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## Fibers of Drought

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# **FIBERS OF DROUGHT**

**by Termeh Ghazi**

A thesis exhibition presented to OCAD University in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Art, Media, and Design.

The Ada Slight gallery, April 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2024.

## **Abstract**

Environmental damage is a critical problem, especially in regions such as Baluchistan in Iran, where clean water scarcity poses a critical problem for people's lives and health. I am an Iranian Canadian interdisciplinary textile artist born and raised in Tehran. A lesson I learned from studying microbiology and observing microorganisms through a microscope is that scientific realities exist beyond our apparent perception. However, their impact on humans and non-humans cannot be ignored.

My thesis idea is derived from my studio practices focusing on various fibres:

How can my textile art practice address environmental challenges related to water scarcity in the Sistan and Baluchistan regions of Iran through methods and fibre mediums used in my practice, while simultaneously raising awareness and advocating for the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage?

As a result, my textile art installations reflect both physical manifestations and hidden causes of drought and water scarcity. Human interference and mismanagement of natural resources have been detrimental to the Iranian people, including myself.

Keywords: Water scarcity, environmental degradation, mismanagement, exploitation of natural resources, surreal textile art, mixed media installations, cultural heritage, public awareness, environmental art and activism, and community resilience.

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Thanks to my parents, sister, and brother, from afar in Iran, I am deeply grateful for their continued support and encouragement. This journey has been made stronger by your love and unwavering belief in me.

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This research-based thesis is dedicated to the people of Sistan and Baluchistan, whose lives are deeply impacted by water scarcity, and to all communities around the world facing similar challenges in accessing clean water. I intend to make a small but meaningful contribution to addressing the global water crisis and raising public awareness to preserve natural resources and cultural heritage.

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## Introduction

Rooted in my Iranian heritage and scientific education in microbiology, I am an interdisciplinary textile artist who has been influenced by Indigenous teachings on environmental stewardship after moving to Canada. In this thesis, I adopt my background in microbiology as a framework to interpret and respond to environmental issues in the creation of my mixed-media textile installation. This scientific perspective allows me to approach my textile practice with an acute awareness of ecological systems, emphasizing natural processes as well as their interconnectedness and delicate balance.

My thesis work focuses on illustrating water scarcity issues in Sistan & Baluchistan, Iran, using art to embody the dynamic relationships between land and water. By integrating scientific understanding with artistic expression, my work explores the connection between art and environmental activism, reflecting the belief that land is a living, active entity. This approach underscores the critical importance of sustainable practices in managing our natural resources.

Robin Wall Kimmerer writes that land is “everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustains us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world [is] enacted” (qtd. in Liboiron 43).

This thesis investigates human impacts on nature through textile artwork that reveals human mismanagement of natural resources, particularly in areas suffering from severe water shortages, such as Baluchistan in Iran. Sistan and Baluchistan, Iran's second-

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largest province, faces critical challenges in politics, the environment, the economy, health, and security. Located in the mountainous southeast, it borders Afghanistan and Pakistan, with Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman as a key potential trading hub for the Middle East and South Asia. Despite its vast size, comparable to North Dakota or Syria, the province has only 2.8 million residents, with a majority living in rural areas, in contrast to the urbanized rest of Iran. The region is divided into Sistan in the north, inhabited by ethnic Persians, and Baluchistan in the south, west, and east, populated by the Baluch ethnic group. The Baluch, Sunni Muslims in a Shiite country, maintain a tribal and clan-based society. Zahedan, the provincial capital, has over 600,000 inhabitants (Nada 2021). The region faces significant challenges due to its remote location and historical underdevelopment (Nada 2021). The central government has made minimal efforts to integrate the Baluch into broader Iranian society, resulting in significant socioeconomic disparities and ethnic tensions. The State Department's 2019 human rights report indicates that Baluch regions are severely underdeveloped, with inadequate access to education, jobs, healthcare, and housing. In 2018, more than half of its residents rely on truck deliveries to provide running water. In spite of this, the government has done little to improve the situation. The historical significance of this region is notable as it served as a crucial link between South Asia and the Middle East, facilitating trade and cultural exchanges. Under Darius I from 522 to 486 B.C.E., it was an integral part of the ancient Persian Empire. Today, the region's strategic importance is underscored by its potential to serve as a major trading hub due to Chabahar port. By 2015, Sistan and Baluchistan's annual precipitation had dropped by 50 percent over 40 years, causing severe water scarcity in rural areas. Iran partly blames Afghanistan's damming of the Helmand River

for the water crisis. Since the 1950s, dams like Kajaki and Grishk have reduced the river's flow into Iran, with parts dry for up to 10 months a year. The construction of dams has jeopardized the Hamoun wetlands, which span across Iran and Afghanistan. These wetlands, comprising three lakes, have been a vital water source for local communities for millennia. In 2000, they were the world's seventh-largest wetland. However, due to drought and inefficient water use, they have significantly shrunk, with their surface water nearly gone by 2004. The dry soil has exacerbated dust storms. While occasional rainfall or floods temporarily revive parts of the wetlands, it is insufficient to undo decades of damage. Restoring the wetlands would require redirecting several billion cubic meters of water (Nada 2021). The country's mean temperature has risen by two degrees over the past two centuries, leading to increased evaporation and higher water demands for agriculture. Iran is now ranked as the 24th most water-stressed nation by the World Resources Institute (Goudarzi 2021).

