

**ISLAMIC ARTISTS: INTERTEXTUALITY, TEXT AND IMAGE IN THE  
WORKS OF SELECTED CONTEMPORARIES AND THEIR ARTISTIC  
PRACTICE OF DUALITY**

by

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## DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that this research is my own original work. All secondary data used and quoted have been acknowledged and referenced according to university requirements.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This research explores combined elements of social life, tradition and context as possible outcomes present and presented owing to an intertextual perspective. These are addressed in the works of contemporary artists who come from Islamic countries and thereafter migrated. They are placed in contrast to myself, a Muslim, residing in South Africa, a secular country.

Drawing from a daily interaction with Islamic text, my experience with it is visceral. As a starting point to this study, the idea of 'otherness' in relation to culture is explored by tracing the effects of a cultural influence in the outcomes of art practice.

The nature of this lived experience has formed and informed this study. A further explanation of the impact of religion and culture on daily life is described by Professor of Anthropology, Kenneth M. George,

[T]he ethical crises, projects, and striving we see in everyday religious life are worked out not just in the intersubjective play and politics of language but also in encounter with, in dwelling with, material and visual substances and forms (George 2016:51).

The research to follow identifies and traces multiple open-ended readings present in the artworks of myself and two contemporary Islamic artists, Shirin Neshat (Iran, Qazvin b. 1957) and Mounir Fatmi (Morocco, Tangier, b. 1970) whose work demonstrates an interplay, although different from mine, characterised by their experience as artists with Islamic backgrounds in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

Neshat and Fatmi share a written text component within their works as well as subject matter concerned with the historical affairs, religious ideologies and Western perceptions of Islam.

The research to follow is grounded in three assumptions: 1) a text is not only a text in the common sense understanding but can be extended to include visual texts, 2) that texts do not exist in isolation, but is always generated in relation to another structure and, 3) through the viewing of these texts one is able to generate layers of meaning. Each of these assumptions has been



informed by the work of Bulgarian-French philosopher and literary critic, Julia Kristeva.

Kristeva coined the term 'intertextuality'<sup>1</sup> and informed the theory around it during the early 1960s through exploration of Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of 'dialogism' (Bakhtin 1929). Kristeva states that Bakhtin's understanding of the 'literary word' is, "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning)" (Kristeva 1986:36).

Kristeva sees intertextuality as used to describe the intersections of textual surfaces in order to identify the various structures, codes and ideologies present therein. This intersection is evident in the experience of literature and non-literary text.

When looking at non-literary texts through an intertextual perspective, one enters into a dialogue that generates meaning by arranging and composing, therefore eliminating singularity (Raj 2015:80). The artists' works are considered from the intertextual perspective to identify how various facets of their works and art practice provide an opportunity to compose dynamic meaning.

## **1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

With a focus on layered meaning, the research question is; what can be revealed when an intertextual analysis is applied to the juxtaposed images and texts presented in the works of Shirin Neshat, Mounir Fatmi, and Shenaz Mahomed (b. 1992)? The research considers whether these Islamic artists, through their creative practice demonstrate duality and ambiguity in their artworks.

The research puts forward the claim that, this analysis of three artist's examples will contribute to a body of knowledge about the choices made by contemporary Islamic artists, their artistic practice, the outcomes of their

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'intertextuality' was first featured in Kristeva's essay, *Word, Dialogue, Novel* in 1966. The essay was later published in 1982 in her book, *Desire in Language* along with other essays. An updated version with a selection of her essays was published in 1986 titled, *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi.

practice and their position as double conscious living artists in 21<sup>st</sup> century western communities.

## **1.2 THESIS STATEMENT**

The various structure, codes and ideologies present in the artworks of Shirin Neshat, Mounir Fatmi, and Shenaz Mahomed revealed through an intertextual lens can inform knowledge about their artistic practice and the duality of their lived experience.

The research considers the theory of intertextuality to provide a better understanding of the social and cultural systems that influence the artists' thoughts and art making processes. The research asserts that there is a subjective view that cannot be avoided when reading the works and addressing the artists' use of modes of intertextuality in their artistic practice.

The reasoning which supports the above stated claim is that, 1) the artists all deal with a clash of cultures causing a conflict in identity, 2) any text possessing an intertextual nature immediately disrupts an objective and stable reading and 3) their artistic practices openly question and challenge stereotypes of Islam using historical Quranic texts in relation to contemporary attitudes.

## **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this study is to perform an analysis of Shirin Neshat, Mounir Fatmi and Shenaz Mahomed's artworks as examples of multiple layered meaning, through the utilisation of an intertextual dialogical research perspective. This intertextual perspective allows for an interpretation of texts, looking at various systems, codes, traditions and other art forms that contribute to shaping new works and thought processes (Allen 2000:1).

The intertextual approach does not provide a stable reading or singular meaning. The focus of this research identifies, highlights and presents, hidden, dual meanings and texts that are present. The research shows that an intertextual approach may be applied to specific contemporary Islamic artists.

The research focused on 'texts' in forms of documents, images, three dimensional forms and written texts.

To achieve the aim, the following objectives have been set:

1) The Islamic tradition is defined through a brief overview of Islamic traditions, the Quran, the Hadith, Sharia law and detailing the 5 pillars of Islam which are perceived as the foundations of Islamic life. Throughout the process of defining Islam the acronym (PBUH)<sup>2</sup> was used. This textual approach is well known to readers of the Quran and other text which refer to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) further positioning the definition as referential to other texts encountered by practicing Muslims.

2) Research is conducted on the history of Islamic Art and the basis of its visual representation restrictions.

3) A review of specific media representation of particular social and cultural contexts of Islam is performed.

Objective 2 and 3 provide the opportunity to position the lived experience of the three considered artists within an international context with a focus on Islam.

4) The method of intertextuality comprises of calling into play a theory, a notion or approach and even discourse from others (Novak 2013:[sp]) and thereafter tracing these relations through a subjective reading (Allen 2000:1). Therefore an outline of important intertextual guidelines and modes are compiled.

5) Various levels of Muslim diaspora and duality are identified as this is a feature of the lived experience of artists Shirin Neshat and Mounir Fatmi.

6) Exemplified in the work of the aforementioned artists, written text from the Quran and other appropriated texts are located as part of artworks creating a

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<sup>2</sup> 'PBUH' is an acronym for 'Peace Be Upon Him' and is mentioned after any Prophet in Islam out of respect and to pass on blessings to that Prophet. The Quran specifically mentions the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and states, "Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him [Muhammad] and ask [ Allah to grant him] peace" (Quran 33:56).

perceptible narrative complicated by the elements of 'duality' (Du Bois 1989:3), humour, power, identity, Islamic laws, culture (Peck 2001:200), representation of violence and artistic practice (Marshall 2007:25).

This subjective reading incites possible connections of artworks to images relating to postmodern art movements. This further relates to their context, tracing back to their practice, to the artist and then space and place. Bits of meaning found in between these relations then surfaced to "disrupt a stable meaning and objective interpretation" (Allen 2000:3). This type of intertextual reading allowed for the research to become a fully active process in the production of meaning.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

An intertextual analysis is carried out as it entails a description of details to inform a larger and more focused scope of knowledge related to the artistic practice of Islamic artists working in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in predominantly Western environments. The intertextual method of analysing the artworks and practices of the artists is carried out to reflect visions of their society, interconnectedness and influence on human relations (Allen 2000:6) gaining understanding of their position as artists living out duality. Through this method, the research is presented as a broad explanation that provides a theoretical perspective (Creswell 2003:110) on the various structure, codes and ideologies present in the artworks of Shirin Neshat, Mounir Fatmi and Shenaz Mahomed.

Secondary information is analysed during the research. This entails collection and examination of a body of knowledge created by other researchers that pertained to the study (Gorard 2002:234). The information collected consists of paper-based sources, electronic sources and artworks.

The sources used require intervention in the form of detailed interrogation regarding where the information came from, whether it was within a contemporary timeline, whether it presented accurate geographical locations and whether the information could be combined and compared? (Develop a Research Proposal 2018:[sp]). Once these questions were resolved, the

information was analysed and interpreted to specifically address the research question.

The reason for using a qualitative approach for this research project was to be able to explore contemporary Islamic art in comparison to my own practice taking personal context into consideration. Key features of qualitative research include its aim to acquire an in-depth understanding of the ways of social life (Bricki 2007:2). According to Holloway and Wheeler (2002:30) qualitative research is “a form of social enquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world in which they live.”

With regard to my own practice as a Muslim artist working in South Africa, a practice-led method is used to create a focal point for the study, creative process and created artworks. In producing a body of work with reflective documentation, exploring the specified subject matter that was advanced through this research about and within my art practice. The research has brought this creative practice component into form through an autobiographical recount using the first person perspective to embody my own voice and therefore position my creative process as self-referential.

Artmaking serves as a method of research by way of creation, particularly conceptual images that influence change in perceptions (Marshall 2007:23). A fundamental aspect of this research process resulted in a creative outcome where practice was undertaken as a key method (Niedderer 2007:13) for generating meaning.

The research facilitated the opportunity to investigate my artistic practice, in keeping within Islamic laws. This has led the study to explore the reasoning behind the prohibition of the human figure in Islamic art practice, considered reading of traditional Islamic visuals forms of art and written text as a means to communicate present-day encounters.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE

### 2.1 Background to the study

An introduction to Islam the religion, is provided in section 2.1.1, largely derived from the researchers own knowledge from attending *madressah* (Islamic classes) and from the Quran. In section 2.1.2, secondary sources that are internationally available from the internet were used to obtain a view of Islam from the perspective of everyday practicing Muslims.

This form of secondary references were selected for this research as they provide a look at the practice of living Islamic artists on an international stage. Stemming from the historical context of Islam, the sections to follow address the contemporary social and cultural environment of a practicing Muslim by providing a different aspect of Islam which is the lived experience.

#### 2.1.1 Introduction to Islam

The section to follow provides an overview of Islam the religion, to define the Islamic tradition. This has been achieved through a short expansion of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life and a description of fundamental sources present in the life experience of Muslims. These sources include the Quran, the Hadith<sup>3</sup>, Sharia law and the five pillars of Islam.

According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2015, the estimate number of Muslims in the world was 1.8 billion and still growing (Lipka 2017:[sp]). Islam is a religion and lifestyle that practices “peace through submission to God” (Islam Explained 2014:[sp]). According to Islamic scholar Sayyid Abul (1959:5), the direct definition of the Arabic term *Islam* is ‘submission’ and therefore holds connotations to surrendering and obedience. As the researcher was taught in madressah, a basic fundamental of the faith

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<sup>3</sup> The Hadith with an uppercase ‘H’ refers to the noun – what the entire collected sayings and pronouncements are called. ‘Hadiths’ in plural with a lowercase ‘h’ refer to individual sayings and pronouncements.

is that there is only one God and this forms part of the main tenet<sup>4</sup> of Islam. The Quran is the first major text-based source all Muslims follow for the religious teachings of Islam.

By leading an Islamic lifestyle through testifying to the Oneness<sup>5</sup> of God and the belief of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as God's messenger, one is called a Muslim. A Muslim is also described as one who, regardless of background, social standing, race or country, practices Islamic beliefs and possesses attributes of righteousness (Abul 1959:5).

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is considered the most successful in spreading the word of Islam (Islam: An Introduction 2018:[sp]). Conveying the monotheistic belief in one God, the prophets of Islam (including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Jesus) delivered guidance, some through scriptures such as the Torah and Bible (Islam Explained 2014:[sp]).

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) denounced idol worship and paganism after receiving the first verses of the Quran from the Arch Angel Gabriel (Jibraeel) 610 C.E. (Islam: An Introduction 2018:[sp]). For 23 years after, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued receiving and spreading the message. All revelations were then compiled as the Quran by scribes and companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Nawab 2006:[sp]).

The Quran is taken as a guide and model to equip Muslims with direction in life (Ayoub 1996:[sp]). The Quran (directly translated as 'the recitation') serves as the central text of Islam.

The language of the Quran is Arabic. In the Quran (12:2) it states, "[w]e have sent it down as an Arabic Quran so that you will understand." One reason for Arabic as the language of the Quran is that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was from Mecca (in 570 C.E.) and therefore revelations were given in his particular language (Khan 2014). It is also believed that Arabic was the chosen language due to its precision, copiousness and nuances (Khan 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> A tenet is described as, "a principle or belief, especially one of the main principles of a religion or philosophy" (Dictionary 2018).

<sup>5</sup> 'Oneness' is the term used to emphasise the singularity of God devoid of any partners. In Islamic text, the word is capitalised to stress the importance of the concept.

The Hadith is the second text-based source that forms part of Islam and comprises of “collected sayings and pronouncements of the Prophet (PBUH) [that] are complimentary to the Revelation” (Islam: An Introduction 2018:[sp]). Shabout (2018:[sp]) describes the Hadith as a, “body of traditions describing the life of the Prophet (PBUH).” The most authentic Hadith and interpretations are known to be, *Sahih Bukhari*, collected by Imam Bukhari (d. 256 AH, 870 CE), and includes 7,275 hadiths and *Sahih Muslim*, collected by Muslim b. al-Hajjaj (d. 261 AH, 875 CE), which includes 9,200 hadiths (Saheeh Al-Bukhari 2016).

The Hadith is considered to be second to the Quran in providing guidance to Muslims (Cragg 1999:[sp]). Muslims regard the Hadith as a type of law to be obeyed pertaining to daily behaviour and character (Cragg 1999:[sp]).

Legislation for Muslims is derived from both the Quran and the Hadith. The verses of the Quran and the Hadith place utmost importance on the oneness of God, focusing on the assertion of Judgement Day<sup>6</sup> and the hereafter<sup>7</sup> (Nawab 2006:[sp]). Emphasis is placed on consequences for those who deny the message and the great reward and benefits for those who submit (Nawab 2006:[sp]).

The 7<sup>th</sup> century people of Medina<sup>8</sup> readily welcomed the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and it is known as the place where the teachings of Islam began to flourish and spread (History of Islam 2018:[sp]). Almost the entire Arabian Peninsula had accepted Islam and abolished idolatry in the eight years following the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) move (Leghaei 2018:[sp]). However, it was only after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 632 C.E. that Islam spread intensely fast (Leghaei 2018:[sp]).

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<sup>6</sup> The ‘Day of Judgement’ in Islam is also referred to as the ‘Day of Resurrection’ where all souls will be brought back to life and have their good and bad deeds assessed (Leghaei 2018:[sp]).

<sup>7</sup> The ‘hereafter’ refers to a life beyond death (Leghaei 2018:[sp]).

<sup>8</sup> As the core of the Quran rebuffed the belief in more than one God, many traders in Mecca whose livelihood depended on the sales of idols, sought to assassinate the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), causing him to depart to the nearby town of Medina (History of Islam 2018:[sp]).



Military conquests took place intermittently throughout tribes in Arabia and once an army was formed, it began making its way, “towards the Sasanian empire and northwards to Palestine and Syria against the Byzantine empire” (Smart 2018:[sp]). The Quran informs on fighting enemies of Islam throughout various chapters with phrases such as, “[i]ndeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly” (Quran 61:4) and “[f]ight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors” (Quran 2:190).

Islamic legal scholars began compiling the Sharia, after the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) death, in the seventh century right through to the tenth century, in order to bring about a system of legal guidance to the growing Muslim Empire (How did the Sharia Law develop? 2016:[sp]). Sharia law is a compilation of guides and regulations derived from the Quran and the Hadith by Muslim legal scholars (Afsaruddin 2017:[sp]). As a practicing Muslim, the researcher understands that Sharia is considered sacred amongst Muslims, as it is believed to have originated from God (Allah).

However, the original Sharia did not explicitly consist of a code of laws but was also a developing body of religious knowledge (The Origins of Islamic Law 2018:[sp]). During the modern era (c. 1500 – c. 1800) as Western colonial authority was on the rise, it was inevitable that the Sharia law would be adjusted to accommodate a Western law system (How did the Sharia Law develop? 2016:[sp]). Today Muslim legal scholars agree that the Sharia law has been modified to modern environments depending on the country, society and context although still keeping within its religious foundations (The Origins of Islamic Law 2018:[sp]).

Part of the lifestyle of all Muslims is to practice the *sunnahs* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to follow rituals made up mainly by the fundamentals of worship which are encompassed in the five pillars of Islam (Macaulay-Lewis 2013:[sp]). *Sunnahs* are described as the traditional and social practices or habits one should have in Islam according to the Quran and the Hadith (Afsaruddin 2017:[sp]). The five pillars are described as “a framework

for Muslim life” (Ibrahim 1997:[sp]). An explanation of the five pillars is expanded on below to provide a context of the lived experience of Muslims:

1. The *Shahadah* – The Testimony of Faith: “[t]here is none worthy of worship except Allah (Quran 37:35) and Muhammad (PBUH) is the Messenger of Allah” (Quran 48:29).

The testimony is an utterance, maintaining that there are no partners joined with God and is known as the foundation of Islam (Macaulay-Lewis 2013:[sp]).

2. *Salah* – Prayer: “[r]ecite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do” (Quran 29:45).

Muslims perform prayers five times a day<sup>9</sup> (Macaulay-Lewis 2013:[sp]). These prayers serve as a daily link to God (Ibrahim 1997:[sp]). Muslims pray by reciting certain verses of the Quran whilst bowing, kneeling and prostrating (Macaulay-Lewis 2013:[sp]).

