Reclamations of Power and Space Through the Abject:

Franko B and Rashid Rana

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I hereby declare that, except where it is otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis represents my own original work.

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Abstract

This thesis analyses four key works by two artists from different sociopolitical contexts, Franko B (b. Milan, 1960) and Rashid Rana (b. Lahore, 1968), who share a generational consciousness in their approach to subject matter. Franko B's performance *I Miss You!* (1999–2005) and his sculptural work *Sleeping Beauty* (2016) comment on current and historical sociopolitical issues related to representation and marginality. Rashid Rana's collage series, *Red Carpet* (2007) and *Veil* (2004), deal with the East/West, masculine/ feminine and human/animal divides in the contemporary geopolitical landscape. Through an analysis of these bodies of work, this research demonstrates that, despite facing issues unique to each context, minority groups across societies face similar struggles which are not limited to, or caused by, their identities per se, but form part of a dialectical understanding of the Self in relation to the "Other".

Building on the theoretical frameworks offered by Julia Kristeva, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Rancière, and other Post-Marxist theorists, this thesis considers the abject as a powerful tool in activating artworks with affective value to the viewer and prompting an authentic engagement with the subject, with the purpose of dismantling hierarchically structured subjectivities. This thesis suggests that, if art has any impact on audiences, or a role in instigating social change, this is contingent on a re-evaluation of the false consciousness that is determined by hegemonic ideologies.

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives

The central aim of this thesis is to explore how works of art provide insight into contemporary social issues and the human condition under late capitalism. With attention to medium and subject matter, I investigate the affective quality of the artworks in order to illustrate how they can be effective in inducing emotional, intellectual, and material transformations in the audience. The secondary objectives of this thesis are several, and they intertwine in the discussion. I examine: the use of abjection in art; the cultural impact of the aesthetic judgement of contemporary art; the mass production and consumption of images and the effect of images on the desensitised social consciousness; the critical engagement of art with its audience; the interrelation between present-day social issues and contemporary art; and the role of the abject in the artworks chosen for study. I will expand on these topics later in this Introduction.

Methodology

This thesis applies art history, art theory and critical theory to an analysis of four contemporary artworks: *I Miss You!* (1999–2005) and *Sleeping Beauty* (2016) by Franko B (b. 1960, Milan); and *Red Carpet* (2007) and *Veil* (2004) by Rashid Rana (b. 1968, Lahore).[1] While Franko B and Rashid Rana have different personal and cultural backgrounds, they share a generational consciousness which has witnessed capitalist growth and decay, the War on Terror and increased polarity between the East and the West. Their works deliver interventionist comments into mainstream society's understanding of marginal presences. Other central themes in their work are religion, alienation, and object fetishism. With these considerations, I analyse their works comparatively with other significant artworks and art movements, in the light of the theories of Julia Kristeva, Theodor Adorno and Jacques Rancière, among others.

Structure

Chapter One considers Franko B's *I Miss You!* (1999–2005). Franko B is a contemporary artist from Italy whose practice covers a wide range of media, including sculpture, performance, installation, and drawing. Franko B is an activist who often uses his

[1] Please see Appendix for images of the artworks.

body as an instrument, drawing upon human suffering to promote affective engagement with his art, and political action.

In *I Miss You!*, Franko B parades, naked and painted white, on a catwalk. Blood drips, from cannulas inserted in his arms, as he walks and poses for the audience. The performance incorporates the themes of abjection and borders, both of which are critical in the exploration of all the artworks in this thesis. Laden with Christian iconography, Franko B's performance depicts two borders: the physical border between the catwalk and the audience, and the metaphysical border, symbolised by the cannulas bleeding out the artist.

Chapter Two analyses Franko B's *Sleeping Beauty,* a marble sculpture of a child, carved in the Baroque style of Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The sculpture is displayed on a structure that elevates it from the ground, framed with a rectangular border which the audience is not allowed to cross. *Sleeping Beauty* was made in 2016, following the obstruction of Italy's rescue operation Mare Nostrum, which aimed to keep refugees from drowning at sea. (The UK had refused to participate in its funding, asserting that it would result in an influx of refugees, most of whom are Muslim, into Europe.)[2] *Sleeping Beauty* is carved in the image of a dead refugee child who was washed ashore on the Libyan coast. The photograph was circulated widely in social media, along with other similar photographs; yet, it had no systemic effect stopping other children from suffering the same fate.

Chapter Three examines Rashid Rana's *Red Carpet*, a collage series from 2007 in which the artist combined thousands of photographs he had taken in a slaughterhouse into a facsimile of an "Oriental" carpet. Rana is a contemporary artist from Pakistan, a country that was founded as a result of British colonialism and whose people are under attack today with the rise of terrorism and Islamophobia. *Red Carpet* illustrates the inextricable links between the two. The generic pattern of the carpet deliberately does not allow for any specific geographical reference, evoking the imagination of a generalised Orient. Rana's technique contrasts the Orientalist perception of the region as the homeland where beautiful and desirable things are to be found and taken, with the historical and current slaughter of life in the Middle East and Asia. *Red Carpet* complicates human/animal distinctions and, in doing so, questions the value of human life, especially when said humans are the "Other."

[2] Alan Travis, "UK axes support for Mediterranean migrant rescue operation," *The Guardian*, October 28, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/oct/27/uk-mediterranean-migrant-rescue-plan

Chapter Four examines three collages from Rana's 2004 *Veil* series that each depict a single figure in burqa. The larger images are composed of smaller stills from heterosexual pornographic films, depicting predominantly female bodies. *Veil* is a comment on the position of women in patriarchal society, where they are the Other, conceptualised primarily in relation to men. Both the pornography industry and veiling, which is a trans-religious practice, are manifestations of the sexualisation and objectification of the female body. Despite (and, I argue, because of) being in the service of the patriarchal/hegemonic power that dominates the world, these practices are put forth by both the West and Muslims to condemn each other and claim superiority, with no positive impact on the lives of the women whose bodies are subjected to this.

Despite their different birth cultures, both Franko B and Rashid Rana operate within an international contemporary art sphere which encourages a comparative analysis of their works. I selected these artworks for this thesis because of the different experiences and perspectives Franko B and Rashid Rana provide, converging on the central theme of human suffering. Franko B's and Rana's art calls for a revision in the way we perceive and treat the Other, and how we define ourselves in relation to it. The following discussion, in which I outline some of the ideas of Kristeva, Adorno and Rancière, provides the theoretical framework under which this thesis will attempt to respond to this appeal.

Literature Review

Debates about the intersection of ethics and aesthetics in art are increasingly relevant in the contemporary world, where images which shape and reflect public opinion are circulated for mass consumption through technological means. The contemporary consciousness is permeated with visual accounts of suffering: of refugees, the homeless, the war-torn; often presented within a framework that encourages apathy and resignation, if not an outright vilification of the vulnerable. At the same time, we are bombarded with images of beautiful bodies and lavish lifestyles to which we should aspire if we are ever to have what they promise; sex, wealth, and power. The dissemination of such images within the discourse of the popular media creates and consolidates a false consciousness which justifies the status quo and disempowers the individual from recognising their plight under the late capitalist system.

When first used by Marx and Engels, false consciousness referred to the view held by intellectuals, who prioritised their own ideas as an agent to transform the consciousness of the

masses. Marx and Engels emphasised that this belief was fallacious, because of the exclusion of the working class from high culture.[3] Further, they argued that the ideas espoused by intellectuals were in fact, due to class interests, aligned with that of the state.[4] Gramsci revised the definition of false consciousness whereby it came to encompass the beliefs of the working class, by demonstrating that the state is not an isolated ideological apparatus but is manifested in everyday social relations between all members of the society. Paying specific attention to Catholicism, he underlined the fact that religion is instrumentalised to establish the hegemonic rule of the state.[5]

The notion of false consciousness was further developed by Lukasz, who suggested that it is predominantly a question of perception, and the Frankfurt School thinkers, who, by incorporating psychoanalytical theory into their philosophy, explored the "subjective" dimension of false consciousness. They proposed that false consciousness is "a problem of distorted experience and being" and investigated "how the worker's experience of capitalist society not only produced a false perception of interests defined economically, but also how this experience produced a 'false' sense of self."[6] In my analysis of Rashid Rana's and Franko B's artworks, I explore how false consciousness is produced by the representation and association of the marginalised sections of society with the abject, which is explained by Kristeva as the primary, but not the only, instance where a person defines themself.

Kristeva identifies the process through which an infant develops a sense of self, by distinguishing themself from the mother, as the first instance of abjection. Where the child and mother have been previously united in the *chora*,[7] the child, by repelling the mother from their subjectivity, the first imaginary border they envision, conceptualising themself by who they are not: the mother.[8] For the separation to take place, the child construes the mother's body as abject: disgusting, repulsive, *revolt*ing. For the son, this is a necessary step: to

[3] Ron Eyerman, "False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory," *Acta Sociologica* 24, no.1-2 (1981): 44. Chapter 4 will demonstrate this.
[4] Franz Jakubowski, *Ideology and Superstructure in Historical Materialism* (London: Pluto Press, 1936) http://libcom.org/library/ideology-superstructure-historical-materialism-franz-jakubowski-1936, 44-48.
[5] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: ElecBook, 1999), 416–419.
[6] Eyerman, "False Consciousness," 52–54.
[7] "A psychic space and time in infancy, or in the breakdown of language, during which meanings and expressions generated are semiotic in nature, sounds and gestures express feelings and energies; independent of an understood symbolic system, such as language." Janet L. McCabe and Dave Holmes, "Reversing Kristeva's first instance of abjection: the formation of self reconsidered," *Nursing Inquiry* 18, 1 (2001): 78.
[8] McCabe and Holmes, "Reversing Kristeva," 78–79.

confront, overthrow, and assimilate paternal authority, which stands for law and value.[9] The lack of an authority to challenge and subsequently identify with complicates the abjection of the maternal body and generates the feeling of exclusion. This condition is compounded by the lack of the imaginary father, which will be addressed later, regardless of the gender of the child. The individual either feels excluded or, to compensate, excludes others, affirming themself by proclaiming: "'I' include myself at the top" or "'I' exclude those at the bottom."[10]

Individuals reconstruct the boundaries around themselves throughout their lives in revolt against the abject, which is perceived as an ever-present threat to one's sense of self. Kristeva highlights this process as also an opportunity for one to dismantle the process of identity formation acquired in childhood.[11] Identity differentiation, if accomplished through the exclusion and abjection of "the lower echelons of the social edifice," reinforces their vulnerable position in society.[12] This coincides with the false consciousness discussed above, where, instead of confronting the unjust treatment under the capitalist system, individuals align themselves with the hegemonic power, believing it to serve and represent their interests.

Notably, in the primary instance of abjection, the child, by rejecting the mother and turning them[13] into the abject, also repels, rejects and "ab-jects" themself, given their previous selfsameness.[14] Kristeva identifies abjection as a *narcissistic crisis*: "Narcissism then appears as a regression to a position set back from the other, a return to a self-contemplative, conservative, self-sufficient haven."[15] It is a crisis because narcissism contains within itself a desire to return to the origin, the *chora* (given that the construction of the self necessarily involves its rejection) and the mourning of "an 'object' that has always already been lost."[16] The artworks that I have selected appeal to the audience's shared humanity with the represented, evoking the *chora*, and challenge their preconceptions about the subject matter and their self-identification in opposition to it by purposefully bringing forth the

[9] Sarah K. Hansen, "Julia Kristeva and the Politics of Life," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 21, no.1 (2013): 35.
[10] Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: the Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis* vol. 1, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 23.
[11] Joan Brandt, "Revolt or Consensus?: Julia Kristeva in the 1990s," *L'Esprit Créateur* 41, no.1 (Spring 2001): 87–95.
[12] Hansen, "Julia Kristeva," 37.
[13] There are transgender men who give birth after or during their transition, who prefer to be referred to as mothers while using "they/them" or "he/him" pronouns elsewhere.
[14] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia Press, 1982), 13.
[15] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 14–15.
[16] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 15.

abject. Further, many artworks have religious subtexts, which I highlight by taking into consideration Gramsci's observation that religion can be instrumental to enactments of hegemonic power; this is supported by Kristeva's theories.

Kristeva proposes that the patriarchal order, symbolised by the stern father and typified by Abraham, has an alternative, the imaginary father, which is oppressed under the status quo. The imaginary father shapes one's subjectivity and perception of the Other as its primary model.[17] It facilitates the primary instance of abjection by offering love outside of the *chora*, thereby protecting the narcissistic space necessary for identity formation. Oliver explains:

> Kristeva's fantasy of the imaginary father is a fantasy of identity that does not set up an absolute alterity imposed by a paternal threat. The primary identification with the imaginary father neither absorbs nor ostracizes the difference of the Other. Rather, it is a fantasy that invites difference and thereby a new conception of identity.[18]

The imaginary father rehabilitates abjection and loss, thereby protecting the individual against abject eruptions or an inwards depressive collapse,[19] which are manifested in the artworks of Franko B and Rashid Rana. The following chapters will explore this. In this sense, they are *true* portrayals of the world, which lacks the imaginary father, and they are appeals for one where It would be.

The truth content of artworks is central to Adorno's theories on the function of art as a transformative medium. Adorno asserts that art is a form of mimesis, which differs from representation by the relationships depicted. Where representation relays the relationship between the artist (subject) and an object, mimesis illustrates the relationship between the subject and another subject, embodying the relationship in art form.[20] This is because the very act of depiction includes the perspective of the artist as well as their relationship with subject matter. Through mimesis, art reflects false consciousness, which pervades every relationship under the late capitalist system. What makes an artwork genuine for Adorno is not its

[17] In her study of Kristeva's writings, Oliver suggests that the imaginary father is firstly, not necessarily a male; further, that it is an amalgamation of the mother and the father because it incorporates the mother's love. Therefore, I use "It" when referring to the concept. Kelly Oliver, "Kristeva's Imaginary Father and the Crisis in the Paternal Function," *Diacritics* 21, no. 2–3, A Feminist Miscellany (Summer-Autumn, 1991).
[18] Oliver, "Kristeva's Imaginary Father," 61.
[19] Hansen, "Julia Kristeva," 37.
[20] Nathan Ross, "On Truth Content and False Consciousness in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory," *Philosophy Today* 59, no. 2 (2015): 275.

aesthetic appearance, but its ability to manifest false consciousness, thereby denoting truth-value, as well as rendering the experience of the artwork uncomfortable, painful, and even belittling.[21]

Adorno's perspective is a subversion of Kant's theory of aesthetics. Prioritising and encouraging the appreciation of the formal aesthetic quality of artworks, Kant suggests that art must be engaged with from a disinterested standpoint.[22] Adorno refutes this position, asserting that disinterest indicates an indifference to the expression of the subject's suffering embodied in art and, consequently, compliance with the status quo.[23] Further, he identifies the tendency to conceive of artworks as an occasion for mere gratification as symptomatic of the consumerist attitude prevalent in the culture industry.[24] Adorno contends that the glorification of aesthetic form is emblematic of the antagonism towards the subject, presenting in modern Anglo-Saxon art as an "allergy to expression," observed in "the aesthetic condemnation of the ugly [which] is dependent on the inclination, verified by social psychology, to equate, justly, the ugly with the expression of suffering and, by projecting it, to despise it."[25]

The unwillingness to engage emotionally with genuine art is a missed opportunity to experience its "promise of happiness."[26] By Adorno's definition, genuine works of art are those whose creation and reception are both plagued by suffering. Art, therefore, enables its audience to imagine a world where the artwork, and the conditions that produced it, do not exist. Adorno states: "an artwork is always itself and simultaneously the other of itself."[27] When "processually deciphered" by the audience, the false consciousness mimed in the artworks reveals itself to consciousness, laid bare to critique and thus, to transformation, however subtle.[28] Adorno emphasises that works need not be "haranguing" to instigate societal change, because it is not an external entity that is transformed via the agency of the audience, but the audience itself.

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[21] Espen Hammer, "Happiness and Pleasure in Adorno's Aesthetics," *The German Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 90, no. 4: 249.
[22] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), xi, 52.
[23] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann and Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2002), 92–94, 323. Hammer, "Happiness," 255.
[24] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 17.
[25] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 49. Ross, "On Truth Content," 282.
[26] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 81.
[27] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 283.
[28] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 243. Ross, "On Truth Content," 227.

Adorno argues that thinking is itself is a transformative process, "a sort of becoming," which cannot be sparked without the provocation of an external object, an Other: the artist who is exhibited in the artwork.[29] He proposes that "total self-relinquishment" is a necessary condition for achieving subjectivity, whereby the viewer immerses themself in the experience of the non-identical Other, without any preconceived categorisations. Through self-relinquishment to the artwork, thought reaches its potential by embracing the Other which has incited the process. Kiloh explains: "The thinking subject cannot be superior to the difference of the object because it already harbours and produces otherness within itself."[30] Self-relinquishment is not an attempt to eradicate contradictions but to allow them to exist in dignity. It is distinct from a diminishing of the ego, or a surrender of one's individuality. Instead, the subject's "power to be weak" is derived from a strengthening of the self.[31]

Adorno's formulation of self-relinquishment to the artwork is consonant with Kristeva's postulations on the possibility of an unthreatening interaction with the Other. Morgan notes that both theorists observe that the contemporary individual is experiencing a loss of inner subjectivity.[32] Kristeva ascribes it to the patriarchal status quo and its dissemination through everyday language, which oppresses the individual and encourages further oppression and exclusion. Adorno argues that the loss of subjectivity is necessary for the disruption of false consciousness (false subjectivity) propagated by capitalistic ideologies and emphasises that subjectivity, which humanity is yet to achieve, can only be established with the aim of abolishing the physical suffering of every member of humanity.[33] He writes:

> It is not up to the individual sufferer to abolish suffering or mitigate it to a degree which theory cannot anticipate, to which it can set no limit. This job is up solely to the species, to which the individual belongs even where he subjectively renounces it and is objectively thrust into the absolute loneliness of a helpless object.[34]

[29] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 2007), 201. Kathy Kiloh, "Towards an ethical politics: T.W. Adorno and aesthetic self-relinquishment," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 43, no. 6 (2017): 577.
[30] Kiloh, "Towards an ethical politics," 577.
[31] Kiloh, "Towards an ethical politics," 583.
[32] Marcia Morgan, "The Affect of Dissident Language and Aesthetic Emancipation at the Margins: A Possible Dialogue between Theodor W. Adorno and Julia Kristeva," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 24, no 1 (2016): 167-169.
[33] Kiloh, "Towards an ethical politics," 573.
[34] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 203.

This thesis explores artworks that depict marginalised presences in mainstream Western society, about whom divergent opinions are held and debated endlessly by legislative bodies without any resolution to their systematic oppression and discrimination. Rancière points out that the failure of this communicative model of rationality is due to a perceived categorical difference between the subjects of the debate (police) and the speakers (politics).[35] Although democracy is a promise of equality, the restriction of legislative political activity to the privileged results in the exclusion of common people from politics, where they often are not seen, or heard, or understood, by their so-called representatives.[36] Rancière suggests, similarly to Adorno, that art has the potential to be effective in producing a shift in the systematic order, by creating dissensus between the present and what could be, and bringing into the visible what is not seen.[37] Further, politics is itself aesthetic, he explains, because of the distinctions that it makes about what is worth looking at and seeing.[38]

Bourdieu's study of the judgement of taste draws upon the parallels between the domain of politics and pure aesthetics. He explains that the principle of pure aesthetics is characteristic of "the bourgeois denial of the social world to its limit": the detached, pure, gaze can be held only by those who can afford to distance themselves from the struggles of social life and remain unaffected by its expressions as embodied in art. Bourdieu asserts that the indifference necessary for the appreciation of pure aesthetics can manifest as "moral agnosticism," especially when the artworks demonstrate ethical transgressions.[39] This attitude is rampant in the contemporary political sphere, and is escalated and facilitated by the precedence of identity politics, which pits groups of people against each other and, thereby paralyses the public conscience and plays on false consciousness, while systematic injustice continues.

