you actually need the biography or not. For me, context was always really important for work. So if the work needs the context of the biography, you will present it. And if it doesn't need the context of the biography, you will present it.

SZ: Has this project changed the way you look at the ownership of an artwork?

GM: I haven't thought of it. Now if you ask me the question, I think it does. Because I just talked before about like, I make this work for him, but he made the biography for me. So then maybe it's a cooperation.

is it possible to create an artwork without basing it on sth outside of us?



HERMANN PITZ/ ARMIN

Age
Location
Education
B.G.
Exhibitions
Medium
Concept

Armin was born in 1956 in Oldenburg, Germany. He lives and works in Munich. He holds a Meisterschüler degree in painting from the Hochschule der Bildenden Künste in West-Berlin (1980) and has had many solo exhibitions in different museums. On international level, He participated in shows like documenta (1987 and 1992), Skulpturprojekte Münster (1987 and 1997), XLIII Biennale de Venezia, 1. and 2. International Biennale Istanbul. Next to his studio practice, he has a continuous curatorial practice since 1978 in international institutions.

A possible entry point into Armin's works is to trace the themes that recur in his work and overlap or mutually expand: mirror objects, photographs, light sources that can be assigned to the field of optics or objects that, due to their form or function, can be associated with the process of seeing:

convexly or concavely curved objects, a mirrored sphere or drops of water. The motifs are familiar to the viewer from everyday life and at the same time stimulate him to reflect on the perception of reality: What is reality, what is fiction?

The curtain, easel, and lighting are reminiscent of theatre and stage or evoke a studio atmosphere. Here, too, the themes revolve around appearance and reality, image and likeness, staging and presentation. Everyday reality mutates into artificial-artistic reality. For his complex concept, Armin also uses other metaphors from the cultural and scientific tradition as formal "containers" that connect his works like a network: the archive, the world map, the family tree, or the journey. [...]

The artist quotes himself, again and again, establishes a spatial and temporal continuity between works, develops his iconography. His art lives from the paradox of always progressing through references back.

Interview with Tabitha Nagy

TN: How did it feel for you to feel yourself into this new person by a text? How was it for you?

HP: It was interesting because I'm belonging to a different age group. So you need to think of what would you have done as an artist if you were born 35, 40 years later? I look at it very much in this sense. The authorship of an artist is bound to the biological age. It's been like this since centuries, maybe since forever. So in that sense, I like the challenge and the artist profiling, where you look at authorship as being a biological effect.

Almost all of the ←
artists have mentioned
age, either in their
Bios or when describing
the other artist.

Hermann Pitz was sent the
biography of THE BERG, the alter
ego of Berk Tuncer.

TN: What do you imagine the art of this person to be like?

HP: I came to Istanbul in the year 1990, when the first edition of the Istanbul Biennale was made. And I was invited as a German artist at that time. So I had the physical experience of Istanbul and the description of the neighborhood, where the guy grew up, sort of the first years of life. I've felt like I could identify it geographically. I knew, oh, that's the neighborhood where I hung out with those curators, Harald Seemann and others, so it was not unfamiliar to me, but only in terms of geography. I didn't talk and I don't talk today any Turkish language. But still, I was familiar with the smells of visiting a market in that neighborhood.

TN: Do you have any imagination of how this person might be?

HP: You called him or her The BERG, it could be a girl or a man, we don't know in the name. So what we knew was the family relations.

And also something that I've thought to recognize is just the smell of the neighborhood where he grew up and the markets and the smell of the bakery and these sort of things came to my mind, very much stronger. So I couldn't really tell whether it was a he or she. It's also a matriarchal family.

But anyway, that's how I came up with this hammer, the idea of architecture and the claim of The BERG that they would have witnessed different cultures. I thought how do I represent an Ottoman culture? I can't really do it with my artistic practice, but I can do it with my experience of having lived in different cultures.

So the book came up, the book was in my collection. I bought it in Amsterdam and I also credited the library in Amsterdam. But also I've sort of tried to find overlappings between what my life has brought up as an experience compared to the life of the BERGs experience as a very much younger artist.

TN: Could you maybe talk about the work that is now attributed to The BERG?

HP: Well, it seems to be an artist who is struggles with the interaction of what we know about architecture and how we know about it. It's through texts, but also the physical part of it. Somebody has to take a birck in his or her hand. To be a masoner and to build those walls. It's a really simple thing.

