Art and Identity: an ethnographic investigation into art education in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the researcher as a participant ceramic artist in Canterbury

By

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Abstract

This thesis is a multi-media interdisciplinary presentation of an ethnographic investigation of the development of art education, and its relationship to identities at Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities in The Islamic Republic of Iran. The researcher is a participant ceramic artist in the study, and thus her studio-based enquiries and practices are integrated with the processes of observation in educational ethnography. This has resulted in the production of a number of interconnected texts. These texts are visual as well as literary, representing phenomena in the research site. They are as follows:

- a written report representing the participants, demonstrating the complexity of art educational practices in Tehran and their particular socio-political contexts:
    - the staffing and curriculum structures since the 1979 revolution
    - gendered autonomy and identities in the processes of art education
    - the role of the private ateliers, and Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in art education and public art
- ceramic and video installations entitled 'The Archaeology of self', exhibited at The Iranian Artists' Forum or 'Khaneh-ye Honarmandan', an international cultural venue, by the invitation of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. As a continuum of methodologies and outcomes, these visual enquiries have been instruments for understanding the participants and further consolidating the dimensions of the concept of identity at the site of research
- a photographic presentation, and cultural document from Tehran, creating crucial contemporary visual contexts

The multi-media approach has given the researcher insights into the qualities of the participants' common lived experiences, whilst sustaining her own artistic and cultural integrity in Canterbury leading to 'The Archaeology of Self'. This integrated approach has facilitated, and further provided an opportunity to achieve intercultural continuity and exchange with Tehran contributing to the current debates on art in the Islamic Republic.

Further, the thesis demonstrates that the concept of identity is both tacit and fluid, interconnecting the processes of art education or training with the individuals' perceived personal identities. The thesis relates that despite the socio-political constraints, especially regarding women, whether through governmental policies, religion, or tradition, there does exist a rigorous critical and educational culture of analysing, making and showing art in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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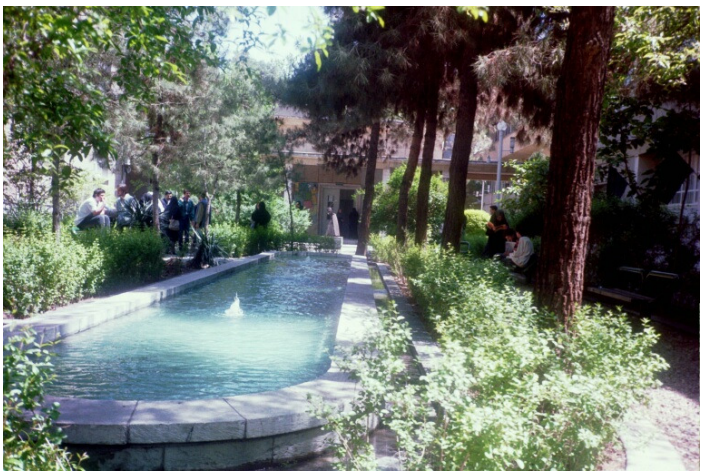

Tehran University campus, Faculty of Fine Art, 2002

Al-Zahra University for Women, Department of Painting, 2003

Chapter One: Introduction

The strength of the idea of this interdisciplinary qualitative study in art education in Iran rotates on a triple axis: to investigate an unexplored area of knowledge in international higher education, to contemplate how the processes of learning and practicing art might affect individuals' identities, both in Tehran and in Canterbury, and to facilitate inter-cultural understanding and exchange between East and West through the thesis, including the researcher's multi-media art.

The need for the enquiry

Although research in Education has a longstanding tradition, research in higher education considering aspects of art and design training are relatively recent developments. The relevance of lived experience and art production in adults, and its potential contribution to wider academic discourses is increasingly recognized in current debates in research (Elinor et at 1994, Evans et al 1995, Greene 1995 and 2001, Detels 1998, Ahlberg 1999, Marriner 1999, Duncum 2000).

Further, Matrix Conferences 1 (1988), 2 (1993), 3D (1995), and 4 (1999), initiated and promoted by Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design have led to a systematic reappraisal of the importance of a research culture in all aspects of art and design higher education (Greenhill 1997a). Discussions have continued through collaborative initiatives between the Royal College of Art, Wimbledon School of Art, and The London Institute at 'CLTAD', The Centre for Learning and Teaching in Art and Design, in a series of workshops in 2003-2004. Training and procedural guidelines regarding proposals, supervision, and appropriate methodologies in research in art are amongst the outcomes of these workshops.

In the field of ceramics, The University of Westminster hosted a one-day conference in 2001 to address the emerging research discourses in clay arts specifically. Whether concerned with technological and applied materials research, art and industry, written analysis of studio processes in producing fine art or applied art, product conception and product development, and cultural/historical enquiry in relation to the arts, attentions are directed towards a national research discourse in the field of art and design. This study is located in the cultural/historical category, with myself as the participant art-practitioner and my work as the instrument for reaching wider contexts in research. Interestingly, such discussions are already registered within the European discourses, calling for research in art and design education in Europe to bring together institutions, individuals, and cultures, for the mutual exchange and extension of ideas including art practices (Kessler, 1997). The Research Assessment Exercise, 1997 and 2001, have further linked such practices to the health and validity of teaching institutions,

primarily because cultural/historical enquiries within the visual arts might be ways of enhancing the understanding of differing values in Education (Evans et al 1995).

At the turn of the 21st century and the age of digital and mass media, globalisation has to a large extent meant the expansion of capitalism through mobilising work forces where labour costs less. A desire for, and striving towards cultural understanding, and cultural collaboration with the non-capitalist world, or the developing world, would serve us well in bringing new dimensions to globalisation. In most cases making art is interlinked with lived experience and the individual's cultural heritage; in a cultural/historical enquiry such as this, relationships between the local and the global, the individual and the human race at large, might be illuminated. Enquiry into the processes of art education in Iran shall provide opportunities to locate, recognize, and understand spaces for diversities in cultures, and existences within specific ideological frameworks. Further, art education by nature promotes a sense of immediacy in expression, it allows the practitioner to make new and coherent imagined worlds, it permits ideas to intersect rather than just remain as parallels, and thus facilitates a space to give credence to alternative realities (Greene, 2001 and 1995). The recognition of such processes is the recognition of forms of global citizenship, and would ultimately lead to the softening or lifting of divisive boundaries, towards a shared global discourse based on understanding and common experience.

It is crucial that such expansion in global discourses are supported, and built upon through systematic in-depth observational research from the field. Consultations with Iranian and non-Iranian scholars in the fields of art, social, and political sciences in the Middle East have further suggested that research in art education in Iran has not yet been addressed (private communications: Dr. Venetia Porter, British Museum 2001; Professor Asef Bayat, Laiden University 2001; curators at the Barbican 2001), and that there is indeed a need for a pioneer in the field.

Such considerations further coincide with my personal interest in the new generation post 1979 revolution fellow Iranians, and the global recognition of forms of contemporary art from Iran. Iranian Cinema has had remarkable successes at home and around the globe, particularly in the West, winning a series of first prizes in Venice, Cannes, Berlin, and Madrid in the last two decades. It has attracted a large following around the globe, and is analysed and discussed in most progressive film schools from Japan to the Americas. Similarly major exhibitions by Iranian artists at the Venice Biennale; the Serpentine, the Barbican and the British Museum in London; Paris; Berlin; the MOMA, Whitney, and Metropolitan Museums in New York, in recent years have highlighted the sensibilities and perceptions of a nation, bringing them to the attention of millions outside Iran. These events promote a sense of enquiry particularly because of their specific spatio-temporal contexts.

Academic research and cultural exchange are further supported by Iran since the presidency of Mohammad Khatami in 1997; he has communicated this to the world through his visits to the United Nations. In his addresses in February 2003 and March 2004, at the Iranian Embassy in London, to researchers including myself, eminent scholars from the British Museum, and London, Cambridge, Durham, Exeter, Edinburgh, and Manchester universities, HE Morteza Sarmaddi, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic, reiterated the need for research in Iran in order to expand the dialogue between Eastern and Western civilizations[1]. He stressed the importance of building cultural bridges for the advancement of knowledge and for the benefit of humanity. He further elaborated that collaborative scholarly work involving members of both academic communities, Iran and Britain in this instance, would create occasions for tangible cultural exchange between these nations in the contemporary political climate.

It is crucial, in my view, that such aspirations are taken seriously and attended to. Effort and willingness on our part as members of academic institutions should be communicated back to Iran through research regardless of perceived ideological difference and political limitations. Meaningful cultural, scientific, and scholarly exchange and collaborations with Iran, no matter how small in scale, will ultimately serve us all in softening and lifting ideological boundaries towards developing an inclusive global discourse. In a world of conflict, crisis, and uncertainties, where we are increasingly failed by elected and non-elected political leaders to reach political solutions through understanding, research such as this contributes to the understanding of the human condition. “Fuller knowledge of the historical varieties of human society” is recommended to us by C. Wright Mills; I aim to explore such historical varieties through personal and collective experiences of the participants in this study (Mills 1970 P. 163).

Personal motivation

The need to participate, to make contributions however small, and to be accepted as an active member in society is part of being human. It has been my ambition to be part of a critical community, to contribute through my art, and to communicate ideas beyond my immediate environment, geographical location, and discipline in art; research such as this is one way of fulfilling those ambitions.

Personal experiences too, alert one’s sense of enquiry into ways of transcending the limited realities of day-to-day living. Some years ago I attended a concert by two masters in Iranian

[1] This references President Khatami’s “ Dialogue between civilizations”, in his 1998 address at the United Nations in New York, when after two decades of political and economic sanctions and isolation from the West, The Islamic Republic re-emerged as a strategic presence in the Middle East.

classical music at Kensington Hall in London. The relatively small string instruments, 'taar' and 'seh-taar', were played by Reza Lotfi alternately. A younger musician played the 'daf', a very shallow but enormous tambourine with numerous and very fine small metal rings in its inner wall tightly positioned next to one another, and bouncing. These men played their instruments as if taking in their last gasps of air, producing extraordinary music. They lifted and transported their audience in powerful chariots of sounds to imagined spaces above heavens. And then, softly and masterfully brought them down again, with one synchronized note. The words they sang, verses by poet philosophers Rumi and Hafez of 13th and 14th centuries, implied life, and then life again. By the end of the concert I was so absorbed and moved by the eloquence of these master musicians that I could neither speak nor move from my seat. I was transfixed.

Such experiences had been part of my life before I moved to England; I had experienced aesthetic charge and aesthetic emotion in my upbringing in Tehran and would recognize them there on. My adulthood in Damascus and Syria, my coming of age in Cairo and Egypt, and my 'art escapes' to major sources of international art such as London, New York, and Paris, and all of Italy, had further enriched this bank of aesthetic recognition. My cultural experiences, whether literary, aural, visual, or in relation to human interaction had equipped my senses to have the capability of absorbing aesthetic charge, and aesthetic emotion. Canterbury, as the new location for my life, appeared to be barren by comparison. Besides, I simply lacked the social language that was required of me to be part of everyday living with others. Unable to appreciate loft conversions, home extensions, artificial political correctness, and submissive hierarchical and medieval codes of behaviour rife in this medieval environment, I became increasingly isolated. The Crypt at Canterbury Cathedral was one place where I was able to recover a sense of imagination and reflection beyond the mundane. Desperate to learn to communicate and to contribute as a newcomer, I turned to the study of art, and working with clay specifically. It was in its space that I recovered reasons to experience aesthetic charge, so crucial to my sense of self. Although I was aware of the limitations of being oneself only in the studio/theory class, I soon realized that the arts, art history and theory, and my visual and sensory heritage, both Eastern and Western, had to form my future direction. This parallel world allowed my mind to flourish because of difference, it further suggested that difference brought vitality. Indeed I discovered that the art world, and art theory thrived and survived because of the newcomer and difference; it was highly unlikely that I would leave this world having recovered it.

My point in relating the above is this: if my engagement with art education had re-energized my critical and intellectual existence, as well as a sense of self or identity, might it not be the case that a similar process could lead my compatriots in Iran to a critical sense of their selves? Reflecting on this initial enquiry prompted the next question. How might the processes of art education be in Iran, a country which has been profoundly affected by isolation because of a

revolution in 1979, and has been forced to engage in a devastating eight-year war with Iraq between 1980 and 1988? Gradually, but increasingly, it became evident that I should return to Iran in order to see, hear, and observe the responses to these questions in person. Although securing entry to Iran between 1985-1997 had proved impossible for me, new legislations in Iran were in place to issue new and legitimate documentation for those Iranians who had a further citizenship outside Iran; the path seemed clear.

The research questions

The circumstances related above clarify the conceptual framework for this research. In terms of the research questions, however, I soon realised that the field was vast. There existed a need to narrow the focus, and contemplate the ultimate limitations my enquiries might have. In-depth analysis of socio-politics and socio-economics in Iran would be outside my expertise and the scope of the study. Similarly, the evaluation of the teaching and learning processes in art education in Iran would neither be of interest to me, nor part of my expertise. In any case, establishing the standards and values against which such ideas might be assessed are impossible tasks; whose standards, and whose values? Where would one find the legitimate tools of evaluation? Assessing the interconnection of institutional ideologies, and the notions of 'high art' and 'vernacular art' would follow a similar reasoning. Placing any such focus or emphasis on approaches to the enquiry would ultimately exclude one group or another; it would bear the danger of imposing the researcher's misplaced perceptions. Forms of counting and statistics: the number of students and tutors or their ratio; precise numbers of hours in various disciplines; percentages; and costing of programmes and specific subject areas would not be essential to my enquiries. My training and practices in art do not promote the positivist paradigm. Rather, I was interested in the study of the people, and their practices and behaviours around art education within a specific, perhaps even limited timeframe. This, I believed, would throw light on human experience, illuminate personal and collective histories, and reveal human condition in contemporary life in Iran. I wished to look for, and locate the specificities in the building blocks of those experiences and behaviours. Merely counting those building blocks would be redundant in my view. Thus the research question emerged as an interconnected enquiry as follows:

> What is the nature of art teaching and art practice? What are the staffing and curriculum structures for such teaching practices? And how do these relate to the students' and tutors' identities?

Within this framework, I would access the field as a researching artist, and conduct my investigation at two significant universities in Tehran. Al-Zahra University for Women would be of particular interest because of its female only student body, as well as being a renowned campus in the region. Tehran University, because it is the first degree awarding university in

Fine Art in Iran. Within a specific period of time, three extended visits in one academic year, January to December 2002, I would attend lectures; observe 2D/3D studio practices; note aspects of the curriculum such as the type of art history taught: Persian, Islamic, Arab, Western etc.; learn about systems of organization such as staffing; and contemplate the relationships between art and identities, whether related to theologies or not. I would thus collaborate with the institutions and individuals as a semi-participant observer documenting experiences ethnographically, and assemble a report based on a diverse array of evidence, or data, to project the ideas implied in the research questions.

My role as the semi-participant researcher, however, became more significant as the research processes developed, particularly because of the invitation by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art to exhibit my work at an important cultural venue and affiliated art gallery. Both the institutions and the individuals I worked with had treated me as a colleague from the outset, and had invited me to give talks and informal seminars. They had valued my position not only as someone who might have a fresh eye for observation, but also a fellow art practitioner who would be well oriented with the complexities of studio-based processes. Indeed the first question I was asked when visiting Tehran University to secure access was whether I was active in the studio. I believe too, that they saw in my eyes a shared passion for Iran and its cultural heritage.

The invitation to mount an extended solo show of my work at the Iranian Artists' Forum, however, was collaboration on a scale I had neither anticipated nor was able to imagine. Although my creative integrity as a ceramic artist was thus recognized, to show the findings of my enquiries in the studio in Canterbury, a highly personal visual-textual address of ideas, tools, and materials at a specific time in my life implied forms of exposure I had not contemplated. Such exposure would make subject of enquiry my own engagement, behaviour, and perceptions around the notion of art. Such speculations, the enormity of the commitment required, and the possible consequences were indeed worrying. The sheer physical and logistic involvement in such undertaking regardless of the time and physical effort required for making the work, became apparent to me only some time after accepting the invitation. To imagine an abstract intellectual space for my work amongst the community of artists in Tehran, as well as packing and transporting several hundred kilograms of ceramic sculptures, whose very essence articulated fragility seemed ironic as well as an impossibility. As reflected in the title of the collection, 'The Archaeology of Self' the subject of Chapter Three, aspires to communicate an emblematic cycle: the joy or dance of life, traces of memories and histories, strength, brokenness, and transcendence. All of which, in idea and as concrete objects, are suspended in space for the viewer to reflect and expand on. I soon persuaded myself that neither fear nor pride were constructive, I had to set to work with sensitivity and courage. This was what the participants, especially the student body who worked with me,

deserved: a glimpse of the 'first draft' of the thesis in fired clay, and a deconstruction of my experiences and perceptions through my studio work.

Inadvertently perhaps, Tehran was creating a space for mutual reflection. If invitations to talks and seminars by tutors and their students were the very first steps towards creating a meaningful dialogue around the subject of art training, the invitation to mount a solo show of my work was a major leap towards cultural continuity and cultural exchange. No longer would the textbook oriented guidelines and debates regarding the quantity of the researcher's participation, semi-, full-, etc., be an issue. Further, a critical consideration of notions of objectivity/subjectivity assumed a redundant position in this context, simply because Tehran was creating a space to view the outcome of my highly subjective endeavours in the studio. Thus, in real terms, Tehran determined the researcher to become a subject of enquiry herself, her work part of the outcome of the research, and the thesis multi-media. The supervisory panel in Canterbury encouraged these developments, and further recommended that the outcomes of my enquiries in the studio, and the enquiries at the universities in Tehran should assume parity, and be granted equal weight.

Research Setting: Tehran University and Al-Zahra University for Women

Tehran University is the first degree awarding institution in art in Iran, situated in west Tehran on 'Enghelab' or Revolution Street. It is also the institution where the academic cannon and critical excellence are set, and held high in the processes of education. Although there are several universities in Tehran and in the provinces which award art degrees, the core of art curricula nationally are designed by the practitioners and theoreticians based at Tehran University campus. It houses eminent professors and scholars within twenty six faculties including the sciences, social sciences, humanities, jurisprudence, law, the environment, Industrial engineering, and politics, with a beautifully planned site and gardens. Its student body has played a major historic role in critically analysing, debating, and objecting to the actions of the previous and the current political regimes in Iran. The 1979 revolution mobilised a great number of student activists and demonstrations, and marked Tehran University campus as a major landmark and venue for ideological debates as well as riots. The site for the central congregation and debate leading to the 1979 revolution, just opposite the main gates at Tehran University, is now converted into a large mosque where hardline religious rallies take place every Friday.

University art education in Iran was first established in 1939 (H. S. 1319)[2], funded by the ministry of higher education. It was initially housed at the well known Marvi Khan School premises training young clerics, and subsequently moved to its present location at Tehran

[2] This represents the Muslim solar Hejri calendar used in Iran.

University. The purpose built faculty and its large and well-lit studios were designed and run in close collaboration with Andre Godard, the architect from Paris who had a consultancy firm in Tehran. The Faculty has been expanded to house a variety of new disciplines in addition to the initial disciplines of painting, sculpture or stone carving, and architecture. The curriculum comprised of two phases. The initial phase offered a two-year training in architectural drawing, painting in the style of the 'academy' in Paris, carving, and art history. Once the candidates successfully passed the relevant examinations, they would be promoted to the second phase of advanced studies in art. The faculty's high council or 'shora-ye aali' would then convene in the spring and autumn in each academic year to consider the finals projects for graduation.

The development of art education in higher education was an evolutionary process over seven decades beginning in the late 1840s. The transition from master/apprentice or 'ustad-shagerd' practices, leading to the institutional training and the naturalist style stemmed from the reformist vision of Mirza Taqhi Khaan Amir Kabir, the first prime minister to Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, who founded 'Darol Sanaay'a, or the art and craft institute, in Sabzeh Meydaan in the Bazar, and the 'Darlol Fonoon' as the first modern Polytechnic where engineers, physicians, interpreters and musicians were trained, and painting classes were also given.

Traditionally the master-apprentice or 'ustad-shagerd' system of training in the workshop or 'karkhaneh' were the means of transferring skills regarding painting, calligraphy, illumination, enamelling, and the design of royal edicts, treatises, chronicles, etc. (Ekhtiar 1998, 1999). Such training processes were often well guarded and exclusive family trades facilitating appointments in the Qajar courts (1785-1925), and the dynasties before them. The Ghaffari family, of Kashan origin in central Iran, were pivotal in establishing art training in Iran close to its contemporary forms. As court painter during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1834-48), Abul Hasan Ghaffari, Sani' al-Mulk spent five years in Italy to observe trends in 'academic' painting and lithograph. His new training, views and expertise were significant in the establishment of painting classes as an academic pursuit in Iran's first European-style institution of higher learning, the Dar al-Funun. His nephew Muhammad Ghaffari, Kámál al-Mulk, also court painter, founded the fine art school or 'Madreseh-ye Sanayi' Mustazrafeh' in the mid 1800s,[3] where an autonomous fine art programme was offered with governmental funding. Kámál al-Mulk who was trained at the Paris Beaux Arts also designed and founded teaching art as a specialised subject starting at secondary schools or 'honarestan'. These schools taught the science of painting 'elme naqashi', carving 'hajjari', and art history in the

[3] The date given for this is in the lunar Hejri calendar 1329.

style of the academy in Paris. (unpublished manuscript, courtesy of the Public Relations Department at Faculty of Fine Arts, Tehran University, 2002)[4].

Al-Zahra University is the only national women's university, accommodating several faculties including the Faculty of Applied Arts, where male and female tutors teach forms of the plastic arts and crafts. It was founded in 1964 during the Pahlavi regime as The Institute of Higher Education for Girls, built on the site of a small shrine and orchards in rural Vanak, north west Tehran. This was through a specific donation by a 19th century courtier for the purpose of educating women, and not necessarily because of Islamic ideology. It was renamed for a very brief period to 'Mahboobeh Motahedin Institute' immediately after the 1979 Revolution, and finally registered as Al-Zahra University for Women in the memory of the Prophet's daughter. It has made higher education available to many young women whose family traditions are not in favour of co-education. A considerable number of the student body at Al-Zahra wear the 'chador' form of Islamic cover and come from the 'traditionalist and neo-traditionalist religious classes' (Mirhosseini 1999). Whilst some advocate the hardline policies of the government and see the campus as a site for expressing fundamentalist views, very many, including the students from the Applied Arts Faculty, disregard or oppose such views and policies as much as they can. The Chancellor Dr. Rah-Navard holds an advisory position with the government on issues regarding women, as well as directing the PhD programme at Al-Zahra, and teaching theory at Tehran University. An 'avant-garde' student at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tehran University in the 1970s, she

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[4] Towards the end of my third trip in Tehran, and following substantial efforts and enquiries about the history of the Faculty of Fine Art at Tehran University, I located the name of a scholar who had researched and recently produced such a document. Liasing with the Visual Arts Department secretary, I found his timetable and waited for him in the lobby. Approaching him when he appeared with some of his colleagues, I introduced myself and asked him if he was indeed the person I was looking for, to which he replied "yes". I asked if I might be given or shown a copy of such a document, or perhaps have a few minutes to discuss its content. This cheerful, sharp and witty professor of my own age replied: "No Madam…..I am like the sun, the moon, and sometimes I enjoy an eclipse. These days, I am enjoying that eclipse and therefore, do not communicate!" Everyone laughed out loud, including me. I was in no way offended. Realising that I was not able to get any response from this scholar, I made an appointment with the Head of Public Relations at the Faculty of Fine Art housed in the Architecture Department and explained how crucial it was to locate some information regarding the history of the faculty. He said he would see what he could do to help. Some days later I returned to this office and was given, in a brown envelope, a copy of a beautifully handwritten text. I believe this must be the document I was looking for; it does not have a signature, however. I have since been able to cross-reference the content of that manuscript with Layla Diba's Royal Persian Paintings 1999.

became an active political campaigner for the Islamic Revolution, embraced its new dress codes, and has enjoyed a successful career as an academic and political figure since the 1980s.

A brief historic context

As mentioned earlier in relation to the research questions, this thesis will not attempt at analysing the current political situation in Iran, nor will it discuss details of recent political histories. The participants' views in Chapter Four, 'texts and spaces', shall throw light on events relevant to this study through relating their personal and collective histories. The 'hejab' or Islamic form of dress, however, must be briefly discussed here since it is relevant to Chapter Four, [Text IV] in this thesis, and touches the lives of a significant portion of Iranian women on a daily basis. This, I have based on personal knowledge.

The 1906 Constitutional Revolution marks Iran's most significant intellectual and political struggle for reform and modernization, having started in the mid 1800s with a change of attitude towards language, and its simpler forms of usage in literature. The debates regarding women's issues, however, were first publicly addressed during the reign of Reza Shah who ruled Iran from 1925 to 1941[5]. The 1927 public dress codes made it illegal for women, at least

[5] Reza Khan, as he was known before he became king, was said to be, by my close relatives, a charismatic and fierce man. He was the Chief Commander of the Army 'Sardar Sepah' and subsequently Minister of War in 1921, the Prime Minister in 1923, and became Reza Shah the first king of the new Pahlavi Dynasty in 1925. The Islamic Revolution in 1979 toppled his son the late Mohamad Reza Shah. Because Reza Khan was the next-door neighbour of my paternal grandfather Mirza Ebrahim Khan before he became Shah, and his "drinking and swearing chum", many anecdotes, some with historic elements, have been handed down to us. I recall both my elderly grandmothers speaking about the day women were de-veiled. They spoke of their rage, and how they considered Reza Khan responsible for this loss of integrity. They stopped going outdoors for a period of time, and stopped socialising with their friend the new King's wife. They chose to visit the public baths at dawn driven in carriages, in fear of their veils being pulled off their heads. By the time my mother became a young woman, however, the idea of 'no hejab' was accepted by many families. She told us how she indulged in the new look, wearing fancy hats and coats made in Paris when she married my father. I remember playing with her extra-ordinarily beautiful handbags as a child. Their fine metal clasps, I now understand, were in 'Art Deco' and 'Art Nouveau' styles. Thus, in the space of a couple of decades, there had emerged a 'public' cultural life that men and women enjoyed together; my parents often talked about visiting the movie houses and the theatre. I was introduced to such cultural activities as a youngster in Tehran.

for a period of time, to appear in public wearing the traditional ‘chador’ the complete body cover, and ‘ru-bandeh’ the perforated face cover. This was well received by many progressive families who wished to openly educate their daughters at schools with a national curriculum, rather than privately either at home or at religious schools. A great number of Iranians however, rejected such imposition at the time, seeing it as an attack on their religious identity, sense of tradition, and integrity.

Whilst the subsequent half-century had allowed the issue of ‘Islamic cover’ have a space to evolve and be interpreted as a matter of choice, some factors within the Islamic Revolution pressurised the regime to impose a strict ‘Islamic’ dress code on all women in 1980. These were contrary to the promises of Ayatollah Khomeini who had given his word, while in exile in Paris, not to interfere with secular laws in Iran. The consequences of such a cycle of illegalization (1927) and re-legalization of ‘Islamic cover’ dominate social discourses in contemporary Iran powerfully. Not all by any means, but millions of Iranian women and indeed men, young and old, profoundly reject and resent the laws regarding any form of Islamic cover today. Resisting such laws in public spaces, however, proved dangerous as well as illegal at the outset, in the first decades of the Islamic regime. Women who did not embrace this change would be attacked sporadically in public spaces by youth hardliners, the 'sepaah'.

In recent years, however, there is a sense of fashion and ‘colour’ in the dress codes observed by women. If one is not dealing with the governmental offices, a loose and colourful scarf and jacket type overcoat or ‘roopoosh’ might be enough to appear in public. The dress codes observed indoors, however, can be as avant-garde and expressive as anywhere in the world, particularly intensified by the relevant forms of globalization, and highly up-to-date because of satellite television and the internet. This sharp contrast in private and public conduct has a multiple of dimensions in social behaviour, and severe consequences in social life. It spins a web of mistrust/distrust and division.

Perspectives and paradigms

My enquiries as an art practitioner are based on imagination and ideas; these are related to my experiences and the knowledge of my art historical heritage. The relationships between my ideas, and the outcome of my investigations in physical or visual objects, draw on a set of tools such as clay, twisted wire, kilns, kiln atmosphere, a range of temperatures for firing, and digital cameras. These necessarily represent my disciplines and my sensory sensibilities. Similarly, I have sought to create a tool kit which would best assist me in understanding, analysing, managing and re-presenting the phenomena I have encountered in the field. Thus, both sets of enquiries require specific tools in order to communicate the bigger picture and

construct the thesis. I have striven to be sensitive, and true to the participants in the choice of my tools in the field.

As clarified in the Research Questions, this study is concerned with the quality of behaviours around teaching and practicing art. I would suggest that the qualitative paradigm is the most appropriate for my fulfilling the aims specified in the research questions, and the analysis of the responses to those questions. It accommodates methodologies, which are best suited to social enquiry and the promotion of understanding (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, Schwandt 2000). Social science deals with the sociological imagination including personal and collective histories (Mills 1970); social inquiry involves human activity, and engages and interacts with that human activity, it is an "ongoing dialogue with different social worlds" (Holliday 2002, p. 7). These concepts have led me to adopt ethnographic methods where I would watch, listen, and document the elements in phenomena as related in the field. Ethnographic methods enable me to relate the observed and seen phenomena, or to come out and tell the story as it really happened (ibid).

Whilst I am aware of the limitations in myself, my 'tool box', and the outcomes of the study, I would suggest that the qualitative paradigm has helped me to work interdisciplinarily between art and social science, understand and collaborate with the participants, and produce a multi-media thesis. In this, I have hoped to be exploratory, creative, and innovative, in my written and visual texts, maintaining the vitality I aspire to in the entire research.

The structure of the thesis

Following Chapter One, Chapter Two will continue to introduce and discuss the methods I have undertaken to sustain the research processes. It will further illustrate how I have engaged with the nucleus of selected theories to construct interconnected structures for understanding and reconstructing the phenomena before me. Chapter Three introduces the ceramic installation 'The Archaeology of Self'. This is the space for projecting the researcher's response to the research questions as a participant, her formal and visual perceptions through the language of clay, and the structures she has adopted for executing the body of work. Chapter Four is collaborative in nature; it is a constructed abstract space accommodating multiple perspectives and shifts in ideologies. It manages and installs the participants' lived experiences and histories in interconnecting clusters. This spatial arrangement, 'texts and spaces', aims to reconstruct the emerging structures of the development of art education in Tehran. It clarifies the relationships between the research questions, and the experiences, views, and ideologies of the participants.

The 'texts and spaces' presented in Chapter Four are:

Text I, Spaces of Transition and Transformation

Text II, Contradictory Spaces

Text III, Transparent Spaces

Text IV, a Space for Gendered Identities

Text V, A Space for Parallel Systems for Art Education

Further, I shall present a selection of brief texts made up of just a few lines which I shall call 'Illuminations'. The purpose of these is to throw light, as indeed is the case of such projections in the design of illuminated manuscripts, and to reflect on shifts in perspectives through short bursts of knowledge.

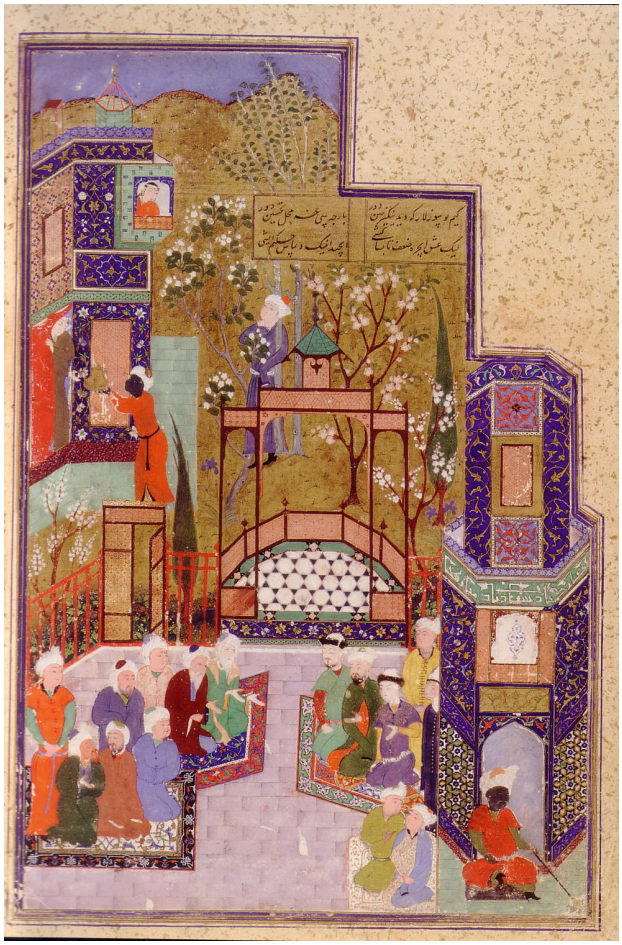
Chapter Five presents two documentary videos, 'My Feet', which was shot in Canterbury and shown in Tehran, and 'Deconstructing Alien Geography' shot in Tehran. Whist these videos create interspaces with the ceramic sculptures in 'The Archaeology of Self' in Chapter Three, they are visual histories further interpreting private and the public spaces, forms of reflexivity, and time. This is where the researcher explores and cross-references her sensibilities, art, and presence at the site of research.

Chapter Six will present the photographic documentation of the study. This is a significant historic and contemporary folio of photo essays which shall orient the reader with seen phenomena, or visual sociology, in Tehran.

Chapters Three, Five, and Six are presented in the thesis in CDs and DVDs. I shall however offer a small selection of photographs for Chapters One, Two, Three, and Four in the printed text, for the reader's more immediate visual engagement.

Chapter Seven will reflect on the interconnection of ideas in the thesis, and conclude the thesis.

I have had to make difficult choices about what to include in this thesis because of the word limit imposed upon me. I have determined that in response to Tehran and my methodologies, I would relate data, the participants' views and experiences, at every opportunity available. Detailed analysis of specific literature on cultural discourses has thus been left out. The design, and the elements of the thesis are emblematic of such discussions in cultural criticism. Ultimately, however, one is selective both in the choice and nature of the data presented. The reasons behind the selections made, and the presentation of certain behaviours and ideas and not others are not always clear cut. I am aware of the fact that one's intuition and life experiences inevitably influence choices and selections made. In Tehran, as indeed in my enquiries in the studio in Canterbury, I have made decisions and judgements according to who I am, my spatio-temporal contexts and sensibilities. For this, I take full responsibility.



Fragments, traces, pottery shards,

mindscapes and psychogeography

Illuminated manuscript, ‘text and spaces’:

From the Khamsa of Mir Ali Shir, 1485

Chapter Two: Context For Methodology and Theory

Introduction

The predominant structures for methodology and theory in this interdisciplinary qualitative study are from ethnographic and poststructuralist paradigms. These form the investigative framework for my enquiries into the development of art education at Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and how such developments relate to the concept of identity. My role as a participant artist-researcher has been key in securing access in Tehran, and has further influenced the range of methodologies and the outcomes of the study.

Ethnographic observation as an aspect of social science, is crucial in the study of humanity and its social organization and culture. The ethnographic observations in this research have been my means of placing attention on the participants' lived experiences and their socio-cultural organization in the context of art education. These observations have thus become the initial tools for analysing and describing the details of the picture before me in Tehran.

The Derridean notions of deconstruction and différance, within the poststructuralist paradigm, have offered a further means for the deconstruction of the ethnographically collected data. They have facilitated the production of an abstract space in order to create relationships between those observed, their experiences in the social world, and their practice of making meaning through art. As a result, the data has been reconstructed into a non-linear forum of ideas, revealing traces of sensibilities and ideologies which I have named 'texts and spaces'. In the processes of investigation, the ethnographic and poststructuralist considerations in this study have evolved and interlocked organically informing one another and creating one path. As a participant researcher, an idea well established in both paradigms, a practicing artist, and significantly because of the invitation from Tehran to mount a solo show of my work, the studio enquiries in Canterbury are also part of the processes of investigation. They reveal the researcher's perceptions, not to be seen as 'objective' but integral to the study. The sculptural and video installations have thus acquired textual status becoming integrated with the methodologies, and forming a coherent part of the thesis. The outcome of the study, therefore, is a multi-media thesis of written and visual texts, both 2D and 3D.