3. *Zakah* – Charity: “[z]akah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [zakah] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise” (Quran 9:60).

Charity must be given to the less fortunate as often as one can. This traditionally takes place on a monthly or annual basis where Muslims should ideally contribute 2.5% of their yearly income to those in need (Islam Explained 2014:[sp]).

4. *Sawm* – Fasting: “[o] you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous” (Quran 2:183).

Ramadaan is the ninth month in the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims fast (Macaulay-Lewis 2013:[sp]). Fasting takes place daily during this

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<sup>9</sup> Based on the researchers knowledge from attending madressah, these prayers are: *Fajr* (before sunrise), *Dhuhr* (midday), *Asr* (afternoon), *Maghrib* (after sunset) and *Isha* (night).

month from dawn to sunset whereby Muslims abstain from eating, drinking and sexual relations (Ibrahim 1997:[sp]). Based on the researchers knowledge from attending madressah, fasting is a spiritual act of self-restraint that should increase one's patience, empathy and ability to control bad habits and worldly desires.

5. *Hajj* – Pilgrimage: “[a]nd complete the *Hajj* for Allah. But if you are prevented, then [offer] what can be obtained with ease of sacrificial animals” (Quran 2:196).

Every Muslim should at least once in their lifetime perform the holy pilgrimage to Mecca if they are physically and financially able to do so (Ibrahim 1997:[sp]). Based on the researchers knowledge, following the tradition of Prophet Abraham, the pilgrimage symbolises unity of mankind as all Muslims gather as equals regardless of caste, culture or creed to worship God.

### **2.1.2 Islam in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The current representation of the Islamic faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by the West is shaped through mass media by perceptions of the religion as something to be feared and threatened by. This has caused a change in how Muslims identify themselves depending on the particular cultural context they find themselves in.

The Muslim population in the United States experience misconceptions and feelings of being judged by their appearance and religious background, resulting in a feeling of confusion and alienation towards their own faith (Tindongan 2011:73).

Since the eighth century to contemporary times, Islam is perceived by the West as a fixed mind-set with rigid beliefs that are used to define all aspects of living (Dajani & Michelmore 1999:54). What has become crucial to the perception of Islam in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is its media image that, according to Dajani and Michelmore (1999:55), came from a tradition during the Middle Ages where it was dominant in the West through “medieval perceptions of the

Saracens”<sup>10</sup> to view Islam as “violent and perverted.” Raja (2014:3) builds on to this notion by declaring that the Western account of Islam is largely fed by the media with a specific focus on Islam as a faith that is vigorously biased with regard to gender and the mistreatment of women.

According to Byrd (2017:1), post 9/11, new light has been shed on, “the nature of Islam and the Muslim world.” Especially for those migrating to and residing in the West (Byrd 2017:1). Muslims and Muslim migrants in the West were ‘othered’ after 9/11 specifically in the United States, where amongst many American citizens, there is lack of knowledge about Islam as a religion (Tindongan 2011:73). Racial profiling, various media forms, an excessive representation of news regarding people or events associated with Islam and even television shows aided this ‘othering’ (Tindongan 2011:73).

Although secular societies in Western European countries are seen as places of “opportunity and freedom”, Byrd (2017:1) states that,

[m]any Muslims find their presence to be unwanted, unwelcomed and hated; their religious sensibilities disrespected; their culture maligned, and their faith positions mocked and degraded.

Throughout media representations, Islam is considered more as a political affair rather than a belief system (Dajani & Michelmore 1999:56). In support of this view, a study conducted of Time Magazine publications between 1944 and 1994, on topics regarding Islam revealed, “only ten of the 309 articles appeared in the Religion section. According to the coders, 256 or 83% of the articles had a political focus while only forty articles, or 13% dealt with religious issues” (Dajani & Michelmore 1999:56).

It is natural for communities to close themselves off within their “religious life world” and oppose open engagement by embodying uninformed accusations made towards their deep-rooted beliefs, identity and culture (Byrd 2017:3). According to Safi (2003:48), these accusations rather gave rise to what he terms “Progressive Muslims.”

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<sup>10</sup> Old English – meaning Arab or Muslim (Online Etymology Dictionary 2018).

Safi (2003:48), states that, “[a] progressive commitment implies by necessity the willingness to remain engaged with the issues of social justice as they unfold on the ground level, in the lived realities of Muslim and non-Muslim communities” (Safi 2003:48). A sectarian way is avoided when complying with a progressive Islamic outlook, as one now considers humankind and human dignity (Sadek 2006:[sp]).

For a progressive Muslim, “potentially different multiple alternative modernities” (Duderija 2010:133) exist with various starting points (Duderija 2010:133). These modernities stem from definitive cultural contexts that serve as a basis for their contemporary way of thinking (Duderija 2010:133). Regarding Islam and innovation, various critical and non-apologetic critiques are advocated by progressive Muslims (Safi 2003:48). This refers to how progressive Muslims are confident in addressing issues around stereotypes, victimisation and starting a conversation about their experiences of being Muslims in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

An example of progressive Muslims in action can be seen in an event that took place in the United Kingdom. During March 2018, various Muslim communities in the United Kingdom began receiving anonymous letters to their homes and businesses with a bold title stating that the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2018 would be “Punish a Muslim Day” (Figure 1) (Hassan 2018:[sp]). The letter detailed a point system rewarding acts of contempt and brutality towards Muslims (Figure 2) (Hassan 2018:[sp]).



They have hurt you, they have made your loved ones suffer. They have caused you pain and heartache. What are you going to do about it? Are you a 'sheep' like the vast majority of the population? Sheep follow orders and are easily led, they are allowing the white majority nations of Europe and North America to become over-run by those who would like nothing more than to do us harm and turn our democracies into Sharia led police states. Only you can help turn this thing around, only you have the power. Do not be a sheep!

There will be rewards based on action taken. These are as follows:

10 points	Verbally abuse a Muslim
25 points	Pull the head-scarf off a Muslim 'woman'
50 points	Throw acid in face of a Muslim
100 points	Beat up a Muslim
250 points	Torture a Muslim using electrocution, skinning, use of a rack
500 points	Butcher a Muslim using gun, knife, vehicle or otherwise
1000 points	Burn or bomb a mosque
2500 points	Nuke Mecca

**Figure 1 & 2:** Punish a Muslim Day letter, 2018.  
(Hassan 2018:[sp]).

In response, protestors of various faiths gathered to form a chain around Newcastle Central Mosque to show their support for the Muslim community (Figure 3 & 4) (Roundtree 2018:[sp]). Although no hate crimes were reported on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April relating to the letters, it left Muslims with feelings of anxiety and fear resulting in many ready to take on these threats through social action (Rannard 2018:[sp]).



**Figure 3 & 4:** Supporters at Newcastle Central Mosque, 2018.  
(Hassan 2018:[sp]).

A clear trait of progressive Islam in practice is the weight of importance on, “concrete social action and transformation” (Safi 2003:48). Due to the negative light shed on Islam in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a progressive approach

carried out largely through social activism is crucial as a way to deal with those perceptions of which art making may be one.

A focus on the South African context of Islam in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be covered in Chapter Four through the researchers' practical body of work. Having provided a brief history and overview of Islam to provide a background and context to the study the next section will now be concerned with Intertextuality as one of the central ideas of the research.

## **2.2 Intertextuality and Visuality**

Intertextuality is a literary theory concerning the relationship between texts (Literary terms 2018:[sp]). The theory refers to various texts that interrelate through reactions to one another (Thomas & Sanderson 2011:1028). Allen's understanding of intertextuality is that,

[o]ur dialogue as speakers, therefore, is not simply with those we speak with but also with the already established codes and modes of speaking associated with different social situations (Allen 2003:80).

Applying intertextuality to describe these fundamental relations between texts came about as an alternative method to analysing literary text (Landwehr 2002:2).

In this section, the research will unpack the origins of intertextuality with a focus on its development as a theory and method. The research does not focus on intertextuality solely as a literary theory. The overview of origins is carried out for a better understanding of intertextuality for when the research applies it as a method to interpret visual art.

### **2.2.1 Dialogism and Mikhail Bakhtin**

Intertextuality is rooted in the theory of 'dialogism' (Bakhtin 1975). Mikhail Bakhtin was a Russian literary theorist and philosopher who significantly

influenced the thinking connections in language (Mikhail Bakhtin 2018:[sp]). Bakhtin's theory of dialogue in language is termed as dialogism<sup>11</sup>.

Dialogism refers to the meaning of texts changing according to different social situations (Allen 2000:80). Bakhtin's idea of language is that it possesses a dialogic nature (Allen 2000:80). This nature involves the context of the specific speaker in their social situation becoming crucial in developing meaning that is dependent on certain factors (Allen 2000:80). Mevlude Zengin (2016:315) affirms this, stating that "language cannot be objective because it depends on the subjectivity of the speaker" (Zengin 2016:315).

For Bakhtin, language is "always evaluative, always involved in social ideology" (Allen 2000:80). His interest lies in the social connections between people (Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogic 2012:[sp]). These social connections are deep rooted in the forms of speech or writing (Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogic 2012:[sp]).

In his essay, *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975) Bakhtin explains his theory of the dialogic by referring to the novel. The novel is described as a type of genre and an innovative method for conceptualising time and explaining social context (Bakhtin 1975:330). Bakhtin (1975:330) states that,

[t]he novel took shape precisely at the point when epic distance was disintegrating, when both the world and man were assuming a degree of comic familiarity.

The novel was given meaning when singular thought began to overlap and merge with other thoughts and ideas. Dialogue that is "double-voiced" in the novel, such as parody or appropriation, is a communication of "two world views" (Worton & Still 1990:16).

Bakhtin's argument claims that a combination of dialogues is used when people speak to each other (Worton & Still 1990:15). He asserts that these dialogues are 'borrowed' in order for people to "communicate their intentions" (Worton & Still 1990:15).

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<sup>11</sup> Dialogism as a term came into use not with the work of Bakhtin but rather subsequent theorists in reference to his writing *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975).



Dialogism assumes that at any given time, in any given place, there is a set of powerful but highly unstable conditions at work that will give a word uttered then and there a meaning that is different from what it would be at other times and in other places (Holquist 1990:67).

These conditions include the speakers themselves, their contexts and knowledge. Minor influences such as weather are included as a trivial condition in dialogism as it assumes that even accidental details affect utterance in dialogue (Holquist 1990:67). Bakhtin acknowledges language and text as an idea constructed through social practice featuring cultural, political, social and even religious beliefs (Zengin 2016:322).

### **2.2.2 Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes**

Julia Kristeva established the concept of intertextuality through exploration of Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic. Intertextuality is theoretically addressed through the idea of context and communal position (Kristeva 1966). Layeredness and multiple voices influencing each other and also existing because of each other are a result of intertextuality (Kristeva 1966).

The term intertextuality is defined as "shaping of a text's meaning by another text" (Literary terms 2018:[sp]). In other words, a text's meaning is not necessarily seen in isolation but rather existing in relation to other texts.

Kristeva suggests that meaning and understanding go beyond social and psychological relationships between people (Kristeva 1986:37) and includes structuring of narratives in relation to others (Kristeva 1986:44). Kristeva's intertextuality gives significance to the way language is read.

Kristeva explains intertextuality as being defined in a horizontal and vertical method that intersects. She argues that there are two planes that coexist when unpacking intertextuality (Kristeva 1986:45). These planes are a "horizontal axis (subject-addressee)" and "vertical axis (text-context)."

When these planes coincide, they highlight a crucial point; "each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (Kristeva 1986:45). Maria Alfaro (1996:268) explains this as words

containing other preconceived words and texts containing other preconceived texts.

As a horizontal reading of intertextuality, Kristeva (1986:37) explains that, “the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee” and vertically defined as, “the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus.” Kristeva’s theory discloses how the writer through a vertical and horizontal reading of intertextuality, then fuses discourses in relation to the writer’s own text (Kristeva 1986:37).

In *The Death of the Author* (1967) Barthes (1977:142) explains that once dialogue takes place on a subject, a disconnection occurs. The author is no longer the sole producer of meaning (Barthes 1977:142).

Allen states that Barthes’ understanding for the term ‘intertextuality’ explores the origins of the word ‘text’ as an ancient word referring to notions of spinning and weaving (Allen 2003:83). For Barthes (Allen 2003:83) the idea of spinning and weaving moves away from dealing with fixed sources and origins when it comes to the text but rather with the “already written and the already said.”

In *From Work to Text*, (1971) Barthes (1977:157) suggests that any type of text exists in language and the development of that discourse. The idea of “the real” for Barthes is interchanged with cultures’ construction of the real by way of texts (Fiske 1987:114). Connections between texts are the codes that allow for a consistent intertextual exchange to take place (Fiske 1987:114).

For Barthes, then, the knowledge of reality, and therefore, for practical purposes, reality itself, is intertextual: it exists only in the interrelations between all that a culture has written, spoken, visuali[s]ed about it. In this sense, all texts refer to “what has been written, i.e. to the Book (of culture, of life, of life as culture), it (the code) makes the text into a prospectus of this book (Fiske 1987:114).

For Kristeva and Barthes, an artist or writer brings forth many discourses, codes and texts associated with history, culture and even politics that could intentionally or unintentionally be employed in their works and that is what is encompassed in intertextuality (Landwehr 2002:9).

### 2.2.3 Graham Allen and other contemporaries

Literary theorist and Associate Professor in Modern English at University College Cork, Graham Allen understands intertextuality as, “promot[ing] a new vision of meaning, and thus of authorship and reading: a vision resistant to ingrained notions of originality, uniqueness, singularity and autonomy” (Allen 2000:6). It is highly unlikely for the term intertextuality to possess one established definition (Haberer 2007:57).

Non-literary texts can also possess an intertextual nature removing any neutrality from the term intertextuality and rather exposing its “underlying socio-political importance” (Martin 2011:149). Allen establishes that intertextuality is not restricted to literary arts but can be applied to various discussions in “cinema, visual art, music, architecture, photography and in virtually all cultural and artistic productions” (Allen 2000:174).

Allen (2000:5) further states that “even contemporary literature seems concerned with echoing and playing with previous stories, classic texts and long-established genres such as the romance and the detective story”<sup>12</sup>.

One needs to acknowledge that in general all things can be ‘texts’, in order to comprehend the varied extent of intertextuality (van Zoonen 2017:4). The most obvious element one associates with ‘text’ is the written word (books, signs and letters). This can however be extended to include visual texts and multi-media texts (van Zoonen 2017:4).

It is crucial to understand that intertextuality not only concerns itself with the writer or artist’s intentional or unintentional referencing of pre-existing texts but also includes the reader’s ideology and scope of knowledge surrounding the text (Zengin 2016:302). Therefore, Zengin (2016:302) states that, “[t]he generating of the meanings of a text is reali[s]ed not only in the act of production but also in the act of reception” (Zengin 2016:302).

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<sup>12</sup>An example of applied intertextuality in literature would be, *The Odyssey* by Homer retold in James Joyce’s, *Ulysses* (Novak 2013:[sp]). Joyce retells and adds on to Homer’s work setting the story in the modern context of Dublin. Current new versions of fairy tales tailored to fit in our current context can also be an example of applied intertextuality (Novak 2013:[sp]).

Intertextuality initiates an active site where, “relational processes and practices” become the prime method of investigation in opposition to “static structures and products” (Alfaro 1996:268). These relational processes include connections between texts through intertextual modes.

Intertextual modes include “citations, quotations, allusions, borrowings, adaptations, appropriations, parody, pastiche, imitation, and the like” and therefore affirm a dialogical relationship between texts (D’Angelo 2010:33). These factors are either unintentionally present or intentionally used (Zengin 2016:300).

D’Angelo (2010:33) in his text “The Rhetoric of Intertextuality” (2010) details 6 intertextual modes. These modes are:

1. Adaptation: described as “being recast into new form”, this mode is most commonly used in film and television (D’Angelo 2010:34). Adaptation entails turning one medium into another such as a novel to film or a board game to video game (D’Angelo 2010:34).

2. Retro: described as “recycling”. Retro is a mode associated with nostalgia, presenting an ironic attitude towards the longed for style (D’Angelo 2010:35). An example of the intertextual mode of retro is most commonly seen in movies and television shows (D’Angelo 2010:35).

3. Appropriation: Classified as a type of imitation, appropriation entails borrowing from other works and styles (D’Angelo 2010:38). An appropriator does not acknowledge prior texts or use them with permission whereas an adaptor acknowledges the texts (D’Angelo 2010:36).

4. Parody: mainly associated with notions of “ridicule, incongruity, exaggeration, and criticism” (D’Angelo 2010:39). It is a style of mocking usually by way of dark humour (D’Angelo 2010:39). Parody is one of the most popular intertextual modes used and is found in various contemporary genres (D’Angelo 2010:39).

5. Pastiche: described as a type of ‘double coding’ making use of new technologies that encompass aspects from previous mediums (D’Angelo 2010:40). Pastiche is a method of creating by bringing together or ‘pasting’

different elements (D'Angelo 2010:40). This mode is used in almost every medium (D'Angelo 2010:40).