TN: What do you think more in general about the topic of artist profiling? What, in your mind is the relation between an artist and their life and on the other side, the perception of an artwork and the knowing about the life of an artist?

HP: Most of it is of course, oral history and also gossip. You know a little bit about an artist by what you hear, what people say about him or her, right? On the other end you have what's the contrary. You have an artifact and you don't know who the author was, but when you visit a museum, for instance of ancient art, you see only the piece and art historians, they could date it.

They could say it's a pre-Christian or Byzantine art, but we don't know who made it. In that sense it's both sides. It's the artifact that stands on its own, detached from the authorship. And then of course it's lots of authorship, where you have a narrative already coming along with the person.

TN: And do you think this knowing about this authorship and the story behind the authorship is important? Or historic accuracy is really important?

HP: It has been in European or Western European art. It hasn't been in Shiite art so much. And also in Persian art not. They have tons of certified artifacts in other cultures. But here, where we live in a convention of authorship to be individual, we have a long history of at least 500 years in which we would talk about the identity or also the motives, deep psychology, of the composer of the piece of art. But even in Western art, you have absurdities. Think only of William Shakespeare, where all biographies admit, we just don't know who the guy was.

TN: What would you prefer for yourself?

HP: Well, for me, it's the same difference basically. It doesn't really matter. But for a young artist, for your generation, of course it's a new thing since we are in a globalized world and we can communicate in the way you guys are doing it. There's also a new option, maybe a third option in it. But I can't really tell where to place it, unless in the exhibition you are making.



LUISE VON COSSART/ ENOLA VON DER PAHLEN

Dear Stranger,

My Name is Enola von der Pahlen. I am 23 years old, live in Germany, and would call myself an artist.

I grew up as an only child of hard-working parents in Berlin. My Dad is a gutter cleaner and musician and my Mom is a social worker for family support. They raised me as a free spirit and traveled with me through Europe in our bus every summer when I was little.

After finishing school I studied product design and learned how to be a goldsmith. The last couple of years have been pretty confusing for me. I had visions and opinions about what my life would be like and made decisions based on my ideas. At the end of those steps, nothing felt like the end of a road.

Now I am studying free art and it feels right. Looking back I can say that I don't regret any of my decisions. They made me who I am, gave me my skills, and made me as brave as I need to be for an artist's life.

I love to travel, explore lost places, and collect things and materials I find on the way. I had my first exhibition in a little art bar a few years ago and it changed a lot for me. It freed me from feeling the need that something I make has to be useful or pretty. It just needs to have meaning for me.

My work is influenced by exploring materials, crafts, dreams, my emotions, and everyday struggle. I investigate my perception, events that changed or confused me in the past and try to make sense out of the things that I don't understand. Since I was 6 years old I am a migraineur and that illness took a lot of time in my life.

I try to explore how that influences my psyche and changes the way I see the world.

As a girl from a working-class family, I value truth and access over everything else in art. My main interest lies in alchemy, history, and music and my media are drawing, object, installation, jewelry, and time-based media. I'm excited to find out what I am like in your imagination.



Interview with Tabitha Nagy

TN: How does it feel to try to impersonate somebody based on a text? On a biography?

LC: It was actually harder than I thought it would be, but I really liked it. In the beginning I thought it would be like acting. I tried to pretend being someone that I read. But the further process went on it felt more like, I was kind of connecting with her. I got to meet her through the text and try to imagine what a person she was and it created my own person in my head. I don't know if she's really like that, or if it's just something that happens with a text. But it was really nice actually, because I thought about things that I normally didn't think about. My process was also different than it would normally be. I'm really intuitive and do what I feel.

Luise von Cossart was sent the biography of Nima Tavana, the alter ego of Afra Mirfarsi

And this was more about really calmly thinking about the things she wrote and connecting with it.

TN: Who is this person in your head? Could you describe them?

I can try. Her name is Nima. I'm not actually sure that she's a girl, but in my head she is. And she's a little bit older than me and kind of a shy person. She lives by herself. She doesn't like to communicate that much or it isn't easy for her to communicate. So I thought that she was someone that needs to open up over time and express herself through her work. So I thought that the things she does are really personal, but Not in an easy way to understand. It's not like she draws a big heart and then it's an emotion. It's more like really sensitive and small facettes of herself in the art.