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[35] Jacques Rancière and Davide Panagia, "Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Diacritics* 30, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 116. Please note that Rancière's terminology alters throughout his writings, and he sometimes refers to politics as the activity of the people. I use the term here strictly to describe the ruling class.

[36] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: politics and philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 24–32. Matthew Lampert, "Beyond the politics of reception: Jacques Rancière and the politics of art," *Continental Philosophy Review* 50 (2017): 183. Rancière draws similarities between animal grunts and the words of the plebs to the ruling class, which is unable to understand what they mean; he is pointing to how the common people are seen. Rancière and Panagia, "Dissenting," 115–116.

[37] Jacques Rancière, "Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics," ed. and trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010), 134–151.

[38] Rancière, *Diagreement*, 35–36.

[39] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 5.

Rancière highlights the fact that politics, which is necessarily a "denial of equality," is a system of subjectification which creates subjects "by transforming identities defined in the natural order of the allocation of functions and places into instances of experiences of a dispute."[40] Because politics, as removed from communal life, does not have the same experience as the subject, it assesses it by "measur[ing] the gap between" the role it plays and playing no part.[41] Thus, political subjectification is determined by the liminal space between the subject and politics, which is actively maintained by the exclusion of the subject from itself. It is, in fact, a "form of disidentification."[42] Rancière asserts that this is *wrong*, and that political agency should aim to assert every speaking individual's entitlement to equality.[43]

Based on Kristeva's definition of the abject as that which disturbs the order and "draws attention to the fragility of the law," it can be deduced that, in the eyes of the ruling class, the common people are the abject; the revolting; the Other; the threat.[44] However, today's society shows that a significant portion of the abject, the common people, have internalised the attitude of the class which actually materially benefits from their abjection, and they project it onto others. What remains is the alienated individual unable to connect with their own species or define themself but for the categories imposed upon them. In compliance with Adorno's description of self-relinquishment to the non-identical, Franko B's and Rashid Rana's works request unreserved emotional and intellectual engagement from their audience. They challenge their audience to confront the abjections that they make and to overstep their own boundaries, in hope of a world where aesthetics and ethics will coalesce.

[40] Rancière, *Disagreement*, 35.
[41] Rancière, *Disagreement*, 35.
[42] Rancière, *Disagreement*, 36.
[43] Rancière, *Disagreement*, 30, 38.
[44] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

CHAPTER ONE: *I MISS YOU!*

Overview

Franko B (b. Milan, 1960) was raised in an orphanage and, later, in a Red Cross institution before emigrating to England, where he was trained in fine art at Camberwell College of Arts, Chelsea College of Art and the Byam Shaw School of Art.[45] Franko B creates works in various media and is widely acknowledged for his performances, where he utilises his own body as an abject entity in order to reference personal and societal struggles. He is adept at constructing performative spaces which bridge the distance between art and its audience by evoking intense emotions among those who view the art.

One example of such performance by Franko B is his work *I Miss You!*, staged firstly in 1999 in Belgium and, subsequently, in seven European countries until his last performance of the work in 2005.[46] Although the performance itself was identical in each case, audience variances at each performance and consequent modulations in the reactions of the onlookers represent a significant factor in any such piece. This analysis focuses on a specific performance at the Symposium on Live Art held at the Tate Modern Museum in London in April 2003. This particular performance is notable because of the abundance of related resources that can facilitate a satisfactory study of the performance. These sources include a video documentary and Jennifer Doyle's essays where she outlines the reactions of the audience after watching the performance.[47]

In *I Miss You!*, Franko B makes an appearance, naked and painted white, on a canvas catwalk. The lights are dimmed in the exhibition space, with only harsh fluorescent bulbs around the catwalk illuminating the scene as the figure bleeds from cannulas affixed to his arms. His opened veins drip blood as he leisurely – almost nonchalantly – walks the length of the catwalk, as is typical in standard fashion shows. His whitened body glistens as cameras flash, and lights blink. He stares deep into their eyes as he poses for the waiting, eager photographers while his figure drips blood that pools around his feet. After the snapshots are taken, the figure makes his way back to the beginning of the catwalk, leaving behind a trail of

[45] David Thorp, "Bodies of Distress: Franko B's Paintings and Objects," in *Blinded by Love*, ed. Dominic Johnson (Italy: Damiani Editore, 2006). http://www.franko-b.com/Bodies_of_Distress.html
[46] Franko B and contributors, "I Miss You." Franko B Official Website. http://www.franko-b.com/I_Miss_You.html
[47] Jennifer Doyle, "Critical Tears: Franko B's 'I Miss You'" in *Blinded by Love*, ed. Dominic Johnson. http://www.franko-b.com/Critical_Tears.html Jennifer Doyle, *Hold it Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 73-77.

bright red blood on the canvas. The performance continues for ten minutes before Franko B retreats, with his white body covered in blood. Franko B does not reveal any expression throughout the performance, which contrasts with the title of the work, *I Miss You!*

Franko B's face is mask like, not revealing any emotion throughout the performance. His composure does not indicate that he is under physical strain, although Doyle notes that, by the end of the performance, it is clear to those who are paying attention that the artist is struggling. Franko B's statuesque figure contrasts with the title of the work, *I Miss You!*, which emphasises lack, a yearning for completion. It is symbolised by the blood running down his body, signalling dissolution. Franko B needs something from the audience: love; for that, he suffers.[48] Adorno writes: "if the artist's work is to reach beyond his own contingency, then he must in return pay the price that he, in contrast to the discursively thinking person, cannot transcend himself and the objectively established boundaries."[49] Franko B's performance is a literal depiction of the boundaries by which the artist is bound, where he positions himself as an unfamiliar sight on the catwalk in a non-reciprocal relationship with the audience.

The staging of the performance intentionally plays with the senses of the audience. They are left in the dark, free to respond to *I Miss You!* as they will. Franko B's embrace of abject elements – his blood and his naked, overweight body – evokes powerful emotions– even physical ones – in response: viewers may feel nauseated, upset, or alarmed; they may cry; they may avert their faces away from the spectacle. It is only after the initial reaction to the sight that the audience begins to decipher the artist's motivation for the performance which has forced them to confront, intellectually and rationally, the human figure in its most blatantly naked, bloodily real form. The sight also raises ethical concerns, because witnessing the sight of bodily harm and violence, which may involve self-harm,[50] implicates an audience if they choose not to engage with it, even though that is what is expected of them during the performance. Franko B's demand from the audience, however, extends beyond the timeframe of the performance.

[48] Doyle, "Critical Tears."
[49] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 42.
[50] What constitutes self-harm is not agreed upon. In an interview, Franko B. asserted that he does not consider his performances that involve physical damage to be self-harm because his acts are displayed in a public space. Franko B and contributors, "Franko B interviewed by Artist Taxi Driver" (June 2015). Franko B. Official Website. http://www.franko-b.com/artist_taxi_driver_interview.html

Franko B explains the motivation for his performances as two-fold: to express his own repressed experience, and to present a critique of the coercive social structures that condemn, repress and deny any individual drive that is deemed to be perilous, deficient, or subversive.[51] Franko B's presentation of his own naked body for this purpose is significant, both because he is a gay man who was abandoned by his Roman Catholic mother,[52] and because fat bodies are considered to be abject "sources of horror, marginalization and shame."[53] Fatness is also associated with overconsumption, which contrasts with the catwalk, where, traditionally pristine, thin, and mostly white bodies are exhibited for mass consumption by the audience. By exhibiting "ugliness," which is also two layered in the Adornian sense, as an expression of suffering, and in the perspective of hierarchical normativity that promotes light skinned and thin people, Franko B challenges his audience to reflect upon their own reactions to the display of reality.

Sacrifice and Bloodletting

While the changing political atmosphere has generated new perspectives on the nude body in the world of art, the representation of the human body has a longstanding tradition in art history. The nude human figure – traditionally the female body – is a common subject in art, which was historically displayed with the claim of invoking a Kantian engagement with the work, in order for the viewers to appreciate its aesthetic form. The objectification of the female body has been challenged, from the 1970s, primarily as a feminist strategy by incorporating the abject and rejecting representations of the body that abide by the ideal beauty standards. This strategy has been disputed since the 1990s by various theorists, who suggest that the exclusion of beauty from art, especially art with a political agenda, is detrimental if such art is to have a positive impact.[54]

Negrin suggests that theorist who argue for the reincorporation of beauty into artworks claim that, by prioritising intellectual engagement over sensory pleasure, abject representations alienate their viewer. Aversion and shock, rather than empathy, are produced

[51] Luca Beatrice, "ETRACORPOREAL: The black period of Franko B," in *Franko B "Full of Love,"* ed. Marena Rooms Gallery, trans. studio Melchior s.r.l (2007), 8–10. http://franko-b.com/Media/FrankoBFOL.pdf
[52] Franko B reconciled with his mother for a brief period as a young boy but afterwards was sent to a Red Cross Institution.
[53] Lesleigh J. Owen, "Monstrous Freedom: Charting Fat Ambivalence," *Fat Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Body Weight and Society* 4, no. 1: 2.
[54] Lwellyn Negrin, "Beauty versus Politics: A False Dichotomy," (conference paper, AAANZ Conference, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, 2018), 1–2.

when confronted with the abject.[55] Initially, there seems to be some truth to this; Keidan notes how often the performances of Franko B and similar artists are referred to, primarily by middle-aged men, as "freak shows."[56] Keidan asserts that people who dislike these performances often find them to be sensationalist, or banal, stating they have witnessed all this before in the 1960s. Performance Art did emerge in the 1960s, and artists took alterations they made to their own bodies to the extreme. Most of these performances questioned the commodification and objectification of the art object, as well as the human body as object, as does *I Miss You!*.[57] Further, they presented social critiques that considered the suffering which humanity had witnessed in earlier decades. The fact that contemporary artists are creating similar performances today demonstrates that the issues that were addressed have still not been resolved.

Religious imagery has been a central element of performance art, where artists experience blood and pain as ritualistic elements.[58] While sacrifice and bloodletting as ritualistic practices have a history that predates monotheistic religions, the predominant religion contemporary to the artists had, arguably, the greatest impact on their work. Numerous artists have appropriated the Christian notion of using the human body in a sacrificial ritual, which Jesus Christ is said to have done, to test the limits of their bodies and psyches, and to demonstrate their political, moral, and aesthetic ideals.[59]

One example is by Chris Burden, who has quite literally depicted the transfixion in his performance entitled *Trans-fixed* (1974).[60] In this work, he nailed himself to a Volkswagen by the palms of his hands, imitating Christ's crucifixion, and was subsequently presented to an audience. The car engine raced for two minutes, to imitate the agonising sound of screams. The selection of the car brand is significant: the Volkswagen was designed and produced *en masse* as (translated literally from German) "The People's Car". Upon this item of mass production and mass consumption for populist aims, which was produced by a fascist state, the artist is "crucified" for, and by, his art.

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[55] Negrin, "Beauty vs. politics," 1.
[56] Lois Keidan, "Blood on the Tracks: The Performance Work of Franko B," in *Franko B.* Photographs by Nicholas Sinclair, text by Lois Keidan and Stuart Morgan (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1998), http://www.franko-b.com/Blood_on_the_Tracks.html
[57] Marcia Tucker ed, *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 95.
[58] Keidan, "Blood on the Tracks." Tucker, *Art After Modernism*, 95–99.
[59] Matthew 26:28 states: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
[60] Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Art since 1900* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 568.

Trans-fixed is a commentary on the capitalist system and its various institutions, which are destroying art and the artist. Moreover, given that the Nazis persecuted the Jews and other ethnic and minority groups in World War II, and it is often believed that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross, it can simultaneously be viewed as a comment on the political, religious, and cultural hegemonies that wear down and kill non-confirmative elements. The artist, as one of society's "outsiders," is one such representation in this scene, because he is visually and symbolically crucified on a vehicle of consumerism and hegemonic conveyance which bears religious overtones. Due to its violent nature, *Trans-fixed* might evoke awe, as well as horror, in the audience. Nevertheless, the purpose is not to stun the viewers into a state of immobility; rather, it is to force them to consider how they are influenced by mass movements in consumerism, politics, culture, and art itself, evidenced by the commentary on the inertia of the audience in the name of the work, *Trans-fixed*.[61]

Figure 1: Giovanni Antonio Bazzi aka Sodoma, *St Sebastian*

[61] Tracy DiTolla, "Chris Burden Artist Overview and Analysis," *TheArtStory.org*, first published April 5, 2014, https://www.theartstory.org/artist-burden-chris-artworks.htm

While blood itself became visible as a purposefully abject element only in the 1960s, suffering has been a longstanding subject in art, especially in the medium of painting. The martyrdom of Saint Sebastian[62] attracted the interest of Renaissance painters, including Mantegna, Guido Reni, Botticelli, Tintoretto, Bazzi, and Titian.[63] In paintings that are dedicated to Saint Sebastian, the youthful figure of their subject is depicted in an undeniable state of suffering. He is often portrayed as partially clothed and chained to a pillar or a tree. His body is impaled by several arrows, and he stares into the skies with a pure, often a beatific, expression on his face. Today, Saint Sebastian is considered to have been a homosexual, so his death has come to signify the persecution of the LGBTQIA+ community in the modern world.[64] The relationship between suffering, blood and redemption has historical roots from which artists continue to draw for representations of current concerns, such as sexual identity.

Franko B's use of the image of dripping blood in a provocative manner has similar historical precedents in art. His work not only elicits revulsion; it also complicates traditional conventions of art. By exposing his bleeding body, Franko B also compels the audience to reflect on the meaning of being vulnerable and shedding blood, and, finally, to consider the boundaries between the human body and its political identities. Through a broken, bleeding body, Franko B showcases the cathartic, symbolic potential of human blood. He also underlined the suffering of the LGBTQIA+ people at the hands of religion and the systems that utilise religion to oppress and to rule the people.

In *I Miss You!*, Franko B embodies and re-lives, through the performance, his sacrifice as a gay man. Because of his identity, he has been repressed both categorically and historically. Such self-expression is the sacrifice for a more comfortable but untrue way of living, which the artist determinedly avoided by being forthcoming about his sexuality since the beginning of his practice. Moreover, Franko B has relied on Christian theology and ritual bloodletting in presenting his concept of blood and its shedding as transformational media of communication, as a symbolic bridge between the performer and the audience. An evaluation of the implications of Franko B's application of white pigment on his skin is critical and will

[62] Figure 1: Giovanni Antonio Bazzi aka Sodoma, *St Sebastian*, 1525, oil on canvas, 206 x 154 cm, Palazzo Pitti collection. Image retrieved from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sodoma_-_St_Sebastian_-_WGA21550.jpg

[63] Richard A. Kaye, "'Determined Raptures': St. Sebastian and the Victorian Discourse of Decadence," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27, no.1 (1999): 273.

[64] Charles Darwent, "Arrows of desire: How did St Sebastian become an enduring, homo-erotic icon?," *Independent*, February 10, 2008. https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/arrows-of-desire-how-did-st-sebastian-become-an-enduring-homo-erotic-icon-779388.html

be addressed further in the Conclusion. With regard to *I Miss You!*, Franko B has stated that he painted his body white because he wanted to become someone else – a body with which the members of the audience can identify.[65]

In the aftermath of the performance, its viewers are driven to question whether the painted-on white skin and flowing discharge of blood were indeed an attempt to attain – or perhaps regain – lost purity. In the religious realm, self-flagellation is a form of body mortification that is significant for its purifying effects. However, the act involves violence and possibly self-harm, which is consistent with the religious connotations in Franko B's work. Further, Franko B effectively manipulated the symbolic meaning of the blood flowing from the human body in order to fashion a different mode of connection between the audience and the art. While the daring work could have alienated audiences, Franko B accepted this risk in view of the potential rewards of expanding communication channels between his art and his audience. The blood-dripping body might be disturbing for the viewers, but it could also be liberating and therapeutic, as explained by Ruvi Simmons:

> Just as the artist kills himself in the act of recovering the work of art, the viewer is caught in an embrace – of loss, need, blood and becoming – that both erases and reveals. The fact that the performance ends before the actual moment of death does not interrupt its internal logic or the profundity of how it binds us in horror, in awe, in a tangle of empathy and collaboration – the complexities by which the art of performance and the performances of life become inseparable, watch each other, and watch us as we watch ourselves.[66]

By making use of the concept of sacrifice, Franko B initiated a new means of both receiving and responding to artwork which presents the human body in its abject form. Through Franko B's confrontational art, the audience is given the opportunity to recognise a part of themselves in the figure that they can no longer keep at a safe aesthetic distance.

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[65] Becky Haghpanah-Shirwan, "When There's No Future How Can There Be Sin?," Franko B Official Website (2015). http://www.franko-b.com/dont_talk_to_me_about_shock.html

[66] Ruvi Simmons, "To See You, To Be You, To Become You: I Miss You, Phenomenology, Performing Bodies and Other Things," Franko B Official Website (2017). http://www.franko-b.com/To_See_You_To_Be_You_To_Become_You.html

Apotheosis and Abjection

The white paint on Franko B's body imitates the look of marble. This material was used in Europe for centuries to preserve and present beauty and perfection and to signify the epitome of civilisation. However, the figure that walks down the canvas is far from physically "perfect"; in fact, it is in vivid contrast to conventional ideas of beauty typically represented by a catwalk. Franko B references both formal aesthetical judgements and the position of the gay man as ugly, perverse in the dominant, heteronormative world. His body is a receptacle and the receiving object of the spectator's gaze – a container revealing its messy form and gory contents, including imperfect skin, flabby flesh, and blood, in a manner that is traditionally deemed obscene or vulgar.

I Miss You! is an active rejection of society's expectations from the individual, enacted by revealing what one is expected to hide: fat. Owen notes that fat bodies are perceived to be abnormal, repulsive, and monstrous; abject, and closely associated with immorality and shamefulness. Being fat is associated with greed, unhealthiness and a lack of personal self-control: something to be mocked and shunned.[67] The absence of fat bodies from representation in much of popular culture and art, except as signifiers of excess consumption and/or targets of ridicule and rejection, is knowingly referenced in *I Miss You!*. Fat bodies are abject. This perception is doubled for Franko B, given his sexuality. In *I Miss You*!, Franko B takes control and agency of his body – and, by extension, his sexuality – in defiance of this burden of shame, but also uses it as a tool to inform the audience that he will no longer allow the oppression that has been meted out to his community. Monica Trigona explains that, by performing, artists free themselves from their own distress, whether this arises from their "deviant" sexuality, anxieties, or desires; they exorcise hidden fears by making publicly visible what is hidden.[68]

Similarly, Franko B's performance and its transgressive form and nature can be understood from a Foucauldian perspective. Foucault asserts that the conceptualisation of transgression begins with an understanding of sexuality as detached from the field of the profane. While the profane can be defiled, sexuality is an "inward profanation" that "marks the limit within us, and designates us as a limit," thus invalidating any distinction between the sacred and the profane. Foucault explains transgression as "profanation which no longer

[67] Owen, "Monstrous Freedom," 2, 3, 5.
[68] Monica Trigona, "New Romantic," in *Franko B "Full of Love,"* ed. Marena Rooms Gallery, trans. studio Melchior s.r.l, (2007). http://franko-b.com/Media/FrankoBFOL.pdf

recognizes any positive meaning in the sacred."[69] However, transgression is not to be taken as rebellion, because it does not intend to completely eliminate boundaries or destroy limits. On the contrary, limits are both necessary and reciprocal elements without which transgression could not happen. Moreover, they are dependent on each other for their being and meaning.