6. Simulation: described as, “[an] act or process of assuming the outward qualities of an object or process, usually with the intent to deceive” (D'Angelo 2010:41). This mode makes one question what is real and what is not (D'Angelo 2010:41). A contemporary example of simulation is reality television (D'Angelo 2010:41).

Media scholar, John Fiske applies intertextuality in an alternative manner by distinguishing between three types of texts; primary (content without reference), secondary (reviews of primary texts) and tertiary (audience interpretation) (van Zoonen 2017:5). Fiske believes that these types of texts can interrelate vertically and/or horizontally (van Zoonen 2017:5).

Genre is a primary text. Fiske (1987:108) describes genre as;

a cultural practice that attempts to structure some order into the wide range of texts and meanings that circulate in our culture for the convenience of both producers and audiences (Fiske 1987:108).

Fiske assigns genre to the horizontal plane (Fiske 1987:108). The relations that exist on the horizontal plane occur between primary texts and are less “explicitly linked” (Fiske 1987:108).

A primary text also exists on the vertical plane but alongside a secondary text that particularly relates to it. (Fiske 1987:108). Secondary texts include articles, reviews, critical analysis and discussion (Fiske 1987:107). These texts serve to advance the distribution of the preferred content of the primary text (Fiske 1987:116).

The distribution of preferred content is completed by tertiary texts (Fiske 1987:116). These are the texts that occur at “the level of the viewer and his/her social relations” by way of accessing meaning from secondary texts (Fiske 1987:116). Tertiary texts include audiences’ responses and interpretations (Fiske 1987:123).

Pradipta ([sa]:6) states that one must, as Kristeva affirms, position oneself on the horizontal axis rather than the vertical axis. This will allow both axes to be on a similar level to envision a situation involving dialogue where attitudes and underlying beliefs will be “intertextualized” (sic) (Pradipta [sa]:6). Kristeva maintains that the vertical axis is equally significant for intertextuality to make sense and that though both axes exemplify varying roles, together they are essential instruments of intertextuality (Pradipta [sa]:6).

Texts are layered with codes and methods in which to view them. Worton and Still in their text *Intertextuality: theories and practices* (1990) provide important guidelines to follow when applying intertextuality as a method of interpretation for texts. Their ideas are the following:

1. Regarding intertextuality, texts should be understood as disparate and historical and not only as independent structures (Worton & Still 1990:45). Texts are molded by an interaction of conflicting realities (Worton & Still 1990:45).
2. Texts are regarded as “traces and tracings of otherness” and not a construction of present relations (Worton & Still 1990:45). This means that they are formed by the recurrence and revolution of other texts (Worton & Still 1990:45).
3. Through certain methods, ‘other’ texts restrain and influence the new-formed texts by stipulating structures and content (Worton & Still 1990:45).
4. Texts of a visual and intertextual nature range from “the explicit to the implicit” (Worton & Still 1990:45). These texts can be either extremely focused or extremely broad in terms of cultural codes and traditional practices (Worton & Still 1990:45).
5. Meaning is reconstructed when relations between texts is acknowledged (Worton & Still 1990:46). This acknowledgement serves as an act of interpretation (Worton & Still 1990:46).

6. Acknowledgement of the broader discourse “(genre, discursive formation, ideology)” to which an intertext<sup>13</sup> belongs is more important than the recognition of the intertext itself (Worton & Still 1990:46). This suggests that academic knowledge is less important when building up cultural codes in the texts (Worton & Still 1990:46).

Since it is characterised by duplication and renewal of “other textual structures”, intertextuality is referred to as fragments and fragmentations of discord (Alfaro 1996:268). When an intertextual reading is applied to a text, the premise and associations derived from the other texts to which it relates will frame the reader’s interpretation (Zengin 2016:301).

The creative works of Shirin Neshat and Mounir Fatmi will be considered in Chapter Three. The discussion during the analysis will include where appropriate aspects of the previous expansions. Understandings of texts and modes of intertextuality will construct a subjective reading. This reading will frame each artists’ creative practice with reference to their position as Islamic artists who demonstrate duality and ambiguity in their artworks.

### **2.3 Islamic Art**

An intertextual analysis cannot be applied without a basic understanding of the origins of Islamic art. Islamic art can be simply stated as art that complies with “Muslim aesthetics” (Shabout 2018:[sp]). It can be viewed under an umbrella term for visual arts created by artists working within Islamic cultural norms regardless of whether they are Muslim or not (Islamic Art 2018:[sp]).

Ahmed Sayed (2014:11) explains Islamic art as an echo of the enduring ethics within Islam as a religion, however, communicated within a specific context. Demonstrating both eternal and spiritual values, Islamic art also contains a local influence of aesthetics and craft (Sayed 2014:11). However, Islamic art has never shied away from “creative reinterpretation of accepted forms” (Wade 2006:[sp]). The restrictions imposed on Muslim artists in the

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<sup>13</sup> An intertext is described as, “a literary text that is related to one or more other texts, especially through the use of allusions to these texts” (Dictionary 2018).

form of religious rejection appear to be something innate that arises from the Islamic conservatism in one's particular social context.

Sayed (2014:1) further states that, “[w]hat unites different Islamic works of art is their respect for an aesthetic directly tied to the Muslim attitude and conception of the world brought about by the tenets of the religion of Islam” (Sayed 2014:1). This implies that there is an unofficial tendency or loyalty towards keeping within what is permissible in terms of representation.

The “Muslim attitude” that Sayed (2014:1) refers to is described by Al Faruqi as “a preoccupation with tradition” (Al Faruqi 1977:353). Al Faruqi (1977:353) explains that this attitude of religious loyalty and devotion comes from home environments that steadily encourage contact with the Quran and its teachings (Al Faruqi 1977:353). Resulting in an active structuring of thoughts and actions that are in accordance with Islam (Al Faruqi 1977:353).

F.M. Verstraete (1986:57) in his article, *Islamic Art: The aesthetic implications of the Shahada* (1986) states that the monotheistic basis of Islam as a religion is the First *Shahada* (testimony), which is indicative of and denounces idolatry. This results in aniconism, which is a term for, “opposition to the use of [images of idols]” (Dictionary 2016). This means that it is a ban on visual representation of any divine or human being. Across Abrahamic religious contexts, aniconism is a strongly considered idea (Gaifman 2017:335) as it removes the process of Iconoclasm<sup>14</sup> completely by avoiding the act of visual representation all together (Soganci 2004:1).

Examples of early Islamic art shows that aniconism was not always a constant feature and figural iconography was commonly found in early Islamic ceramics, bronzes, carpets and textiles (Figure 5) (Verstraete 1986:57).

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<sup>14</sup> Iconoclasm is the dispute over the use of visual imagery of religious icons during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century in the Byzantine Empire (Iconoclastic Controversy 2018:[sp]).





**Figure 5:** *Roundel with a Byzantine Emperor*, 8<sup>th</sup> century. Tapestry weave in red, pale brown, and blue wools and undyed linen on plain-weave ground of undyed linen. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art 2012).

Islamic art is complex as its' character comprises of a large body of styles over a long period of time (Shabout 2018:[sp]). Place, nation, religion and context all contribute to said characteristics (Shabout 2018:[sp]). Shabout (2018:[sp]) explains that Islamic art serves as “a cultural identifier, which nevertheless retains local and/or regional characteristics.” The characteristics are not exclusively attributed to Islamic artists, religion, restraints, Sharia law or Islamic countries but may be compared to a range of art historical terms (Shabout 2018:[sp]).

There is a belief in Islamic art that creating visuals of figurative images is sinful (Kozak 2014:[sp]). For their work not to appear as ‘real’ Islamic artists therefore sought alternative ways to represent meaning (Kozak 2014:[sp]). Shabout (2018:[sp]) asserts that, “Muslim artists adopted the practice of two-dimensional pictorial spaces” in order to accomplish alternative methods. Forms and colors were and are assembled in certain orders leading to decorative and symbolic patterning in the form of calligraphy and geometry.

Grabar (1973:248) has distinguished three features across the variations of Islamic art; “its social meaning, its abstract ornament and its tension between unity and plurality.” Islamic artists of the present and past apply geometric style to their designs and works for a variety of reasons and effects (Kozak 2014:[sp]).

Shabout (2018:[sp]) explains that God exists only as an “abstract force” in the mind of Muslims. It is therefore blasphemous to attempt to portray God in a form that is easily provided from his own creation (Shabout 2018:[sp]). Oleg Grabar (1973:250) suggests that geometry might serve as an answer in understanding the urge to get closer to God or the Divine in visual form. He further states that it would be valid to point out that the continual disparities in a geometric form possibly serves as a visual rendition of the various names of God so popular in Muslim devotion (Grabar 1973:250).

Political structures inherent in traditions from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran have influenced the characteristics of Islamic art (Islamic Art 2018:[sp]). Sayed (2014:1) explains that in spite of the geographical influences that occur, Islamic art still complies with abstract aesthetics.

Islamic art affirms a distance from the Westerner by way of ambiguities present in the artworks (Duran 2014:331). This is due to much of Islamic art consisting of crafts such as ceramics, household items and tapestries to name a few and when seen isolated from a home environment, these objects take on an obscure role (Duran 2014:331).

Grabar (1973:249) states that, “Islamic art is characteri[s]ed by an aesthetic democratisation.” Various approaches in Islamic art are undertaken to decorate the interior of buildings (Grabar 1973:249). Certain features such as geometry and calligraphy were not limited to sovereignty or royal palaces and places of worship but are found on the streets and homes of the public (Grabar 1973:249). Grabar (1973:249) asserts,

One reason for this surely was the deep egalitarianism of Islam. Even princes and kings have certain privileges and advantages, at least a reflection of such advantages may be available to all.

The preference for a consistent artistic style for an Islamic artist derives from a rooted communal unity where all Muslims, regardless of the difference in cultural and racial backgrounds, feel that they are Muslim first before anything else (Wade 2006:[sp]). This firm mentality leads to “social and artistic conservatism” for many Muslim artists, which over centuries, resulted in artistic structures and approaches remaining steadfast (Wade 2006:[sp]).

In Islamic countries, towards the end of the seventeenth century, a European influence developed and curbed the dominance of Islamic aesthetics over the art produced (Figure 6) (Shabout 2018:[sp]). One can presume that the effects of Islamic aesthetics and the rules of non-figuration were still present amongst many Islamic artists and may have manifested unconsciously and perhaps out of guilt for stepping away from the Hadith.



**Figure 6:** *Iranian Woman with a Cat*, late 18th century.  
Oil on canvas, 163.8 x 88.3 cm.  
(Doris Duke 2013:[sp]).

Shabout (2018:[sp]) believes that to truly comprehend Islamic aesthetics, we should look critically at the commonly held misconception about “religious prohibition on representation.” The Hadith places additional emphasis on the opposition of depicting figures than the Quran does which many may perceive as not a direct instruction from God (Islamic Art 2018:[sp]).

Shabout (2018:[sp]) argues that, there is no conclusive research that serves as evidence to prohibiting representation of figures. She states that the images referred to in the Hadith and Quran are those relating to, “idols worshipped by pagans” (Shabout 2018:[sp]). The Quran does not explicitly deny figuration when mentioning idolatry, such as the Torah does, but rather places more emphasis on the testimony, “There is none like unto Him” (Quran 42:11), alluding to the idea that God is completely beyond representation (Wade 2006:[sp]). She further affirms that during the initial phase of Islamic

art, there were no restraints in representation except for an unofficial ban against illustration in mosques of living beings, in other words, all things with a soul (Shabout 2018:[sp]).

The depiction of Prophets is widely rejected and considered highly offensive for Muslims across the world, however, the rejection of figurative art is mainly exercised by extremely conservative Muslims who even dismiss the most basic creation of images (Islamic Art and Depictions of Muhammad 2007:[sp]).

The exact hadith relating to this prohibition by Bukhari Sharif <sup>15</sup> is, “Those who paint pictures would be punished on the Day of Resurrection and it would be said to them: Breathe soul [life] into what you have created” (Sahih Muslim [sa]). This can be interpreted as; by trying to replicate and animate beings that God has created, one puts himself/herself in the same position as God, therefore, defying the main principle of Islam, which is worship of one God alone.

Within the context of destroying idols at that time, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared that angels will not enter a home or place of worship where there are images portraying living beings (Bukhari and Muslim [sa]). This declaration resulted in people destroying all images. This was decreed to ensure that no other being might be worshipped in a two-dimensional visual form or three-dimensional form as the idols were.

Shabout (2018:[sp]) maintains that Muslims did not oppose figurative art but rather lacked interest. This was due to a historical precondition as opposed to a religious restraint (Shabout 2018:[sp]). Fundamental features were borrowed by Islamic artists from Western practice, and then further modified with certain Islamic aesthetics to form new designs that emphasised unity and order (Geometric Patterns in Islamic Art 2001).

With regard to the researcher’s experience, artists today may oppose figurative art in accordance to their Islamic education and upbringing. This positions the artist researcher as actively managing duality and ambiguity.

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<sup>15</sup> Authentic collection of hadith collected by the Muslim scholar Muhammad al-Bukhari, after being transmitted orally for generations (Sahih Al-Bukhari [sa]).

Communicating through visuals is therefore how she engages as an artist. In her art practice, there is a constant negotiation between abstraction, order, unity and figuration.

### 2.3.1 Intertextuality and Islamic Art

Verstraete (1986:58) suggests that Islamic art can only be understood considering the complex sacred principles deep-rooted within the faith. Sayed (2014:11) echoes this sentiment by proposing that when constructing space, Muslim artists apply a “spiritual perspective” compared to a more direct approach as would be utilised by the West. An example of this outlook can be seen in the architecture of mosques and more specifically ‘muqarnas’<sup>16</sup> (Figure 7).



**Figure 7:** Shrine of Abd el-Samad, Natanz, Iran.  
(Broug 2017:[sp]).

Grabar (1973:250) describes muqarnas as a “single completed entity whose segments are however, often treated as complete units in their own right; it is at the same time a delineator of space and a surface for ornament.” This architectural object contains limitless individual parts that are in no way visually dependent on each other thus proving an important aspect for much

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<sup>16</sup> Muqarnas are an arch type ornamental form in Islamic architecture used mainly in domes, also known as a “honey-comb vault” (Takahashi [sa]). Their form does not have a structural function (Muqarnas [sa]).

of Islamic art being that balance of unity and plurality (Grabar 1973:250). This idea of contrasts as a natural characteristic of Islamic art serves well in understanding how intertextuality becomes significant.

In terms of literature, intertextuality is considered as the affiliation of what is already known with the new (Nugraha 2016:1). This idea of connections made may well support a visual reading of Islamic art in the process of codification. Nugraha (2016:1), uses the term 'aesthetic reading' when applying the method of intertextuality.

For Nugraha (2016:2), aesthetic reading is a life experience involving imagination and enjoyment, however, it is not merely a direct reading for information but, "reading with attention to what readers are experiencing, thinking, and feeling." He explains that the necessity to read a text as if it is a life experience becomes crucial in understanding how intertextuality is applied (Nugraha 2016:1).

The notion of adding life experience as part of reading a text feeds into Allen's explanation of intertextuality as an, "attempt to disrupt notions of stable meaning and objective interpretation" (Allen 2000:3). A lived experience already brings about a subjective take on a reading, which in turn may disrupt a fixed and unbiased meaning. Allen affirms that the term intertextuality is in no way limited to literary works but expands as far as reflecting insights of society and human relations (Allen 2000:5).

Bringing into focus ideas of connections and mutual dependence in contemporary society is what makes intertextuality such a beneficial term (Allen 2000:6). With regard to Islamic art, where the characteristic of a balance of different features and ideas becomes crucial when applying an aesthetic reading, intertextuality becomes the bridge.

Throughout all the various methods where intertextuality is applied, it still aims to encourage a "new vision of meaning" (Allen 2000:174). This vision opposes deep-rooted beliefs of, "originality, uniqueness, singularity and autonomy" (Allen 2000:174).

In terms of artistic production in Islamic art, artists view their artistic outcomes as a reflection of their identity and therefore add on a complex layer of meaning to their works. This results in Islamic art being characterised by a merger of place, space, history, nationality, culture, tradition, religion and context. All factors that contribute to an individual identity intersect and meet on one surface.

The manner in which artworks are curated also adds to the level of intertextuality. Allen (2000:177) suggests that curating numerous single works to be exhibited in a space sets up connections between them that were not present before or even part of their conceptualisation. This additional notion, demonstrates Pradipta's ([sa]:7) argument of intertextuality not always connecting in "textual terms" but also by how individuals interact with their environment and those around them.

When relating to individuals, a text is seen as part of continuous socio-cultural development (Raj 2015:78). Contemporary Islamic art development is caught in-between the past and present as Muslim artists deal with a historical "spiritual perspective" and a contemporary view. Intertextuality then becomes relevant as it also deals with the embodiment of a text within a community and through past experiences (Raj 2015:78).

Connecting oneself from one context to another already presents an aspect of intertextuality, giving an individual liberty to compose what is presented to him/her from both contexts, resulting in adding on a new dialogue to his/her personal insight (Pradipta [sa]:6). For Pradipta ([sa]:6), unique signs must be devised for an individual to decode in any type of text, in this case contemporary Islamic art, regardless of its ambiguous nature. This nature of multiplicity derives from combining characteristics which include complex pattern, layering, abstraction and Arabic calligraphy.

