

ENGAGE Projects

Announcement for Immediate Release:

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Debated Narrative

RAHELEH FILSOOFI

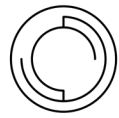
Saturday, September 10 - Saturday, October 15, 2022



Imagined Boundaries, completed in 2017, multimedia installation

ENGAGE Projects is excited to announce our upcoming solo show *Debated Narrative* by multidisciplinary artist and educator Raheleh Filsoofi. Born in Iran, living in the United States, and working in between, Filsoofi contemplates the psychological effects of marginalization and the occupation of geographic and socio-political liminal space. Filsoofi's work oscillates between the literal and figurative concepts of land, ownership, and border informed by her lived experiences as an Iranian woman and immigrant. With roots in ceramics, Filsoofi uses the aesthetic approach of symmetry to embody these concurrent challenges of her identity in both Iran and the United States. A self-described "collector of soil and sound, itinerant artist, feminist curator, and community service advocate," Filsoofi uses her dynamic community role to create space for women and non-binary artists and scholars.

Debated Narrative plays with imaginary and existing geographies on three tiers of global, national, and Nashville-specific levels. A contemporary commentary which draws on an expansive archive of Middle Eastern art and history, the exhibition will feature an installation of white box vessels, each with a cutout of a traditional Iranian shape drawn from visuals that can be traced back to the Music Room of Alighapoo Palace in Isfahan. The vessel opening reveals a digital interface featuring a video of a stranger's face staring back at the viewer. The vessels become facilitators of an intercultural dialogue inspired by the Safa Khaneh community in Isfahan in the early 1900s; built to house dialogue between Muslims and Christians, Safa Khaneh, or 'House of Friendship,' is regarded as one of the first interfaith centers in the world. Similarly, Filsoofi uses her installation of vessels to elevate the moment of negotiation that happens between disparate identities navigating a shared space.



Also featured in the exhibition, Filsoofi's series of rotating, jump roping self-portraits pays tribute to the artist's foundations in ceramics; with origins in the phenakistoscopes developed in the late 1800s as well as ceramic plates from 10th century Islamic art, Filsoofi resurrects this traditional style of ceramics in a digital age. Also imitating the spinning globe or the rotary movement of a potter's wheel, these animations are a direct commentary on place and belonging at both a global and interpersonal level. Filsoofi explores the boundaries between cultures and people, specifically the relationship between Iran and the United States, through traditional symbols and the contradiction afforded by the innocence of jumping rope on land that has seen grave casualties.

Filsoofi is an Assistant Professor of Ceramics at Vanderbilt University as well as a Lead Faculty member of the Chautauqua Visual Arts School. She holds an M.F.A. from Florida Atlantic University and a B.F.A. from Al-Zahra University in Tehran, Iran. Her work has been shown individually and collaboratively both in Iran and the United States, including the recent interactive multimedia solo exhibitions *Inh(a/i)bited*, an installation at Spinello Project Gallery in Miami (2020), and *The Overview Effect*, an installation at Betty Foy Sanders Gallery of Georgia Southern University (2019). Filsoofi's project *Imagined Boundaries*, consisting of two separate exhibitions, debuted concurrently in a solo exhibition at the Abad Art Gallery in Tehran and group exhibition (*Dual Frequency*) at The Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, Florida in 2017. The installations connected audiences in the U.S. and Iran for a few hours on the nights of the show openings. Her multifaceted curatorial project *Fold: Art, Metaphor and Practice*, which engaged over 20 artists, scholars, and educators in exhibitions, performances, and lectures over a period of one year in Edinburg and McAllen, Texas, has been a milestone in her professional career. She has been the recipient of grants and awards, including the Southern Prize Tennessee State Fellowship and South Florida Cultural Consortium Fellowship for Visual and Media Artists funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

In upcoming events, Filsoofi will participate in the Sharjah Biennial 15, *Thinking Historically in the Present*, which will feature new works and commissions across various venues in the emirate. The Biennial will take place from February 7th to June 11th of 2023. Featuring works by more than 150 artists, Filsoofi will be joined by Chicago-based artists Theaster Gates and Michael Rakowitz among others.

For further information, please contact info@engage-projects.com