When a person transgresses one limit, therefore, she or he only uncovers a new limit. The act of transgression "forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes…to experience its positive truth in its downward fall."[70] When *I Miss You!* is viewed through Foucault's analytic prism, Franko B reveals not only his naked, white body but also his profane self, "like a flash of lightning in the night, which does not shine from the outside, but the inside." Bebergal explains that by this act, he demonstrates that transgression contains "its own limit, denies its own limit, and reveals its own limit."[71]

Consequently, Franko B may be labelled "vulgar", because his art violates the so-called boundaries of decency. Historically, such direct display of the human body – including both its nudity and its various functions, such as bleeding and secretions – have been considered offensive and anathema to civil society. Accordingly, they have been hidden from public view. Civility requires that one is clothed and apparently separate from acts such as displays of bodily discharge. Nonetheless, Franko B subverted the traditional concept of vulgarity by employing it as a powerful and provocative tool. He exposed the inherent hypocrisies of conventional notions of decency by illustrating the fact that they are more perverted than the acts that they label "obscene" and "perverse," in search of total freedom.[72]

According to Sartre, the perception of the Other as vulgar is a symptom of the internal tension that is experienced by everyone. Charmé asserts that, given this shared struggle, "Sartre envisioned the possibility of the reappropriation of otherness that would ultimately bring about a reconsideration of the problematic categories of self and other."[73] Like Foucault's description of the relationship between boundaries and transgression, Sartre's

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[69] Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard and trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 30.
[70] Foucault, "A Preface," 34.
[71] Peter Bebergal, "A Meditation on Transgression. Foucault, Bataille and the Retrieval of the Limit," *CTHEORY*, University of Victoria Archive, 1998. https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/view/14629/5495?fbclid=IwAR1IZBu5VA9It_NU2-FW23xe8OgLtyouOaA3ObaK1M5Ksk4uVVtNh0JpisM Please note that there are no page numbers in this online publication.
[72] Keidan, "Blood on the Tracks".
[73] Stuart Zane Charmé, *Vulgarity and Authenticity: Dimensions of Otherness in the World of Jean-Paul Sartre*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 8.

concept of vulgarity casts it as the complete opposite of fabricated civility; yet, they describe a dialectical relationship. Vulgarity describes all that is not civil. Based on the arguments of Kristeva, the concept of vulgarity relies heavily on boundaries, which Franko B deliberately complicates and subverts in his artwork.

Franko B's performance is not only a defiance of boundaries at the personal level; it is also symptomatic of class struggle. Corbin asserted that Sartre understood the vulgar to encompass "nakedness, profanity, bad manners, poor hygiene, body odour and public excretion resident in the lower class."[74] However, the rejection of these qualities creates a "physically, emotionally, and verbally sterile environment [that] help[s] to conceal the viciousness and hypocrisy of the bourgeois ethic, one which privileged repression above expression."[75] Rancière states that political agency is about making seen bodies that are not seen.[76] By using elements of exclusion, ugliness and shame as agents of perceptual and cultural alteration, and in keeping with both Adorno's position on the purpose of art and Kristeva's argument about the importance of the abject in culture, *I Miss You*! makes visible the bodies and sexualities that have been literally and figuratively excluded from the normative public view and consciousness.

I Miss You! showcases a vulnerable body, which the audience may label as vulgar in their immediate initial reaction; however, by experiencing a deeply emotional response, the audience may also come to view the body as an expression of the individual and categorical reclamation of long-suppressed freedom. Thus, the performance has the potential to prompt viewers to question their own positions in society along the spectrum of the civil to the vulgar, by considering the concept of shame. Franko B stated when discussing *I Miss You!* that "we are all bleeding inside."[77] Perceiving Franko B's public display of his body and his pain, which is in fact human, as abject, may thus encourage viewers to contend with their own feeling of shame and, eventually, overcome it, just as the artist has transformed his own.

[74] Sean Corbin, "Sartre's Conception of Vulgarity, Authenticity, and Freedom as Explored in Louis Sachar's *Holes*." *Crossroads: An interdisciplinary journal for the study of history, philosophy, religion and classics* 2, iss.1 (2007), 17.
[75] Corbin, "Sartre's Conception of Vulgarity," 17.
[76] Lampert, "Beyond the politics," 183.
[77] "Who is Franko B?," *Bluecoat*, June 22, 2016, http://www.thebluecoat.org.uk/blog/view/who-is-blogging/244

CHAPTER TWO: *SLEEPING BEAUTY*

Overview

Franko B's *Sleeping Beauty* (2016) is a hand-carved Carrara marble sculpture in the tradition of Bernini[78] in Baroque.[79] In this work, Franko B has rendered concrete the image of a dead child, who is presumably from Syria, the site of one of the worst ongoing crises in modern times. The marble child is laid, with his eyes closed, body extended, and clothes dishevelled, on a slab carved with waves. Although he is deliberately unidentified, his posture clearly resembles images of dead refugee children that circulated in social media.

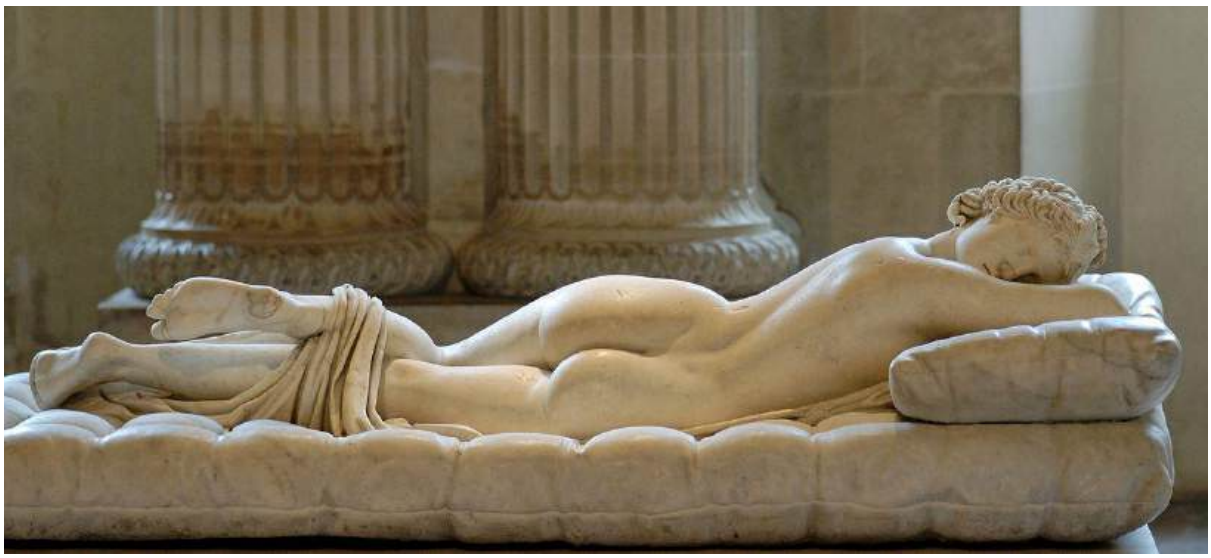

Figure 2: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Borghese Hermaphroditus*

In September 2015, the News Media displayed the image of a dead Syrian child, Alan Kurdi, who washed ashore in Turkey after the refugee boat on which he and his family were fleeing capsized.[80] His image captured the tragedy of the catastrophic refugee crisis and became an icon of the disaster that is unfolding daily in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Similar images of drowned refugees along the Libyan coast had been captured and distributed by Syrian artist Khaled Barakeh earlier in August, before they were removed from social

[78] Figure 2: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Borghese Hermaphroditus*, 2nd century, white marble and Carrara marble, Louvre Museum. Image retrieved from: *https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Borghese_Hermaphroditus*

[79] "Sleeping Beauty," Franko B Official Website, http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty.html

[80] Helena Smith, "Shocking images of drowned Syrian boy show tragic plight of refugees," *The Guardian*, 3 September, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/02/shocking-image-of-drowned-syrian-boy-shows-tragic-plight-of-refugees

media for content violation.[81] By casting this source image in marble, Franko B defied censorship and eternalised the child, and an unknown number of others like him who suffered a similar fate, through his art.

Sleeping Beauty announces the vulnerability of the human body. The artwork appears to be delicate and mirrors the fragility of human life, especially that of a child. Its whiteness signifies the child's innocence and contrasts poignantly with the reality that the non-white skin of refugee children contributes to their death. The coldness of the marble underlines the lifelessness of the figure. The contrast between the curvilinear waves and the static body also reveals the condition of the refugees who have no place to go but to the sea in the hope of reaching safety. Mannik notes: "water possess[es] the ability to traverse across land in a variety of ways; its movements have always been relegated to powerful ideas about freedom and borderlessness. When fluidity is epitomized in this way, it washes away any remaining trace of grounded existence."[82] Although the flamboyance of the Baroque style might initially seem to contrast with the sombre subject matter, the reference to Bernini, whose works of art were "performances of expression," produces in *Sleeping Beauty* a sense of immediacy and continuity that correlates with the ongoing refugee crises.[83]

The marble depiction crystallises not only the child's suffering but also the callousness of humankind, which has, directly or indirectly, allowed the tragedy to happen. The child's eyes are closed, signifying the eternal sleep of the dead but also providing a counterpoint to the audience's "waking slumber" of ignorance to the horror of the event before them. Thus, it asks the audience to open their eyes wide and to understand the connotative meanings of the child's untimely death (discussed later in the chapter through a consideration of the fairy tale that is eponymous to the work).

When shown in Franko B's solo exhibition *Death and Romance in the XXI Century* and also in *HOW TO SAY IT THE WAY IT IS!*, *Sleeping Beauty* was displayed on a stand that resembled a morgue table, and it was framed on all four sides by straight lines – lines that the audience could not cross.[84] The child whom the marble sculpture embodies is elevated,

[81] "Sleeping Beauty: Franko B in conversation with Sarah Wilson," The Freud Museum London, https://www.freud.org.uk/2017/06/25/sleeping-beauty-franko-b-in-conversation-with-sarah-wilson/
[82] Lynda Mannik ed., *Migration by Boat: Discourses of Trauma, Exclusion and Survival*, Forced Migration Series Volume 35 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 7.
[83] Genevieve Warwick, *Bernini: Art as Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 194.
[84] *Death and Romance in the XXI Century*, curated by Maurizio Coccia, was exhibited at the Palazzo Lucarini Contemporary in Trevi (Perugia) September 2016 – January 2017, and *HOW TO SAY IT THE WAY IT IS!* at Rua Red Gallery, South Dublin, 7 October – 2 December 2017.

sacredly venerated and untouchable, but that is only because he is dead. The frame around the work references the borders that the child died trying to cross. It also represents the borders between life and death, and between tragedy as reality and as spectacle. It is now the audience who cannot cross the border to reach him or wake him, even if they are genuinely moved to action by the event.

The border between the child and the Others was applied by choice – by human hands – and can easily be erased if the creator only chose to do so. In viewing the separation between themselves and the child, whom they can no longer reach in death, the audience is forced to ask several questions: how real is the border between themselves and the child – and, by extension, all refugees? Where does one border end and another begin? What are boundaries, and why do they exist?

Analogous to the performative space that separates Franko B from his audience, and whom he misses in *I Miss You!*, *Sleeping Beauty* conceptualises borders on multiple levels. Kristeva suggested:

> The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. …It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.[85]

In this sense, when confronted with the image of the dead child – a child whose very existence is supposed to signify innocence and the defiance of death – the audience is confronted closely by the abject crime that is embodied by the child's death. Kristeva explained the effect on the audience as follows: "The abjection…reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things."[86]

The artwork of Franko B draws upon the practice of "Othering", through the use of borders. In this artwork, Franko B documents the refugee crisis, which itself has challenged the borders that nation-states so righteously protect in the name of sovereignty and at a cost to humanity. By emphasising the concept of borders, Franko B highlights their constructed and

[85] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.
[86] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

arbitrary nature – and, by extension, that of nation-states and national cultures which thrive on exclusion. By memorialising a dead refugee child, the artist not only visibly marks and remarks on the borders that cause the loss of life; he also re-territorialises the zone of division, which then leads the audience to explore questions of humanity and the ethical treatment of people who fall in in-between, or "liminal", spaces.[87]

As is evidenced by the censoring of Barakeh's photographs, both public and private media exhibit extraordinary bias in their coverage of the suffering of non-white victims compared to their white counterparts.[88] In stark contrast, Franko B has solidified the trauma of refugees in such a way that the audience is driven to engage with the work. In so doing, the audience is forced to confront their collusion, through disengagement or ignorance, in the crisis. Franko B engages the audience, not only in viewing the dead child's sculpture, but also in encountering the profane in themselves, which condones their decision to turn a cold, blind eye to mass suffering. Through the subversion of traditionally recognised and understood art forms, Franko B has once again questioned and criticised the modern mass cultural approach to human suffering. To this end, he employed the practice of technologically facilitated mass consumption of images with an inherently fleeting form and impermanence in consciousness.[89]

Transience

Human beings grapple with an innate fear of death. It is an ever-present concern that has popularly been addressed by myths about warding off death by becoming immortal. Innumerable philosophers have addressed the subjects of death and the afterlife as well as the notion of immortality. Heidegger defined death in the following terms: "The end of the world

[87] When displayed at the Freud Museum, *Sleeping Beauty* was accompanied by a photographic series by Franko B titled *Still Life*, where the artist chronicled the homeless of London between 1999 and 2002. "Sleeping Beauty. Exhibition at the Freud Museum [London] (May-July 2017)," Franko B Official Webpage, http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty_Exhibition.html

[88] In contrast, research conducted by the University of Alabama concluded that "terror attacks by Muslims receive 357% more press attention" than their non-Muslim counterparts. Another study found that white mass shooters "were 95 percent more likely to be described as 'mentally ill' than black shooters." Mona Chalabi, "Terror attacks by Muslims receive 357% more press attention, study finds," *The Guardian*, July 20, 2018, https://amp.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jul/20/muslim-terror-attacks-press-coverage-study?fbclid=IwAR38vRGS06_N3-Rvq-yldcH4hS97jpvl3ou4VzSXajEYyMLcJ4Yts4nSJt8 Jeff Grabmeler, "White mass shooters receive sympathetic media treatment," *Ohio State News*, July 17, 2018, https://news.osu.edu/white-mass-shooters-receive-sympathetic-media-treatment/

[89] In an exceptional compilation of artworks in various media on migrations by boat throughout history, Lynda Mannik draws upon the power such documentation can have in addressing human rights and identities. While acknowledging that representations found in the media of migration by boat "can have a profound influence on policymaking and public opinion, setting up a vicious cycle of discrimination," she highlights how they can "also allow for shifts and changes in public perspectives, to give a voice to marginalized individuals, and to challenge dehumanizing policies." Mannik, *Migration*, 4.

– is death. The 'end' that belongs to existence limits and defines the whole of Existence. …death is just a fellow Existence."[90] Accordingly, death causes anxiety, because it is an experience of nothingness. Nevertheless, death is not a solitary event, because the fear of death is shared. Heidegger also stated that humans, when faced with the concept of death, reveal their inner state: that of fear. The fear of death (i.e., inexistence) is inescapable, and the only way to defy death is to accept the vulnerability of existence. Heidegger explained:"[w]hen experiencing anxiety in the face of death, Existence is a possibility left to overtake, to be brought. That anxiety is converted to the anxiety or fear of the events that are approaching."[91]

One way in which humanity has attempted to resolve its anxiety over transience is by commemorating the dead by carving their figures into hard material. This is a practice with a long precedent in the history of art. There is a clear relationship between monuments and memory; each commemorative artwork is an act of resistance against forgetting and erasure. A frequent iconographic element in commemorative sculpture is the naked death, which is significant in Christian thought, where flesh, when not condemned for being weak, is perceived to be where the spirit, which is of God, dwells. Barcan observes that "the Incarnation makes theological sense only if the human embodiment is seen as worthy and meaningful."[92] Further, art of this nature is an expression of inclusion and belonging, as well as a marker of identity. This artwork forms a link between the past and the future: by showing what was, it seeks to inform what is and what will be.

The apprehension of being dead and forgotten has been a motivation for the production of commemorative artwork throughout history, with its earliest instances observed in the sarcophagi of Ancient Egypt.[93] A notable element of ancient Egyptian art is its specificity to the figure it represents. For example, the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun, a child king who also died at a very young age, is distinctly marked, relaying his name and status to intentionally prevent the viewer from identifying with the dead person. In contrast, *Sleeping Beauty* was created with the intention of allowing – even compelling – the audience to identify with the figure. The anonymity of *Sleeping Beauty* contributes to the affective quality

[90] Martin Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?*, trans. Siavash Jamadi (Tehran: Phoenix Publishing, 2014), 302.
[91] Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?*, 328–327.
[92] Ruth Barcan, *Nudity: a cultural anatomy* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2004), 117-118.
[93] Matthew Craske, *The Silent Rhetoric of the Body: A History of Monumental Sculpture and Commemorative Art in England 1720-1770* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 427.

of the work by emphasising the commonality with the audience and their shared humanity and mortality.

Commemorative art is a means of preserving the past, supporting an existing world order, or conserving values. By synthesising this artistic form, traditionally attached with preservation and appreciation, with what has become an icon for humanity's calamity and shame, Franko B addresses the cognitive dissonance of our times. *Sleeping Beauty* asks: What is it that compels people to insist on preserving the established order when it is clearly harmful and detrimental to the wellbeing of others, and of themselves? The rest of this chapter will examine two disparate responses: the former, driven by fear, and the latter, melancholy.

One way to approach this phenomenon is to examine the psyche of the most vehement advocates of a segregated world: the white nationalists and the alt-right of the West. A dichotomous perspective of the world, where the West must resist the rest, cannot reasonably be held in a world shaped by colonialism and imperialism and with rapidly depleting resources. However, fear is known to override reason, and the alt-right uses it strategically to propagate its agenda. In 1918, Oswald Spengler published *The Decline of the West,* depicting a world that was split into radically disparate cultures.[94] Rose suggests that Spengler characterised the Western world as one whose "distinctive mark is an intense striving for infinity", while concurrently, the West was witnessing its own demise.[95] The imminent death Spengler predicted spoke to the existential dread of loss and obliteration felt by those who have so far been in global power.[96] Although Spengler did not favour one culture over the other,[97] his culturally deterministic approach influenced others, such as Samuel Huntington,[98] and earned him the position of "alt-right's cultural critic."[99]

[94] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc, 1926), 1-50.
[95] Matthew Rose, "The Anti-Christian Alt-Right," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, New York 281 (March 2018): 3-4.
[96] Rose, "Anti-Christian," 2.
[97] This is by no means to say that such privileging does not exist, or that racism is endemic to the alt-right. At the height of European imperialism, the idea of a superior "high culture" of the West was a convenient excuse to plunder and exploit the physical and cultural capital of the exotic, mysterious Orient. Now, the more overtly supremacist rhetoric has been obscured; yet, the notion of the predominance of Western culture remains a foundational concept in most educational institutes, where students are required to take courses that glorify the history of Western civilisation or Western literature while omitting information about the rest of the World or what happened to them in order for the West to reach its glory.
[98] In his infamous "The Clash of Civilizations?", Huntington claimed that there is an unbridgeable divide between the East and the West. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72 no.3 (Summer,1993): 22-49.
[99] Rose, "The Anti-Christian Alt-Right," 3.