Water scarcity in Baluchistan has exacerbated other dangers for locals. Recent droughts and floods have disrupted the habitats of the Gando, a short-nosed crocodile native to Iran traditionally symbolizing blessing and water, leading to attacks on residents, especially children. Habitat erosion forces these animals into close contact with humans, increasing attack risk. Environmentalists' efforts to feed and safeguard endangered species are hampered by inadequate infrastructure and safe water access. The ongoing conflict underscores the urgent need for sustainable solutions to address water scarcity and protect human and wildlife populations (Nazari 2021).

In Iranian heritage, water holds profound cultural significance, as well as importance for everyday life. Ancient Iranians revered water as a life-giving element and a sanctuary from evil. Water's importance is deeply embedded in Iranian mythology. Symbols and rituals date back to Mithraism (Beck 45-49, Ulansey 23). Throughout my research, I also refer to Tishtrya, the star associated with rain and fertility in ancient Iranian mythology. The power of Tishtrya is restored by Ahura Mazda, enabling him to defeat the drought demon Apush and restore rain to Earth (Old World Gods). This thesis explores water's critical role in sustaining Sistan and Baluchistan's land and cultural heritage. In this project, the importance of water in an arid landscape is intertwined with the vitality of life. My practice led me to my thesis research question: How can my textile art practice address environmental challenges related to water scarcity in the Sistan and Baluchistan regions of Iran through methods and fibre mediums used in my practice, while simultaneously raising awareness and advocating for the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage? In addition, it emphasizes the living, active nature of the land. My intricate patterns and textures represent nature's interaction with human activities. Through this visual experience, the artwork emphasizes the interconnectedness of nature, culture, and community resilience in managing natural resources.

Max Liboiron, in *Pollution is Colonialism*, highlights the severe impact of modern industrial economies on natural resources: "When most people refer to waste and pollution today, they are referring to a set of relations that uses the land as a sink for a relatively new form of waste characterized by unprecedented tonnage, toxicity, and heterogeneity, created within industrial political economies premised on growth and profit" (Liboiron 41). Profit-Fibers of Drought

driven practices result in widespread pollution and environmental degradation due to the misuse and overuse of these essential resources. In a comparable way, my installation highlights the link between environmental degradation and human activity. Using tactile forms, I emphasize the tangible effects of pollution and resource mismanagement. Iran's leadership underestimated water scarcity before and after the 1979 revolution (Al-Aloosy 2022). Before the revolution, water-intensive agriculture destroyed ancient Qanat systems and increased urban migration. The arid climate in Iran and irregular water distribution affects the quality of water, its availability, and settlement patterns. Current government policies ignore local management and community input, leading to conflicts over water allocation. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the war aggravated water issues, causing soil and water degradation and disrupting resource development.



Fig. 1. "Map of Iran with province names and neighboring land" (*Wikimedia Commons*).

## Inspirational artworks and perspectives

In making my work, various artists and environmental activists have influenced me. Their contributions to art and environmentalism have deeply influenced my thought and process. As a result, I have been inspired to use my textile art installation to raise awareness about environmental issues.

My installation incorporates natural and cultural heritage elements, provoking the audience to consider the consequences of mismanaging resources and fostering a connection between human and non-human communities. Leopold's insights align with my thesis. My art seeks to convey an understanding and respect for people's interdependence on the environment. It preserves Sistan and Baluchistan's cultural and ecological heritage.

Other examples are Basia Irland's projects which often involve community engagement, emphasizing water bodies' cultural and ecological importance. Through her art, Irland raises awareness about water resource issues using collaborative and interactive practices. Notable projects like "Ice Books" and "Water Library" involve creating art that interacts with natural water bodies and engages local communities. For example, in *Ice Books*, she carves books from ice containing native seeds, which are placed in rivers to melt, releasing the seeds, and aiding riparian zone restoration (Irland). While Irland's work uses natural elements and direct environmental interaction, my approach utilizes textile art's symbolic and tactile nature to evoke a connection with the audience. Both our works share a commitment to raising public awareness about water scarcity and its consequences, but our methodologies differ. In Irland's ephemeral art, material is used

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to engage with the environment, and I employ durable textile materials to represent the ongoing struggle and resilience of affected communities. The purpose of our works is to foster a deeper understanding of environmental issues. Creative expression bridges the gap between scientific understanding and public perception, making water scarcity accessible and emotionally impactful to the public (Ireland). To bring attention to the crucial importance of protecting our freshwater resources, my thesis concept addresses water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchistan, Iran, through textile art installations.