Below, I present the analysis of the framework and the processes of investigation in three parts. In Part One I shall bring together the most significant elements of methodology and theory I have considered, clarifying their meanings as concepts in the context of this study. This will provide a detailed account of my understanding of these concepts, and their relevance as research design tools.

In Part Two I shall illustrate how aspects of the methodological and theoretical structures have been implemented in the field as procedures to take ideas forward, both in the studio in

Canterbury and in Tehran. In Part Three I shall reflect on the processes of research as a means for learning, and personal or professional development.

Part One: Key Principles in Methodology and Theory

Ethnographic considerations

Ethnography has been my primary guide and tool for the analysis of phenomena in Tehran. As a branch of anthropology, I have discovered ethnography to be a dynamic approach to social research where perceptions are made through observing human behaviour according to what is said and done. Dynamic, because observation of social behaviour in humans is, in my view, witnessing one's own kind on a journey of change and continuity in various social contexts. Further, the variety of observational tools available to the ethnographer, photography and video for example, facilitate the transformation of such observations into documents registering history. My aims in pursuing the ethnographic path have been to record, understand, and represent the experiences of the participants in the context of art education, not criticising the researched body. Rather, I have hoped that the thesis would be a reflective analysis of human condition, generating new knowledge, and an informative experience for the reader.

As a major point of reference, I copied the following statement in my notebook prior to the initial field trip to Tehran.

> "In its most characteristic form 'ethnography' as a form of qualitative research involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. Ethnography shares parallels with scholarship in the humanities and the arts which have themselves become an increasingly important influence on social research." (Hammersley and Atkinson 1997, p. 1)

This statement has consolidated the notion of observation as a scientific and intellectual tool, making legitimate my observational skills as an artist, and allowing these skills to be implemented as tools in social science. I am particularly taken by the similarities between observing the world towards conceptualisation of ideas in my art; and the observation of humanity and phenomena towards hermeneutics in the lived experiences of the participants in Tehran. Both disciplines rely on observational skills in order to understand concepts, to gain perceptions, and to construct outcomes.

Through my readings, and in the process of research, I have become aware of the critical and reflexive approaches in ethnographic observation. Critical ethnography problematizes

normative and universal claims to hermeneutics and truth (Carspecken 1996). It validates interaction between the cultures and contexts of the researcher and the researched, moving beyond the ideological constraints of Western and non-Western behaviours. It resists 'Otherization' (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000).

Reflexive approaches in ethnography consider the ethnographer as part of the investigation. This, however, does not mean the mixing up of the sources of the data, but the researcher's willingness to be in situations where she might also be observed, viewed critically, and be treated as data source. As pointed out by Kincheloe and McLaren, the ethnographer is a "unified subject of knowledge that can make hermeneutic efforts to establish identification between the observer and the observed" (2000, p. 301). I locate the processes of my enquiries in the studio, the outcome of my studio practices in ceramics and moving image, and my diaries, in such critical and reflexive ethnographic procedures.

Further, reflexive and critical ethnography gain ground from critical theory in cultural criticism. They are related to origins as diverse as the critical traditions of Marx, the Frankfurt School, Foucault, Derrida, and the feminist movement where notions of power, liberation, and resistance are contemplated (Ladson-Billings 2000, Kincheloe and McLaren 2000, Lincoln and Guba 2000, Tedlock 2000). As methodologies, reflexive and critical approaches have formed particularly significant and useful tools in my observing and analysing the participants' experiences. The complex and multiple nature of identities, diversities in perceiving beliefs and traditions, degrees of political autonomy, agency in structuring lives, and resistance, have thus been explored. Such issues are of particular concern and relevance in our time at the turn of the 21st Century, when individuality, nationhood, and citizenship of the globe assume exceptional significance in social and academic discourses and debates.

Such considerations have further alerted me to the crucial relationship between my studio enquiries in Canterbury and the question of art education in Tehran. It has been in the processes of making my ceramic sculptures [Chapter Three], and the processes of editing of the video 'My feet' [Chapter Five], that I have realized the significance and interconnection between my art and my identity, and the relationship between the participants and their art in Tehran. Whilst my ceramics have proved to be my means of emotional and intellectual survival, they further reference the participants' strife to articulate their sense of identity. The rhythmic journey of my feet in the video depicts the search for an abstract landscape to relate to in order to resist isolation. It has become clear to me that the participants' engagements with art in Tehran, similarly relate their search for intellectual survival and self-realization. To my astonishment many participants who visited the show in Tehran pointed to the work and told me they recognized themselves in the work. Although when making the sculptures I had only imagined the female participants, several young male students identified with the pieces too. They expressed their desire to acquire them, they wanted to take them home. This

intellectual emotional collaboration between myself as an artist and them as artists, and between understanding myself through my own work and forming a better understanding of them through it, is at the core of my thesis. I find it a poignant revelation.

In the process of collecting data in Tehran I faced a highly focused critical stance from every single participant; this has necessitated reflective methods compatible with the demands in the field. In contrast to the conventional and naturalist ethnography where politics are set aside, critical and reflexive ethnography promote political consciousness creating a sphere of knowledge mindful of notions of power and resistance (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000; Tedlock 2000; Denzin 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 1997). The socio-political contentions from Tehran have needed to be located within such frameworks. As related above, such developments have complemented the poststructuralist ideologies relating to the concepts of liberation, the empowerment of the individual, and the understanding of difference through contexts.

Finally, reflexivity has allowed me to create and articulate a personal space and a personal voice in the thesis, rather than a distant institutional or corporate one. I have recognized this as an opportunity for registering, developing, and analysing my thoughts and ideas, leading to their further clarification and self-knowledge. These are explored in my experiments with music, as well as my video camera. My research diary relates my sensory analysis of music or sound in order to create an understanding of the interrelationships of form, rhythm, space, and time. My videos in Chapter Five, use the psychic strength of the lens to access my deeper thoughts, revealing glimpses of my psycho-geographies as if a visual ethnographic diary. Thus, reflexivity has been instrumental in recognizing personal experiences as the scaffolding for the conceptualization of knowledge (Hammersley and Atkinson 1994).

Although listening, watching, and note taking have been the initial means of gathering ethnographic data, a more varied selection of tools were introduced as the research developed. The photographic documentation, Chapter Six, has yielded a considerable visual dimension, context, and history. These images are reminders of seen phenomena, and the strength of the individuals I have encountered in Tehran, witnessing their certainties as well as uncertainties. Tape-recorded semi-structured interviews and conversations have provided opportunities for creating a one-to-one dialogue with the participants in order to document their lived experiences as well as their voices. Mixed with these data are the sounds of Tehran, the roar of the traffic, the occasional call to prayer by the muezzin from the radio, the vendors in Tajrish Bazar in north Tehran, and the poetry offered by one taxi driver. In order to further register these presences, and reference ‘time’, I intend, as a future project, to incorporate these ‘found’ sound fragments, and compose a ‘sound piece’ to illustrate new dimensions regarding the site of the study.

These processes have been enlightening; they have enabled me to approach the research site, and subsequently the deconstruction of the data, with confidence and without the loss of time. I have, however, reminded myself at all times that no matter how elaborate my tools might appear, they are only there to reflect my aspirations towards forming a fuller understanding of phenomena before me. These tools have neither been to measure the cultures of the researcher and the researched against one another, nor merely to recount differences of approach within the cultures of art education in Tehran and in Canterbury. My main aim has been to investigate as fully as possible with the most appropriate and available tools in order to understand and record diversities in existences. This is expressed succinctly by Geertz who says:

> "The uses of cultural diversity, of its study, its description, its analysis, and its comprehension, lie less along the lines of sorting ourselves out from others and others from ourselves so as to defend group integrity and sustain group loyalty, than along the lines of defining the terrain reason must cross if its modest rewards are to be reached and realized" (Geertz 2001, p. 83).

I have looked upon the ethnographic processes in this research as a joint cultural journey with the participants in Tehran, hoping to increase learning and understanding of human condition and common experience. Paradoxically however, it has been in Canterbury that I have had to cross uneven terrains as a researcher. Carrying out research was more problematic in Canterbury, with the territorial politics for accessing kilns and materials, than accessing knowledge in Tehran (see Appendix 5 and Illuminations v & xii). This is because difficulties or faults do not simply arise in interacting with the researched body, as expected by many engaged in research. Misjudgement, misguided but deeply rooted prejudice, or misplaced institutional anger and resentment towards the researcher can easily occur at home in one's own institution. Although this has been damaging, I have come to believe that such misgivings must be a characteristic of educational institutions anywhere. My experiences in Canterbury have demonstrated this to me. Geertz perceives research to be an arduous landscape that must be crossed if only to realise its unpredictable predictabilities, which themselves increase understanding. He considers this landscape as follows:

> "Full of sudden faults, and dangerous passages where accidents can and do happen, and crossing it, or trying to, does little or nothing to smooth it out to a level, safe, unbroken plain, but simply makes visible its clefts and contours" (ibid).

Paradoxes and frustrations, then, do exist and as an ethnographer one notices them more acutely because of sharpened senses. I have noted the ethnographic observations in this study to be an experience of contrasts and contradictions in human behaviour. This has been surprising as it has been difficult. I have come to the conclusion that such occasions are the

moment for resilience and courage, and the moment that the researcher must remain determined to fulfil the demands of the research enquiry. The metaphor of a landscape of "dangerous passages" and of "clefts and contours" resonate with my experiences profoundly and remind me that learning and knowing about others are highly valuable, and might be useful tools to know and learn about ourselves.

Poststructuralist influences in the study

Complementing the foregoing ethnographic approaches and their analysis is the poststructuralist paradigm in contemporary critical theories and philosophy. Poststructuralism refers to an inter-disciplinary movement: social sciences, politics, law, and linguistics amongst others, suggesting alternatives to structuralist discourses, philosophies, and theories (Benjamin 1997). Whilst it does not negate structuralism wholly, it problematizes its absolutist convictions in logic, binary oppositions, hierarchies in meaning, and the universality of western traditions in thought. It introduces notions of space and time in relation to difference in terms of contexts, and in order to determine meaning.

The adoption of the poststructuralist path has led my enquiries to the Derridean concepts of deconstruction and différance. Jacques Derrida's philosophical education was based on his analysis of phenomenology movement founded by Edmund Husserl. This was an invitation to place focus on the science of phenomena as detailed description of conscious experience, without recourse to explanation, metaphysical assumptions, and traditional philosophical questions. With such a philosophical background, Derrida has put forward the concept of deconstruction or deconstructive reading, also referred to as the 'ethics of deconstruction', as a means of analysing human experience within the contexts of space and time. As one of the most controversial thinkers of the late twentieth century, his critical discourses are regarded as a major contribution to philosophical developments in our time (Cohen 2001; Bullock and Trombley 2000; Derrida 1998; Derrida 1997; Norris 1987; Benjamin 1997).

In Derridian terms, deconstruction as a form of dividing literary texts into parts, or simply categorising them under lists and headings, is limiting the complexity of their meanings. We are recommended to pause, drop the hierarchic analysis of thought in the form of canonical discourses and traditions in literary texts, and take up the reading and re-reading of their margins looking for layers of meaning. Deconstruction in its Derridean sense is not a form of linear disassembling of parts, nor is it a system of backtracking and putting ideas sequentially or chronologically. Deconstructive reading is an ethical demand, it aims at revealing what might appear insignificant and from a multiple of perspectives. It attends to texts through placing attention on difference and contexts spatio-temporally. It takes into consideration related histories, and critical circumstances in order to build layers of knowledge. Deconstruction suggests that such qualities should be particularly noted, rather than dismissed, it is about non-linear approaches in determining meaning, paying attention to

contradictions, gaps, uncertainties, as well as certainties in textual or behavioural analysis. I believe that illuminating these qualities in phenomena will reveal dimensions of meaning whilst reflecting on possible cycles and origins of thoughts and events in phenomena. The 'Illuminations' section in Chapter Four, for example, is my way of sustaining the commitment to the concept of deconstructive reading in addition to the design and the presentation of all other data in this multi-media thesis.

Ethical deconstruction, in my opinion, might also mean safeguarding the integrity and wholesomeness of texts, recognizing their autonomy, and allowing for meanings to develop and be determined in relation to other texts through selecting and positioning. In this way meanings might emerge as ideas, and could be viewed dynamically from a variety of angles, where the accepted norms of right and wrong might also be questioned. I suggest that the process of selecting, arranging, or positioning and juxtapositioning of texts, or phenomena, would inevitably induce shades, and colours, and consequently multiple possibilities in determining interpretations. In a way, deconstruction leaves room for a degree of open-endedness. I welcome this open-endedness and would resist totality and neat packaging of ideas. This is not dissimilar to deconstructing a painting, where reading form and structure, values in colour, potential textural qualities in colour, their saturation and luminosity, and the emotional power associated with them might be established according to their positioning (Elkins 1999). This way of deconstructing transforms colours into ideas, dealing with the sensual qualities they might project in themselves, the qualities they might induce in their neighbours, as well as a hermeneutic memory system for the whole painting which would be inclusive of their frequency or rhythm occurrences. Such judgements may never be final however, since the contexts of the painter and the viewer, the context of the site of the exhibition, and the quality of light might promote further readings.

I believe the Derridean notion of deconstruction aims at increasing layers of understanding rather than making concepts over-relative or limited. Wherever the possibilities of understanding increase, the nature and depth of meaning also increase, and contradictions might also occur. Thus, multiplicity and contradiction in meaning create a quality which cannot be static, is fluid, and might shift according to the angle or the perspective it is viewed. I aim to present the data in Chapter Four with these principles in mind, multi-perspectively, and hope that they might communicate numerous and open-ended interpretations or ideas. This, I would suggest, will address the collected data at once critically and ethically as an ongoing discussion.

Interrelated to the deconstructive theories is the conception of 'la différance' as a contemporary and politically alert philosophical orientation. It was first put forward by Derrida in 1966 at Johns Hopkins University in a paper regarding literary texts and language. This was further developed in his teachings and writings in France and presented again in

1968 with wider political bearings, more inclusively applied to the arts, social sciences, law, etc., aiming to acknowledge the dimensions of world cultures and identities (Critchly 1999). La différance continues the deconstructive reading of texts whilst making references to 'trace', 'mark' and 'time'. It analyses meaning of phenomena to be at once different or 'differential' and 'deferred'. Différance is a phonetic re-arrangement of the words 'differ' and 'defer' as a marker or reminder of how layers, traces and time might affect the meaning (Norris 1987). Différance suggests, therefore, that meaning must be considered relative to time and space considering spatio-temporal qualities. This, in my view, establishes firm relationships between meaning and layers of experience in social phenomena. Prescribed meaning, or absolutism, is therefore redundant in the Derridean thought. What one experiences recalls layers and histories in the mind's archives, whether based on logic and/or intuition. The notion of différance, therefore, alerts hermeneutics to the shift and 'movement' (Cohen 2001) in meaning. This is how Derrida himself refers to it:

> Différance is a network of differentially signifying traces of meaning implying limitlessness of contexts; "the effort to take this limitless context into account: la prise en compte de ce contexte sans bord". (Critchly 1999 p. 38, citing Derrida)

Whilst such contention of limitlessness of perception carries the danger of over-relativism, it nevertheless creates a space for contemporary discourses to become alerted to the contradictions, complexities, and shifts in human perceptions. I am further reminded of the power of difference in perception which I discovered in my studies in art as an undergraduate. The art world and art theory, I know, thrive on difference, survive because of it, and are enriched by the differences in contexts and perceptions. I thus recognise the potential fluidity in the idea of différance, and I find it inspiring. This fluidity is highly relevant to all aspects of my work. As a multi-lingual and multi-identitied individual belonging to both East and West and part of a number of socio-political contexts, the chain of my ideas relate well to the concept of différance, and are contrary to absolutist and essentialist paradigms.

The reflexive and highly charged qualities of the Derridean concepts of deconstruction and différance have provided me with the tools I need as an ethnographer and an artist to conduct the study, and manage the analysis and synthesis of the collected data. They have alerted me to note, record, and strive to understand the subtleties emerging from phenomena, defer absolute meanings, and build upon new layers of knowledge from the margins. This is evident in my commitment to the production of data at every opportunity possible, and is reflected in my multi-source and multi-dimensional selection of those data. They include Tehran and Canterbury, sculptures and videos, observations at my own institution and at Canterbury Cathedral, presented in the **Illuminations**. This multi-layeredness facilitates the means to reveal the political and ideological positioning of the participants. It allows me to draw on the participants' experiences and views even in the last lines of the final chapter to project the

extent, and the complexities inherent in the epistemologies, hermeneutic, and intellectual trajectories in the study.

Observing the continuum of methodology and theory

I have related above the two paradigms which form the structures I have considered and worked through to attend to the methodologies in this study. As ethnographic and poststructuralist ideas, they have become an interrelated and interlocked system providing the scaffolding for the understanding of the enquiries in Canterbury and in Tehran. Attending to these processes of enquiry, their management, their deconstruction/reconstruction or synthesis, I have realised that theories as sets of ideas, and methodologies as procedures engaging with those ideas, form an organic and continuous continuum. Indeed I draw on, and illustrate this quality in theory and methodology whenever appropriate, and in a variety of locations in the thesis starting in Chapter One. This is simply because it has become evident to me that such processes create both working structures with architectural qualities, and relationships which lead to new creative and expressive outcomes. I share Derrida's view that:

> "From the moment one separates Theorem and Pratem, one considers architecture as a simple technique and detaches it from thought, whereas there may be an undiscovered way of thinking belonging to the architectural moment, to desire, to creation. A path which does not have to be just discovered but to be created and located at a crossroads at which arrival and departure are both possible" (Derrida 1997, p. 319).

My attempt at creating the architectural moment in this research would be to construct a forum, abstract 'spaces', at the heart of the written thesis to present the deconstructed ethnographic data as 'texts'. As an autonomous document these 'texts and spaces' might thus be regarded as points of arrival as well as departure of ideas, also making room for the views of the reader. Creating such a continuum of theories, methodologies, and outcomes, I believe, stems from my training in art and creating art objects through interconnected processes. Its clarity, however, I have re-discovered and observed in the consideration of deconstruction and différance, and their cyclical application to the collection, selection, management, and reconstruction of the data into texts. This continuum of synergistic occurrence of conscious efforts, and intuitive actions to grasp phenomena suggests that the processes of research in their entirety are cyclic, possessing architectural qualities where one builds on distant experiences and recent discoveries as scaffolding and structures for understanding and locating relationships.

The development of the idea of 'text'

In pursuing Geertz's contention that social acts of being in the world are "text-analogous" (Geertz 2000, p. 17) and therefore are subject to interpretation, I have grasped a firmer understanding of the Derridean regard for the idea of text. Derrida considers human activity whether political, economic, historical, and socio-institutional to possess meaning and subject to interpretation (Derrida 1999). I recognize such contentions, and would suggest that in group or urban life at least we project ideas about our ways of being which are considered, adopted, and presented as actions or behaviours possessing meaning. We thus determine and communicate who we are or wish to be; we create texts.

Simultaneously, in the study of the iconology of ancient Iran[6], of Susa in south central Iran around the 4th millennium B.C. specifically, and interconnected to the above contentions, I have noted that before the emergence of formalized standardized scripts the peoples of the region selected, registered, and communicated ideas visually in texts. They did so through drawing in brief and elemental but highly ordered 'primitive' marks (early semiology), and in the forms of amulets, seals, plaques, or tablets. They texted their ideas in clay or bitumen, registering for one another and for us as their future, systems of belief, rituals, ambitions for overcoming beasts, as well as counting and documenting systems for valued possessions (Harper et al 1992). Such iconography of my ancestral peoples, and understanding the significance of their acute modes of communication at the dawn of civilization, have further consolidated my readings of contemporary developments in thought by Geertz and Derrida regarding the idea or concept of 'text'. As a consequence, I have determined to build on such structures and consider the multi-media elements in this thesis as 'texts', where behavioural, written, visual, and sculptural ideas have been considered, selected and collected together, ordered, and presented to articulate meaning, contribute to the breadth of my findings, and enrich the outcomes of the study. Moving image and art objects are amongst these forms of texts.

My clay sculptures might be viewed as texts and might be read and interpreted visually; they communicate ideas and ambitions both on personal and art historical levels. Collectively, they depict a sensory cycle; intuitively they pursue the joy or dance of life, strength, resistance, fragility, brokenness, and transience. As ceramic pieces, they are also constructed to convey the seduction of clay and its plastic qualities in accepting form and touch, the alchemy of the hidden fluxes and oxides, as well as the transformational qualities in the physicality of the firing processes. As an installation of 'form and movement in space', the suspended female fragments further reference rhythms and intervals or time, and the wriggle for life and expression I have witnessed in Tehran specifically amongst the female student body. Further,

the collection stands as a metaphor for memories of archaic landscapes and monuments with specific qualities of light, and with traces of surface structures from ancient cultures, as it does for my personal history and cultural sensibilities. Their title 'The Archaeology of Self' allows for gaps and paradoxes, interruptions and continuities, so eloquently articulated by Foucault in relation to archaeology. He says:

> "Archaeology is much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new forms of positivity, and of sudden redistributions." (Foucault 1972, p. 169)

These sculptures can thus be read and contemplated within a multitude of perspectives. It is my aspiration that on a universal level they might pay tribute to their textual and sculptural heritage in clay in early civilizations.

Similarly, the photographs from the campuses in the study are texts. Al-Zahra University students holding their painted self-portraits in front of them, for example, are visual texts, or compositions and essays, which I have registered on my camera lens, ordered, and assembled and represented in the thesis, in order to convey meanings and ideas about them. These collaborative constructions between the researched, and the researcher are presented in Chapter Six in order to communicate the struggles and triumphs of female students in the study. Their paintings manifest their resistance, and strife for autonomy, discussing 'self' in partially clad bodies considered taboo in the public arena and particularly problematic in contemporary Iran. Photography here, discusses new ethnographies and the space for reciprocity through collaboration; it further acts as a vital sociological tool to concretise observations (Harper 2000). It allows the researcher's visual observations to be transported to an analytical space where they might be read and deconstructed individually or collectively towards a discourse of resistance. As photo essays, they hold layers of meaning, depict mindscapes, and evidence the created spaces for being, and resisting.

The taxi drivers, more fully considered in Chapter Seven and the Appendices, make a contribution to the idea of text through their oral histories, which they have contemplated and thought through for some time perhaps, specifically given to me to convey meaning. My reason for illuminating their text is twofold. Firstly, by projecting their insights, I attend to my commitment to the notion of the 'Other' (Derrida 1996), the 'not included', the 'marginal', or 'the insignificant' further implied in the concept of différance. And secondly, their participation in the discussion is my way for further reflection and contextualization, and/or cross-referencing, the socio-political analysis given by the participants at the two universities in Tehran. Their oral histories of recent and distant pasts, their collective text, comes from the 'outside' world, the margins of my research site, but speaks from the heart of society in Iran. Their presence in this thesis is part of my strategy for deconstructing the bigger picture, reflected on in the following statement:

> "To 'deconstruct' a piece of writing, or any 'text' for that matter, is …to operate a kind of strategic reversal, seizing on precisely those unregarded details (casual metaphors, footnotes, incidental turns of argument) which are always, and necessarily, passed over by interpreters of a more orthodox persuasion. For it is here, in the margins of the text – the 'margins', that is, as defined by a powerful normative consensus – that deconstruction discovers those same unsettling forces at work." (Norris 1987, p. 19).

The written text in this thesis forms the culmination of events, thoughts, and procedures throughout the study. The ethnographic texts present a selection of conversations, recorded semi-structured interviews, and observations regarding the art educational practices in Tehran in response to the research questions. As a strategy, the latter are spatially oriented as 'texts and spaces' indicating cycles and origins of phenomena in histories, ideologies, views, and identities. Similarly, and in order not to further fragment the data and to acknowledge the integrity the participants deserve, I have placed 'texts and spaces' in the heart of the thesis in a constructed space, in a forum. 'texts and spaces' are thus simultaneously methodologies for relating the participants' lived and common experiences, as well as outcomes forming the discussion in this thesis as history. As an installation of ideas in a constructed space with multiple of perspectives, they are in symmetry with my sculptural and video installations.

In terms of editing and presenting these texts, the participants were informed that data would be selected and not every part of those data would be represented in the thesis. I have paid particular attention to translating the definitions from Farsi into English. I thus believe the participants would immediately recognize themselves and their statements in these translations. I also believe my knowledge, grasp, and love of English as well as Farsi, as two rich and living languages with immense capabilities and histories in poetry and prose, has come to its own in my transmitting the spirit of what was given by the participants. As a native speaker of Farsi I have profoundly understood the participants' articulations, recognizing the depth and power with which they delivered their views. As a proficient and well informed English speaker with a grasp of the linguistic and cultural training in art discourses, I have sought not only the exact equivalent of the terms given in Farsi, but have aspired to convey the tone, the spirit, and the power the originals possessed. Such processes, I would suggest, have been similar to a poet's translation of poetry from another language where cultural meaning and impact have been preserved. This has indeed made me a unique researcher in Iran and in Britain.

Considering what each participant has specifically said in discussions and interviews, and selecting those who are presented in this thesis within the framework of deconstruction and différance has taken eighteen months of contemplation. A great proportion of my observations in the studios and lectures were translated and written at length in Tehran shortly

after observations were made. Most of these have not been used, though illuminating and highly valued teaching and learning processes. A 15,000 word detailed account of three sessions with Dr. Javadi at Tehran University in her theory class and at Iran Baastan Museum is one such example. Dr. Azjand's lecture in Text III, or Mr. Daresh's discussions in the sculpture studio in Text II, are other examples where the contents of two-hour sessions in real time, have been condensed into a representation of just a few pages. This I call 'data management'.

Specific and detailed conversations and tape-recorded interviews were transcribed in Canterbury. These too had to be selected primarily according to the line of my enquiry and argument. Subsequently they were, patiently and with exactitude, translated into English. After a faithful translation was achieved, I highlighted, condensed, summarised, and presented these in short forms as texts in Chapter Four. Though 'fragments', these have each been read, and re-read again and again to make sure the specific terminology used by the participants, and the tone and direction of the 'whole' were preserved. This is as much to do with my integrity, as is to do with theirs. The nature and extent of the data collected have simply been too great to present fully. Repetitions, and forms of direct questioning by myself have not been included in these texts.

The emerging spaces for observing the researcher

So far in this chapter I have demonstrated how I have understood the structures adopted in order to attend to the research questions, and the way they have influenced the study as driving principles. My engagement with Tehran, however, became even more significant because of 'The Archaeology of Self' exhibition presented in Chapter Three. The exhibition was held in January 2004, one year after the collection of data was completed, in the particularly difficult political climate during the parliamentary elections, and when the majority of the members of the parliament observed a 'sitting in' in protest against the hardliners in the government. As a result of this political climate the morning newspaper 'Sharq' which holds the highest daily circulation in Iran, and is famous for its socio-political and art coverage was closed down by the government to rethink its coverage policies. Consequently, their extended interview with myself and David Shutt who attended the opening of the show remained unpublished. The point here is the significance of the invitation by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art at such difficult times, their commitment to the artists they invite as the major sponsor of national and international cultural events, and the importance of my fulfilment of my commitment to Tehran during these trying times.

The exhibition provided an excellent intellectual space which gave the participants in Tehran an opportunity to view, discuss, and critique the researcher's studio work as one version of her thesis, and her artistic identity. The extent of their opinions, noted in a book for this purpose, are astounding in their analytical dimensions. They have expressed their responses

critically, referencing the show's potential political message, its form as installations of sculptures and video, emotionally in relation to familiar iconographies, and their own representation in the work. These joint experiences as a result of the exhibition created a remarkable context for reciprocity, and highly valued cultural engagement and cultural exchange between the researcher and the researched body including notable sculptors, painters, critics, and the general public.

Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork, I had worked out that methodology must be a strategic and systematic approach to making and managing enquiries in response to the research questions, in order to reach possible answers or 'relationships'. I had contemplated methodology to be an analytical process of investigation, revealing the tool-kit of the investigator. These would be my tools of ink and paper, clay and kiln, tape recorder, camera, video camera, as well as my intellectual tools of ideas and thoughts, imagination, and a mental map for actions and procedures. These tools, I perceived, would be applied in order to conduct the enquiry and illuminate 'relationships'. I had set off for the field highly focused on the job at hand, the collection of data: watching and listening with interest, and asking questions to meet the demands of the study. I was so determined to demonstrate a grasp of what might be taught in Iran that I undertook a study of iconography in Iranian art specifically concerned with Persian antiquity and early Islam. The identity of such iconology is located in the art produced in the contemporary period, the observation of geometric forms in the visual arts and architecture, and in textual analysis in Iranian classical painting and calligraphy. I wrote a preliminary chapter of 20,000 words on this subject which I have not since used.

I had not, however, imagined that I would engage with Tehran to the degree to which I was invited. The participants, individual tutors and students initially, and the institutions ultimately, invited me to engage much more fully than I had expected. This meant that I would be exposed and become a subject of investigation and possibly scrutiny myself. But I realised very quickly that doing research is also about flexibility in collaboration, courage, and the ability to make decisions. I had to demonstrate to the institutions and the individuals in Tehran that I was willing to co-operate through a stronger input into the processes of research; I had to allow them to observe me. Indeed, I welcomed this level of communicating with the participants, and the mutual ground for observation. Research cannot and must not be a one-way journey. Reciprocity and collaboration, in my view, must be allowed for (Harper 2000).

This flexibility created an opportunity for establishing mutual trust enhancing the quality of interactions. It provided an opportunity to look into the margins of social spaces and behaviours to create 'thick description' (Geertz 1973, 1993, 2001). Accepting the invitation from the students holding a life class in the privacy of their home, presented in Chapter Four, Text IV, is an example of discovering such unique spaces and sources for thick description.

The tutors too invited me to speak on a variety of topics. These include Mr. Daresh, sculpture tutor, Dr. Javadi, theoretician, Dr. Kafshcian, the head of visual arts at Tehran University, and Dr. Shad, head of painting and the director of MA programme at Al-Zahra University. The topics included the concept of 'identity', modernism and Picasso's clay works, art educational processes in the UK, the development of my own practices in the studio, and the current trends in sculpture in Britain. Not only were they interested in me as a fellow practitioner, but also a trusted source with whom to hold a dialogue. In these collaborations students were appointed to book rooms and set up equipment and work towards locating new knowledge. Fortunately, I was able to give such talks because of my involvement and input into the undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the Art Department at Canterbury Christ Church University. I managed to collaborate with the students to collect slides locally and arrange for an urgent delivery of slides to Tehran from Canterbury, through the Graduate School. My own collection of slides on the development of modernism, the clay works by Picasso, and the development of my own work were enthusiastically received by trainee painters and sculptors, and their tutors.

Methodologies, then, are evolving concepts and processes. They are as much about what one is prepared for and has considered in the planning and design of the research, as they are about what comes into focus and emerges in the field. It became clear to me in Tehran, that in order to sustain an energetic and robust flow in my activities as a researcher, I had to be prompt in learning how to work with the participants, make decisions and implement those decisions to the best of my ability on the spot. Fortunately, my training as a practicing artist dependent on primary research and intuitive perception have prepared me for such processes. As an artist I am challenged by my tools and materials on a regular basis and I have to make prompt decisions one way or another in order to prevent damage to the work. Having worked with clay where humidity and temperatures, both in the studio and in the kilns, can make or break work, have proved to be excellent training. It is a question of transferring skills intellectually according to the context. In Tehran, it has been about earning the participants respect, and gaining their confidence through collaborative projects, and in order to be allowed into their spaces; insights similar to those described by Geertz:

> "Working familiarity with the frames of meaning within which they enact their lives does not involve feeling anyone else's feeling, or thinking anyone else's thoughts, simple impossibilities. Nor does it involve going native, an impractical idea, inevitably bogus. It involves learning how, as a being from elsewhere with a world of one's own, to live with them" (Geertz 2001, p. 16).

I have lived outside Iran since 1979, but I have kept my knowledge of Farsi and cultural heritage alive[7], indeed a driving force in my intellectual development. Nevertheless, I found the prospects of giving talks at Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities daunting tasks. It occurred to me that I was at once the same and different to the participants in Tehran; language and politics have both evolved in my absence. Consequently I spent hours preparing what I wished to say in my talks, and how I would say it. I found myself consulting dictionaries and encyclopaedias searching for contemporary definitions, learning and practicing the current academic terminology, and familiarising myself with academic discourses in my discipline in Farsi. This type of involvement has not meant that I always support and hold the same ideologies as the institutions and the individuals in Tehran. It certainly does not mean that I agree with everything they do, but it has been an effort and willingness on my part, an ethical commitment in the process of research, and an attempt to overcome ideological boundaries to try and see from their point of view, resisting 'Monolingualism' and 'Otherization' (Derrida 1996).

As clarified above, the processes of observation in this study have not been reserved solely for the participants in Tehran. Indeed, Tehran created spaces where I might be observed too, and I have no doubt that the participants were empowered to view my art and behaviours as subjects for enquiry and reflection. Further, I have been prompted by Tehran to examine my own personal identities and sensibilities in the course of the study as part of my reflexive and critical methodologies. Geertz analyses this as the study of our own culture alongside the cultures of others. He says:

> "The study of other people's cultures, and of one's own as well, involves discovering who they think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it, something a good deal less straightforward than the ordinary canons of Notes and Queries ethnography, or for that matter the glossy impressionism of pop art 'cultural studies,' would suggest" (Geertz 2000, p. 16).

Unpredictably perhaps, I have endeavoured to examine the relationship between music and the sensory or sensual consideration of the concept of space. The following extract from my 'research diary' relates this investigative idea to: a) the formal development of the ceramic

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[7] I am indebted to my volumes of Persian poetry, both by the poets of 12th , 13th , and 14th centuries, as well as modern and contemporary poets such as Nima Yooshij, Forough Farokhzaad, Sohraab Sepehri, and Shaamloo, for sustaining my ability to read in Farsi and imagine the abstract. The global language of the New Iranian Cinema, but particularly the works of the film director, photographer, and poet Abbas Kiarostami have reminded me of a rich cultural heritage, whether visual, philosophical, or written.

sculptures in Canterbury, b) imagining the possible spatial qualities of the installation in Tehran whilst making the sculptures in Canterbury, and c) the implication of the concept of abstract space as means and ends of organizing and presenting the ethnographic data as an assembly of texts.

Research Diary, August 2003:

> In order to develop my understanding of space, abstract sensual space, I have put myself through an exercise of imagining and examining a sense of space through music. This, I have achieved through listening to specific pieces of music repeatedly and in consecutive days and weeks, lying down on the floor with my eyes closed.
>
> J.S. Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven have been the major sources initially. I have also pursued my enquiries through contemporary classical music from Iran, and the deconstructive mathematically oriented music of Steve Reich (Bang on a Can: New York Counterpoint, Nonesuch 2000). Through Bach's Cello Suites 2, 3, and 6 (Rostropovich 1995, EMI), I have developed a sensual understanding of structure, somewhat timed space, or an open architectural space with mathematical rhythms in horizontals, and verticals…rising. This has communicated emotional transcendence. Following these exercises I consulted writings on Bach regarding ornamentation or the lack of it in his music; the minimalisation of the surface ornamentation in my work references such readings. Through the opening movement of the second act in Beethoven's only opera Fidelio (von Karajan, Berliner Philharminker EMI 1995), I have developed a sensual understanding of arrangements of close and vaulted space as if in a catacomb… I have sensed the pressure pushing space or atmosphere down, in a circulating, lingering sensation. 'Time' in this instance has been determined in terms of sounds that are near, and sounds that are far in the orchestration. In classical Persian music, of which I am an avid follower, I have contemplated a vast inner space of psychological qualities as if in dialogue with great mountains if not the gods. Although my knowledge of musical terminology like rhythm, harmony, melody, and colour in orchestration have not been much affected through these practices, I have become aware of relationships of space with form and movement, time, interval, and repetitive rhythm. These have, in turn, enhanced my senses and ideas around formal solidity, and movement or 'dance' in space. I have also realized that in considering space one considers time, hence a forth dimension, and that the ear measures time through sound. I wonder how, or if it is possible at all, to apply the idea of space to my writing!