According to Michelsen and De Orellana: "Resilience is an essential part of alt-right arguments for identity segregation [where] the innate qualities of the white European-America are framed as in need of defence against dissolution or corruption by cultural biological mixture."[100] The alt-right establishes resilience by vilifying all that is not Western. The rhetoric of resilience has had many victims of different religions and ethnicities. In its most current form, it presents by stereotyping the predominantly Muslim refugees as rapists and terrorists who will displace the white population and corrupt their culture.

The creation of a dichotomy between the West and the rest of the world is predicated on a religious and economic divide which is maintained by those who seek to maximally exploit the religious sentiments, livelihood, and fears of people. Although the alt-right movement is not fundamentally Christian, the Western civilisation that it rallies to protect is.[101] Rose alleges: "Spengler does not argue that there is no Western civilization without Christianity. He argues that there is no Christianity without Western civilization."[102] The correlation provides insight into the fearful mind of some Christians, believers in Jesus – a symbol of love, compassion and sacrifice – who accept, and even support, harsh border policies. The dissonance in the attitudes and beliefs of some Christians is a continuing political concern of many artists, as is evidenced in this mural commentary on the alt-right-driven Trump presidency and its incarceration of children and families.[103]

[100] Nicholas Michelsen and Pablo De Orellana, "Discourses of resilience in the US alt-right," *Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses*, published online April 28, 2019: 8.
[101] Although there are alt-right movements in non-Christian countries that agree with the principle of cultural segregation and anti-immigration policies, this chapter focuses on the Western alt-right. Sitara Thobani, "Alt-Right with the Hindu-right: long distance nationalism and the perfection of Hindutva," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42, no. 5: 745-762.
[102] Rose, "The Anti-Christian Alt-Right," 3.
[103] Figure 3: Ian Pierce, a.k.a Artes Ekeko, *Mural Arts Philadelphia*, nine hundred square foot mural at 2536 Front Street in the Fairhill section of North Philadelphia. Photographed by Steve Weinik for Mural Arts Philadelphia. Image retrieved from: https://www.phillymag.com/news/2018/07/17/immigration-mural-philadelphia-trump/#kszLCJmJJKxGHb9M.99

Figure 3: Ian Pierce, a.k.a Artes Ekeko, Mural Arts Philadelphia

What's In a Name?

> [Kristeva's] conception of art speaks to our own current crisis where the individual's symbolic and imaginary capacities have become atrophied: a growing absence of love, and an increasing presence of melancholia and depression, seem to be increasingly the lot of human beings in this *fin de siecle*.[104]

Sleeping Beauty is a curious title for the artwork, because it belongs to the familiar fairy tale of an innocent princess who was cursed to sleep until awoken by a kiss from her true love. The sculpture was exhibited in the Freud Museum in 2017 as part of Refugee Week. Uniquely, for this exhibition, the sculpture was displayed on a plinth that resembled an altar – a religious architectural element on which sacrificial offerings are made. On the wall behind *Sleeping Beauty*, looking over him, hung a painting of a palm tree. The display was

[104] John Lechte, "Art, Love, and Melancholy in the Work of Julia Kristeva," in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: the work of Julia Kristeva*, ed. John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (London: Routledge, 1990), 25.

significant, because the sacrifice of life is a central precept of all Abrahamic religions, drawn from the story in the Book of Genesis in which Abraham, to prove his love for God, accepts God's command to kill his own son. The palm tree is also a recurring symbol across Abrahamic religions.[105]

The element of sacrifice is particularly significant in Christianity, where "an imaginary identification with the death of Christ provide[s] a means of bringing death into the symbolic."[106] Death is thus subverted, and the anxiety over annihilation eased, through the promise of rebirth. However, this no longer applies to the alienated individual in modern society. Kristeva observed that "the depressives in Western capitalist societies" do not experience this symbolic death which promises rebirth, but a "partial death of the symbolic itself, manifest in the cutting of links with others, and an atrophied imaginary."[107]

Addressing the melancholic withdrawal in the West, which presents as apathy, disengagement and resignation, Lechte asks whether the West is not engaging in collective suicide.[108] Kristeva contends that it is, and proclaims that "a new loving world [must] surface from the eternal return of historical and mental cycles."[109] The name of Franko B's artwork implies the artist's agreement with Kristeva: one can envision a world where sacrifice is made redundant, and true love comes to awaken *Sleeping Beauty*. Furthermore, in accordance with both Rancière's theorisations and Kristeva's conception of art, Franko B prompts the

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[105] "The palm has been among all nations a symbol of victory: 'What is signified by the palm,' says St. Gregory the Great (Homily on Ezechiel 2:17), 'except the reward of victory?' The primitive Church used it to express the triumph of the Christian over death through the resurrection. 'The just shall flourish as the palm' (Ps 91:13), over the world, the flesh, the devil, by the general exercise of the Christian virtues. The palm is the symbol of those conflicts which are carried on between the flesh and the spirit (Origen, in Joan. xxi; Ambrose, in Luc. Vii)." W. Clarkson, "The significance of the Palm Trees," The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database, https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/clarkson/the_significance_of_the_palm_trees.htm
"A palm branch symbolizes the victory of the Jew against his accusers (Lev. R. 30:2): 'Dreaming of palm trees is a sign that one's sins have come to an end.'" "Palm," Jewish Virtual Library, 1998-2019 American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/palm "Palm trees also hold a sacred meaning in Islamic teachings and it is narrated that Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus under a date palm." "Christ, Mary and the significance of palm tree in Islam," *Al Arabiya* English, Dubai, December 24, 2018, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/life-style/art-and-culture/2018/12/24/Christ-Mary-and-the-significance-of-palm-tree-in-Islam.html

[106] Lechte, "Art, Love and Melancholy," 35.

[107] Quoted in Lechte, "Art, Love and Melancholy," 38.

[108] Resignation syndrome is a psychiatric condition where the patient completely disengages from life. Driven with "lack of options and a loss of hope," they withdraw from every activity, including eating and drinking, and allow themselves to die. Despite its rare occurrence, reports from Nauru indicate an outbreak of the resignation syndrome, specifically in children. Louise Newman, "What is resignation syndrome and why is it affecting refugee children?," *ABC News*, August 22, 2018, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-22/resignation-syndrome-and-why-is-it-affecting-refugee-children/10152444

[109] Quoted in Lechte, "Art, Love and Melancholy," 39-40.

audience to consider where they stand, and what values they align with, through his exploration of the politics of beauty.

CHAPTER THREE: *RED CARPET*

Overview

Rashid Rana (b. Lahore, 1968) was trained as a painter at the National College of Arts in Lahore between 1988 and 1992. Although Rana was trained in painting, and does identify as a painter, he does not paint.[110] Instead, Rana remixes and blends several elements, including miniature painting, sculpture, collage, and photography, to create a new body of art. He makes effective use of digital photography by removing images from their context in order to manoeuvre them in a way that re-envisions the image as a different reality – a technique that complicates and subverts dualities to bring into question preconceived notions about identity and culture. Rana's work problematises cultural and religious conflict, political rifts, social partitions, and the micro-level divide between the private and public selves.

Red Carpet (2007),[111] a five-piece series of collages on chromogenic print, embodies Rana's artistic premise. This chapter examines *Red Carpet I* (295x221 cm) and *Red Carpet IV* (305x206 cm). The works look like traditional Oriental carpets;[112] upon closer examination, they are discovered to be composed of photographs taken in a slaughterhouse. The domestic beauty of the Oriental carpet, a commodity renowned for its aesthetic and economic value, and the blood and body parts of animals scattered on the floor of the slaughterhouse, emblematise two stereotypical imaginations of "the East." Physical encounter with *Red Carpet* is not dissimilar to the experience of the stereotypical foreigner described by Kristeva: "The one who does not belong to the group, who is not '*one of them*,' the *other*."[113] The large scale of the work invites the viewers to come closer and discover its contents for themselves, an act that mimics "the discovery" of the non-Western world following the end of the fifteenth century. The larger work, the illusion, appeals to the audience's aesthetic sensibility, which, like the real carpets, can be acquired as a status symbol. Conversely, the reality it depicts in the smaller images: *halal* (permissible) slaughter, a practice considered by most Muslims a religious duty, repels.

Rashid Rana took some of the photographs at the slaughterhouse on 18 October, 2007. On the same day, Pakistani television was broadcasting the Karhaz bombing, ascribed

[110] "Rashid Rana 'In Conversation' with Jemima Montagu and Greg Hilty Part I," Youtube video, 16:58, August 15, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eu948jaHZc4
[111] *Red Carpet IV* was made over two years and Rana added *Red Carpet V* to the series in 2011.
[112] I acknowledge that "Oriental carpet" is a problematic phrasing; I will address the issue later in this chapter.
[113] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 95.

to Al Qaeda at the time. The suicide bomber targeted the procession of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, upon her return from exile. The first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan, Bhutto was the leader of the opposition Pakistan People's Party. The bombing killed over 200 people and left many more injured. Although such bombings were cited as components in justifications of the US's War on Terror, it was actually US-led imperialism, and its support for radical Islamic groups in the fight against the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, that led to the emergence of Al Qaida.[114] Rana commented that, while at first he was undecided on how to use the images, he decided to create *Red Carpet* after watching the massacre on television and noticing the similarities between blood and the body parts lying in the slaughterhouse and on the streets.[115]

According to Rana, witnessing the slaughter of animals in person and approaching it through the barrier of art – that is, looking at its representation on canvas or in a photograph or moving picture – are vastly distinct experiences, because art removes the audience from the experience of the act. The vicarious experience of the slaughter of animals is, therefore, less emotionally distressing. Rana has drawn parallels between watching and documenting animals being butchered on the assembly line and the massacre of human life as viewed through a screen, because the artwork is also a screen. He recounted his experience of initially being averse to the animals' butchery, then, after spending fifteen minutes in the slaughterhouse, becoming desensitised.[116] Similarly, the consumer of mass media becomes immune to images of death, and the brute reality of the killing of living beings on an industrial scale to satisfy other purposes.

By subverting the audience's anticipation of gazing at a beautiful artefact, Rana shocks them into a new kind of awareness. The audience is forced to absorb, when least expected, that which they had become accustomed to, or simply avoided, by placing a screen between themselves and acts of abject, ugly reality. By eliminating the intermediary between the object; abject, and the audience, Rana forces the audience out of the complacent zone of mere spectatorship. Moreover, he jolts them into confronting their own attitudes:

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[114] Rajen Harshe, "Unveiling the Ties between US Imperialism and Al Qaida," *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 51 (December 20–26, 2008): 67. Ishaq Tanoli, "10 years on, no headway in Karsaz blasts investigation," Dawn, updated October 1, 2017, https://www.dawn.com/news/1364489

[115] "Rashid Rana – Part 2 of 2," Youtube video, 2:40, "The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art," August 28, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1MuhuOe4zI

[116] "Rashid Rana - Part 1 of 2," Youtube video, 1:40, "The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art," August 28, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9WLQ-e_tvc "Rashid Rana – Part 2 of 2," Youtube video, 2:40, "The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art," August 28, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1MuhuOe4zI

> Wilful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance have remained the guiding spirit of Orientalism, it has survived defiantly and remained dominant when alternative information has been readily available. Orientalism is composed of what the West wishes to know, not of what can be known.[117]

Rashid Rana's intention in creating *Red Carpet* is not self-evident. The work can be read, prosaically, as a criticism of the meat industry, and more precariously, of *halal* slaughter. Such criticism may indeed be a subtext. The ambiguity of Rana's position on the subject matter reflects in *Red Carpet* the strength which Rancière ascribes to art. In a world where *halal* practices are scrutinised to propagate racism and bigotry, Rana encourages his audience to engage in self-reflection and consideration of their own reactions to, and interpretation of, *Red Carpet*.

The Collage of Carnage

> …what is particularly fascinating about contemporary collage is its relation to its radical history of trauma, disruption and desire now that these basic tenets have been played out, absorbed and normalised in wider Western culture.[118]

Rashid Rana's decision to use photographs of butchered animals, and not humans, to address the carnage of conflict that has been taking place in the East is significant. Humans often become habituated and desensitised to upsetting or shocking images after repeated exposure to them.[119] Our personal attitudes towards, and relationship with, subject matter is a determinant factor in whether we develop this response. The value we attribute to an image correlates with its affect.[120]

While the atrocities of war in the Middle East are widely documented and broadcast, slaughterhouses are enclosed spaces. The meat industry is thriving, but most people refrain from deliberating on the killing and processing of the animals they consume. This wilful ignorance can also be driven by conformity, where exposure can have a positive impact for

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[117] Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1999), 19.
[118] Craig Blanche ed., *Collage: Assembling Contemporary Art* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), 8.
[119] I will explore this phenomenon further in *Veil*.
[120] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003) Note that there are no page numbers in this online publication.
https://monoskop.org/images/a/a6/Sontag_Susan_2003_Regarding_the_Pain_of_Others.pdf
Sontag notes one exception as the depictions of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

some change.[121] Rana's use of graphic photo-imagery is imbued with transformative intent in this regard; Sontag contends that: "photographs are a means of making 'real' (or more real) matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore."[122]

It is more difficult to surmount conformity when individuals believe that they have no agency. Desensitisation and a lack of imagination produce apathy, which manifests as conformity. Acknowledging the limited human capacity for affection, Sontag suggests that the primary role of images of death and suffering is to prompt their audience "to examine the rationalizations for mass suffering offered by established powers." They ask: "Who caused what the picture shows? Who is responsible? Is it excusable? Was it inevitable?" She adds:

> someone who accepts that in the world as currently divided war can become inevitable, and even just, might reply that the photographs supply no evidence, none at all, for renouncing war.[123]

Rana's deliberate selection of animals for the images of carnage challenges the binary understanding of the world by bringing forth attitudes implicitly held by its audience.[124] I indicated in the previous chapter that a dichotomous conceptualisation of the world is harmful and detrimental. A binary view of the world not only serves an ideology that thrives on hatred and fear; it also falls short of providing a real understanding of either side of the divide. *Red Carpet*, referred to in various online texts as an Oriental carpet, reveals one problem with conceptualising the Orient, which consists of "the great civilizations to the East of the West: Islam, China, India and Japan," as being of one single essence.[125]

The absurdity of amassing such a wide spectrum of peoples under one elusive title is evidently an insult, as Rana shows. By evoking the religious conflicts, particularly pervading meat consumption, in the "the Orient," Rana brings into question identity and territory. The Indian subcontinent was partitioned by the British colonisers in 1947, beginning a process of

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[121] This is evidenced by the reactions from the public to the demonstrations of Anonymous for the Voiceless, an animal rights activist group who display footage from the processing plants of the meat industry in the streets, among other activisms. Toby McCasker, "'Cube of truth': Anonymous hit streets with violent footage of animal farming," *The Guardian*, January 31, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/31/cube-of-truth-anonymous-hit-streets-with-violent-footage-of-animal-farming

[122] Sontag, *Regarding*.

[123] Sontag, *Regarding*.

[124] A study conducted in Malaysia in 2019 on "the role of Christianity and Islam in explaining prejudice against asylum seekers" found that "for classical explicit prejudice, the effect was strongest from Muslim toward Christian asylum seekers. Conversely, for implicit prejudice, the reverse was true: The effect was strongest from Christian toward Muslim asylum seekers." Misha Mei Cowling and Joel R. Anderson, "The Role of Christianity and Islam in Explaining Prejudice against Asylum Seekers: Evidence from Malaysia," *The International Journal for The Psychology of Religion* 29, no. 2 (2019): 108.

[125] Sardar, *Orientalism*, 2.

violent conflict and resettlement. Although, "[f]or a long time, scholarly work on Partition dealt with it as a ruptural 'event,'"[126] contemporary scholars "consider Partition as the beginning of a process of 'nationalisation' of disparate peoples, of folding multiple locations and contexts into the idea of the nation as a moral and political 'community.'" The process was inherently violent, involving the coercion and domination of those disparate people who were disbarred from contributing to the conception and shaping of this newborn nation's moral consciousness and identity.[127]

Similarly, by its very nature, the creation of a collage such as *Red Carpet* necessitates the process of disruption and destruction: it involves tearing and cutting, rupture and violation, and slicing of separate images, only to piece them together into a new whole. The alterations made to the image are akin to existence: as the gashes and lacerations that are left behind only underline the disruption and transgression that overwhelm contemporary being. Fragmentation, multiplicity, and contradiction are the essence of collage, where distinct elements blend together, their interrelation complicating reality. No component, on its own, is the same as the whole, which itself is *imagined* through its constitutes.[128]

A collage is not a pure, distinct image. Rather, it is a failed fusion, often of conflicting elements. It corresponds with the complexities of contemporary life, where there is no true belonging, and where intersubjectivity proclaims the impossibility of consigning anything, even oneself, to any single category. Kristeva suggests that individuals attain a sense of self through a process of elimination where they observe and reject others in order to determine who they are not; therefore, the self is defined in, and by, opposition to the Other. When this process is hindered by some dissolution of the distinction between the self and the other, it forms into a rejection/negation of the abject and its blurring of boundaries and liminalities.[129]

The perception of the Orient as a homogenous entity that is fundamentally disparate from the "self," as conceived by the "foreigner," contributes to desensitisation to the suffering of the Other. The lack of a sense of personal relevance, at best, preserves the status quo where the conflicts within the region are considered "their problem" or confirm prejudices about the Orient as cruel, barbaric and backward. This vision, combined with relative privilege and conformity, breeds bigotry and racism. Rana's portrayal of the

[126] Adeem Suhail and Ameem Lutfi, "Our City, Your Crisis: The Baloch of Karachi and the Partition of British India," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, no. 4: 892.
[127] Suhail and Lutfi, "Our City, Your Crisis," 892-893.
[128] Blanche, *Collage*, 8-20.
[129] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 9-13.

aftermath of forced dissolution of space in "the Orient" calls on the audience to question the comfortable distance they hold between themselves and the Other. Rana has moved the carpet from the ground to the wall, replaced its weave with the collage, and replaced its design and geometric motifs with slaughter. The soft, variegated field of pinks of *Red Carpet* is the composite colour of the blood and body parts of butchered animals. Yet it symbolises the land, on which, and for which, human blood has been spilling for decades. The soil soaks up the blood, but Rana does not allow the beautiful artefact, which would be laid on the ground and covered up, to hide its reality: a collage of carnage spread under the feet of the powerful and privileged.