She wrote „I want to recreate my most personal perspective so others can experience something as well.“ There was something that I could really relate to. I always have problems with talking about my art and I felt she had the same problem that she makes something out of herself, but she doesn't know how to say it with words.

TN: Were there other parts in this text, in his biography, that made you feel closer to her or gave you a clearer image of who this person is?

LC: Yes. I actually marked some. She wrote that she chose sculpture over graphic design, because she found it interesting because it's tied up in space and atmosphere. And that was really nice because for me, it's also not just about the artwork, but it's also about how it's presented and how it works in different atmospheres, in different rooms. And she doesn't just think about this one thing. She also thinks about this whole context. Everything is connected in her art. And that's really inspiring for me. I mean, I don't know if she really thinks that way, but this person is inspiring for me. she wrote that she likes to think about the spaces. That's nice too, because art doesn't just stop where you make it. It's also goes on about what's the context and what's happening next week or what's happening after you built it?

And she wrote: „Human emotion, society's morality and culture has always been my concerns.“ Before that I thought a lot about the process, but I couldn't quite get to catch on what I actually want to make in her mind. And that really helps me that sentence.

TN: The language that was used in the biography was kind of similar to yours. Did this help you feel yourself into the biography?

LC: Maybe. she writes a quite easy English, like myself. And that really helps. So I don't have to think about words. And she writes in a similar way.

would you have expressed yourself differently if you would have written your Bio in german?

TN: Did your perception of the connection between a biography and an artwork change?

LC: In the beginning I thought that it's really important. I mean, when I was in a museum always wanted to know the background of every artist and get the connections. And in this biography, I mean, it really helps to know some facts, but most she wrote about was what she's more interested in now and those sentences gave me more like a, idea for herself.

So maybe it changed that way that I think now maybe sometimes you can just take the moment without the before.

TN: What kind of artwork do you have planned for this project?

I'm working on a beeswax bowl. It's almost finished. And I want to fill this bowl with moments. I really liked what Nima wrote about moments and the space between. I thought about how to catch these moments. I made molds of little coins and those coins I have with me and I try to catch moments. In the beginning I thought I would make something more symbolic. I could use Iranian symbolics or stories that I read from there, but it doesn't feel right. Because I wasn't in Iran before. I don't know much about this country and it would be cultural appropriation. So I thought about what is something that me and Nima can feel in the same way? What's something we all can feel? Like those universal moments, when you are with your family or with your friends, or in the nature or looking over the Lake and those feelings, when you're just feeling in the moment and feel really calm and fulfilled.

And right now I try to put those moments in my coins and then I will cast them in glas.

I want to have this bowl full of these moments. And that it's coins is about what Nima says about how she's interested in cultures and society, history and that communication has always been hard for her. And I thought that the ultimate historic communication tool were coins. It's something that connects a lot of cultures and that's a symbolic metaphor for what she said here.



MEHDI FARZANE/ ARASH

My name is Arash and I was born in Isfahan which is one of the metropolitan cities in Iran. I was born during the Iran / Iraq war. My father was a pilot and served in the army. Evidently, discipline and order were very important in our household. He died when I was six and after he passed away our family was stuck in a very strange dilemma. Both family and friends paid a lot of attention to us and we were also supposed to get used to this new lifestyle. I was a kid but I was faced with something that didn't even exist in a child's world. After a while, I understood that I should plan a future that didn't include a father in it. The death of my father created an unwanted but deep union between the members of my family which included my mother, sister, and brothers. During secondary school, I started to be interested in arts, but still, I haven't made a serious decision on studying it.

In my first year of high school though I seriously decided to study music and of course it was faced with my family's disagreement. This turned to be my first challenge attempting my way into the art world. But I managed to convince them somewhat and buy my first guitar. Three years after I entered the Music Conservatory of Tehran and graduate after four years. When I entered the conservatory, I was very much into rock, blues, and funk, after the conservatory classical music was added to the list. I was always expected or asked why I don't play Iranian instruments or why I don't use Iranian music structures in my music compositions. I was always told that this would be a symbol of my nationality, but to be honest, I have never wanted to do that, I have never had any interest in playing Iranian instruments.