### Conceptual inspirations

In *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben vividly illustrates the global and enduring nature of environmental crisis through his poignant observation: “This is not one country’s sadness, nor is it the story of a single year. Animals and plants living in a refugee worldwide may soon find their ‘sanctuaries’ and ‘preserves’ unendurable traps. If the forests indeed die as the weather warms, many animals will go with them” (McKibben 116). As stated in the quote, environmental degradation is pervasive and affects ecosystems worldwide, resulting in dire consequences.

The scenario is similar to Sistan and Baluchistan’s water shortage. In the Hamoun wetlands, once lush and lush, the region is now arid due to mismanagement and climate change. As these ecosystems disappear, human populations relying on them for agriculture are at risk. When these natural reserves become untenable, people and non-human migrate, creating socioeconomic instability. As a result of the drying of the wetlands, human displacement and unemployment are exacerbated, which in turn heightens drug trafficking and addiction among displaced populations. Ecological



balances are disrupted as well by extinctions and migrations of animal populations. Sistan and Baluchistan's water crisis mirrors global environmental crisis McKibben warns about. Our relationship with nature needs a radical rethinking to protect and restore ecosystem balance.

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crucial importance of protecting our freshwater resources, my thesis concept addresses water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchistan, Iran, through textile art installations.

Iranian photographer Azad Amin captures the human stories behind drought and water scarcity, reflecting the subjective and apocalyptic landscape of Sistan and Baluchistan, which parallels my narrative-driven textile art ("Blessing out"). Amin, in his photography series *Blessing Out, Evil at Work*, captures the human stories behind drought and water shortages. Amin says: "I was travelling to the region to document the everyday struggles of the local population, their efforts to adapt to the harsh conditions, and their hopes and dreams for the future" ("Blessing out"). While Amin's photography documents the region's harsh conditions, my textile installations offer a tactile and immersive experience. Both mediums serve as powerful tools to raise public awareness. As Amin's photographs do, I have turned natural elements' textures and forms into platforms for discussing water issues in the region. Throughout my creation, I drew inspiration from his photographs, which freeze times of struggle and adaptation.