Such musical investigations have aided the visualisation of my sculptural forms in space in the way each piece relates to the space it occupies, the way it holds that space, and how the pieces relate to one another spatially in the installation. Consequently formal relationships between the objects, individually and collectively, and space are generated, interrelating rhythms and intervals. I have no doubt that the design of my sculptures and the editing of the video, 'My Feet', have benefited from these sensual enquiries. The success of the installation in Tehran, a constructed space of a metaphoric cube within which the sculptural forms were suspended in columns and at angles, depended on these musical exercises. The outcome of such invented and adventurous methodologies, however, extend beyond the articulation of visual and concrete space in my artwork. They are also a means for acquiring the confidence to deconstruct and view ethnographic data spatially and multi-perspectively. This would be an architectural metaphor potentially capable of holding other spaces, an abstract intellectual space where the voices of the participants might be placed textually in relation to one another.

The sites for observation, developing the idea of 'space'

In the processes of the study I have become increasingly aware of the shifts in views and perspectives, locations of ideas, experiences, and the sites for investigation. This consciousness has been relevant to both my enquiries as an artist, in 'The Archaeology of Self' for example, and as an ethnographer looking for insights in phenomena as it unravels. As a consequence I have developed an understanding of abstract or conceptual space where recent or distant histories might exist simultaneously or in juxtaposition, creating varied textures and meanings, and sometimes leaving only traces and residues of ideas behind. The statement presented below articulates the potentiality of the concept of space as a location capable of imagining and holding the complexities in ideas and phenomena:

> "Space is becoming the principle stake of goal-directed actions and struggles. It has of course always been the reservoir of resources, and the medium in which strategies are applied, but it has now become something more than the theatre, the disinterested stage or setting of action. Space does not eliminate the other materials or resources that play a part in the socio-political arena, be they raw materials or the most finished of products, be they businesses or 'culture'. Rather, it brings them all together and then in a sense substitutes itself for each factor separately by enveloping it." (Lefebvre 2003, p. 410)

Whilst this statement consolidates my understanding of the concept of abstract space, and the spatial orientations I have considered in order to relate the ethnographic texts, it has further alerted my attention to the potential fluidity of the site of research, and overcoming perceived boundaries in its location. Although the most obvious sites for observation in the study have been marked as the campuses of Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities, considering the site of research as fluid has facilitated the coming together of a number of new spaces including the

tutors' ateliers, a life drawing class in the home of one student, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, The British Museum, my studio in Canterbury, the interiors of taxis, 'The Archaeology of Self' exhibition, the architectural interiors of the shrines at Tajrish and Mashad, the archaeological sites at Estakhr, Naqsh-e Rustam and Persepolis in Southern Iran, and the Crypt at Canterbury Cathedral. Such shifts in location might indeed suggest shifts in perspectives pertinent to my deconstructive methodologies attending the margins of texts.

Further, my studio in Canterbury has become a space for ethnographic observation and part of the 'enveloping' research site, with myself as its research instrument. Methodologies and theories related to my creative energy, and the continuum of 'idea-process-idea' have been activated in this space resulting in data in the form of ceramic sculptures and moving image. This is the space where the fragmented formal qualities, and the worn 'relief' surfaces of a handful of ancient pottery shards from ancient landscapes have been studied, internalised into a mindscape, and imagined as new surfaces referencing my own body. This is also the space where my feet have narrated my psycho-geographies as if on a search for new surfaces to step onto. The journey of the dancing feet, or the walk for art and self-realisation, engages deeply with the participants in Tehran on their search. Induced by 75% slow motion, this ethnographic document has unravelled and projected the private, intimate, and tight space of the studio in Canterbury on the wall of the public art gallery in Tehran. It has questioned the much guarded notions of 'the private' and 'the public' in Iran specifically through the sensual and symbolic implications of the naked foot. The 'private life class' in Chapter Four, [Text IV] is yet another private space brought into the research site, in symmetry with the above and to discover new layers of knowledge relating to the participants' experiences.

I would thus contend that for an ethnographer the site of observation is an evolving and fluid space, with the possibility of shifts in locations and more abstractly, shifts in perspectives. This fluid site is where the observer might continue her task noting subtleties and overcome hierarchies; also where the social actors might perform their social acts in particular places at particular times (Schwandt 1994). The research site thus comprises corridors, university car parks, ateliers, galleries, researcher's studio, coffee shops, taxis, and other public or private spaces where the processes of enquiry might continue, not through metaphoric binoculars but through being present and witnessing phenomena firsthand. The research site in the qualitative paradigm, in my view, can only be a mental map of evolving and shifting spaces.

Part Two: Deconstructing the researcher's methodological behaviours

Personal conduct

My conduct as a researcher, and the respect I hold for the institutions and the participants in Tehran constitute a very important part of my methodologies. Institutions operate in particular ways and have particular procedures and codes of behaviour; the researcher must patiently

and, in my view, respectfully follow such procedures and acknowledge the professionalism of the researched body. Only through such conduct will the researcher win the respect and the trust of the researched body in return, be they individuals or institutions. Prior to my first visit to Tehran I had been warned by so many that no institution in the Islamic Republic of Iran would be accessible; that the doors have been closed for the last 25 years; that obtaining permission to observe the conduct of any university in Iran would be impossible, let alone Tehran University; that even if I were to be granted access and permission to conduct my research, it would not be safe and it would be interrupted and I would be accused of espionage; and that ultimately my data would be confiscated from me and I might end up in prison. None of these predictions have taken place. However, such thoughts did not leave me until the last moment in the airport when I completed the third visit to Tehran. My fourth visit to Tehran from late December 2003 to early February 2004 was to prepare for, and install my solo show, and therefore the data collected was of a different nature to my earlier trips not involving extensive notebooks, tapes and tape-recorder, and numerous rolls of negatives and newspaper articles.

At the outset of the research programme, long before arriving in Tehran I composed a courteous letter of introduction to the Director of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, whom I did not know, on behalf of the Director of Research at Christ Church, introducing me as a research candidate. This is the only person I had a name for, so it was sent to Tehran three months prior to my introductory trip in the last days of December 2001 to access permission. When I actually arrived at the desk of the personal assistant to the Director of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, her staff located the whereabouts of that letter on the computer screen and acknowledged that they did in fact have it on file in their International Office and that they did know about me. I found this precision and transparency in attending to my enquiry impressive.

Within two weeks from that day and a few days before my return to Canterbury I was given a short slot to put my case to Dr. Sami-Azar, the Director of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, who grilled me about my credentials and educational background and artistic discipline only to politely object to my asking him for help. However, I insisted that I did not know of any other source, and that he was my only hope because he knew who I should go to in the universities I was hoping to work with. This led to a very short note of introduction to the Head of Visual Arts at the time, Dr. Hosseini Rad, at Tehran University. He received me austerely but politely and the first question he asked me was about my studio work and artistic engagement. This was highly significant because I believe Tehran accepted me to proceed with my research primarily because I am a fellow practitioner, an artist. The second comment that Dr. Hosseini Rad made was that “research is good for everybody involved”. It was Dr. Hosseini Rad who gave me the names of the Director of International Relations at Tehran University, the Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture at Tehran

University, the Chancellor of Al-Zahra University, and finally the Dean of Applied Arts at Al-Zahra University. He suggested that I should write to each of them when I got back to Canterbury with a copy to him and explain the nature of the research. I did so and three months later, March 2002, when I returned to Tehran I was informed that I must also submit my research proposal for scrutiny. By the third week in April 2002, having spent a total of six weeks in two trips, I was officially a researcher at Tehran University and seconded to Al-Zahra University to carry out observations.

During these weeks, I waited in lobbies and secretaries' offices for hours, for just moments of interaction fulfilling the procedures required by the study. However, I do not believe that those long hours and days waiting behind doors were wasted, exhausting though they were. They provided a process of socialization and initiation into the field. It is probable that I consciously and subconsciously renewed and regulated my use of language, analysed degrees of formality as well as informality in social behaviour, familiarised myself with political and social discourses, and formed a deeper understanding of dress codes. I managed to work out an appropriate and personal dress code as I sat or stood in various spaces at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and The Visual Art Department at Tehran University. I noted a complete code of dress for women and men, just through watching: from the tea-lady, junior secretaries, senior female administrators with great authority, female art critics and newspaper columnist, and female curators, to the male artists, high powered designers of grand schemes, and many national and international guests that frequented those spaces. I did this with great interest. (One part of these descriptions from my research diary can be found in **Appendix One**). I have no doubt that such observations helped me to think about who I was in Tehran, at least as far as my appearance was concerned. I had to work at the universities and with male and female lecturers and professors who were mostly political appointments and not museum curators and art critics. I wanted to sustain my role as a serious, enthusiastic, and respectful researcher. I decided that my passion for colourful scarves and shoes had to be kept at bay. I was not an artist nor an art student in Tehran, I was primarily a researcher trusted by the Iranian Government, whose employees might just have to drop in on a lecture on theology given by a cleric. I chose a black headscarf for the universities and kept my long dark aubergine colour coat as a uniform. My large black shoulder bag could take all my equipment of several pens and notebooks, diaries, camera, tape recorder, photographs of my artwork, and some apple juice for those intervals in Ramadan, the month of fast. I did not find this dress code in anyway uncomfortable or unacceptable, it was part of the job, I simply got on with it. Fashion in Tehran is a big concept, but I neither had the time nor the interest in being fashionable. I make these points here because they are highly relevant to relate; I have been questioned about my conduct and dress code on numerous occasions by many different people but particularly researchers.

I believe, however, that my very first communication with Tehran, the letter signed by the Director of Research, was the single most important step in my methodologies. I believe that its courteous and respectful style, and its quest for making a contribution to knowledge were appreciated by its receivers. I am in no doubt that the waiting of hours and days for the introductory procedures to take their course prepared me for my return journey to Tehran, in late March 2002, and working closely with the participants at the universities.

Planning and programming the collection of data

The process of collecting data depends on meticulous time keeping and constant planning and re-planning, always looking ahead in order to be ready for diversions. It is my experience that diversions do emerge and no matter how well prepared, events do not necessarily develop according to plan. In research one is ultimately dealing with other human beings who have their own rhythm, personal agenda, and micro and institutional politics to consider. In Tehran I was an outsider and remained so, consequently not affected directly by the micro/macro politics of the individuals and institutions. It would be too naïve, however, to think that they did not exist. This was demonstrated to me particularly poignantly during the processes of studio research in Canterbury when the ceramics tutor caused psychological problems, my studio space was vandalised, and my drawings went missing.

Time keeping has been a crucial element in achieving the research goals. The planning and securing access to the institutions in Tehran was achieved at the end of my first term as a research student. I took advantage of the Christmas break in 2001 and spent three weeks in Tehran introducing my proposal and myself. Subsequently, I arranged two further field trips to collect data, in the spring and the autumn of 2002, for a duration of nine weeks each. By January 2003, I had completed the cycle of three visits to Tehran and had to begin making the work for my exhibition. The research and the making of the work, approximately 400 kilograms of fired clay; the processes of making and editing a video; the packing of the fragile sculptures; and the shipment of the work to Tehran by December 2003 required meticulous planning and perseverance. I project-managed; each stage of the task had to be timed and completed in a carefully planned manner, whilst technical process, and costs were noted in a log book.

Time keeping in Tehran during the period of data collection was of a different nature, largely because of the traffic problems but also because of the occasional change in institutional procedures. I soon learnt that some classes or lecturers have small margins of delay routinely, and that I must consider these delays in my planning. Determined to keep an eye on my budget, I used the reasonably priced public transport at the outset; these were the communal route taxis or ‘kerayeh’, and the very full buses. I soon realised, however, that I could not sustain this, and exhausted from spending an average of three hours per day in the traffic, I changed my transport policies subsequently. Private or telephone taxis travel within the same

crowded routes but one is picked up at the door, so the extended walks from home to bus/taxi stations could be avoided. Although I was never late before using the telephone taxis, using them allowed me to be where I had to be five to ten minutes earlier than the other participants. This was important to me; it gave me time to draw breath from my journey and be ready for my tasks at the Universities in good order, and functioning. It was part of my strategy to be at work early and appear ready and enthusiastic in order to maintain good social contact. In this way I managed to be there and become part of the scene, rather than arriving a few minutes late and drawing attention to myself. The Dean at Al-Zahra commented to me that wherever she looked, I was present! Although I took this as a complement, I knew that it just seemed like that. The fact was that I felt privileged to be a researching artist, and since I had been given the permission to be at these institutions I wished to adopt strategies that would enable me to use my time in the best possible way. Making sure that I would arrive a few minutes earlier and leave when they did helped my status as a colleague, and a co-worker. I kept to a schedule of two full days per week at Tehran University and two mornings, or one morning and one afternoon at Al-Zahra University. These could not always be the same days, since different tutors came in on different days. I did try to keep at least one day per week at Tehran University, and one afternoon at Al-Zahra University as a constant. These became my days when the students or the tutors could locate me on the campuses, should they wish to discuss particular issues. I had requested that they did not call my residence, unless absolutely unavoidable, because I might disturb my hosts unduly.

The two days at Tehran University would be spent on class/studio observations, and time with the students. To proceed with my observations at Tehran University, the outgoing Head of Visual Arts instructed his personal assistant Mrs. Kooshanfar to write a programme for me. I, however, negotiated with Mrs. Kooshanfar for a new programme of my choosing, and was delighted that she did not have any problem with my adjustments. In fact I found Mrs. Kooshanfar very co-operative, without being particularly friendly. Interestingly she submitted to me a photocopy of a set of photographs from the 1970 issue of Tehran University newsletter depicting Empress Farah Pahlavi, the late Shah's Queen, on a visit to the Faculty of Fine Art and the Visual Arts Department on the occasion of her receiving a doctorate from the faculty in the early 1960s. In the case of Al-Zahra University, I introduced myself to the Dean, Dr. Mazaheri, and withstood her rigorous interview on my politics, my private life, my education, and a request for a CV and documents regarding my artistic output. Subsequently, I was simply left to resume and continue my tasks of searching, finding and attending studio practices and people to interview. This is exactly what I did. Initially, I observed the Dean's classes at Al-Zahra, who teaches the entire history of art, apart from history of modern art, but gradually I found painting and drawing tutors with whom I made arrangements for further contact. I simultaneously allocated time to visiting ateliers, galleries, and other art sites in Tehran.

The time spent on writing my notes varied. I attended to these in two simplified categories. First would be reading and adjusting lists of key statements I had put down in my notebook whilst observing in the field. Calling on memory as soon as possible was crucial in completing the framework of ideas and fragments of notes, and as a result I would often remember more subtle details of events, triggered off by those key words/statements. Second, would be the processing of my field reports into my laptop, attempting 'headings', and thinking about the possible connections and relationships. These often guided me to my subsequent areas of enquiry or specific questions I might put to the participants for cross-referencing. I would often spend between 6-7am writing on my laptop, and possibly some more in the evenings. I must admit, however, that I constantly felt behind schedule, and was overwhelmed by the speed and chaos of things. Tutors' plans would sometimes change without my knowing it, or a class would be held at a museum rather than the university campus, every step was a challenge. Time keeping, however, was my way of sustaining control, if one could call it control. It helped me feel organised psychologically, even though synchronising with the participants appeared to be an abstract art form at times. This art form, however, I managed to weave through once I understood it. Observational procedures, I have discovered, are an education in themselves because they involve adjusting to others' rhythms and territories. Due to such levels of concentration, therefore, I felt it necessary to observe a strict fast in socializing, particularly on the days I would spend ten or more hours attending to my research tasks.

I started my day very early in Tehran, the views from the balcony of my sister's residence provided an incentive. I managed to watch the sun rise from behind the mountains quite regularly; I imagined early mankind's wonder of its beauty and awe. I found the cycles of appearing and disappearing, concrete and abstract, and light and dark captivating and refreshing. I had studied the iconology of early Iranian art, from 4000 B.C., prior to my trips to Tehran, and was thus able to make connections between the formal articulation and mark-making of those early art makers and the cycles of the sun, the moon, and the stars appearing and disappearing in the sky. Like me in the world of my research, they too tried to understand the elements of a universe before them.

I introduced my methods of observation in stages, with a timed interval. This was partly because I was cautious not to overwhelm the participants, as well as myself. Routinely, I would wait for the tutors outside the class or studio, introduce myself, and choose a strategic position from which I might be able to see everything, and sit down. Often I would not be able to see my notes, because most art lectures involve the showing of slides and videos in darkened rooms. As for introducing photography, I had to be very sensitive to the situation. although photography was mentioned in the proposal as a methodology, I sensed that most tutors did not find photographing agreeable. I thought it best to introduce this in stages and limit it to the students and their work. On every occasion I would ask permission, but would

do so very quickly and politely in order to keep the spontaneity and freshness of the photographs. The students almost always laughed and said “Only one? Take more”. They treated me like a respected peer.

Once both the participants and myself got used to the idea of photos, I introduced a tape-recorder to my methodological tools. I recorded the student interviews in the open and in a public area at the universities. This demonstrated the transparency and legitimacy of my methodologies. Apart from transparency of my actions, recording in public spaces has projected some additional sounds such as the muezzin’s call to prayer, the occasional joke and laughter amongst the students as well as the tutors, and the roar of the traffic. These are of particular interest to me personally, reminding me of the moments of interaction, connection, and being in the ‘space’ as a collaborator, and sharing the experience.

As for my procedures for carrying out the interviews, I would normally put my questions, not more than three or four, to the participant and let her/him speak. This worked very well, but it became evident that one or two participants had particular agendas, (see Behnaam in Text IV), which has added an exploratory stance, and widened the sphere of discussion. I welcome this, and believe that in ‘real life’ we assert agendas when we can; ethnography is the observation of real people and real situations.

Thus the processes of data collection took place in a variety of ways with a variety of tools. Although I shall not represent every incident in this thesis, I present the account of one week’s programme from my ‘research diary’ in **Appendix Two**. (A summary of all the data I collected can be found in **Appendix Three**.)

The process of learning as research methodologies

One does not come to research from nowhere! Past experiences, accumulated knowledge of the world, the ongoing willingness to learn about and discover new ideas, and the particularities of one’s discipline act as methodological tools of understanding. The Research Training Programme offered by the Graduate School provided a critical community where ideas from a multiple of disciplines and perspectives were discussed and examined. Giving presentations and seminars, whether locally at my own institution, or outside it, provided a means for focusing and formalizing my ideas during the processes of research. Through these hidden methodologies I have learnt, to some extent, how to deliver my findings to others. The interdisciplinary nature of these talks, art and social science, has been motivating, challenging, and rewarding. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to such research discourses. The chance to participate in the teaching programmes for the Masters in Fine Art in my own department, and the undergraduate programme in Cinema, in the Media department have prompted me to look to horizons beyond my research for inspiration and learning. These have provided excellent training, and through such practices I have

discovered a personal voice crucial to my academic development. The publication of my first article by the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), my intended article for Text, an interdisciplinary journal for the study of discourse, and the invitation to write a book proposal for I.B. Tauris have been as a result of such methodologies.

Art methodologies, also part of my tasks as a participant practicing artist, have created spaces for further exploration of perceptual and visual ideas. These combined with my curiosity about digital technologies has rendered the production of art videos. Further, the British Museum is where I have observed qualities in ancient art, made drawings, attended conferences, and taken in the spirit of antique landscapes. These landscapes are implied in my sculptures, and form the substructures for the installation 'The Archaeology of Self'. The richness of such methodological enquiries and practices have increased my visual literacy, allowed me into a parallel world of art theory, and have nourished me during the challenging times. But, significantly too they prepared and acquainted me with the broader view of art history and theory which I encountered in Tehran.

The study of specific art literature, and sustained visual research (e.g. small and large scale drawing, maquettes, experiments with materials, transcription from other work, time management) are methodologies which form the structures of thought and perception in one's studio practices and enquiries. They cause the dialogue the practitioner has with herself/himself during the execution of the work in the studio. The intensity of such hidden methodologies, and the professional curiosity of artists are often overlooked by researchers outside the discipline; and very few scholars view major exhibitions as major publications. It has been my intention in this chapter to demonstrate the extent to which my rigour as an ethnographer has been strengthened by my rigour as a practising artist. In order to throw some light on such hidden methodologies I present an extract from my 'research diary', in **Appendix Four,** which was a brief report to my supervisor, regarding my visual research. Such efforts are part of a cycle of experience which inspire and extend beyond this thesis. The continuum of creative thinking, and the willingness to look at works and ideas of great diversity in particular contexts, are in my view, making space for developing ideas for future work.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed my methodologies, philosophical perspectives, personal conduct, and actions in the processes of research. I have illustrated the focus of the structures I have employed in order to attend to the research questions in Tehran and Canterbury. These structures have been my tools for the understanding, deconstructing, management, and the synthesis of the responses to those questions. These processes have continued through the

thesis until the last statement printed on the page. The outcome is a multi-media thesis of written, sculptural, photographic, and moving-image texts.

On reflection and at the time of writing, I have been reminded of the world of Iranian classical paintings and manuscripts where images of humans, ideas about geometric patterns, light, colour, texture, architecture, and social conditions in imagined intersecting worlds unravel before the viewer in a single image. The aspiring artists of this ancient art form depicted a self-contained universe capable of multiple perceptions; they presented the viewer with glimpses of several scenes, rather than a single perspective, symbolising a variety of spaces in a single story. Written texts, either brief or extended, of what was said, sung, or recited, were then overlaid around these scenes suggesting views and dialogues between the participants (visually represented in Melikian-Chirvani 2000, Gray 1947, Soudavar 1992, Papadopoulo 1976). It has occurred to me that the makers of such works have given us 'texts and spaces' as a deconstructive collection of ideas. It is my hope, that the innovative form of my thesis is viewed as a collection of visual and textual ideas which provide glimpses into the human existences and human condition, making a contribution to new knowledge through contemporary lives in Iran.

Chapter Three: Ceramic Installation

This chapter introduces the ceramic installation 'The Archaeology of Self', a collection of 33 suspended and two vertical sculptures, presented in Tehran in a solo show at The Iranian Artists' Forum or 'Khaneh ye Honarmandan'. The installation explored the role of the researcher as a ceramic artist and its relations to the research questions. This was by the invitation of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the single most important institution supporting major national and international cultural events in Iran. As a means for inter-cultural exchange, and inter-cultural continuity, the show demonstrated how the language of art overcomes ideological barriers and boundaries, tolerating difference. This has indeed been an achievement prior to the submission of the thesis in Britain, and might be viewed as a major publication. I am indebted to Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art for their invitation, their sensitivity and response to the logistics and materials, and for enabling me to communicate my views through my art.

Significantly, it has been in the processes of enquiry into my sensory and emotional world, creating 'The Archaeology of Self', and my video 'My Feet' presented in Chapter Five, that I have initially put to work my theoretical considerations of the concepts of 'deconstruction', 'space', and 'reflexivity'. Whilst my ceramics address forms and qualities observed in the female participants, they might be considered as reflections on our common experiences projecting aspects of my 'self' as in self-portraits. The application of these ideas and theories has thus preceded the process of writing, and the reconstruction of the ethnographic data from Tehran. It must further be acknowledged that being a practicing artist has indeed been key in conceptualising the research proposal in Canterbury, and securing access to the institutions studied in Tehran. My creative integrity arises primarily from my creative identity as a ceramicist. This is where I have discovered my sensory sensibilities, accessing the body of my educational research, and further establishing the link between practice and theory. I have aimed at sustaining the sensibilities and the creative imagination I discovered in myself in the ceramic studios, expanding my efforts in exploring new ideas, tools, and boundaries. Thus, the undertaking of this interdisciplinary research, its continuum of multi-methodologies, theories, and practices, is an extension of my art educational research skills further developed into new disciplines such as social science and media.

In symmetry with 'Texts and Spaces' in Chapter Four, the ceramic installation has facilitated a continuum which at once manifests methodology and outcome. The sculptures, individually and collectively, deconstruct my engagement with clay, speculating, projecting, and reflecting on aspects of my multi-cultural visual identity in my particular spatio-temporal context in Canterbury. Simultaneously, they have been my tools for understanding myself, and the participants' rigour and strife for expression and articulation of aspects of their identities

through their art. They thus externalise the chain of my inner thoughts as the participant researching-artist, and the way I perceive the female participants in Tehran. As texts, the sculptures have been executed to communicate meaning; they have been transformed from mud to ordered objects, assembled and presented in response to the research questions, contemplating the relationships between art and identity in Tehran and in Canterbury.

It is within such deconstructive processes that I have sensed my intellectual presence, and have come face to face with myself, and my humanity. This has been crucial to overcome the severe harassment and abuse I experienced during 2002-2003 from the ceramics tutor in my department in Canterbury[8]. 'The Archaeology of Self' has in effect been the acutely critical and reflective process of self-realisation, through which I have managed to restore mental strength and sustain the study. Thus I have become able to grasp a deeper understanding of the participants' use of art processes as tools to address unacceptable socio-political circumstances, intellectual isolation, and alienation, each according to their contexts.

Further, and in a highly abstract way, I would interconnect the installation with the residues of my Persian literary heritage and its recognition of the female as physical and metaphysical presences in the concepts of the 'mystic dance and the beloved', 'ascendance', and the journey towards 'light'. Such notions are deeply rooted in one's upbringing and collective psyche as an Iranian, and contemplated rigorously in relation to a spiritual existence. My sculptures are thus metaphors, and visual inscriptions in clay belonging to an imagined world, a sensory non-verbal world of perceptions. Their execution thus rotates on a triple axis of the experiences and histories of the researcher, the history of art, and the experiences and histories of the participants in Tehran. It is vital that this body of work be addressed and contemplated visually, in a mental as well as a physical space where the world and the imagination of the viewer, wherever its origin, might enrich and expand the experience.

A selection of the ceramic sculptures shall be presented at the 'viva voce'; in this text, however, they can only be represented photographically in the form of a CD, in the 'Power Point 2000' format, which is included at the end of this Chapter. I recommend **Appendix Six, Seven and Eight,** for my earlier methodologies, the contexts for my visual sensibilities, and the comments about the show in Tehran. These comments are a confirmation of the participants' recognition of their own abstract presence in the body of work presented. Not only did a number of female participants recognised their bodies 'formally' in the sculptures, but numerous viewers including tutor participants saw great affinity between the sculptures, the joy of the female, and the antique landscapes in Iran as a mythical historical substructure. They frequently smiled and pointed to the residues in surface structures in the work while

[8] A summary of the account of this damaging experience was submitted to my supervisory panel at the time, and is presented in **Appendix Five**.

making formal and cultural interconnections. One participant related the forms specifically to the Victory figures, (e.g. the Victory of Samothrace, Louvre). Many stated that they saw the work as monumental, implying visual histories, and a reference to individuals as well as a collective body.

Philosophical orientation

The body and clay share essential elemental qualities; they are as much about strength as they are about fragility. The body as a metaphor manifested in a fluid language of formal ideas, as a site for registering experiences, and as an object in space, fascinates me and feeds my imagination. Whether fragmented or imperfect the body possesses a physical/metaphysical and sensory presence (Gormley 2004, 2004a, 2000; Blandino 2002; Gombrich 2000; Rogoff 2000; Clark 1958). Indeed I sense and carry my own history on the site of my body; I draw on its fluidity and its warmth to articulate my ideas. Similarly, clay as a material of 'the origins' possesses primal alchemy, warmth, and abstract qualities. Its inexhaustible physical potential and its response to touch, I have found seductive. Such terminology as sensory, fluid, and primal are not used lightly by this researcher, they are indeed discoveries made as a result of sustained focus, and anticipation for moments of connection or lucidity in the studio. The processes of making the work are most lucid when the external and the tangible world, what is seen, touched, felt, and drawn are deeply internalised and transformed into inner understandings, and an inner longing to want to imagine and create. Such degrees of engagement with the creative energy in myself and my work in the studio have served me well in Tehran, investigating the essence of this research, which is a spatio-temporal consideration and documentation of human experience and human condition in relation to art training.

The body as the site of one's creative energy, literally and metaphorically, has mapped my intellectual trajectory in 'The Archaeology of Self'. Born and brought up in Tehran near mountains, and having climbed Mount Sinai on several occasions, I have often contemplated the similarities between female form and mountain ridges. Physical archaic landscapes in a variety of locations such as the ancient sites and relief carvings of Persian antiquity[9], the architectural and cultural remains on the mountains at Naqsh-e Rustam, and Estakhr near Persepolis covered in pottery shards flattened and unified with the crust of the earth, form my mindscape. My sculptures are emblematic of such psycho-geographies.

[9] Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rustam, and Estakhr have not been inhabited since the defeat of the Achaemenians by Alexander of Macedonia in 330 BC. I have included images of these sites in the photographic documentation representing this chapter.

Women in Ancient Persia, many of whom participated in hunts, travelled, held court in their own right, and were independent working chiefs, or 'araššara'(Brosius 2002), feed this mindscape. 'The Fortification' clay texts from Persepolis at the British Museum give accounts of these women's lives and such events through the wine, flour, beer, and grain ownership and allocations (ibid). Except for the seals, much of the representative art in relation to these women is lost to us mainly because they were small in scale and often made of precious metals and alloys (ibid). A few clay examples however, have remained and I have seen such examples at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Louvre in Paris where they are currently (January 2005) on a special touring exhibition. In bringing this chain of ideas together in my installation, I have contemplated Eagleton's perception of Walter Benjamin's contention that the corpse, even in extreme fragmentation, becomes quite simply "the pre-eminent emblematic property…", and "instrument, raw material to be organized" to express allegorical truths and political standpoints (Benjamin cited in Eagleton 1990 pp. 335-7). I have chosen '33' as a symbolic representation for the idea of the 'collective body'; whilst each piece is different in form, as a means of an organized unit the individual subject such as myself or those in Chapter Four [Text IV], might assert a message of strength, agency, and resistance. I have had close associations with number 33 as a child. A fraction of the '99 names of God' in Islam, I frequently observed my grandmother holding rosaries made of 33 exquisite unfired clay beads strung in bright emerald green silks, whilst murmuring God's names in remembrance. The 'Archaeology of Self', therefore, is as much about presences, as it is about absences, residues, and traces of ideas.

More methodologies

Classicism above all, and the Neried Monument at the British Museum where I have made studies leading to the production of a number of prints, have been important points of reference. The earliest clay figures; ancient pots from Iran with elements of the figure in their design; the arts of Susa and the ancient Elamites at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the works of Edgar Degas (Kendall 1996, Thompson 1988, and Thomson and Turner 1980) and through him the drawings of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres; the lucidity of Henri Matisse's primal forms have never been far from my thoughts in the studio, leading me to the visual observations in Cézanne's Bathers, and my own body. I have engaged with the idea of dance, or 'the diagonal', to articulate movement, and to reference the inner/outer sensory fluidity of the body (Clark 1958). In my video 'Deconstructing Alien Geography' presented in Chapter Five I have referenced this fluidity and movement by creating a simple diagonal line, turning the mountain on its side through the lens of the camera. This further references the movement or the idea of the diagonal in the suspended sculptures representing Text IV in Chapter Four. Fluidity is a concept which I have considered in the continuum of my methodologies and theoretical considerations through 'reflexivity', 'la différance', and the

concept of identity. Such fluidity further reflects the desire not to be static, and it is as much about myself, as it is about the female participants in Tehran being active in structuring, and authoring aspects of their lives and identities through art education.

Specific influences from the complex and vast field of ceramics come from a variety of rich visual and tactile experiences. 'A Secret History of Clay from Gauguin to Gormley' at Tate Liverpool in April 2004 has been a tremendous feast for the mind, and a reminder of this diverse global heritage. This timely and much needed show, together with the potter Grayson Perry winning the 2003 Turner Prize have again put the ceramic arts at the centre of art debates since the birth of Modernism in art.

Facing the clay in the studio continues to introduce a sense of struggle, challenge, as well as immediacy. Regarding my personal engagement with it, I am particularly gripped by the spirit and freedom in the handling of materials stemming from Abstract Expressionism. I aspire to be intuitive and fluid in my approach alongside my detailed mental and practical preparations. As an undergraduate I met and discussed my response to clay with well-known artist potters such as Alison Britton, Robin Welch, and the late Joanna Constantinidis. I am grateful for their encouragement, and view this body of work as a continuation of the same curious mindset. Further, Pablo Picasso, whose body of clay sculptures I have seen in London and New York, and whose contributions to forms of art I have discussed in a dissertation as an undergraduate; Peter Voulkos; Ewen Henderson; Sara Radstone; Richard Long; and above all Ryoji Koie of Japan and his 1990 Seattle collection have been liberating influences, and constant as sources of inspiration. The ideas behind Marcel Duchamp's "The Fountain, 1917", the porcelain urinal, and his "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even, 1915-23" also known as "The Large Glass", especially after the latter was shattered in transit, are referenced in my work. I have often pierced the surfaces of my work with ready-mades such as nails, coins, bits of metal, abstracted clay prints from Qoranic amulets, and broken china and crystal glass. The firing processes, the range of temperatures adopted, have allowed these ready-mades to assume new identities. Whilst some simply disappear, change colour and melt, others renew themselves in textures. Such transformational qualities resonate with my observations regarding the female participants in the study, provoking ideas of cycles of brokenness, strength and resurrection, origins, presence, absence and trace, which might be interpreted further, marking events and cycles in my own lived experience.

As analysed in Chapter Two, I have drawn on music to develop my understanding of the interrelationships between form, movement and space. My methods for hanging the clay sculptures articulate intervals in space implying time, and are thus related to these musical enquiries. I have often used a single colour as if a new sound, or counterpoints marking both contrast and interconnectivity, in order to emphasise shifts. Specific visual observations in art (Cornelia Parker's Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View 1991, Alexander Calder and

Luciano Fabro), and architecture have further assisted me in contemplating formal qualities, balance, chaos and order, illusion and reality, and complexity and simplicity. These have further informed the site-specific installation in Tehran, resulting in the design of a false ceiling made of cool, shiny, twisted, and industrially manufactured 4mm steel ready-made cabling. The construction of this geometric grid facilitated the suspension of the sculptures multi-perspectively in angles and columns within an open cube. Whilst the architecture of this open cube enabled the viewer to weave through the body of work and inhabit its intimate spaces, the grid itself suggested new interpretations. The ambiguity of this metallic barrier over the female forms did not go unnoticed in Tehran.

The sculptures are cut away slabs with relief markings on both sides which also reference a metamorphosis of the idea of the 'column'. The marks are from tools either made or manipulated by myself. The slabs are relieved from large beds of prepared and rested grogged white stoneware. These are under-fired in oxidization at 1050-1100°C in order not to appear fully vitrified, and consequently closer in texture and scent to their origins in strata. Data in the form of log books have been kept to document the range of temperatures and their relationships with surface qualities in the work. Except for much needed and appreciated assistance by my husband Adrian in carrying the large heavy kiln shelves from the studio to the kiln room, the work has been executed entirely by myself at every stage. The kiln shelves, of which there are only two available in the department, weigh 20kg each with an approximate additional weight of 10-15 kg for each sculpture when wet. They are 75cm in diagonal and have thus dictated the maximum length available to me in the kiln. The height of the pieces is a combination of this measurement and the maximum reach of my arms, offering intimate and human scale. I, therefore, consider these sculptures as extensions of my body and in order to reference its scale I have attached a clay print of my thumb onto the translucent '20lb fish line' I have used for installing the suspended forms. Because the pieces are made 'in the flat', the drying and firing processes are highly critical processes. The shrinkage rate has been around 20% particularly because of my preference for exceptionally wet clay; shrinkage is always a shock for the maker. Each piece has taken an average of 3-4 weeks to be completed, and some pieces have been given a polish of bees wax. The 'Archaeology of Self' travelled to Tehran by air in plastic containers packed in two well padded wooden crates of a total of 400kg, with the cost of clay at £2.50 per kg. The cost of packing and return transport from my studio to London was £1,500, whilst the return journey to Tehran, custom clearance, the costs for the gallery space, attendants, curators, and video projection equipments for eight days, were undertaken by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. I employed a well known graphic designer, Reza Abedini, to create my invitations and posters, choosing and purchasing the paper myself.