Eat the Refugees

The trampling underfoot of the Oriental, the Other, by Western conquerors, alluded to by *Red Carpet*, has its genesis in the original "Holy war" ideologies of the Middle Ages. Sardar traces the origins of Orientalism back to the sixteenth century, when the notion of the West first began to replace Christianity as the unifying element. In accordance with the agenda of the Crusaders, the Muslims were represented as an inversion of what would later become "the West": "evil and depraved, licentious and barbaric, ignorant and stupid, unclean and inferior, monstrous and ugly, fanatical and violent."[130] Orientalism expanded towards the end of the fifteenth century, and, during "the Age of Discovery", the ideologies of the "Holy war" were replaced with the commercial exploration of the world for profit. Colonial pursuits expanded and adjusted the image to serve their own needs.[131] The Orient, which came to encompass India, China, and Japan, was imagined and represented "as an unfathomable, exotic and erotic place where mysteries dwell and cruel and barbaric scenes are staged."[132]

Accounts of "the imaginary Orient" were disseminated primarily through literary works by scholars, travel writers, poets and playwrights, as well as by visual depictions of the Orient.[133] One product of this echo-chamber is *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827) by Delacroix, which was inspired by Lord Byron's eponymous poem.[134] The painting depicts the last living moments of the last king of Assyria, who, upon receiving news of his defeat, orders his slaves to gather his most valuable possessions, horses, and concubines to his

[130] Sardar, *Orientalism*, 2.
[131] Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India, and 'the mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.
[132] Sardar, *Orientalism*, 3.
[133] Sardar, *Orientalism*, 42-49. Linda Nöchlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 33-59.
[134] Sardar, *Orientalism*, 46.

bedchambers and to have them killed, before he kills himself. The despot watches the scene with an indifferent expression, lying on his bed, while his slaves stab the naked concubines and horses.[135]

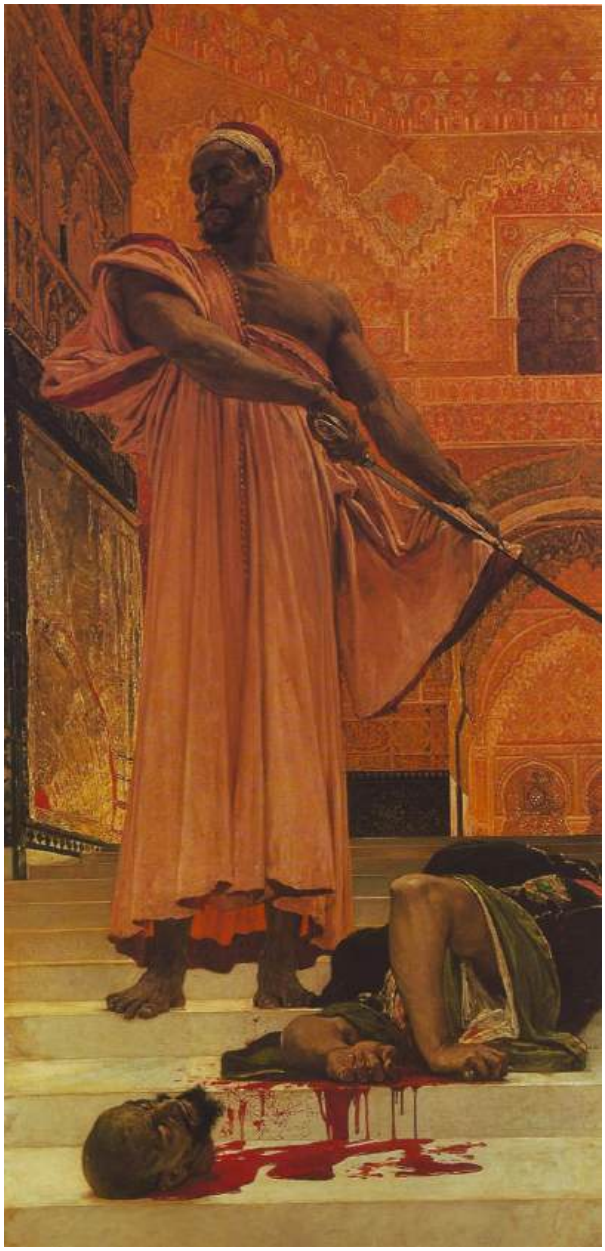

Figure 4: Henri Regnault, *Summary Execution under the Moorish Kings of Grenada*

Sardanapalus's apathetic disengagement from the brutality of the scene parallels that of the executioner in Henri Regnault's *A Summary Execution Under the Moorish Kings of*

[135] The brutality of the scene is amalgamated with eroticism; "the concubines are dying in a state of sexual ecstasy, their death is represented as an exotic spectacle, observed both by Sardanapalus and us." Sardar, *Orientalism*, 46. Sardar notes "symbolically, the violent and barbaric Muslim male and the sensual, passive female come together to represent the perfect Orient of Western perception: they fuse together to produce a concrete image of sexuality and despotism and thus inferiority." Sardar, *Orientalism*, 48. Next chapter will explore this issue further.

Granada (1870).[136] The painting depicts an executioner looking indifferently at the decapitated man whom he has freshly killed, while wiping his sword. He has a strong black body, and shares similar features with the dead man, "suggesting fratricide."[137] Unlike Delacroix, Regnault had first-hand experience of the Orient. In fact, the painting was produced in Granada, where Regnault travelled with the "aim to depict the real Moors in the way they used to be, rich and great, both terrifying and voluptuous, the ones that are to be found only in past history." [138]

Regnault's insistence on representing the Oriental as he imagined, even in the presence of contradictory evidence, might be an artistic choice. However, his inclination is symptomatic of the tendency in the West, prevalent to this day, to propagate a vision of the Orient, and more specifically, of Islam, that would reaffirm its preconceptualisations. Further, Regnault's depiction of the Moorish executioner is not dissimilar from the portrayal of Muslim men today by right-wing Western media. Both Delacroix's and Regnault's paintings imply an inherent Middle Eastern affinity with violence, blood, and slaughter. This implication, which has pervaded the discourse against Islam for centuries, often manifests itself in the West's scrutiny of *halal*.

The slaughtering practices of Islam have been cited in attacks on Muslims and propaganda that depict the Islamic world as barbaric and regressive. Mukherjee explains: "Just as Chinese restaurants have been long stereotyped for serving dog and calling it chicken, Halal-phobes have historically conjured up gruesome tales of rabid imams and fundamentalists slaughtering livestock in their bathtubs."[139] Islamic law dictates that Muslims can eat animals only if they are killed in a certain way. The process of Z*abiha* (ritual sacrifice) involves cutting through the neck of the animal in one single motion with a razor-sharp blade. The animal is not allowed to see the blade before its death and must be fully conscious before, and fully unconscious after, the sacrifice. Although various stunning techniques, mechanical blades, and assembly-lines are required by law in some countries, this is not favoured under Islamic law.

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[136] Figure 4: Henri Regnault, *Summary Execution under the Moorish Kings of Grenada*, 1870, oil on canvas, 301x143cm, Musee d'Orsay. Image retrieved from: *https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henri_regnault_maures_grena.jpg*

[137] Sardar, *Orientalism*, 48.

[138] Lynne Thornton, *The Orientalists: Painter-Travellers* (Paris: Acr Edition, 2009), 152.

[139] S. Romi Mukherjee, "Global Halal: Meat, Money, and Religion," *Religions* 5 (2014): 36.

"Over the last decade, the debate on calculus of the animal's pain in halal food production…mobilized animal rights activists and also anti-Muslim xenophobes who conveniently instrumentalize 'animal welfare' in the name of their political interests."[140] While some extremists, like far-right politician Pauline Hanson, explicitly condemned the religion and religious by equating buying halal food with "funding terrorism" and "supporting the Islamisation of Australia,"[141] others were more subtle. A large portion of Europe, where the religious slaughtering practices of a minority had been debated using the same rhetoric in the past (a process which contributed to the Holocaust)[142] devised procedures "to manage and regulate Halal." Australia and the US sanctioned ritual slaughter, "while simultaneously making appeals to human[e] practices."[143]

The reanimation of debates over *halal* – and *hijab* - in the last decade is not coincidental. In her investigation of state racism and anti-terrorist legislation in the US, Bhattacharayya observes that, before the War on Terror, US politicians merely exploited the pre-existing anti-migrant attitudes among the public for personal political benefit. This changed after 9/11: public discussions of legislative change for anti-terrorism measures were used to create an image of "specific migrant monsters," which was also a central theme in anti-immigration laws. Her study concludes that:

> the public presentation and debating of proposed legislation itself become[s] part of the cultural battle around the issue. Arguably, the introduction of such proposals in itself serve[s] as a significant component of the demonization of the target groups.[144]

Debates that emphasise animal suffering under the hands of Muslims, commanded by Allah, underhandedly feed into a racist agenda. Unfortunately, this sly strategy is not discerned by some Western populations. Mukherjee asserts that "while Halal phobia may certainly be the product of anti-Muslim sentiment, it is also the result of the non-Muslim community's wincing (carnivores included) at the knife wielding, throat cutting,

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[140] Mukherjee "Global Halal," 32.
[141] Loulla-Mae Elefhtheriou-Smith, "Australian senator Pauline Hanson wins backing for clearer halal labelling on food," *Independent*, June 27, 2017, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/australia-senator-pauline-hanson-halal-label-food-muslim-one-nation-islam-slaughter-certified-a7810776.html
[142] Dorothee Brantz, "Stunning Bodies: Animal Slaughter, Judaism, and the Meaning of Humanity in Imperial Germany," *Central European History* 35, no.2 (2002): 167-194.
[143] Mukherjee, "Global Halal," 34.
[144] Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Dangerous Brown Men: exploiting sex, violence and feminism in the war on terror* (London: Zed Books), 79.

'exsanguinaters' of *zabiha*."[145] It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss whether *halal* slaughter, or meat consumption in general, is moral. Meat is of foundational value to Muslims and will plausibly remain so for at least some part of the population. Yet, Foltz notes:

> Muslims are not prominent participants in animal rights discussions today, but that may be at least partly due to the fact that much of the Muslim world is so beset by all manner of injustices between humans that it is hard to look beyond the concerns of our own species.[146]

Red Carpet illustrates Foltz's point. While the West is debating whether *halal* slaughter is ethical, thousands of Muslims and Others are being murdered and tortured, either directly, by Western military actions, or as a result of a Western colonialist and imperialist agenda. Even more ironic is the specific controversy around whether to stun the animal (a process that renders the animal immobile and unconscious) before killing it. When proposed as a compassionate alternative in 1886 in Imperial Germany, stunning was presented as "a powerful concept because it suggested a gradual less violent death."[147] In the light of Kristeva's description of "the depressive Western" experiencing a partial death, the parallel between the animals and humanity becomes palpable.

This point was made explicit in a performance piece by the Center for Political Beauty, a collective of activists and artists based in Germany who engage in political performance art. Their "basic understanding is that the legacy of the Holocaust is rendered void by political apathy, the rejection of refugees and cowardice."[148] The group staged *Eating Refugees* in 2016, in "celebration" of the Turkey-EU deal, which was effectively a deterrence policy. The countries agreed that Syrian refugees who reached Greece (Europe) would be returned to Turkey. *Eating Refugees* was planned as a re-enactment of the Roman capital punishment *Damnatio ad bestias*, for which the group built an arena in the middle of Berlin. They then searched for refugees who would volunteer to be eaten alive by four tigers, which they transported from Libya. Mai Skaf, an actress from Syria, volunteered. She had fled her

[145] Mukherjee "Global Halal," 33.
[146] Richard C. Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 4.
[147] Brantz, "Stunning Bodies," 173.
[148] Center for Political Beauty. 2009-2019. https://politicalbeauty.com/about.html

country to escape persecution for her defiance of Bashar al-Assad, becoming a refugee in France.[149]

On the day when Skaf planned to walk into the arena, the group released a statement, supposedly from the tigers, where they declared their refusal to be "the sad performers of your doom."[150] The Center stated: "To the artists this is a brutal game with the fates of refugees. They show the EU and the German federal government as modern Roman emperors, forcing people to flee into the arena of a struggle for survival."[151] Literary accounts indicate that *Damnatio ad bestias*, a form of entertainment for the common people, was imposed by Romans to execute Christians.[152] By inverting the roles of the persecutor and the persecuted in what would be a violent spectacle, the Center for Political Beauty demonstrates the hypocrisy of Western/Christian exclusionism, as does Rashid Rana in *Red Carpet*.

In its review of Rana's retrospective exhibition *Labyrinth of Reflections: The Art of Rashid Rana 1992-2012*,[153] Art Now wrote: "we are destined – or doomed to accept conflict, of political, cultural, societal and personal nature, in order to survive."[154] It is indeed our collective prerogative to decide whether pluralism will be our doom. In *How To Avoid the Clash of Civilizations?*, Jonathan Sacks proposes that "it was revolutionary for saying that every human being is in the image of God, and God told Abraham and Sarah to be different to teach all of us the dignity of difference."[155] Rana's *Red Carpet* challenges its audience to revolt in our image of each other, and ourselves, placing it firmly in keeping with Rancière's contention that art should provoke and promote dissent, internally and externally.

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[149] "Die erste Kandidatin stellt sich vor," Youtube video, 17:05, "Zentrum für Politische Schönheit," June 21, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfLLnirY5ak
[150] Center for Political Beauty. 2009-2019. https://politicalbeauty.com/eatingrefugees.html
[151] Bhavya Dore, "Why one woman plans to walk into a cage of tigers in the middle of Berlin," *The Wire*, June 28, 2016, https://thewire.in/politics/why-one-woman-plans-to-walk-into-a-cage-of-tigers-in-the-middle-of-berlin
[152] Cornelius Tacitus, The Annals, ed. Alfred Church and William Jackson Brodribb (New York: Random House, 1942), Annal 15.44. Accessed online, June 17, 2019, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi1351.phi005.perseus-eng1:15.44
[153] The exhibition opened on 18 February, at Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi.
[154] "A walk in the art of Rashid Rana," *Art Now*, http://www.artnowpakistan.com/a-walk-in-the-art-of-rashid-rana/
[155] Jonathan Sacks, "The Dignity of Difference: Avoiding the Clash of Civilizations," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 7 iss.2: 37.

CHAPTER FOUR: *VEIL*

Overview

Rashid Rana's *Veil* series (2004) consists of six acrylic mounted chromogenic prints. This chapter takes into consideration *Veil I*, *II*, and *III*, which have single figures in them.[156] Each work, measuring 51x51cm, is a pixelated image of an unidentified person dressed in a burqa. The figure is assumed to be a woman, because the burqa, which covers the entire face and body, with a mesh window across the eyes that allows the individual to see but not be seen, is worn only by women.[157] The artworks frame the women's head and shoulders as a portrait would if her face were visible. The portraits of the women, as well as the negative space around them, are composed of still images from heterosexual hardcore pornographic films, focusing largely on women's body parts or faces in sexual acts. Men are absent, except for their phalluses. None of the individuals is identified. Rana did not exhibit the *Veil* series in Pakistan, where pornography is illegal, "for fear of the media making a story out of it," and because he didn't "want any trouble from extremists, no matter how few."[158] In the following discussion, I will investigate *Veil* in the light of Orientalism and Romanticism, evidenced in the work of Manet and Ingres, and draw correlations with Arahmaiani's performance *Offerings from A to Z* (1996).

At first glance, *Veil* seems to represent two expressions of female sexuality that radically oppose each other: while pornography exposes the female body and its sexuality, the burqa, a symbol of modesty, attempts to eliminate any sexual associations by virtually erasing the female figure. On a broader level, both pornography and veiling have been vehemently contested as both emancipatory and oppressive practices engaged by, and/or imposed on, women. Despite the apparent dichotomy in the practices, and in relation to the depictions of women, Rana's intention for *Veil* is not to consolidate a dualistic conceptualisation of the world and its people. Instead, Riddhi Doshi suggests, "by juxtaposing the two ideas, Rana critique[s] negative stereotypes of women, both the sexual objectification inherent in pornography and the stereotypical image of women from the

[156] Rashid Rana added the other three works to the series in 2007.
[157] The practice of veiling pre-dates Islam, and has never been confined to Muslim women; however, because of the portrayal of Muslim women by the public media veiling today is only associated with Islam.
[158] Barbara Pollack, "Nudity in contemporary art is tolerated increasingly in countries where it wasn't in the past," *ARTnews*, January 1, 2010, http://www.artnews.com/2010/12/01/removing-the-veil/

Islamic world constructed by the media."[159] I argue that Rana's critique of the sexual objectification of women is evidenced in, but not restricted to, pornography; and his critique of the representation of women, while including, is not limited to, those from the Islamic world.

Like *Red Carpet*, *Veil* as a series of collages generates dual imagery. However, by the very act of composing the larger images from ones that are apparently of contradictory nature, Rana undermines such duality. Instead, he emphasises the commonalities between the two depictions: nameless women, whose bodies have been subject to debate and exploitation by various ideologies and their institutional and cultural regulatory forces. Rana's aim for *Veil* is to encourage a critique of the "so-called machinery of truth from which these images are born." He asserts:

> Today, every image, idea, and truth – whether in ancient mythology or the news of the day – encompasses its opposite within itself. We live in a state of duality…My works are an effort to represent this complexity and transcend the bold divisions that people create in their perceptions.[160]

Although the *Veil* series strictly depicts women, it illustrates the phallocentric world, for which Rana's decision to portray women wearing the burqa, which cover the body head-to-toe, concealing also the eyes, plays a vital role. Deriving from Lacan's theorisations, Peggy Phelan notes that reciprocal gazes are fundamental for one's sense of the self. Rather than a passive act, Phelan explains that viewing the other is a type of social self-recreation, in the act of which one re-presents oneself. She adds, citing the works of Copjec and Rose, that "one always locates one's own image in an image of the other *and*, one always locates the other in one's own image."[161]

Rana's purposeful concealment of the veiled women's eyes denies the audience any immediate means of identification with them. The lack of a reciprocal gaze positions the women as the object, rather than the subject, of the audience's attention. This effect is further amplified by the pornographic stills where women are more overtly exhibited as objects; the fetishisation of their body parts indicates a convolution of the object/subject position of

[159] Riddhi Doshi, "Rashid Rana: lifting the veil," *Hindustan Times*, April 1, 2012, https://www.hindustantimes.com/art-and-culture/rashid-rana-lifting-the-veil/story-QvJUDZUQDtOA5jYLveso0J.html
[160] Doshi, "Rashid Rana: lifting the veil."
[161] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 18-19. Emphasis in original.

women at large. The repetitive images of body parts highlights and problematises the sexualisation of the female body, which is equally evident in the stills as well as the obscured figure of the larger representation. At the same time, Rana prompts the audience to identify with the overall figure by presenting it as life-sized, and by use of a pink, flesh-coloured palette, to evoke empathy with the figure as one of a human being, before closer inspection reveals its fragmented components.