It seems nationality is an element that is always somewhat of importance to everyone but it doesn't seem to play a role in my work. I continued playing bass guitar and composing songs with different bands in Tehran and currently, I am studying jazz and American twenty-century music in Turkish in Istanbul. It's a quite funny mixture of learning New Orleans and Chicago's Jazz music in Turkish in Istanbul and analyzing it in my head in Farsi. Even though national symbols don't play a role in my music, I believe geographical status makes a big difference in how you perceive your surroundings and translate them into your work.

Interview with Tabitha Nagy

TN: Hello Mehdi, Welcome to our talk. What did it feel like to impersonate an artist?

MF: Hello. Thanks for having me. It was very fun and interesting but at first, it was very hard and strange because I am a musician and the other artist is a visual artist and I had to put myself and my mind set as a visual artist. And I had to the biography several times, to find some solutions and some keywords as a visual artist.

TN: Which were the parts that stood out to you in this biography?

MF: In general it was very different than mine because I talk about my background and experiences and she doesn't.

Mehdi Farzane was sent the biography of Jina Halenbeeke, the alter ego of Gemma Meulendijks.

Mostly she talks about how she creates work. The boldest part was when she talks about the best spot and the best moment. And how she influences her surroundings and how her surroundings influence her. I think this was the main thing that helped me with the work.

TN: So your process was more like that you take the keywords and try to make it your own, Rather than trying to impersonate the other artist in a sense. If I understood.

MF: Yes exactly, because her biography was too short and mainly she talked about how she creates works. There is no personal information in her biography to find out and to put me in her shoes.

TN: From the biography, did you get an idea of how the artwork of this person may look or how this person is, like character-wise? Personality-wise? And did you try to incorporate that in the work that you made?

MF: It is very hard because as I mentioned before, her biography is too short and her personal information in her biography is like a title, like her nationality, her name, and other things like this. The main part of her biography as I told you, talked about creating work and I tried to put myself as her and find some personal information and use some personal information in my work but actually, I use her biography to make the work.

TN: For your biography, would you write it differently now? Or would you normally write it differently than you did for this project? What do you think of this impersonal approach that the artist that you got took?

MF: If I want to send a biography for this project again, I'm sure I will send the same one. Because when I was writing it, I knew that, the other artist have to impersonate me and I want to help them to find a solution easier. Gina's biography was very interesting for me, to be honest, I don't know if I can write a biography like her but maybe someday.

is it possible to write different Bios based on the concept of the work we are presenting?

I don't know. In general, I just want to say, I think it's a very important thing, that we should write a biography according to the situation, and think about who is supposed to read this and how it would be used. It's very important.

TN: What kind of artwork did you make for the project? could you describe it?

MF: I created an interactive space, In this space, I guide the audience through some steps, and in every step, there are some choices, and the result of these choices will be a music piece that I designed and created. The important concept that I used from her biography is to be an influencer or to be an influencee and the second one is to find the best spot and best moment for making and creating an art piece. I think this project is not finished for me and it will be continued in the future.

TN: How do you see the ownership of this artwork? because it's a peculiar circumstance in this project.

MF: I think, the ownership of this project belongs to both of us equally, because I used her concepts and identity of her biography to make this piece. If I didn't receive her biography and if I wasn't in this project, this idea wouldn't exist and because of that, I think it's equal between us.

TN: so you see it as more of a collaboration?

MF: In some ways maybe we can call it a collaboration but I don't think it's a direct collaboration, because the biographies were exchanged randomly and we didn't choose them. Because of that, I think it's not a hundred percent collaboration.

TN: Do you have anything else you want to say in the interview?

MF: I just want to say thank you again and I am very glad to be part of this project and the thing is I learned about this project is how important it is to write a biography and to put information in it. I read one of them, the new version of biography and I can not wait to read the other biographies that the other artists wrote.

ACTUALLY I WAS THERE



CHOOSE ONE.



