

*Ways of Being Here: The Making of Immigrant Subjects*

by

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis project investigates how contemporary artists articulate immigrant positionality in their work. It asks: how are notions of selfhood taken up in contemporary art practice to speak to the political and affective dimensions of moving from one place to another, and consequently establishing oneself in relation to multiple locations? The exhibition *Ways of Being Here*—featuring works by Abedar Kamgari, Rah, and Alize Zorlutuna—was conceived to answer this question. The works in the exhibition performed the tensions inherent in negotiating multiple cultural and individual identities. This feminist thesis project argues that the works in the exhibition challenged the normative multiculturalism demanded by official Canadian discourse. It insists that current art practice responds to the need for a renewed political consideration of the realities of being an immigrant in Canada today. In doing so, this thesis informs a broader cultural understanding of the local, national, and international dimensions of global migration.

Keywords: Canada, contemporary art, critiques of nationalism, curating, diaspora, exhibitions, feminism, immigration

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## **Curatorial Essay**

### *Ways of Being Here – The Making of Immigrant Subjects*

*Ways of Being Here* centres on a key question. What potential does the artwork hold as a site for investigating how immigrants are formed as subjects in Canada today? The exhibition examines this question by bringing together the work of three emerging local artists whose practices consider how we conceive of ourselves in relation to the places in which we live. The works of Abedar Kamgari, Rah, and Alize Zorlutuna explore notions of the ambivalent immigrant Canadian subject.

*Ways of Being Here* is driven by a political position that seeks to resist normative oppressive systems of power and instead privilege minority voices that have historically been under-recognized. It critiques both the demands for prescribed articulations of difference and the regulation of voices that multiculturalism creates. Critics have argued that multiculturalism—as a celebration of harmonious diversity—emerges from institutionalized and nationalist Canadian rhetoric (Bannerji 2000; Day 2000). Such rhetoric is indebted to, and seeks to obscure the country's legacies of colonialism. Within the context of global migration, it is imperative to critically consider the ways in which recent immigrants to

Canada can ethically live on this land in light of the issues of aboriginal sovereignty and land claims (Thobani 2007; Sharma and Wright 2008).

Multiculturalism acts as a veil that enables a national disavowal of the country's colonial history and present, and as the banner under which immigrants to Canada become subjects—that is, simultaneously make themselves legible and are made legible within the state (Bannerji 2000; Day 2000). Richard Day explains Canadian multiculturalism as an already achieved ideal of unity, as the aim towards this ideal (one that is in fact ever actually achievable), and as a policy that both asserts and strives towards that ideal (Day 2000: 6). As a policy, multiculturalism does not encourage the process (implicit in the concept of diversity) of persons becoming and being individuals, but in fact seeks to manage this process. Scholars hold that whatever individuation there is in Canada, it exists in spite of the multiculturalism promoted by the state (Bannerji 2000; Day 2000). *Ways of Being Here* aligns itself with such a critique of the function of multiculturalism. It holds that multiculturalism as ideology and policy operates ubiquitously, and that its effects are materially felt daily. It imagines how resistance to notions of multiculturalism produces fundamentally different conceptions of equality and community. The exhibition considers it necessary to dismantle the homogenous construction of what multiculturalism is and can be. It hopes to contribute



to such dismantling by presenting diverse perspectives that do not replicate the harmonious diversity implied by multicultural ideals. The works in the exhibition demonstrate an awareness of both the political and geographical specificity of Canada as the backdrop to the conditions of their production and public presentation. Although they do not address Canada explicitly, their performance of meaning and positioning within the exhibition aim to resist homogenous and singular ideals.

*Ways of Being Here* features the work of women artists—a decision that is both deliberate and critical. Abedar Kamgari identifies herself as an Iranian-Canadian artist, Rah as an Iranian-Canadian as well as a Persian artist, and Alize Zorlutuna as a Turkish-Canadian, queer, and Muslim artist. While it is important to acknowledge that all three artists have Middle Eastern and Islamic backgrounds, the exhibition seeks to privilege the specificity and heterogeneity of the experience enacted by the works of each artist. *Ways of Being Here* positions itself within an intersectional feminist politics to better grasp the particular identities and perspectives articulated by the works it presents. Intersectionality can be understood as a conceptual analytic tool to think about the multiple ways in which various forms of oppression function on material bodies (Crenshaw 1989). As such, intersectional feminism allows for alliances with movements that similarly work against the cultural, economic, and

social oppression of peoples. The work of feminism to dismantle hetero-patriarchy's constant fixing of "woman" into a stable representative register that can be commodified, and consequently rendered valuable for the late capitalist moment of today, parallels this project's aims. *Ways of Being Here* strives to resist and disrupt the neoliberal project to transform the immigrant into a stable and manageable category against which to create ideological national unity. Similarly, the exhibition does not seek to remediate the exclusion of women from the artistic canon. Rather, it aims to draw attention to the fact that their systematic absence within this canon is part of the broader hetero-patriarchal structure that needs to be actively challenged. My intersectional feminist politics celebrates the multiplicity of perspective and voice. *Ways of Being Here* endeavours not to reproduce multiplicity as unity itself. Instead it privileges disjunction, contradiction, and friction as simultaneously possible modes of being in community and as individuals.

The present artistic moment differs from the predominantly medium-specific works of artists of the 1990's and early 2000's such as Richard Fung, Jamelie Hassan, Peter Karuna, and Jin-me Yoon, where the themes of immigrant and diasporic identity were explored via pointed socio-cultural and artistic critique. The current stage of globalization encroaches on all aspects of life and therefore restricts the possibility of

bracketing out a single socio-cultural or socio-geographical concern effectively. In this context, politically effective artistic production inextricably links form and content. It moves laterally across both to discuss multiple themes at once. This mode of art-making is also consistent with the current stage of neoliberal late-capitalism where geographic and temporal delimitations are perpetually and destabilizingly in flux<sup>1</sup>. This historical juncture coheres with how current art practices address the interweaving operation of pressing social questions. Rather than isolating thematic social concerns nationally, and privileging medium specificity in doing so, artists mobilize them together in order to better comment on the present socio-cultural conditions. Artists demonstrate a consciousness towards the multitude of forms of oppression and privilege that inform the choice of medium, topic, exhibition context, etc. of each artistic undertaking, for both those who make *and* interpret artworks. The works that are presented in *Ways of Being Here* inform a multi-perspectival investigation of identity. In making art about their immigrant histories and multiple presents, Kamgari, Rah and Zorlutuna work from an

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<sup>1</sup> For a set of excellent discussions on how the artistic and cultural discourses on identity politics are shifting with increased globalization see: Gagnon, Monika, Richard Fung, and Cameron Bailey. 2002. *13 Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics*. Montreal: Artextes Editions.

explicitly intersectional perspective that brings questions of gender, class and sexuality directly to their work.

### *Multiplying Selves*

The works in *Ways of Being Here* address the idea that being an immigrant entails having multiple subjectivities. Immigrant subjectivity is a complex and non-singular social construct. This notion has and continues to be expounded in postcolonial and diaspora cultural theories that argue for multiplicity, and more specifically duality, as an important characteristic of the identity of persons who have been displaced and/or who have moved. For instance, post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha has established the notion of multiplicity in identity in terms of hybridity and hyphenation<sup>2</sup> (1994). The person—who lives in a different place than the place she is from—has to navigate her constantly changing relationship to both her initial cultural context and the present one. The subject whose cultural identity is multiple can never fully “fit” in either cultural context: she invariably maintains both. This results in a tension in her identity. Bhabha contends that it is through and against this tension

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<sup>2</sup> Bhabha states that: “hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements [of one’s identity] as the basis of cultural identifications” (1994: 219). For more, see chapter “How Newness Enters the World” in *The Location of Culture*, 1994.

that this person conceives of her cultural and individual identities (Ibid.). *Ways of Being Here* explores the context of contemporary immigration and focuses on the concept of the hyphen. The notion of the hyphen applies specifically to the subjective multiple cultural and geographic allegiances of the migrant person. Scholars have explained the concept of “hyphen identity” in these terms: “for those of us [...] whose corporealities fissure the logic of unproblematic identification, plural/multicultural societies have constructed the impure genre of the hyphenated subject” (Mishra 1996: 433). Having a “hyphen identity” can be understood as an “empoweringly-disempowered” state. While this notion of identity problematizes the ideal of being a singular and therefore whole subject, the notion of identity as hyphenated, or “on the hyphen”, can also be a productive framework by which the immigrant person can establish her identity (Ibid.) “Hyphen identity” can thus be loosely defined as a person’s abstract negotiation of, and constant subjective (re)positioning against, the intersecting, contradictory, and complementary social, cultural, and geographical characters of two places. The idea of hyphen identity as allowing for multiplicity in identity is particularly salient to the explorations of selfhood undertaken by Rah in *The Sound of Strings* (2012), Alize Zorlutuna in *Inheritance* (2013), and Abedar Kamgari in the works that comprise her series *Traces*.

Artists have utilized a variety of tactics to represent multiple co-existing aspects of a person's identity in visual terms. The split screen, for instance, is a clever technical strategy available within video art. Using two or more channels to make up one work allows the artist to capture two simultaneously present realities within one instance of viewership. Video artist Richard Fung's *Jehad in Motion* (2007), in which its protagonist Palestinian-Canadian Jehad travels to his homeland of Hebron on one screen, and performs quotidian tasks in his host country of Canada on the other, stands as one of the best known examples of the use of this device to depict the immigrant person's negotiation of duality in Canadian video art practice. In *Ways of Being Here*, artists Rah and Alize Zorlutuna both employ the split screen to make visible their embodiment of cultural, racial, and sexual differences. Abedar Kamgari does not utilize the multichannel technique; instead, notions of hyphenation in identity are articulated through the multi-installation format of Kamgari's series and the multi-material character of each installation.

Rah's video work *The Sound of Strings* (2012) makes direct use of the split screen to represent how two cultural identities can simultaneously occur within one subject. *The Sound of Strings* presents the artist as subject of the work: two images of the artist's face are seen throughout the duration of the four-and-a-half-minute video. On the left

side of the screen, the artist is shown facing the camera in the process of threading her facial hair; on the right she wears the chador, sewing it up over her face throughout the course of the work. A santoor stack unites the two frames. From the outset, the work presents culturally specific symbols—threading, the chador, and the santoor. Threading is a form of facial depilation that originates in Middle Eastern countries; the chador is a piece of cloth which covers the whole body worn by women in Islamic countries to designate their religious affiliation; and the santoor is a historical multistring instrument that is played principally in Middle Eastern countries (Rah 2016). Upon quick viewing, the two acts being performed read as rather banal illustrations of Middle Eastern cultural practices as they are enacted in a Canadian artistic and exhibitionary context. And yet, neither separately nor in conjunction do the two clips enable any substantive insight into the context (personal, cultural, political etc.) of the acts. The threading process merely ends, leaving Rah staring at us motionlessly; the chador is sewn up and disappears by merging with the black background.