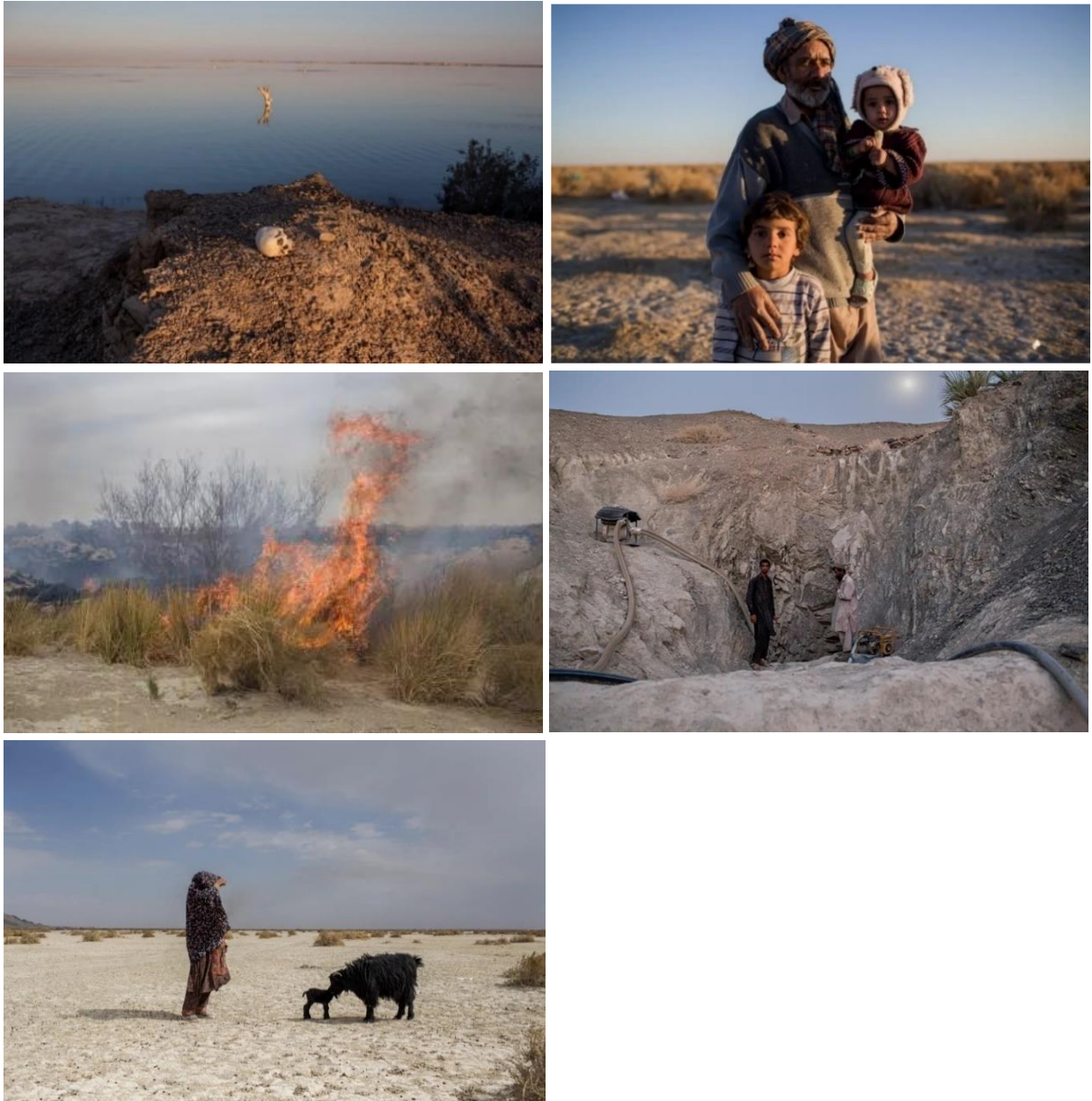


Fig. 2. Photographs from Azad Amin's series "Blessing out, Evil at Work" highlight the human stories behind drought and water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchistan. *Der Greif*, 10 Jan. 2024, <https://dergreif.org/artist-feature/azad-amin>. Accessed 26 June 2024.

### Technical and material inspirations

Melissa Webb's (<https://www.melissawebbart.com>) immersive installations inspired my approach to create multi-layered mixed media textile art installation. Webb's work creates direct sensory experiences, allowing viewers to interact with handmade textiles that mimic natural forms (Webb). Inspired by Webb, I use traditional textile techniques to create immersive experiences that reflect environmental degradation and cultural heritage. Techniques such as felting, knitting, and stitching create textured landscapes that evoke arid conditions and community struggle for water. Webb's focus on historical contexts and material narratives aligns with my approach to incorporating cultural heritage into my art. Using locally sourced materials and traditional techniques, my installations aim to provide visual experiences while engaging the audience in deeper contemplation of humanity's relationship with nature. The vision of Webb's future reclaimed by wilderness resonates with my desire to raise awareness about environmental conservation.

Having a deep connection with nature and the environment, Charlotte Lindgren's (<https://www.prairieinterlace.ca/charlotte-lindgren>) fiber art resonates closely with my thesis on water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchistan. Her sculptures made of textile materials influence my technique of transforming fibers into three-dimensional pieces that engage viewers on multiple levels. As I aim to explore innovative ways to combine textures and forms in my mixed media installation, Lindgren's technique of layering textures and forms inspired me to use natural landscapes and ecological

themes as inspiration. It combines various elements in order to depict the struggles and resilience of communities being affected by water scarcity.

Aude Franjou's (<https://audefranjou.com/portfolio-item/mp15/>) artistic manipulation of plant fibers to craft organic forms significantly parallels my own use of natural elements like tree bark and wool, which represent life's tenacity and endurance. Her sculptures, crafted from linen and hemp, dynamically respond to environmental shifts, underlining the material's dual nature (Franjou). This influence extends to my installation, where dried branches and roots of a surrealistic tree encapsulate the collective struggle and solidarity of the communities in Sistan and Baluchistan in pursuit of water to rejuvenate their environments. In transforming fibers into sculptural representations, Franjou's approach is akin to my personal goal of utilizing textile art to confront ecological challenges, highlighting textiles' capability to address urgent environmental and cultural issues.

Like Melissa Webb, Charlotte Lindgren, and Aude Franjou, I transform textile mediums into three-dimensional pieces which allows me to create tactile experiences that engage viewers on multiple sensory levels. As such, my environmental narratives are enriched with textiles' sculptural qualities that represent natural forms.

### Sistan and Baluchistan inspirational craftsmanship

Felt making, though less documented in Sistan and Baluchistan, is an ancient tradition in Iran's western provinces. This technique was developed by early inhabitants of the region, known for its livestock and wool production, essential for felt making. Historical

accounts from the 19th and 20th centuries suggest felt making existed in Sistan and Baluchistan. Influences were potentially transferred from neighbouring regions like Afghanistan and Pakistan, where Baluchi communities reside. This historical significance and rich tradition influenced my choice to use felting for the main body of my thesis installation, as it connects deeply with the cultural and environmental narrative of the region (IFP News; Walking in Iran).

Needlework in Sistan and Baluchistan, Iran, displays rich traditions and techniques. Suzandouzi, prominent in Baluchistan, features bold geometric patterns, animal motifs, and floral details using vibrant colors and silk threads. Sistan embroidery is known for its geometric and linear designs, typically in contrasting shades with a focus on clean lines and symmetry. These styles, passed down through generations, reflect the region's unique culture. Needlework decorates garments for special occasions, signifying wealth, and social standing. It also provides income for rural Baluchi women, supporting cultural sustainability (Walking in Iran). An old lady named Mahtab Norouzi was one of the experts in this technique. Mahtab Norouzi's work was highly sought after. She created intricate patterns and striking designs that captured Iranian craftsmanship. She was a crucial figure in the revival of traditional needlework in the region. However, modern styles and materials pose challenges, making it crucial to preserve these skills for future generations. Each stitch tells a story, and every motif represents a piece of this region's cultural tapestry (Mirzaie 2012).