Cherem observes that contemporary art from the Muslim world appeals to two audiences who hold divergent positions regarding the status of the female body and its ambivalent representation and visibility in the work, leading to a tendency to analyse the art through binary opposites.[162] Rantanen's study of the non-documentary burqa pictures on the internet affirms the antithetical interpretations of the in/visibility of the bodies of Muslim women. The findings indicate that the burqa is perceived by the general public as a powerful symbol of inequality; a perception that can be "undermine[d] by representing the West in a one-sided way, for example, that the West is decadent and corrupt."[163] The accessibility of pornography reinforces this perspective. As Rana observes: "men in my part of the world have a very distorted image of the Western woman. They imagine that if they would land in Europe or America, there would be people having sex in the parks."[164]

Although the *Veil* series allows for all interpretations outlined, Rana's technique makes it evident that the disparate representations of the women are the product of the conceptualisation, prevalent both in the Western and non-Western imagination, of the female body primarily and indispensably as a sexual entity. Cherem warns against a less hostile interpretation, which he argues has become the de facto reading of artworks that portray Muslim women, whether they are visible or covered, "a stance toward emancipation and even empowerment," even when "the iconography often allows for a completely opposite reading."[165] Rana's work emphasises that, regardless of whether a woman's apparel is modest or not, social and religious forces convert a woman's body into a site of conflict and subsequently diminish her to an object status. Phelan argues that, as one sees oneself reflected in the other, while also seeing the other in oneself, "the degradation of one necessitates the

[162] Youssef Cherem, "The Absent Subversion, the Silent Transgression: The Voice and the Silence of the Body in Some Contemporary Iranian and Arab Artists," *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 85, no. 4: 302.
[163] Pekka Rantanen. "Non Documentary Burqa Pictures on the Internet: Ambivalence and the politics of representation." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 8, no. 3: 335.
[164] Pollack, "Nudity in Contemporary Art."
[165] Cherem, "The Absent Subversion," 302.

degradation of the other."[166] The critique Rana offers in *Veil* is thus not of the women portrayed, or the practices of veiling or pornography in themselves, but is a reflection on "an economy of cultural goods that produces not only commodities for consumption, but also consumers for those goods."[167] Viewing the *Veil* brings to mind Foucault's observation:

> What is peculiar to modern societies, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the* secret.[168]

Offerings

> Paradoxical as it may seem, pornography does not reveal Woman, though in it Woman reveals all, because Woman does not disclose herself as subject in pornography. On the contrary, it is Man who is revealed in her objectification. For the Woman he observes is the objectification of his idea. She is after all Man-made: not a real prostitute, but a product of the masculine imagination.[169]

The Luncheon on the Grass (1863) by Edouard Manets depicts a picnic shared in an open field by two well-dressed men and two women. One of the women is nude, the other bathing, suggesting that they are prostitutes. Exhibited at the Salon des Refusés, after it was rejected by the official Salon, the painting scandalized the public, who were accustomed to depictions of French women that befitted the bourgeois codes of femininity wherein respectability was identified with domesticity, manifest in depictions of women chaperoned in public. In contrast, "women associated with the streets, pleasure and money signified as sexuality and figured as prostitution."[170] In defence of Manet, Emile Zola insisted that the

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[166] Phelan, *Unmarked*, 7.
[167] Lynda Nead, *The female nude: art, obscenity, and sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), 83.
"Data reveal six of the top eight porn-searching countries are Muslim states… Pakistan tops the list at number one." Carrie Weisman, "Why porn is exploding in the Middle East," *salon*, January 12, 2015, https://www.salon.com/2015/01/15/why_porn_is_exploding_in_the_middle_east_partner/
[168] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol:1 An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 35. Emphasis in original.
[169] Geraldine Finn, "Patriarchy and pleasure: the pornographic eye/I," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 9, no. 1-2 (1985): 83.
[170] Richard Kendall and Griselda Pollock, ed., *Dealing with Degas: representations of women and the politics of vision* (London: Pandora, 1992), 111.

painting was devoid of any visual allusion, and the nude woman was merely there as an excuse for the artist to paint some flesh.[171]

Zola's defence, which reduced the female body to an object of no other significance than as the recipient of the audience's appreciation, exemplifies the "sacred frontier" of high culture outlined by Bourdieu, who asserts that the high culture preferences a Kantian enjoyment of aesthetics whilst denying "lower, coarse, vulgar and venal pleasure."[172] However, Bourdieu highlights, this distinction is not inherent to the objects that are deemed to be of high culture. Rather, it is the "social subjects, classified by their classifications, [who] distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make."[173]

The reception of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's contemporaneous painting *Turkish Bath* (1852-1862),[174] which was rather uneventful, demonstrates how high culture is determined not by subject matter but by the attitudes of the social class towards it. *Turkish Bath* depicts twenty-six nude women, "in various stages of ecstasy," in a Turkish bath.[175] The *tondo* format of the painting resembles a keyhole, through which the voyeur; the audience, is looking into the private space. The gaze is unidirectional, as "none of the women look out or look at each other." The obliviousness, as well as the sheer number of the women, some of whom are depicted in inviting poses, proclaiming, Sardar notes, "come and conquer us!" bears a striking resemblance to the women in Rana's *Veil*.

[171] Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, "Metaphors of Power and the Powers of Metaphor: Zola, Manet and the Art of Portraiture," *Nineteenth Century Contexts* 21, no. 3, 446.
[172] Bourdieu, *Distinctions*, 7.
[173] Bourdieu, *Distinctions*, 4.
[174] Figure 5: Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *The Turkish Bath*, 1862, oil on canvas on wood, h:108cm w:108cm d: 110 cm, Louvre Museum. Image retrieved from: https://www.art-prints-on-demand.com/a/jean-auguste-dominique-ingres/the-turkish-bath-tondo.html&KK_COLLECT_ID=335
[175] Sardar, *Orientalism*, 47.

Figure 5: Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *The Turkish Bath*

It would be naïve to assume that *Turkish Bath* was readily accepted as high culture because, unlike Manet's painting, it depicts a scene where nudity is commonplace, and thus is not sexually charged. On the contrary, Ingres's painting epitomises the representation of Oriental women as passive and submissive, yet highly sexualised "fairies"; an image to accompany that of the violent Oriental men discussed in the previous chapter.[176] I explored in the previous chapter how the representation of the Oriental men as inferior to their Western counterparts justified the colonialist agenda. The overly sexualised and permissive representation of Oriental women, which came to be identified with the East, served the same purpose.

Investigating nineteenth century French Romantic authors' depictions of the Orient, Lowe notes:

> The Orient is frequently represented as a female figure, and the narrative of Occident is figured in the rhetorical framework of the romantic quest;

[176] Naji Oueijan, "Sexualizing the Orient," *Prism(s): Essays in Romanticism* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1.

> the female Orient is a metonymical reduction of what is different from and desired by the masculine European subjects.[177]

Lowe emphasises that the feminised representation of the Orient corresponds to a European masculinity that is just as ascribed; a construction that is "based upon the notion of masculine desire."[178] Lowe's analysis explains why Ingres's painting readily found its place in the sacred domain of Western high culture which rejected a similar depiction of women in the Western context. Further, it demonstrates why the gender or sexual orientation of the artist is irrelevant to the perception and representation of the Orient as a sexualised Other, which is determined by cultural hegemony.

Ingres's *Turkish Bath* was highly inspired by the depictions of the baths by Lady Mary Montagu, who was allowed entry to the baths due to her status as the wife of a diplomat. Her letters indicate that, despite their insistence, Lady Mary refused to join the bathers, which, along with her status as an elite Western foreigner, compounded her position as the voyeur. Leeks suggests that Lady Mary's depictions of the Oriental, viewed from the eyes of imperialism, are thus representative of the "notion of Western superiority [that] objectifies the Eastern women and subjects them to investigation, even though that investigation is not connected with the author's sexual desire."[179] The impetus to conquer and exploit, that characterises both imperialism[180] and the construct of masculinity based on masculine desire, is manifest in the pornographic stills that make up the *Veil*.

Addressing Bourdieu's appeal to transgress the "sacred" frontier to reintegrate high, "legitimate" forms of culture with mass culture, Nead warns against a levelling of nude female bodies, which are abundant across both cultures, as "identical manifestations of 'sexist' culture."[181] She argues that drawing a parallel between the depictions of women by Ingres and the stills from Rana's *Veil*, as I have, would be mistaken, because Bourdieu acknowledges that "cultural differences register distinction."[182] Nead's argument has some validity, also because the nude male form is likewise a frequent subject in Western fine art; however, her limited Eurocentric perspective fails to account for both the depictions and the reception of the Other in this context, and its repercussions in the East. In relation, it fails to

[177] Lisa Lowe, "Nationalism and Exoticism," in *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 214.
[178] Lowe, "Exoticism," 215.
[179] Wendy Leeks, "Ingres Other-Wise," *Oxford Art Journal* 9, no. 1 (1986): 31.
[180] Used in this context interchangeably with colonialism.
[181] Nead, *The female Nude*, 85.
[182] Nead, *The female Nude*, 85.

explain the perception of Western or Westernised women in some, but not limited to,[183] Islamic states as "fair-game," an impression, Rana notes, that is amplified by access to pornography. It also fails to consider how the nineteenth century representations of the Other are still relevant in the construction and dissemination of a false consciousness that serves the interests of today's elites.

Marcuse notes that the death of Romanticism, corresponding with the technological advancements of the nineteenth and twentieth century, was observed not only in artistic styles but also in the human condition, which suffered under the mechanisation of labour. The proliferation of factories and urbanization, by reducing the plenitude of things from which one can obtain pleasure, de-eroticised the individual, thereby reducing eroticism to a localised sexuality. Technological advancement also led to the process of "desublimation of higher culture" whereby "the oppositional, alien, and transcendent elements in the higher culture," were liquidated "through their wholesale incorporation into the established order, through their reproduction and display on a massive scale."[184] Marcuse notes that these "sublimations" were instruments of social cohesion and control, which intensified domination while extending liberty. Robinson explains: "The structural reduction reduces the distance between culture and the present reality, turning it into an appendage of advertisements and consumerism."[185]

Marcuse's study demonstrates that, although high culture is no longer reserved for the elites, its sublimation benefits the class whose domination was established by its predecessors; visual arts, in this context, depictions of the Other, were utilised to serve this agenda. Today, the pornography industry, its popularity and expansion evidencing the de-eroticisation of the individual and localised sexuality, which is visible in the stills in *Veil*, serves the same purpose. It is ironic, however, that the construct of masculinity advertised in pornography, which is predominantly based on aggression and dominance and not eroticism,

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[183] "Defendants who seek to introduce evidence of a victim's clothing do so to support their allegations that the victim contributed to her victimization. Because general societal attitudes are reflected in jurors, they are likely to believe and act on the believed that a woman can contribute to her victimization by the way she dresses. …Such inferences have been shown to be inaccurate". Theresa L. Lennon, Sharron J. Lennon and Kim K.P. Johnson, "Is Clothing Probative of Attitude or Intent-Implications for Rape and Sexual Harassment Cases," *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice* 11, iss. 2, article 3 (1993): 415.

[184] Herbert Marcuse, "The conquest of the unhappy consciousness: Repressive desublimation," *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/one-dimensional-man/index.htm Please note that there are no page numbers on this online publication.

[185] Andrew Robinson, "Herbert Marcuse: One Dimensional Man?," *Ceasefire Magazine*, October 22, 2010. https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-6-marcuse/

corresponds to the "conquests" that took place during the age of "discoveries" more accurately than to the nineteenth century Romantics.

Fantasies

Song: "It's one your favourite fantasies. The submissive Oriental woman, the cruel white man."[186]

Pornography perpetuates a binary and hierarchical representation of sexuality, which is as prevalent in the discourse of art history as in other subjects, including law, religion, medicine, and philosophy. The hierarchical difference between femininity and masculinity, which manifests in pornography in the often violent subordination of women, is not restricted to any one culture or religion.[187] In this sense, Finn asserts, pornography "is neither deviant nor perverse nor subversive of an authoritarian repressive sexual regime articulated from elsewhere…It is rather, just another instrument of that regime."[188] Finn highlights that pornography creates the female object as well as the male-subject, whose desire is shaped by the depictions of women in pornography, which itself is a product of a history of other men's desires, found across the register of visual culture. She argues that masculinity is a construction not "on the basis of men's real identity and difference," but one arising from an idealised difference "constituted most essentially in the cultural differentiation of Man from his Other."[189]

Further, the medium of pornography, being a visual one, fixes the status of the female as an object in it and protects the men from a real encounter; which would transform her into a whole being, rather than a passive object and a receptacle for male desire, dissolving the safe space within which the male can entertain his desire with no threat to his Ego.[190] The smaller images that compose *Veil* compare with those that weave *Red Carpet* in that they both depict scenes that transpire in a private space. Unlike slaughterhouses, pornography is accessible to the public, but is typically viewed in privacy, and in many parts of the world, not discussed. Both scenes are easier to process viewed through a lens and have a similar potential for desensitisation. Further, pornography follows an escalation model, where consumers pursue ever-harder material: most often depictions of verbal and physical violence

[186] David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 17, https://eportfolios.macaulay.cuny.edu/gillespie17/files/2017/10/Hwang-David-Henry-M-Butterfly.pdf
[187] Catherine Itzin, "Pornography and the construction of misogyny," *Journal of Sexual Aggression* 8, no. 3: 16.
[188] Finn, "Patriarchy and pleasure," 81.
[189] Finn, "Patriarchy and pleasure," 91.
[190] Finn, "Patriarchy and pleasure," 85.

and re-enactments of rape.[191] Exposure and habitation to pornography is two-fold: to the sexual activity itself, and the plot, or meaning.[192] An extensive study of the effects of pornography consumption on the viewer is not within the scope of this discussion. Still, some are important to note in deliberation of the visual and verbal descriptions of Muslim men provided in the previous chapter, which remain part of the discourse today: "increased callousness towards women, trivialization of rape as a criminal offense, distorted perception of sexuality."[193]

The outlined effects of pornography are not inherently found in the men and women of any specific religion, race, or ethnicity. However, the pornography industry that perpetuates the traditional masculine ideal, characterised by status achievement, aggression, limited emotional range, and, crucially, identification with control, dominance and power,[194] is directly correlated with war, which often seems to result from conflicts between these categories. Zürbriggen's study shows "rape and war are correlated because traditional (hegemonic) masculinity underlies, and is a cause of, both."[195] Arahmaiani, the only female artist discussed in this chapter, is a contemporary artist from Indonesia, whose performance *Offerings from A to Z* (1996), similarly to *Veil*, demonstrates how traditional masculinity, which can be guised under imperialism, nationalism, religion, or any other ideology or ideological apparatus, is directly related to the violence endured by women (and men) under these regimes.

Arahmaiani was born in 1961, in Bandung, Indonesia. She grew up listening to Quranic verses, told to her by her father, who was an ulema (a scholar in Islamic theology and law).[196] She lived her early years under the authoritarian New Order regime (1966–1998) which militarised the state and civil society.[197] The regime introduced new laws concerning

[191] Fabio D'Orlando, "The Demand for Pornography," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 12 no. 51 (2011):61.
[192] Bikram DasGupta, "Effects of Pornography on Sexual Beliefs and Behaviours," *North American Journal of Psychology* 19 no.2 (2017): 380.
[193] These effects are not gender-specific.
[194] Eileen L. Zurbriggen, "Rape, war, and the socialization of masculinity: Why our refusal to give up war ensures that rape cannot be eradicated," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 34 (2010): 538.
[195] Zürbriggen, "Rape, war," 538. Kelly's analysis of the alt-right, where she describes the War on Terror as a "masculinist fantasy" is a recommended read on this subject. Kelly, Annie. "The alt-right: reactionary rehabilitation for white masculinity." *Soundings* 66, iss.66: 68-78.
[196] Carla Bianpoen, Farah Wardani and Wulan Dirgantoro, *Indonesian women artists: the curtain opens* (Jakarta: Yayasan Senirupa Indonesia, 2007), 46.
[197] Marcus Mietzner, "Authoritarian elections, state capacity, and performance legitimacy: Phases of regime consolidation and decline in Suharto's Indonesia," *International Political Science Review* 39, no. 1: 85-87.

women and family, among which was a ban on polygyny,[198] to build a new national identity.[199] Visual propaganda depicting "iconic figures of female citizenship – omnipresent images of devoted wives, self-sacrificing mothers, and dutiful participants in the state's family-planning program, [were used] to fortify [state] control of both public and private spheres and to blur the distinctions between them."[200] Like Rana's *Veil*, Arahmaiani's *Offerings from A to Z*[201] complicates public/private spheres to demonstrate the violent ideological invasion of one's most private space; their bodies and sexualities.

Figure 6: Arahmaiani, *Offerings from A to Z*

Offerings from A to Z was realised in Chiang Mai, Thailand, at the Padaeng Crematorium. The performance began with Arahmaiani, dressed in a black robe, walking on a path. The path was laid between rows of guns directed towards her, dispersed among plates

[198] Dialmy notes that in Islamic mind, "polygyny is said to keep (men) from committing adultery." Abdessamad Dialmy, "Sexuality and Islam," *The European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care* 15, no. 3: 160-168.
[199] Suzanne Brenner, "Private Moralities in the Public Sphere: Democratization, Islam, and Gender in Indonesia." *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 113, no. 3 (September 2011): 482.
[200] Similar propaganda to use women for nation building and to give birth to more soldiers can be found across the world, proliferated especially in times of conflict. Brenner, "Private Moralities," 480.
[201] Arahmaiani, *Offerings from A to Z*, 1996, Performance at Pagaeng Crematorium, Thailand. Image retrieved from https://universes.art/en/nafas/articles/2003/arahmaiani/arahmaiani/img-04/ and Wulan Dirgantoro, "Arahmaiani: Challenging the Status Quo," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Inquiry* no.42 (Autumn/Winter 2016).

of offering. On it were photographs of women and heterosexual couples in erotic poses, and the body of a female mannequin. She stopped to sit in front of a photograph of a woman, whom she did not look at, before entering the Buddhist temple where she stood in front of the Buddha. The performance included the artist lying down "on the ground, covered with white sheets, blood-red liquid smeared on her lower parts, while to her left and right rows of guns were aimed at her."[202] She then lay on a stone plinth, which is either a table used to wash corpses, or a tomb,[203] "surrounded by black-and-white photographs of scantily dressed heterosexual couples in erotic poses."[204]

Arahmaiani's performance has multiple meanings. A woman's virginity is an extremely important concept in Islam, which must be "saved" until she is married so as to not bring shame on her family, a problem solved by some families by killing the women; a practice called "honour killings." On the other hand, men are encouraged to remain sexually active throughout their lives. Traditionally, men were entitled to own sexual slaves with no limit on numbers, regardless of whether they were married or not. Sexual slavery was prohibited with the advent of colonialism. However, prostitution is still practised in the Muslim world, and it is tied closely to the concept of virginity.[205] Dialmy asserts: "For the Islamic common sense, 'only the whore loses her virginity before marriage'. The prostitute is considered to be not only a woman who sells herself for money but one who first gave herself 'entirely' before marriage."[206] The role of poverty as a contributing factor in women's engagement with sex work cannot be stressed enough. However, in the Muslim context, many women become sex workers because they "lost" their virginity in the first place, most often as a result of incest and rape.[207] This is not because Muslim men are rapists, but because of our collective failure as humanity in recognising and reconciling the injustices we have been suffering under each other's hands.

The location of *Offerings from A to Z* adds another layer to the interpretation of the sacrificial elements in Arahmaiani's performance. Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist country and, unlike Abrahamic religions, Buddhism prohibits living sacrifice, and violence. Thailand also has a thriving sex industry and is a popular destination for sex tourism, which,

[202] Bianpoen, *Indonesian Women Artists*, 45.
[203] Wulan Dirgantoro, "Arahmaiani: Challenging the Status Quo," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Inquiry* no.42 (Autumn/Winter 2016): 25 and Bianpoen, *Indonesian Women Artists*, 45.
[204] Dirgantoro, "Arahmaiani," 25.
[205] Dialmy, "Sexuality and Islam," 161-162.
[206] Dialmy, "Sexuality and Islam," 164.
[207] Dialmy, "Sexuality and Islam," 164-165.