The artist's performance of threading and sewing is theatrical insofar as it is painstakingly deliberate and does not yield itself to be comfortably read as an earnest or intimate look into the protagonist's identity. On the contrary, the thirty seconds at the opening of the work

that precede the action during which the viewer looks at her two faces, one covered with a scarf, the other not, do not provide her with any insight into the performer's "identity" at all. The segment does not serve as an entry point into the seeming protagonist of the work. It establishes the artist as a blank screen for the action about to unfold. Although there are two images of the protagonist-artist—which, according to the hyphen theory, should enable the viewer to get a better understanding of her identity—the work ultimately denies the viewer access. Rah's disappearance behind the acts she performs can be generously interpreted as a comment on the possible pitfalls of interpretation when attempting to comprehend the relationship between cultural practices and identity. It can also be understood as a somewhat didactic challenge of the notion that it is possible to interpret, or gain insight into a person's identity through the visual. Given the current context of heightened Islamophobia across the world, being this didactic may be necessary.

The two actions that Rah performs in *Sound of Strings* also suggest reading the work in terms of feminized work, of self presentation, and of ritual. And yet, the matter-of-factness with which the acts are performed challenges, to a degree, extrapolating from them in such terms. In the cultural specificity of its representation, *Sound of Strings* inevitably engenders different levels of engagement depending on the



viewer. However, the work also transcends its cultural specificity through the disaffected and aestheticized manner in which the artist performs the threading and sewing actions. One of the most apt parallels to be drawn between her two acts emerges in the use of thread. Once it appears as a principal visual link unifying the two views, the possible personal, religious, and political implications of the work are destabilized. An illustration of culturally- and religiously-specific practices is turned into an exploration of the possible everyday uses of string in Middle Eastern cultures. This subversion of meaning is consistent with Rah's broader practice, which mixes the playful and the serious to intentionally position the viewer in an unmistakably uncomfortable position.

*Sound of Strings* does not make a direct political claim. It does not state the relationship of its subject matter to the broader socio-cultural context within which it exists. Rather, it "strings" the viewer along, allowing her to take the time to explore the two faces and performances to ultimately reveal an underwhelming and comical link—the strings of the santoor, as much as the strings used to thread and sew, are what sutures the work together. As the image of the artist in the sewn up chador is enveloped by the black background and disappears completely out of view, the viewer is left with an image of the artist intensely looking out from the left side on the screen. The ending of the work does not signal a

moment of resolution in the abnegation of one side of the hyphen, or a forced moment of coming to terms. Rather, the blank side of the screen reminds the viewer of the constant presence of the second, that which is rendered invisible by the demand of coherence. The artist's stare is resistant, defiant, weary in its blankness, and challenges the viewer to not yield to the convenience of disavowing one side of the hyphen. Instead, *Sound of Strings* invites the viewer to hold the gaze of the artist and remain present in the silence that closes the work.

The use of the multiple screen is productive not only to illustrate oppositions and tensions in embodying manifold cultural identities. It also enables the artist to visualize the complementary, contradictory, and incongruous aspects of a person's identity that are caused by their hyphenation and negotiated within the single whole that is the body. Alize Zorlutuna's *Inheritance* (2013) exemplifies the use of the multichannel technique to explore notions of embodiment. The work consists of three channels united by a single humming drone sound that plays throughout the duration of the work. A different action is performed on each channel: during the course of *Inheritance*, the naked protagonist manipulates a crocheted table cloth by stuffing it in her mouth, hiding herself beneath it and masturbating, and kissing it. The intimate actions that take place in the frames provide only partial access to the protagonist. She does not

look at the viewer and is cropped in each frame so as to provide only a partial view of her face and body. *Inheritance* examines political questions of cultural belonging, sexuality, and gender through an exploration of the physical and affective.

The tablecloth in the work is an item that Zorlutuna's Turkish grandmother knitted throughout the course of her life, an object that the artist reveres, which symbolizes both tradition and community, both familial identity and homeland history. Through the careful, delicate, and loving handling of the table cloth, *Inheritance* articulates multiple aspects of identity, as well as its unification and, to a degree, its harmonization, in a single instance of viewership. Zorlutuna speaks of *Inheritance* in terms of an exploration of embodied and transcultural queer desire as it relates to her Muslim heritage (2016). The use of the multiple channels allows the artist to take up sexuality, culture, and genealogy simultaneously, and in doing so assert herself as an embodied "multi-cultural" being. Being "multi-cultural" entails being across and within multiple cultures, rather than being "multicultural" which necessitates a resolved relationship to one's culture(s) in a way that is coherent with the dominant modes of being in Canada<sup>3</sup>. Throughout the work, the artist as protagonist is not

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<sup>3</sup> The provisional definition of the "multi-cultural" offered above owes to feminist physicist Karen Barad's notion of "intra-action" whereby the

tense at all, she is almost procedurally, or rather experimentally, immersed in the actions she performs. The artist shows her reverence towards the crocheted tablecloth by kissing it. She uses it as a tool for plugging her mouth to self-silence, and for hiding under to masturbate. The tablecloth can be read as a metaphor for how identities are shaped in and across two cultures. Individuation—the process of becoming an individual—occurs through the emerging tensions in the work: between the title and the action, and between the different actions themselves.

Although the tools of the exploration—her body and the table cloth—are undoubtedly personal, the exploration as such effectively transcends the personal. *Inheritance* makes a case for the importance and role of the corporeal as a site where understanding oneself as a multi-cultural person can be gained. Framing notions of difference in positively abstract terms of cultural identity enables current multicultural ideology to not only obscure, but actually disavow the concretely material—and too often violent—implications of ethnic, racial, and sexual differences (Chow 2002: 14-15). The results of difference are not immaterial: they are felt physically in and on the body. The extended

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person performing the action does not precede the action but is co-constitutive with the action (Barad 2012). Similarly, someone who is multi-cultural is made through the relationship to multiple cultures.

droning hum that resounds within, around, and throughout the three frames of *Inheritance* originates from the mouth of the protagonist in the left frame, and immediately transcends it. The soundscape metaphorically enacts the symbiotic relationship between abstract and embodied forms of difference.

Kamgari's *Traces*, a series comprised of five works and presented in its entirety in the exhibition, enacts the notion of the hyphen by presenting multiple geographies and temporalities. These multiplicities, hyphens, and dualities are actualized in Kamgari's works by their relationship to each other in the gallery space, by the juxtaposition of materials and images in each installation, and by the multiple places that are represented within them. The series exemplifies how the hyphen as a state of being is not a static mode—the relationship between the two terms that make up the hyphen alters continuously.

Each of the five pieces that make up *Traces* presents a particular perspective on the artist's understanding of herself. This understanding emerges, in part, from the tensions produced by her relationship to her past and present. For Kamgari, these two states are and have been situated in Iran, Turkey, and most recently Toronto and Hamilton. The works are located in these multiple places and times through their materials. The materials originate from and relate to specific places for

the artist. In *Great White North* (2015) for instance, a Google street view snapshot of Kamgari's first Canadian home is positioned next to a photograph of flowing water. On top of the photos lies a clump of dried sabzeh, an Iranian wheatgrass used in ceremonies during the Persian New Year celebration. On the thirteenth day of festivities, the grass is thrown into a flowing body of water in order to bring prosperity for the coming year. Recently however, Iran has experienced drought which has led to the grass being left on the side of the road, to wilt and dry out instead of being utilized for its ceremonial purpose (Kamgari 2016). The work represents more than one place and time, and visually demands a constant shift in perspective from one to another. The work's strength lies in the fact that it *shifts* between places and times: it achieves this without notice or transitory markers for the viewer. As such *Great White North* replicates how the immigrant person holds within themselves, and constantly navigates, multiple places, times, and associations that come with these past places.

The dichotomy between the dried grass and the image of the first house—the former a symbol of lost community and joy, and the latter, an antiseptic signal of the promise of immigration—marks a lasting melancholic relationship with expectation and hope both in Iran and Canada. Melancholy—the Freudian concept of pathological circuitous

grief in opposition to mourning which is a linear form of coping with loss—has been identified by scholars as a productive mode of resistance for the immigrant who does not want to disavow her history and culture in order to fully take on the social and cultural demands of the nation state in which she lives (Ahmed 2010). Others, however, have argued that melancholy as a mode of resistance is productive only to a point: ultimately it disallows the possibility to achieving cultural equivalence (Chow 2008: 577). Kamgari's works effectively situate the fact that the immigrant person negotiates her present in light of her relationship to past places and times. Whether or not the melancholy in Kamgari's works limit their potential effectiveness remains an open question<sup>4</sup>. What is certain is that *Traces* metaphorically enacts the *imperceptible* yet palpable shifts in cultures, identities, and places the migrant subject experiences.

#### Resistance in [Self] Installation

The works in *Ways of Being Here* suggest that being an immigrant in Canada produces mutable, uneasy, and at times contradictory realities, rather than harmoniously coherent ways of being. The artists in *Ways of*

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the topic of melancholia as a potentially productive mode of being see: Eng, David L., and Shinhee Han. 2000. "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia". *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 10 (4): 667-700.

*Being Here* explore notions of coherence as they pertain to the multiplicities in their identity. These explorations can be linked to the nation's abstract demands for coherence—the coherence necessary to be a good subject of the state. Instead of arguing against such demands explicitly, Kamgari, Rah, and Zorlutuna undermine them by celebrating heterogeneity through a conscious and active installation of themselves as subjects of their own work.

To articulate how identity is not harmoniously coherent, Kamgari utilizes the installation of her materials rather than herself. The artist explores the ways in which it is possible to represent the multiple and diverse elements that can make up a person's identity through the objects and photographs that comprise her works. For instance, the bird's nest in *Anyone Home?* (2015) was found during a walk home and instantly concretized what the work was going to be. The bird's nest provided Kamgari with a new perspective from which to reinvestigate the themes of loss and disappointment, particularly around her familial ties and migration histories—these themes run throughout *Traces* as the loci for Kamgari's understanding of her identity (Kamgari 2016). They are gestured at in *Anyone Home?* by the faded family photograph that is the basis of the installation. The juxtaposition of the bird's nest and photograph, as well as the title, point to a private family history, to the



passing of time, and to the precariousness of notions of home. However, there is no clear, *coherent*, overarching relationship between the different elements—the meanings derived are speculative, provisional, subjective. The understated, poetic, and tentative aspects of the installation can be understood as a direct resistance to the demands of legibility.