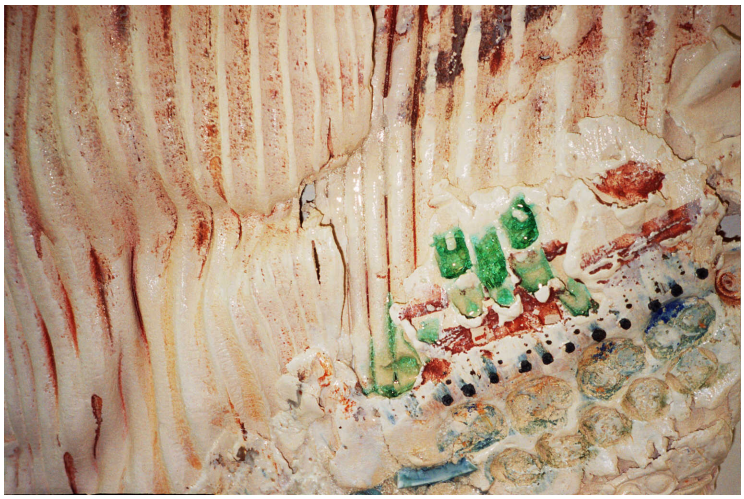
I have used porcelain slips and tin oxide washes to achieve chalky finishes in memory of specific ancient stone monuments and the white bone fragments and shards I found in

Estakhr. For translucency, a quality I have observed in the surfaces of Degas' paintings, and reminiscent of my mother's skin, I have applied, wiped, and reapplied a highly diluted tin based low temperature glaze. The orange/yellow in the work is a mixture of clay from Iran, medium ruttile oxide, and red iron oxide in equal amounts. The blue and green are a mixture of Iranian and Italian glass and crystal. Faint traces of braids, laces and ribbons are visible on the surfaces of some of the pieces; these were applied to be only barely visible at the very wet stage to emphasise movement, reference drapery, and possibly opulence. Although they are mostly from the Jewish merchants on 32nd and 33rd Streets in New York, they further reference memories of childhood accompanying my mother to the Iranian Jewish cloth merchants in Tehran.

My attitude towards the work in the studio has been similar to a warrior seeking peace; this thought occurred to me in the processes of editing the video 'My Feet' in Chapter Five, where I document the endless journey of my feet in and between the studio and the kiln room. As for a discussion of aesthetics within the work, I have at all times hoped for the "unity and integrity of the work of art" (Eagleton 1990, p. 4) to speak for itself.

The Archaeology of Self, the side view of the installation in Tehran

Installing The Archaeology of Self in Tehran



Details of surface treatment in the ceramic sculptures

Tehran University student examining the work

cds

CD:

‘The Archaeology of Self’

Chapter Four: Texts and Spaces

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to deconstruct, present, and discuss, the participants' lived experiences in the processes of art education in the field in Tehran. To that end, the chapter seeks to develop understanding, using a selection of ethnographic data as an installation of ideas in a constructed abstract space. This is a collaborative space, a forum, where considered and selected ethnographic texts are housed in spatially oriented clusters, positioned and juxtapositioned in relation to one another. Texts and Spaces are thus my systematic management, combination of descriptions and analysis, and the synthesis of what I have actually seen and heard in the field. These are entirely in response to the demands of the research questions. The research questions are:

> What is the nature of art teaching and art practice? What are the staffing and curriculum structures for such teaching practices? And how do these relate to the students' and tutors' identity?

Texts and spaces are a continuum of methodologies and outcomes, with an embedded system for cross-referencing ideas and ideologies. They manifest the relationships between art educational processes, critical incidents, socio-political histories, and consequently origins and cycles of certain events in a broader sense in society. The complexity of the participants' perspectives regarding themselves, their institutions, and the society in which they live, reflect the fluid nature in their expressed identities. Each ethnographic text works as a building block in the site of art education, and plays its crucial part in clarifying the relationships implied in the research questions, whether regarding forms of teaching or elements determining identities.

The extent of the details given in the reconstructed ethnographic texts is part of my strategy to recreate the observed phenomena, such details might be valuable in themselves, suggesting interpretations not put forth by this researcher.

Ethical considerations

Whilst the continuum of theories and methodologies considered in this study are ethically oriented, I would like to make an explicit statement in this space. Whether in Tehran or in Canterbury, I have aimed to be transparent, accurate, and fair in relating my observations and professional conduct. To be reflective and critical, in my view, is part of the rigour in maintaining transparency, accuracy, and fairness at every stage of the study. Such qualities were addressed in the research proposal, a copy of which was submitted to the Director of International Relations at Tehran University for scrutiny and permission to proceed with the

research. Consent was granted verbally. Dr. Hosseini-Rad, Head of Visual Arts at Tehran University in the first few weeks of research commencement, and Dr. Mazaheri, the Dean of Applied Arts at Al-Zahra University were submitted with copies of the research proposal. Both welcomed the study. Indeed the significance of the study was recognized by Tehran and communicated to me through their un-conditional and generous co-operation in securing access to the campuses at both universities. This thesis is thus a collaborative cultural document.

I have specifically consulted every single student who collaborated with me in seminars and interviews whether he or she would like to be represented in the thesis, and under a different name. Only one student took up this advice and offered the information under an invented name. As for other key individuals in the institutions, it has been acknowledged by all parties concerned that their contributions have been of particular significance because of who they are and the positions they hold, whether practitioners, theoreticians, or leaders of those institutions. As a consequence, and also because of the enormity of the task of re-translating the selected data back into Farsi, no transcribed data has been sent back to the participants for their final approval. I intend to submit a copy of the thesis to Dr. Sami-Azar, Director of Tehran Museum of Contemporary art in due course, particularly because of his position as the honorary Research Chair at Tehran University during the study.

I believe degrees of subjectivity are inevitable in any research. In projecting the participants' experiences, I have striven to transcend my limitations. I have done this with discipline, and with the intention to be objective.

Texts and spaces

Imagine an architectural space with multi-perspectives where voices might be heard, where arrivals as well as departures are possible, where cycles in events might register light and dark, and where ideologies might intersect. Here, the following are installed:

Text I, Spaces of Transition and Transformation; Text II, Contradictory Spaces; Text III, Transparent Spaces; Text IV, A Space for Gendered Identities; Text V, Parallel Spaces for Art Education; Illuminations

Chapter 4, Text I: Spaces of Transition and Transformation

This Text relates events in the transitional spaces of national and personal histories in relation to the research questions. Whilst it focuses on two art tutors' and one sculpture student's lived experiences and their particular spatio-temporal contexts, it illuminates the staffing and curriculum design structures in art education since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The three participants come from backgrounds with a strong sense of tradition, have been educated at Tehran University, and have experienced or caused others to experience states of transition and transformation through art education. This text shall orient the reader into the institutional teaching and learning structures, the concept of identity, the private atelier system held by many sessional tutors as private centres for learning art, the role of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in the development of art education, and the strife of female students to achieve. These shall be discussed more fully in the texts in this Chapter.

In Part One, we shall meet Mr. Vakili who has just returned from Paris where he showed his work sponsored by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. He teaches drawing in the painting department at Al-Zahra University. He believes that he shall remain a sessional tutor with no prospects for a tenure status and retirement benefits. This is simply because he wishes to remain an independent artist, rather than becoming a politically appointed tutor bound by the governmental line. He sees his identity intertwined with his palette, and his students. In Part Two we shall meet Dr. Kafshchian-Moqadam who is a 'year 3-4' painting tutor and group director or Head of Visual Arts 2002-2004, at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tehran University. In contrast to Mr. Vakili, Dr. Kafshchian's is a political appointment which means he is part of the hierarchy of the administrative cadre at the Faculty, can influence policy, is able to develop his career within the University, and enjoys holiday pay, retirement benefits, etc. His sense of identity is related to his allegiances with the governmental line, at least publicly. His position in the Faculty, his ideology and teachings, are believed widely, to comply with the current regime's guidelines. The polarity these tutors create runs through the art community as well as society as a whole. In Part Three we shall meet Shiva Sadegh-Zadeh, a graduating sculpture student at Tehran University also from a traditional family born and brought up in Tehran. She speaks of having persuaded her father to come to terms with her studies in art. She has transferred her art training skills to activate the minimal resources such as art books and the events at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art to develop her education personally.

Part One, Mr. Ahmad Vakili

Mr. Vakili is the main drawing tutor at al-Zahra University. I first noticed his class when in session in the painting department corridor. He was standing in the doorway lighting a cigarette (a practice I have not witnessed at Tehran University). I introduced myself and my

research to him then. Mr. Vakili is recognized as a successful painter in the art community in Tehran and has a teaching atelier with a substantial number of male and female students. He calls himself a "teacher/painter" rather than just a painter because of the income his atelier provides towards his livelihood. Trained at Tehran University in the late 1970s when the curriculum was still based on the Paris Beaux Arts. He graduated with considerable delay in the early 1980s. This was as a consequence of a three year interruption imposed on all universities in Iran to 'rectify' the national curricula nationally one year after the 1979 Revolution, which transferred the power systems from the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979) to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Extracts from data diary, 22 October 2002, 10am

> I have presented myself to the drawing studio at Al-Zahra University, Department of Painting, on two occasions finding the studio empty. On this occasion I find Mr. Vakili amongst 13 young women preparing for a 'crit'. The drawing studio is an airy room with large windows on one side. The walls accommodate ample space for putting up work on a felt surface. There are no easels in this instance as these are brought in from a large stack in the painting studios when needed; some students use large clip-boards or the arm of their chair when they draw, no drawing is taking place this morning. There is a round table in the centre on which there is a stack of drawings of mainly A3 size. Mr. Vakili is a large man, he towers over his students watching, smiling, bright and interested. He does not, however, interfere with the way the students place the drawings on the felted wall. The ladies make suggestions to one another considering the placement of the drawings individually as well as sequentially or collectively. I take photographs. Some want to punctuate the coloured ones with the positioning of the stronger tonal drawings next to them. Juxtapositioning the work, they stand back and look, making adjustments, and re-adjustments suggested by the members of the group. They decide not to put everything up leaving a mound of work on the table. Within fifteen minutes everyone seems to be ready.
>
> There is a sense of pleasure and excitement about the gathering, the students are happy to see their tutor amongst them and relate to him in easy, intimate, and conversational manner. Although the work is by one student, everyone seems to take pride in the work as though their own. The drawings are of female form in the state of undress. There are great varies in poses, sitting/turning, stepping/standing, and possibly jumping, one or two seem to be pregnant. They are multi-media, black and brown conte, pencil, washes in watercolour or gouache are added as part of the articulation of light, and negative space. There

are no architectural or furniture observations around the forms in these drawings, all we see is the nude form.

A discussion takes place and lasts around thirty-forty minutes. The young student, in her pale colour 'roopoosh' overalls and head scarf, says that the drawings presented are her work during the summer which she has spent mostly at home with her young children. She talks about her love of drawing the human form in motion. It is implied that these are of her own body, although she has also been observing a member of the family specifically for drawing. Students make their points about the drawings they 'like' and the materials used. Some mention Matisse, and Klimt. The nude as an idea is not analysed, its significance is taken as a matter of fact, and reality.

Mr. Vakili participates in the discussion and sometimes encourages whoever is speaking to be more analytical in terms of the quality of the line in relation to the form, and movement. He speaks of mass, volume, and weightlessness within the forms. He touches on notions of "the whole" in relation to "the fragment". He speaks of the emotion that "the whole" conveys, stressing its essence.

One student gets up, apologizes and says that she has to leave as she was not sure whether there would be a class held today. Mr. Vakili says that the office were supposed to put notices up about his missed sessions, as he had been in Paris in the past month. Mr. Vakili reminds everyone that the two missed sessions shall be made up in the course of the next few weeks, and would the class representative think of some possible dates suitable for everyone. Some suggest the same day their class is scheduled for, but longer hours till 5pm. Some say they could not possibly find any more hours in the week as the term is packed with work. The consensus is that this will be further discussed later.

Mr. Vakili proceeds to remind everyone the materials they should have when they come to his drawing sessions. He emphasizes on the size range of the paper he requires, 100/70cm in particular, and the range of drawing materials: pencil, black and brown conte, charcoal, ink, and tragacanth solution/paste. This last item is a white powder which forms a gel/gum/glaze type substance when mixed with water and comes from plants of 'genus Astragalus' used in pharmacy. Mr. Vakili then turns to me and says that there are two elderly gentlemen who have been working around the campus for years, and they come in on some days and sit, or model, for the class. One student says that they are very good at coming in, sitting on the stool, and rolling up one trouser leg for a pose. Everyone laughs. I make a note of Mr. Vakili's mobile number in order to make an appointment to visit his atelier.

The foregoing account provides a glimpse into the daily events in an art institution: the tutor has been away; the office has forgotten to put a notice up to inform the students; a student brings in work undertaken independently over the holidays to see what her tutor and colleagues think; and the tutor sets down his requirements for the start of the new academic year. The illumination of such student/tutor interactions helps to demystify the perceptions one might have as an outsider around the idea of teaching art in Iran. Further, as witnessed above, the art studio becomes an autonomous space where even the restrictions regarding drawing the nude are disregarded. The all female student body at Al-Zahra university negotiates this possibility and succeeds in implementing it. In this collaboratively created private interior there is little regard for censorship.

Photographic images from this crit session, and of Mr. Vakili in his atelier are presented in Chapter Six.

Recorded conversation with Mr. Vakili in his atelier; Thursday 14 November 2002

> I arrive a few minutes after 5pm and find Mr. Vakili in his study/studio, off a square hallway. Mr. Vakili is playing an instrument, the seh-tar[10] while holding a conversation with a beautiful and young woman standing close to him. She speaks in a hushed whispering voice. I sit down and make notes about the atelier environment, whilst Mr. Vakili and his companion continue their hushed conversation[11]. Next door there is a studio accommodating around 15-18 male and female students painting in oils, and drawing. In the kitchen opposite to this studio, some people wash brushes in the space allocated for this purpose, and there is evidence of teas and other refreshments despite the period of fast in the month of Ramadan. Mr. Vakili's study is one of the four rooms in the apartment, the fourth room accommodates shelves and stacks of paintings against the walls. Mr. Vakili's study has two desks, and large wall-to-wall book shelves full of art reference books in Farsi, English and French. Seeing the French books I am reminded of his statement about when he was Paris and he could not find a decent contemporary painting to look at. He said that England has the first word in painting, and mentioned a list of them. I make a point of mentioning these details to illustrate how the majority of tutors regard researching art as an innate need, professionally and personally.

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[10] This is a different instrument to the Indian Sitar, it is much smaller with just a few strings.

[11] I am reminded of the particular attention the young female students receive in the painting studios in Canterbury, observing these similarities in practices is of interest to me even though this is not a comparative study.

There are several easels at one end of the room and stacks of stretched canvases. There are several containers of a variety of brushes, some are enormous dotted here and there. After some minutes the young lady leaves, and we proceed with our recorded conversation. I explain to Mr. Vakili, as indeed to all participants, that I might not use everything we discuss today, in my thesis.

At the time of transcription in Canterbury I notice that I tell Mr. Vakili that I am very happy about people coming in and out of his study as this provides sound textures for my recordings[12]! In the course of the interview his family join us for a few moments, telephones ring, and I meet his assistant[13]. This atelier is run like a kingdom with Mr. Vakili at its head. He responds to my questions as follows:

> "To tell you a little about my childhood and early education, my first memories of making visual observation go back to when I was five or six. I used to be captivated by the numerous ancient scriptures and hand written Qurans belonging to my grandfather. In my family, one understood from an early age that one had to have a good handwriting. You just knew that the surname Vakili is synonymous with a great hand. You see, these texts were precious items in the feudal family I was born into, they were looked at with awe and handled with great care, in a way they embodied our history because on the first pages were people's birth dates deaths, etc. Some were several hundred years old. I remember paying much attention to the rhythms in these texts, their illuminated 'shamsseh' motifs punctuated the page. They were beautiful and I would search for similar shapes in the motifs in the carpets on the floor.
>
> "We moved from the North West region of Ardebil to Tehran and I went to school in Tehran. I had a painting teacher who encouraged me to do art seriously at the specialist 'Honarestan' secondary art school. He insisted that it was the most important and relevant subject matter for me. This notion was profoundly disputed at home; it was totally unacceptable to my father to allow his son to become a painter, he wanted me to do medicine.

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[12] I find such minute details about the processes of arriving at the final product 'the thesis' interesting, and would like to keep them in this report from Tehran if only to introduce 'informality', it is human, and creates a sense of closeness rather than remoteness.

[13] I have met Mr. Vakili's assistant at "Iran Shenassi", the monthly meetings in smart up-town gatherings of young male and female professionals who discuss art, culture, and socio-political issues in Iran.

"There used to be a famous ice-cream shop at the bottom of Shemiran road, the 'gol-o-bolbol', you know it[14], and next to it there was a small picture frame shop. I used to stand outside this shop for hours, looking at people's portraits framed up. Often I would draw these portraits at home from memory, as indeed I drew just about every picture that existed in my school books. I used to draw a caricature of every single teacher in the class and pass them around, it made me popular with my classmates. My first experiment with colour was when I spent thirteen rials, I stole this from my father's pocket actually, and bought some pigment powder. I then mixed the pigment with olive oil at home and painted a pine tree in our garden, it had lots of snow on it so you can imagine the mess. But colour interprets drawing, you only have to look at Ingres to realize that, drawing is the structure for what is perceived. I believe this to be the case in the postmodern developments in art, we return to the technique of drawing. When you study the body, the poster, the installation, even when you hold a camera in your hand and make video art, you are contemplating drawing.

"Anyhow, my father died when I was sixteen and I recall thinking, perhaps just for a moment, that as a result of his death I could become a painter. His shadow reigned heavily on us and I was not able to pursue the matter until I was nearly 18 and had to go to university. At this point I prepared my case and told my mother that I wanted to study painting at Tehran university. But she could not tolerate this either. Eventually she agreed that I should attend the Faculty of Fine Arts, but to study industrial design which in her view would be much closer to becoming an engineer! There, in 1977, for the first time in my life I attended drawing classes with all the other art students. This was such an unbelievable experience for me, I had never imagined drawing could be like that, to draw in the life class or in nature with other people! We had a fantastic time, we travelled on several art excursions, drawing the landscape, this vast landscape of ours, we observed the variety of these landscapes in the regions, the characteristics of its formation, the features of the people who populated them. Some were the same colour as their land. Our tutors were serious about art and committed to their students, they watched over us. The

[14] These landmarks are important to those readers who were brought up in Tehran, like myself, and know that they are gradually disappearing.

wonderful tutors at Tehran University: Mr. Arkhas, Reza Derakhshani, Bahman Boroojerdi… But you know they were dispersed, some went to Paris after the revolution and some to Germany and the ones who stayed here, it was never the same for them, and we lost a tradition.

"In the year of the revolution, 1978-79, the walls of our campus throbbed with energy. The level of debate was high, political debate was everything for us, we were highly critical of our socio-political situation, we were not interested in appearances and clothes. When the revolution happened many made political choices, the Islamic Marxist Mojaheds took a serious stance against the new regime, some of them became armed, so the Islamic Revolutionary Government who could not sustain that level of debate closed down all universities in the country and many arrests were made. This was coined as 'the cultural revolution", but in fact it was for the government to re-group.

"The new academic cadre, 'The Cultural Revolution Council' or 'shora-ye enghelab-e farhanggy' had firm ties with the regime and composed a very poor national curriculum in 1983. The implementation/administrative council who are members of the 'academic council' or 'hey-atte elmi' would decide how to set the pitch and teach the curriculum transforming it into actual art practices. Each faculty has its 'academic council', but also the steering committee as heads of department who are political appointments, have mostly benefited from PhD scholarships overseas, and have allegiances with the revolutionary regime. They are not, by and large, serious practicing artists. I myself was neither a Mojahed to take arms, nor a 'Muslim' according to the new regime's ideology; I wanted to be a painter. We carry on, we drink our drink and paint our paintings.

"My first exhibition was not till 1985, in the middle of the war with Iraq, when five of us showed our work at a furniture shop. We had no choice, there were hardly any galleries open. Since then, I have made a point of having at least one show every year, twice on two occasions. I have recently returned from a few weeks in Paris where a number of us known as Group C, sponsored by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art showed our work. I found nothing that I would call painting in Paris. I know it very well, I walked every corner, if there was anything, its source was New York. London has the first word in painting; you have Lucian Freud, the man who painted that beautiful 'pear'…Uglow, The London School, Kitaj, Auerbach, and the late Francis Bacon, and the rest. That is where I see painting present today, in London. I searched for it at the Beaux Arts,

> and all I found was a tired student messing about with plum lines but nothing on her canvas, I returned several times to see whether anything was developing… and I found nothing…it is all pose in Paris.
>
> "In the art community here, we have an emotional/professional commitment to colleagues based on art; that is how we relate to one another. So when you ask me whether their exists a professional dialogue between the academic council or 'hay-atte elmi' and the art community, I would say there is no dialogue. From their point of view, people like me will never have a tenure status with a pension because of a lack of political allegiance with the regime. From my point of view, I do not relate to people if I do not see their work, their art. For example if I do not see a single exhibition of the work of the Head of Visual Arts at Tehran University Mr. Kafshchian, I cannot have any regard for him. He is not in the art discourse, he is an administrator. So there is no dialogue. You see, students want to see my palette, my brush and easel and my work because these things make my identity and values.
>
> "I do not wish to be negative, I am hopeful of the future of art education in this country. In my time there were only a couple of art institutions, Tehran University and The Applied Arts College which has now been renamed as Honar University. Look at the number of art colleges now, there are numerous in Tehran alone. Yes, it is true that one or two demand fees, but look at so many which are state-funded, like Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities. That is where art discourses start as seeds and begin to develop, in the universities. Those are the sites for the development of art education and we cannot deny that. They must be kept open, we should wish them to flourish."

When the interview finishes, it is evening and very quiet outside just after break of fast in the month of Ramadan. Mr. And Mrs. Vakili are taking some paintings to friends, and give me a lift to a nearby main road where I can catch a taxi easily to Shemiran to my residence. In the 4W-drive we discuss social issues and Mr. Vakili tells me:

> "What I am going to ask you, Mrs. Honarbin is that you do not go back to England and write about the women here being ill treated, or badly done to, or weak. Look at them, if anything they have great power…have you noticed how many of them carry a mobile phone?"

Before I can say anything or comment on *his* mobile phone, we arrive at the taxi route and I have to get out quickly. But I know what Mr. Vakili means. He is

> implying that many women are as free as they wish to be, that they have access to things which facilitate mobility, and that they are not isolated. All this is true especially in urban spaces, but perhaps it has not occurred to Mr. Vakili that the gender debate is not about mobile phones and other useful accessories, but an ongoing strife aiming for widely practiced secular and civil laws in relation to women of all classes. Education, poverty, certain traditional interpretations of religious jurisprudence, and demands for 'participating equals' must be added to the possession of mobile phones. It is not a subject with an end, it is continuous.

In the above I draw on recent histories: the history of the individual participant, the history of art education in Iran, and the history of the country, to illuminate the roots and cycles in events pertinent to the research enquiry. It is important to know who the tutors are, as it is vital to acknowledge that from 1980-1988, the Iran-Iraq war affected and destroyed lives in Iran with severe human, economic, and psychological costs unparalleled in the recent history of the country. References to this war have been constant in the processes of this research, and I have projected the participants' views whenever possible. Mr. Vakili's references to drawing are valuable since we shall come across similar ideas regarding drawing in Text II in the sculpture studios. He guides us through the development of the new administrative structures for staffing and the 'cultural revolution'. The hint at the energetic and dynamic political debates at Tehran University during the revolution years is highly accurate and poignant. The student body in Iran, did then and do now, contribute to the country's political discourses. Indeed Tehran University student body were a significant factor in the Iranian revolution in 1979. The last uprising from its campus and dormitories in 1999 were brutally dealt with, without the regime openly taking the responsibility for the disappearance of many students. As a consequence, in my view, they are now on a silent march rather than riots.

Part Two: Dr. Kafshcian-Moqadam, Head of Visual Arts Department, Tehran University

I first met Dr. Kafshchian in the staff room in the Visual Arts Department sitting at the conference table marking papers. I was waiting to meet Dr. Hosseini Rad the Head of Visual Arts. In my subsequent visit to observe Dr. Kafshchian's class, the department secretary Mrs. Kooshanfar informed me that Dr. Kafshcian was now the new head, and I realised that the headship rotates amongst senior staff every two years. The following is the report from that session.

April 16th 2002, Tehran University, Dr. Kafshchian-Moqadam, Painting tutor, Director of The Visual Arts, Painting Year III (semester 5), 13 female students, and 7 male

> I wait for Dr. Kafshchian in the secretary's area adjacent to the Head of Department's office. This large room has a long counter where enquiries are

attended to, also separating it from the tutors' pigeon holes. Dr. Kafshchian comes out of his new office and I follow him up the staircase to the 2nd floor. His silence and body language is one of 'do not say a thing unless absolutely necessary'[15]. We enter the class, I choose a seat at the back near a cluster of female students who are deep in conversation quietly. This room has benches placed in rows as well as individual seats with wooden arm rests. There are two stands at the front for projectors. There are two boards, one green with chalk and one shiny white with felt tips.

There are two groups of students sitting and standing in an informal huddle. Dr. Kafshchian asks for drawings of the sites for the current projects. It becomes clear that this is a 'keep in touch' meeting and that the class, a few members of which are not there, is undertaking various projects, murals, wall constructions etc. whose sites are all over Tehran. Some drawings have been submitted and materials are being discussed and in some instances further research is to be followed.

One female student asks whether the translation she has undertaken, from French, is accurate. This is a short list of materials that had to be translated into Farsi as part of her assignment. Dr. Kafshchian looks at the list and responds. He asks if anyone needs to ask questions about their specific projects. He stresses that site drawings must be submitted and analysed by next week "maximum".

One female student says she is in the process of making 'colour' charts, studies which they call 'etude' for a swimming pool wall she is commissioned to do.

Dr. Kafshchian discusses the bid/proposal for the airport project and suggests additional members for this, their largest project. The group representatives speak about action so far taken with the membership of the group at 10.

One female student who is doing a project on her own is worried about the costs and wants to know about alternative materials for her project. She later goes to Dr. Kafshchian's desk to show him images of etched glass she has downloaded from the internet as research related to her project. She explains that she had to go to the Public Relations Department at the Ministry of Science to access such sites and download information useful to her project. There is some discussion

[15] This is a simple observation, I am well acquainted with this form of approach through my experiences in Canterbury. Such human behaviour need not necessarily be connected to specific locations or Islamic behaviour, but perhaps certain interpretations of Islam might be a consolidating factor.

about how she is going to etch and install her glass panels and the suitability of mat/shiny surface finishes. Dr. Kafshchian gives advice while doing simple related sketches on her note pad analysing what he means. There is much discussion about qualities of Plexiglas and thicknesses available in the market. Approaching glass manufacturers and making moulds through manufacturers facilities are ruled out because of costs. The use of lead, aluminium and clay are discussed. The reflective aluminium surface is a point in discussion.

There are some negotiations done about submission dates for those who have not yet decided which project they will undertake. Some have more that one project in mind.

It is now 35 minutes since the class started. Dr. Kafshchian makes some notes in a large diary type logbook and reminds everyone that they have one semester left for the execution of these projects. The session is then over and some students leave. Female and 6 male students discuss the project on the road to the airport. There is much laughter because one student suggests the girls' dormitories the perfect place for meeting, further planning, and general interaction[16]… another says he has to produce a 'special' photograph of himself in order to secure an appropriate 'pass'… I ask them to explain to me what they are planning to do. They say that they have organized their own meetings to prepare for the project, and so far they have put everyone's drawings together and have found ways of harmonizing/incorporating everyone's ideas/drawings. They have elected members in the group who would be responsible for time-keeping, buying materials, report writing and documenting the project visually. The 'walls' or the site of their painting project are enormous. Several site viewings have provided ideas for the content of the mural relating to urban residential areas to the overlapping site of a helicopter landing pad. The walls are ten meters long each and in concrete. The whole plan is going to be presented in a bid to Tehran municipality and if successful, the students shall be paid. The students seem very keen to have an ironic element in the work, and they wish to mix some Classical Persian motifs to do with flight, and the hard and mechanical designs of a helicopter. They discuss iconographies, and mention the 'winged sun' as a possibility.

[16] Ironic references to segregation often cause much laughter amongst the student body. Whilst the girls dormitories are out of bounds, there is much collaboration in these projects between the student body regardless of gender type.

I join Dr. Kafshchian who is still sitting at the desk discussing work with a young lady in strict Islamic dress of black head scarf and chador, constantly pulling her cuffs down. There is also a mature student, possibly in his late 30s, who has three A4 metal plate 'studies' for his project; these have highly textured welded metal surfaces in black/grey tones. I wait till they have finished. Dr. Kafshchian tells me that unfortunately there are no facilities for these projects to be done in the department so the students have to get on with their work and produce their objects from sources outside the campus. He says that some cannot afford the materials. He says:

> "…for instance this man is a teacher and wishes to do art for himself, and has a family to support… As you know this business of art is very costly… She is also completely penniless and lives in one room with her young husband. We are here to help…we do what we can. These are difficult times …we want to help them get through it all."

I ask Dr. Kafshchian about how they bid for the projects from the Municipality, and he explains that the Municipality send the department details of available projects and spaces on request, and when the students are ready with their ideas, a bid form is filled in and returned to the Municipality[17]. He says that the students work as a team and keep log books and document the processes digitally on and video cassettes and CDs. He then proceeds to draw the route map to the site of the new project in my notebook. He also tells me that some students elect to do 'performance art' for their projects and that there also is an 'art walk' forthcoming in the autumn semester. It is titled 'the forgotten landscape' and it is a collective effort of walking a destination of over ten kilometres in the north western region in Khorasan, near Mashad, marking the landscape.

'Work in progress' meetings are essential in art training. This one has demonstrated that 'scale', 'installations' and 'public art' are encouraged and are part of the training processes at Tehran University. The ideas of 'performance' and the 'art walk' indicate the attention to what is understood as 'conceptual art' at Tehran University. The students' engagement with the urban environment and public spaces imply that the limitations of the studio space as the only place for doing the work, and the size of the canvas as the only arena for painting are left

[17] I do not believe that the Municipality would invite other art departments from other universities to enter this bidding system. I would suggest that this form of participation is due to the tutor's position and who he/she might know in other institutions. I have known of a few able research students whose professors have facilitated job and project interviews based of professional connections.

behind. The students seem to have been encouraged to relate their art to a different type of canvas, the urban spaces outdoors. It is significant that male and female students collaborate in such projects meeting institutional and organizational challenges as a team.

Dr. Kafshchian's assertion "We are here to help…we do what we can. These are difficult times …we want to help them get through it all" shows that his concerns about his students are beyond what is required of him as simply teaching. He has probably secured some financial assistance for those two students experiencing severe financial hardship. The 'Jahad-e-danesh gahi' might have provided some assistance in this respect. This is an educational/financial support organization within universities which helps 'pious' students in a variety of ways individually, or collectively on organized educational trips.

In the subsequent weeks to that session I became more familiar with Dr. Kafshchian and his robust and energetic presence in his department. His students spoke of him as a hard task master not tolerating tardiness, absences, and delays in work submission. I also found out that many in the art community outside the university consider him a staunch supporter of the government, and one who does not attend art shows in galleries. However, he maintained a highly professional relationship with me as a researcher, agreeing with the requests by myself and the student body for holding seminars, group talks, and slide shows. Amongst these were the seminar on gender issues, and talks and slide shows discussing Modernism. He and a handful of his colleagues attended my seminar on contemporary British sculptors Anthony Gormley and Andy Goldsworthy, whose works and ideas based around the human body, and the environment I particularly wanted to discuss in Tehran. On one occasion the students cornered him in the lobby asking for his signature on the permission slip to get keys to a room with facilities for a slide show of my own work. Before signing the slip, he looked straight into my eyes and with the gesture of his hand and the movement of his head, he said "Not problematic?", to which I replied "No!". To my amazement, I realised that I had picked up the subtle language of censorship, and that I understood exactly how to implement it. I was using it as a tool, and in order to get on with my own work, as easily and simply as that. 'Problematic' in art institutional terms means nudity and erotic art; neither of which are tolerated in the art scene in Iran. This does not mean however, that such practices do not exist. We have witnessed Mr. Vakili's crit session at Al-Zahra campus above, and I know of a variety of 'life class' practices in private ateliers. In Text IV in this Chapter I shall take my reader to one such space.

20th November 2002, recorded interview with Dr. Kafshchian, in his office at Tehran University

> Dr. Kafshchian's office is not very large, but accommodates his seat and large desks with two/three chairs in front. Behind his desk on the floor stands a small plaster cast very similar to Michelangelo's slaves, possibly a copy of a copy,

about 60cm high. There are several paintings and sculptures of recently graduated students dotted around, and some glass fronted book shelves full of books. He offers me one of the seats and I set up my tape-recorder. He does not receive any phone calls in the thirty five minutes I spend with him and I am not certain whether he has asked his secretary to hold his calls. I thank Dr. Kafshchian for his time and tell him that I was moved by his collaborative work with his students on their 'art walk', video and equipment installation of numerous large canisters of paint in primary colours and a projection of a group walk. The video installation 'The Lost Landscape' shown at 'New Art II' at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in October 2002. He knows that I have also visited the Gymnasium on Enghelab Street, very close to Tehran University campus, where his wall painting/mural (approximately20-35m) depicts man/machine/power, with various interpretations and revolutionary themes. Dr. Kafshchian is attentive, listens to the framework of my questions carefully and proceeds as follows:

> "My primary aim in organizing this walk, the installation you refer to, was to create a state of transition and transformation, or bring such a state of mind to the attention of the individuals who took part. I believe there is something missing in our inner lives, we are so engaged with the mundane, and the surface, that we have forgotten the idea of the inner. I wanted to create an occasion when we might induce, and locate this state of transition and transformation, contemplate it, say hello to it, and discover its peace. I wanted to question the touristic views we all hold about landscape. We seem to be tourists in every stage of life, and although the tradition of pilgrimage is part of our culture we have no grasp of what it could mean. As you see on the video in the course of this 10 kilometre walk, gradually and despite the arduous journey and aching feet, the students develop a relationship with the landscape and the environment they are in. The 'lost landscape' incidentally is a place, it is a hill and has ancient history. But the 'lost landscape' becomes a metaphor, the students become more contemplative as to what it all means, and this was evident in their paintings. They started with doodling, pouring paint disinterestedly…but towards the end their drawings changed nature. The hope is that this experience awakens or alerted senses; which of course depends on the individuals and their potential for absorbing the idea. It was also an occasion to see smiles on their faces, despite their aching feet.
>
> "In relation to the organizational structures, The Faculty of Fine Arts is one of the 26 faculties at Tehran University which was founded some 63

years ago. When The Fine Art faculty was founded just a few years later, architecture, painting and sculpture were the only subjects taught. As you know we now have an extensive programme in this faculty in several departments. Industrial design, graphic arts and calligraphy, art photography, theatre studies, film studies, and music have been added to those initial subjects. Our intake, of 80-90 visual arts students, is on a yearly basis except for art photography which is every other year due to the limitation in facilities. You have seen our computer room, we also offer some foreign languages and sports, conservation, stage design, and many other optional topics as electives. There is a credit system of 109 mandatory credit units for each specialisation and discipline; these are related to the core requirements in those disciplines. There are also 27 general subject credit units[18] which must be covered in the course of the ten semesters or four years. Yes, we are aware of the weight of the general subjects, and we are in the process of reducing the bulk of the general subjects to 20 units. These will have to be formalized and officially announced before I can give you a breakdown.

"We have tenure and sessional tutors and there are five disciplines/groups whose course directors work with the Head of Visual Arts. This cluster of people form the 'administrative assembly' or 'shora-yeh ejraee' and are responsible for the execution of the programmes and the curriculum. This assembly or 'shora' are all members of the 'academic council' or 'hey-atte elmi' who elect the Head of Visual Arts every two years. The dean and his academic deputy are also present in these elections and take part. It is a quick process and we often rotate between the group director and his deputy in order to maintain continuity in teaching and administration.