When visually reading an Islamic artwork, there is a constant search for links to personal experience for the viewer. This may be due to one identifying with the craft elements of Islamic art, the written text or the more contemporary use of weapons as seen in the works of Shirin Neshat and Mounir Fatmi. Although historical restraints in making are now played upon and interpreted

differently per individual or by society, Islamic art contains some form of pre-existing thought linked to the Islamic tradition and culture.

Allen's summation of intertextuality accurately validates its need as a vital tool for decoding. He states that,

intertextuality reminds us that all texts are potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader's own presuppositions, lacking in clear and defined boundaries, and always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic 'voices' which exist within society (Allen 2000:209).

This summation is useful when decoding contemporary Islamic art as it allows for a necessary diverse perception in decoding a type of art that defies singularity by its very nature.

## **2.4 Duality and Diaspora**

According to American cultural anthropologist, Steven Vertovec (2000:5), the word 'diaspora' derives from the Greek term 'diaspeirō' meaning 'to distribute'. The term was used to describe dispersed people sharing a common religious and cultural heritage (Vertovec 2000:1).

The research considers the idea of diaspora to run parallel to duality. To understand the term 'duality', William Du Bois' explanation of the term 'double consciousness' is applied. The research does not derive from a black American perspective but adopts their experience of having to deal with belonging between two different contexts, cultures and/or states of mind and applying it to the context of this study. Du Bois (1903:3) states,

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Double consciousness broadly connotes ideas of "cultural conflict and social identity" (Allen 1996:50). For Green (2013:1), to create an individual that can



smoothly function in mainstream society, a conscious decision is made by that person to divide one's inner self by way of balancing ideals (Green 2013:1).

One's self and identity is then negotiated based on "experiences [and interactions] with peers, neighbours, colleagues, and authorities in the new culture" aiding the conceptualization of double consciousness in current times (Lobban 2013:556). For Vertovec (2000:5) leaving a place promotes the notion of hybridity, multi-faceted identities and an inherent duality.

Although Du Bois posed double consciousness as problematic, for some the balancing of identities has become a norm. Most young British Muslims who are described as progressive, easily manage to interplay their multiple identities by showing great confidence and devotion in their religious integrity whilst maintaining complete participation within their secular societies without any compromise of their culture (Duderija 2010:128).

The practice of Islam in a Western society can be viewed as existing in a liminal space<sup>17</sup> where context becomes critical in understanding how most Muslims (not only limited to diaspora or migration) mould their religious practice to their surrounding society.

#### **2.4.1 Muslim Diaspora**

A negotiation of identities takes place for Muslims residing in a predominantly Western society as they are true citizens of the country whilst also being viewed as threatening (Tindongan 2011:75). With regard to functioning in a Western society, a Muslim does manifest an alternative identity in order to create a sense of belonging to the dominant culture (Tindongan 2011:75).

The research affirms that the artists under discussion have created this alternative identity in order to host their duality. Moghissi (2006:15) argues that the term 'Muslim diaspora' is not only associated with a cultural standing but is now more than ever based on a political foundation (Moghissi 2006:15).

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<sup>17</sup> Tindongan (2011:79) describes liminal spaces as, "spaces and places where marginali[s]ed peoples often reside. These spaces exist in the zone between two worlds or in the place where these two worlds overlap. The two worlds are the world of the home culture and the world of the dominant society."

This political foundation also forms part of the inherent duality of their identities.

The political aspects stems from what Moghissi (2006:16) terms as the 'host' country. She suggests that regardless of whether or not the individuals are devout, practising Muslims or not, once they are in the new host country, there comes a need to assert an Islamic identity (Moghissi 2006:16).

This is due to the way the host country and its citizens treat Muslim migrants (Moghissi 2006:16). The general assumption of Muslims as an identical religiously devout group does not allow distance from viewing Islam as a "political ideology" (Akbarzadeh & Mansouri 2010:3). That broad depiction only provides a singular view on their identities as that of conforming solely to Islamic principles.

An individual does indeed internalise the climate of the host country when constructing their identity. Homi K. Bhabha (1994:1) describes this construction of identity as "the moment of transit." In this moment, various factors such as time and location overlap to form a complex figure that possesses both its historical and cultural past as well as its present reality (Bhabha 1994:1).

An identity that has a strong feature of duality is based on its relation to others. This refers specifically to social context and location. A Muslim migrant may fear a loss of identity when interacting with others within their community and society and by influence of their new surroundings, which therefore brings about a new sense of self-awareness (Moghissi 2006:16).

The research argues that this self-awareness can renew the original 'home' identity to parallel a new 'host' identity resulting in an individual residing in a dual or 'in-between' space. Bhabha (1994:7) states that refiguring an identity to a point of an in-between space "innovates and interrupts the performance of the present." In trying to create a sense of belonging, a constant process of negotiation takes place (Moghissi & Ghorashi 2010:176).

Inner conflict takes place during this negotiation. The result may show that depending on the host country and its conditions of hospitality, identities may

not necessarily run parallel but one may dominate another (Moghissi 2006:59). An immigrant may feel that either their nationality comes first, their race or their religion. This is more common amongst second-generation migrants, as they were born in their secular host country, and may affiliate more with that country than any other aspect of their identity.

Naturally, Islam takes on a different shape in different societies (Akbarzadeh & Mansouri 2010:40). In a secular society and as a minority group, Muslims may feel like an 'Islamic other'. This is described as an individual "who is different from 'the self'" that is being an original citizen (Akbarzadeh & Mansouri 2010:99).

Akbarzadeh & Mansouri (2010:101) explain that 'the other' brings about feelings of anxiety by being viewed as a threat. This idea is often taken as a collective Muslim experience. However, that perception does associate danger of the 'Islamic other' with young males and vulnerability of the 'Islamic other' with females (Akbarzadeh & Mansouri 2010:101).

The evolution of Muslim diaspora has brought about various "socio-cultural identities" (Akbarzadeh & Mansouri 2010:113). Akbarzadeh & Mansouri (2010:113) name five main types of these identities;

the kinship based community, the ethnic or national community based on language, culture and citizenship; neo-ethnic Muslim identity based on their shared origins from Muslim communities and shared culture and religious values; Muslim identity based on religion but without specific culture or language; and seculari[s]ed and westerni[s]ed Muslims who retain a Muslim sub-cultural ethnic identity defined more by a multicultural urban environment than by their parents ethnicity.

This brings to light the diversity of minority Muslim societies coping with a duality that is dependent on the social context of their host country.

In the chapter to follow, the idea of 'otherness' (Said 1978) in relation to culture and social context will be explored within the discussed artists' outcomes of their practice and the diasporic and religious influence that takes place.

## CHAPTER THREE: DISCUSSION OF SELECTED ISLAMIC ARTISTS

This chapter provides a look into the diasporic and intertextual nature of Shirin Neshat and Mounir Fatmi. In a brief introduction, the ideas in these artists' work are related to the thinking of Alana Trificante, Siobhan Shilton, Lillian Davies, Laura Marks and William Du Bois. By drawing on these scholars' expertise in the fields of visual studies, art criticism, curating, cultural studies and philosophy, insights are obtained into Neshat and Fatmi's conceptual thinking, their reasoning behind their chosen media, their exhibitions as well as the trends prominently featured in their works.

### 3.1 Artistic Practice of Shirin Neshat

#### 3.1.1 Overview of Neshat's practice

Neshat was born in Iran and left for New York in 1974 to pursue her studies in Fine Art (Sign Journal 2011:[sp]). She received a BFA and MFA at the University of California, Berkeley (Sign Journal 2011:[sp]). In 1990, Neshat returned to Iran, eleven years after the Islamic Revolution (Sign Journal 2011:[sp]). The return and shock of the change she had witnessed led her to produce her first body of work, the photographic series *Women of Allah* (1993-1997) (Sign Journal 2011:[sp]).

Independent critic and curator, Alana Trificante (2015:91) notes that Neshat's work presents a constant shift between East and West and also between the roles of the observer and the observed. According to writer Desireé Navab (2007:39) in her article, *Unsayin Life Stories: The Self-Representational Art of Shirin Neshat and Ghazel*, artists lean more towards visual narratives to express their in-between state, specifically in relation to diaspora and to deconstruct stereotypes regarding their home country.

Neshat uses poetry by Iranian female poet, Forough Farrokhzad (b. 1935 Tehran, Iran). Farrokhzad wrote on topics of martyrdom and the role of

women in the Iranian Revolution<sup>18</sup>. Neshat applied the poetry to her works to highlight the subject's inner conflict (Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]). Through the poetry, Neshat ties in a local influence of aesthetic and craft (Sayed 2014:11) in the way that the poetry is applied to the body parts in her works in the same way that henna<sup>19</sup> is applied.

Neshat uses the poems of Farrokhzad to assist in exemplifying her identity as diasporic in a completely different country (Pignatelli 2016:[sp]). She states that,

[p]oetry and calligraphy are innate in Iranian culture. I like poetry because it has the potential to be metaphorical, and for us Iranians, metaphorical language is essential... That's why it is logical that the halo of poetry is found in my work because it's part of me, my personality and my culture. It's part of my art and comes through easily when I'm creating. I like to count on Iranian poetry, because I know that it's understood by my people. In terms of Farrokhzad's poems, they are very necessary for my work for explaining my feelings and the character of my people (Marse 2013:[sp]).

Farrokhzad was the first female poet to oppose political structures of Iran by writing about her desires, reality and challenging gender roles (Marse 2013:[sp]). During the Islamic Revolution, Farrokhzad's poetry was seen as obscene and indecent by the Government and was therefore banned (Biography of Forough Farrokhzad 2018:[sp]).

To follow is an example of her poetry from her third collection titled, *Rebellion* (circa 1956);

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<sup>18</sup> The Iranian Revolution (also known as the Islamic Revolution or the 1979 Revolution) refers to the defeat of the Pahlavi dynasty backed by the United States, eventually replaced by Islamist organisations and Iranian student movements (Afary 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Henna is a dye prepared from a plant scientifically known as 'Lawsonia inermis' (Origin of Henna 2018:[sp]). The dye is used on skin, hair, fingernails and even fabric (Origin of Henna 2018:[sp]). It is a common practice in Eastern culture to apply henna on hands and feet in the form of patterns (Origin of Henna 2018:[sp]).

“weary of divine asceticism,  
at midnight in Satan's bed  
I would seek refuge in the downward slopes  
of a fresh sin.  
I would choose at the price of  
the golden crown of godhood,  
the dark and painful pleasure  
of sin's embrace” (Rebellion (Esysan) 2018:[sp]).

As a migrant artist, Neshat uses poetry substantially to trace back to her own roots, as a memory of her country Iran, not losing sight of her original identity (Pignatelli 2016:[sp]). From this, an aspect of intertextuality becomes clear as Neshat connects herself between contexts allowing freedom to construct new dialogue (Pradipta [sa]:6).

### **3.1.2 Intertextual analysis of Neshat's works**

This intertextual analysis allows for many contributing factors that affect outcomes. The work of Neshat is contextualised within social positions and cultures with a focus on Islamic representation.

*Women of Allah* (1993-1997) sets the stage for this investigation in reading the works' through the intertextual guidelines previously explained. Neshat uses herself as the artist to represent intentionally armed Muslim women that become iconic portraits (Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]). Through *Women of Allah*, Neshat discloses conceptual narratives concerning women in Iran.

Neshat states that the beginning of the *Woman of Allah* series came from an extremely personal place with initially no intentions of making social commentary about her country's political climate (Macdonald 2004:629). The series was a way for Neshat to deal with the transformation of her country (particularly the women) when she returned from exile.

With herself as the subject, Neshat has inscribed each portrait photograph, as seen in *Rebellious Silence*, (Figure 8) with calligraphic Farsi poetry on the body, namely on the face, eyes, hands, feet and chest (Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]). There is nothing timid about the images as Neshat sets up a confrontational and compelling scene.



**Figure 8:** Shirin Neshat, *Rebellious Silence*, 1994.  
B&W RC print & ink.  
(Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]).

The first intertextual guideline demonstrated in the *Women of Allah* series is texts being disparate and historical. This is due to Neshat dealing with leaving her home country and using poetry as a tool to assist in demonstrating her identity elsewhere. Neshat's approach to portraying her idea of radical transformation of a place and people was by combining her home language, Farsi, in the form of calligraphic poetry, her body, a weapon and the veil.

In terms of history, the works challenge and represent Iran's political state. The reason behind this claim is the use of the veil in Neshat's images as that has been the most noticeable change in public appearance for women under the Islamic rule in Iran upon Neshat's return. The veil makes an appearance throughout Neshat's images even those that don't depict her face or head (Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** Shirin Neshat, *Allegiance with Wakefulness*, 1994.  
B&W RC print & ink.  
(Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]).

The use of the veil is categorised under the second intertextual guideline that the works are considered under, restraints and influences. Part of the intertextual analysis, after inferring a theory, is to delve into the idea or message of the works. With the running theme of restraint present, Neshat's works are fearlessly confrontational – a way to empower a voice with a representation of the new Iranian woman.

Neshat's gaze in *Rebellious Silence* is direct and focused straight at the viewer. Although the gun is placed over Neshat's face, arguably touching her lips, nose and forehead – it in no way reads as a power holding her back.



It is interesting that the parts of her face that the rifle grazes are the same parts of the face that touch the ground whilst in prayer in an act called 'sujood' which means to prostrate (Figure 10). It is a position in prayer when you are most vulnerable as you are prostrating unarmed, with no sight of your surroundings.



**Figure 10:** Female prostrating (in sujood), 2018.  
(Quora 2018:[sp]).

Allison Young (2015:[sp]) states that aesthetically the split formed in the image with the rifle, "implies a more violent rupture or psychic fragmentation. A single subject, it suggests, might be host to internal contradictions alongside binaries such as tradition and modernity, East and West, beauty and violence." Whilst the research affirms that the image plays host to internal conflict, one can consider the split as a mirror effect – one side existing because of the other and reflecting the other.

By layering or combining objects or tools of 'power', the works exist in relation to each other as the meaning of the veil would not be as powerful without the presence of the rifle. The display of the rifle liberates the oppressive quality that is commonly associated with the veil.

In other works that are part of the same *Women of Allah* series, Neshat chooses to, in contrast, present a feeling of innocence and protection to the powerful undertones present. This can be seen in *Untitled* (Figure 11) when a child is depicted in the portrait underneath the veil with a rifle placed to the

side. This can be categorised under the intertextual guideline of a broader discourse.



**Figure 11:** Shirin Neshat, *Untitled*, 1994-1997.  
B&W RC print & ink.  
(Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]).

In her TED Talk given in 2010, titled 'Art in Exile', Neshat tells the audience that,

I became immersed in the study of the Islamic Revolution - how, indeed it had incredibly transformed the lives of Iranian women. I found the subject of Iranian women immensely interesting, in the way the women of Iran, historically, seemed to embody the political transformation. So in a way, by studying a woman, you can read the structure and the ideology of the country (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]).

For Neshat, a woman's body is perceived as a kind of combat zone for different types of political beliefs and discourses (Sheybani 1999:[sp]). This brings into light that the images can be read as more than just representation of change but also a representation of an embedded history – a place where the past and present meet.

In an interview with Shadi Sheybani (1999:[sp]), Neshat explains in more detail about the construction of the photographic images. She states, “[e]ach image is constructed to magnify contradiction” (Sheybani 1999:[sp]). This is an important statement for analysing her photographs as the notion of contradiction and opposition was intentional, however, Neshat does not specify what that contradiction is – this is where subjective tracing of relations through an intertextual reading becomes significant.

Neshat's series of photographs incites a rage of powerful feelings against one another creating a tension and turmoil that is also felt by the viewer (Blackstone 2013:[sp]). Neshat (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]) states that the series of works having started off as confronting her own personal questions, soon became part of a much larger discussion, namely: “the subject of martyrdom, the question of those who willingly stand in that intersection of love of God, faith, [including associations with] violence and crime and cruelty.” Most of the photographs in the series consider the notion of martyrdom as a strong focus presenting a parallel link between femininity and violence further resulting in an overlap of “love, politics and death” (Sheybani 1999:[sp]).

Neshat clearly explains that Iranian artists cannot escape the political as it has defined their lives (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]). Due to this she states that, “we don't find the moral, emotional, psychological and political space to distance ourselves from the reality of social responsibility” (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]). This sentiment reinforces Allen's (2000:5) insight that intertextuality reflects society and human relations.

The series is viewed as a visualisation of the public and private lived experiences of women subjected to Islamic rule (Sheybani 1999:[sp]). Neshat believes that her position as an artist in exile compelled her to become a voice for her people (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]).

Neshat describes feelings of inner conflict for having to be critical of the West and their perceptions about an Islamic identity but also having to be critical about her own home country and their abuse of power (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]). However, she views this position as empowering as an artist as she states, “[w]e are the reporters of our people, and are communicators to the outside world. Art is our weapon. Culture is a form of resistance” (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]). Neshat focuses on culture as being beyond communication – for her it takes on a different level of meaning without the risk of becoming a form of entertainment for the West (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]).

Professor of Philosophy at Cornell University in New York, Scott Macdonald conducted an interview with Shirin Neshat in 2004 which was published in a journal and titled, *Between Two Worlds*. In the interview, Macdonald provides readings of Neshat’s previous and current works focusing on particular social situations in which she found herself when producing the works and how they were later perceived after major global events regarding terrorism (Macdonald 2004:621). He focuses on the binaries evident in Neshat’s work and the creative process Neshat undergoes (Macdonald 2004:621).