## Methodology

My textile art installation depicting a surreal tree incorporates various materials and techniques to represent the struggles of accessing clean water in Sistan and Baluchistan, Iran. This artwork aims to highlight the urgent need for clean water in neglected and marginalized communities while demonstrating the power of textile art to raise awareness about social issues. By challenging traditional notions of art, I explore its potential to contribute to a more sustainable future. This is as Iranian environmental artists' concerns are both personal and contextual, such as water shortages, habitat loss, pollution, and unsustainable practices which have influenced Iranian artists. Social and political commentary accompany these themes. As a result, Iranian works often serve as warning signals, highlighting problems. This reflects the cultural influence which deeply impacts artists' worldview and artistic expression (Maktabi 2015).

Iranian environmental artists are deeply influenced by concerns such as water shortages, habitat loss, pollution, and unsustainable practices, reflecting their personal and cultural contexts (Maktabi 2015). These problems are exacerbated by government neglect and overexploitation, with Iranian works often serving as warning signals of these issues.

Incorporating both traditional and modern textile techniques, my mixed media installation uses felting, knitting, embroidery, coiling, spinning, and ceramics, with materials like tree bark, wool, clay, and various fibers. These elements symbolize the struggle and resilience of communities facing water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchistan.

Textiles are profoundly connected to geographical locations through their material origins and processes. Alice Kettle emphasizes this relationship, noting that "cloth is socially engaged or socially enacted, embedded, and entwined in community making and in recording histories" (Kettle 336). This connection makes textiles an ideal medium for addressing environmental and cultural issues.

My project explores the significance of textiles as a medium for environmental and cultural discourse, using their intrinsic connection to specific geographical locations and historical significance to address the pressing issue of water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchistan.

### Material Origin

Wool, yarn, and threads used in felting, coiling, embroidery, and knitting are sourced from local suppliers in Toronto, emphasizing sustainable practices. My material choices are deeply influenced by cultural heritage and ecological considerations. In Iran, particularly in regions such as Sistan and Baluchistan, goat wool is traditionally utilized in textile production due to its availability and durability (Dixon 102). However, in keeping with sustainable practices and local availability, I chose merino, and sheep wool sourced from Canadian suppliers. This decision reflects my commitment to environmental sustainability while acknowledging the practical limitations of using traditional materials not readily available in my current location.

Similarly, the tree bark used in my work is collected from parks in midtown Toronto, symbolizing nature's interconnectedness across geographical boundaries. In Sistan and

Baluchistan, palm tree bark is more commonly applied (Smith, 2020). The materials I use are locally accessible, so I keep the regional context of my practice while adapting to the resources available in my current environment. As such, this approach is aligned with my sustainability goal and supports local supply chains, reducing environmental impacts associated with long-distance transportation.

These materials are transformed through various processes to create tactile, textured pieces that engage the senses and invite viewers to explore the narratives embedded in the fibers. My work reflects my cultural background and my commitment to sustainable practices, creating a dialogue between traditional and contemporary approaches.

### Cultural embedding

By incorporating traditional techniques such as embroidery, felting, and coiling, my work connects with the rich textile heritage of Iran. These methods are not only a nod to the past but also a means of preserving and reviving cultural practices. The use of water-soluble sheets in creating embroidered nets represents the transient yet impactful nature of water, a vital resource that is increasingly scarce in the regions depicted in my art. My installation extends from the wall asymmetrically across diverse levels from the wall to the floor, creating a surreal tree that symbolizes the map and land of the Sistan and Baluchistan regions. The installation continues with a movement reminiscent of a river stream, symbolizing Farhad's river from Nezami's narrative ("Tomb of Shirin and Farhad"). This river, constructed to prove Farhad's love for Shirin, culminates in a garden ("Tomb of Shirin and Farhad") Similar to the love of Shirin and Farhad is the love and care for land, water, soil, and the cultural heritage of the region.

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## The making of the installation

Below, I outline the various sections and elements of my installation, detailing the materials and techniques used, and their significance within the overall piece.

Wool was the main material used for the installation. Wool, with its ability to be felted, spun, and knitted, provided a versatile medium that could be transformed into a myriad of forms and structures.

### *Tree*

The main body of the tree was to be mounted at the corner of the wall, with smaller extensions gradually spreading to the right, akin to a map of the land and its fragmented communities. The first part of the tree included one main large piece and was surrounded by six smaller pieces. These were all made of roving wool using a wet felting technique in an earthy colour palette of different shades of grayish brown and beige with small touches of green. On top of these felted parts, I stitched varied sizes of tree barks which fell from trees after raining in the fall and I collected them from a park close to where I live in Toronto. The felting process (Fig. 3), which involved mating wool fibers together using water and agitation, tied into the theme of water. It also created a strong, cohesive material suitable for a large-scale installation.



Fig. 3. Process of (wet) felt making for the body of the tree, photos by Termeh Ghazi, OCAD U Textile studio, 2023.

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Fig. 4. Seven pieces felted from roving wool hung to dry. They are installed as the main body of the tree, photo by Termeh Ghazi, OCAD U Textile studio, 2023.