"Regarding the system being controlled top-down, ideologically based, and the promotion of those tutors with the 'chador' but lacking academic credentials; I think we have to reflect on what is being done for the student body. Let us put idealism aside, look at our strife and commitment to teaching and learning, both the tutors and the student body. Look at our performance within the present structures and what is available to us, these socio-political and physical structures. Yes, the programme design at the outset of the revolution was re-written but it did not work. It was too

[18] Twelve of these general knowledge units are on the revolution, Islamic morality, Islamic ethics, and Islamic texts.

prescribed and ideological with great stress on ‘the revolutionary’ and 'religious concepts'. It was soon realized that students must experience art processes in the studios, and create art according to their experiences, so things had to change. I can say that what we do for our students now, today, matches any institution in Paris. You have observed our practices, in the studios, the crits, so you must have seen that despite the headscarf there are freedoms. I have this reputation of being tough, keen on discipline. Yes, but I want to maintain contact, a dialogue, with my students so I am open to discussion. Your thesis would do well to see us in the light of our endeavours today and now.

“As for the influences from my studies in Paris or whether Paris changed me, perhaps I would have changed anyway no matter what. I had a wonderful time and made numerous French friends. The good thing was that we discussed everything: rights and wrongs. But I also met people from the African nations with colourful clothes, I learnt from them, how they preserve their identity. We socialised a lot and the ‘information’[19] people called on me on numerous occasions. Well understandably, they were paying for my education and wanted me to party less. Before going to Paris I had travelled extensively as a tourist, to Pakistan, India, the Arab world: Saudi Arabia and Syria, Italy and France, but the duration of my studies in Paris provided a great opportunity to reflect on my own culture and see theirs. To observe strengths and weaknesses from a distance. This was an incredible experience, to have the time to step back and watch yourself and your own culture, and then watch the students and tutors there. You see, we have worthwhile values and traditions. Now, as the group leader in the Visual Arts Department, I am so busy I cannot stand outside of it all and watch the socio-political behaviours, observe their direction and development more clearly.

“The education I received in Paris was seminar based, but I was impressed by their positive outlook, their discipline. My beliefs did not alter as a result of being there, what had been based on emotion and youthful imagination turned into articulated and logical discourse. My French friends would comment on my zeal, and my accent being from Mashad, and the fact that my wife would never remove her headscarf in public. But

[19] It is alleged that the behaviour of scholarship students, before and after the 1979 Revolution, are observed by informers! I am not sure to what extent.

> we got used to one another, enjoyed a dialogue and soon they changed their judgement. The picture they had created in their minds about people from our geographical region being terrorists was altered. In fact Paris Municipality invited me to paint a mural in a public place and I heard only a few months ago that it is still there[20]. It was a scene of our traditional Norooz celebrations, the spring equinox. Cultures can work together.
>
> "As for art travel and visits for the student body, this is a discrepancy for our students. What we teach them through images and books is distant from them in reality. We know how difficult it is for our students not to see the art we introduce to them first hand, nothing can replace the charge of standing in front of a painting, a distance of just one metre, and looking at it, seeing its brush marks, experiencing the power of its colour. But we do not have the budget to take our students to experience these things on a yearly basis as used to be the tradition. I organized a trip to Paris and Italy when I came back from my studies, and many course directors attempt this within Iran. The University buses are old, and the responsibility for safety is enormous. We are hoping for a trip to the Vatican and Paris in the summer."[21]

Before I leave Dr. Kafshchian, he gives me two photographs of the work of his students partially wiped off. This is presented in Chapter Six. These are wall paintings on the campus within the Faculty, depicting forms at once resembling trees and the male torso. I ask who dared damage the work, and he says 'heraasat' or 'Islamic ethical guardians'! I ask him why they have not taken away the plaster cast of Michelangelo's slave placed behind his desk. He says "They have not got this far yet". On this note, and almost choking I take my leave. I believe the same has happened to his mural at the Gymnasium on Enghelab Street. Who are "they"? So often one hears references made to

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[20] This is interesting since no paintings/murals marking the celebrations of the Iranian new year have been shown in public places in Tehran since 1979. In the interiors of homes, however, regardless of religious beliefs the celebrations are as strong as ever. Public expression in public art is reserved for the faces of the Ayatollah's, and specific Martyrs. Cinemas do have amazing billboards which often show faces of beautiful young women in contemporary and fashionable headscarves. Magazines and periodicals too, often depict the faces of young beautiful women.

[21] In October 2003, James Bland an MA painting students at Canterbury Christ Church University who had just returned from Italy informed me that he met students from Tehran University drawing at the Vatican.

> "they…themselves". These characters, I would suggest, are the new generation of zealots with little education and mobilised by the fundamentalist factions in the government. The interpretations of Islam put forward by these factions are interconnected to power and money in the name of Islam.

I locate and obtain a copy of the curriculum breakdown before I leave. I realise that two thirds of the credit units are concerned with core art subjects. The remaining one third are subjects such as physical education, the English language, computing, Farsi, family planning, and Islamic discourse. These are separate from the theoretical studies regarding the Muslim heritage. The latter forms one third of art theory in general. This analysis suggests that the design of the curriculum is based on an attitude of all round education, rather than a full focus on fine art, for art's sake.

I also find out that there are several professors and associate-professors in the faculty and that many of the scholars who are members of the 'academic council' or 'hay-ate elmi' have been in the department since before the Revolution, and are not necessary politically appointed, but their areas of expertise are indispensable to the faculty.

In contemplating my interview with Dr. Kafshchian, it has become evident to me that Dr. Kafshchian perceives himself as a caring and responsible leader of his department, and not a grand designer of hardline policies implied by the art community in Tehran. His position, however, is complex. His upbringing in the holy city of Mashad in the northeastern province of Khorasan, a highly regarded religious venue for the majority of Iranians, must play a great role in his sense of tradition, and religious zeal. These must have been particularly sharp in his youth affecting his views towards strong allegiances with the Islamic Revolution. Naturally, then, aspects of art history and the discussion of the nude are not tolerated by him as points of principle. Such perceptions bore recognition in the initial years of the Islamic Revolution, as they do today, and were rewarded by a scholarship to study in France.

Dr. Kafshchian's sense of identity must be profoundly interconnected to his institutional status, and the influences in his upbringing. His perspectives are further bound by what is required of him outwardly as a Head of Department at Tehran University, his means of professional survival. Unlike Mr. Vakili, he does not own a private atelier full of adoring fee-paying young learners, he is an employee and institutional behaviours anywhere, are bound by group loyalties. I do wonder whether one might juxtapose specific political discourses such as Dr. Kafshchian's, to specific allegiances to hierarchies in academic environments anywhere. Ironically in the last three years I have observed administrative changes in my own department in Canterbury including two deans and three heads of departments. Group loyalties have on many occasions prevented transparency. I do not believe transparency is available to us whether in the so known democratic, or undemocratic worlds. One does not know.

Part Three, Sculpture Student Shiva Sadegh-Zadeh

Shiva is a graduating student in sculpture at Tehran University. She has a gentle but determined voice and what she says is highly considered and articulated. She wears her hair with a longish fringe partially over her large eyes, in a long plait down her back. Her pale patterned headscarf is carefully chosen to complement her skin tones and is loosely knotted under her chin as if a mandatory accessory, she adjusts its placement frequently to just so. Indeed headscarves and the way they are worn are highly linked to fashion. She wears a short, above the knee, fitted knitted 'roopoosh' overall, usually in ash grey showing her blue jeans and sneakers. She carries a satchel. She is not in anyway extravagant or out of the ordinary in her appearance.

I first met Shiva in the last days of my stay in the second leg of data collection in the students' cafeteria at the Faculty of Fine Arts. She commented that she was disappointed her course tutor had not invited the graduating students whose coursework were over to come in specially to attend my talks at the sculpture department. So she located me and brought in a well documented portfolio of her best work to show me. I was impressed with this demonstration of intellectual energy, not to be satisfied with what has been decided for you, and to search for and locate what might be interesting in the long run. I was particularly taken by Shiva's maquettes. These were an assembly of dissected cones and cylinders, and small scale maquettes in stiffened, slightly curved, and punched felt walls which dividing space in a multiple of ways. In the following interview she critically analyses some of her experiences engaging with art education.

January 29 2004, interview with Shiva Sadegh-Zadeh at the Cafeteria at the Iranian Artists' Forum

> We meet at the Cafeteria and order cakes and scented tea in large glasses; Shiva responds to the framework of the questions I put to her and I take notes, word for word, in Farsi. She observes my writing as we proceed and occasionally changes her mind.
>
> > "At the moment I am gathering materials for my dissertation which will be bound and submitted on the day of my finals show/presentation. I am following a few strands: land art, environmental art, the ephemeral, 'site' specificity, and performance art. Although my advising tutor, examiners and whoever is invited will be present, I am making arrangements for this to be documented by video. I am designing a vertical sculpture in adobe mud bricks whose centre would be in ice; as the process of melting takes place this sculpture will start to disintegrate, slowly collapsing on itself. The adobe bricks will be made of the earth I would have dug up at the site

of the sculpture…so the base of the vertical is in the hollow, and subterranean…viewed from a distance the section of the sculpture that is in the 'dug up recess', the roots as it were, would not be seen, the sculpture would be just a presence on the horizon for a limited time. Calculations of scale, time, weather conditions and temperature are important parts of the processes. I am interested and moved by Andy Goldsworthy's ice sculptures and am translating an article by Anthony Gormley regarding his views on the 'site' of a sculpture. This takes a long time as my English is not that good, it is what I learnt at school and university.

"Discussions about art either with fellow students or specialist sculpture tutors are limited…some space was given to this in the final year when one would be invited to give an opinion… But on the whole the tutor would speak and we would listen. I have managed to construct a personal line of thought in relation to the lectures given by Mr. Daresh…but I imagine seeing tutors at work, and working in the studio with the tutors to be a different sort of experience altogether. I wish I could experience that.

"Most of my knowledge regarding contemporary art is from attending the library and talks at Tehran Museum of Contemporary art. There have been two conferences on 'New Art', and the foreign speakers usually show slides which are new and interesting to us... The museum provides simultaneous translations. Very few of my course-mates attend these talks. In depth art history modernism, or contemporary and conceptual art were too piecemeal at university. In fact, they simply referenced topics, without addressing or analysing issues related to the artists and their deeper perspectives. I discovered Richard Serra in books, and found his minimalist surfaces really quite daring. I like the weighted mass and the groundedness of his work and how one inhabits the space he creates. Some of my maquettes were influenced by him…I would like to learn more about Cindy Sherman and Sara Lucas, and I love René Magritte. I used to spend much time looking at books at the Faculty's library until the end of my 3rd year. Gradually I approached the Museum's library… but new books are bought mostly for the students in architecture, and not painters and sculptors[22]

[22] I believe this might be because of censorship.

"Religious Knowledge, as you know, is given much weight and is a subject area that we study through out the education system. At university, we have to cover 12 units which is similar to the units for drawing. These 12 units cover Islamic history, the history of the revolution, ethics and morals of Islam, Islamic texts, and principals of religion in Islam. We can only take one or two units per semester, so in the course of the four years at university we have these topics to drag with us year after year. Fathers often think 'oh well there is some control for these kids' but mothers are sceptical.

"I wanted to go to 'Honarestan' which is just about art at high school level, but my father thought going to a specialized secondary art school problematic… neither here nor there… I don't think he considered it as education. My four year period studying art at university has persuaded him that yes, Shiva has chosen a life direction for herself and it's alright… Especially since the day I won a prize for my installation with needles. I created a very narrow path with white polystyrene walls, at the end of which were scattered one thousand soft new green leaves…but the walls were pierced with over one thousand large quilting needles which I had asked my father who is a tailor to buy for me. I am also preparing for an installation of seven white steps covered in needles that end onto a white wall!

"From my university training, I have learnt that I must express my opinions, and that I must organize my thoughts, because I know that I do think. Before I was quiet, of course I thought then too, but I did not realize the relationship or the transition/transformation processes of thinking, into expression and articulation of ideas and views. If one does not express, voice or articulate thoughts and ideas, particularly in art, one gets left behind. Expressing ideas and thoughts are signs of registering one's existing and being I believe. I have learnt these things at university

"Recently, I collaborated with a male course-mate and spent one week away from home for the first time ever. My father agreed with this because it was for work, my art. We went to Hamedan, 6-7 hour bus journey from Tehran, to contribute to a national project working with art students in the provinces. It has been great to work together and exchange ideas, we have been doing this for some time. But you know at the end, in the ceremony when they were reading out names, acknowledging various art projects, they gave him the credit for our collaboration, and to my astonishment he did not correct this assumption. He said 'never mind…

> As long as it gets done, it is not important in whose name!'. I had to intervene and put this right. As a male he is used to getting credit for whatever he does, it does not occur to him that I want my name to be mentioned and my input acknowledged…. We are supposed to get enough money to cover our costs for this project which should be good because my parents have been paying for everything so far and it is not easy for them. Although university education is free, art costs a lot. Male students usually have jobs, but hardly any female students work while studying, it is not practiced traditionally. I am waiting to graduate, and then I will think about working….. Do you know, I feel sometimes that I am just beginning to understand what art means… I wished I could start again…… O, can we cross that last bit out? …..Well if you think its good, leave it in."

Although highly critical, Shiva determines the four year period of her art education at Tehran University as an intellectually worthwhile experience. She has found a voice. This has been a transitional space for Shiva. Significantly, she has caused her traditional father to readdress and reconsider his opinion and to come into terms with art education as a worthwhile process of self-development with future prospects. So Shiva has caused her father to experience some transformation in thought. The profound philosophical view of life, evident in Shiva's case in her melting vertical on the horizon and needle ridden paths, are characteristic of every single art student I talked to in Tehran. The introduction of new iconography, the needles and the soft new leaves, marks Shiva's originality in perception. Her father being a tailor, she must been well acquainted with the function of needles; her adoption of this local ingredient and its transformation into an idea and a concept is precisely what art education is about. Similarly the idea behind her finals project, mixing adobe bricks and ice to create an ephemeral vertical sculpture, are observations of local and traditional concepts. Ice banks/warehouses or 'yakh-chaal' are ancient traditional means of producing ice for the summer months in Iran. Vast areas of land with very thick-walled adobe structures were filled with snow and water in the cold months to create enormous ice mountains. The teaching Shiva has received, her personal sense of enquiry, the books she has looked at, her interaction and discussions with a male colleague on a regular basis, and talks at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art have been the contributing factors in her development, this is the case for art education anywhere. Shiva is inspired. I admire her for her aspirations, and her sense of agency to drive ideas forward. I recognize these elements in her conduct because I have been there, I am still there experiencing and experimenting in Canterbury. Finally, her observation of gender issues, and her critique of those issues is widespread amongst the majority of women I have met in Iran. I shall demonstrate this in Text IV in this chapter.

2D self-study, Al-Zahra University

Chapter 4, Text II: Contradictory and Paradoxical Spaces

Following Shiva Sadegh Zadeh's lead on her sculptural thoughts in Text I, Text II presents teaching and learning contexts led by two eminent tutors in the sculpture studios at Tehran University. Sculpture as a discipline in fine art is not practiced at Al-Zahra University; their 3D studio practices such as inlaid woodwork are either addressed as a craft subject or as a support or optional medium.

Text II indicates the critical views held by the participants touching on their individual, professional and collective sense of integrity and identity. The accounts given are based on my attending and observing studio sessions without prior arrangements with the tutors concerned. Unlike the question/answer format of Text I, the assertions made by the participants in this Text have been made voluntarily and without my soliciting their specificities. This is precisely where their poignancy lies; the participants have demanded my attention and focus on the paradoxes in phenomena in their space and time. If Text I elaborated on the development of the curriculum and staffing structures since 1979, Text II enters into teaching and learning situations and expressed socio-political observations of the participants.

The sculpture studio

Tehran University sculpture studio, also known as the '3D workshop', is just one block away from the Visual Arts Department. It is a purpose-built, light, airy and vast single story rectangular hall (approximately 30x10 metres) with a high ceiling. Several sessions might take place at one time in this spacious facility. In front of this studio, it in the courtyard, stands a magnificent long haired goat in twisted steel which is the work of the late Master Ismael the technician. Two more of his goats are displayed, on bench level, at the Jamshidiyeh rock park in north Tehran. The studio has large windows along the walls on the left, and a narrow gallery up some steep stairs on the right near the entrance. Opposite the entrance at the far end, there is a kiln room which has recently been fitted, in January 2004, with large kilns replacing the old gas operated ones. Immediately in front of the kiln room, is the plaster and clay area which accommodates large wooden tables for plaster mould making or working with large or small quantities of clay. There are a few sinks and taps in this area too.

Coming in towards the centre of the studio, from the plaster/clay area, there are numerous individual work tables/stands where students engage ideas in their chosen materials. There are several plaster cast busts of various sizes dotted around, but the most imposing is a giant copy of a version of Michelangelo's 'The Dying Slave' (c. 1513) placed near the windows. On the opposite wall to the windows there is a large frieze of a Graeco/Roman pastoral scene. This is

placed almost under the ceiling, so observational drawings and/or copying/modelling the frieze in clay are done by placing high stools over tables. There are tens of lockers against this wall, opposite the windows, on the floor, where students' works in progress are stored. There are at least two teaching areas, complete with drawing boards, tables pushed together and stools all around, where group discussions and teaching take place. This is indeed a marvellous open plan space, well attended to by the two technicians and the cleaners. The tutors often congregate in the office area, to the left of the entrance where there are desks, telephones, filing cabinets etc. and where the tutors congregate to have tea and hold discussions.

Extracts from Data collected on November 9th, 2002, in Mr. Daresh's session

I arrive at the University at 8.20 am, having left the house at around 7. I head for the 3D studios to observe one session in Year 3; although classes are scheduled for 8.30-12, the technician informs me that nothing much happens before 9 o'clock. I make notes of the facilities. Last time I attempted to sit in the sculpture classes I found out that the practical part of the National University Entrance Examinations for art were in process. Once the candidates get through the written examinations, they undertake a practical examination followed by an interview.

When Mr Daresh arrives, I introduce myself and tell him briefly about my research, he listens attentively. Mr. Daresh appears sensitive with a droll and ironic sense of humour. He is clean shaven in a dark suit and perhaps in his late 40s. He proceeds to tell me that although they have an interesting collection of students, there is a major handicap because of a lack of proper museums for viewing and contemplating art on a one-to-one basis. He also says that despite this, in the last two years they have had two students who succeeded in getting places and scholarships in Florence and London. As Mr Daresh and I proceed towards the teaching area, he tells me that he does what he can, but he himself is in need of reading about the new developments in sculpture and that he hardly gets a moment these days to do anything as scholarly as that.

The session takes place in a space, a sort of enclave, which is created by a number of tables pushed together in the centre, around which are numerous stools and chairs. There is a portable green board that is used by Mr. Daresh during this session, beyond it there are shelves. As he is stopped by someone, I go and join three young women who are already sitting at the table setting up their 'work in progress'. Mr. Daresh joins us and in a few minutes there are 15 female and 6 male students present; two more join in during the session. Most students have their drawings, studies, and photographs of experiments on the

large table in front of them. There are one or two constructions of geometric forms. Mr. Daresh joins the group and sits at the same table and introduces me to the group, addressing me he says:

> "Iranian students' experiences are twice their real age because of what they have been put through these recent years. They are forever thoughtful and uncertain and you can see this in their faces. It is said that you need 40 years to get over a war! We had an 8 year war with Iraq only 13 years ago, it is ever present in our minds."

He then proceeds to say that they have been having discussions regarding the idea of motion in space, "volume, space and movement", towards a project for the end of the semester. He adds that there is a tradition of 'crits' or 'judgement' (pronounced in French) at the end of each project when everyone's efforts in investigating, understanding, and creating work is put on show and analysed by the group.

I notice a very well made transparent blue set of cubes with moving fractal geometric parts in and out of the sides. These parts suggest the possibility of a variety of way for construction. In response to several students' questions about their initial drawings and maquettes, Mr. Daresh suggests that the blue transparent maquettes be passed around for everyone to examine closely. He says:

> "Drawing is to record the processes of an idea from its conception until it has left us and is external to us. As if in a crystal ball, drawings reflect the journey of our thoughts into objects. They register ideas. These may be on paper initially, the design, the studies or the experiments, photographs, and the construction stage. The process of re-making with the introduction of colour, or the introduction of colour for facet distinction, or re-adjusting the colour, are all still drawing. What such a process does is constantly increasing our understanding of the relationships of space and the object in it; volume, motion and space become one concept through these drawings."

There are a number of questions asked as students draw, some from objects in front of them, and they negotiate ideas in groups. Mr. Daresh responds by saying:

> "Sartre says that 'freedom imposes itself on us, we are hesitant to use it…'. Do not think about limitations. Be free, at least for now. It would be great to see some drawings that could never be realised in objects… Draw

> from your experiences… Remember our heritage of objects in bronze, of beasts depicted as burners, of glass… Think about the concept of water and what it means in this geography of ours, and how it could be captured in space."

A female student joins the class. Mr. Daresh looks at his watch and greets her saying: "So…every three weeks or so you wonder how we are getting on and drop in to make sure we are doing our job?" She smiles and settles down. I notice that Mr. Daresh does not take register.

Mr. Daresh gives some time to discussing colour: the simplicity of form, and the impact of primary colours, Calder, Kandinsky, Léger, and Miro are mentioned. He urges the student body not to be satisfied with the first stage of an idea and suggests that they should think ideas through as they venture out and carry out research from the environment, observing, and investigating new possibilities. Perhaps they should take a nature walk and observe the movements and the hovering of a dragon fly in space. Some student seem to like the idea of water and plan an experimental project. They would collaborate and examine weighted balloons floating on water. I decide to join and photograph them.

Mr. Daresh then stands up and demonstrates some possibilities in a drawing on the green board. His drawings are precise and geometric. He invites the students to imagine a turning/moving geometric object leaving a 3D form, a cube for example, crossing the space and going through a second smaller geometric form parallel to the first and stopping at a third form also parallel but much smaller. He wishes the students to imagine what transformations these objects would assume. "Drawing", he says, "brings concepts together".

A number of students come up with the idea that no matter what its form, the object in motion will leave a circular impression on impact. They introduce circular forms to their drawings. There is a suggestion that there is a school of sculpture that deals with movement of objects in space. Students seem to be familiar with Calder and Miro, but make enquiries from one another about the works of Isamu Noguchi and his garden museum in Japan. His website is mentioned as is the website for The Louvre and its sculpture collection. I remember one of Damien Hirst's sculptures of a table tennis ball suspended in space in perpetual motion by air pressure. Mr. Daresh makes a pointed assertion here addressed to me:

> "We have paradoxes in this modern life of ours; we have access to the net in our homes and we are in touch with the world through internet and satellite. Every middle class family has a satellite television now, yet the

> gate keepers at our university entrances, who were previously engaged in farming the land, stop our students and search them sometimes… This is lacking in logic, our students are intelligent thinking people… What is the point of this search? Nobody could search the contents of their heads. What is the point of censorship in our news?"

Mr. Daresh invites the group to think about form, space, and motion and to search for metaphors for their ideas. He suggests that one could conceptualise and imagine a film script: how a character is shown setting off from a starting point, how the viewers follow her movement in space, through the traffic, to the airport, in the plane, arriving in another space. He says that one has to imagine the evolutionary stages in ideas, and the process of construction, and register them in drawings. As the drawings and the construction become nearer one another, new relationships will emerge for contemplation and further development of the work. Mr. Daresh suggests that the students should imagine, draw, and execute the work as a chain of processes. He advises the students to be cautious about "this business of 'I like'", "I did it because I liked it…". He asks the students how this 'it' that is 'liked' might be trusted… What its principles would be….the criteria behind it… He says that this is not a fruitful stance and that there must be clarification at every stage, and that one needs to think and re-think. It is a question of "thinking", "looking" and "observing", and "thinking again". Students draw, talk and look at each other's work. Some time passes. Mr Daresh asks if the drawings might be passed around for everyone to look at. He asserts:

> "This is an exercise that you will take home, re-think and re-draw and gradually develop by introducing new elements to it. Accuracy and colour might be part of those elements. Anything else is hugely welcome".

I think about 'abstraction', 'imagination', and 'conceptualization'. I know this is the beginning of term and I shall not be able to attend the crit at the end of term. I would like to see what the students come up with. I thank everyone for allowing me to sit in this session and ask if I might take a couple of photos. One student volunteers to take photos with my camera from a table top in order to include everyone, myself included in the photographs. As I gather my notebook, Mr. Daresh enquires after my methodology in my research. I mention that other than ethnographic principles, I am taken by the Derridean theories in deconstruction. He looks at me with a smile and says "Oh yes…and that 'différance' of his". He then says that it would be a good idea for me to give a talk to his class. Some students volunteer to book rooms and equipment and liase

with me, I note down their mobile numbers just before I leave I ask what sorts of topics do they cover in sculpture. A range of interrelationships with 'space' are mentioned, foundry, ceramics too, although the kilns have been out of order for some time. They also have specific classes for studying volume, form, and analytical studies in sculpture.

I note that these Saturday morning sessions with Mr. Daresh are theoretically from 8.30 to 12.00 but they start after 9 am and usually finish around 11.00-11.30. I also note that most male students have jobs, and that the weekly basic attendance requirements are around 16 hours.

There are two mature female students in this group who come and find me afterwards to talk. One has two children and has come back to education having seen to her brothers and sisters after their mother's death. She is not 40 yet and has two children of her own. She tells me that she wishes very much to participate in the Gender Seminars being organized by other students. She volunteers to translate into Farsi, and distribute the list of topics I have prepared for these seminars.

Reflections

The foregoing accounts demonstrate that the teaching and learning art is understood as it would be anywhere in the world. There are of course specificities in approach because of the tutor and his direction. Mr. Daresh combines formal ideas and abstraction through imagination. The data demonstrates that students are encouraged to consider motion and space as evolutionary processes. Mr. Daresh's stress on drawing as a means for understanding and registering ideas and thought processes is noteworthy. However, his discussions reference socio-political circumstances. On several occasions he refers to the contradictions and conflicts in being a student seeking knowledge, and being in a society where censorship is experienced routinely. Resource limitations are brought to our attention in the lack of museums for personal and face-to-face engagement with works of art. The resources available to these students are limited to books, videos, and websites. These in themselves are often dated, according to my observations in the library at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tehran University, and despite the annual International Book Fair. I have attended this Spring Book Fair, and have seen the wonderful array of art books on sale. They sell out fast. Sadly however, it is not the ordinary students who buy these, but well-to-do followers of art. I know well how my visual literacy depends on books, galleries, and museums outside the institutions at which I have been educated. But despite such unbearable handicaps, the students and most tutors persevere passionately with the job at hand as best they can.

Mr. Daresh's concerns about his students become doubly poignant when he addresses the world, through the researcher, to speak about the effects of Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and its lasting damage evident on the students' demeanours. This damage is undeniable across all strata in Iranian society, it has born great losses in life, economy, as well as the promotion of a 'martyrdom culture' by the government. The martyrdom culture takes advantage of the nations' emotions towards securing a culture of self-righteousness for the regime through religiosity.

Furthermore, we are urged by Mr. Daresh to contemplate the paradox and contradictory nature of ideologies in society in Iran. The ability to access the world through information technology, whether at home, at the net cafés, or at the computer rooms at universities and institutions on the one hand; and the humility the student body have to endure as members of that society when they are checked and searched by the 'gate-keepers' of little education, on the other. Mr. Daresh considers such incidents as forms of attack on the integrity and identity of the student body in the particular context of the universities. This is indeed often commented on by the students themselves, but particularly female students who tend to be more expressive in their dress code and conduct. Such paradoxes and contradictions create dualities in behaviours and the concept of 'inside/outside' becomes political. It is implied that one can only be 'oneself' in the private space of the interiors and only with trusted friends and family. This is in sharp contrast to the expected ways of public conduct by the government. Any hope for unity, transparency, and trust amongst and between individual members of a society are thus demolished. Incredibly, however, sculptures do get made, and the art practices do continue.

Sculpture session with Mr. Sheikh-ol-Hokama

> Following Mr. Daresh's session, I join 'Year I' with Mr. Sheikh-ol-Hokama just a few metres away. Mr. Sheikh-ol-Hokama is a practicing and exhibiting sculptor and leads the discipline at Tehran University. Many of his students experiment with aspects of the anatomy and create human form, the extent of which is negotiated between the student and tutor and what might pass as acceptable. I find Mr. Sheikh-ol-Hokama in the plaster area with the technician, and instructing some of the students on mould making processes. I introduce myself and he seems to know all about the research. As he is busy, I join the students away from the clay and plaster area. This is Year I, there are around 15, working individually, but some share small tables. Two students are discussing the difference between Plato and Socrates. One student has modelled a complete male figure in clay with every muscle visible, and in proportion. One female student is struggling to model a female form. Several male and female students are playing around with numerous identical shapes in plaster and clay, these

seem to have been only just released from their small plaster moulds. One student is suspending a long strung form between two poles. He has made the bridge-like object from numerous square sheets of cardboard, strung together with dental floss. Some of the facets are in colour. I get their permission to take photographs and sit near them to write my notes.

Mr. Hokama joins me; he says that when he started working at Tehran University before the 1979 Islamic revolution, they had a policy of one extensive European art trip per year; he reminds me of the favourable exchange rate they enjoyed at that time. He then points to the tiled floor and says:

> "When we look at this tiled floor, despite its basic function, its age and marked surface appearance, we see harmony in it. The same geometric shapes, the same colour, all worn out evenly and together…this unity gives it its character and integrity. It should be the same in this faculty, but it is not."

I spend much time thinking about this statement delivered in absolute calm, and without any trace of bitterness. I feel I have nothing to add to it and decide to report it as it was delivered. In my view it can only emphasise the conflict in perceptions, referenced by Mr. Daresh in relation to the individual and the so perceived 'Islamic' society. It is evident however that the tutors and their students collaborate in creating an atmosphere they can work in, but they never cease to be critical of their circumstances and the limitations forced on them. They know well that they are undermined and that they are capable of much more, only possible through absolute autonomy.

I attended two further sessions on the history of the development of sculpture in cultures as diverse as the Graeco-Roman, Egypt, India, and China's Terracotta Soldiers. Dr. Zahra Rahnavard, who is also the chancellor at Al-Zahra University narrated these videos mentioning terminology such as "paradigms", "parameters", and "socio-political" in English several times. Remarkably, these videos were so well edited that there were no signs of either free standing or relief sculptures depicting women and goddesses. On reflection, I believe the videos shown by Dr. Rahnavard were a form of rushed sightseeing the world, rather than discussing art. My gratitude goes to Dr. Rahnavard, however, for responding to my question about the future of the female art students. She informed me that 65% of the national university student body are female, and that the graduating female art students have opportunities to work as artists, open private studios and galleries, become teachers, curators, and designers, in a country faced with severe unemployment even for its doctors and engineers.

Tehran University

Study of plaster casts

Discussion of form, space and motion

Study of bas-relief

Study of form, motion and water in a public space

Chapter 4, Text III: Transparent Spaces

Introduction

This text explores the range, and nature of art theory taught at the two institutions in the study, whilst also indicating aspects of studio practices related to theory. By 'theory', in this context, I mean a range of ideas, and abstract knowledge, rather than concrete hypothesis and rules. Following Mr. Daresh's assertions on drawing and colour in the previous text, and because painting is the only fine art discipline at Al-Zahra University, I shall primarily relate my observations regarding 2D work. The text seeks to clarify the focus and perspectives adopted, rather than the detailed analysis of course contents. The activities and orientation of the sculpture studios at Tehran University have been related in Text II, and through Shiva Sadegh-Zadeh in Text I.

Except for the extended account of Dr. Azjand's session crucial to my argument, the data presented in this text are either in condensed form based on two-hour lecture observations, or brief extracts from studio observations of similar duration. In the following paragraphs, however, I have brought together the shared characteristics of the art educational practices I have observed to acquaint the reader with the general conduct at the Visual Art Departments in the study.

Traditions and practice

Lectures or sessions on theory often take place in rooms which accommodate around thirty five students comfortably; the group sizes I have observed have not exceeded this number. Both benches, and individual chairs with armrests are used for seating and note-taking. The rooms are equipped with fixed green boards or sliding white boards, sometimes both, for illustrations, points and sub-headings in discussions, summaries, and sometimes quick graphs. All lecture rooms, also known as 'Audio Visual Rooms' have bare walls, except for some of the rooms at Al-Zahra University, which are partially felted for art work to be pinned up when necessary. There are always one or two desks available for the tutors who carry a register for each session. This register is taken seriously by most tutors since student absences could lead to administrative problems. Facilities for slide projection vary in type, and in every case student representatives have been responsible for operating these. Tutors simply walk in with the slides and other visual materials and hand them to the students in charge. On one occasion a DVD was used, and the departmental technician brought the projector and screen, and set them up. On two occasions at Tehran University an 'opac' was used; these project any 2D image placed over the lens, and are very useful for projecting book pages. Except for the video of Alhambra shown at Al-Zahra University, the quality of the slides and videos shown, in my view, are not as good as they could be.

Tehran University has large and airy studios with multiple lockers, easels, benches, and 'antique plaster casts' to draw from. The traffic noise is disturbing at times, and in all drawing sessions observed, soft classical music was played on a small CD/cassette player. Both campuses have very good size galleries to show 'work in progress', group mid-term shows, and individual degree work. The gallery in the Visual Arts Department at Tehran University seems much more active in showing selections of students' works in progress. This might be due to the number of students and the variety of disciplines in the department. Students, sometimes in consultation with their tutors, create opportunities to curate 2D and 3D group shows in the gallery, where drawings from all disciplines including Industrial Design, Art Photography, Painting, Sculpture, and Persian Calligraphy are shown. I have observed the enthusiasm with which they go about such initiatives; they often assist one another and collaborate in their spatial considerations. The gallery ceiling and walls are installed with railings for suspending 2D and 3D work, these parallel railings in the ceiling allow for 2D work to be hung back to back creating spatial interest. Strong fine double-ended metal hooks of various sizes are available from the department secretaries for these purposes.

There is also a perfectly lit and vast double chambered gallery on the second floor of the Architecture block at Tehran University, which is used for big shows from the Faculty and from outside. Its curator/warden holds office during term, he very kindly invited me to show my work in this splendid space. I believe this was the venue for many important art shows before the 1979 Revolution. Al-Zahra University has a lecture theatre which can be partially cleared for group shows.

The duration for degree course training is ten semesters. The period of writing a dissertation, and creating art objects for a finals show are outside these semesters and count as two semesters in themselves. Technically, students should graduate after these 12 semesters but many take longer, especially male students from the provinces who make extended use of the hugely subsidised food and accommodation. There is no practice of collective yearly degree shows at either institutions in the study. Once the students have passed the end of semester examinations, and covered the number of required credits, 126 in total, they disperse to prepare a final's project. This comprises of a bound written piece to represent theoretical research, alongside related 2D or 3D work for an exhibition. These are then presented in a public viva where the course director, course tutor, and the advising tutor are present and might question the candidate on the work submitted. Close members of the candidate's family often attend the viva. The grades are officially announced some days later after this viva.

In my observations, tutors and students appeared to have comfortable and friendly relationships, regardless of apparent or implied political or ideological differences. Indeed one feels the students are fully supported and even protected by their departments. Evidence of this are the relatively freer observation of dress codes, more fluid male-female interaction

within the student body at Tehran University campus, and the general conduct of the students at both departments. This became obvious to me personally when I spent an hour at the gate of the Faculty of Political Sciences on Tehran University Campus, where similar behaviours appeared to be more cautious if not restricted. Contrary to perceptions from outside Iran, Islamic terms such as 'haraam'[23] or 'halaal' were not referred to or considered in relation to art teaching and learning. Such terms are mostly related to mosque discourses. All interactions and discussions observed by myself have circled around a discussion of art, issues and ideas related to it, theories, materials, form, colour, etc., as in any art educational institution. Whilst nudity and erotic art are categorically not tolerated, one senses that such conclusions have been arrived at subtly and through the ethics programmes built over time from the early years in education; for many the subject is not of interest in the first place.