Macdonald makes it evident that Neshat’s work portrays an ongoing transformation (Macdonald 2004:627). Building from her initial anger and personal questioning of traditional suppression in the *Women of Allah* series, he states that Neshat moves on to showcasing her diasporic identity and being, “torn between heritage and aspiration” (Macdonald 2004:627).

Neshat’s later works, specifically video and short films, are placed under the intertextual guideline, traces and tracings of otherness. A short two-screen video piece titled, *Soliliquy* (1999) (Figure 12) is in Macdonald’s opinion (2004:621) one of Neshat’s most personal works.



**Figure 12:** Shirin Neshat, *Soliloquy*, 1999.  
Production still.  
(Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]).

Trificante describes *Soliloquy* as a “dual projection and sound installation” depicting a divide of the lived experience of a woman in exile (Trificante 2015:390). The videos are projected on opposite walls facing each other. Trificante (2015:91) states that specifically Neshat’s video works, “build a sense of simultaneity and parallelism within dualities.”

The term soliloquy is defined as, “an act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when by oneself or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play” (Dictionary 2017). In the videos, the characters perform without acknowledging any audience, and through their actions of constant movements between different spaces they visually express her duality. The women in each video is played by Neshat. The audience is unable to watch both videos side by side forcing the viewer to divide their viewing between East and West (Trificante 2015:390).

For Trificante, the soundscape is continually engaging resulting in an immersive experience for the audience of “a frenetic combination of ambient noise and music across both hemispheres” (Trificante 2015:390). According to Neshat (Macdonald 2004:641), the construction of space and place was carefully planned to seem familiar to each other. Having been denied

permission to film in Iran, Neshat opted to film in Mardin, Turkey and Albany, New York (Soliloquy 2018:[sp]).

From Macdonald's perspective, "the spectator's physical position, looking back and forth between two different worlds, echoes and embodies Neshat's psychic position" (Macdonald 2004:624). Macdonald (2004:627) asserts that the videos are a diptych that bring up a range of opposing realities for Muslim women. Trificante (2015:392) contributes a thought provoking reading of the work by suggesting that it is loaded with imagery of the women "crossing thresholds: peering through windows, moving through doorways, stepping from interior to exterior, and negotiating these passages through time and space" (Figure 13).



**Figure 13:** Shirin Neshat, *Soliloquy*, 1999.  
Production stills.  
(Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]).

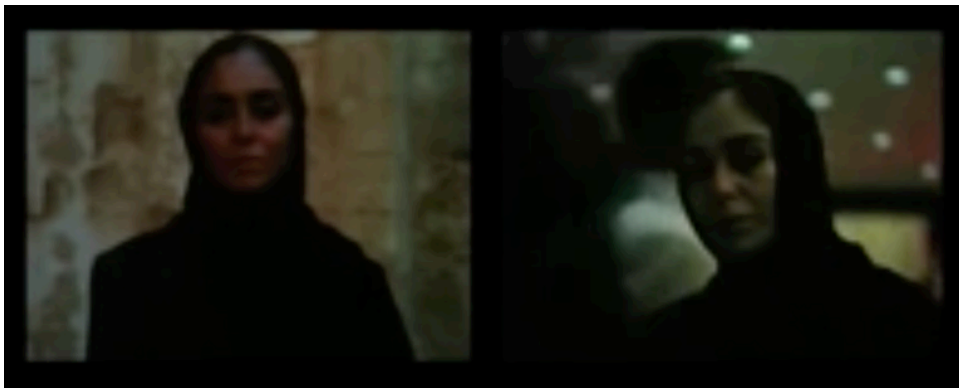
The architectural magnitude of the monuments in the videos are aesthetically minimalist. It creates an immersion that compare to the *Women of Allah* series. For Trificante (2015:392), through *Soliloquy* and the journey of the two women, Neshat has created a form of navigation through Iran's political history.

The women in the videos occasionally pause to observe each other and their journey before making a next move. Placing herself in a nomadic position Neshat turns to these contexts to reflect her own. She states, "I am a nomadic

artist. I work in Morocco, in Turkey, in Mexico. I go everywhere to make believe it's Iran" (Art in Exile 2010:[sp]).

Neshat's diasporic experience is highlighted in this work, she uses host countries to reflect her home country. The research suggests that this is an affirmation that Neshat's constructed dual identity favours asserting one identity more than the other. Due to Neshat's displacement, her choice is for her Iranian identity to dominate.

In New York, a scene was filmed outside a subway station in the foyer of the World Trade Centre (Figure 14), two years prior to the terrorist attack in 2001 (Soliloquy 2018:[sp]). This highlights the possibility that the bystanders in those scenes were future victims of the attack (Soliloquy 2018:[sp]). "If *Soliloquy* expresses the desire for dialogue between east and west, it also acts as an unintentional memorial to those who died for lack of such a dialogue (Soliloquy 2018:[sp])."

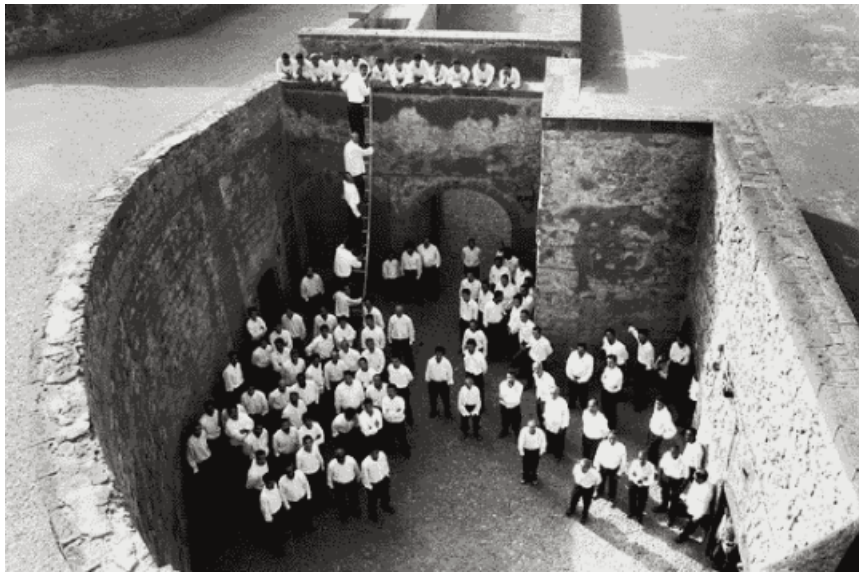


**Figure 14:** Shirin Neshat, *Soliloquy* (World Trade Centre still), 1999.  
Production stills.  
Screen shot by author.

Advancing the intertextual perspective, the idea of imminent death directly relates to a core narrative of the video filmed in Turkey. The main premise of the video surrounds a cryptic death ritual where groups of men and women surround the building to announce a death (Figure 15 & 16) (Macdonald 2004:641).



**Figure 15:** Shirin Neshat, *Soliloquy*, 1999.  
Production stills.  
(Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]).



**Figure 16:** Shirin Neshat, *Soliloquy*, 1999.  
Production stills.  
(Shirin Neshat 2012:[sp]).

Neshat explains that it is the death of a young boy who is associated with the lead female protagonist (Macdonald 2004:641). She further explains that this relates personally to her as she had lost her young nephew a year before (Macdonald 2004:641). The work now takes on a new level of meaning in our



current context by reading into it with the idea of personal loss, and more specifically, death of innocents.

Neshat's works prove that a singular reading is not possible as there are elements relating to and existing because of each other (Sheybani 1999:[sp]). She claims that the very structure of Islam holds a complexity in having beauty and innocence coexist with violence and hatred (Sheybani 1999:[sp]).

Neshat aims to create the familiar in her works through intertextual modes of pastiche and retro. Neshat's photography is an example of pastiche as she 'collages' classic poetry with contemporary portraits and weapons. The mode of retro features nostalgia (D'Angelo 2010:35) and is made clear by Neshat's inclusion of her nephew with the scenes of the funeral announcement in grayscale.

According to Sharon Parker (2005:16), through *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin focuses on defining his theory through the creative process of an author and their dialogue with previous authors and the specific historical context. In Parker's dissertation, *Embodied Exile* (2005), she offers a different view by focusing on this theory serving artists as well.

For Parker (2005:16), artists also engage in a dialogue with other artists and their relation to the context they find themselves in. She describes her research as an investigation of the creative works of female Iranian artists who produce works that, "expand beyond the binary divisions of tradition and modernity to post-modern metanarratives of gender, society, culture, politics, revolution, and war" (Parker 2005:16). Although, Parker focuses on the exile of these artists from their home countries, her interest still lies in their visual representation, through mixed media, of this experience (Parker 2005:18).

Exile is prominently featured throughout Neshat's works whether intentional or unintentional. Her works ultimately become a balancing act of two different worlds (Sheybani 1999:[sp]), in which the viewer must negotiate their way through adding on their own ideologies and experiences to Neshat's in their subjective interpretation.

Neshat claims that during the time of the Islamic Revolution, Muslims understood visual presentation as a mirror to what they represented as an identity (Shabout 2018:[sp]). This statement still rings true for many Muslims as they challenge stereotypes and aim to redefine their identity in a contemporary society.

## **3.2 Artistic Practice of Mounir Fatmi**

### **3.2.1 Overview of Fatmi's practice**

Born in 1970 in Tangier, Morocco, Mounir Fatmi now lives and works between Paris and Tangier (Goodman Gallery 2016). Presenting a delicate interplay of dualities in his art, Fatmi's work explores language, rituals, the body, and the politics and ethics of difference. His work has been described as a construction of, "visual spaces and linguistic games" (Goodman Gallery 2016).

Davies describes Fatmi's visual landscape of his childhood home as adorned with an image of Morocco's King Mohammed the fifth and framed religious text from the Quran in decorative Arabic calligraphy (Davies 2012:14). As children Fatmi and his peers were not allowed to touch the household copy of the Quran itself because they were never physically clean enough to do so (Davies 2012:14). In Davies' view (2012:14) these two prominent personal limits position Fatmi's works and art practice.

Finding his conservative hometown too restricting, Fatmi ventured out to study art in Italy. His travels made him comfortable with the idea of appropriating identities (Davies 2012:16). Unlike Neshat, who preferred to assert her identity in every place, Fatmi adopted new characteristics in each space. Fatmi states that although having received a 'culture shock' and wanting to adopt new identities, his father's 'conservative perspective' is one he will always entertain as it gave him "another vision of art" (Davies 2012:20).

Davies (2012:14) describes Fatmi's childhood in Morocco as spending most of his time at the flea markets taking in an overload of bustling city sights and sounds, which in turn taught the artist "how to look and listen." She describes

his experience as a way in which Fatmi now presents his works as they confront the audience with moving images and sound for a more immersive experience (Davies 2012:14).

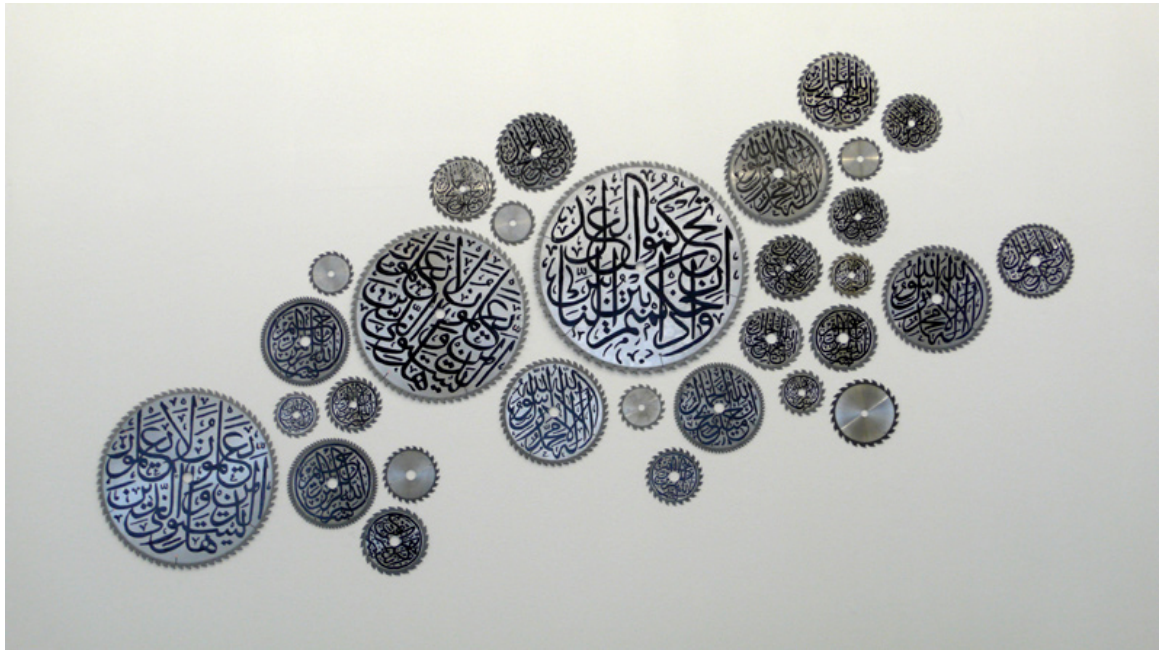
Fatmi's works are sensorially described by audiences as, "visual repetition, perpetual circular motion, illegible Arabic calligraphy, and aggressive sound [creating] a sense of danger, announcing an imminent clash of worlds" (Stanciu 2013:[sp]). The description affirms the works' intertextual nature as fragments and fragmentations of discord (Alfaro 1996:268). The reader's interpretation is framed by associations to other texts relating to sound, volume and motion.

His work reflects a blasphemy of the religious object and a deconstruction of doctrines and ideologies (Goodman Gallery 2016). Offering a different perspective, Fatmi's work attempts at viewing the world in a new glance therefore opposing the traditional (Goodman Gallery 2016).

### **3.2.2 Intertextual analysis of Fatmi's works**

Marks (2010:10) argues that Fatmi, in his work, *The Machinery* (2006) (Figure 17) challenges the religious texts and phrases that were visible in his childhood home. Marks (2010:10) suggests that the material choice of the work in depicting saw disks or roundels in combination with the heavy machine sound and rotating at different speeds has an effect of danger present and viewing the exhibition as a whole amongst the other works, "suggests that pious statements accepted "without asking how" become at best clichés, at worst weapons (Marks 2010:10)."

The use of blades in Fatmi's works exemplifies Worton and Still's intertextual guideline of reconstructed meaning as the relation between violence and written text is acknowledged. There are different methods of interpretation that is dependent on the individual deciphering the work (East 2013:[sp]). Fatmi provides more of a literal explanation as he affirms that the blades are potentially harmful in that they can cut or injure yet they depict alluring Arabic calligraphy from the Quran (Figure 18).



**Figure 17:** Mounir Fatmi, *The Machinery*, 2006.  
Laser cut steel blades.  
(Keitelman Gallery 2013).



**Figure 18:** Mounir Fatmi, *The Machinery* (detail), 2006.  
Laser cut steel blades.  
(Keitelman Gallery 2013).

From an intertextual perspective, tracing the works back to the context of Fatmi's childhood becomes relevant. *The Paradox* (2014) (Figure 19) has

Quranic verses and hadiths incised into it. The Hadith is known to be the Prophet's (PBUH) words, which Muslims are against questioning, and is widely believed to contain no fault or error, just as one assumes the working of a machine to be without any deficiency.



**Figure 19:** Mounir Fatmi, *The Paradox*, 2014. Machine in steel, Arabic calligraphy and engine. (Jane Lombard Gallery 2014:[sp]).

The research further traces the way in which Fatmi recalls his childhood, religious text and images of power that were abundantly displayed in his home, were treated with the utmost respect. This adds a layer to his works which use technological materials that are likely to be known and used by people worldwide.

In contrast to Fatmi's strict upbringing, his use of technology as a means of connecting with people across the world, reconstructs meaning. This is portrayed by the manner the devices are displayed, such as scattered across the floor or sawed through walls, physically spreading and breaking barriers.

Fatmi is constantly negotiating his identity. In terms of his diasporic experience, he chooses to use his host country to talk about his home country, one place never dominating the other. This is evident on the artist's

website, written in French, which include all his explanations and artist's statements. The artworks, however, portray Arabic text.

Davies (2012:24) states that, "we must recogni[s]e that Fatmi's practice never develops along a straight path, instead it continually loops back on itself, constantly revisiting childhood references, teenage idols and images of home" (Davies 2012:24). The use of common and old technology as a medium could further indicate Fatmi's intension that perhaps anyone can manipulate the forces behind power.

The infusion of humour and violence present in Fatmi's works traces back to those childhood memories of the marketplace, where Fatmi first encountered a cheap copy of the *Mona Lisa* on canvas "upside down and being eaten by a sheep" (Davies 2012:14). Davies states that, "The anecdote of loose livestock devouring a copy of a Western icon supports Fatmi's assertion that, "you cannot have one single history of art," but rather, "the story of the original objects and of their copies" (Davies 2012:14). Appropriation is applied in an indirect manner as Fatmi challenges the religious texts and phrases that were displayed in his childhood home. This categorises his works under the intertextual guideline of the explicit to the implicit.