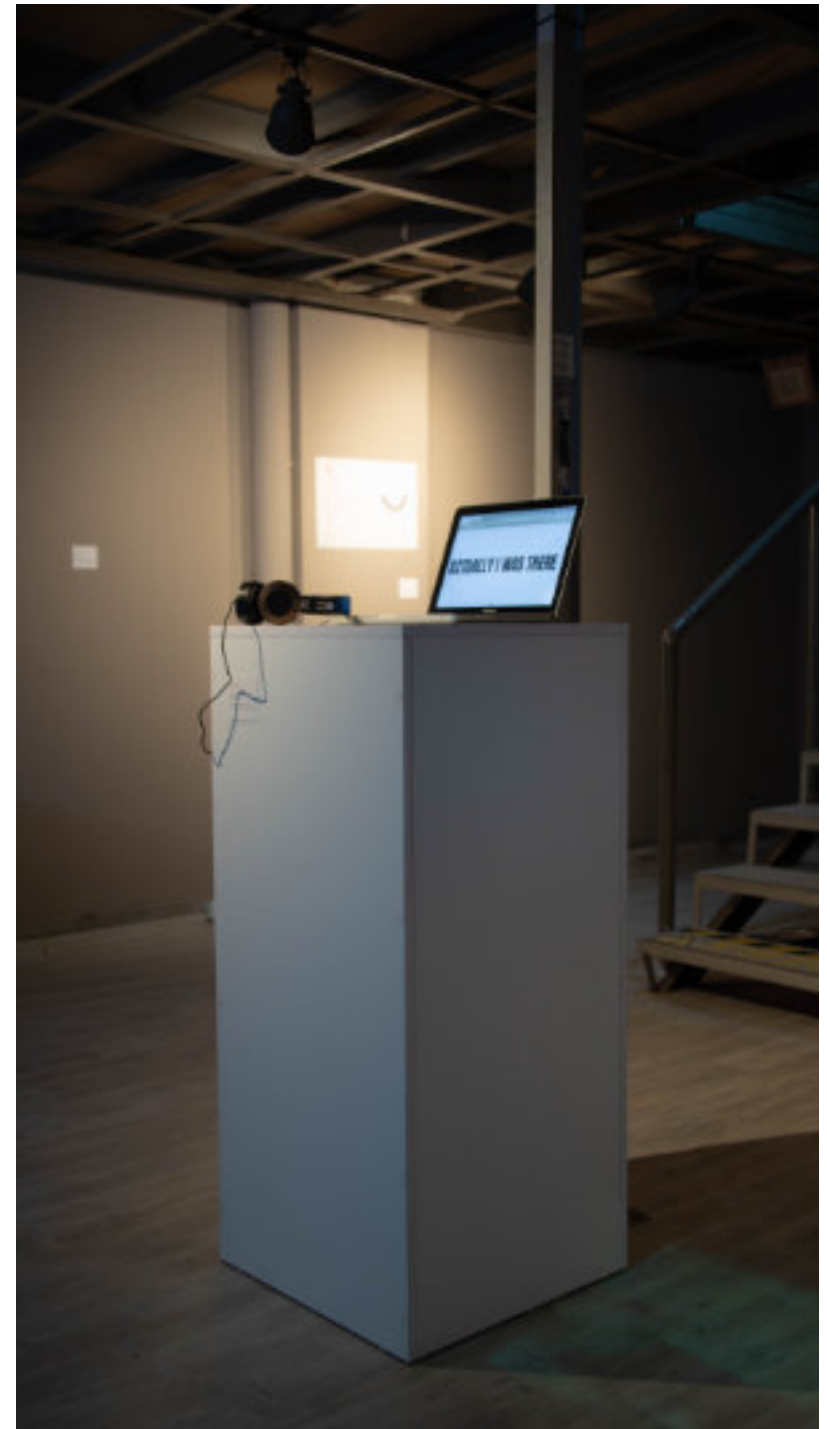
CHOOSE ONE.

SCREAM

LAUGH

CRY

BE SILENT



PARNIAN GHORBANI/ SOFI KIAEE

Most artists write an artist bio because other artists have written one. But this one, this one is directly aimed at you. And as you read it, you slowly start to shrink into me.

You are now named Sofi Kiaee. You were born on the 13th September 1994 in Tehran. Tehran, its always on the news, Tehran this, Tehran that. But that isn't really your reality, you have an underground life. From there, the subculture is not as different as other places. But the cover, my darling the cover is misleading and there's always more depth to it.

You've lived in Tehran most of your years, except when you were 8, where you lived in another continent for 2 years. What affect do you think that had on you? How do we decide which life events are important?

You recall some memories from the past in your consciousness and think to yourself, Im living with this memory every second of every day. they never left, I don't think I've ever stopped thinking about them. It's just... under the rug. Those buried and hidden in the root, drag us around like puppets.

Your dad bought an analog camera in the 80's, your mom used it after they married, and they passed it down to you and you went to university studying Photography using the same camera. You weren't very productive in University; You still hadn't managed to tame the chaos inside, never mind the outside.