Perspectives in art in world civilizations

The core of the theoretical studies at Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities are part of the national curricula, designed by scholars who are members of the 'hay-atte-e elmi' or the academic council either based at Tehran University, or in institutions governed by it. These studies are primarily concerned with the cultural-historical developments in art in world civilizations, rather than the specific and evolutionary analysis of art objects as ideas. The latter is touched on, in a 2 credit module. The interconnection between Iran's cultural heritage in art and architecture, and its contribution to the broader cultural-historical developments in world art and culture become a focal point whenever relevant and appropriate. The range and depth of ideas and topics addressed in these studies, in my view, resemble what one might encounter in a large museum, unravelling layers in cultural history. I draw on data below to illustrate my point.

20 April 2002, Tehran University, Art And The History of Civilizations Lectures: The Art of the Parthians - Dr. Azjand's Saturday morning Session, 22 female and 11 male students

> Dr. Azjand is an eminent scholar with numerous publications. He is about 55, clean shaven, and in a tailored fitted jacket of ash grey, very pale blue shirt, and light cream-khaki trousers. He wears large roundish glasses. He mostly stands in front of his desk as he speaks, but occasionally walks around with his arms folded, or sits briefly at the edge of his desk. He demands attention, addresses individual students as if partners in a dialogue on philosophy, calling them as

[23] 'haraam' is an Arabic word widely used in the Muslim world to mean religiously unacceptable. 'halaal' also from Arabic, is the opposite of 'haraam' and it means blessed by Islam.

'Mr …' or 'Ms …' He recommends that there is no need for note-taking and gives titles of books to be consulted through out his lecture. He takes the register at the beginning of the session, but is forced to take it again at the end of the session because several male students have arrived late. He comments on these late arrivals with humour and authority enquiring precisely what mode of transport was used; one soon realizes that most of the young men who are late have simply walked from the dormitories!

Dr. Azjand summarises the discussions in the previous sessions on the debates around Alexander's defeat of the Akheamenids, and the subsequent Seleucid period. The discussion continues with the introduction of the Parthians, 2nd century BC to 250 AD. The Parthians' socio-political context is analysed, the relevance of such categories of nomadic, farming, and urban peoples are discussed. It is elaborated that the Parthians were nomadic peoples in essence, of Arian race wishing to be different from the Hellenic in the style of government. Frequent interference from abroad, especially Rome's repeated attempts to manipulate the question of Armenia to her own imperial advantage played a major role in Parthian politics. As a consequence the Parthians fought the Romans for supremacy in Armenia and Syria, maps and territories are referenced.

The Parthians, Dr. Azjand asserts, adopted and expanded Mithraism as the religion/tradition or cult of Mehr protecting heaven and earth and in celebration of ultimate cosmic light, or the sun. Mithraism was exported to Rome by Roman soldiers initially as a secret cult, where remains of wall paintings and reliefs survive today. Dr. Azjand draws parallels between the origins of traditions in Christianity, sound similarities in Mithra and Messiah; the idea of the Pope and the seven stages of "Baabi" in Mithraic tradition; and the musical instrument "Arghanoon" that the followers of Mithra played and sang to when they met, compared to the tradition of organ playing (organon/organum) in Christian practices.

He continues, that in their art, Parthians chose realism over idealism of the defeated Seleucids, as is evident in the figures in Qaleh-e-ye Yazdigird where faces and figures of individuals are depicted with realistic characteristics, rather than the idealism reserved for images of gods and related symbolic iconography. Similarly, coins from the period show faces that have specific individual facial markings.

Some students take notes vigorously, and are advised occasionally to just listen and consult the books later.

Dr Azjand asserts that Parthian architecture and the traditions of wall painting and relief developed in 'pockets' rather than by a central standardized system. Repeat patterns in decorative stucco enjoyed a tremendous vogue under the Parthians, forming the architectural ornament. He gives an account of the archaeological sites in the North East, Nisa, where Italians have excavated Parthian sites, relating the sun-dried brick and stone architectural forms, and interiors of varied and diverse designs according to the local traditions. This, Dr. Azjand points out, is repeated in varied styles across the Parthian kingdom.

He continues that the best preserved remains from this period are the monumental buildings and statuary. Frontalism is assumed to be a way of presenting the figure in a more imposing way increasing the subject's bearing by the more immediate face-to-face contact. The 'Frontalist' treatment by Parthians can occur with an oblique stance and can be shown alongside a profile view. Pattern and details of dress may reveal a person's rank or social background, as there was much concern for self-image in Parthia.

Dr. Azjand comments that the misinformed general tendency for many commentators, from the 13th century AH or 19th century AD to the present time, has been to equate Parthian art to a classical model with the 'ideal' quality, and the suggestion that any departure from these norms would be considered as "debased Orientalism". He asserts that while there may be details which are clearly borrowed from the West, Roman and Hellenic arts, the overall effect of the finished product is definitely Parthian with distinct local characteristics. The adoption of the title 'King of Kings' by Mehrdad II, or Mithridates II, he argues, can be considered as a reflection of the King's need to establish his legitimacy in the eyes of Parthia's subjects by appealing to the idea that the king was heir to the authority of the Achaemenians rather than the Romans. He continues that, Parthian art served as the intermediary for the transfer of imagery from the ancient world to that of Islam. The Parthians can be credited with a relative tolerance of minority religious faiths, no one practice acquired a dominant position, and that religion tended to take a back seat in the arts.

Dr. Azjand pauses here and invites questions. Several students check dates and titles of books.

I ask whether there is any evidence of the status of women in Parthian art and society.

Dr. Azjand reminds everyone that the Parthians were nomadic in essence, and he explains that there is evidence of small gold mother goddess type figures. He also says there is evidence that there existed the concept of "giss sefid" or 'the

> white haired one', who were wise-women sages of middle to great age. The "giss sefid" were regarded as chieftains, and assumed high advisory status in society. He points out that the phrase is still in use in the vernacular in Farsi, meaning the female elder who possesses knowledge.
>
> Before we leave the room I ask the students what type of art they have enjoyed discussing the most so far in these series of lectures, they tell me that the early examples of Luristan Bronze were fantastic.

Later that morning, I asked Dr. Azjand for an interview, as he was checking his mail box in the secretary's office. His response was:

> "Madam what do you hope to cover in an interview… We have been living a life in the last twenty five years".

I have understood this statement to indicate a continuum of experiences regarding the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, as well as the thorough devastation, suffering, and loss incurred as a result of the Iraq-Iran war. The collapse of systems of organization and economy have had severe consequences for a great many in Iran. The emergence of new ideologies primarily based on specificities in interpreting religious rules, rather than evolving secular and civil laws, have profoundly disappointed and dismayed the majority and isolated the intellectuals. It is strongly believed by the majority of Iranians, and I include myself in this, that the Islamic Revolution was meant to be an intellectual revolution inclusive of Islamic thought, rather than a forceful theocracy excluding the intellectual and progressive energies in the country. Whilst I still hope and believe that the 1979 Revolution will serve the nation for the better in the long run, I cannot help but understand, and sympathise profoundly with the implications of Dr. Azjand's statement.

As for Dr. Azjand's lecture, it is evident that early art, both Eastern and Western have been discussed in his previous lectures. Greek and Roman influences are referenced in his argument, and the students hint at their preference for the pre-historic Bronze objects from Iran. The consideration of the Parthian culture in the late antique period, exploring the evolutionary journey in attitudes in depicting human form and face, the vernacular developments in architecture, and the history of musical instruments such as the "Arghanoon" are of value in cultural studies across the nations around the globe. The message here is to educate, and further acquaint the student body with an historical-intercultural framework, establishing the continuity and interconnections between the pre-Christian, pre-Islamic worlds, and noting the possible influences and exchanges of ideas.

Ironically, however, whilst scholars sustain such discussions of cultural complexity and continuity in educational institutions, full public expression of certain aspects of the nation's cultural identity is frowned upon by the hardline factions in the Islamic regime. Television

broadcasts of contemporary celebrations related to the pre-Islamic traditions such as the rituals of jumping over fire in the very last days of winter, the spring equinox celebrations of 'Norooz' the Iranian new year, and the full view of musical instruments and orchestration, are restricted by the government. This indicates a conflict in perceiving national sensibilities and identity. Whilst such celebrations are practiced fully inwardly and in the interiors of homes by all Iranians, forms of national identity imbued with religiosity are promoted outwardly by the state as the true identity of the nation. This preferred concept of national identity by the government is based on contemporary, partial, local, and power oriented interpretations of Islam, and not the Islam understood by many Iranians who practise it privately as their spiritual and philosophical direction. The culture of martyrdom, one of many disastrous outcomes of the eight year war with Iraq is further used by the state to consolidate such misperceptions and promote new identities constructed to overwhelm.

The point here is that Iranians, whether in the art theory class or out, wish to retain all aspects of their cultural heritage or identity, including their religion. Forms of religiosity branded by the hardliners in the Islamic regime can only be seen as means for seeking power to dominate the nation's perspectives on cultural heritage. The data suggests that at least in art educational contexts in a governmental institution, there runs a forum where continuity in such cultural heritage is freely contemplated. This is further echoed in the activities of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in Text V. These indicate the internal tensions within the regime, which must exist in the governmental discourses and institutional practices, where opposing factions struggle to gain or maintain ground, causing centre and periphery positioning in interpreting theology as law.

Cultural continuity in the post-Christian and post-Islamic civilizations

Such addressing of intercultural transitions and developments in art and culture, as illustrated by Dr. Azjand, was sustained as my observations progressed in Tehran, covering the post-Christian and post-Islamic eras. This suggests a linear and chronological design in the curricula, since my observations indicate that one might discover the prequel/sequel to a session at Tehran University in the lectures given at Al-Zahra campus, or vice versa. The session on the development of Byzantine art on 19 November 2002, given by Dr. Mazaheri to 2nd year painting students at Al-Zahra campus would make a good example of such indications.

> Dr. Mazaheri's slide-aided extended talk covered influences in art in early Christianity, the fall of Rome, and the rise of the new capitals or centres in Constantinople and Ravenna, establishing the East as an artistic force. She asserted that the proportional rhythms in form in classicism gave way to ecclesiastical architecture characterised by semicircular facades, niches, and

> ornament with luminous gold, and elaborate coloured glass mosaic encrusted interiors. Dr. Mazaheri made substantial references to the tradition of illuminated manuscripts, the idea of which had travelled down the centuries through the decorated texts from the Maani 'book art' traditions from pre-Islamic Persian courts. She reminded us of the importance of the Egyptian idea of the scriptorium. The latter, she explained, implicated the art of the ascetic celibate nuns and monks who lived, worked, and prayed together in early monastic life, before segregation was imposed. The Migration Period in the 5th and 6th centuries, the Franks in Gaul, the Germanic peoples, and the Spanish before the Arabs were related to the student body as critical and crucial socio-political events affecting the arts of Eastern and Western Europe.
>
> Dr. Mazaheri discussed the need to understand 'evolution' in art in order to form a global understanding of cultures, and the interconnection of those cultures. Dr. Mazaheri concluded with the court of Charlemagne, his passion for illuminated texts, his chapel in Aachen, and the first exchanges of ambassadors, and art objects, between his court and the Muslim world under Caliph Harun al Rashid (789-809). She finished with a few slides of the Irish tradition for texts, perhaps connected to the 'migrant' artists, and requested that the students read set texts for the future discussions relating the dark ages, the Crusades, and the developments in Romanesque art.

The breadth of topics in these series of lectures whether at Tehran or Al-Zahra Visual Arts departments astounded me, especially when I realized that the students have written examinations at the end of every semester. When I put this concern to Dr. Mazaheri, she agreed and said "My dear Mrs. Honarbin, we do not give them a chance to think, do we."

This trend continued. At Tehran University and Dr. Javadi's lectures on the re-appearance of imagery and design in the post-Islamic arts from Persian antiquity. Textiles specifically, and the rediscovery of single colour glazed turquoise tiles in 10th century in Iranian architecture in Kerman, were amongst the numerous examples she touched on. Dr. Javadi's lecture was followed by a day at Iran Bastan, and Islamic Arts Museums in Tehran. Subsequently, in my observations at Al-Zahra campus, the achievements of Alhambra palace in Andalusia, and an analysis of light, lucidity in form and ornament aspiring to the cosmos, and water as architectural design referencing heaven on earth were covered by Dr. Mazaheri in a brilliant two part lecture with slides and video projections. The idea of the Persian garden as a concept was analysed in relation to Alhambra. And Finally, I will leave the reader with the thoughts in a lecture I attended in the 'Art and Muslim Civilization' series given by Dr. Mazaheri. This was on the socio-cultural exchange and collaboration between the Safavid dynasty of the 16th to 18th centuries in Iran, the Gourkanian dynasty in India, and the Ottoman Empire in Turkey.

Dr. Mazaheri made an example of the architecture of Taj Mahal, its formal characteristics executed in collaboration with Iran, the consideration and division of space and ornament, giving details of chambers, gardens, and the curvilinear geometries in its designs and façade. Interconnections were made between the love of forms of art, the whole of Taj Mahal as a collection of ideas, an occasion for creating an opportunity for continuity and exchange of materials and ideas amongst the region's notable artisans, a project about the love of a prince for his wife, and politics.

Whether and how the student body manage to find the time to produce their own artwork at the end of such extended interdisciplinarity in theoretical training in education, culture, and socio-politics, is beyond my grasp.

Theory and practice in the studio

Observing art practices in the studio is highly complex. For this is an accumulative practice depending on what has been experienced, learnt, and exercised previously, and whether and how they might be re-applied at any one time. These are processes which cannot be readily measured, and given. I have sat in numerous studio sessions where students have been drawing, painting, or working in 3D, but also not apparently 'doing anything'. Making a mark, putting down a colour, considering form in space, or applying a light touch onto the wet clay which has only recently been just mud at the foot of a mountain, are all fragments in an ongoing dialogue, and a measured one at that. This is a felt or sensed dialogue in a non-verbal world of enquiry, perception, imagination, emotion, etc. This intellectual engagement encompasses both the external and internal worlds of the individual, inclusive of a discussion on theory. What is absorbed by the mind's eye, the inner responses to it, and its re-externalisation through the art object or representation and performance, create the dimensions of that dialogue. New visions of existing ideas are thus offered by the artist. Based on this argument I call on the following observations to suggest that theory in relation to studio practices is taught at the two campuses, even though locating it proved hard.

17 January 2004, 3rd Year painting crit, Mrs. Mohassess's class, Al-Zahra University

> The large studio is bustling with activity, everyone has brought their finished canvases for the end of semester 'crit'. A few of the students, maybe a quarter, have chosen topics depicting flowers, candles, calligraphic elaborations, and unexplored motifs from ancient art in collage format. Such forms in painting might be described as illustrative, often available on large canvases in the bazar, or shown on the national television as 'scenery' between programmes. The remaining three quarters of the students, however, have chosen to communicate their perceptions, ideas, and issues of concern through self-portraiture. This reflexivity is exciting; it at once acknowledges the presence of 'self', and offers

innovation in the tradition and heritage of figurative art in Iran particularly prominent in the courts of the Safavid and Qajar dynasties from the 16th to the 20th centuries. The self-portraitures in this crit however are mostly fragmented and partially clad, perhaps referencing the idea of the nude and what is considered taboo in the current socio-political climate in the country. The fragmentation, relative bareness of the flesh, and the spaces for considering 'self' in these canvases suggest critical perspectives; they are comments and statements about the presence of that 'self' as an idea. Although none might be considered as ground breaking works of art, they do convey high degrees of intellectual engagement, self-awareness, and self-realization. As an observer I could not but admire the courage and levels of consciousness demonstrated through theory and its practice. A large triptych shows the head and face of the painter in mid-space in a lavatory. Whilst very simple in appearance, it is immediately evident that such imagery implicates not only qualities through colour, form, and space, but also critical intention. The ambitions of this second group of painters are not calligraphic or illustrative scenery, but longing for discovering and showing meaning through art. It is evident in the work of the majority in this crit that the tutor has engaged the students in art discourses and criticism, art history, and theory.

I present photographic images of this crit in Chapter Six.

27 November 2002, painting/photography student viva at Tehran University

I attend a public viva for a B.A. in photography, in the gallery in the Visual Arts Department at Tehran University. There is a panel of five tutors asking questions on the art exhibited and the dissertation submitted. The only female tutor present, has also been the 'advising tutor' to the student in the last six months. I am struck by the candidate's absolute consideration of space in showing the work in identical square frames, hung with equal spacing in an unbroken line at eye-level on three walls in the gallery. The candidate speaks at length about how he has adopted Roland Barthes' semiology in his imagery and his writing to articulate his concerns in his art.

Photographs of this viva are presented in Chapter Six.

10 December 2002, painting student's finals, Al-Zahra University

A small painting is secured onto a slim tall easel, the canvas is left partially untreated and it is so fine in texture that you can see the light through the weave. This is a fragment of a bigger painting copied from a traditional Persian painting. Small geometric motifs in bright yellow, orange and red sit on bright cool Giotto

> blues. Next there are three framed enlargements of the analysis of the geometry of the motifs. Next, the blue of the background is interpreted in three framed enlargement of cooler and warmer blues. These are followed by a panel made of three squared sections, each section is a painting made up of very, very fine lines covering the space in soft curved diagonals. The colours are in bright red, bright yellow, and bright blue. Over these are mounted in solid wood: a triangle, a square, and a circle. The candidate tells me she has deconstructed a geometric motif from a Persian miniature, and that the fine lines are really her own sinews as she felt them during painting. She says she is travelling abroad to marry soon.

29 January 2004, In conversation with graduating sculpture student, Mahmood, from Tehran University

> "The substructure of my work is nihilism. I organized a 'performance' on the campus… Here, right here, in front of all of them[24]. We got ourselves kitted out in black, highly tailored suits, black ties, the whitest of starched shirts you could find, and dark glasses. Walking, and pausing for short intervals in clusters, sometimes closing in, and sometimes on the verge of dispersing, we marched through the campus, we stunned them all, they did not know what was happening for a while. Who were these men in black suits! Eventually they realised, or were told that we were sculpture students considering versions of ourselves in space and being."

Mahmood also told me that he comes from Sabzeh-Vaar where the tradition of the 'Ashoora Processions'[25] are taken very seriously, performed through highly organized and precise marches representing each trade and profession in the city. One is bound to interconnect his performance art on campus, his nihilist theoretical attitude, and Ashoora traditions in Sabzeh-Vaar. This is indeed the case with all shows on 'conceptual' art I have attended in Tehran, they rise from personal experiences. Shiva Sadegh-Zadeh in Text I has already demonstrated this to us.

As a practicing artist I know that engagement with theories and ideas in art can sometimes be borne out of a whisper, a passing reference by a cherished art maker, an idea revealed through a vertical line on a frieze, the depth of a horizontal line, a certain quality in light, fullness in form, the speed of a curve, etc. In my view all art is interlinked to a concept within a universe

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[24] I would suggest that by 'them' he means governmental elements like the 'heraasat' Islamic ethical guardians, the 'jahad-e danesh gahi' the university educational jihad, and others.

[25] I shall explain more in Text IV.

of theories, and therefore 'conceptual'. The data below shall assist me in making my point further.

Mrs. Minoo Assadi's class, painting studio at Al-Zahra University

> "This morning we have been creating a 'Fauve' pallet focusing on paint and colour as concepts. As you can see our model has painted her face, reminiscent of Henri Matisse's "The Woman with the Hat". This will help us understand the bizarreness of the Fauvist Epoch and palette at the outset of modernism."

Mrs. Mohassess's class, painting studio at Tehran University

> "I have been talking to my students about colour harmonies, we do this as they develop their canvases. I think it is important that they think about values in colour even if they are working intuitively. When I started working here, I introduced the organization of the picture plain to my students, pointing out how vital it is to 'manage' the canvas as a whole world with objects in it. Mr. Seyhoon was reluctant to accept this; you know of course that this really was his department. The students in the life class were to think and consider the model, under his supervision, and not the space and objects around the model. But that was over thirty years ago!."

Mrs. Saaghar Pezeshkian's tutorial with a painting student, Al-Zahra University

> "The figure and its study could lead you to abstraction, you would be investigating through the figure, the figure as a concept. This is how abstraction finds a substructure. There is no reason why you should not experiment with 'scale' as you continue looking at the 'figure'."

Mr Motabar's 'Antique Class', drawing from plaster casts

> "I can see that you are working with 'light'. Fine that is the idea! But you must not give up your idea in the middle of your investigation, in the middle of your sentence as it were. Continue this consideration of light, see how it develops…. Try not to lie, you do not need to lie to make illusions, it is all an illusion. Just record what you actually see…be brave."

The full account of my observations at Mr Motabar's drawing sessions at Tehran University and my visits to his atelier are presented in **Appendix Nine**.

Conclusion

Within the context of Dr. Azjand's lecture on theory, I have pointed out the shift in perspectives in perceiving the concept of identity specifically related to national identity.

Whist the ancient cultural history of the country is addressed and discussed in the interiors of the lecture halls, external and public demonstration of the same ideas are subdued by the government in the name of Islam and its local governmental interpretations. As one taxi driver pointed out to me, every single Islamic occasion for celebration is promoted by the government through expensive and extensive street illuminations, but the celebration of Norooz and other connected festivals such as the festival of fire have until recently been banned from public places. This has caused many Iranians in urban life to doubt their Muslim heritage and adopt a less interested view towards the Arab world for having 'invaded' Iran.

I have further demonstrated how both campuses view theoretical studies as an intercultural and fluid concept, one that engages with cultural histories, sensibilities, and iconographies from Persian antiquity, the Muslim heritage, the Christian heritage, and from varied art historical periods in the East as well as the West. These theoretical studies, however, consume one third of the art curriculum inclusive of Islamic texts, Islamic ethics, and Islamic history. In real terms, the study of Islamic theory matches the total tuition in drawing! This is a concern for many participants, tutors and students, who believe that the allocated time for studio practices is eaten up by a range of unnecessary topics.

With regard to the relationships between theory and studio practices, the data suggests that the interested student engages with what is given, and locates other sources to acquire relevant theories to articulate her/his imagined world. This has certainly been the case with myself, as an undergraduate I was taught very little in terms of volume, but what was given prompted me to search for more. The data further suggests that theories and ideas are owned and implemented by the participants as they would be by any practitioner, regardless of their origins, East or West. Art theory, in its entirety, is considered by the participants as their artistic heritage, and they claim it and put it to work.

My observations have further indicated that histories of painting and sculpture from the mid-19th century through to the contemporary period are taught specifically in relation to studio practices. This becomes evident in student presentations, and conversations amongst the participants in the studios when terms such as 'the Expressionists', 'Bauhaus', or 'Suprematism', etc., are used. I would suggest, however, that specific attention is paid to abstraction or Abstract Art because this is useful and any reference to the idea of the 'nude', nudity and erotic art are thus subtly put aside. The study of the figure is viewed differently however, and it often features in students' work.

Several students have communicated to me that art theory, history, and studio practices could be taught more "scientifically". In relation to theory, I believe by "scientific" they might mean systematic, possessing a clear and transparent structure and direction. From the examples they gave, Shiva Sadegh-Zadeh in Text I, it appeared that the student body wish to be given the history of painting and sculpture through the full analysis of any one period,

similarly to the theory classes given by Dr. Azjand, Dr. Mazaheri, and Dr. Javadi on world civilizations and cultures. It seems that the teaching of specific art history since the 19th century is less fluent, indeed the students imply inadequacies. The limitation in visual resources intensifies this demand, and in certain cases censorship causes gaps which undermine the narratives in the development of the history and story of the plastic arts. In relation to practice, I know that many students feel they benefit more from tutors such as Mr. Motabar who teaches drawing very specifically, according to his preference, which is the style of the academy and measured.

Further examples of crits and drawing studios are referred to in my notes on Mrs. Paryush Gangi **Appendix Ten,** and Mr. Zargham, **Appendix Eleven**.

Al-Zahra University self portraits

“From geometry to Rothko”

Chapter 4, Text IV: A Space for Gendered Identities

This text deconstructs the emerging gendered spaces in Tehran. It provides an opportune moment to further relate such emergent gendered spaces to the concept of identity, which I have discussed in Text III in relation to national identity. Whilst engaging with the current literature on the meanings of 'identity', 'feminism', and 'gender', including the literature from Iran, is inevitable, it is my observation that the perspectives projected in such literature fail to grasp the specificities and dynamics related to Tehran succinctly. The projections of forms of national identity devoid of the voice of the individual (Ahmadi 2004, Elahi-Ghomshei 2004, Ashraf 1373 AH)[26], and the evaluative cultural theories on forms of identities interrelated to sexualities, new ethnicities, and the emergent Asian, black, Afro-Caribbean, and West-Indian diasporas in the West (Hall 2003a, Hall 2003b, Hall 2003c, Brunsdon 2003, Rogoff 2000, Derrida 1998, Hall 1995), remain unrelated to my purposes in this space. My intentions in this text are to project the voices of the female participants and stress on their reflexivity, multiple perspectives as individuals and collectively, and more importantly as they perceive themselves. It is vital that we recognize these voices articulating and structuring lives, and constructing identities, rather than evaluating them in relation to the discourses in the West. As the experiences related in this text manifest, these participants routinely, and in my view competently, examine, analyze, and critique the socio-political contexts they live in. Indeed, they overcome some of its limitations through art educational processes.

These voices register the desire and aspirations for self-expression, self-realization, and a demand for a more collaboratively structured socio-political partnerships. Whilst these 'articulations' as a product of identification decipher complexities in identities through similarities, polarities, and difference (Hall 1980), they echo the ambitions of educated, thinking, or active individuals from any race or in any contemporary society regardless of boundaries set by the discourses in cultural studies. Their particular significance in Iran, however, is interrelated to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, when a systematic 'cleansing' of the high status professional positions held by women took place. Whether in politics, the judiciary, cultural and intellectual spheres, women were excluded from high level decision making, and the processes of running the country. Only those who identified with the religiosity of the new regime would have a possibility for contribution; even those would not be at decision making levels.

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[26] I have benefited profoundly from the papers given at SOAS by the first two, and the article written by the last; I had nevertheless hoped for an indication of the location of the individual within their discourses.

Neither condemnation, nor praise for the much improved situation since the 1997 elections and Mr. Khatami's office as president would be appropriate here. I have considered it my task to be willing and vigilant in my response to the voices of women in Iran, and to collaborate in projecting those voices. Widely held misperceptions and misinformation, in the media and in the minds of many in the West, often steer away from the breadth of activism and expression in the lives of these women, who are also Muslims.

Significantly, it is here in these deconstructive processes that I have observed what is referred to as 'identity' is ultimately a tacit concept, and a fluid construction of ideas related to ongoing spatio-temporal contexts. The complexity of this tacit concept, as is evident in the range of the experiences offered, is interconnected to the individual's vision of self (Assoun 2000). As we shall see none of the participants in this text mention 'identity', but all appear to intentionally and with a sense of agency, search for solutions against degrees of isolation, separation, collision of ideologies, and alienation. They are engaged in a dialogue negotiating cycles of change and continuity, degrees of modernity, and innovation in tradition, in order to determine who they wish to be. These constructs are in line with the paths they have chosen to pursue according to their circumstances, and within their spatio-temporal realities. As an observer, and as a participant artist in this study I recognize and share this search. I visualize it as a wriggle for life, movement in space, and a form of transcendence; the qualities of which I have manifested in my sculptures in 'The Archaeology of Self'. I am not separate from this cluster of participants, and would suggest that together we make a paradigm of similarities, difference, and temporal unity, rather than absolute and static unity. Our visions of ourselves are fluid with varied perspectives.

This text is presented in two parts. In Part One I shall create a space for the voices of seven participants who provide a range of ideas and socio-political backgrounds demonstrating the points I have made above. In Part Two I shall further consolidate those points based on the data collected in collaborative and social spaces, and where women specifically express their desire to work in partnership with men creating innovation in traditions. The response from the female participants in Tehran, both voluntarily offered in collaborative seminars, or sought by myself in relation to the research questions, has been varied as it has been generous. Because of the word limit in this thesis, however, I shall present only fragments of selected data to make my points.

Part One: Women's Voices

Presented below are 'voices' of seven women engaged in art education, who are selected as interviewees because they present a range of attitudes and perspectives. What I have projected in this text are shortened summaries from recorded interviews, conversations, and notes, which are either transcribed exactly as given, or on occasion paraphrased in the processes of

re-editing, specifically for Text IV. It must be noted that several women are economic partners in their households. The significance of the issues they analyze is twofold; whilst they are highly individualistic in the range of issues they raise, they unravel one by one, gendered issues of concern in Iranian society at large.

Maryam is 30, a painting student at Tehran University, she wears what is considered to be the 'full Islamic' cover or 'chador', which she views as linked to her political identity as well as familial tradition. This is the dress code preferred by the Islamic Government.

> "I am from a political-religious family, and I am a supporter of the Iranian government and its stance on theologies. This is, after all the revolution of the minorities. My family did not think studying art was suitable for me because one or two cousins, sadly, lost all sense of their roots when they went to university to study art. I married at 15 and now have a 12 year old son. I have however, taken advantage of adult education courses and the Educational Jahad[27] to make up for the lost years to pursue my interests in art. I investigated a number of universities including Al-Zahra which I found unappealing due to the student body being all female. It became clear that I wanted to study at Tehran University. I was assisted in all these by the 'jahad-e danesh-gahi'. I did a foundation course there and was taught art history to help me prepare for the university entrance examination. I also attended Mr. Arkhas' classes[28] for drawing, but I was put off by everyone becoming a little like him. He seemed very single minded. I could not have achieved all this without my husband's support and constant encouragement. I get home when I get home in the evenings, sometimes at 9 o'clock. Whoever gets there first, cooks. Raising our

[27] Jihad is an Arabic word which simply means striving for betterment. Jahad is the Farsi pronunciation of the same word. The 'educational jahad' or 'jahad-e danesh-gahi' is a governmental organization that provides opportunities, and some financial assistance too if necessary, to vetted applicants. It creates an advisory/consultancy/tutorial space in almost any discipline. It has been particularly beneficial to re-habilitate many soldiers from the Iran-Iraq war to come into terms with their traumas and disabilities through education. This facility is also highly appreciated by many who have faced hardships through lack of opportunities; it has been part of the message of the Revolution to create such opportunities for the 'disadvantaged'. It is, however, generally understood that Jahad beneficiaries, at least outwardly and visibly, demonstrate their support for the government and its policies or stance on interpreting moral/ethical codes of behaviour. Participating in pro-government demonstrations, attending mass prayers and adhering to dress codes for women, in particular, are also implied.

[28] Mr. Alkhas is a well-known painter who has a teaching atelier. He taught at Tehran University before and at the outset of the Islamic Revolution.

> son is taken seriously by both my husband and myself, but my work is suffering at the moment, it is naïve of women to want it all and have it all. Terms such as 'liberated' and 'free' are difficult statements, I am trying to reach my goal. I have a set of aims. I hope to go abroad, Germany where I have relatives, to familiarise myself with other ways of looking at art. I believe they are much more 'scientific' in their approach. As the Prophet has said learning is a duty even if it is to be sought in far away China. I think it would feed into my own work, and perhaps, I might be able to teach it."

To create a space to be autonomous and the agent of one's life, to structure and restructure that life, and to bring about change in familial attitudes, and to collaborate with one's husband or partner in order to expand one's horizons, are aspirations of most intelligent human beings anywhere. Maryam has imagined and located a set of personal goals, and shapes her life in order to achieve them. Further, Maryam critiques attitudes in art, such as sameness in drawing styles, and surprises me in her choice of university. The latter is particularly interesting because I assumed, wrongly, that because of her own strict dress codes and piety she might have preferred an all women student body. Not so however, as she is far more interested in the inclusiveness of Tehran University than the exclusiveness of Al-Zahra.

Paryush is 50 and teaches textile design at Al-Zahra University, as well as Honar University and The National Heritage Foundation. She wears her carefully chosen headscarf, both in terms of design and colour, reluctantly. I enclose the account of Paryush's interview in full in **Appendix Ten**.

> "I have been teaching art for the last 18 years at two universities, whilst also practicing and regularly exhibiting painting, I am exploring ideas of scale and geometry at present. The famous saying from Madineh Fazeleh "*do not enter if you do not grasp geometry*"[29] has a symbolic meaning for me and is never far from my mind…. I design the courses I teach according to my education, my understanding of art, and my expertise, I insist on being autonomous in what I teach. I love being around my students, they give me energy, I get up in the morning and put my lipstick on and wear my headscarf and go to work, I need the income. I have supported my family financially all my married life and I am proud to have helped my students to go to Japan to do MA degrees, two of them have got scholarships to do PhDs there. Sadly, in the West, there is no

[29] This is a reference to the holy shrine/mosque in Madineh in Saudi Arabia, the place where the Prophet Mohammad was buried. It is a highly regarded venerated venue for those who attend the Hajj ceremonies in Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

> consciousness of Iranian women like me, and our culture. There are considerable numbers of us contributing and defying restrictions as much as we can…. I for one refuse to apply self-censorship and insist on thinking freely, despite the head scarf. You cannot touch my mind."

To make an example of the divinity of the concept of geometry from the holy shrine in Madineh is indeed to interpret Islamic principles symbolically and intellectually beyond the mundane local and somewhat isolated interpretations of some clergy in Iran. Whilst Paryush deplores self-censorship, she brings to our attention the misinformed and exoticizing imagination of most Western media towards Muslim women as if intellectual life must necessarily be governed by either the absence of religion or by undermined perceptions of it.

Anahita is 21 and is a 3rd year student in painting at Al-Zahra University. Her parents live in the south and she lives in college dormitories. She wears her headscarf simply, and there is something about her intelligence and autonomous sense of herself that cannot be easily described.

> "Yes I like to paint images of my own body, sometimes without clothes. Well it is only a body and we all have it, don't we? My body, your body, it is a common language that's all. I don't know what it means to paint 'beautiful' things, is something beautiful when you can't take your eyes off it? I paint the bathroom, I have just painted my head in the middle of the space in the bathroom. At the moment I stack my paintings under my bed. A friend and I are looking for a space, a studio, somewhere near college so we can make big canvases. It is difficult though, most houses want to let rooms to tidy people and we want to spill paint everywhere."

The personal, particular, and universal language of art for Anahita seems to be the language of the body, she recognizes this as an 'apriority' concept intuitively available to her. She explores this in her paintings, analytically and according to her experiences. She articulates her unspeakable thoughts regarding the physical and emotional presence of her partially nude body through art. Art education facilitates this private audience with herself, no matter how unacceptable the idea of the nude in her art class. Images of Anahita's work are presented in Chapter Six.

Saara is 22 and an abstract painter soon to graduate from Al-Zahra University. She wears the most fashionable scarves available, carefully choosing colours that suit and enhance her complexion. She speaks English and Italian.

> "Yes my university education has been interesting with some good tutors, and some not so good. I have met many girls I would never have met otherwise, from villages. That has been great. I have done some research in Reza Abbassi

> Museum towards my finals. But my problem with Iran is nothing to do with my art education or the headscarf, rather the double standards for women and men. Because I am female, there are far more restrictions on my behaviour. My boyfriend and I have to consider 'good behaviour' all the time. We can be together, and not together at the same time. My brother, however can get away with anything under the sun! He and his girlfriend(s) have a licence to do as they wish. Even my own generation, my own friends find ways of dissolving or diluting our sense of liberation and independence when it comes to dealing with men. It is not to do with religion, none of my friends practice religion, but we collectively give into men. I cannot stand it."

Saara expands her observations and discussion to a global critical discourse about equality, or rather the lack of it between the sexes. She finds her circumstances acutely unacceptable, demanding change now and quickly, effective to her circumstances. But what is also interesting, is the fact that she recognizes how this debate is interconnected with collective behaviours beyond the boundaries of religion. She accepts that she and her friends are contributors to the dilemma.

Toktam is 21, a painting student from Al-Zahra University and is interested in figure painting. She wears colourful and minimal headscarves, almost always falling off her head. She has exhibited her drawings depicting young couples in 'coffee shops'.

> "I love painting the nude and I have compiled the history of figure painting in 100 images since the Renaissance. When we studied the Renaissance, our tutor covered almost every single painter and every single brushstroke placed on a church wall in Italy during the period… I love art history, and it is ridiculous to say West and East too much. I am a citizen of the globe, a member of the global village. If I am to be an artist, all of art history is my heritage. I write all my boyfriend's essays; can you imagine I studied the whole history of divinity in Indian culture, they have so many gods and goddesses. I also studied the Mahabharata, hundreds of pages of it, to help him with his ideas. Can you imagine, I nearly died. He is doing art at Azad University. My own work is about women being sacred! I like to paint prostitutes, women working hard in boring offices behind desks and young couples in coffee shops, as saints…. Well I give them these bright colourful halos."