Appropriation is one of the modes of intertextuality and makes use of historical texts in current texts by an artist's selection and distortion thereof (Zengin 2016:323). Fatmi makes use of this approach through disrupting relations of meaning in his works by dislocating old technology and reconceptualising its purpose (Stanciu 2013:[sp]).

Working away from home made Fatmi significantly aware of his relocation and how the distance became crucial to his practice (Davies 2012:24). He withdrew so that he could have a new perspective – almost like a child unaware of what is happening in their surroundings (Davies 2012:24). As much as Fatmi distances himself, his works always hold an element of personal history confronting a contemporary reality.

In her article, *Cubist Counterpoint: Transnational Aesthetics in Video, Sculpture and Installation Art by Mounir Fatmi* (2013), Senior lecturer in French Literature and the Visual Arts at University of Bristol in England,

Siobhan Shilton, views Fatmi's work, as distinctively addressing visual means of presenting Islam in ways that resist singular readings.

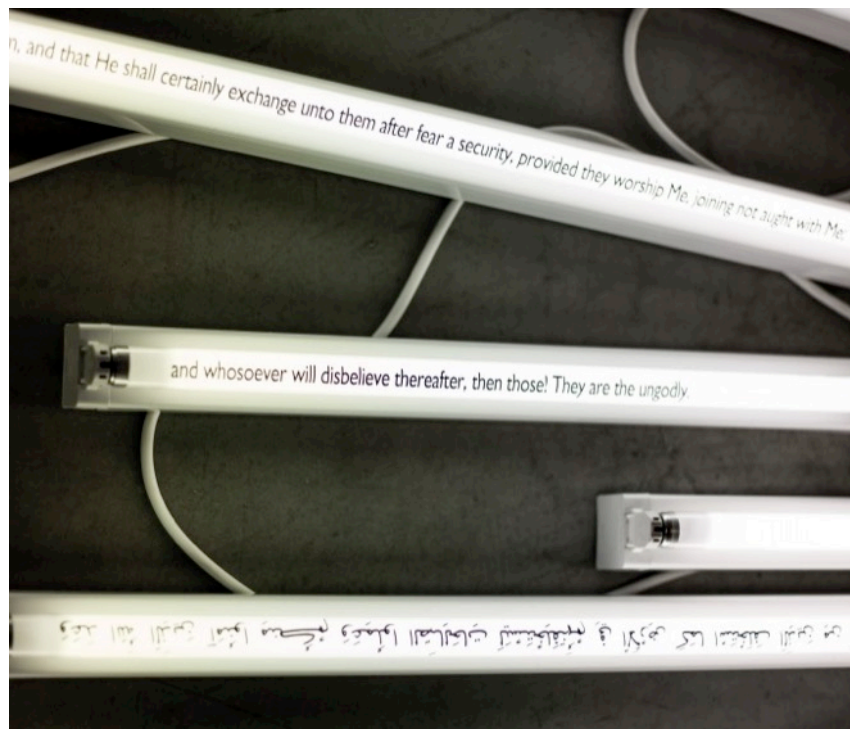
For Fatmi's work, Shilton's research is critically relevant as she focuses on the interactive qualities of Fatmi's works to emphasise the spectator's experience as one of a multisensorial and multidimensional encounter (Shilton 2013:43). She regards this as crucial in perceiving Fatmi's works which take on different views by including other senses as part of the experience (Shilton 2013:43).

In September 2012, Fatmi had his first solo exhibition in South Africa titled, *Suspect Language* held at Goodman Gallery in Cape Town. Censorship was used as a point of departure for Fatmi, bringing in to question the legitimacy of the Quran's phrases as seen in his work titled, *In the Absence of Evidence to the Contrary* (2012) (Figure 20) (Mounir Fatmi 2012:[sp]). Fatmi strives to highlight a paradox between beauty and violence, meaning and its shape by questioning written text and its visual poetry (Mounir Fatmi 2012).



**Figure 20:** Mounir Fatmi, *In the Absence of Evidence to the Contrary*, 2012. Installation. (Mounir Fatmi 2012:[sp]).

The 'surah' (chapter) in the work addresses 'disbelievers' (Figure 21) – this could be directed to a western audience, however it was also Fatmi's choice to include both Arabic and English. The choice of fluorescent light tubes to present the words is playful yet substantial as it indicates that any tube or part of the chapter may burn out at some point and that there is an external source of energy needed to view the work. Perhaps it was also a literal choice to illuminate this specific text in our current 21<sup>st</sup> century context.

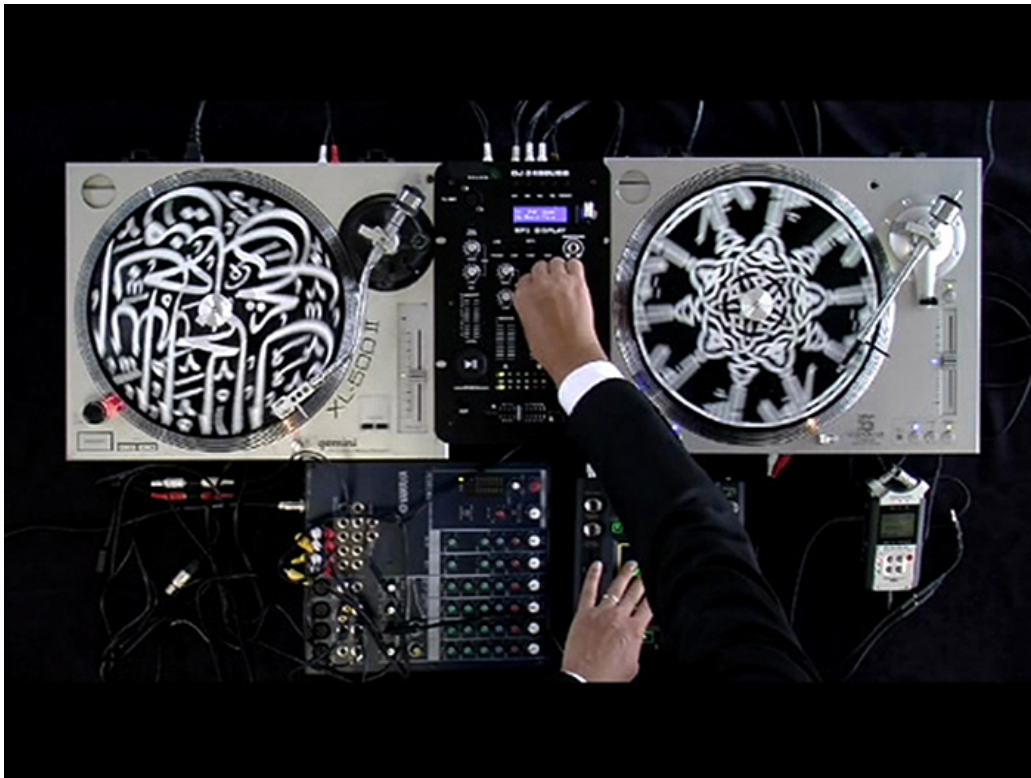


**Figure 21:** Mounir Fatmi, *In the Absence of Evidence to the Contrary*, (Detail) 2012. Installation. (Mounir Fatmi 2012:[sp]).

As a way to encourage dialogue and undercut conventional practice, Fatmi recontextualises cultural expressions in his video work *Mixology* (Figure 22) (Carmichael 2011:164). The work is displayed flat on the floor with the viewer overlooking a close up video of a DJ spinning records that have white Arabic calligraphy from the Quran inscribed onto the surface.



Fatmi asserts that he is Muslim and therefore the use of the Quran in his works is to depict that it is more than just a religious book but also a book of history that has an effect in all that we do (East 2013:[sp]). According to Carmichael (2011:164), distortion of the music and meaning of text is carried out by the act of the DJ scratching into the painted calligraphy.



**Figure 22:** Mounir Fatmi, *Mixology*, 2010.  
Production still.  
(Mounir Fatmi 2012:[sp]).

The work hints at different purposes for the “religio-political machine” (Golonu 1:2011). A typical conflict between religion and desire arises with the deliberate and vicious clashing created between image and sound (Carmichael 2011:164). Cultural specificity is invaded by globalisation as symbols of religious doctrines and beliefs become more flexible and obscure (Carmichael 2011:164).

The work, *Mixology* (2010) is categorised under the intertextual guideline of traces and tracings of otherness. This is largely due to the materiality of the

work itself. Fatmi used older turntable technology and traditional Islamic text as a medium in a contemporary club like setting.

It is clear from Fatmi's works that there is a constant interplay and conflict between all kinds of dualities – between culture, religion, tradition, society, politics and identity. This also places the work under the intertextual guideline of a broader discourse. Through his approach of appropriation, parody and layering, Fatmi's works are strongly intertextual by nature.

Apart from appropriation, Fatmi's works largely demonstrate the intertextual mode of parody as he critiques the original or sacred through a humorous approach that appears as blasphemous. Fatmi admits to enjoying “working on the border of things” by having different cultures clash in his works (East 2013:[sp]).

By taking on a variety of identities through his travels, parody serves Fatmi well as it also functions as “a self-reflexive strategy” that maneuvers between what is real and what is constructed (Landwehr 2002:7). Fatmi constantly confronts us with the familiar reworked to become unfamiliar actively allowing the reader and audience to participate in meaning making.

Fatmi concisely describes his duality and the challenges that accompany it by stating,

I live in Paris and when I am in the USA, I am a French Artist, but when I am in France, I am a Middle Eastern or African artist. I am always from somewhere else, wherever I am! I see here an urgency to understand the other, to accept and to learn with the other, and art can be a way to facilitate this (Stanciu 2013:[sp]).

From this Chapter, the research affirms that art practice can be a method in dealing with duality and a split in identity. It becomes apparent that artists cannot fully detach from their home or cultural identity and confront the matter through their artworks.

## CHAPTER FOUR: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RECOUNT: CREATIVE WORK OF SHENAZ MAHOMED

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses a selection of my body of work created as the practical component to my research. In order to exemplify my duality, a double voice is used. This chapter has been written from a first person perspective in contrast to the academic voice used in previous chapters.

The body of work is titled *SANHA Approved*. SANHA is an acronym for; South African National Halaal Authority. SANHA is a jurisdiction that provides certification of Halaal food amongst other associated cultural items (About SANHA 2018:[sp]). Regarding general matters referring to the application of the term 'Halaal'<sup>20</sup>, SANHA works as a non-profit organisation serving the Muslim community (About SANHA 2018:[sp]). In their mission statement they assert that,

[they are an] internationally recognised Halaal authority which promotes professionalism and excellence in the process of certifying, monitoring and promoting Halaal products in accordance with the Divine dictates of the Sharia (Islamic Law) (About SANHA 2018:[sp]).

The multimedia works discussed below are central to ideas of permissibility and freedom to question. The titles of the works play against each other by making reference to personal encounters of sacred scripture and close to home current news events.

### 4.2 Islamophobia in current news events

The idea for the body of works and research emerged from the shock of being confronted by Islamophobia in early April 2016 in the nearby community of Valhalla in Pretoria. Valhalla is a predominantly white Christian community.

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<sup>20</sup> *Halaal* meaning 'permissible' is constituted by the form of animal slaughter according to Sharia (Hossain 2012:[sp]). *Halaal* also includes acts that are good and decent. *Haraam* meaning 'forbidden' is constituted by immoral behaviour and practices (Hossain 2012:[sp]). *Makrooh* meaning 'disliked' is constituted by practices that are not advisable but are also not punishable (Hossain 2012:[sp]).

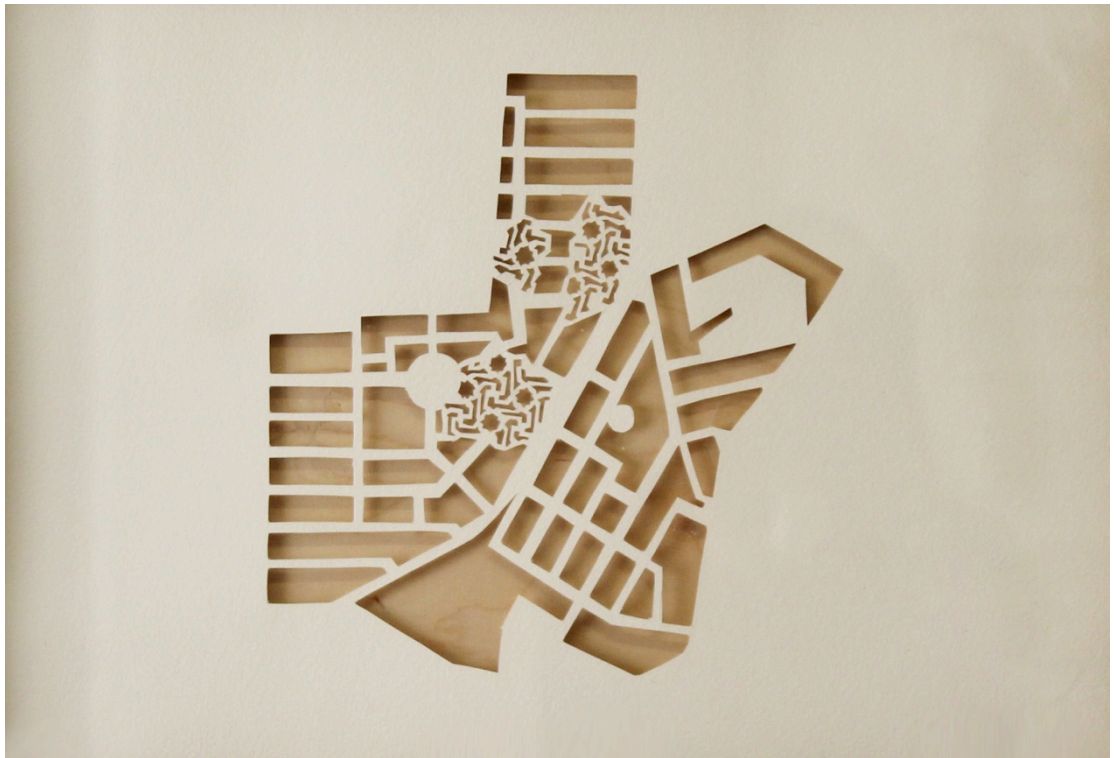
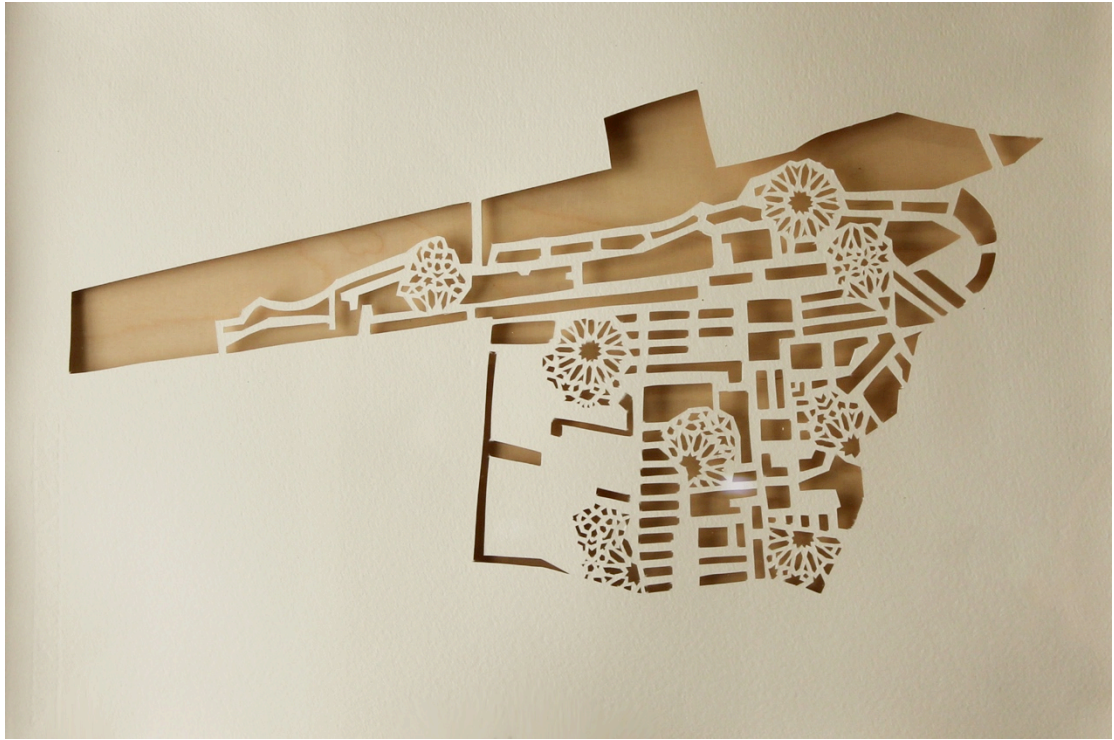
Protests broke out as white residents were outraged over the decision of Tshwane metro Mayor Kgosietso Ramokgopa to donate 10 000 square meters of land to the Tshwane Islamic Trust in order to erect a mosque (Raborife 2016:[sp]). The city council believed that the donation and construction would, “create social cohesion and promote diversity in the area” (Raborife 2016:[sp]).