Tree bark, another key material, added an organic and tactile dimension to my pieces (Fig. 6–7). By incorporating bark, I drew a direct connection to nature, emphasizing the resilience and fragility of the natural world. Bark texture and form contributed to the visual narrative of environmental degradation and renewal.





Fig. 5. Getting inspired by trees and their textures while walking in the neighborhood. Photo by Termeh Ghazi, midtown Toronto, fall 2023.



Fig. 6. Collected tree barks attached on the felted pieces, photo by Termeh Ghazi, 2024.

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Fig. 7. Details of stitched bark tree on the felted roving wool, photo by Termeh Ghazi, 2024.



### *Roots and branches*

Raffia and jute, known for their strength and flexibility, were used for wrapping and coiling (Fig. 8–9). I intended these materials to not only enhance the textural richness of the work but also symbolize the interconnectedness and interdependence of natural systems. In my view, the coiled roots would create a dynamic and organic shape, while the coiled branches would give a sense of movement (Fig. 10).



Fig. 8. The coiling process. Photos by Termeh Ghazi, 2023.



Fig. 9. Tests with synthetic yarn (in green and brown shades).



Fig. 10. Selected coiled pieces with jute and wool yarn.

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### *Lace pieces with knitted embellishments*

A free-motion embroidery and binding of thread nets with water-soluble starch-based materials (Fig. 12) aimed to demonstrate the communal effort required to address environmental issues. Free motion embroidery is a technique of machine sewing that do not follow a specific pattern. By applying this technique on water-soluble materials using thread in brownish gray shades and some bluish shades, I created lace/fishnet pieces for installing alongside and between the felted pieces on one side of the installation. After washing the embroidery pieces to remove the starch, the pieces became lacy and fishnet like (Fig. 11–12).

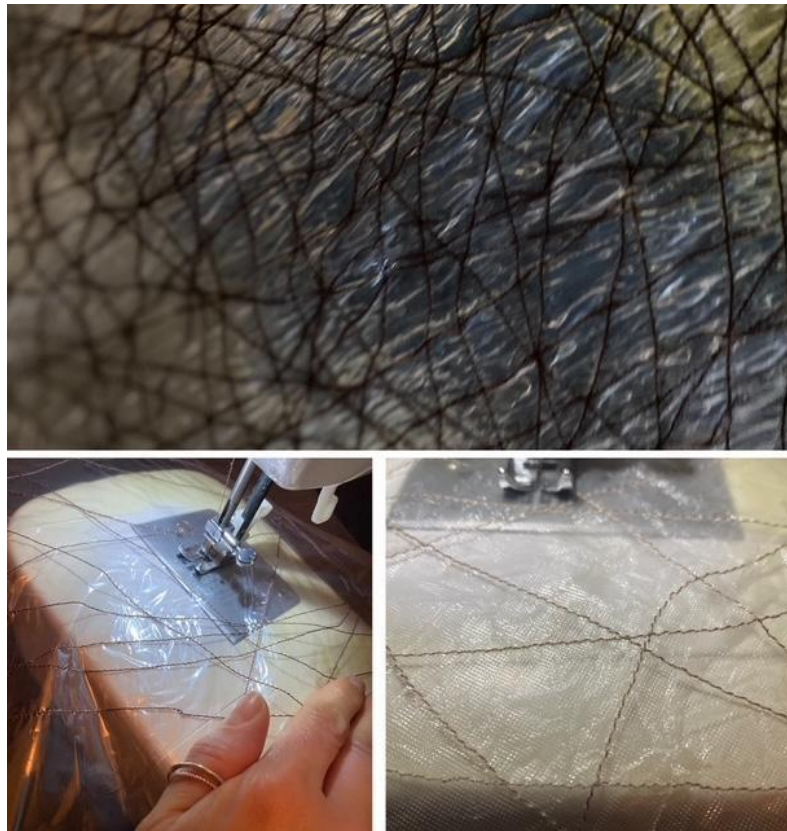


Fig. 11. Process of free-motion embroidery on the transparent starch-based sheets, photos by Termeh Ghazi, 2024.



Fig. 12. Washing off water soluble starch-based sheets to get final lace pieces, photos by Termeh Ghazi, 2023.

### *Knitting to mimic moss shapes*

As blue shades of threads are a symbol of hope, the blue lace pieces were decorated with various tiny puffy knitted pieces mimicking moss shapes (Fig. 13–14). These pieces were knitted in different earthy tones using a chunky knitting machine and then attached to the lace parts by embellishment machines (Fig. 20–21).