The degree of chance in Kamgari's process of making *Dundurn St* (2015) (the metal elements that comprise the work are arbitrary), and the specificity of the final result that is the work (the neatly aligned objects that run along the bottom of the photo installation) parallel the artist's own identity. Kamgari's personal and family history of movement and immigration is one over which she had no voice. Her current choice of Hamilton as the city where she lives and studies however, as well as her rigorous artistic practice, illustrate her personal agency. The metal objects making up the installation were gathered over a period of time during the artist's ritual walks along Dundurn St. from her student home to the Hamilton bus station where she would take the bus to visit her mother in Toronto—the place she originally immigrated to (Kamgari 2016). Though the relationship between the gathering of materials and their installation alludes to the degrees of agency Kamgari has had over shaping her own identity, it is ultimately through her relationship to *both* places that the artist actualizes her subjectivity. The making of *Dundurn St.* necessitates

both cities. The work maintains an active relationship to Toronto and Hamilton and, as such, disallows for an authoritarian privileging of a singular dominating and coherent localization of identity. Instead, it asserts the value of conceiving of oneself through multiple places.

The artists in *Ways of Being Here* approach the notion of resistance to the demands for coherence in diverse ways. Where Kamgari's works are at times opaque and allusive, Rah's work is pointed and direct. *Oriental Drag* (2013) is exemplary of the ironically subversive politics that run through Rah's practice. Throughout the three-minute looping stop-motion digital video, the artist stages herself dressed in what she terms in the work's title as "oriental" clothing. The artist's deliberate self-installation in this work states her authority over her subjectification. The inclusion of the staging of the work within the frame of the action gestures at the intentionality behind the artist's self-subjectification. Rah explicitly layers her clothing, the objects she manipulates as she dances, *and* the images of the work itself. The movement the juxtapositions create undermines the actual possibility of subjectifying the subject of the work. The stop-motion structurally disallows the viewer from locating the dancing Rah for more than a split second—by embracing movement and playfulness, the artist literally prevents herself from being fixed by the work and the implicit viewer. By

explicitly positioning herself as subject, and then disallowing the viewers from effectively subjectifying her, Rah turns the prohibition into an act of affirmation of her agency.

The notion that diverging aspects of identity can cohere within one person is an interest that informs Zorlutuna's entire practice. Considered side by side, *Inheritance* and *Zugunruhe*, yield a productive interpretive tension for mining how installation, as concept and format, informs this interest. Although *Inheritance* is not an installation work, it installs its subject very specifically within the frame in which it wants to be read. In contrast, *Zugunruhe* is installation at its best: it transcends sculpture by actively encroaching upon its environment. *Inheritance* presents multiple simultaneous perspectives, and in doing so, acknowledges the fruitful potentiality of disparate multiplicities. In *Zugunruhe*, a series of cups are installed along two contiguous sides atop a square plinth to create an arrow pointing in a cardinal direction. This work also presents multiple perspectives that are held in tension—the cups are arranged to aim in one direction, and tilt in the opposite direction. The compass by the work authenticates its orientation: the work points in the empirically true west. Contrary to the simultaneously occurring multiple perspectives of *Inheritance*, the duality in *Zugunruhe* is presented as physically fixed in one place. The notion that the work holds two perspectives in tension is

suggested by the square geometry and oblique tilt of table on which the cups rest, as well as the compass. Unlike *Inheritance* which, to a degree, positively embraces cultural and personal history by imbuing it with desire and pleasure, *Zugunruhe* gestures at the precariousness in maintaining multiple (cultural and personal) identities within one place. Although *Zugunruhe* is immobile and solidly rests on the floor pointing west, the tea within the cups tilts eastward. Although the work, like the artist's identity, is physically in the West, it maintains an active internal orientation to the eastward located homeland of Turkey and its cultural practices. *Zugunruhe* exemplifies how installation, both conceptually and materially, can serve to visualize a resistance towards singularly coherent notions of identity.

#### *Negotiating Active Practice and Participation*

*Ways of Being Here* is committed to the multiplicity not only of cultural identities but also of perspectives, voices, and conversations about migrant identity. This commitment does not present itself didactically but emerges both in the exhibition format—through the presentation of multiple artists that consequently share a similar conversation—and in the practices and works of the artists themselves. Resistance to a singular perspective—both in and toward the works—is enacted in two principal

ways. It is acted out through participation in the creation of the works, and the active engagement with them in the space of the exhibition.

Rah's performance *Oriental Dance Workshop* is a live participatory event that demands the physical participation of its public. For approximately forty minutes, Fatimeh, Rah's "Oriental" character, teaches the participants how to dance like a "true oriental". *Oriental Dance Workshop* most conspicuously demonstrates a commitment to bringing to light seemingly historically distant, yet constantly reiterated, hegemonic orientalist narratives, the perpetuation of which maintains a fundamentally racist status quo. The dance teacher enthusiastically eggs the audience to follow her movements and to perform the supposed silly voice-exercises and dance moves of the "oriental". As this interaction unfolds, the work implicitly asks the question: who authorizes the mimicry, the citation, the repetition of this "oriental" dance? Although there may be concrete answers to this question, and the unabashed commanding posture of Rah's performance persona implicitly tells her audience that there are, neither Rah the artist or Fatimeh the dance teacher ever articulates a direct authorization.

The seeming ambivalence of *Oriental Dance Workshop* could be construed as a tactic to avoid taking a clear position towards the the national and cultural politics of the work. However, this ambivalence

produces a necessary discomfort in the participant of Rah's "workshop". This discomfort is productive in that it actualizes the broader cultural implications of the performance. *Oriental Dance Workshop* brings to light how Western audiences negotiate issues of cultural appropriation, and of knowing and being able to claim representations as "cultural". Rah engages in the conversation critically—the persona conducting the workshop is well aware of the relationship between the "authentic oriental" and her potential audiences. And yet the workshop never loses its humour, never succumbs to a direct analysis of the action—it creates a safe space for the participants to let go, engage in the activity, and then discuss the implications. Maybe the space is too safe, maybe the participation in the performance is in fact a representation of a broader reality. Rah does not tell her audiences.

In contrast to the almost forced participation in Rah's "workshop", participating in Zorlutuna's *Zugunruhe* is in no way a direct action. The work alters throughout the course of the exhibition as the tea evaporates from the cups a little more with each passing day. The viewer experiences the work in a single instance, when Zorlutuna fills up the cups at the opening, or perhaps on the third day of the exhibition when they are still almost full, or on the last day when the rings of evaporation have run down almost to the bottom of each cup as what remains of the tea has

started to mould. The changing nature of *Zugunruhe* aligns it with feminist notions of becoming. For instance, feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (2005) conceives of becoming specifically as duration and self-differentiation. She states: “[d]uration is difference, the inevitable force of differentiation and elaboration, which is also another name for becoming” (Ibid). This framework for understanding how the world operates is productive for conceptualizations of identity as constantly in production through representation and as a *constant* negotiation of a multiplicity of geographical allegiances within the single person (Hall 1996; Gilroy 1993). As it shifts throughout the course of the exhibition, *Zugunruhe* embodies the notion of “becoming”. The work moves materially through time and conceptually through place. By structurally and thematically privileging “becoming”, *Zugunruhe* prohibits authoritative viewership and, consequently, the production of a singular authoritative narrative about its meaning. Viewed in these terms, *Zugunruhe* relies on the viewer to make its *always partial* meaning. This partiality has to be understood not only in terms of insufficiency (the viewer never experiences the “whole” work) but also in terms of a necessary multiplicity (*Zugunruhe* is never locatable as one work, it is always changing and therefore different). The meaning of the work is realized when the viewer becomes conscious of its fundamental partiality.

*Zugunruhe* depicts the tension between wholeness and partiality. The single westward-pointing compass and arrow-shaped edge allude to an essential and singular coherent referent as the underlying meaning of the work. However, this positioning acts in contrast to notions of “Eastern” communal tea ceremony practices that are implied by the tea cups, tea, and nearby teapot. By presenting this tension, *Zugunruhe* metaphorically states the immigrant person’s necessary constant negotiation of multiple cultural contexts. The two directions, the places for which they stand, are held in tension by the work, as they are by the immigrant, in a moment dependent and shifting balance of power. In performing an identity in the process of becoming, *Zugunruhe* intrinsically resists fixity and affirms the capacity of heterogeneity.

Kamgari’s works do not demand participation as such. However, the movement and down cast looking (actively embodied actions) that they necessitate can be understood as forms of active engagement akin to participatory action. Each work in the series can be effectively read as a single piece in a single moment of viewership. However, their presentation as a series in *the present exhibition* positions each work as belonging to a provisional yet cohesive whole. Such cohesiveness can be experienced by the viewer by physically moving across the gallery space. Kamgari’s works provide a metaphorical road map through the



exhibition—one that is necessarily slightly different for each viewer. The path taken to view Kamgari's works alludes to the ways in which movement plays a part in, and structures, our self-understanding. Walking across the gallery, stopping to view each work, deriving meaning from each piece, and then cohering the works and their meaning into the one overarching series metonymically enacts the ways in which the processes of migration contribute to shaping the identity of immigrants.

Moreover, the viewer-participant who walks among the different works mimics the artist's own process of walking. Kamgari's walking practice is integral to finding the materials that make up her work. The practice of looking down as she walks—an act Kamgari understands as being demanded of women by Islamic cultures, which she herself unwittingly espouses, and which she seeks to oblige the viewers to do as well—is what leads her to be attentive enough to spot the found materials used in her pieces (2016). In this way, *Traces* encapsulates the irrevocable tensions of past and present cultural and geographical contexts for the immigrant person. The past cultural demand to look downward and its lasting effect on the artist is both problematic and fruitful: Kamgari's works embody contradictions that are frustrating and uncomfortable, but also productive. As such, they can be read as an affirmation of the value of multiplicity and incongruity: the works in *Traces*

prohibit singular and static interpretation. Participation enables not only Kamgari's works, but the exhibition as a whole, to privilege different, and numerous ways of engaging with art.

*Multiplicity, Access, Participation: Concluding Ways of Being Here*

The works of Abedar Kamgari, Rah, and Alize Zorlutuna explore notions of identity formation. They examine how being an immigrant, and having an active relationship to the place in which one lives and where one has lived, informs the development of subjective identity. *Ways of Being Here* presents the poetic, incongruous, affirmative, fraught, and melancholic results of this examination. Kamgari, Rah, and Zorlutuna consider how immigrants come to understand themselves as individuals within a nation that imposes specific demands on them. They do so by exploring the multiple elements that can make up identity, by installing themselves as subjects of their own work, and by demanding active participation from viewers.

*Ways of Being Here* showcases the works of these three artists to gain a better perspective of the relationship between identity and place. It proposes different ways to understand the realities of immigration and of being in community. The exhibition also seeks to enable its audiences to consider contemporary artistic production critically within its broader cultural—and therefore political—contexts. The contemporary landscape

of global immigration and the current Canadian political climate, especially in Toronto, a city which prides itself so strongly on being multicultural, has led to the production of socially engaged art on the subject of immigration. Immigration, immigrant identity, and the ways in which people navigate multiple cultures, are incredibly salient and urgent topics for exhibitions. By addressing these topics, *Ways of Being Here* hopefully asserts their cultural valence, and positively contributes to the much-needed conversation—which regrettably has been a perpetual murmur—about the contradictions, problems, and benefits of immigrant life in Canada.