This extract reveals the dimensions of the art histories this young woman has encountered, whether through the teaching she has been offered, or autonomously sought for private reasons. She offers us a glimpse into her world, and it is a big world. Confidently, she considers herself a citizen of the world beyond her own geographical and cultural boundaries.

Parisa is 19 and is a 1st year sculpture student at Tehran University. She is very careful that her scarf is not pushed back too far, she seems to respect the regulations and perhaps is religious herself. I observed that she listened attentively to what was said, and always had several points to make in response. She is not from Tehran and lives in the university dormitories.

> "I am interested in issues of women profoundly, because I really do not want to end up like my mother. She is a nurse, and in her forties but she is tired all the time, her health has suffered because she has had to work constantly to support us financially; it is too much I think. I think laws should change and women who work so hard should be able to retire earlier, or something. I want to enjoy my life more than my mother. I am a 1st year sculpture student, but I don't know what I'll be yet."

Asking for serious reviews of the civil and secular laws of the country to protect working women, and suggesting that allowances should be made for working women's consuming responsibilities, are more the job of a young lawyer at work than a first year sculpture student. The data demonstrates the depth of this young woman's thoughts; and how they rise from her personal experiences. She can't be alone in this! This should help her in her perceptions in her art.

Soodabeh is 51 and works as a freelance from home, she dresses simply without any jewellery or make up and often shares items of clothing with her husband and father.

I have asked Soodabeh for an interview because I thought it important to reference and represent those women who have lost their jobs as a consequence of the change in the regime. Restrictions imposed on women and institutions at the advent of the Islamic Revolution ousted numerous minds. As a painter and a gallery owner, Soodabeh had offered a space to many young artists to show their work.

I have put Soodabeh and Maryam as the last and the first of the seven voices in this text to demonstrate the existing polarities in views, interpretations and perceptions of Islamic Government, whilst also highlighting the extent and dimensions of art education in society. The presence of the two women, and indeed all the data in this text, suggest that Islam is and can be a fluid concept open to diverse interpretations. The irony is the Government's interpretation of Islam has assisted Maryam to join the mainstream, and Soodabeh to be driven out; both are Iranians, and practicing Muslims. Soodabeh says:

> "I had a gallery and a bookshop, I had to give up both as a consequence of the change of regime in Iran in 1979; I published Shahrnush Parsipur's novel 'The Women without Men'. It was exciting and rewarding to work with writers and painters, but I have had to re-established myself, I have taken my tools, pen and

> paper, to the interiors of my study at home. I work as a translator and editor of art and academic books now. I am also working with a group of international Muslim scholars based in Tehran to translate the Quran. You know, my skin is tough, it has to be, I am a woman! I have been the main bread winner in my family, and I manage the household. My husband is beginning to do well in his documentaries, they are being shown on television these days. I have also educated two of my children at home, they have turned out to be reasonable human beings. One is a painter and the other makes films and takes photographs. They cannot get on with their peers, however, because they did not attend school, they just took the exams… Isn't life ironic? My religious beliefs, looking at religion as a philosophy in a metaphysical sense, have helped me survive. I look to the future, to the possibilities of science at the end of 21st century, beyond geographical borders. Nations and nationhood become meaningless in that metaphysical space. Humanity will have to re-address and re-consider its thinking…. This revolution has been like a costly wave in the streets, it is intellectually remote, it has not touched the interiors, our hearts, we don't understand what they say. I don't believe the rest of the world has any idea about secular and intellectual life in this country, as if they have forgotten this ancient civilization, this culture. The heritage of painting, poetry, music, and architecture in this land have survived for hundreds of years, and I have no doubt they will continue to do so."

I pause here in silence.

Part Two, Spaces of Innovation

Searching for collaborative spaces, a seminar at Tehran University

My observations of the gendered spaces in Iran were further enriched on numerous occasions. I found the female student body at Tehran University particularly critical about gendered issues and their male peers' behaviours on campus. Highly conscious of the implications of their actions, the possibility of being singled out as trouble makers, they approached me to give a seminar in the gallery space in the Visual Arts Department. Once I agreed to contribute to a discussion rather than giving a paper, Morsaleh, Nazanin, Golnessa, and Parisa, girls from the Visual Arts Department, booked the gallery space, printed invitations/flyers on strips of paper, distributed them in the Faculty and actually had a group of 30 students gather together during an extended lunch hour. Dr. Kafshcian, The Head of Visual Arts, had given his consent for this gathering and he peered through the door for a moment during the discussions.

Having just attended the gender and 'femininities' seminars at BERA 2002 in Exeter (British Education Research Association, September 2002), I produced a list of interconnected topics regarding the current gendered issues in Britain; I felt such a list might be of some use should these seminars continue. This was translated and distributed by one sculpture student who studied English as an additional subject, who wished to help and participate but could not attend the meetings because of her children demanding any extra time she had. In the time allocated to me, I made a case for the gender debate in Britain being an ongoing and complex one. I touched on issues regarding the complexity of traditional marriages in the British Asian communities; the plight of exceptionally young unmarried teenage mothers who did not know who the fathers of their children were; the new and 'chic' forms of prostitution amongst very young women, the plight of young educated and highly able women who have to 'succeed' on every front in social life whilst also working in highly competitive circumstances with demanding hours, in order to appear modern; and the high ranking female professionals, eminent professors in education specifically, who are re-examining their own developments from being underprivileged female members of the low income socialist classes of the 1960s and 70s, being transformed into the position of middle class, designer dressed, widely travelled academics, and members of the 'tanned' wine connoisseur classes of the new century[30], and still not taken seriously by some of their male colleagues. I felt that the breadth of such discussions in Britain and relating their extent would be of interest to our lunch-hour seminaries.[31]

Many who attended the seminar kept quiet, a few from both sexes actually declared that they were there to listen only. As the seminar progressed I realized that two or three female students delivered most of the statements, although they would be occasionally reminded by a single voice that they had forgotten to make one of the points the group had agreed on. This was obviously a planned group effort with spokeswomen leading the discussion. It became evident that many female students would like to work closely with their male peers on

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[30] I have been privileged to attend Bera 2002 and 2003 where I gave a paper on Voices of Iranian Women in a Symposium. In both these years I attended seminars and papers by Professor Valerie Hay, Professor Dian Ray, Dr. Christine Skelton, Dr. Becky Francis and Dr. Vicky Gunn amongst others who provided me with an almost instant critical education, and the breadth of research in 'feminine' gender studies in British Higher Education. The issues touched on above are some of the topics critically addressed in papers given by these eminent academics at these two international conferences.

[31] Several of these students attended the showing of 'The Archaeology of Self'. At the show, Golnessa told me that she will never forget our seminar, whilst Morsaleh looked at the sculptures and after a little while wrote in my book "These are about us, I can see these are us".

projects in order to exchange ideas and learn in groups. This, I felt, a passionate plea to be included intellectually. I identified with this profoundly in relation to my life in Canterbury. It also became evident that the girls believed the boys preferred to keep themselves in separate male groups, and viewed the girls as 'girl friend material' only, whereas the girls had come to university to meet new people and develop their ideas. The girls further asserted that they wished their male peers to work in consultation with them on issues arising, rather than arranging events with the tutors without consulting them. I had noted that in my various encounters with groups of students, on two occasions specifically, the 'boys' would either not say much, looking tired or not involved, or they would give guidance as if they were experienced sages. They would say things like "what you should do is this…". I noticed on several occasions that this irritated the girls who exchanged glances with me indicating their irritation.

Poignantly however, a few young male voices in this seminar mentioned that many male students have one or two part-time jobs to support themselves, and sometimes others, financially. Some anxiety and resentment was implied in these statements and there was a suggestion that girls had it easy, and that they always wished to discuss 'issues' without understanding what it was really like to have jobs as well as being students. I was personally told by a number of students during my observations in the sculpture studio that the minimum weekly attendance requirement by Tehran University being 16 hours made it possible for many male students to have jobs. Unfortunately, I and other women in the seminar completely overlooked this issue, or perhaps I did not consider it my place to intervene.

It is generally believed that very few female students seek jobs to support themselves because it is not a fully accepted practice amongst most families.[32] Many do of course look forward to work once graduated, as do many who wish to become artists, follow their ambitions there, and/or marry. It is highly likely that many male students find the prospects of military service, the expectations of financing a family once they graduate, as well as having to work part-time

[32] I know that my cousin who is a 2nd year University student studying English works at home and has two private students per week, so one cannot over-generalize. I myself worked for two years after graduating from high school at 17, to finance my trip and the initial year in my studies in Britain in the 1970s. Further, my aunt Aki, now 75, was a professional all her married life and her retirement benefits supplement her income now. She collaborated with an eminent medical professor to found the first comprehensive medical library on the site of Alam hospital, a busy teaching hospital in Tehran. This made it possible for the student nurses and doctors to consult medical books in their spare time as they worked and trained. My grandmother too was a working woman, one of seven daughters she became a Qoranic scholar out of both necessity and interest to support herself financially. This is particularly interesting because she was born in the latter years of the 19th century in Tehran.

during the period of study, overwhelming. Some might interpret such prospects as unwanted, and infringements on their liberties. It is also probable that many male students perceive themselves as the future mainstay and start advising/guiding their female peers rather early. Traditional values at home and specifically in the public arena, and the governmental stance in promoting the role of women primarily as the nurturer of the family could be other contributing factors towards such perceptions. It seems to me that such issues, to lesser or greater degrees, are part of the architecture of gender issues anywhere in the world. This inter-relationship between the young female student body and paid work on the one hand, and the expectations of change towards fuller collaboration in societal partnerships and decision making with their male peers on the other, would make a worthwhile research project in the future in Iran.

It must be acknowledged that there is absolutely no opposition to collaborative work between students by the department, indeed as we have seen in Text I a group of male and female students shared a project for the Tehran Municipality.

I make a space here to include Behnaam, and reflect on his critical voice and experiences. This is an extract from an extended interview with him, the only male student who actually turned up for his interview, and almost on time, albeit without his work or images of his paintings and sculptures. Behnaam was articulate and highly organized in raising his points, often reciting poetry, short verses by contemporary and ancient Iranian poets, to support his multi-perspective argument. He spoke at great length about the unfair system in selecting the governing body at Tehran University, objecting to the role of religion in such processes, and the limited time allocated to 'drawing' as a discipline.

9 November 2002, Tehran University, recorded interview with Behnaam

> "I know that you were expecting a discussion about my work as a graduating painter/sculptor, and the metaphysical thought in Henri Matisse's work, which I am discussing in my dissertation. But I have decided to make a statement about the state of the world. I want to tell you that I, the air I breathe, the milk I drink, this university, our government, and many governments like it around the globe are enslaved by the power systems in the West. The American greed, its Zionist chain of control and capitalism, have crippled us. This is what we talk about at home in the evenings when there is nothing on television to watch, when we are tired of our books, when we see images of war on our televisions, all kinds or war, and when there cannot be any trust in anyone who has anything to do with power. Tell me, don't they look around themselves, and think in the West? Did you know that Clinton has already been to countries north of the Caspian Sea and secured all rights for the future pipelines and the gas in the region? The gas which is still deep underground and not yet been decided for, or its extent fully

> clarified by the indigenous people in that region? So we think what is the use of this industry?"
>
> "You mentioned 'autonomy and art'. Let me tell you about your celebrity ridden autonomous art, your worship of anything that is driven by money. When Christo wraps mountains in cloth, like a record in its sleeve, when he covers a skyscraper in Berlin and stands on top of it to be worshiped as '*the object*' in space, he is ruled by capitalism, and the money it depends on. Just think about the sponsors… Money, our money, the oil money, the money we cannot have. The money we need to spend on a thousand and one things to improve lives here, and to secure futures here. So, of what significance would my few canvases and sculptures be in the dirty scale of things. If you want to interview me, consider these issues, what other chance do I have to speak to that world of yours?"

When the essence of Behnaam's message is supported by giant intellectuals such as Edward Said (2004a, 2004b), Arundhati Roy (2002), Howard Zinn (2002), Noam Chomsky (2002)[33], and many others, there is little this researcher can add in confirmation. As ever, a string of questions occur mindful of the so called new world order, the cycle and forms of Imperialism, continued ideological colonization, and capitalism at the cost of the Other (Derrida 1996). Is it not true that globalization and global economy are meaningless concepts for the majority of world nations who are neither participants nor stake holders in its discourses, and its possible rewards? Is it not true that the dominant political discourses of the West are, as ever before, profoundly interlinked with power and money in the involvement of the conglomerates in global politics, global economy and poverty, and as a matter of course in the presidential elections in the so believed democratic and free world, i.e. the United States of America. Is not the concept of democracy severely damaged and undermined by the combined dominant discourses of monetary control, religious ideology and morality dressed as 'free world ideology and value system' from the U.S., subtly partnered by Britain? Is not the absence of transparency in both governments, especially in recent histories and the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, deeply damaging to the democratic processes worldwide? Can Behnaam, our young student from Tehran, and millions like him around the globe, be expected to sit back and not critically analyse, or be concerned about these issues related to their futures? I, like

[33] The range of the critical analysis these intellectuals have put forth goes beyond the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11 200l. Chomsky and Roy give historical perspectives of Imperialist acts by the United States in post World War II involving numerous countries in Central and South America as well as the Palestinian question. They build a picture that is savage as it is calculated.

millions in the West, and East, find it impossible to overlook and tolerate the moral high ground, religiously-based ideologies, and the lack of transparency branded as democracy, regardless of geographical locations and forms of religion or worship. The participants in this text illuminate both Eastern and Western civilizations' discourses of deceit and corruption. These severely undermine the efforts exerted by ordinary people and the intellectuals from both communities to overcome the ever increasing East-West, and North-South divides.

Creating a private site for learning, the life class

At Al-Zahra University, I did not personally witness any explicit gendered debates, perhaps because of the absence of male students and lack of competition between the sexes. The debates I did witness were mostly in small groups held in the courtyard near the canteen by those students who appeared to campaign in support of the governmental policies reflected in the pro-regime media, on moral/political issues of the day. I present below, however, the account of an art gathering initiated by Al-Zahra students at home. This shift in the location for art processes creates contrasts between ways of being in the public and the private spaces, where the mostly austere and uniform public dress codes give way to individualistic forms of dress and expression. Whilst these differences and variations make for ethnographic details of interest, they also demonstrate that women do not walk around indoors in their coats and headscarves as is depicted on all Iranian media, television programmes, and films.

My main aims in this section, however, are to further relate the sense of agency the participants demonstrate, and how they autonomously set out to invent, create, or construct a world for themselves through art. This is a rich parallel world that reaches for new openings and possibilities such as varied forms of music from a number of cultures, or examining the possibility of different ways of arriving at formal relationships and the concepts of light and texture. My aim here is not to critique the aptness of the participants' skills, or the soundness of their practices and abilities as artists, or indeed the relevance of their practices to the Canon of excellence, or High Art. Rather, their wish to demonstrate to themselves how they can create worlds where they might participate in the ways they choose.

Research Diary, Oct. 14th, 2002, West Tehran

> Saara and I set off at 4.30 pm to Toktam' house, where Toktam has initiated a life class. This is an experiment and will run for a few weeks to develop formal and spatial skills, a painter acquaintance of their own age is to 'sit' for them.
>
> The apartment is located on the 3rd floor in a 4 storey building with large iron gates with a courtyard that can accommodate a number of cars. We take our shoes off on the landing in front of the entrance door and go in. We step down inside and take off our head scarves and 'roopoosh' coats. On one side of the grey marble floors there is a large salon and dining room, The large armchairs

have light coloured brocaded covers, and the dining chairs, in contrast have calico covers to the floor. There are silk flowers in large china pots, and a few black African souvenir type sculptures here and there. The other side of the corridor another sitting room is visible. I imagine there must be a kitchen and similar facilities next to it, beyond my view. Toktam speaks in a hushed voice and this indicates that there are members of the family about, who must not be disturbed, due to siesta time. We are guided up 3-4 steps where there is another corridor with many doors. I imagine this is where the bedrooms are. One of these rooms is Toktam's bedroom and we enter.

By 5.15 pm three other young women arrive and set themselves up. One is Katty, she is the model. She takes her blue sleeveless t-shirt and brown cotton trousers off and folds them neatly and places them on the corner of the bed. I notice how Katty holds her shoulders almost up to the top of her ears when she arrives and before taking her t-shirt off.

Toktam is scurrying around arranging things. She has put her hair up in a large bright double sided hairclip the colour of crushed strawberries. She wears a large blue short sleeved shirt and light grey three-quarter length trousers with wide fold-ups. She looks at me writing my notes and says that I should mention the fact that she has done a major tidy up and pushed everything either to the walls or under her bed to create space. She adds 'Oh yes, tell them that the curtains are well drawn!".

The model stands against the built-in wardrobe, the brass handle and key hole of which are almost parallel with her right breast. There is slight difference in colour and a faint bikini line around her breasts. Her tanned skin resembles milk-chocolate. Her briefs are slightly folded over and she shows a beautiful sharp curve from her waist to the top of her hips. She has a very lean yet soft body, not a muscle in sight. She says that this first pose is 30 minutes and the only standing one she is planning to do. This is almost like a gentle warning, she is in charge. She has put her watch (somebody's watch) propped up on the floor in front of her. She is skilled and confident, I notice her shoulders have relaxed and are at ease.

Toktam has been searching for a particular CD, she plays track 5 of Bach's Messiah-moll Sanctus. I am observing from the end of the room sitting on a stool against a small desk. On my right, Saara and Saba (sitting cross-legged) have set themselves up on the bed. At the bottom of the bed against the wall there is a stereo set and then the door. Opposite me, the other end of the room, the model is cheerful but relaxed trying a couple of poses. In front of me on the

floor Toktam is wriggling to find a comfortable and settled place. Bita is sitting leaning against the wall on the left. The girls on the floor have held one knee up and one leg stretched and are resting their clipboards against their knees. Everyone has A3 paper, clipboards and pencils. Nobody speaks. Nobody measures. Everyone works with fast but gentle strokes. 20 minutes have passed. Toktam has located the model's head and draws a halo.

The model stops. Toktam has a nearly full image but says that if she does not fetch the tea from downstairs it will get useless and lose its scent, and leaves the room. On her way out she looks a Saara's drawing and says "What's this rubbish and laughs" as she pushes her feet into her strappy slippers. I expect someone has been instructed to brew the tea. The model puts on her t-shirt. Bita looks at Saara's drawing and Saara says that she is looking for some new relationships in her drawings. Saba is still drawing, she shades parts from memory now.

Tea arrives on a tray with some chocolate, a large bar that has been sliced. It is delicious. I ask the model if she draws and paints. She says she does, and adds that although this is work, she actually enjoys it because it is a kind of interaction and communication, 'together' work. She says she sometimes makes friends with people through her modelling. It becomes clear that she does this often.

I ask the group if men have models. Yes, is the general response, there are some girls who model for men. But "we feel more comfortable to have exclusively female groups" they say. There is a club where men model for a mixed group, you have to be an art student in order to become a member and participate. It is all privately done they say.

I ask the group why it is that they choose to draw the figure. Their aims vary:

Toktam: "I am studying the 'sacred', by which I mean the idea of the sacred. I want to show this with the female figure…sometimes at work, or holding a child, a prostitute perhaps, women at work behind a desk in a boring office. I need to feel the anatomy with my hands and my mind on my paper".

Bita: "I am interested in the dark/shade of the skin, the light falling. I want to understand the variety of textures in the skin…. I don't go to any art school but I paint a lot". Bita is in blue jeans and white ankle-less pop-socks. Her strappy top shows her underwear, they are all the colour of her own skin. She has a ponytail and is in her early twenties.

Saba has just graduated with top marks from Al-Zahra, and has a place to do an MA at Honar University (highly reputed Art School). She says: "I just love the

figure, female figure, it is beautiful. I love to observe it. I know it will feed my work, but I actually enjoy drawing it for itself." Saba has recently got married and her husband is as young as herself and has studied Theatre at Tehran University, Faculty of Fine Arts. They have known one another for eight years and have come to Tehran from Garmsaar, not a progressive town/village, near Tehran and have no intention of going back. (This is the case for many young people or indeed farming communities who migrate to Tehran).

Saara: "I don't like figure painting at all…but I am looking for "relationships'. This feeds into my work which are patches of colour in abstraction". (I know for a fact, however, that Saara has been put off by a tutor who announced to Saara, that she was going to draw the members of her family for her finals project because she was so good at drawing her mother around the house. Saara's response to him, evidently, is 'certainly not', she is doing highly abstract work).

It is now ten minutes since we started the tea break and Toktam has changed the music. Katty, the model, takes off her T-shirt again and experiments with some poses in a seating position on a dark brown wooden chair. The music is Medieval Spanish with Jewish players, not unlike some old Persian melodies. The model is now settled on the chair at an angle in a turning position across the seat with one arm disappearing behind her and the other at her side with her palm pushing onto the seat. Saara asks for a more acute angle and the model Katty adjusts her knees more to the side. The group proceed with their drawings.

I am sitting behind the group and really wish that I had a video camera. I notice a book near the model's chair, Toktam placed it there a few moments ago. I leave my post and take a few steps and pick it up. Everyone is drawing. I look at the book, it is 'Fra Angelico, Phaidon 1992' with a stamp from Honar University Library.

I put the book down and draw a sketch of the room. There are a few easels and stretched canvases leaning on the end wall near the edge of the fitted wardrobe. The windows, the length of the wall to my side, have satiny white curtains only half way down because of the bookcase and cupboards underneath. Opposite the wall with the wardrobe, in front of which the model is sitting, I have my piano stool in front of a desk, this is a distance of about five metres. Next to the desk is a rigged up dressing table of a large mirror and a low table on which there are tens of lipsticks, nail varnishes, hair clips large and small, bits of note paper and perfume. At some point Saara examines the lipsticks and whispers to me that she often tries on Toktam's lipsticks and gets inspirations from the colour range.

It is now 25 minutes since this pose started and they break for a rest. I ask if they ever 'measure' when they draw or consider perspective or think about proportions. The response is no. Saara says they did all that in their first year. Toktam says that she is looking for the feel of things.

There is a pose change. There is also a change of music, Toktam plays the late Nosrat-Fateh Ali Khan from Pakistan. Katty is sitting on her chair in a diagonal, with the left knee up on the chair against the torso, left upper arm almost under her left breast, the right arm over the thigh at an angle. I think to myself of all the diagonals that Katty is creating in this pose, I see/imagine the composition within a rectangle, I see lots of triangles.

At some point Bita asks the model to remove her hand from her thigh, qualifying her request by saying "if that is OK with everyone".

I decide to stop note taking, there is another break. I am glad of it.

Toktam and I speak about Fra Angelico. I ask her what she might say to people who believe Western art must be understood in a certain way. She laughs and says "People can say what they wish. But look at it" she shows me 'The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Four Angels' and says "I look at the similarities of the organization, the content, it is not dissimilar to some Persian paintings. Early 'Bizance' art was so influenced by ancient pre-Islamic Persian illuminated manuscripts. We have studied these things. I respond to them all, emotionally, and I hope I shall never be so ignorant as to say that the West should not find emotion in colour or content in the arts of the East".

Saara joins in: "I never think about what belongs to whom in art, I am doing what I like, I don't really care".

I explain that an MA student in my department in Canterbury told me that in his view, there was nothing Middle Eastern in my work, that it was not Turkish enough. I explain that he told me so with great honesty. I add that he said he had imagined 'Turkish Art' to be different to what I had produced in my show in October. The girls look at me wide-eyed, and one says "did you tell him you are not Turkish anyway?" I say yes.

Saba gets up and looks at everyone's work but does not offer any comment. The group prepare for another pose.

I look at Fra Angelico's 'The Dream of the Deacon Justinian' and respond to it through memories of rooms, light, colours of things I have seen as a child. I show their golden haloes to Toktam, they are like illuminations. I suddenly realise that I am responding to the picture intuitively, resisting my art training. I

wonder if I would like it any more if I looked specifically for surface design and colour rhymes and contrasts, degrees of perspective and proportions considered, light source, precedence in design, sacred/secular reference in the painting etc. I am drawn to the picture intuitively because I have lived in rooms with windows like these, we have a habit of leaving our slippers in doorways like this, we still wear slippers like these, the half open door in this painting is so familiar to me, light and dark, it reminds me of the rooms in my mother's house where at times we were not allowed to enter on account of grown-ups being engaged in something important.

I look through the book again, and Toktam says "If you like this, then you must look at THIS". She pulls out a book from under a pile of papers in the base of the music centre and hands it to me (Elenora Bairati, 1991, Milan). I recognize the cover immediately. I have seen these in Arezzo, Sansapolcro, and Urbino following Piero Della Francesca's trail. I tell everyone about the recognizable architectural landmarks and faces in Piero's paintings, and that it is evident in his paintings that he used the same models and faces again and again. I tell them that I particularly like his "Flagellation" and all those wonderful feet placed in space with precision. I explain to them that due to this mathematical precision in the floor and its proportions, the dimensions of the real space can be determined. Saara looks at me and says "yes we did all that when studying Classicism and the Florentine School". I ask if they know or have studied any contemporary British painters; all of them mention Kitaj, Bacon, and Lucien Freud. I say that I don't believe Kitaj is British and that he is now back in the US.

There are one or two more short poses. Toktam tells me about the art class she teaches in a primary school. She says she once encouraged the children, 10-11 year olds, to imagine what would happen if sheep could fly! She says it was a great exercise to get them to imagine extraordinary things, she says they did some wonderful drawings/paintings, and shows me a few notebooks and papers from the class. Katty, the model says that Toktam should get her pupils to draw and paint on A4 and A3 paper rather than in their lined notebooks. She says that they ought to imagine their work as paintings rather than homework.

At 7.30 pm the session ends. I notice again how Katty holds her body when dressed, in contrast to when posing almost in the nude. She is completely at ease and confident in the life class, and I find this extraordinary.

Downstairs whilst putting on our headscarves each person pays their share of the costs and Toktam puts the money in an envelop and hands it to Katty. They do not accept my share, as I am their guest. I thank them for allowing me to sit in

their session. They announce the next session at Saba's house. We all pour into Toktam's car, borrowed from her mother, and she drives us to Central Tehran to the private view of Iraj Karim Khan Zand's[34] exhibition. There is some negotiation as to which roads to take, and we feel our way through the traffic and the various one-way systems before we get there. Toktam's headscarf falls to her shoulder, and she ignores it for a while, resisting the law for some moments, and then she puts it back on again with one hand whilst driving!

This is when I ask Toktam why she is interested in the idea of the sacred. She tells me that just over a year ago she was arrested because she was talking to three of her male friends. She says that this sort of thing still happens to young women sporadically, but less than before. She says that she has many male friends as she does female, and on this particular occasion she was taken to the police station for questioning, on the possibility that she might be a prostitute. It took 72 hours before she was released and proved innocent. She says that she met a lot of different women in the prison where she was kept for the most of that 72 hours. Some were prostitutes, some had stolen money, but all of them were in a way innocent to her, so she would paint women as sacred. I was dumbfounded at the straight forwardness of Toktam' account and analyses. There is nothing I can add. I am happy to see her thriving with her art and teaching and wearing her pale pink lipstick, and I wish her well. I think of her profound sense of dignity.

It is inevitable, in my view, that this private and collective partnership in the life class, however short lived, would serve as a tool to overcome the harsh realities of Toktam's experiences. Experiments with ideas and issues have been the beginnings of all great art in the history of art and theory. The point here is to continue the search.

Innovative public spaces for religious collaboration

As indicated in Chapter Two, I have considered my research site a broad space, where I might grasp and develop an understanding of the interrelated cycles of events. At the outset of my research in Tehran before resuming my tasks at the universities, I intentionally and specifically attended a religious rally to see whether, and how such events had changed since I last attended one years before the Islamic Revolution. I was amazed of the innovative new dimensions practiced in some neighbourhoods. I discovered that at least in some mid-town

[34] Iraj Karim Khan-Zand is a painter/sculptor who has an open atelier one or two evenings per week and welcomes students and art debates. He is also a sessional tutor at Al-Zahra University and flies to Isfahan and Zahedan on a fortnightly basis to teach art.

residential areas women openly expressed new interpretations of traditional religious values, negotiating cultural behaviours according to who they wish to be. I present the following extract as cross examination of some of the points I have made in the foregoing sections, and as an example of the developing gendered spaces, in society at large, showing the debate moving forward.

Research Diary, 25 March 2002, Ashoora ceremonies in Tehran

> This is the eve of Ashoora, the 10th of the month of Moharam in the Islamic Lunar Calendar.[35] The street I am visiting is a perfectly ordinary urban space, middle class but not too expensive. The homes in this neighbourhood are mostly two-three storey houses with courtyards/gardens, which have been converted into apartments. The residents are mostly middle-professionals, or middle-merchants. This is not one of the most avant-garde neighbourhoods in Tehran, but one with a sense of tradition. They have made this tradition more fluid, however. I am struck by the participation of the women, rather than their traditionally observational position in the margins or from windows and balconies. The women, many, many of them, have walked in a highly orderly procession behind the men to arrive in front of the mosque. Many men and women are walking alongside the procession on the pavement separated from the street by ditches of running water. The women are of all generations and although mostly in black there are also many colourful expressive scarves about. Younger women look bright and cheerful and carry mobile phones, like their male peers, and have fully made-up faces. Their 'high-lighted' hairstyles push out of their headscarves, and their often elegant make-up, show off their eyes, eyebrows, and lips, as if well considered expressive drawings.
>
> The procession arrives at the mosque a few hundred metres up the road. There are lines and lines of women and children, some sitting and some standing in

[35] This is an important date in the Shi'ite calendar. Processions of religious chants, forms of flagellation, and beating of drums are made in remembrance of the anniversary of the martyrdom of the fourth 'Shi'ite' Imam, Hossein the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, over 1300 years ago in 680 A.D. in Karbala in Iraq. This martyrdom was because of the political/ideological differences between the courts of the Caliphates and those who wished to follow the descendents of Ali Ebin Abou Taleb as the successor of the Prophet Mohammad. For a succinct and brief history see Chelkowski 1999. Although considered to be a tragic day and month, as children and young teenagers we were treated by my parents to watch these 'performances' of fabulously rich processions with extraordinary colourful emblems and banners from small balconies above the shops in the main street in Tehran Bazar. We were often given very good food and rosewater sherbets as alms as served to those in the processions.

front of this neighbourhood mosque which is adorned in colourful lights, religious flags, and banners. Several magnificent traditional emblems, in filigree alloys several metres wide are parked in front of the mosque. I soon realize that this is a candle-lit vigil. Women and men together, almost everybody holds and lights candles; there are a few very young boys and girls who distribute the candles here and there. I light mine, as I take a count of several rows and estimate the crowd to be around 1000. The neighbourhood men look around and seem vigilant and alert.

I have my camera, and as soon as I pull it out of my pocket, one lady says "Be careful the 'sepaah'[36] are watching". Some older women say "Let her take her photographs…. But be quick". Two women say perhaps they should deliver a speech just like Zeynab did. Zeynab was the scholarly sister of Imam Hossein the third Imam amongst Shiites who delivered a political speech on this day when the news of her brother's martyrdom reached her tent.

Here, however, everything is calm and organized and peaceful, I take a couple of photographs of the feet of the women and walk away to the tent where tea and cakes are served as alms for everyone. There is no 'axis of evil' here, I think to myself, just an axis of intelligence, courage, and agency.

Conclusion

It is my experience that being involved in art education, as both sensory and intellectual developments, promotes the desire to examine the qualities in things, deepens one's analytical abilities, and in many instances provokes self-search; one engages with histories of both self and society and the interface of the two concepts. The data demonstrates that the participants are highly alert in their observations and analysis and engage with these issues acutely. It is highly probable that the processes of art education facilitate or strengthen such abilities in the participants in this text. The data further demonstrates that the participants use art processes towards degrees of self-realization, this is evident in what is said and done, as well as the paintings represented in Chapter Six. We have further witnessed that these participants are

[36] Soldiers, but more importantly in contemporary life it means the 'zealot minders' associated with the Revolutionary Guards and the hardline factions in the government who carry a baton, and are obviously there to frighten, intimidate, and control the crowds. They succeed when in a group, but alone they are quite vulnerable looking and not particularly educated. I have occasionally seen these near the campus, between the Rudaki Opera House and Tehran University. I said to one on one occasion that I doubted he could control the student body with just one baton, and he laughed! The students I worked with avoided contact with the 'sepaah'.

vociferous, often economic partners, and that their ideas and aspirations reach for boundaries beyond their art disciplines. I would suggest that this text, in its entirety, is an indication of women's voices in Iranian society at large illuminating multiple perspectives, working towards new interpretations of tradition, and negotiating new complex and multi-identitied spaces.

In Part One, the boundaries of a world are drawn and indicated; this is a rich and wide-reaching world, a world of diverse ideas and locations encompassing Japan, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Germany, India, Italy, Britain, and the cultural heritage of the Renaissance and Byzantium. Toktam, for example, considers herself a citizen of the globe, a member of the global village and speaks of systems of worship in India, beyond her own. She announces her ownership of her art-historical heritage from East and West. Maryam relates a shift in ideology through art education and is setting off for Germany for new experiences, this becomes more significant when we remember her starting point on her journey. Paryush tells us about her autonomous mind. She sends her students to Japan to develop and learn from that rich culture, whilst contemplating her own through geometric ideas tied in with her Muslim identity and heritage. Soodabeh speaks of religion as philosophy and new scientific and artistic boundaries in the future beyond her life time, Parisa speaks of a just world where working women might be better cared for, and Saara and Anahita are in quest of what they perceive to be their fundamental and legitimate rights. Despite the dominant discourses in the media, and the minds of many, the participants' world relates a large cultural map which is complex and multi-layered, matching their aspired fluid and multi-identitied perspectives.

Agency, the processes of authoring and structuring one's life, and carving and shaping social and private spaces to fit one's self-perception, continues in Part Two. The participants demonstrate a strong desire for fuller partnerships and collaborations in socio-cultural and socio-political events. The Tehran University students' seminar, the neighbourhood women expressing their Muslim identity publicly alongside their men and according to their own interpretations of Islam, and the collective 'formal' investigations in the life class, are examples of such collaborations and partnerships. I would suggest that once ideas are born it would be only a matter of time before they become much more widespread. The population of the female student body in Iran stands at 65%[37] of the total numbers attending universities, this is an achievement by the Islamic Republic, and the promise of more educated women, as mothers or not, can only promote optimism. Education is fundamental in the development of ideas.

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[37] This figure was given to me by the Chancellor of Al-Zahra University, Dr. Rahnavard, in an interview not presented in this thesis. However, this figure is repeated in the Iranian media quite routinely.

It is neither the remit of this research, nor the choice of this researcher to count and recount the sources of socio-political and socio-economic flaws, and degrees of ignorance and repression in Iran or outside Iran. Further, I am reluctant in defining the concept of identity exactly, and engaging in reductive processes of categorization, simplification, or generalization for the sake of locating Tehran within a 'suitable' academic discourse as related in 'Hall 1995' and others. I am not entirely certain about the implications of feminist and essentialist identities in contemporary cultural discourses, and do not wish to create discursive boundaries for the aspirations of the participants in this text. Trajectories in Western cultural literature, in my view, have severe shortcomings, they seldom address multiple perspectives and they are indeed somebody else's voice. As I have demonstrated, these participants ably and succinctly speak for themselves, giving layers in personal and collective histories which are spatio-temporal. Furthermore, the Tehran based lawyer, the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi and her team and colleagues are highly active in pursuing legislative secular laws for protecting the legitimate rights of Iranian women, and Muslim women worldwide. What is offered in this text is a space for the projection and recognition of the participants' voices, illuminating their concerns in negotiating cultures, expressing fluid and strong secular and Muslim identities, defying sources of power where possible, and contemplating or creating new paths to go forward. Making misinformed generalizations and judgments because of religion, and geographical location appear not only redundant, but damaging. The gender debate in Iran has been ongoing at least since the 1920s when my grandmothers refused to appear in public without the traditional black chadors of their time; I have no doubt that the debate shall continue and develop further robustly.