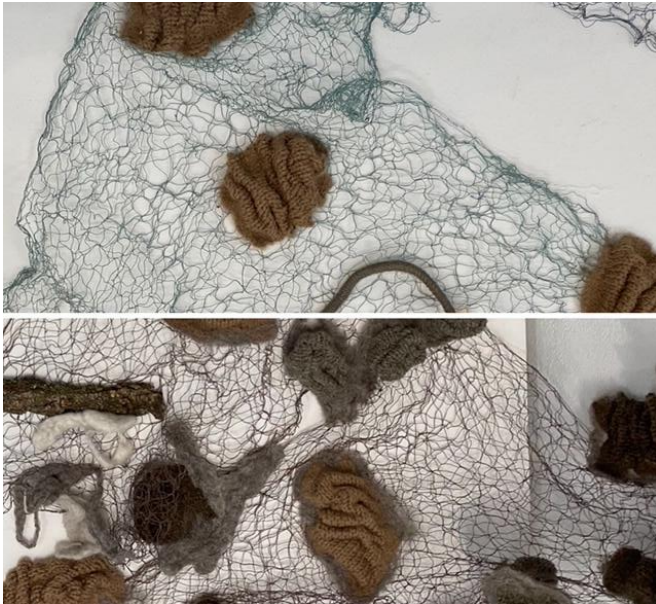


Fig. 13. Blue-shade lace pieces in the final installation, photos by Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slaight gallery, April 2023.



Fig. 14. Tree covered by moss (left); moss on concrete (right), photos by Termeh Ghazi, midtown Toronto, 2023.





Fig. 15. Knitting with a chunky knitting machine and wool yarn to create moss shapes by the re-hanging technique; knitted samples for moss (right), photos by Termeh Ghazi. 2023.



Fig. 16. Part of the felted, embroidered lace and knitted pieces on the final installation, photo by Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight gallery, April 2024.

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### *Ceramic sheets and cracked pieces*

Clay and ceramics were integral to my work, symbolizing drought-stricken landscapes, and cracked earth. The process of shaping and firing clay mirrored the transformative power of natural elements and highlighted the enduring impact of environmental changes. The use of pigments in ceramics added a layer of meaning, connecting the pieces to the land and its cultural heritage.

All broken ceramic sheets were decorated with colourful patina in the pattern of the traditional colourful needlework with nomadic geometric motifs of women in Sistan and Baluchistan areas (fig. 18, 27).



Fig. 17. Air dried and randomly cracked clay slabs in the test, photo by Termeh Ghazi, OCAD U, Dec. 2024.



Fig. 18. Allowing an under-glazed clay slab to crack randomly while air drying, then stitching tree parts into the broken pieces, Termeh Ghazi, OCAD U, Feb. 2024.





Fig. 19. Detailed view of a stitched patina clay piece with broken edges, Termeh Ghazi, OCAD U, Mar. 2024.



Fig. 20. A section of the final installation featuring stitched patina clay pieces with broken edges, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.

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Fig. 21. Broken patina clay pieces represented thirsty cracked soil in the final installation, Termeh Ghazi, OCAD U, Apr. 2024.

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Fig. 22. Another section of broken patina clay pieces represents thirsty, cracked soil in the final installation, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.





Fig. 23. Last section of the installation with a patina featuring traditional Baluchi motifs, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.

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## *Water*

To emphasize the limited access to clean water in Sistan and Baluchistan in Iran, I created a piece using spun wool in grey shades mixed with blue hues (fig. 24). A combination of different techniques (fig. 25), colors and materials, positioned among the broken ceramic pieces, aimed to symbolize the scarceness and preciousness of water in these arid regions. The spinning wheel technique added a tactile, visual representation of water's vital presence amidst the fragmented landscape, reinforcing the urgency of addressing this environmental crisis through my textile art.



Fig. 24. Hand spun grey and blue wool representing water in the installation, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slaight Gallery, Apr. 2024.



Fig. 25. Water essential role in wet felting (top right and left), washing off free embroidery starch base sheets (bottom left), ceramic making, and mud patina (bottom right), Termeh Ghazi, OCAD U, Feb. 2024.



### *Recorded video*

In order to generate an immersive experience for the audience viewing my installation, I included a short video documenting the project's creation process (fig. 26). In this addition, I shared my artistic journey with the audience, engaging them through my multi-sensory experience that incorporates visual, auditory, and tactile elements. The video highlighted the labor and thoughtful considerations that went into the installation, creating a deeper connection and understanding between the viewers and the artwork.



Fig. 26. Recorded video scenes share different creation phases, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.

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## *Lighting*

Lighting played a pivotal role in enhancing my installation's immersive quality. Lighting was not considered a central strategy in the conceptual phase. However, its value became evident when installing the project and experimenting with different lights in the exhibition space.

Lighting transformed the space by adding sensory stimulation and thus enhancing the viewer's experience. Textile details were highlighted by the interplay between light and shadow on the textural surfaces. Not only the lights illuminate the artwork, but it also added energy to the space and making it more engaging as a curatorial commentary.



Fig. 27. Lighting creates dynamic shadows and enhances the depth and dimension of varied textures, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.



## Results and future plans

Incorporating diverse materials enables me to explore and express complex themes related to environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. Each material brings its own set of properties and advantages, allowing for a dynamic and multifaceted approach to mixed media art. Through the interplay of these elements, my installation seeks to create an immersive experience that engages viewers on a sensory level, encouraging them to consider the issue of water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchistan critically. By utilizing various natural materials, I underscore textile art's transformative potential in raising awareness and inspiring responsibility for natural resources.