## **Support Paper**

### **Introduction**

*Ways of Being Here* is grounded on the premise that artistic practice—particularly when it is mobilized in the form of a curatorial project—is a valuable site to investigate the relationship between the nation and the immigrant subject. As a dominant medium for imagining such relationships, literature is a powerful locus to understand the intricate power dynamics between immigrant identities and the nation states in which they are formed: it has long served as an analytical site for cultural theory on migration and national identity. Although this project owes to literature and at times deploys literary tropes, it also reflects my deep suspicion of words—especially because of their slippery yet paradoxically rigid and necessarily linear quality. As a counterpoint to this representational form, I was thus drawn to the visual arts as they necessitate an extra-visual engagement and transcend linear structures. I argue that the visual arts may serve as a more apt setting to mine or investigate the dynamics at play between the immigrant subject and the Canadian nation, and the ways in which these dynamics inform contemporary art production in this country. With this aim, this project considers the practice of three artists working in Canada generally, and

Toronto specifically. I contend that it is possible to mobilize the political and affective meanings produced by artworks as congruent sites for critical insight on how nation states constitute immigrants as subjects, and how immigrants become subjects in response to nation states.

This paper outlines the theoretical frameworks which form the critical landscape on which this exhibition project is anchored. It discusses key exhibition and programming precedents to establish the local and national lineage of curatorial practice and situate *Ways of Being Here*. A close look at the principal methods applied in the execution of the exhibition and curatorial essay provide a snapshot of the diversity of methodological approaches utilized in this project. An overview of the curatorial decisions regarding programming and installation illustrate how the exhibition project substantiates the premise that art practice is a potent setting to explore the relationship between immigrant and nation.

## **Literature Review**

This project is indebted to an interdisciplinary literary framework that effectively addresses my concerns as a curator. The diverse range of scholarly perspectives that inform the project include critiques of the contemporary geo-political contexts of national subject formation as they relate to postcolonial, feminist, and curatorial theory. These perspectives allow me to illuminate the crucial intersections that form the backdrop for

this project, and to maintain the necessary conceptual distinctions between its multiple concerns.

### **Critiques of Nation(alism)s**

Critiques of nationalism are central to unpacking the broader socio-cultural contexts out of which the works in the exhibition emerge. The body of literature on this topic is based on Marxist notions of labour (Marx 1978) and on Foucauldian theory of the mechanisms of modern power (Foucault 1978; 1982). Cultural theorists such as Arjun Appadurai argue that—within the contemporary moment of global capitalism and neoliberalism—a critical purpose of the nation state is to enable the production of a world that is increasingly interconnected (Appadurai 1990; Morley 2011). Yet, global capitalism and neoliberalism also produce growing economic gaps within and between nation states, and increasingly repressive systems of power that dubiously appear as enabling individual freedoms and access to wealth (Hardt and Negri 2001; Harvey 2006). Art historian Rosalyn Deutsche (1996) further problematizes the functioning of power in these terms by identifying the male subject position from which these dominant (patriarchal) critiques emerge as a key feature of the arguments they present. Her apt critique highlights how gender informs the identity formation of the subject, and how it can circumscribe the arguments this subject articulates. Although many

theories of globalization do not substantially account for racial, ethnic, sexual, or gender constructions of difference, they provide a glimpse into the global socio-economic landscape in which contemporary immigration unfolds—a landscape that surfaces in the art works featured in this project.

### **Post-colonialism**

Post-colonial literature addresses national subject formation through the lens of colonial, neocolonial and imperial histories: it is the critical perspective upon which this project is founded. Post-colonial writing problematizes global socio-economic perspectives by more accurately identifying how power operates through such histories. Responding to post-colonial theorist Edward Said's 1978 conceptualization of how the "other" serves as a boundary against which to achieve [self]-coherence, critics such as Homi K. Bhabha (1994), Paul Gilroy (1993), Édouard Glissant (1989), Stuart Hall (1990, 1996), Gayatri Spivak (1994), and Trinh T. Minh-ha (1987, 1989) have provided a much needed framework for the ways in which the self is made within the discursive, ideological, and political terms of imperialism as material condition and dominant cultural practice. Stuart Hall (1990) asserts that cultural identities are not static but formed through representation. To do so, he draws out parallels between cultural forms of representation and media-based

representation. Hall (1996) argues that rather than aim for a singular and essentialized culture which replicates static identity, the presence of difference in fact necessitates other forms of identification and, in turn, other forms of solidarity. His arguments are important to *Ways of Being Here* in showcasing the works of immigrant artists dealing with identity in their practice.

### **Immigration and the Canadian Nation**

Contemporary post-colonial scholars assert that imperialist practices continue to operate in Western nations. Indeed, laws and cultural practices that rely on the concepts of ethnicity and race enable states to establish imaginary constructs of national unity (Chow 2002; Gilroy 2004; Minh-ha 2011). Working from the concept of nation as a historically situated political and ideological construct that enables claims of unity and wholeness necessary to modernity, scholar Richard Day argues that in order to achieve coherence, Canada as a nation state relies on imagined ontological claims to cultural diversity (Anderson 1991; Day 2002). For Day, cultural diversity inevitably results in regulation through a constant practice of inclusion and exclusion of who is allowed to be a national subject. Scholars such as Himani Bannerji (2000) and Sunera Thobani (2007) further Day's analysis by focusing on how the state produces "cultural difference" through multicultural policies that are



linked specifically to its history of colonialism. Importantly, Bannerji and Thobani centre the dimensions of gender and race in their critique of Canadian nationalism.

Working within a North American framework, the relationship between settler colonialism, ideologies of nationalism, and immigration has been identified as a pressing and under-acknowledged topic (Hall 2003; Lawrence and Dua 2005; Sharma and Wright 2008; Morgensen 2011). In keeping with this premise, *Ways of Being Here* seeks to highlight the interrelationship between each of these concepts—particularly as it functions in Canadian cultural and artistic production.

### **Diaspora**

The contemporary concept of “diaspora” is here interpreted as referring to persons united by their common displacement rather than point of origin. Owing to Paul Gilroy (1993), this interpretation enables this project to argue that cross-cultural and individual-to-collective meanings can be drawn out of the works showcased in the exhibition. Sociologist Stephane Dufoix’s (2008) analysis of “diaspora” illustrates the potency and malleability of this term for representation and in doing so illuminates the productive limits of its possible uses. Dufoix identifies and deconstructs “diaspora” as a contemporaneous dubiously catch-all term with a precise history and multiple ideological and practical uses today.

Indeed, diaspora theory works from a cross-disciplinary position: it merges quantitative socio-historical inquiry and qualitative humanities analysis of artistic practice. In doing this, it seeks to better grasp how displaced peoples understand themselves in the places they live as individuals and as communities (Mishra 1996; Rushdie 1991; Quayson and Girish 2013). Scholar Sara Ahmed's essay "The Melancholic Migrant" (2010) exemplifies this approach. Through a close-analysis of film, Ahmed argues that the nation places various homogenizing and oppressive demands upon the immigrant. Ahmed analyzes the multiple affects represented in, and generated by, mainstream representation of culture(s), and then considers the impact of such representation for the dissolved collective [nationally bound] consciousness towards which it is addressed. Her approach instructs a consideration of the broader cultural impact of artistic representation.

### **Feminism**

Multiple and diverse contemporary feminist texts are important for the project's expansive understanding of the capacity of identity-based perspectives to articulate (and respond to) broader socio-geographical and political issues. Scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003), for instance, explicitly argues for anti-racist feminist practice as way to engage across concrete and abstract nation-imposed borders, to

continue projects of decolonization, and to vigorously resist neoliberal and capitalist ideologies. Though her position is somewhat abstract and idealistic, the tenor of her scholarship aligns with the politics that underlie this project. Coming from affect theory, feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz (2005) looks to philosophers Bergson and Deleuze (who consider the concept of becoming as a dialogical structure) to explore intuition with respect to notions of constant becoming through internal and external difference. Grosz (2002; 2010a; 2010b) politicizes and wields these philosophical musings in order to establish a non-authoritarian, adaptable, and inclusive feminist politics. Grosz's work is productive for comprehending the fluidity, malleability, and constancy of the subject identity formation of the individual embodied person theoretically in terms of gender *and* constructions of ethnicity and race. The works of Hosu Kim and Grace M. Cho, which are included in *The Affective Turn* (2007), deliver poetic and feminist accounts of themselves as immigrant, historically located, multiple and disjointed subjects. Their works are particularly salient in providing varied and poetic first-person perspectives on how individuals understand their subject formation through spatially and temporally grounded lenses. These perspectives are critical to this exhibition thesis' ability to adequately respond to the extra-linguistic in art practices.

## **Curatorial Practice**

Critical museologist Tony Bennett's essay "The Exhibitionary Complex" (1995) provides the historical horizon for this project's knowledge that art exhibition spaces are necessarily politically inflected. Bennett works from a Foucauldian understanding of institutional power as a disciplinary agent. He argues that art institutions serve both educational and disciplinary purposes for a specific class (and race) of publics. Curator Simon Sheikh (2011) proposes that the relationship between normative exhibition formats and publics typified in Bennett's work still applies today. According to Sheikh, it does so not only in historical exhibition formats and/or institutional spaces but also in "alternative" contemporary curating which fails to distinguish between embodied publics that actually frequent art spaces and the abstract publics of "the art world." Taking up Bennett's argument in the context of contemporary art institutions, art historians Andrew Dewdney, David Dibosa, and Victoria Walsh (2013) assert that the demands of fixed and coherent singularity of the nation state for which the nationally funded institution stands is fundamentally at odds with the split and dislocated subjects that the neoliberal, postmodern, postcolonial, late-capitalist Western moment produces. This argument encapsulates the potentially productive tensions inherent in

conducting *Ways of Being Here*; a project that directly challenges the notion of coherent singularity in subject identity formation.

## **Exhibition Review**

*Ways of Being Here* positions itself within a diverse and disparate landscape of Canadian-based and socially engaged exhibitions of contemporary art. Due to the limited scope of this paper, it is not possible to provide a substantive overview of the breadth of exhibitions that have taken and continue to take on the theme of immigration. Nevertheless, a closer look at two exhibitions and at the programming of two exhibitionary spaces that informed the direction and scope of *Ways of Being Here* is instructive. The four examples below provide a snapshot of the existing range of curatorial and programming endeavours that promote socially driven and culturally critical art.

## **Curatorial Precedents**

### ***Crossings***

**Curated by Diana Nemiroff**

**National Gallery of Canada**

**August 7 – November 1, 1998**

Conceived and curated by Diana Nemiroff, *Crossings* presented the multidisciplinary work of fifteen internationally based artists characterized as contemporary and immigrant on seemingly equal terms. This dual characterization of artists is indispensable to the aims of *Ways of Being*

*Here*. However, Nemiroff's exhibition did not actively address the paradoxes, contradictions, and inequalities often yielded by these categorizations, nor was it self-conscious of the place of Canada as a nation-state within its examination of contemporaneity and immigration. The diversity of the artists in the exhibition in terms of gender, race, and socio-cultural geographic position was a commendable dimension of the show directly applicable to the concept of diversity my project sought to problematize. Although the scope of the artistic practices presented in *Crossings* was substantial, the exhibition flattened the experience of immigration by emphasizing the commonality of the "migrant" or "exile" state, while remaining a-historical and a-political. *Ways of Being Here* emerged as a direct response to these types of deeply problematic lacunae in mainstream Canadian curatorial practice.