You have an disagreeable nature, we don't know why that is my dearJ, maybe you're not creative, you're just disagreeable. So you're not very keen on the way things "are".

Sometimes to your advantage, sometimes not. This leads you to ask many questions: Why is a photography 2D? why is it on the wall? Why does it have a front and a back? Why no one touches it? What happens in the alternative?

Your practices are often between the realms of image and literature. For you image making is a way of deciphering the language, a treasure map that has been passed down to us by our ancestors. Your studies are mostly about psyche, and the things that form our thoughts and shape and behaviors. And you think,-J) you can translate those concepts into art works.

The other day a very old friend of your family told you a story about when you were 6 and you had gone to a book fair with school.

You bought two copies of the same book, saying "because I really liked it". After hearing this, the current you thought to herself, well, I must have never

changed, all the things that happened to me since then, like they really didn't matter.

Parnian Ghorbani was sent the biography of Rodrigo de Sousa, the alter ego of Diogo da Cruz.

Interview with Shirin Zeraaty

SZ: How did you approach the biography?

PG: I decided not to search the artists he's worked with because for the same reason that we were not supposed to have a visual idea of each other's line of work. I read it a couple of times. I Googled some parts of it. The phrase using slowness as a form of resistance. It turns out it's a very interesting concept where instead of going along with this fast-paced world, you intentionally bring slowness to routines that don't necessarily require slowing down.

SZ: How he phrased the sentences are very different from the way you wrote yours for this project. I wonder what you think of the language?

PG: Using a certain kind of language is a freedom of choice and you play with the hand that is given to you. It's a very well-written text. It transfers exactly what the author wants it to. I would maybe add that it didn't have a soul, but did it have to have a soul? No.

SZ: You have had very little information on the artist's background. Did this make it easier for you or more challenging?

PG: Well, not including something like family background, or we could say like a sentimental background is including another thing. We can trace less sentiments or less belonging and more impersonal and logical approach to his work. And maybe even to his character.

SZ: After this project, do you see the relationship between an artwork and a biography differently?

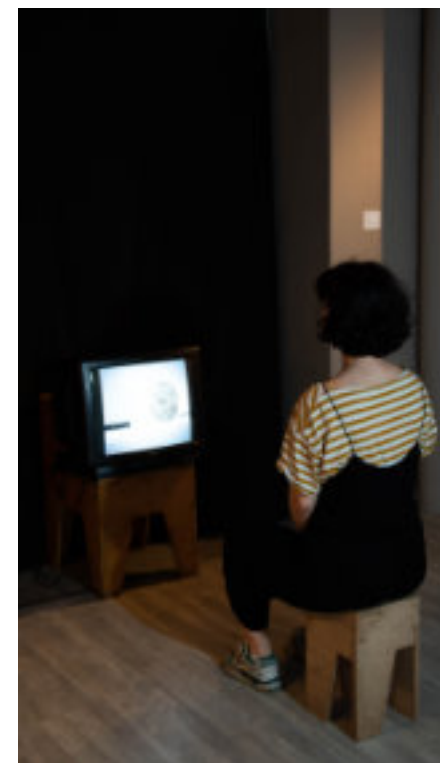
PG: I will have a clear answer to this question after I see the work produced with my biography. Is it necessary to be sensitive and obsessive or even use a certain kind of language to create what I create? I'm looking forward to finding out.