Ryan notes, juxtaposes a Western identity of individualism which confirms the self via sex, and a Thai sense of identity which pivots on family membership.[208] Lau explains that in the Theravada Buddhist society, "prostitution is deemed acceptable through the concept of karma and merit-making. Within this belief, a girl can show gratitude and gain merit by raising money to support her family." [209] The violence suffered by Thai women (and children) is not confined to the growing sex industry's demand for more bodies. Domestic violence is a rampant, but mostly unaddressed, problem. Due to the stigmatisation of wife abuse, Thai women hide their abuse by concealment, silence and isolation or other means of revision of events, in order to protect their own sense of self and safety, that of their family, and their husband's image, despite the fear and psychosomatic conditions that arise from such concealment.[210]

The fear, shame, and fear of shame, that motivates Thai women's self-censoring is a fundamental component in the veiling practice of Muslims. The hijab is an "attempt to limit all sexual desires, expression, and experience exclusively to the legal and sacred bounds of marriage."[211] However, it in fact is an indication that these desires do not recognise any boundaries when the subject is the woman's body, or, in the larger context, any body. I have demonstrated in this chapter how the sexualisation and feminisation of the Orient is a manifestation of the construct of traditional masculinity, used to justify the invasion of the land, culture, and people. The same construct is ubiquitous in pornography, as in other media of mass consumption, and it is presently invading and shaping both men's and women's minds and lives. Rashid Rana's *Veil* series is a demonstration of this phenomenon. In *The Object Stares Back*, James Elkins writes:

> Seeing is never complete – especially when the subject is charged with sexuality or with danger, it is impossible to see all of it or see it in a relaxed or measured way. Instead, our eyes jump from one place to the next, trying not to apprehend the whole.[212]

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[208] Chris Ryan, "Sex Tourism: Paradigms of Confusion?," in *Tourism and Sex: Culture, Commerce and Coercion*, ed. Stephen Cliff and Simon Carter (London: Pinter, 2000), 25.
[209] Carmen Lau, "Child prostitution in Thailand," *Journal of Child Health Care* 12, no. 2: 145.
[210] Nilubon Rujiraprasert, et al., "Disclosure of Wife Abuse among Northeastern Thai Women," *Thai Journal of Nursing Research* 13, no. 4 (October–December 2009): 332.
[211] Zahra Alghafli, Loren D. Marks, Trevan G. Hatch and Andrew H. Rose, "Veiling in Fear or in Faith? Meaning of the Hijab to Practicing Muslims Wives and Husbands in USA," *Marriage & Family Review* 53,7 (2017): 697.
[212] James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: on the nature of seeing*, 1st Harvest ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1997), 86-87.

Rana's *Veil*, by use of the technique of collage and repetition, circumvents any conscious or subconscious attempt to avoid comprehension of what the artist depicts, de-pictured: the individual, alienated from the Other and from themself, a condition which Marcuse observes is ever-worsening under the late capitalist system. He portrays women's identity as a mass of conflicting but overlapping perception: something defined by, and to be hidden from, the male gaze, while existing in service to the patriarchal view of femininity that is rooted in religious and capitalist ideologies.

CONCLUSION

This thesis investigated the insight offered by the selected artworks into contemporary social issues. The analysis was inspired by psychoanalytical, feminist, postcolonial, and Marxist theory. I have highlighted the problems identifiable in the artworks that are universal to the individual, exacerbated by late capitalism and the patriarchy. For this reason, I analysed the artworks by positioning them in the continuum of art history, and I examined similar artworks from different geopolitical and sociopolitical backgrounds. A central focus has been the convergence of ethics and aesthetics, along with the role of the abject in prompting the audience to a critical and affective engagement with the artworks. Based on Kristeva's theories, my study of the abject as the Other was critical in exploring Franko B's and Rashid Rana's interventionist comments on the marginalised sections of the society, and in proposing an alternative mode of existence that would prevent the continuation and reproduction of the struggles embodied in the artworks.

The body – be it human, or animal; visible, or invisible – is a central element in the artworks analysed in this thesis. In Franko B's *I Miss You!* and *Sleeping Beauty* and in Rashid Rana's *Red Carpet* and *Veil*, the bodies are on different ends of the aesthetic spectrum hierarchised by Kant and by theorists who advocate for the reincorporation of beauty into artworks. *Sleeping Beauty* is formally aligned with the ideal beauty identified by Kant, which he derived from the word "idea", that which is *universally available to all humanity*.[213] In contrast, *I Miss You!* is a purposefully grotesque exhibition of the artist's body: painted white, his belly pushing through space, breaking the proper "ideal" form, and with blood running down his arms; an antithesis of the standards of beauty and composition embodied in classical sculpture or promoted in the media.

The only visible human bodies in Rashid Rana's works are in *Veil*. They belong to the women in the pornographic movies, with some of the stills showing only their orifices. Both Franko B's body and the bodies of the women in *Veil* are abject, in the sense of breaking the physical space between the self and non-self. On the other hand, *Sleeping Beauty* fortifies the boundaries between the art object and the audience via the frames around the sculpture, which prevent the assimilation of the artistic space into that of the audience. This becomes a poignant reference to the borders which the child died trying to cross. The commemorative statue further presents a critique of the model of consumption under late capitalism, which

[213] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 232. Emphasis mine.

diminishes the subject matter, a dead child, to a moment of interest before it is forgotten. The same model applies to the consumption of pornography, where the first definition of consumption, "the act of using or eating something," is arguably more pertinent to the practice.[214]

The body parts scattered around *Veil* resemble the photographs taken at a slaughterhouse in *Red Carpet.* Both show flesh and meat. The sacrificial elements in all four works prompt a consideration of the parallels between human bodies and those of animals. They form a critique of the ongoing sacrifice of human life in the name of capitalism, observed by Walter Benjamin to be the new religion, which has developed parasitically to Christianity in the West.[215]

This thesis has explored the treatment of people, specifically, Others, under the economic and cultural hegemony of capitalism, which is often disguised as, or justified by, religion. This hypocrisy is emblematised in *I Miss You*, *Sleeping Beau*ty and *Red Carpet*, among other works, by their sacrificial elements. It is also manifested in *Veil*, which represents women's experience of violence. Reineke suggests that this is because they live in a "sacrificial economy" that pervades society.[216]

Building on Kristeva's theories, Reineke explains sacrificial economy as a system that is marked with death and paralysis on both ends, compounded by "substitutionary violence" as well as the somatic inclination towards violence within every individual.[217] Sacrificial economy is closely related to the primary instance of abjection, where an individual's sense of self is formed through the exclusion of the mother. This process is replicated throughout an individual's lifetime, where the exclusion of others becomes increasingly more violent, including scapegoating and demonising, so that the Others become the sacrifice necessary for the preservation of the individual's sense of self.[218]

In my analysis of the artwork, I emphasised melancholy and desensitisation as factors in the audience's unwillingness or incapacity to engage with the suffering presented in the

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[214] Another description of the word is: "The situation in which information, entertainment, etc. is intended for a particular group of people." *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "consumption," accessed June 19, 2019. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/consumption

[215] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings* Vol.1, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Belknap: Harvard Press, 1921, 1996): 288–291. Published in https://cominsitu.wordpress.com/2018/06/08/capitalism-as-religion-benjamin-1921/

[216] Martha J. Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 5.

[217] Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives*, 5.

[218] Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives*, 177–178.

artworks in a manner that would instigate social change. This coincides with Reineke's description of paralysis when one is confronted with the experience of suffering. The other factors outlined by Reineke, explored also by Adorno, manifest as sadistic pleasure, often amalgamated with sexuality, as indicated by both *Veil* and *Sleeping Beauty*.[219]

Figure 7: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty* detail

The spectacles of violence and sex correspond to the unconscious drives present in any individual, and they have been purposed by the ruling class for centuries. In Rome, "bread and circuses" was a political appeasement strategy, designed to divert the populace's attention from their own oppression and to tame potentially revolutionary drives via substitutionary violence. Today, the mainstream media fulfil this function. Further, a variety of TV shows incorporate pornographic imagery into plots about jurisdiction and legislation, referred to as "law-and-order pornography," presenting sex and violence conjointly, and in relation to punishment, in popular mass culture.[220] Chapter Four discussed how the conflation of sex, power, and domination serves to preserve the patriarchal, heteronormative, capitalist

[219] Figure 8: Franko B, 2016, *Sleeping Beauty detail,* hand-carved Carrara Marble, 150 x 70 x 30 cm. Image retrieved from: http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty.html Credit: Riccardo Doggana.
[220] Alex Dymock, "Prurience, Punishment and the Image: Reading 'law-and-order pornography,'" *Theoretical Criminology* 21, no. 2 (2017): 209.

status quo in *Veil*. Images disseminated through the media that carry this undertone also serve to propagate racism, which is inherent in this system.

Franko B's decision to sculpt the dead refugee child with his pants down is an example of mimesis, as identified by Adorno, because the artwork embodies the inter-subjectivities within a society shaped by the cultural hegemony. The formal qualities of *Sleeping Beauty* encourage scopophilia: looking as an activity that evokes pleasure. It subverts the pure gaze which excludes venal pleasures to reflect upon the representations of non-Western, non-white and non-Christian people in the mainstream media. Exploring the representations of these people, among which is Sleeping Beauty, during the War on Terror, Bhattacharyya asserts that sexualised racism has been used "as a strategy of dehumanisation."[221] She references the photographs taken in Abu Ghraib[222] depicting atrocious torture of prisoners (which is effectively rape, even apart from the forced sexual acts),[223] to propose that, when presented within a discourse of necessity and protection, such images become a cause of pleasure for the "protected" audience.[224]

This pleasure is more readily justified when the victim is perceived as inferior and deserving of punishment. I explored in the discussion of *Red Carpet* a familiar representation of Muslim men in the "West" since the fifteenth century. Sleeping Beauty, however, is not a man, but a pre-adolescent child, whose death cannot be justified by those discourses present in the mainstream media. Franko B's purposeful eroticisation of the child painfully demonstrates the discrepancy between the arguments for European exclusionism, based on perceived threat and protection, and reality. Further, it incriminates the audience, who might have taken some pleasure from the War on Terror, which is effectively a crime against humanity.

Perkins writes that Adorno conceives "the art object as simultaneously wound and weapon, that is, as a kind of wound that enacts its own wounding."[225] When an artwork expresses violence, its audience, as witnesses, can position themselves only as victim, or aggressor.[226] The frames around *Sleeping Beauty* suggest that its audience is necessarily the

[221] This strategy has been used to dehumanise non-White people for centuries, and this continues today. I touched upon this in the previous chapters in my discussion of Orientalism.
[222] Kristeva suggests these photographs depict abjective eruptions. Hansen, "Julia Kristeva," 37.
[223] Because it involves forcing oneself into another's body and space without their consent. Bhattacharyya, *Dangerous Brown Men*, 123.
[224] Bhattacharyya, *Dangerous Brown Men*, 105-131.
[225] Russell Perkins, "Adorno's Dreams and the Aesthetic of Violence," *Telos* 155 (2011): 21.
[226] Perkins, "Adorno," 21.

aggressor, and this contrasts with the child's anonymity, which encourages self-identification. This complication is purposeful and is also present in Franko B's *I Miss You!*, where the artist paints himself white in order to allow the members of the audience to identify with him.

I discussed in Chapter One how the purpose of the sacrificial elements and bloodletting in *I Miss You!* was to enable the artist to relive and articulate his own trauma: the abandonment and lack of love he feels as an orphan, and the repression and discrimination he encountered throughout his life as a gay man. I identified the social critique presented by the performance as one of consumerism. This is compounded by our collective obsession with physical beauty, which, in turn, is exacerbated by the consumerist culture on which capitalism thrives. Franko B's performance can be read in an alternative way, for which my discussion of the alt-right in *Sleeping Beauty* is relevant.[227] A significant element in the discourse of the alt-right is white victimisation, where white supremacists justify racism and sexism by accentuating their own suffering, claiming that they are just as oppressed as marginalised sections of society. White victimisation has a lighter form: white fragility, which often manifests as resentment, or resistance, when some white people are confronted with an "unflattering picture of their racial group."[228] In this light, Franko B's performance, where he makes himself bleed, can be interpreted as a reflection about his own whiteness – or, given that he strives for the audience's identification with him, a call for some self-reflection on their part.

I believe that a brief investigation of another performance where the artist painted himself white will be enlightening in examining what Franko B, who is aware of the power of trauma and repression, might be relaying in *I Miss You!*. Günter Brus was a member of the Vienna Action group, a radical movement that produced performances which used and evoked the abject to re-enact and resolve the collective trauma Austrian people underwent during the Holocaust. Driven by Freud's psychoanalytical theory, they believed that the Austrian people were suppressing their memories of suffering, as well as their own involvement in the regime.[229] *Vienna Walk* is a fine example of the Group's ambition. In 1965, Brus began walking from Heldenplatz (where the Austrian crowd welcomed Hitler

[227] This analysis is in response to bell hooks's call for a need to "interrogate issues of race and racism in relation to our notions of artistic excellence, looking at the ways we think about color, how we use images in works[.]" bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: New Press, 1995), 131.
[228] Dana Nichols, "Teaching Critical Whiteness Theory: What College and University Teachers Need to Know," *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege* 1 iss. 1 (August, 2010): 6.
[229] Susan Jarosi, "Traumatic Subjectivity and the Continuum of History: Hermann Nitsch's Orgies Mysteries Theater," *Art History* 36, no. 4 (September 2013): 841, 844.

after the annexation of Austria), towards Stephansplatz (the mother church of the Roman Catholic archdiocese), where he planned to end his walk.[230] He was fully clothed, but painted completely white, except for an irregular vertical black line that ran through his body, dividing it in half. He never reached his destination, because his performance was interrupted by the police on the grounds of disturbing the peace.

The dividing line that crossed Brus's body represented the polarisation of the Austrian society, where one party was the aggressor and the other, the victim. It was painted on white, which is not a colour in itself, but the composite of all the colours in the spectrum. The image thus signifies that the boundaries drawn between one and the other, dividing the whole, are not necessarily confined to the constructs of race, ethnicity, or sexuality – although these are often proposed as reasons for the exclusion of marginalised sections of society under the patriarchal, white-supremacist, heteronormative, capitalist system *under* which we live. To clarify: I am not proposing sameness as the whole, but a level of consciousness that allows for differences without being threatened by them. Charlene Spretnak explains this as:

> When we experience consciousness of the unity in which we are embedded, the sacred whole that is in and around, we exist in a state of grace. At such moments our consciousness perceives not only our individual self, but also our larger self, the self of the cosmos.[231]

The capitalist system strategically prevents this consciousness from developing. Instead, it proposes, via its various apparatus, a false consciousness as truth and necessity. It targets the individual's primary fears and unconscious drives, including sex, violence, and self-preservation, to consolidate itself. The portrayal of the Other as abject is mimed in all the artworks in this thesis. This replicates the primary instance of abjection in the absence of love and support, which alienates the individual who abjects as much as the Other. Kristeva defines this restrictive way of life as a "life of death," where meaning is lost, and people are reduced to bodies of organs, under the control of the state.[232]

This is what is implied in *I Miss You!*, where Franko B pleads for completion; in *Sleeping Beauty*, where a dead child, dead only because he is an Other, lies in marble; in *Red Carpet*, where the body parts of animals on the floor of a slaughterhouse duplicate those of

[230] Jörg Wolfert ed., *My Body is the Event: Vienna Actionism and international Performance* (Vienna: Museum moderner kunst stiftung lüdwig wien, 2015), 3.
[231] Quoted in hooks, *Art on My Mind*, 99.
[232] Hansen, "Julia Kristeva," 32.

humans, massacred as a result of imperialist agenda; and in *Veil*, where women (and men) are reduced to their genitals, their bodies concealed or exhibited, deliberately exploited to satisfy a self-righteous hunger that demands more. Adorno writes that we live in a hedonistic, self-destructive society, under the delusion that our activities, and the things done in our name, are for the sake of self-preservation.[233] This comes at the cost of Others, in the sacrificial economy I described, but it also costs us; as we deny the Other, we deny ourselves.

Rana's collages, by juxtaposing conflicting imagery, provide the ground necessary for a critical engagement with the dichotomies of East/West and feminine/masculine. These alternates are, fallaciously and strategically, proposed as real and irreconcilable. A critical and self-reflective engagement with *Red Carpet* and *Veil* is challenging and painful, especially in the West, because it requires people to confront their own implicit or explicit prejudices and false beliefs; to have the courage and "the power to be weak." At the same time, Rana's artworks provide a lifeline, through the juxtaposition itself, reminding its audience that whatever identity they ascribe to themselves need not be – cannot be – isolated or static.

Sardar suggests that, through the transference of culture and ideas, increasingly in the age of globalisation, identities which were previously deemed to be inferior became an integral part of the Western identity.[234] Yet, evidently, the culture and ideas which influenced the West and Western identity are not perceived as the equals of the dominant White Western culture.[235] Neither are the people. The transference which Sardar describes will only escalate, given that the ongoing climate crisis will produce an increasing number of displaced people who seek refuge in parts of the world where they are Others. The current treatment of refugees in the world, and our collective history, make the future look grim for humanity.

However, we are also well-equipped. Art such as Franko B's and Rashid Rana's provides an opportunity for us to expose ourselves to heterogeneity; Reineke calls this "the only guarantee of the subject's free agency."[236] She suggests that what has been excluded from the formation of the self becomes no longer threatening to an individual when they are able to notice and identify it through analysis, which results in "an expansion of

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[233] Theodor Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964–1965*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 5–7, 13, 17, 26–28. Kiloh, "Towards an ethical politics," 584, 590.
[234] Ziauddin Sardar, "A Garden of Identities: Multiple Selves and Other Futures," *Journal of Future Studies* 10, no. 2 (November 2005): 15–17.
[235] Chris Baynes, "Most Americans say 'Arabic numerals' should not be taught in school, finds survey," *Independent*, May 17, 2019, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/arabic-numerals-survey-prejudice-bias-survey-research-civic-science-a8918256.html
[236] Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives*, 179.

boundaries."[237] The artworks selected and analysed within this thesis encourage this expansion through their depiction of the abject and their incorporation of abject elements. The audience is not driven to tolerate the Others, but to find, and reconcile with, the abject that is within, so that the system becomes powerless to deny ourselves our humanity.

[237] Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives*, 180.

APPENDIX

This Appendix contains illustrations of the works by Franko B and Rashid Rana discussed in detail in this thesis. Full details of these works are included at the end of the Appendix.