***Past Stories, Present Sense***  
**Curated by Astrid Ho and Suzanne Morrisette**  
**Harbourfront Centre**  
**June 20 – September 20, 2015**

*Past Stories, Present Sense*—part of the Harbourfront Centre's summer 2015 programming on land, politics, and art—consisted of select works by Asian-Canadian artists David Cheung, Brenda Joy Lem, Morris Lum, and Emma Nishimura. By positioning its theme as an interrogation of the narratives that make us understand various histories—even in its limited scope—*Past Stories, Present Sense* enabled the visitors to establish

strong links between the different works. At the same time, it allowed visitors to substantially interact with the work of each artist and, in doing so, it brought their particular position and perspective to the fore. The exhibition directly addressed the Canadian national setting to which the artists were implicitly or explicitly responding. The artworks were displayed in vitrines along a corridor: this display technique facilitated the visitors' ability to allegorically engage with the exhibition's themes of narrative and immigration. The succinct execution of this exhibition—exemplified by the specificity of the thematic and the acuity of the mode of display—provided a rigorous template upon which to model *Ways of Being Here*.

### **Programming Precedents**

#### **A Space Gallery**

**401 Richmond Street West, Suite 110, Toronto, Ontario**

A Space Gallery is an artist-run centre that presents socially engaged, multi-disciplinary contemporary art. With one main gallery flanked by a smaller adjacent space, A Space showcases a limited number of artists—and works—for every exhibition. Exhibitions such as *Detention*<sup>5</sup>, *The World is a Garden Whose Walls are the State: Jamelie Hassan and*

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<sup>5</sup> January 23 - March 14, 2015. Featuring the works of Tings Chak and Sheena Hoszko

*Ron Benner*<sup>6</sup>, *I:KE - I HAVE MOTION*<sup>7</sup> and *Space Fictions*<sup>8</sup> concretized my curatorial commitment to promoting socially critical artistic practice from a diversity of voices. The efficacy of each project hinges on the acuity of the dialogue produced between the works. The range of work—in terms of number, medium, scale, thematic, and perspective—that A Space has successfully presented is exemplary of what I consider as the curatorial imperative of political engagement coupled with a commitment to artistic excellence necessary in programming contemporary art.

**MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels)**  
**3680 Jeanne-Mance, Suite 103, Montréal, Québec**

Montréal, arts interculturels (MAI) is a not-for-profit arts centre which showcases a range of artistic practices, including theatre, dance, and multidisciplinary visual arts, that engage with what MAI terms as “the intercultural”.<sup>9</sup> While MAI does not provide a sufficiently in-depth

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<sup>6</sup> November 7 - December 13, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> September 23 - November 1, 2014. Curated by Lee-Ann Martin. Featuring the works of Rebecca Belmore, Scott Benesiinaabandan, Faye HeavyShield, Qavavau Manumie, Meryl McMaster, Nadia Myre, and Jeff Thomas.

<sup>8</sup> February 1 - March 15, 2014. Curated by Vicky Moufawad-Paul. Featuring the works of Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen and Juan Ortiz-Apuy.

<sup>9</sup> For an in depth definition of MAI’s use of this term see the “about” section of the centre’s website <http://m-a-i.qc.ca/en/>.



explanation of the meaning or function of this term within its mandate statement, this vagueness may be a deliberate tactic. The interpretability of “intercultural” enables the institution to initiate diverse and inclusive programs that respond to local, national, and international developments. MAI’s submissions-based programming and frequent collaboration with various arts festivals equips the institution to participate in fostering a socially engaged arts community in the city of Montreal. By looking at cultural practices in cities across Canada, this project gains a better perspective of its own local cultural context.

## **Methodology**

This project used a mixed methodological approach. It combined primary research in the form of artist and curator interviews with secondary research including archival and literature analysis. The plurality of critical frames taken up by this project was crucial to its political aim of rejecting traditional hegemonic patriarchal narratives and promoting a multiplicity of perspectives in the production of artistic discourse. This methodological approach was utilized with a view to achieving a multi-dimensional understanding of the political and aesthetic valence of contemporary immigrant art in Canada.

## **Literature and Archival Research**

An interdisciplinary and expansive literature analysis was integral for me to establish a set of interrelated theoretical frameworks that could be mined in the analysis of the works. In anticipation of this, I read a breadth of literature on the topics of the social, political, economic, and affective dimensions in which contemporary subjects are constituted. These readings ranged across the theoretical fields of post-colonialism, feminism, diaspora, affect, social geography, and curatorial practice. They set the landscape for my ability to argue that a multidisciplinary purview is beneficial to challenging normative categorizations of artworks.

During the course of my summer internship at VTape, I viewed over fifty hours of video on the topics of diaspora, migration, and immigration, and conducted research with the objective of finding secondary material on the works I was watching. Throughout the course of this internship, I familiarized myself with a myriad of Canadian artistic practice—specifically video work—that address the topic of immigration in visual and, just as importantly, non-narrative terms. This process was instrumental to focusing the premise of the exhibition and curatorial essay.

## **Interviews**

A number of informal interviews enabled me to accurately position the project, and the questions it addresses, within its broader Canadian cultural context. Two interviews with artist June Pak were foundational to my ability to comprehend the work of artists whose practices deal with topics of ethnicity, identity, immigration, and race. These artists are often categorized as “ethnic”, “immigrant”, or “of colour” by the broader arts community, although their work exceeds these categorizations. A set of frequent informal discussions with the artists participating in the exhibition was important to establishing effective links between my exhibition premise and their ongoing art practices. Two conversations with leading Canadian curators Sally McKay and Andrew Hunter enabled me to deepen my understanding of my role as curator and to better grasp, articulate, and negotiate the potential political implications of my subject position as a white heterosexual cisgender female working with both heterosexual and queer artists of colour.

## **Conclusion**

The multi-perspectival whole that is this project was comprised of a live exhibition, auxiliary programming, and a curatorial text. It was achieved through a critical recourse to multiple and diverse forms of knowledge,

each of which substantially contributes to the production of cultural discourse on the topic of immigration in the arts today.

### **Installation Concept and Design**

The aim of the exhibition was to explore the relationship between the immigrant and the nation. *Ways of Being Here* did this by showcasing works by local immigrant artists who interrogate the ways in which they live as immigrants in Canada. The exhibition also sought to augment and push the reading of the artworks presented beyond their potential bracketing as “immigrant art,” and to trouble the political and social implications of this bracketing. The group exhibition, the site and design of the exhibition, as well as the supplementary programming are four methodological choices by which these aims were achieved.

### **Group Exhibition**

The decision to exhibit the work of more than one artist was deliberate. First, it provided an opportunity to present the often contradictory heterogeneity of perspectives in the Canadian artistic (and therefore political) landscapes. Second, the implicit constellated positioning of the works aimed to incite a conversation among the publics of the exhibition about the diversity of perspectives constantly at work in Canadian cultural context. Due to the limited scope of *Ways of Being Here* (in terms of budget, space, and time), the presentation of three artists and not more

was integral. It enabled me to showcase multiple works by each artist, present various aspects of their practice, and mitigate the possibility of singular readings of the identities explored in each work.

### **Site**

The exhibition was presented at the Open Space Gallery, 49 McCaul Street, Toronto. Due to its long and narrow design that mirrors the streetcar track outside, as well as the view and repetitive sound of streetcars that permeates within it, this space materially and metaphorically alludes to movement. This attribute augmented the affective dimensions of the exhibition. The longitudinal design of the space led the viewer to engage in a linear and narrativized experience of the works on view. In contrast, the content and form of the exhibited works problematized the (conceptual and physical) possibility of a direct movement from one place to another. This dynamic between space and works yielded a productive interpretive tension for the viewers of *Ways of Being Here*.

### **Exhibition Design**

The exhibition design was informed by the thematic aims of the project and by the pressure the building architecture exerted upon the exhibition space. The main structural constraints were the fact that the gallery is informally split into three main spaces where art can be displayed, the

amount of natural light coming in through the windows running along one side of the space, and the restricted access to adequate artificial lighting. Critical to my design decisions was the need to negotiate the largely varying sizes of the works, the intention to disrupt a linear viewing of the works, and the aim to emphasize the exhibition's various themes.

Abedar Kamgari's works opened the exhibition and were displayed throughout it. Although the works thematically take up the tension between past and present homes and cultures, they do not explicitly read as such upon first viewing. Their display at the entrance of the space was significant to my desire to challenge the potential immediate understanding of *Ways of Being Here* as an exhibition on identity politics. Through their dispersal, Kamgari's works also lead the viewer through the space and cohered the exhibition. Alize Zorlutuna's *Inheritance* (2013) and Rah's *Sound of Strings* (2012) are two monumental as well as technically and thematically similar works that require a large space to be viewed effectively. Due to spatial considerations, they were positioned at opposite ends of the gallery. Their separation in the space also contributed to the constant shift of perspective that the exhibition demanded. The central space featured a single work by each of the artists. This decision was made in order to establish a clear equivalence and dialogue between the works.

## **Public Programming**

Throughout the course of the exhibition, three special programming events took place—a performance by Rah followed by a Q&A, an artist talk with artists Alize Zorlutuna and Abedar Kamgari, and a curatorial tour organized in conjunction with the OCADU #trending conference.

Together, the three activities provided an opportunity for *Ways of Being Here* to interact with the community within which it was situated: they enabled the exhibition to not only reach, but also actively engage a maximum of audiences during its short run. The public programming provided opportunities for audiences, artists, and the curator to concretely address and respond to the political and cultural issues illuminated by the works. The artists—each of whom is at a different stage of their practice—participated in multiple program events. This enabled them to engage in a dialogue with one another in ways that will hopefully benefit their broader artistic careers.

## **Conclusion**

*Ways of Being Here* argues for the need to curate artwork that speaks and should speak to immigrant audiences. In view of this, the project sought to centrally include immigrant audiences as part of the ongoing conversation about the political capacity of contemporary art. At the same time, it did not want to exclude other possible sets of audiences

and, in doing, so replicate the marginalization of the body of work presented in the exhibition as “immigrant art.” Critically, the exhibition project asserted the capacity and role of curatorial practice in foregrounding the relationships of power in the Canadian nation-state.