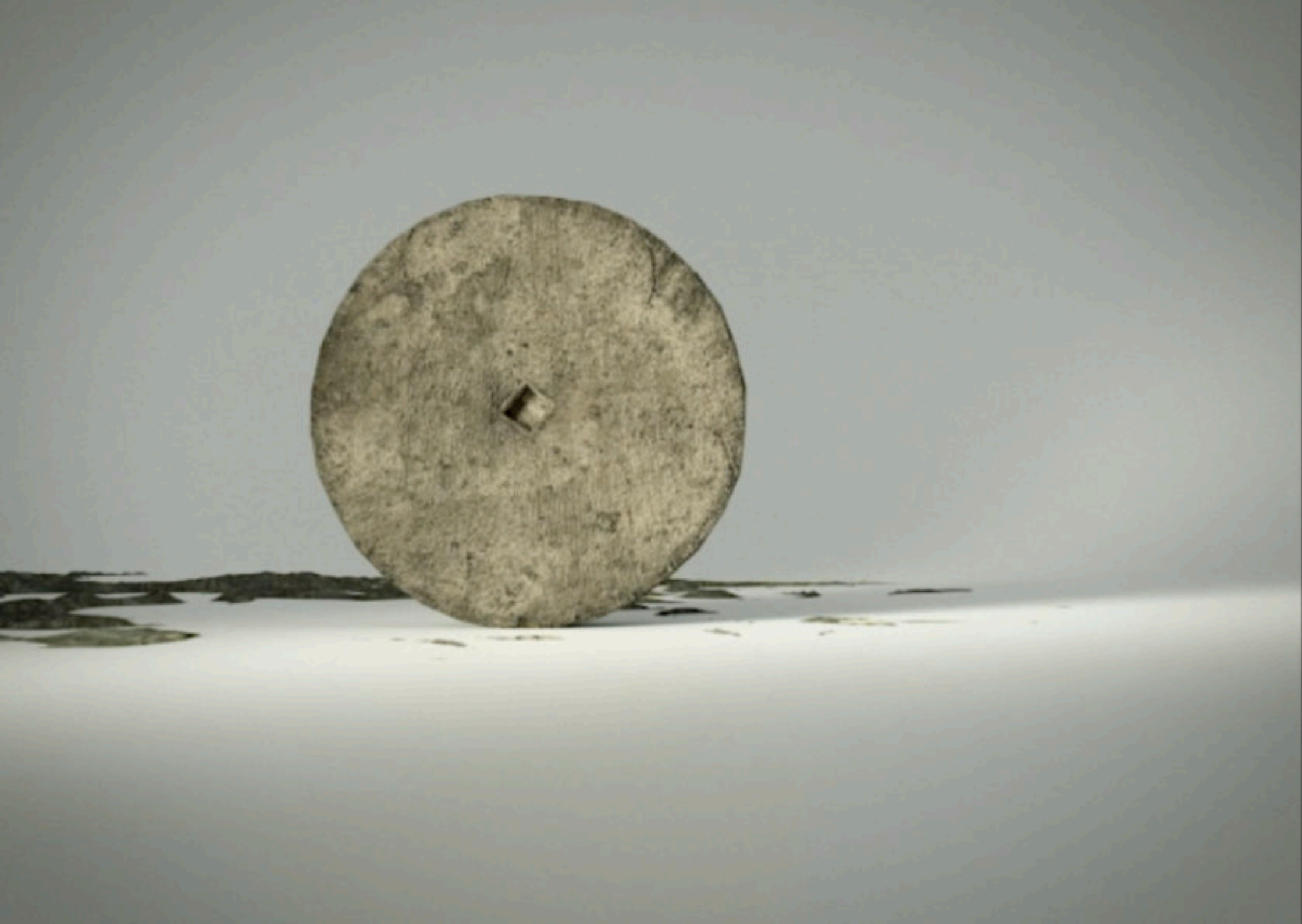
SZ: Usually, as an artist, when I create a work, I would have full ownership of the work. But for this project, you used someone else's identity to create a work. How do you feel about the ownership of this work?

PG: This was a very collective work. Someone else's biography than me in the middle, and then someone who did the work because I didn't have the required skills. And then the whole idea was curated by someone else. So I feel it belongs to everyone who took part in it.

SZ: Could you describe the work you created?

PG: I was out of my depth when it came to choosing the material because I was sure it's tech work and I couldn't do it myself. So that's where Morteza came in and we came up with the idea of a 3D room. I try to work with things that could be done in a shorter amount of time. Because I understood that he works on long-term projects. So I marked replication and historical elements, human knowledge, and referring to past, present, and future. We worked on the concept of the wheel something that exists and influences our past present and future. The wheel is something that the shape of it, even the use of it has evolved with our ever-growing knowledge and affected so much. The wheel keeps moving forward and so do we individually and as a species.





REYHANEH MIRJAHANI

Age
Nationality
Gender
Location
Medium
Education
Bio
Lived - experience
Concept

I am a 28 years old Iranian female artist and researcher, currently based in Gothenburg, which I wish soon I will be able to say based between Tehran and Gothenburg. My inception with art was not to become an artist in society but to use it as a personal tool to objectify/materialize my abstracted personal feelings. But it has all changed.