About 3000 residents in the area signed a petition protesting the construction. Protesters gathered outside Vallies Park Primary School (Figure 23) where the decision was announced and the deed was handed over. Reading the picket signs and listening to radio interviews with white local residents, I was intrigued by how ridiculous the blatant stereotyping, appalling terms and phrases used were. These were used to describe the South African Muslim community and the situation.



**Figure 23:** Valhalla residents protesting against mosque, 2016. (Raborife 2016:[sp])

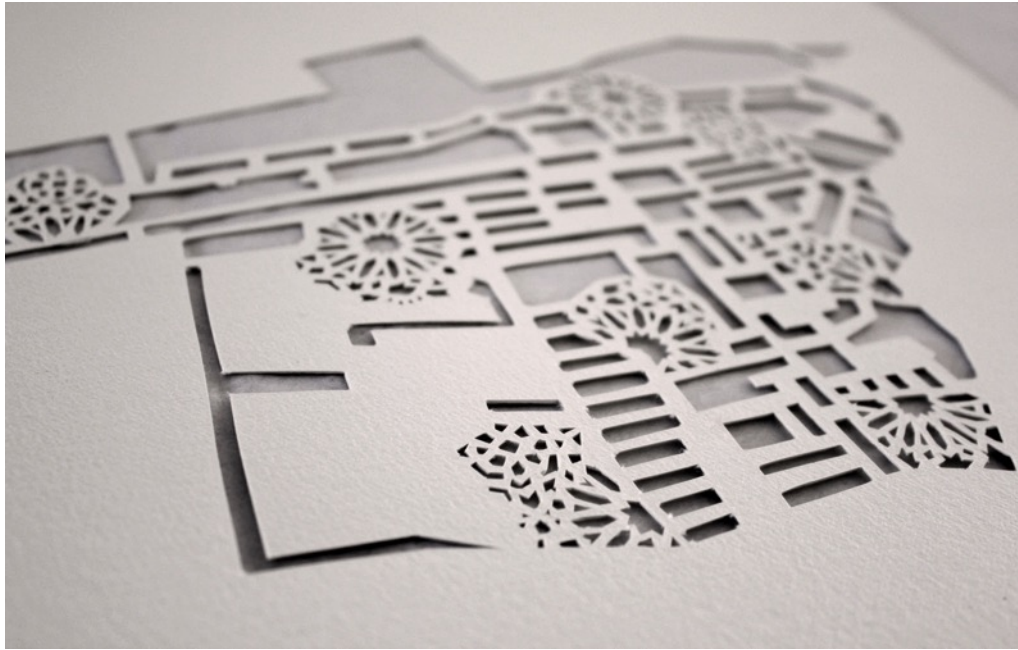
In response to this, I created a triptych of hand cut papercuts, titled *Muslims are Invasive* (Figure 24, 25 & 26). The title comes from a direct quote from one of the residents speaking out about the situation. The works produced present a mapped view of the three neighbouring areas; Laudium, Erasmia and Valhalla – being the main suburbs discussed in the debates and protests.





**Figure 24, 25 & 26:** Shenaz Mahomed, *Muslims are invasive* (*Laudium, Erasmia and Valhalla*), 2016.  
Hand paper cut on Hahnemuhle.  
Photograph by author.

The works show a topographical view of each town with a spurt of popular arabesque patterns (typically found in mosque interiors) depicting the sites of each mosque within the town. The number of mosques in Laudium are eight, Erasmia three and Valhalla with a total of one. The patterned forms are used as a metaphor for an infestation (Figure 27) merging into the landscape in a somewhat visually aesthetic manner. This 'infestation' also alludes to the creeping rise of islamophobia in South Africa.



**Figure 27:** Shenaz Mahomed, *Muslims are invasive (Laudium)* (detail), 2016. Hand paper cut on Hahnemuhle. Photograph by author.

This process led me to gaining a serious interest in topical events concerning Islam. The starting point of *SANHA Approved* was then initiated.

My next set of works produced was a lithographic diptych. Not long after the incident in Valhalla, in international news, a Muslim passenger, Shehraz Sarwar was jailed for 10 weeks at Birmingham Crown Court for saying “boom” after the plane he was on landed (Mccarthy 2016:[sp]).

The incident caused a stir and panic among passengers as the plane had just been through some turbulence. According to Sarwar (Mccarthy 2016:[sp]), during the turbulence, he became distressed and decided to recite some prayers in Arabic to himself. This included the phrase, “Allahu Akbar (God is great).” Upon seeing the reaction of the passengers to his prayers, he became agitated and thereafter said ‘boom’ as the plane landed (Mccarthy 2016:[sp]). The *Boom* and *Kaboom* lithography prints (Figure 28 & 29) provide my critique of this incident.



**Figure 28 & 29:** Shenaz Mahomed, *Boom and Kaboom*, 2016.  
Lithograph with monotype variation.  
Photograph by author.

In 2016, I was awarded the David Koloane Award by the Bag Factory Artists' Studios'<sup>21</sup> in Johannesburg. The award included the opportunity of a residency at the Bag Factory Artists' Studios for six weeks under the mentorship of Joe Leshoka in his printmaking studio, LL Editions. This was the first time I was introduced to the medium of lithography.

My work process differed for these prints as I was in a different space, working in a new medium, conversing with the Bag Factory Artists' Studios industry professionals and gaining their insight and feedback on the work. This was valuable in the conceptualisation of the works because their input and encouragement led me to gain confidence in stating and confronting issues of stereotyping.

The prints aim to showcase the power given to basic words depending on who said them. There is no social context provided in the works, yet the impact is still strong due to the Islamic associations of the male and female

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<sup>21</sup> The Bag Factory Artists' Studios' is "a space for visual artistic creativity since its inception in 1991" (Bag Factory 2018:[sp]).



figure. The choice of using pattern as censorship for the figures faces was made with the idea of eliminating recognition. The text and pattern were created by adding a monotype layer to the previously printed lithograph.

As part of the award, these works were exhibited at the 2016 Joburg Art Fair at the Sandton Convention Centre at the Bag Factory Artists' Studios' booth. The prints were displayed at the centre of the stand making them unavoidable. Working at the fair where a varied audience attended, I was able to witness the reactions of fair goers to the works.

Some people, including other artists, art students and curators were intrigued and came up to me to talk about the works with questions about conceptualisation, challenging identities, Islamic restrictions, language and choice of words. A majority of the crowd, mostly including the general public, reacted uncomfortably. This was observed in the way some people would quickly glance at the prints, almost careful not to stare too long, ignore them completely and raise eyebrows and point it out to a friend. There was a hesitance to engage with the works.

Based on these reactions, I consider them successful in confronting the viewer, their immediate thoughts and associations with terrorism. This is an example of Fiske's (1987:116) tertiary text that includes audiences' responses and interpretations (Fiske 1987:123).

Part of the aim for the works was to be slyly humorous. Due to the subject matter, the presentation aimed at creating an unexpected confrontation and uneasiness. Despite the uneasiness of engaging with the text and figure portraits combined, I find the lithography prints (Figure 30 & 31) on their own to be more effective.



**Figure 30 & 31:** Shenaz Mahomed, *Boom and Kaboom*, 2016.  
Lithograph.  
Photograph by author.

The materiality and technique adds value to the idea of opposition because lithography as a medium possesses a resistant quality as it is a process of print-making, “that makes use of the immiscibility of grease and water” (Lithography printing 2018:[sp]). The medium itself depends on two elements, oil and water, not mixing in order to work. The process of lithography includes placing these resistant elements together on one surface to create something new. The process itself shows how intertextuality encourages a new vision of meaning by opposing traditional beliefs of how something should be done (Allen 2000:174).

A resistance to stereotypical markers of fear is presented by reducing the individual identity to rather showcase its construction as described by Bhabha (1994:1) as “the moment of transit.” The figures blank identities portray a moment in transit highlighting these objects for what they really are – a beard, a hat and a headscarf.

This work also plays on the idea of permissibility in Islamic art. The fact that the figures’ faces are not illustrated allows for it to be an acceptable portrait in that it is without any features that make up a traditional portrait.

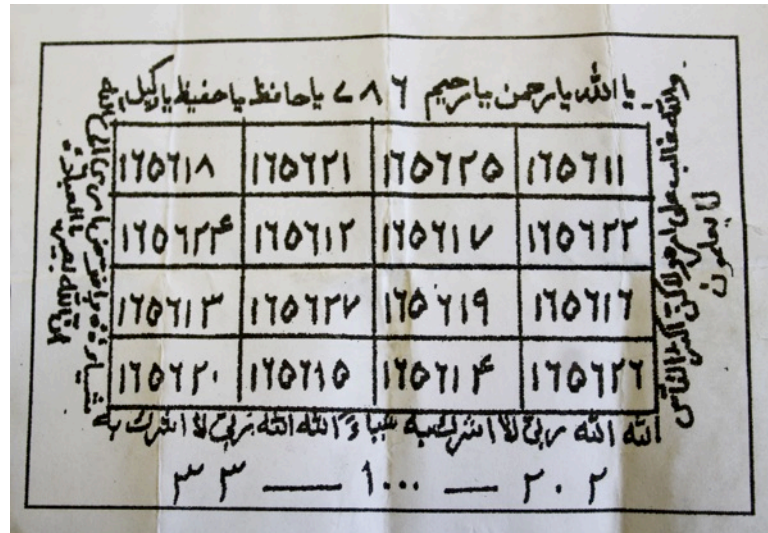
### 4.3 SANHA Approved

Due to confronting ideas of danger and being perceived as a possible threat because of my identity as a Muslim female, it is likely for a considerable amount of my body of work to concern itself with ideas of safety and security. The work *Protection for Muslims (Taweez)* (Figure 32) is a follow-up to the lithographic prints.

Working with the idea of feeling protected, this work depicts a structure of a typical *taweez* translated as 'amulet', which was given to me by a Maulana (Muslim religious scholar) for protection (Figure 33).



**Figure 32:** Shenaz Mahomed, *Protection for Muslims (Taweez)*, 2016.  
Hand paper cut on Hahnemuhle.  
Photograph by author.



**Figure 33:** Mahomed's amulet, 2016.  
Photograph by author.

I thought about the times I feel the safest and this is when I am at home with family. Home in this sense refers to the country I was born in and not that of my ancestors. The constructing of a South African and Muslim identity makes it both my home and host country (Moghissi 2006:16). Therefore I have created my own version of an amulet for protection by combining the amulet with a topographical map view of the 4 towns that I have called my home at some point and lived in thus far; Dundee, Isipingo Beach, Laudium and Erasmia.

Although stemming from personal experiences, I have purposefully made the title inclusive of other Muslims as I believe the traces of the calligraphy and numbers present will bring about a sense of familiarity and relatability for other Muslims. The Quran became my main point of reference because the Quran was first considered as something that provokes a unifying connection and familiarity amongst Muslims.

Based on the discussion of Neshat and Fatmi's work, it is apparent that my artworks fall within most of the intertextual guidelines. The first being texts that are at odds but still refer to history. The Arabic text(s) used are disputed amongst Muslims in terms of the Quranic chapters they refer to for protection as these may have been subjectively selected by an Islamic scholar. The

texts do still refer to history as these are taken from the Quran, a historical text.

Secondly, traces and tracings of otherness are apparent with the use of mapped location and iconic patterning. With the merging of these features, further guidelines are brought to the fore, such as reconstructed meaning in that the mapped views are not as clearly defined when merged but rather create a new location. Cultural influence is presented in the form of traditional Islamic patterning and ideas of protection and safety represent a broader discourse.

In terms of materiality, the practice of paper cutting is meditative – a process almost like the daily *salah* prayer in its repetitive action. The movement of the blade requires the same precision and focus as the steps of daily *salah* prayer. Working with white paper requires a clean space, hands and tools, the *salah* prayer requires utmost cleanliness in the form of ablution taking place before the prayer is performed.

It becomes clear that the materiality relates on a spiritual level although it's a violent act in using a blade to slice. The very nature of paper cutting alludes to a type of brutality in the use of a sharp blade to cut fragile paper. The process further results in the paper becoming much weaker as more is cut away. Through these traces, this body of work takes on an intertextual nature.

Besides looking at current topical events that have directly or indirectly affected me, I turned to the chapters of the Quran, the titles of those chapters and phrases to guide my work process. This is crucial to my practice as I consider these chapters to be topical events that occurred in the time and context that it was written in but also relating to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This echoes Elmo Raj's (2015:78) idea that the development of Islamic art takes place in-between the past and present in order to merge a spiritual and contemporary perspective (Raj 2015:78).

Based on the discussion of the artists above, it becomes apparent that dual conscious living Islamic artists in 21<sup>st</sup> century western communities continue referencing the Quran and their Muslim upbringing in their practice.

### 4.3.1 Value of Pattern

The works, *The Quran and Jihad – Approx. 164* and *The Quran and Peace – Approx. 291* (Figure 34) are laser cut mild steel sculptures that I created in the style of classic Quran book covers and sleeves. These do not possess any content or pages. The patterns on the works cover the surface with an estimate of verses in the Quran that mention Jihad and Peace.

There are 6236 verses in the Quran (Apin 2014:[sp]). The approximate number of verses in the Quran that mention Jihad are 164 (Shah 2013:[sp]), this works out to a percentage of 2.6%. These percentages were then converted into pattern and laser cut according to the sculpture scale. Applying the same method to the number of verses in the Quran that mention peace and compassionate living which is 291 (Shah 2013:[sp]), the second work is covered with a total of 4.6% of pattern to represent this. The amount of pattern coverage almost doubles for the second sculpture.



**Figure 34:** Shenaz Mahomed, *The Quran and Jihad - Approx. 164* (left)  
& *The Quran and Peace Approx. 291* (right)  
Mild steel, 150 x 400 cm. 2017.  
Photograph by author.

The result was a big step away from paper cutting, however, the initial planning of the maquettes were hand cut papercut sleeves (Figure 35). Once the maquettes were completed, the creative process differed greatly from my usual process as this involved intense planning of logistics. This included technical drawings using programmes such as Adobe Illustrator, planning of panels and how they would connect or fold, considering the weight of the final works by researching the correct thickness of steel to use and how to transport – considering a design that is easy to assemble and disassemble and how the mild steel should be treated thereafter.



**Figure 35:** Shenaz Mahomed, *The Quran and Peace Approx. 291*  
Hand cut papercut maquette. 2017.  
Photograph by author.

The technical difficulties complemented the difficulty of dealing with the subject matter. The idea of leaving out pages and direct text relating to these topics aims to depict a lack of knowledge regarding such controversial and sensitive subject matter and to highlight a gap in understanding. By removing the content I have introduced the viewer to what I want them to know on the cover itself, intentionally playing on the idiom “don’t judge a book by its cover.”

The works were exhibited in May 2017 as part of the Nirox Winter Sculpture Fair in Johannesburg. There was much public interaction with the works, without any knowledge of what they were or what they represented (Figure 36 & 37).



**Figure 36:** Nirox Winter Sculpture Fair, 2017.  
Photograph by author.



**Figure 37:** Nirox Winter Sculpture Fair, 2017.  
Photograph by author.



I believe this to be the result of the context or environment – being outdoors in a large park. They became abstract objects that could shield or conceal by creating a private space. The patterns themselves also create a sense of comfort and are in a way welcoming. An intertextual nature becomes apparent in these works by how individuals interacted with the environment and the curated works around them without regard for connecting in “textual terms” (Pradipta [sa]:7).

The decorative element in Islamic pattern is never a reconsideration but holds symbolic value in its style and application (Madden 1976:1). For David Wade (2006:[sp]), it is the “deeper social consistency” in the Islamic world that upholds the artistic features. Geometric pattern is viewed as the main feature because of its inclination towards order and symmetry (Wade 2006:[sp]).

Islam is a lifestyle regardless of contextual or social background. The outcome of the art produced by artists with an Islamic background have a characteristic of unity and order (Geometric Patterns in Islamic Art 2018:[sp]).

In the case of most Islamic art where pattern is merely decorative and free from any symbolism, there is still a common air of spirituality present (Wade 2006:[sp]). This has been suggested as a result of the transcendent quality that the patterns hold because of the symmetry, repetition and order (Wade 2006:[sp]). Simple shapes are, “combined duplicated, interlaced, and arranged in intricate combinations” to form a pattern, therefore, these designs exemplify a turbulent feature in refusing to conform to traditional rules of geometry (Geometric Patterns in Islamic Art 2018:[sp]).

The value of pattern (arabesque, geometric and calligraphic) in my works and practice seeks to encompass these ideals of unity by, on a larger scale, creating a sense of familiarity across cultures and religions. The use of pattern creates a sense of comfort when approaching or interacting with the work overall, despite the actual subject matter. Although in combination with text or figures it may not always be a case of comfort, there is potential in a pattern’s infinite nature to draw in those seeking to further their insight.

### 4.3.2 Stereotypes

In an effort to further my understanding of the potential a pattern has, I began to explore various applications of pattern that did not necessarily include traditional features such as basic shapes. It feels inevitable that the process would entail forming my own patterns. Whilst deriving ideas from the subject matter, the notion of objects used and identified as stereotypes stood out.

The most common stereotype associated with Muslims today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that of a terrorist. I began a study of popular terrorist organisations focusing on their ‘public branding’. What are the easily identifiable objects that they most commonly use or are associated with?