The exhibition provided a counterpoint to—and illuminated the limits of—the written work. Since I was able to sit most of the exhibition throughout its week-and-a half long run, I had the opportunity to engage in a number of conversations with a wide variety of audiences. These conversations enabled me to begin understanding the limits of theoretical analysis via-à-vis the lived experience of viewing works within an exhibitionary context. The visitors who came to see the exhibition included curators, professors, artists, students, family members, and members of the community. Each of the viewers to whom I spoke had a slightly different entry point to the exhibition and my ability to respond effectively informed their experience of *Ways of Being Here*. This process was not only challenging and rewarding, but also profoundly instructive about the difference between embodied engagements with an exhibition and academic scholarship. The intersections between theory and practice are fertile sites for the production of knowledge. Hopefully, this project strengthened the arguments for practice-informed theory and theoretically informed practice. In doing so, it contributed to the



expanding interdisciplinary fields of diaspora studies, cultural studies and curatorial studies within a Canadian framework.

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## **Appendix A – Artist Statements and CVs**

### **Abedar Kamgari**

abedarkamgari.com

#### **Artist Statement**

Abedar has lived in three countries, five cities, and seventeen different houses. Her works focus on an exploration of personal identity by means of an investigation of immigrant experience. The perception and representation of women of colour within Canadian society are ongoing areas of research fuelling her practice. As the foundation of culture, language also plays a significant role in her consideration of diasporic experience, manifesting in her recent video works. Abedar currently resides in Hamilton while pursuing a BFA in Studio Art at McMaster University with an interest in critical writing. An emerging interdisciplinary artist, Abedar's art has been exhibited in Hamilton, Toronto, and in the United States, and her work is owned in private collections in both countries.

#### **Curriculum Vitae**

##### **Education**

2012-2016	Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art, McMaster University
2014	Explore French Immersion Program, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

## **Exhibitions**

- 2016 *Ignition*, Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *Exit Strategy Art Auction*, New Space Gallery, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *Peace*, The Cube, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *Swarm: Annual Members' Exhibition*, Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *Emerging Artist Showcase*, Carnegie Gallery, Dundas, ON
- 2015 *45th Annual Art Auction*, Dundas Valley School of Art, Dundas, ON
- 2015 *Polyvocal Art Auction*, New Space Gallery, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *Hammer on Paper*, McMaster Faculty Club, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *Zeno's Paradox*, The Spice Factory, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *McMaster Friends of Médecins Sans Frontières Art Showcase*, McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *McMaster Friends of Médecins Sans Frontières Art Showcase*, MUSC Marketplace, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 *Intervention*, Mills Library Book Stacks, Hamilton, ON
- 2014 *Swarm: Annual Members' Exhibition*, Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, ON
- 2014 *Polyvocal Silent Art Auction*, New Space Gallery, Hamilton, ON
- 2014 *BEAN*, Make Works Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2014 *6x6x2014*, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, Rochester, NY
- 2014 *Naturally Connected*, New Space Gallery, Hamilton, ON
- 2014 *Chiasmata Silent Art Auction*, New Space Gallery, Hamilton, ON
- 2014 *Sliced*, New Space Gallery, Hamilton, ON
- 2014 *Bamboo*, President's Corridor, Hamilton, ON
- 2013 *En Plein Air*, New Space Gallery, Hamilton, ON

## **Related Experience**

- 2015 Teaching Assistant, Art 1U13 (Making Art and Understanding Images), McMaster University, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 Exhibition Installation Assistant, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON
- 2015 Gallery Assistant, Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, ON
- 2015 Studio Assistant to Judy Major-Girardin, Hamilton, ON
- 2013 Art Exhibit Attendant, Super Crawl, Hamilton, ON

## **Publications**

- 2015           Exhibition essay, Marigold Santos: BLACK MIRROR,  
Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, ON
- 2014           Interview on the Bamboo Exhibition, McMaster Daily News,  
Hamilton, ON

### **Awards and Scholarships**

- 2014           Takeda Corporate Social Responsibility Art Competition
- 2014           The Alise Alexanian Hassel Memorial Scholarship
- 2013           The Marion D. Maitland Memorial Academic Grant in Art  
History
- 2013           The Helen Ray Scholarship in Fine Arts

### **Collections**

Takeda Pharmaceutical Inc.  
Various private collections

### **Rah**

rah-eleh.com

### **Artist Statement**

Rah is an Iranian-Canadian video, photo, and performance artist. She has been the recipient of numerous awards and residencies including: Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec Grant for Film (2015) and Digital Arts (2014), Studio Das Weisse Haus Residency (Vienna, 2014), Artslant Georgia Fee Residency (Paris, 2014), Ottawa Art Gallery Award of Excellence (2013), and the SAW Video Award (2012). Further, Rah was invited by the Williams College Museum of Art to create a performance in response to Diana Abu-Jaber's book, *Crescent*. She was also the only Iranian-Canadian artist in SAW Galleries Ciphers: Tension with Tradition



in Contemporary Iranian Photography, which was curated by Ph.D. Andrea D. Fitzpatrick and was a first-of-its-kind exhibition of Iran's most critically acclaimed lens-based artists. In 2012, Rah's video *Eslah* was published in *Art Journal*, Vol. 8, a scholarly article written by Ph.D. Francine Dagenais and published in Tehran, Iran. Most recently, *CineWomen Cahier*, a biennial publication based out of Paris, dedicated a twelve-page spread to her work *Oreo*. Her work has been published and exhibited in galleries and museums internationally. Rah is represented by Vtape, Canada's leading artist-run distributor for video art.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

#### **Upcoming**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 2016       | (April) Work in Progress: <i>Dear Sister</i> , Documentary,                     |
| Completion |   |
| 2016       | (March) Carleton University, <i>Guest lecture: Women and Media</i> , Ottawa, ON |
| 2016       | (March) Studio XX, <i>Artist Talk and Presentation</i> , Montreal, QC           |

#### **Solo Exhibitions**

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2015 | "Art Fair Suomi." Kaapelitehdas-Cable Factory, curated by Hanna Uusi-Seppa, Helsinki, Finland |
| 2015 | "Coalesce." Carleton University Art Gallery, curated by Jaclyn Meloche, Ottawa, ON            |
| 2015 | "August Art Festival." Women's Studio Workshop, curated by Heige Kim, Rosendale, NY           |
| 2014 | "11:45." Xpace Cultural Centre, curated by FADO and Kate Barry, Toronto, ON                   |
| 2013 | "Oriental Barbie." Williams College Museum of Art, curated by Ph.D. Maurita N. Poole, MA, USA |

#### **Group Exhibitions**

- 2016 "Ways of Being Here." The Open Gallery, curated by Barбора Racevičiūtė, Toronto, Canada
- 2016 "Art Souterrain." Place Bonaventure, curated by Anais Castro and Marie-Josée Rousseau, Montreal, Canada
- 2016 "Performance Voyage 5." Le Centre D'Art, curated by Sasha Huber, Ville De Port-Au-Prince, Haiti
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." Atelier Nord ANX, curated by Timo Soppela, Oslo, Norway
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." Trinity Square Video, curated by Timo Soppela, Toronto, ON
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." SAW Gallery, curated by Timo Soppela, Ottawa, ON
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." Finnish Institute in Stockholm, curated by Timo Soppela, Stockholm, Sweden
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." MaxArtFest, a Contemporary Art Festival, curated by Timo Soppela, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." New Performance, Turku Festival, curated by Timo Soppela. Turku, Finland
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." MUU Galleria, curated by Timo Soppela, Helsinki, Finland
- 2015 "LANDSCAPE – METROPOLIS & Performance Voyage 5." Kunst Am Spreeknien – Schöneeweide Art Festival, curated by Timo Soppela, Berlin, Germany
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." Snehta Residency, curated by MUU Galleria, Athens, Greece
- 2015 "Urban Poetry Festival." Totaldobže Art Centre, curated by MUU Galleria, Riga, Latvia
- 2015 "PV5." Miami International Performance Festival'15, curated by MUU Galleria, Miami, USA
- 2015 "Schöneeweide Art Festival 2015." Kunst Am Spreeknien, curated by MUU Galleria, Berlin, Germany
- 2015 "Process 9." Studio 103, Artscape Youngplace, curated by Lo Bil, Toronto, Canada
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." [.BOX] Videoart Project Space, curated by MUU Galleria, Milan, Italy
- 2015 "Performance Voyage 5." Stichting Ruimtevaart, curated by MUU Galleria, Den Haag, The Netherlands
- 2014 "Something Magic." Petersburger Salon, curated by Pitt Sauerwein, Hamburg, Germany

- 2014 "Vienna Art Week." Studio Das Weisse Haus, guided tour by Lucas Cuturi, Vienna, Austria
- 2014 "Pocket of Resistance." Fluc, curated by Ursula Maria Probst, Vienna, Austria
- 2014 "B the Beat Festival." Kunsthaus Graz Museum, curated by Gregor Krammer, Graz, Austria
- 2014 "Ottawa International Animation Festival: Disney Made Me Do It." Arts Court, curated by Julie Tucker and Azarin Sohrabkhani, Ottawa, ON
- 2014 "PDA Launch." PDA Projects, curated by Brendan A. DeMontigny and Meredith Snider, Ottawa, Canada
- 2014 "Cutlog NY." Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, curated by Artslant, New York, USA
- 2014 "Islam Contemporary." Rosenthal Gallery, curated by Aziz Sohail, North Carolina, USA
- 2013 "Toothache Duets." Performance Space, curated by Maria Unpronounceable, London, UK
- 2013 "Transformer. SAW Gallery, curated by Jason St. Laurent, The Body Remixed." Ottawa, Canada
- 2013 "Islam Contemporary." Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, curated by Abdul Aziz Sohail, MA, US
- 2013 "Chinatown Remixed." Oriental Charm, curated by Beth Greenhorn and Andrea Stokes, Ottawa, Canada
- 2013 "Momentum." University of Ottawa, curated by the graduating students, Ottawa, Canada
- 2012 "National Geographic Goes Ghetto." La Petite Mort Gallery, curated by Guy Berube, Ottawa, Canada
- 2012 "Life is Beautiful." Nuit Blanche, curated by Meredith Snider, Ottawa, Canada
- 2012 "It's Normal." Villa Kuriosom, curated by Amirali Ghasemi and Friederike Berat, Berlin, Germany
- 2012 "Art and Afghan Women: From Kabul to the Capital." Orange Art Gallery, curated by Ashley White, Ottawa, Canada
- 2012 "Ciphers: Tension with Tradition in Contemporary Iranian Photography." SAW Gallery, curated by Ph.D. Andrea Fitzpatrick, Ottawa, Canada
- 2011 "Wicked Wanda's Spring Show." St. Brigids Centre for the Arts, curated by Wanda Fletcher, Ottawa, Canada
- 2011 "Large Format Photography." Gallery 115, University of Ottawa Gallery, curated by Lorraine Gilbert, "Ottawa, Canada

- 2011 "Vasa Joins Mort." La Petite Mort Gallery, curated by Andrew Gayed and Taylor Norris, Ottawa, Canada
- 2010 "Queer Women of Colour Collective." SAW Gallery, curated by Agitate: Ottawa, Canada
- 2010 Ambassador's Gala, "Art Auction." Ottawa, Canada