Figure 8: Franko B, *I Miss You!*

Figure 9: Franko B, *I Miss You!*

Figure 10: Franko B, *I Miss You!*

Figure 11: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*

Figure 12: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*

Figure 13: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*

Figure 14: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*

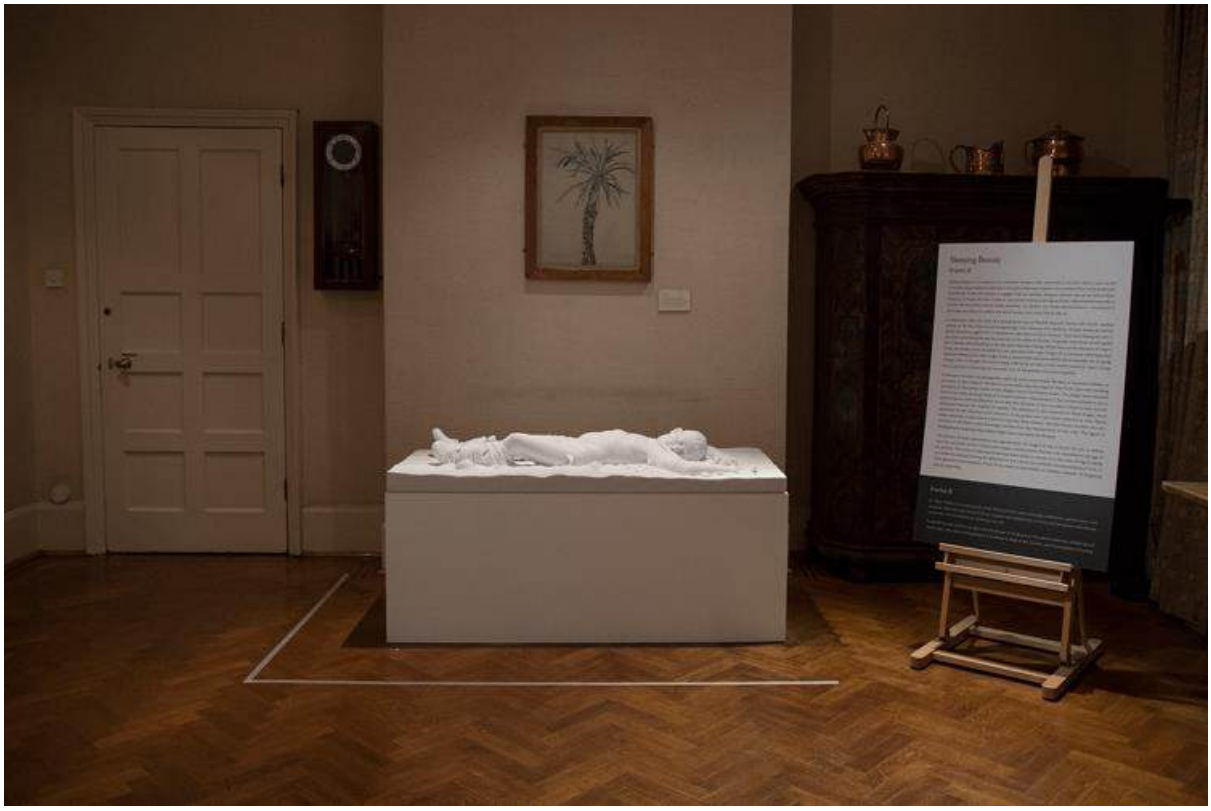

Figure 15: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*

Figure 16: Rashid Rana, *Red Carpet I*

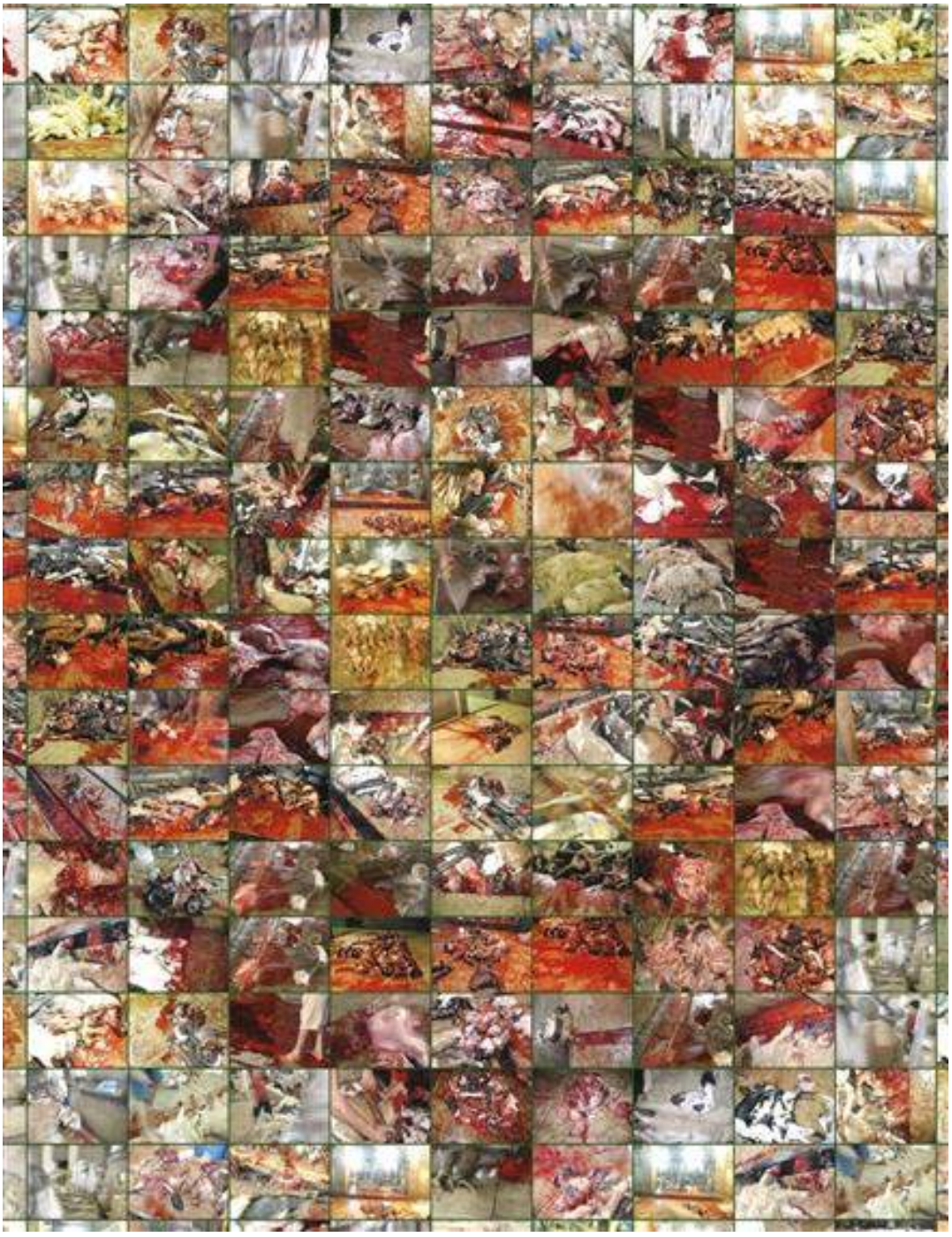

Figure 17: Rashid Rana, *Red Carpet III* detail

Figure 18: Rashid Rana's *Red Carpet* in *Perpetual Paradox*

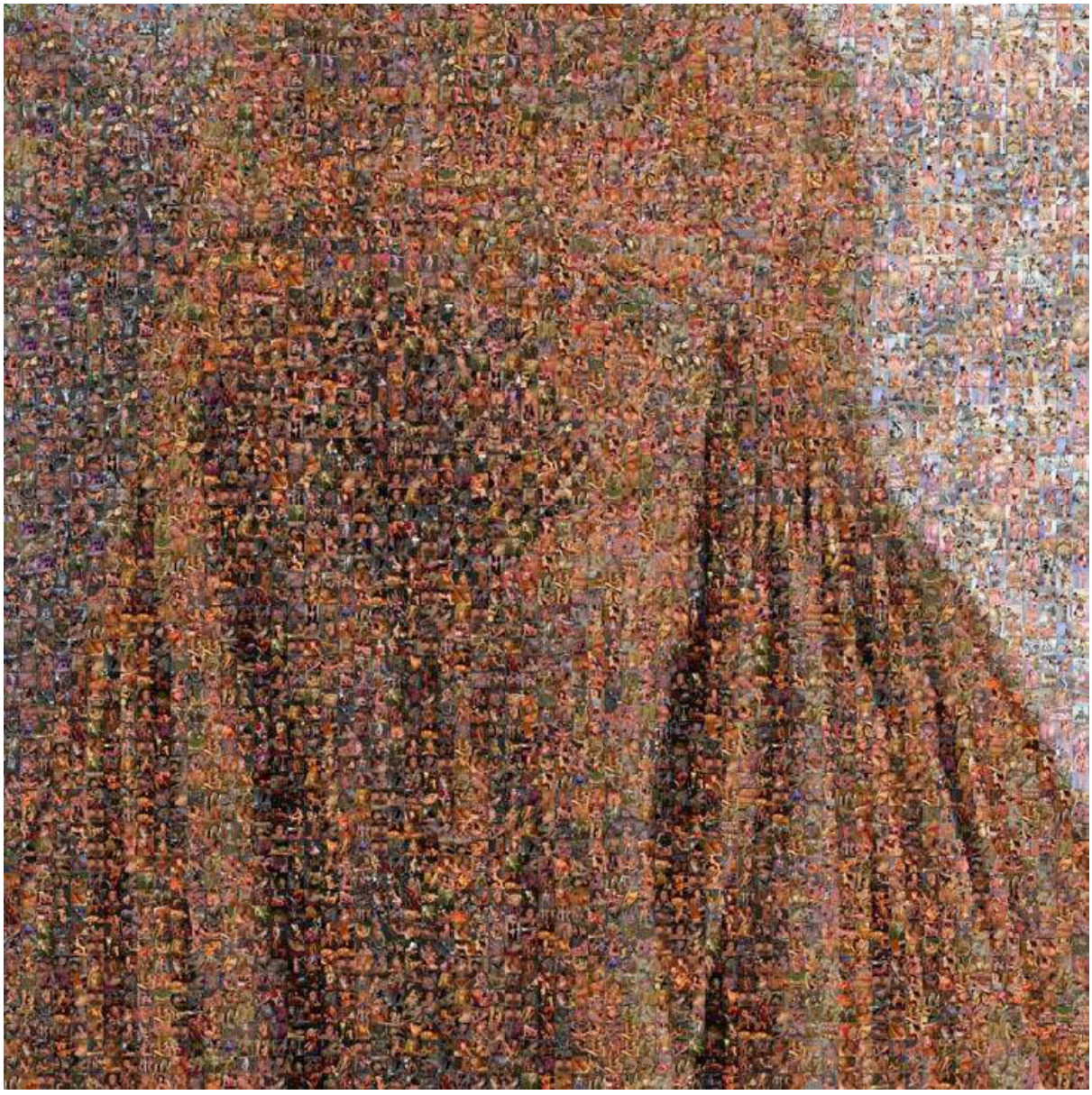

Figure 19: Rashid Rana, *Veil I*

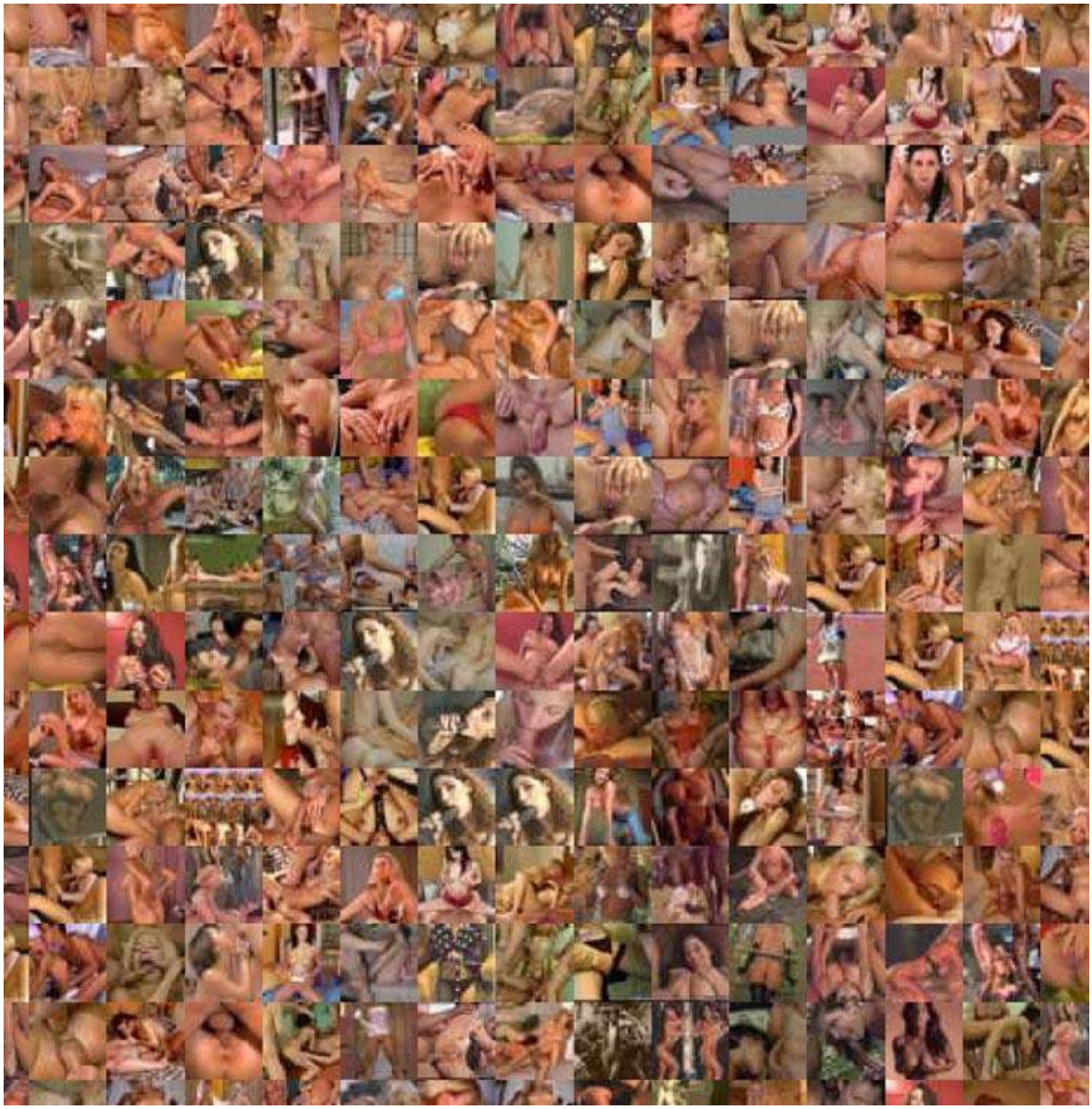

Figure 20: Rashid Rana, *Veil I* detail

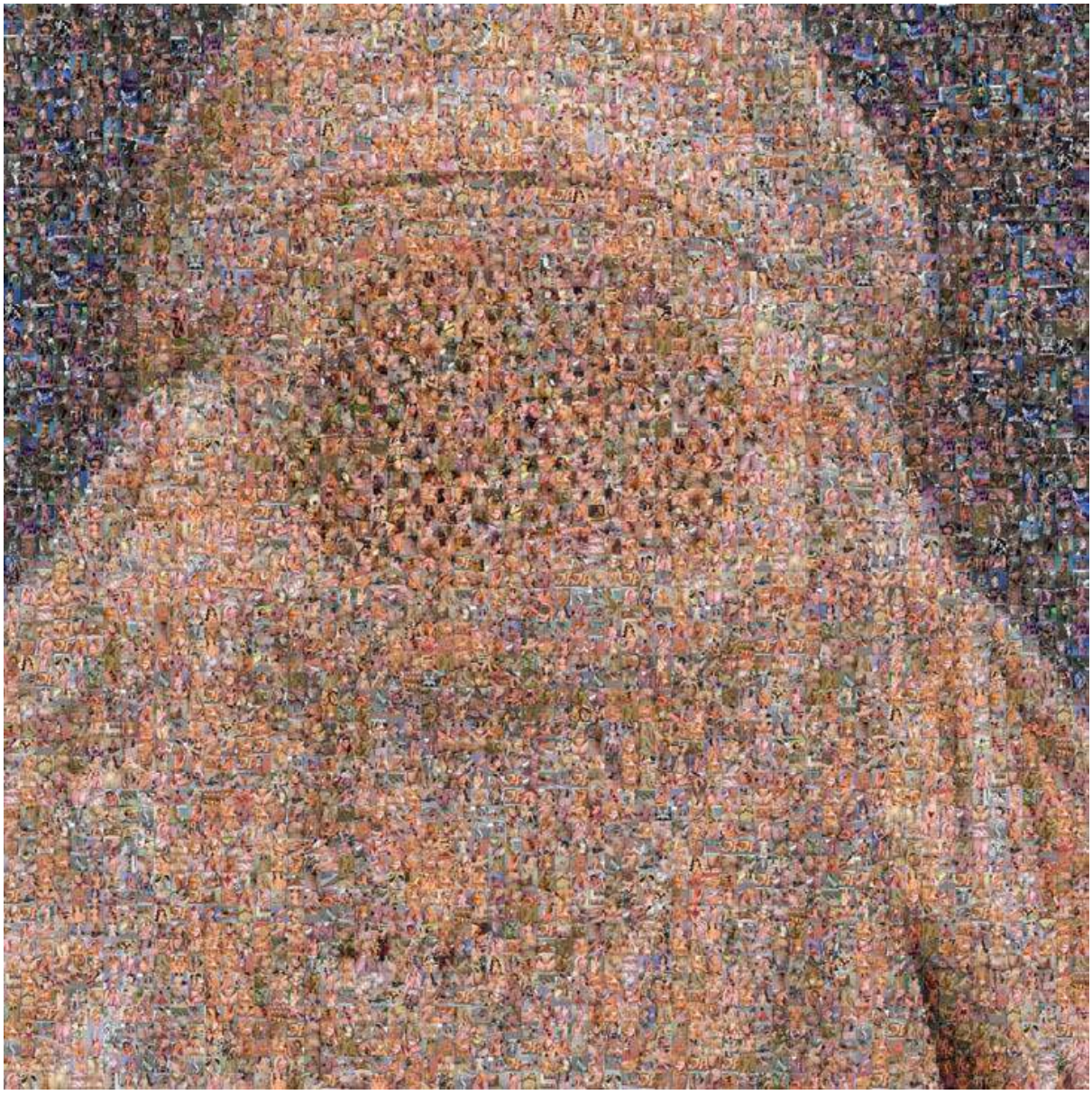

Figure 21: Rashid Rana, *Veil II*

Figure 22: Rashid Rana, *Veil II* detail

Details of the Illustrations Shown in the Appendix

Figure 8: Franko B, *I Miss You!*, 2003, Tate Modern/Live Culture, photograph by Hugo Glendinning. Image retrieved from: http://www.franko-b.com/I_Miss_You.html

Figure 9: Franko B, *I Miss You!*, performance date and location not noted, photograph by Niko Raes. Image retrieved from: http://www.franko-b.com/I_Miss_You.html

Figure 10: Franko B, *I Miss You!*, 2003, Tate Modern/Live Culture, photograph by Hugo Glendinning. Image retrieved from: http://www.franko-b.com/I_Miss_You.html

Figure 11: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*, 2016, hand carved Carrara Marble, 150 x 70 x 30 cm. Image retrieved from: http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty.html credit: Riccardo Doggana.

Figure 12: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*, 2016, hand carved Carrara Marble, 150 x 70 x 30 cm. Image retrieved from: http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty.html credit: Riccardo Doggana.

Figure 13: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*, 2016, hand carved Carrara Marble, 150 x 70 x 30 cm. Image retrieved from: http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty.html credit: Riccardo Doggana.

Figure 14: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*, 2016, hand carved Carrara Marble, 150 x 70 x 30 cm. Image retrieved from: http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty.html Credit: Riccardo Doggana. Exhibited at Palazzo Lucarini Contemporary, solo exhibition titled *Death and Romance in the XXI Century*, curated by Maurizio Coccia.

Figure 15: Franko B, *Sleeping Beauty*, 2016, hand carved Carrara Marble, 150 x 70 x 30 cm. Image retrieved from: http://franko-b.com/Sleeping_Beauty From the 2017 exhibition at the Freud Museum that coincided with Refugee Week.

Figure 16: Rashid Rana, *Red Carpet I*, 2007. Chromogenic print and Diasec mount, 295 x 221 cm, private collection. Image retrieved from: https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/24941/lot/124/

Figure 17: Rashid Rana, *Red Carpet III* detail, 2007, 132 x 183 cm, chromogenic print and Diasec mount. Image retrieved from: https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/RED-CARPET---3/D1D8A77791982577

Figure 18: Rashid Rana's *Red Carpet* in *Perpetual Paradox*, exhibited at Musee Guimet in 2010, curated by Jacques Gies and Caroline Arhuero. Image retrieved from: https://www.facebook.com/RashidRanaStudio/

Figure 19: Rashid Rana, 2004, *Veil I*, Chromogenic print and Diasec mount, 51 x 51cm. Image retrieved from: https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/rashid_rana_veil1.htm

Figure 20: Rashid Rana, 2004, *Veil I* detail, Chromogenic print and Diasec mount. Image retrieved from: https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/rashid_rana_veil1_detail.htm

Figure 21: Rashid Rana, 2004, *Veil II*, Chromogenic print and Diasec mount, 51 x 51cm. Image retrieved from: https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/rashid_rana_veil2.htm

Figure 22: Rashid Rana, 2004, *Veil II* detail, Chromogenic print and Diasec mount. Image retrieved from: https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/rashid_rana_veil2_detail.htm

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