I started my art education as a sculptor, working mainly with the form and struggling with the relation between concept and form, studying the affective potentials of aesthetic choices in the relationship between objects in installation work. During this time I mainly focused on my personal feelings and expressions. Right after I finished my bachelor degree in Tehran, I moved to Poland for two years. Somehow it felt like I am not free anymore to express myself in the new society as my work was read based on my nationality.

It was at this point that my practice shifted into participatory installation about the political aspect of others' perception of me, as a foreigner.

In 2018, I moved to Sweden to continue my studies. This time, studying art was not about me, but about us/them. The multiple us/them which sometimes we can fit in and sometimes not. The us that constantly defends itself and the them that is being judged out of its context all the time. Since then my artistic research has shifted into the socially engaged participatory installation as an experimental tool to challenge, question, and study the notion of a political agency (individual and collective), and the position of ethics in this discourse. And this study has been woven with my background in sculpture and traditional visual art studies to understand the interrelationship between political agency and the effective potential of physical involvement/presence.

Now, with my work, instead of resolving the description of "an Iranian female artist", I focus on questioning and challenging our/their position in the entangled political contemporary life we live in.

Interview with Tabitha Nagy and Shirin Zeraaty

TN: How did it feel to impersonate another artist?

RM: Very difficult. I was really struggling with it. Not only because I had not a lot of information, but also because I didn't know what the person exactly meant. So for me it was a challenge, if I should have my own perception and lived experience inside the work, or if I should try to be a hundred percent the guy whose bio I got. In the end I decided to have my own understanding of it and add my own lived experience and subjectivity.

Reyhaneh Mirjahani was sent the biography of Rodrigo de Sousa, the alter ego of Diogo da Cruz.

TN: Did you find similarities in the biography to your own life?

RM: The part that was about political conflict in the Western societies. Not necessarily Western societies, but the conflicts in a contemporary life, that was something familiar for me or easy to develop. But for example, the part about the fictive scenarios and scientific knowledge production or the part about the technology that was really challenging. I've never done anything with technology for art making. I kind of connected keywords and it reminded me of futurists. So I chose that aesthetic to work with.

TN: How do you see the relationship between you and the artwork you made? Do you consider it your work?

RM: I feel the distance. So I kind of feel that I am not the author of this work, but I also understand the other person is not the author. So it's kind of floating in the middle. That's my understanding of it.

SZ: What do you think is the main difference between your biography and his biography?

RM: I think in my biography, I positioned myself. But I couldn't find that in his biography. I couldn't see his position in what he's working with and the concept he is interested in.

SZ: Did you feel the words that were used were vague somehow, or did you think that there was a lack of information?

RM: Lack of information. There could be two or three more words to the phrases, so I could understand exactly what this person means. For example with the structures in Western societies. I was like, what kind of a structure? Is it a political structure, or social, or what kind of structure does he mean? And also about the fictive scenarios, what kind of fictive scenarios?

SZ: Has the process of this project changed or influenced the way you connect to or see the relationship between a biography and an artwork?

RM: The process kind of confirmed how I was thinking about it. This work in the end doesn't belong to me. And if someone would see my work, they can also find out that there's something different, or something wrong with this work.

SZ: When you say you feel it doesn't belong to you, do you mean it in a negative way or more in the sense that it's separated from the author.

RM: That it's separate. Nothing negative. The text I have gotten, I'm not sure if it's a biography. I would say it's maybe more like an artists statement. It doesn't tell me much about the artist himself, except that the study he had and the university and the location he lives. I need more from a biography. How old are you? Just a little about the life. What was the professional journey you went through? This information was missing. I had to more follow the concept he was talking about or the subject he is interested in.

SZ: Could you tell us what you're creating as an artwork?

RM: I used to make sculptures or installation and maybe since three years ago I'm more into participatory artworks or events. For this project I've created a collage. I chose to do the collage, because I knew that I probably cannot attend the exhibition. So it has to be a physical work to send.

SZ: Do you want to add something to the talk? Something about this project or the topic of biographies and artworks and their connection?

RM: Besides my experience I'm very curious to see the other works and to read the biographies and see how people work with this challenge. So for me, the process is not finished. Part of it was my own experience, but I would like to see how people approach this challenge.

"Where is the source?", she asked. It was
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why the whole process reminded
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AN EXHIBITION ON ARTIST PROFILING

Curated by Shirin Zeraaty, Tabitha Nagy