### **Education**

- 2013 University of Ottawa, Major Bachelor of Fine Arts, Minor in Women Studies

### **Awards and Commissions**

- 2015 Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, Grant for Research and Creation in Film/Video
- 2015 Canada Council for the Arts Travel Grant
- 2015 LOOP Discovery Award, Shortlist, Barcelona
- 2014 Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec Grant for Research and Production in Digital Arts
- 2014 Canada Council for the Arts Travel Grant
- 2014 Sponsored Membership, Art Engine
- 2014 Studio Das Weisse Haus Residency, Vienna
- 2014 Ottawa International Animation Festival, Commission, Ottawa
- 2014 Artslant Georgia Fee Artist/Writer Residency, Paris
- 2014 SAW Gallery, Commission, Light Box for Transformer: The Body Remixed, Ottawa
- 2013 City of Ottawa Direct Art Purchase, Shortlist
- 2013 BMO Financial Group 1st Art! Invitational Student Art Competition, Shortlist
- 2013 Ottawa Art Gallery Graduating Student Award of Excellence
- 2012 SAW Video Award
- 2011 New Perspective Conference, Dean of Research, University of Ottawa, Perspectives of Aging

### **Presentations**

- 2016 Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, *Performance and Media*, Kingston, ON
- 2016 University of Ottawa, *Contemporary Art of the Middle East*, Ottawa, ON
- 2015 Alfred University, *Studio Visits: Rah Artist Presentation*, Alfred NY
- 2015 Grünes Haus, Mahsa Abdolzadeh, *Homosexuelle Frauen im Iran*, Graz, Austria

- 2015 Hart House, Peggy Gale, *Rose-Coloured Glasses for Toronto Video*, Toronto, Canada
- 2015 University of Ottawa, *Sculpture and Transformation*, Ottawa, Canada
- 2015 University of Ottawa, *Art, Globalization, and Cultural Hybridities*, Ottawa, Canada
- 2015 SPAO, *The Shrinking World of Photography Symposium*, Ottawa, Canada
- 2013 LPM Gallery, *Light Painting with Raheleh Saneie*, Ottawa, Canada
- 2013 Pecha Kucha Global Event, *Hidden Heroes*, Ottawa, Canada

## **Alize Zorlutuna**

alizezorlutuna.com

### **Artist Statement**

Alize Zorlutuna is a Turkish-Canadian artist and writer who employs a diverse range of media in her practice. Her work explores the themes of labour, sexuality, time, settler colonial relationships to land, and history (among others). Working in sculpture, performance, audio and video, her work draws upon her experience as an individual living between two cultures. Negotiating multiple perspectives simultaneously, this embodied liminality informs her creative practice, manifesting in explorations of interstices. The desire to activate interstices where differing perspectives, emotions, and physical entities meet, and the meanings created in those meetings rests at the heart of her work.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

#### **Selected Group Exhibitions**

2016 Ways of Being Here · Open Space Gallery · Toronto ON  
 2016 Digital Diaspora · The New School: Parsons · New York  
 NY2015 There Should Be Gardens · Inter/Access Gallery · Toronto ON  
 2015 Looking Forward Looking Back – Feminist Art Conference · Great Hall OCADU · Toronto ON  
 2015 Femme Futures · Nuit Rose · Toronto ON  
 2015 The Self · Artist Inc. · Hamilton ON  
 2015 Relief Support · xpace gallery · Toronto ON  
 2014 FRIENDCORE · VideoFag · Toronto ON  
 2014 Unstable Places · Mind Art Core · Chicago IL  
 2014 Restless Precinct · Guildwood Park · Scarborough ON  
 2014 Queering Citizenship · Satellite Gallery · Vancouver BC  
 2014 Work it · Gallery West · Toronto ON  
 2013 Disorientations · Audain Gallery · Vancouver BC  
 2013 Are We in This Together · Access Gallery · Vancouver BC  
 2012 Babel on Rosetta Stone · Gallery 1313 · Toronto ON  
 2012 Apparitions · Audain Gallery · Vancouver BC  
 2011 Tessellate · Nuit Blanche · Toronto · ON  
 2011 A Space without Coordinates · Toronto Free Gallery · Toronto ON  
 2011 Together, curated by Maryanne Cassasanta @ wealltogether.org  
 2010 Art Spin · site specific · Toronto ON  
 2010 The Wrath of Math · xpace · Toronto ON (curated by Mathew Williamson)  
 2010 95th Annual Graduate Exhibition · Ontario College of Art and Design · Toronto ON  
 2010 Hinge · Interaccess Electronic Media Arts Centre · Toronto ON  
 2009 Twilight Orchestra · Nuit Blanche · Toronto ON  
 2009 Abandoned: Echo · Extermination Music Night · Toronto ON  
 2009 Preserving a Lost and Fantastic Universe of Infinite Odysseys · Switch Contemporary Gallery · Toronto ON  
 2009 Retrospective · Great Hall: Ontario College of Art and Design · Toronto ON  
 2008 Show and Tell me about it · xpace · Toronto ON  
 2007 Hello Beach · Wards Island · Toronto ON  
 2007 How to Make love Without Touching · xpace · Toronto ON  
 2006 Noise Moms · Dovercourt House · Toronto ON

## Curatorial Projects

2014	Restless Precinct · Guildwood Park · Scarborough ON
2013	Are We in This Together · Access Gallery · Vancouver BC
2012	Apparitions · Audain Gallery · Vancouver BC
2007	How to Make love Without Touching · xspace · Toronto ON

### **Talks and Symposiums:**

2016	Ways of Being Here · Artist talk · Open Space Gallery · Toronto ON
2015	The Meeting Place: Discussions on Colonialism, Awareness and Action · Feminist Art Conference · OCAD University · Toronto ON
2015	Labour for the Horizon · Consuming Intimacies: Bodies, Labour, Care, and Social Justice · Brock University · St. Catharines ON
2015	Queer Sensation · Queering the Gaze: Subverting the heteronorm through contemporary Art · Artist Inc. · Hamilton ON
2013	Queering Islamic Aesthetics · Hypervisibility · University of Ottawa · Ottawa ON

### **Education**

2012	MFA from School for Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University · Vancouver BC
2010	BFA Sculpture Installation, Ontario College of Art and Design · Toronto ON
2005	BA International Development Studies, Dalhousie University · Halifax NS

### **Grants**

2015	Toronto Arts Council: Grant to emerging visual artist
2015	Ontario Arts Council: Grant to emerging artist
2013	Canada Council for the Arts: Visual Arts Project Grant – SUM°
2012	Ontario Arts Council: Multi and Integrated Arts – SUM°
2012	Toronto Arts Council Visual Arts and Media Arts Project Grant
2012	Ontario Arts Council Multi-Arts Organization production grant
2012	SSHRC
2011	Toronto Arts Council: Visual Arts and Media Arts Project Grant – SUM°

2011	Special Graduate Entrance Scholarship SFU
2011	Graduate Fellowship SFU
2010	Dorothy Hoover Award
2010	Al & Malka Greene Scholarship
2010	Sculpture/Installation Faculty Award
2010	Samel Lazar Kagen Award



## **Appendix B. Visual Documentation of Exhibition**

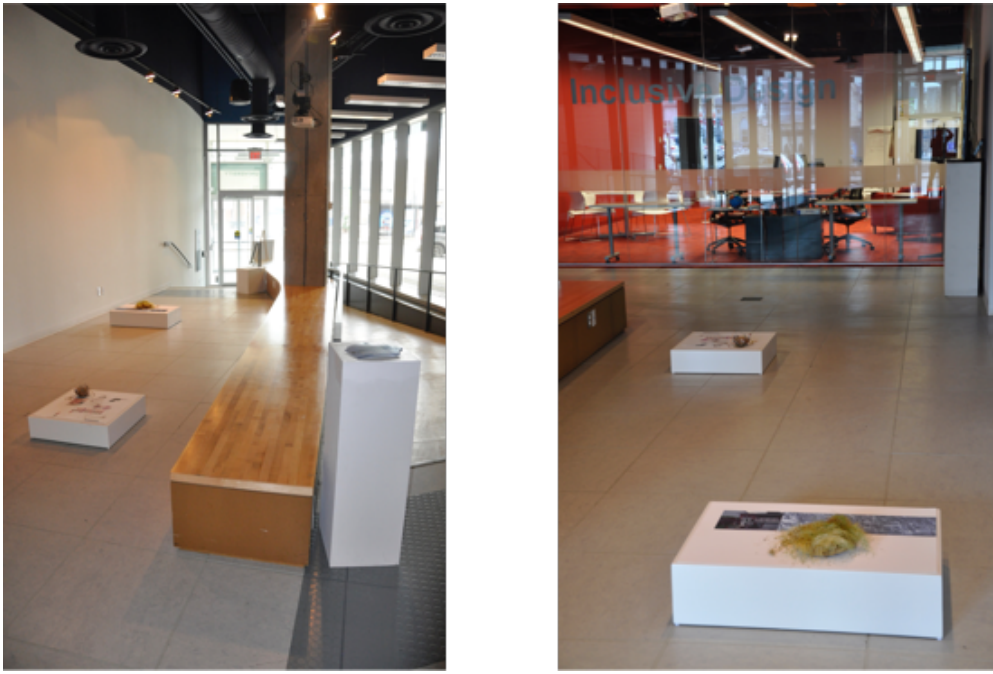


Figure 1. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016.

Abedar Kamgari, *Welcome Home (congregation gathering)*, 2015; Abedar Kamgari, *Great White North*, 2015.

Figure 2. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016.

Abedar Kamgari, *Great White North*, 2015; Abedar Kamgari, *Welcome Home (congregation gathering)*, 2015; Alize Zorlutuna, *Inheritance*, 2013.



Figure 3. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016.  
Alize Zorlutuna, *Inheritance*, 2013.



Figure 4. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016.  
Alize Zorlutuna, *Inheritance*, 2013.



Figure 5. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016.  
Abedar Kamgari, *Great White North*, 2015.



Figure 6. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016. Rah, *Oriental Drag*, 2012; Alize Zorlutuna, *Zugurunhe*, 2016; Abedar Kamgari, *Anyone Home?*, 2015.

Figure 7. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016. Abedar Kamgari, *Anyone Home?*, 2015; Alize Zorlutuna, *Zugurunhe*, 2016; Rah, *Oriental Drag*, 2012.



Figure 8. Alize Zorlutuna, *Zugunruhe*, 2016, Performance Installation Shot: March 2, 2016, Open Space Gallery, OCAD University.



Figure 9. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016. Abedar Kamgari, *Dundurn Street*, 2015; Rah, *Sound of Strings*, 2012; Abedar Kamgari, *Dundurn Street (Residue)*, 2015.





Figure 10. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016.  
Abedar Kamgari, *Dundurn Street*, 2015.