This artwork depicts surrealistic scenes based on the current condition of humans, as well as non-humans, and the imagined future of local cultural heritage impacted by water shortages. The flexibility and potential of my mediums created a platform to visualize and facilitate a dialogue on local water challenges in Sistan and Baluchistan (fig. 28).



Fig. 28. Final phases of the installation, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.

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Fig. 29. The final view of the surreal tree, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.

The surreal tree's layout symbolizes the cultural disintegration caused by water scarcity and highlights the strength of community solidarity as a tool for survival (fig. 29).

As I believe nature's elements are connected beyond geographical and political boundaries, collecting fallen tree barks on the ground in the fall was a way that connected me with my natural surroundings. My symbolic gesture emphasizes shared  
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responsibility and interconnectedness in addressing global environmental issues, such as drought and water scarcity. By incorporating materials from my current home in Toronto into my installation that addresses issues in Iran, I highlight the global nature of environmental crises. This interconnectedness mirrors Aldo Leopold's concept of a land ethic, where we see land as a community to which we belong, fostering love and respect for all parts of the Earth. As Leopold states, "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may use it with love and respect" (Aldo Leopold Nature Center). This approach enriches my art with a diverse palette of materials and textures while strengthening the narrative of environmental stewardship and cultural heritage preservation. By employing pieces from nature into my installation work, I emphasize the idea that our actions and resources are globally linked, reinforcing the urgent need for a unified effort to address environmental issues, regardless of national boundaries.



Fig. 30. Coiled roots in a dynamic composition symbolize challenges of getting to the water, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.

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The rest of the piece is full of unbounded coiled parts on the wall to represent dried and semi-dried branches and those over the floor resembling dried roots and torn bushes attached to the main body on one end but floating in space on the other. Coiled pieces evoke a sense of growth and movement, adding energy and life to the space on the one hand. On the other hand, they are symbols of completion and challenges reaching out to drops of water. The organic shapes of the roots in the installation symbolize the interconnectedness of growth and the challenges faced in reaching resources, such as water (fig. 30).

Lace/fishnet parts of the installation represent the torn warp and weft of this region's land fiber. They can be counted as hidden joints of the land which reflect the miraculous power of its residents' culture and heritage. Threads of strength, resilience, and unity bind the fibers of this thirsty region while symbolizing the region's shared history, values and traditions.



Fig. 31. Lace pieces symbolize shredded land fibers, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slight Gallery, Apr. 2024.



Moss symbolizes resilience and strength to me, as it grows slowly yet persistently wherever there is moisture, despite not being deliberately planted. I aimed to capture this symbol in my pieces by creating small, knitted elements that resemble moss. These pieces serve as a reminder of hope and resilience, suggesting that even in the most challenging times, positive changes can gradually occur (fig. 32).



Fig. 32. Knitted moss represents hope and resilience in the final installation.



Fig. 33. A shot of the final installation, Termeh Ghazi, Ada Slaight Gallery, Apr. 2024.

Returning to my origin story as an Iranian woman artist in Canada, my science background has profoundly shaped my artistic practice. This background has enabled me to integrate detailed observations and meticulous processes into my textile art, highlighting the intricate connections between natural elements and human activities. Reflecting on my journey, the transition from science to art has allowed me to merge analytical rigor with an emphasis on micro phenomena in microbiology—such microscopic, often invisible factors that have real-world consequences—parallels my approach to art. In my installations, I aim to make the invisible visible, drawing attention to often-overlooked environmental and cultural issues, such as water scarcity in Sistan  
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and Baluchistan. By incorporating natural materials and traditional techniques, I emphasize the importance of preserving both our natural resources and cultural heritage. This interdisciplinary approach underscores the necessity of paying attention to our environment's subtleties and nuances. Just as microorganisms play crucial roles in ecological health, minor changes and interventions in our behavior and policies can lead to significant impacts. My art practice seeks to foster a deeper understanding of these connections, encouraging viewers to recognize and act upon the micro phenomena that shape our world. I would like to draw attention to the severe climate issue of the Sistan and Baluchistan region, notably the increase in seasonal sandstorm duration. Originally, the region experienced around 120 days of sandstorms each year, but this has now extended to 160-200 days (World Bank). These storms, characterized by their intensity and duration, have significantly impacted the daily lives and health of the area's residents. For instance, prolonged exposure to sandstorms has led to severe eye irritation and respiratory issues, as residents cover their faces to protect themselves from the pervasive dust and debris (Smith 45-67). This environmental crisis not only reflects the broader issues of climate change but also serves as a poignant example of how small-scale environmental shifts can have profound effects on communities.

Looking forward, my work aims to bridge the gap between art and community engagement. For the next step, I plan to collaborate with diverse community members, including those outside the traditional art sphere, to enrich my projects with their stories, experiences, and traditional knowledge. It is my intention to emphasize the interconnectedness of human experiences and environmental challenges by incorporating these narratives into my future work and giving credits to their

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contributors. In addition to broadening the scope of my art, this collaborative approach also generates a more inclusive discussion about climate issues, with implications for both the art world and communities directly affected.



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