My next set of works in the series, *Halaal Certified*, are silkscreen prints that address these stereotypes and the visuals attached to them. Computerized stock images (free and commercially available for everyone to use) of terrorists and weapons were appropriated. These images are a representation of a common collective perception about the topic.

The notion of pattern is still present, but now using the technique with weapons, such as an AK-47 (part of the weapons typically used by terrorist groups such as ISIS). The rifle in the print is duplicated, put in order and arranged as a pattern.

The use of the written text in both Arabic and English as ‘Halaal Certified’ is aimed at resembling a ‘stamp of approval’. This highlights the now common acceptance amongst Muslims of their general stereotype.

In *Halaal Certified – Slaughter* (Figure 38) the pattern arranged from the rifles intentionally resembles animal carcasses, as this is a play on ‘Halaal meat’ and suggests the idea of Muslims around the world as a society being figuratively butchered by these escalating perceptions caused by extremists.

The images and words that are used came up as results; I searched the terms ‘terrorist’, ‘isis’ and ‘Islam’ and reconstructing those results to form a pattern. Intertextually, these visual texts are the explicit to implicit as they directly challenge stereotypes with the use of humour.

My artworks are exemplify the intertextual mode of appropriation. Another feature of appropriation includes historical texts that overlap contemporary texts and are then modified (Zengin 2016:323). I appropriate and modify classic and traditional arabesque patterns across a range of mediums. Pattern is used as a lens through which one should consider my ideas as it serves as a starting point for what I have understood as acceptable art for Muslims.



**Figure 38:** Shenaz Mahomed, *Halaal Certified – Slaughter*, 2017.  
Silkscreen print.  
Photograph by author.

My body of practical work makes use of pattern and symbolism but use these aesthetics as a method to subvert the limitations of Islamic art practices. My duality arises from a strict Islamic childhood in a secular society. My identity

has adjusted according to social context depending on the private and public spaces I inhabit. Although belonging to a country of religious freedom, I adhere to a range of Islamic rules and regulations. This has led to a constant negotiation of my identity as both South African and Muslim.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

By means of intertextual analysis, the research aims at providing outcomes from undertaking an intertextual perspective to analyse works by Islamic artists who deal with their lived experience of duality. This study continues to expand into further fields of research in contemporary art specifically focusing on identity (Bhabha 1994), language (Bakhtin 1975), community (Akbarzadeh & Mansouri 2010), location (Bhabha 1994) and context (Bakhtin 1975).

In Chapter Two of the study, Islam as a religion and lifestyle was investigated detailing its main principles. This provided a better understanding of Islamic artists' creative practices. The study identified their cultural backgrounds and where the concept of restrictions stems from, laying the ground for analysis of their artworks in Chapters Three and Four.

## الفصل الخامس: الخلاصة

يهدف البحث إلى توفير نتائج من خلال منظور نسقي لتحليل أعمال الفنانين الإسلاميين الذين يتعاملون مع تجربتهم الحية في الازدواجية. تستمر هذه الدراسة في التوسع في مجالات أخرى للبحث في الفن المعاصر تركز على الهوية (Bhabha 1994) ، اللغة (Bakhtin 1975) ، المجتمع (Akbarzadeh و Mansouri 2010) الموقع (Bhabha 1994) ، والسياق (Bakhtin 1975).

في الفصل الثاني من الدراسة ، تم التحقيق في الإسلام كدين وأسلوب حياة مفصلاً لمبادئه الأساسية. ووفر ذلك فهماً أفضل لممارسات الفنانين الإسلاميين الإبداعية. حددت الدراسة خلفياتهم الثقافية وحيث نشأ مفهوم القيود ، مما مهد الطريق لتحليل أعمالهم الفنية في الفصلين الثالث والرابع.

Islamic art was problematized in terms of figural restrictions and aesthetics, which influenced daily life and art making processes. The research provided a deeper understanding to those restrictions by placing the artworks in their specific social context and time. The study found that these beliefs and restrictions were and are now negotiated according to their constructed identity. This was achieved by providing an overview of the artists' practice and an intertextual analysis of their works. Through exploring the artists' home and host environments, the study revealed their "preoccupation with tradition" (Al Faruqi 1977:353).

Worton and Still (1990:45) provided a clear, focused guidelines to analysing the artworks intertextually. Through positioning the artworks according to the provided categories, the researcher was able to identify that the artworks demonstrate ambiguity through combining juxtaposed images, symbols and text. This juxtaposition took place by artworks combining elements that portrayed references to location, technology, identity, local aesthetic, human

كان الفن الإسلامي يمثل مشكلة من حيث القيود الجمالية والجماليات ، التي أثرت على الحياة اليومية وعمليات صنع الفن. قدم البحث فهماً أعمق لتلك القيود عن طريق وضع الأعمال الفنية في سياقها الاجتماعي المحدد ووقتها. وجدت الدراسة أن هذه المعتقدات والقيود كانت ويتم التفاوض عليها الآن وفقاً للهوية التي تم إنشاؤها. وقد تحقق ذلك من خلال توفير نظرة عامة على ممارسة الفنانين وتحليل متعدد اللغات لأعمالهم. من خلال استكشاف بيوت الفنانين وبيئاتهم المضيفة ، كشفت الدراسة عن "انشغالهم بالتقاليد" (الفاروقي 1977: 353).

قدم وورتون ومازال (1990: 45) دليلاً واضحاً ومركزاً لتحليل الأعمال الفنية بين النصوص. من خلال وضع الأعمال الفنية وفقاً للفئات المقدمة ، تمكن البحث من تحديد أن الأعمال الفنية تُظهر الغموض من خلال الجمع بين الصور والرموز والنص المتوافق مع بعضها البعض. وحدث هذا التجاور من خلال أعمال فنية تجمع بين العناصر التي تصور الإشارات إلى الموقع والتكنولوجيا والهوية والجمالية المحلية والعلاقات الإنسانية والنص الديني.

Kristeva (1986:36), Barthes (1977), Allen (2000:6) and Bakhtin's (1975) theories regarding intertextuality and dialogism remain applicable to the study. Their ideas were used throughout to understand how meaning is layered and overlaps.

In Chapter Three, all selected artists clearly present a type of duality and an intertextual nature in their works and practice. D'Angelo's modes of intertextuality provided a beneficial understanding of how the artworks are intertextual and can be decoded for meaning. The most common intertextual modes used by the three artists in their works were pastiche, parody and appropriation.

Throughout this study, opinions have been set up regarding identity, diaspora, duality and decoding. The artists' works demonstrated that a singular reading cannot be achieved and that much of their works are exemplified within various intertextual modes and guidelines that require a subjective tracing of relations.

Barthes ، (كريستيفا 1986: 36 و Allen (2000: 6) ، (1977) ، Bakhtins (1975) نظريات فيما يتعلق بالنصوص والحوار تظل قابلة للتطبيق على الدراسة كنقطة انطلاق وفهم للمعنى الذي هو الطبقات والتي تتداخل.

كريستيفا (1986: في الفصل الثالث ، يقدم الفنانون الذين تم بحثهم بوضوح نوعاً من الازدواجية والطبيعة التبادلية في أعمالهم وممارساتهم. قدمت فهماً D'Angelo أساليب التناغم في مفيداً للكيفية التي تكون بها الأعمال الفنية متداخلة ويمكن فك شفرتها للمعنى. كانت أكثر الأساليب المشتركة بين اللغات المستخدمة من قبل الفنانين ، pastiche الثلاثة في أعمالهم ، والمحاكاة الساخرة والتملك.

طوال هذه الدراسة ، تم إنشاء آراء تتعلق بالهوية والشتات والإزدواجية وفك الشفرة. أظهر الفنانون أن القراءة الفردية لا يمكن أن تتحقق وأن الكثير من أعمالهم تقع تحت مختلف الأساليب والمبادئ التوجيهية التي تتطلب تتبعاً شخصياً للعلاقات.

Although Fatmi and Neshat's duality is directly caused by migration and exile, for Mahomed, her feeling of an identity as dual is caused within her home country and community. It was revealed that for the discussed artists, though they may or may not be openly practising as Muslims, they are compelled to relate to Islam in one way or another. Within secular host countries, in minority Muslim communities, there is a distinct division between the devout and the more secular (Moghissi & Ghorashi 2010:138).

A compulsion to assert an Islamic identity within a secular environment has increased perhaps not in a religious direction but to "Islam as an ideology of resistance" (Moghissi 2006:17). This resistance to being painted with the same brush stems from the media representation of Islam that was explored in Chapter Two. The researcher found that this is the case for the discussed artists in showing how they portrayed an Islamic identity through their creative practices. This was demonstrated by how they questioned and challenged a singular perspective through

على الرغم من أن ازدواجية فاطمي ونشأت ناتجة مباشرة عن الهجرة والنفي ، بالنسبة لمحمد ، فإن شعورها بالهوية المزدوجة يحدث داخل بلدها الأصلي ومجتمعها. لقد تم الكشف عن أنه بالنسبة للفنانين الذين تمت مناقشتهم ، على الرغم من أنهم قد لا يمارسون بشكل علني كمسلمين ، فإنهم مجبرون على الارتباط بالإسلام بطريقة أو بأخرى. داخل البلدان المضيفة العلمانية ، في المجتمعات الإسلامية للأقليات ، هناك تقسيم واضح بين (Moghissi & Ghorashi 2010: 138).

إن الإكراه على تأكيد الهوية الإسلامية داخل بيئة علمانية قد لا يزداد في الاتجاه الديني بل "الإسلام كأيدلوجية للمقاومة" (موغيسي 2006: 17). هذه المقاومة للطلاء بالفرشاة نفسها تنبع من التمثيل الإعلامي للإسلام الذي تم استكشافه في الفصل الثاني. ووجد البحث أن هذا هو حال الفنانين الذين تم بحثهم في إظهار كيفية تصويرهم للهوية الإسلامية من خلال ممارساتهم الإبداعية. وقد تجلى ذلك من خلال كيف شككوا وتحذوا وجهة نظر فريدم



combining elements of identity, merging place, space, history, nationality, culture, tradition, religion and context, all intersecting on one surface.

The key similarities evident in the works of the above-mentioned artists are, multimedia works (working across mediums), themes of duality and identity, an intertextual nature, challenging stereotypes, using historical text from the Quran as an influence and confronting their realities whilst constructing another. Significant manipulation in the use of their mediums to achieve layering of visual text and written texts aid in expressing multiple voices.

The difference occurs in the way they approach the works, their practice and the audience. It is also important to note that each artist is in a different stage of their careers', social contexts and cultural systems, which were identified in this study. Therefore, each artist has different ideas and outlooks on their practices, which is visible in the work and supporting research.

من خلال الجمع بين عناصر الهوية ودمج المكان والفضاء والتاريخ والجنسية والثقافة والتقاليد والدين والسياق ، وكلها تتقاطع على سطح واحد.

أوجه التشابه الرئيسية الواضحة في أعمال الفنانين المذكورين أعلاه هي الأعمال متعددة الوسائط (التي تعمل عبر وسائل الإعلام) ، وموضوعات الثنوية والهوية ، والطابع الترادفي ، والصور النمطية الصعبة ، واستخدام النص التاريخي من القرآن كنوع من التأثير ومواجهة حقائقهم بناءً آخر. التلاعب الكبير في استخدام وسائلهم لتحقيق طبقات من النص المرئي والنصوص المكتوبة يساعد في التعبير عن أصوات متعددة.

يحدث الفرق في الطريقة التي يتعاملون بها مع الأعمال وممارساتهم والجمهور. من المهم أيضا ملاحظة أن كل واحد من الفنانين في مراحل مختلفة من حياتهم المهنية ، والسياقات الاجتماعية والنظم الثقافية ، والتي تم تحديدها في هذه الدراسة. ولذلك ، فإن كل فنان لديه أفكار وتوقعات مختلفة حول ممارساته ، والتي يمكن رؤيتها في العمل والبحث الداعم.

The artists deal with their religious restrictions in different ways. Neshat and Fatmi choose to exploit and openly confront those figural restrictions in their host countries, even unintentionally, making social commentary on them. Mahomed chooses to approach the idea of sharing her experience as a Muslim in a subtle manner, using modes of intertextuality through combining abstract signs, symbols and patterns to voice her questions and confront what is permissible to depict. An interesting observation is that these Islamic artists' works do not consist of crafts such as ceramics and tapestries that are known to be common in Islamic art (Duran 2014:331) but rather mediums that are reflective of their conceptualization process.

In Chapter Four, Mahomed provided a body of creative work that was explained in an autobiographical recount. For the purpose of this study, the use of a double voice – one that is personal and one that is academic – exemplifies her duality. Mahomed's dual state of mind that is a part of her lived reality comes to the fore.

يتعامل الفنانون مع قيودهم الدينية بطرق مختلفة. يختار نشات و فاطمي استغلال هذه القيود الجسدية في البلدان المضيفة لها ، وبشكل علني ، حتى دون قصد ، مما يجعل التعليق الاجتماعي عليها. اختارت ماهومد الاقتراب من الفكرة بطريقة خفية ، باستخدام أساليب التناص من خلال الجمع بين الاتجاهات المجردة للعلامات والرموز والأنماط للتعبير عن أسئلتها ومواجهة ما يجوز تصويره. ملاحظة مهمة هي أن أعمال الفنانين الإسلاميين هذه لا تتكون من الحرف اليدوية مثل السيراميك والمفروشات المعروفة بأنها (Duran 2014: 331) معروفة في الفن الإسلامي بل هي وسائل تعكس ، عملية وضع المفاهيم الخاصة بهم.

في الفصل الرابع ، زود "محمد" بمجموعة من الأعمال الإبداعية التي تم شرحها في إعادة كتابة السيرة الذاتية. لغرض هذه الدراسة ، فإن استخدام صوت مزدوج - صوت شخصي وواحد أكاديمي - يجسد ازدواجها. إن حالة العقل المزدوجة في ماهوميد والتي هي جزء من واقع حياتها تعيش في المقدمة بطريقة صادقة وضعيفة.

This study provided a broad basis to understand intertextuality, duality and its effects in art practice. Further research could be more focused on investigating each intertextual mode more specifically and expanding on each mode as a tool to decoding artworks.

A limitation to this study was that there was a lack of prior research studies on the topic of Muslim artists, intertextuality in Islam and Islamic art in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Questions to be further investigated could be based on comparative case studies and interviews of Islamic artists practicing in various social contexts and locations. A further exploration could be done on double consciousness living artists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century across religious backgrounds, allowing for their perception on religion, tradition, culture and identity. What are the similarities and differences between them and their art making processes?

قدمت هذه الدراسة أساساً واسعاً لتقدير التناقض والازدواجية وتأثيراتها في الممارسة الفنية. يمكن أن يكون المزيد من الأبحاث أكثر تركيزاً على فحص كل نمط من بين النصوص بشكل أكثر تحديداً وتوسيعاً في كل وضع. كأداة لفك تشفير الأعمال الفنية.

من القيود على هذه الدراسة أنه كان هناك نقص في الدراسات البحثية السابقة حول موضوع الفنانين المسلمين ، والتناظر في الإسلام والفن الإسلامي في القرن الواحد والعشرين. يمكن أن تكون الأسئلة التي يجب التحقيق بشأنها مستندة إلى دراسات حالة مقارنة ومقابلات مع فنانين إسلاميين يمارسون في سياقات ومواقع اجتماعية مختلفة. ويمكن إجراء المزيد من الاستكشاف على الفنانين الحيين في القرن الحادي والعشرين عبر الخلفيات الدينية ، مما يسمح بتصورهم حول الدين والتقاليد والثقافة والهوية. ما هي أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بينها وبين عمليات صنع الفن؟

Regarding a constructed identity, Akbarzadeh & Mansouri (2010:114) sum up what Islamic identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century entails by stating;

Islamic religious identity has expanded from kinship and community groups to include de-culturalised and de-territorialised forms of identity.

Today, Islam and culture have become de-territorialised. It is no longer based on social authority or conformity but on personal belief and choice. It is about the self and the realisation of the self through faith.

The analysis of the discussed artists has contributed to knowledge about their double consciousness. Their constructed identity allows for self-awareness embodying voices from a host and home country. The duality of their identities plays a significant role in their production based on their mental and physical in-between state. This is a state that is challenged, explored and negotiated daily.

فيما يتعلق بالهوية المبنية ، يلخص أكبر زادة و منصورى (2010: 114) ما الذي تنطوي عليه الهوية الإسلامية في القرن الواحد والعشرين. لقد توسعت الهوية الدينية الإسلامية من مجموعات القرابة / المجتمع لتشمل أشكال الهوية غير الثقافية والغير إقليمية. واليوم ، أصبح الإسلام والثقافة خارج الحدود الإقليمية. لم يعد يعتمد على السلطة الاجتماعية أو التطابق وإنما على المعتقد والاختيار الشخصي. إنه عن الذات وتحقيق الذات من خلال الإيمان".

ساهم تحليل الفنانين الذين نوقشوا في معرفة الوعي المزدوج. وهويتهم المبنية تسمح بالوعي الذاتي الذي يجسد الأصوات من بلد مضيف ومن موطنه. تلعب ازدواجية هوياتهم دوراً هاماً في إنتاجها استناداً إلى حالتها العقلية والجسدية. هذه حالة يتم تحديدها واستكشافها والتفاوض عليها يومياً.

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