Figure 11. Installation Shot. *Ways of Being Here*, 2016.  
Abedar Kamgari, *Dundurn Street (Residue)*, 2015.

## Appendix C – Promotional Materials

### Exhibition Poster





## **Didactic**

# ***Ways of Being Here***

An OCAD University MFA thesis exhibition

**March 2 – 12, 2016**

**Open Space Gallery @ 49 McCaul Street**

**Opening Reception:** Wednesday March 2th, 6pm – 9pm

**Artists:** Abedar Kamgari, Rah, and Alize Zorlutuna

**Curated by:** Barbora Racevičiūtė

*Ways of Being Here* asks how contemporary art practice explores the implications of moving from a homeland to another country — of establishing oneself in relation to multiple places at once. It brings together the work of Abedar Kamgari, Rah, and Alize Zorlutuna, three multi-disciplinary artists who are actively engaged with their immigrant histories and presents. The work showcased in the exhibition considers the making of identity in, through, and against the places, cities, and nations in which we live.

## **Special Programming**

**Artist Performance: Friday March 4th, 12pm – 1pm**

Rah invites the community to participate in an interactive traditional Iranian dance workshop. Rah's character Fatimeh will be teaching the audience poses, movements, and gestures of the dance. The performance promises to be fun, high energy, and Fatimeh's creative spirit will engage the public to dance with her. A Q&A with the artist will follow.

**Artist Talk: Tuesday March 8th, 3pm – 4pm**

Please join us for a talk with artists Abedar Kamgari and Alize Zorlutuna, moderated by curator Barbora Racevičiūtė.

**Curatorial Tour: Saturday March 12th, 12pm – 1pm**

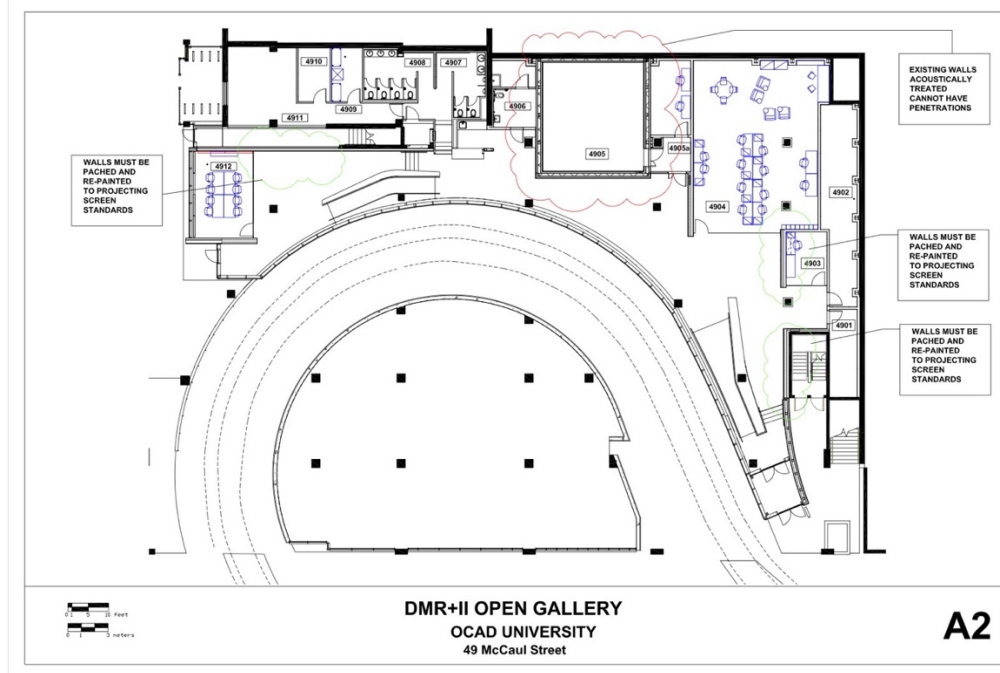
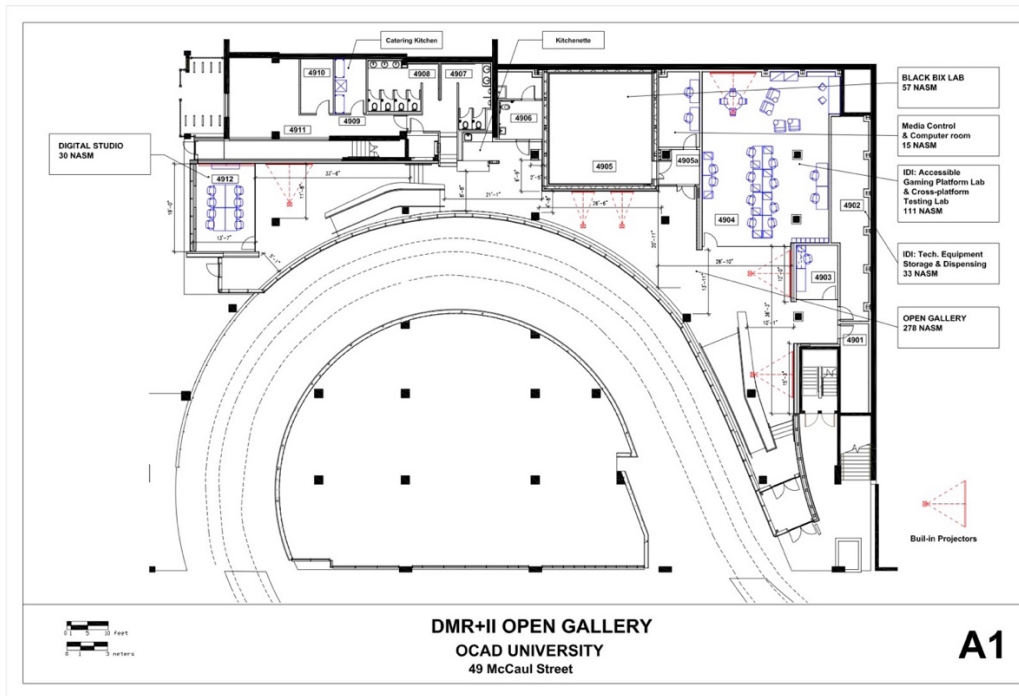
Please join us for a lunch time curatorial tour, organized in conjunction with the [#trending: Mobilizing Art and Culture](#) conference!



## **Appendix D – List of Works**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1.</b> Abedar Kamgari<br><i>The Great White North</i><br>2015<br>Inkjet print, sabzeh (grass)                    | <b>2.</b> Abedar Kamgari<br><i>Welcome Home</i><br>(congregation gathering)<br>2015<br>Inkjet print, ātish-gardoun,<br>esfand, 28 cigarettes |
| <b>3.</b> Alize Zorlutuna<br><i>Inheritance</i><br>2013<br>Video installation                                       | <b>4.</b> Abedar Kamgari<br><i>Anyone Home?</i><br>2015<br>Inkjet print, found bird nest   |
| <b>5.</b> Alize Zorlutuna<br><i>Zugunruhe</i><br>2016<br>Navigational compass,<br>Turkish tea cups, tea,<br>plywood | <b>6.</b> Rah<br><i>Oriental Drag</i><br>2012<br>Stop-motion digital video   |
| <b>7.</b> Abedar Kamgari<br><i>Dundurn St. (Residue)</i><br>2015<br>Inkjet print, found objects                     | <b>8.</b> Rah<br><i>Sound of Strings</i><br>2012<br>Digital video  |
| <b>9.</b> Abedar Kamgari<br><i>Dundurn St.</i><br>2015<br>Inkjet print, found objects                               |  |

## Appendix E – Open Space Gallery Floor Plan



## **Appendix F – Sample Contract**

### **EXHIBITION AGREEMENT: ARTIST/THE GALLERY**

This agreement was made in duplicate on February \_\_\_\_, 2016 between:

**Name** (hereinafter called “the Artist”)

**Address**

And

**Barbora Racevičiūtė** (hereinafter called “the Gallery”)

205 Richmond St W.

Toronto, ON

**The parties hereto agree as follows:**

#### **1. General Intent**

The Gallery shall present the *Ways of Being Here* exhibition with work by \_\_\_\_\_ at the Open Gallery at 49 McCaul Street, Toronto from March 2, 2016 to March 13, 2016.

**\* List of works to include title, date, medium, dimension**

#### **2. Transportation of Art Work**

The Gallery will arrange for and cover the costs associated with transportation of the Artist’s work for the purposes of the exhibition to either 205 Richmond St. W (room 7110) or the site of exhibition, to the best of its ability. The artist shall pick up their works from 205 Richmond St. W. (room 7110) on Sunday March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016 during business hours or at another time, agreed upon in advance between the artist and the Gallery. The terms and conditions of this agreement shall be in effect from the time the objects leave the Artist’s premises until their return after the loan period has ended.

#### **3. Care of Object(s)**

The Gallery shall maintain professional standards with respect to environmental conditions, handling, transportation, installation, display, and lighting. The

Artist certifies that the object(s) provided are in condition to withstand ordinary strains of packing, transportation, and handling. The Gallery shall complete a condition report for each work upon arrival and departure. Should any damage to the objects occur during handling, transportation, installation, or presentation thereof, the Gallery shall immediately inform the Artist of such damage. The Gallery shall not undertake any repairs of damage without the permission of the Artist.

#### **4. Security**

A Gallery staff member shall regularly monitor the gallery during the gallery's opening hours.

#### **5. Promotion**

The Gallery shall arrange, at its expense, announcements of the exhibition as it may consider appropriate. The Artist agrees to potentially participate in media interviews (newspaper/magazine, radio, television and web) with a view to promoting the exhibition and the artist's work; the gallery undertakes to provide to the artist newspaper and magazine clippings of the published material.

#### **6. Installation**

The Gallery shall be responsible for equipment rentals as mutually agreed upon at its expense. The Gallery shall be responsible for dismantling of the works of art.

#### **7. Copyright**

The Gallery shall not permit reproductions of the works of art in the exhibition for purposes of sale, rental, loan or distribution of any kind without the written permission of the Artist.

#### **8. Remuneration**

The Gallery shall provide a \_\_\_\_ honorarium to the artist by the date of March 13, 2016 or at the time of artwork pickup after the end of the contract term.

#### **9. Force Majeure**

In the event that the performance of any part of this agreement shall be delayed or prevented by an act of God or of the Queen's enemies, physical disability, the acts or regulations of duly constituted public authorities, strikes, civil tumult, epidemic, interruption or delay of transportation services or other causes beyond their respective control, the Artist and the Gallery shall be relieved of their respective obligations hereunder during the period such prevention or delay exists. It is understood and agreed that there shall be no claim for damages by either party hereto for any prevention or delay.

**10. Credit Line**

Unless instructed otherwise, the Gallery shall credit the Artist with ownership of the object(s) on all labels, text panels, brochures, catalogues, and other didactic materials published for the exhibition.

**11. Amendments**

All amendments and modifications of this agreement shall be by the mutual consent of both parties.

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**The Gallery:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

**The Artist:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**