Chapter 4, Text V: Parallel Spaces for Art Education

Introduction

As indicated in Text I in the current chapter, the private atelier system and Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art occupy a significant space for the intersection of art discourses in the development of art education in Tehran. In this text I shall introduce Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and relate the range and breadth of its activities, whilst also informing the reader of the type of activities some of the ateliers offer to art trainees outside the university campuses. Whilst a great number of interested visual arts students benefit from the museum's art-oriented and relatively free environment, attend its national and international biennales, conferences, and seminars, a few others find their way into the private interiors of the atelier system where painting, drawing, and above all a discussion of making art take place amongst peers. The point I would like to make regarding the latter is the seemingly ordinariness of interactions and exchanges in the autonomous and collaborative private spaces created. This, in my view, questions the value, validity, and relevance of forms of censorship.

The atelier system

Mr. Manoocher Motabar holds a teaching atelier solely for the purpose of drawing. He is a highly respected well known painter, a sessional tutor at Tehran University, a part-time tutor at Azad University, and a jury member at most painting and drawing biennales at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. He believes in a systematic way of drawing in the style of the academy, observing plaster casts of classic forms and proportions, referred to as the 'antique', and detailed observational drawing from life. The interior of Mr. Motabar's atelier is calm and orderly with numerous rooms and hangings of his own paintings and drawings, selections of plaster casts and skulls, and art historical references in articles and images from the works of Degas, Picasso, and Kámál al-Mulk the founder of art training in Iran in the style of the academy.

In a conversation, he explained the following:

> "We believe in letting the students discover their sensibilities, and understand what they see, in their minds, and gradually internalise line and form. This is very serious work and involves sensory and mechanical coordination. You see, it is like a driving lesson, I am the driving instructor, the student is the one who should do the driving. I sit next to my student and give advice most suitable for that particular situation, it is the student who should discover the language of drawing through discipline. I have internalised 'Ingres' as a concept, and I wish the students to discover and internalise drawing as a concept within themselves.

> We do arrive at our destination, we explore different channels to reach our goals… Later, when I see the student has understood and gained fluency I can recommend simplification, exaggeration, distortion and abstraction. But this sense of discipline is often lacking, indeed rare in students."
>
> "I don't know what is meant by identity, I don't believe in it, what does it mean? Perhaps we do not have a modern identity in art at any rate, modernism is a question of participation, we have never had a chance to develop its concept in our psyche as a nation. Modernism in art is a discussion, an ongoing discussion, it requires participation."

Many of Mr. Motabar's trainees are there for the love of drawing, and of different generations. Some wish to study architecture at university and come to him for a sound training, whilst a few are 'Honarestan' graduates whose secondary school has offered an art syllabus only. Ironically, university art degrees are not available to this last group because their secondary school certificates are not part of the internationally recognized baccalaureate system comprising different subjects. Since entering competitions and biennales at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art are based on art work rather than qualifications, Mr. Motabar's atelier facilitates an immensely important space for continuity in their training.

Mr. Zargham, painting and 'colour' tutor at Tehran University, has a vast atelier where he paints and takes students, specifically to paint in oils. At the time of my visit he had a 'demonstration' painting on his easel, a young male's portrait, which was extremely attentively observed, felt, and drawn in brilliant shimmering colour and paint patches to articulate both form and surface structures. This analytical perception in painting, observing qualities of paint as light are practiced and taught at my department in Canterbury, but are rarely to be found in Tehran. Mr. Zargham explained to me that many tutors and students, consider this type of painting as old fashioned and passé these days[38]. But what concerned me the most in this visit, was that Mr. Zargham's identity as a painter seemed to be undermined. The stacks of half finished canvases which he enthusiastically and generously showed me appeared to have started as fine cityscapes observed from his top-floor atelier in warm colours, and then painted over in rushed and frustrated brush marks resembling bushes and undergrowth. As I suggested to Mr. Zargham at the time, I really wished he could find a residency somewhere away from what is expected of him at the Visual Arts Department, and just paint. In reply he looked at me and said: "Do you really think so". It was evident from his

[38] It is my experience that in Britain too many consider such analytical perception of painting old fashioned.

palette and love of drawing with colour and paint that his first love was indeed his art, which he had neglected for reasons known to himself. Perhaps this was because of his job.

Mr. Iraj Karim Khan Zand, is a practising sculptor/painter who exhibits regularly, a sessional tutor at Al-Zahra University, and visiting tutor who flies to Isfahan University in central Iran, and Zahedan University in the South East, on a fortnightly basis to teach art. Neither painting nor drawing are directly taught in his atelier. Instead he offers a space for young art trainees to think and talk about any aspect of art they wish to. On Wednesday evenings he cooks something simple, often thick lentil soup topped with cheese, for his visitors who might also be other painters and artists.

Data from one particular occasion relates the following

> Massoud, a young photographer, talks about 'body art'. He has attended a lecture at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art given by a visiting Iranian professor, a theoretician from a Californian university. In conversation with Karim Khan Zand and Kayvan, a 'sound' enthusiast, they speculate on the range of ideas which might be considered as body art. Massoud gets frustrated because he wants to know more, and wants to know it now. Neither Massoud nor Kayvan have attended university yet, they take on small projects to support themselves financially. Not having access to internet, Massoud starts writing down the phone numbers of a few people who might between them have new books, articles or catalogues regarding body art.
>
> Two young girls who are preparing for the National University Entrance Examination have brought some drawings to see what everyone thinks, once they pass the written exams which include subjects like maths, Islamic ideology, and languages, the candidates are interviewed and are required to have a portfolio of work.
>
> In contrast to the above there is a student who has just started his MA in Fine Art at Honar University, but seems a little lost, he is accompanying a friend and is perhaps somewhat overwhelmed by the gathering. His views do not appear to be as succinct as the others', he is neither critical nor confident in analysing concepts. This is ironic because he has achieved a BA in art already. He shows his designs to me desperate for feedback. We talk about some of his motifs, they are direct quotes from the most widely used, perhaps even overused, designs originating from Persian antiquity. He does not seem to have suggested new interpretations and or thought in his designs/work. Out of context they are problematic, one in particular looks like the 'swastika'. Karim Khan Zand tells him that he should reconsider this motif so "vitally and centrally" positioned in his work page after page…. "Forget the swastika" he recommends.

A young woman comes in a little later than others. She is very familiar with the space and has brought some food. She says she has come from work in a textile factory. She does not have a degree in art but comes to the atelier as often as she can, and as a consequence she has learnt a lot. She says that she has been promoted from a machine operator to the work with the 'Design Group'.

I ask Karim Khan Zand what he thinks 'identity' is. He goes red and uncomfortable and escapes to the balcony to have a cigarette. I realise that many find the mention of the word uncomfortable because the government often interprets it in relation to its specific contemporary interpretations of Islam, and the notion of Martyrdom. Later when Karim Khan Zand returns from the balcony he says. "Identity… This is my identity, this atelier, these brushes, the things I do…. The identity of these young people can only be seen in their search and struggle (takapou and josto-joo) for ways of expressing themselves and 'being'."

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

A sense of mission

Although Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art was founded by Farah Pahlavi, the late Shah's Queen shortly before the 1979 Revolution, its most significant contributions to 'Public Art' and the art community in Iran have been under the sharp directorship of Dr. Alireza Sami-Azar, and the expertise of his senior management team. In my view the museum provides the crucially needed public service in maintaining cultural continuity, projecting the evolutionary spaces for visual culture as an educational process. My analysis of this institution's activities and its vision are based on my interview with the Director of Public Relations at the museum in December 2002, the contents of three interviews with Dr. Sami-Azar in the national press, published performance charts since 1997, my frequent visits to see major shows, and attending the international conference on contemporary art during the processes of research in Tehran. With one hundred employees and severe shortage of funds, the museum is an example of how institutions can be managed autonomously, run by people of differing ideologies, and achieve high degrees of success. There are several museums and numerous institutions in Tehran who would do well in following this small institution's lead and vision.

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art perceives itself as the single most significant cultural institution and venue for contemporary art discourses in Iran, and the major supporter of national and international art events across the country. Indeed the cultural activities of the Museum have been particularly forward looking, engaging specifically dynamically with a new generation of artists and art lovers. The museum has, to a notable extent, overcome the

complexities of power politics in relation to artistic expression and artistic freedom, offering a sustained comprehensive cultural programme. Whilst the museum remains an agent of the government, and its employees are ultimately bound by the regulations expected of governmental institutions, it nevertheless practices its trade relatively autonomously. I believe this sense of autonomy is part of the museum's brief and mission in engaging with the nation through art and culture, marking a departure from the division and gloom of the post-revolutionary and post-war years. This has resulted in the museum flourishing as a centre holding the attention of the youth through initiating, undertaking and promoting new thinking in art cultures. Engaging with the new post-revolution generation has been one of the most significant strategies of the office of Mr. Khatami as the Republic's President (1997-2005). Indeed his astounding election results in the Spring of 1997 manifested the hopes of women, and the youth in Iran who responded to his promise of change, regeneration, and transparency.

Similarly, the museum has been able to engage with the community of artists, critics, curators and other experts in the field of art, providing sponsorships for Iranian artists to hold group and collaborative exhibitions globally, and work and train at the Cité Complex in Paris. Many, whose activities were to some degree subdued as a result of the change in the regime have thus become participants in the current art scene. Whether alienated because of the contents of their art, or by the stance of the Islamic regime acknowledging only those forms of art which embraced forms of religiosity, members of the art community were quietly pushed out of circulation for years. Many artists, as indeed did hundreds of thousands of intellectuals and entrepreneurs, went into exile leaving the body of art practices and discourses dispersed[39]. It is therefore a remarkable achievement that the space facilitated by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art has brought together individuals whose political and religious views might differ profoundly.

Visual culture as education

The museum often holds private viewings of uncensored material, art videos, art cinema, scholarly research, and art-oriented documentaries for invited guests from the artist and intellectual communities in Tehran. Although these gatherings are by invitation only, they nevertheless create an environment where a dialogue of tolerance between the members of these communities is made possible. As a consequence, there has emerged a collaborative intellectual space for cultural and political integration with a coherent vision regarding contemporary art, where artists, curators, critics, designers, and art educators might be

[39] A figure of three million is often given for the Iranian Diaspora, but I am unable to confirm its sources.

participants in determining the range and nature of national and regional biennales in conceptual art as well as drawing, painting, art photography, architecture, and graphic arts. This, of course, creates further opportunities to engage with the emerging art trends in the Muslim world resulting in significant events such as 'The Second Biennale of Contemporary Painting from the Islamic World' in December 2002. Such biennales not only sustain the crucial interconnectedness of the Muslim visual heritage, but also offer in-depth discussions on the specificities in sensibilities from various Islamic regions such as Africa, Asia, and the Arab world. A range of research papers in the latest developments in the visual vocabulary and grammar of the arts of the Islamic world, comparative studies between Islamic cultures and other cultures around the globe, analytical enquiries into tradition and modernity in Muslim societies through art, and research in museum collections in the Muslim regions were also amongst the topics addressed at this Biennale.

I had the opportunity to attended a conference on 'Postmodernism and Contemporary Art' during the second leg of my data collection in Tehran, when experts such as the head of the Paris Beaux Arts, director of the Rome Academy of Fine Art, head of the Society of German Philosophers, director of Stockholm Museum of Modern Art, and numerous individual artists, feminist practitioners, critics, and authors of theoretical books, came together in a forum discussing art. Such conferences are sponsored, funded, and held at the museum and its affiliated galleries on a regular basis. However, venues in other major cities such as Isfahan, Mashad, and Yazd, are also used by the museum whenever appropriate. Yazd, one of the oldest cities in central Iran with a wealth of Persian classical architecture stemmed from the pre-Islamic heritage, hosted an international conference on architecture in 2002, which was sponsored and directed by the museum, and opened by the renowned architect Charles Jenks.

These processes have culminated in structures which are inclusive and able to mobilize the creative energies in the country as vital creative sources. Iran desperately needs such collaborative vision and conduct in every strata in society in order to move with speed towards fulfilling her vast creative, and intellectual potential. The student body need to witness these developments to be inspired, to become aware, and able to imagine a legitimate location or space for their ideas in the future.

Evolutionary processes

Under the banner of 'New Art', the Museum has held three extended exhibitions of conceptual art where numerous male and female artists have imagined, explored, experimented, and created installations, performance art, happenings, video art, web art engaging with the digital technologies, and above all art photography. I visited 'New Art II' in the autumn of 2002, and found its critical stance, and its visual language a revelation. The exhibits were culturally, socially, and politically responsive, demonstrating a highly sensitive and original local visual vocabulary succinctly locked into the grammar of the language of

current trends in art globally. So many young artists, with the help, commitment, and funding from Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, had reached for new boundaries to voice acutely observed personal and socio-political concepts. I am still haunted by the intermittent female sound ringing through the museum calling out "Help… Help… Help me… help me out of here… I must get out… I need to get out… Help me". Following this voice, I arrived at an installation with two video projections of the same face. One was deep in the ground, as if at the bottom of a traditional water well, looking up. In order to see it one had to climb a few constructed steps to reach the opening of the well and find the image at its base. The other projection was fixed to the ceiling precisely opposite the opening of the well looking into it. Whilst the two images of 'self' facing one another were gripping, the idea of self and society were further implied. The sound had compelled me to look and move towards the direction of its origin, it had journeyed through the collective space of the museum made of other sites and art installations. This was exciting, but because of the quality of the sound it was also profoundly alarming. Such juxtapositioning of emotions provoked responses or reflection on the nature and qualities of 'emotional' and 'aesthetic charge' in conceptual art. Here the reflective and responsive processes of engagement with the work were in place prior to its visual encounter. Though the reading and meaning of the installation are complex and might be determined on a multitude of levels, they prompted me to reflect on the concept of 'inaudibility', the notion of being ultimately alone in life in a singular existence!

Large scale photography combined with sound created some of the most interesting and ambivalent installations in the long and curved corridors in the spiral architecture of the museum. One installation was life size and fixed to the curved walls of the museum creating an illusion of distance and perspective. The specificities in colour, form, and metaphor captured through the strength of the photographer's lens depicted reflexive attitudes towards society. Fashionable Tehrani girls with their own brand of resistance, in colourful scarves and makeup, mingled amongst the congested traffic jams of old and battered cars mixed with the faces of working men and women having to earn a living. The scenes articulated urban and social spaces belonging to people, young and old, deep in thought, on the move, in everyday life.

Though criticized by some artists and scholars for the seemingly "quickness" of approach or methodology, and the absence of certain traditional "skills" in art making, it is my observation that 'New Art II' possessed authority and lucidity in presenting visual and perceptual concerns in contemporary Iran, and maintaining continuity in visual and cultural enquiry. The visual histories and narratives present in the classical genre in Iranian paintings for centuries were present in these works. These works explored the perceptions of the imagined and lived experiences of humans, men and women, through new tools. Thus the 'New Art' series at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art provide glimpses into the states of mind and experiences of a new generation who wish to project their voices through their

choice of tools. Their success does not deduct from the value of the 2D and 3D art which rise from the traditions set by the cannon of excellence in the academy.

Although the Public Relations Department at the museum have generously supplied me with a documentary CD on some of the exhibits in 'New Art' series, I am unable to support my argument with images in this instance because of reserved copy rights for the individual artists.

The international scene

Recent worldwide exhibitions sponsored by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, often in collaboration with the Iranian Diaspora, held in London at the Serpentine and the Barbican[40], in New York and Washington and a total of six other States in the US, in Paris, and in Berlin amongst other locations, have been opportunities for the 'Iranian eye and mind' to travel widely beyond political and ideological boundaries. My point here is at least twofold. Firstly, I wish to emphasise that art as the product of art education is thriving in Iran and is shown internationally, and that despite the socio-political limitations it does posses a robust critical, sensory, and visual language. Secondly, the activities of the tutors and the student body related in this Chapter cannot be isolated from the notion of 'public art', whether at home or on the international scene. Some of the artists whose work travel abroad might indeed be the tutors, or the students, who have been participants in developing art education.

In symmetry with the above, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art regularly invites and hosts artists from diverse locations such as Sudan, Greece, Bangladesh, Switzerland, Venezuela, Spain, Tunisia, Russia, Italy, Oman, Turkey, and Armenia. A film festival of French 'shorts', and accompanying seminars were held as part of the museum's 'Cinematech' activities during my data collection processes; these showings attracted huge queues outside the lobby. As recently as February 2004, just after my own exhibition in Tehran, and in collaboration with the British Council the museum showed a comprehensive selection of works by British sculptors including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and contemporary Turner Prize winners such as Richard Deacon and Damien Hirst. I was told recently by the acclaimed installationist/sculptor Bill Woodrow, both represented at the exhibition and personally there at the opening, that the show was so enthusiastically received it was almost mobbed! This is understandable. The student body and art lovers in Iran do keep in touch with the new developments in art as much as they can through books, articles, and websites; the

[40] Although performance art and installations are almost impossible to be catalogued, unless by video, I would recommend the catalogues for the Berlin show in 2004, and the Barbican Show in 2001-2 to the reader. The latter have given the number of visitors to the show at just under 50,000., unparalleled in their records. This figure was given to me by the office of Dr. Sami-Azar.

promise of seeing and experiencing works of art face-to-face at the earliest opportunity possible, however, creates much hype. It so appears that the art enthusiasts arrived together, and in the first hour of the show being opened! I would have done the same, the visual encounter and cerebral engagement with the ideas and imagined worlds of others through their art is indeed an exciting proposition.

1. Further, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art holds a well catalogued collection of modern art, unparalleled in the East. Paintings by Claude Monet, Camille Pisasarro, Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, George Braque, Wassily Kandinsky, Fernand Léger, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Max Ernst, Mark Rothko, Andy Warhol, Jim Dine, and others are amongst these, held in the treasury at the museum. These are often loaned to major museums and collections worldwide. A much awaited triptych by Francis Bacon was recently loaned to Tate Britain (summer and autumn 2004), for a major exhibition since the death of the painter in 1992. Other pieces, by Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Paul Gauguin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Andy Warhol, have been seen by art lovers in France, Spain, Switzerland, and Germany recently. This is a significant contribution to the international art scene by Tehran.

Conclusion

The development of art education in Tehran is, in my view, a fluid process engaging with a chain of histories, complexities, simplicities, and practices. In this Text I have demonstrated the role and the significance of the atelier system, and Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in developing art education. Whilst the former demonstrates resilience in providing an interior space for training and educating, the latter projects a dynamic vision for a 'community' to sustain itself, and its links through public service and Public Art. The activities and discourses of these micro and macro institutions show their profound understanding of art as a concept which interconnects the aspirations of the individual and the society. Whilst the atelier system provides spaces for forming and nurturing new energies, the activities of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art mobilises those energies multi-dimensionally; it manifests how energies and ideas can be pulled together towards a shared horizon in contemporary Iran.

1.

Chapter 4, Illuminations

In my experience, the nature of new knowledge is a spiralling one, and the task of the researcher as an observer ever present. Here, I shall project a selection of data as illuminations, in order to throw light on specific observations and reflect. My aim is to further implicate the dimensions of research and to shift perspectives towards layers of knowledge which reveal the recesses or textures in the abstract architectural space I have created in this chapter. I would recommend that my illuminations be housed collaboratively according to the reader's perspectives.

Illumination i, Tehran University

I am writing my notes, sitting on a bench in the grounds of Tehran University opposite the sculpture studios. A tall well-built young man in fine clothes, leathers and suedes, approaches me. Cell phone in hand, he says:

> "Hello… I have seen you around, you are some kind of a researcher…yes? I hope you don't mind…but I have noticed that the people you have chosen to talk to are from the lower classes. Many of us come in just to attend lectures, we meet outside the campus mostly. I can give you some mobile numbers, if you like, you can contact those students for interviews."
>
> This is interesting because at the end of a presentation at the Faculty of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University I was asked by Professor Richard Bailey whether I had considered the middle class students only!

Illumination ii, Tehran University

In the lobby of the Visual Arts Department, Professor Ehsayi[41] calls out to me:

> "Madam. Madam may I request that you would explain to these students of mine that this is not a high school, but a university. I really should not have to run after them to make sure they have completed their '*homework*'! I am ill, and retired; I fortify myself with medicines and present myself here at the campus for their sake, for their future".

[41] Professor Ehsayi is a scholar, and practicing calligrapher/painter whose work was shown at the Barbican along with a number of other artists from Iran sponsored by Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

I smile and nod, and ask if I might be permitted to photograph him with his adoring students around him. He laughs and grants permission.

Illumination iii, Al-Zahra University

The garden area at Al-Zahra campus is covered with scented white mulberries, the first spring fruit in early April. A number of girls are having a picnic. One calls out to me, as she folds up her 'chador' to put away:

> "I am the one you should be interviewing… I got married at 15, and am now doing art at 19. My mum-in-law has sent us all a hot lunch for my birthday… Come and eat with us."
>
> One of the achievements of the Iranian government is their national higher education programme, 65% of which is claimed by female students.

Illumination iv, Canterbury

I have noted an image in the recent catalogue of the painter whose work I have been following in the last few years. I cannot wait to see it specifically because of the three full-figured female nudes referencing Cézanne's Bathers. I attend the private view at the Greek Cultural Centre in London only to realize that the painting is not included in the show. I am told nudity is not tolerated by the Cultural Centre in London.

Illumination v, Canterbury campus

Male tutor addresses me in the staff room:

> "You know, your work is too comfortable, what you should do is make a video of yourself reciting the Quran".

He makes comments of this nature often, he *thinks* he is being culturally friendly putting 'avant-garde' ideas my way, taking me under his wing! Besides doubting whether his wing might be big enough, I wonder if he would prescribe that every Christian artist should video herself/himself reading the Bible! Further, I am reminded of the gender debate at Tehran University in Chapter Four [Text IV], where young men taking it upon themselves to direct their peers. Just because I am in Canterbury does not mean I am free from such discourses.

Illumination vi, Al-Zahra University

Two students stop me in the courtyard and ask if they might talk to me for a few minutes, they recommend the cafeteria. I suggest that it is closed because of Ramadan. They say not everyone fasts, and that the Chancellor, Dr. Rahnavard, has announced that light hot lunches and refreshments should be available to the female student body. Over 'refreshments' of hot

freshly prepared thick soup garnished with mint and caramelised onions, fresh bread made on campus, cheese, and scented tea, one of the young women speaks for both and says:

> "We know that you are researching in the art department. We are biology students and we want to know what is the secret of the art students; they always look so fresh, they are much more good looking than us, more energetic. Is it because they do art?"

Illumination vii, Al-Zahra University

I walk up the steps with great enthusiasm, I am invited to look at the ceramics room. To my surprise and utter disappointment I find a grey room with several pedal wheels but no students, no windows, and devoid of any form of expression and reference to the seven millennia history and heritage of clay arts in Iran. This is confirmed by the presence of an elderly gentleman who demonstrates no understanding of the nature and joy in clay. This paradox haunts me, and I continue to be gripped by its barrenness. In my subsequent visit I take back a large hardback volume of the heritage of ceramics in the region and leave it with Dr. Mazaheri the Dean in Applied Arts.

Illumination viii, International Conference on Art, at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

Invited speaker from New York shows slides of various interpretations of 'Islamic Landscapes' by Western artists. A large projection appears on the screen of stunningly blue skies, a distant dome, and a barefooted old man on a donkey.

> Mehri in the audience: "I am going to ask you to reconsider this projection, Islam is a civilization, this 'landscape' and its implications are poorly imagined, it is not art.
>
> Cheers and claps from members of the audience
>
> The speaker: "Excuse me?"
>
> Mehri: "I am requesting that you would kindly withdraw this slide, it is offensive to your audience, this landscape is poorly imagined; how is it art?"

After the conference, the dean from Al-Zahra: "I thank you. I wished to make a similar comment and was just working it out in my head whether it should be in French or in English, and then I heard your voice. Thank you for saying it." Several others join her in this.

My own feelings are ambiguous, I wonder why I cannot leave such issues to others, I am embarrassed for questioning the speaker, and wish I was less intense in my conduct.

Some months later working in the studio in Canterbury I find a newspaper article (The Guardian 10.08.02) in the stack of newspapers I have not had time to look at. It mentions **IRAN** and **Art**. I cut it away from the pile and put it in my satchel. Later that month on the way to the Lake District I find it in my satchel, it is an article relating the above incident as an interesting development in an otherwise unpromising routine international conference on visual arts. The reporter puts her own spin on it naturally, and links it to Iranians wishing to distance themselves from Arabs. I wonder if there is some truth in that, the government's stance on religion as national identity has disturbed many. As a consequence some distance themselves racially from the Arab nations, and from Islam. Not me however, Damascus and Cairo, amongst whose citizens I have lived, whose language I have learnt, and from whom I have learnt about life, mean more to me than such poor racial and ideological boundaries.

Illumination ix, Tehran University

I meet Mr. Zargham, painting tutor, on the stairs in the lobby of the Visual Arts Department. We exchange brief greetings. He says:

> - "I wonder Mrs. Honarbin, is what you are doing wise? This research is in a way gathering… how shall I say it… intelligence. Is it not? The British have a history of manipulating these things?"
>
> - "I hope that I am making a contribution to knowledge Mr. Zargham, that is what I aspire to. I am documenting human experience… You… I myself…. Why shouldn't we do research? We certainly have the tradition, we owe it to ourselves to observe and question, we could use it too."
>
> - "Can we have a copy of what you shall write?"
>
> - "I will make every effort to make a copy available to the archives of the university through Dr. Sami-Azar."
>
> - "Why him?"
>
> - "He is Head of Research at your university isn't he? Mr. Zargham, I have observed your painting class outdoors and have come to your studio, do you wish to withdraw your collaborations with me?"
>
> - "No, it was good that you saw my students paint outdoors, from nature. Mention my website, I have a cyber gallery where I show my students' work."

Illumination x, Canterbury Cathedral

I walk to the Crypt which I visit often to be still. Its horizontal space reminds me of the first movement in the second act in Beethoven's Fidelio. When I am in the Crypt I come into

terms with human scale, not having high ceilings one feels more rooted, perhaps somewhat contained. I am forced by this space to look horizontally, sitting and reflecting. As I approach St. Gabrielle's Chapel with traces of Romanesque friezes, I see a huge video projection on the left, it is Sam Taylor-Woods's 'Pietà'. She is seen sitting on some stone steps carrying a man in her arms, together they form a pyramid. They are lean and strong, and highly focused, in a meditative state. Only one or two points in his body, just in the heel, are barely outside her support. After some three minutes he becomes vulnerable, and about to tremble when the tension, or the equilibrium, of the piece demands the video to come to an end.

Last April we had Anthony Gormley's "Rise" on the ancient tiled floor of the Trinity Chapel above the Crypt. Unfortunately it was one of the items lost to fire in a warehouse in the East End, when returned to London. I think about transience, and art and illusion… How could an illusion burn in fire….

Illumination xi The British Museum

I attend a 'study day' on Persian Antiquity at the British Museum to find traces of women in ancient Iranian sculpture. I meet Robin Lane Fox, an Oxford Don and world authority on Alexander of Macedonia. He later writes to me referencing the book of our discussion: Maria Brosius's Women in Ancient Persia: 559-33 BC. Not long after, I see him in the documentary programme on Channel 4 'Charging for Alexander'. It is about him, his scholarly life, his passion for riding, and his collaborations with Oliver Stone the Hollywood film director. They have been scripting the movie 'Alexander', released in January 2005. Robin Lane Fox gets a part in the film, charging on horseback in a battle scene. Their collaboration and reciprocity reminds me that research is about the interconnectedness of ideas, and that such concepts must lie at the heart of any research. Research as a one-man-band devoid of human interaction and exchange would ultimately lack vitality.

Illumination xii, Canterbury

My studio space is vandalized! My Derrida poster is pulled off its nail, images of art and drawings dear to my heart are taken off the wall and dropped into the bucket of water next to my sacks of clay. Above all my life size drawings and 'cut-outs' from my studies of Matisse, the Neried Monument at the British Museum, and my own body have disappeared. I had arranged my drawing on the freshly cleaned floor to resume work with clay. This is a violent act and I am devastated. There are no students about in this last week in June, only the staff know the newly changed code 2236.

Illumination xiii, Tehran University Campus

Two students rush towards me and one asks: “I am writing an essay on ‘Suprematism’, can you talk to me about it? There is nothing in the library.” I think of Kazimir Malevich. The other young woman wants to know if I know of a book on Damien Hirst, and whether I have it. I feel helpless, I cannot adequately assist either on their quests. I am reminded again of the importance of the resources available to me at home in Canterbury: my books and videos, libraries, and the vast wealth of museums and galleries in London. I feel for the student body in Iran who face such serious lack of resources.

I shall stop at xiii, it is a wonderful number to end with, it demonstrates the spiral nature of knowledge.

Chapter Five: Video Installations

Considering the interrelationships between human experience and spatio-temporal orientations have been at the centre of my ideas and methodologies. As illustrated in Chapter Three, the body and its fluid language of form, physical and metaphysical, have formed an essential part of my 3D enquiries in the studio. This Chapter introduces my video installations as extensions of the same philosophical perspectives, intellectual curiosity and enquiries exploring the interiors of a mindscape. Having thus deconstructed the landscapes of my psycho-geographies, I have responded to reflexive ethnographies, considered myself a source and instrument of data, and employed new tools to create specific visual diaries through visual ethnography (Rose 2001).

This Chapter contains two approximately 4 minute DVDs entitled 'My feet', and 'Deconstructing Alien Geography'. These visual observations document, consider spatially, and digitally draw the private, and the urban social spaces around my body on the one hand, and reference my sensory sensibilities regarding my sculptures on the other. Digitally shot, visually re-considered/ordered/edited, and offered to communicate meaning, these videos further respond to the dimensions of the research site in Canterbury and in Tehran. They are thus at once methodologies and outcomes.

Although executed in response to the research questions, these videos have been a surprise to me. This is because the psychic strength of the lens demonstrates how visually and in relation to physical landscapes, sounds, and the qualities in urban life, I am psychologically bound to the culture of my upbringing. Although I have lived away from these landscapes and this culture for most of my life, I profoundly share and understand the participants' spatio-temporal contexts. What I have visually analysed in the movements of 'My Feet' and in my observation of the public and urban spaces in Tehran, I have seen in their actions and behaviours, going to the studios, discussing art in the studios and engaging with art education. The interpretations for these videos, however, cannot be limited by a handful of words here. These are visual texts and they must be understood free of words, in a non-verbal world. The two projections work best, in my view, when seen in the same hall/room but at a distance of at least ten metres apart opposite one another .

'My Feet' was shot in Canterbury and completed in December 2003 in time to be installed as part of 'The Archaeology of Self' in January 2004 at the Iranian Artists' Forum. Whilst the video engages with reflexive ethnographies and the processes of self-observation in the private space of the studio, it unveils a mindscape implicating the participants, and the archaic landscapes in Iran. The wandering nude foot is on a quest, a journey towards self-realization, locating light. This is key in understanding the voices from Tehran on their quests, expressing their identities through art. The processes of editing have further revealed the ethnographic

data to possess and depict a hypnotic mental rhythm through the ritualistic pulse and movement of the feet, and the traces of sounds. The engaging and disengaging dancing feet are reminiscent of the movements in the ceramic sculptures. The 'four cells' in each sequence reference 'motivic cells' in the synthesis of fugues, where 'layering' provides interrelated structures. The work further implies psycho-geographies which are at once illusions and true; the video thus makes ambiguous and ambivalent the notions of documentary and fiction.

'Deconstructing Alien Geography' creates a symmetry with the above, observing my movements in the urban, public, and social spaces in Tehran. It at once discusses myself, as well as qualities about Tehran. The emphasis on the fluidity of space, and the proximity and closeness of that space to the camera is made significant by the screeching approaching bus, as it punctuates space, and time. The bus reflects the cultural markings, the urban architecture, on its side, suggesting a metaphor for the body as a site for experiencing and registering culture. The camera lens is used to meditate and reflect on particular landscapes such as mountains, water, and trees referencing my childhood environment and its elements, as well as the soundscapes of contemporary Tehran. The latter punctuates the visual. Thus the video explores cycles and rhythms in sound and image. The notions of inner and outer, light and texture, and above all the centrality of women and mountains as structural elements resonate with the ceramic installation.

'Deconstructing Alien Geography' was shot in Tehran on February 1st 2004, and has been shown to a number of audiences in research conferences, the Students' Union at CCCU, and in a major solo show of my ceramic and video installations at The Goods Shed in Canterbury. I believe, however, that its potential as a short video connects well with the selection of videos on view in London in December 2004. The 'Turner Prize 2004' at Tate Britain, and 'Time Zones' at Tate Modern created a visual forum, at the centre of which the very same issues of other spaces and other existences were held. Locations and peoples from Mexico City, villages in Turkey, Albania, Israel, Japan, Texas, and Holland, etc. entered our world enriching our experiences about perceptions and ways of being. Films and videos such as the above, and mine, create a space where one might overcome boundaries and difference, and become part of the bigger world and its fluid energy, if only for a moment. In blurring the boundaries of documentary and fiction one might become a visual collaborator, and observe how the worlds of art, science, and research thus inter-mingle creating new exciting visual knowledge.

The videos are the subject of my paper at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico in June 2005, where as an invited speaker I shall discuss them as visual histories, and reflexivity and representation in interdisciplinary research. They will be shown at the newly renovated museum of 'El Quijote' subsequently, interjected with a gallery talk by myself and a rotating projection of images of my ceramic sculptures and the site of research in Tehran.

Technically, I have considered the processes of making these videos part of the researcher's learning curve discussed in Chapter Two. The editing, the speed of the selected shots, the arrangements of the sequences, repetitions, introduction of new sound, and the frequency of the original sounds used, are entirely my own design without any assistance. I have however, employed professional technicians to convert my mini tapes into 'time-coded VCRs' in order to observe the shots 'frame by frame', and to make appropriate and precise 'cuts' in each set of 25 frames. These selected shots have then been viewed and proofed by myself, rendered, and authored into DVDs in my presence by my technicians. In the case of 'My Feet' I have asked for assistance in the footage I was not able to shoot myself.

cds

CD and DVD:

‘My Feet’

CD and DVD:

‘Deconstructing Alien Geography’

Chapter Six: Images from Tehran

Visuality forms the core of this chapter, offering knowledge, meaning, and a purely visual document in the development of art education in Tehran. The aim of the chapter is to engage the reader in the researcher's visual encounters and observations, which project aspects of the site of research, its participants, and their art. The significance of this chapter is twofold, on the one hand it offers a vital contemporary visual sociology and imagery from Iran related to scholarship, and unrelated to the tradition of scholarly work on Iran which is almost always about the distant past. And on the other, it forms a specifically collaborative thesis interrelating the researcher and the researched in constructing visual texts. These are as much about the mindscape behind the camera lens, and therefore part of 'The Archaeology of Self', as they are about the mindscapes of the participants in Tehran. Images from the 2D studios at Al-Zahra University for example demonstrate the integration of the researcher and the researched as active participants, collaborating in constructing meaning in mutual spaces. What they have constructed on their 'canvases' are in turn reconstructed into images to report to a wider world. This form of reciprocity is recognized as new ethnography arising from new visual sociology and documentary photography (Pink 2004, Harper 1998, Chaplin 1994). Thus the photographic act creates sociological texts.

The chapter then, is a visual document exploring visual contexts, through the shared global language of no words and seen phenomena (Jenks 1995). Whilst the images of the students, the campuses, the studios, buildings, urban and social spaces demystify the nature of existences, and being at large in Muslim Tehran, they possess spatio-temporal significance presenting contemporary or modern knowledge about citizens of the globe (Rose 2001).

This chapter is in the form of a CD in PowerPoint 2000 format, containing four photo essays. They are as follows:

Al-Zahra University, and images related in Texts I and III

Activities in the Lobby, the gallery, and 2D and 3D studios at Tehran University

Tutors in their studios and ateliers

Samples of Illuminated Manuscripts Depicting Texts and Spaces

cds

CD:

‘Photographic images from Tehran’

Chapter Seven: Reflections

Introduction

The continuum of ideas, practices, and procedures in this study have made for a vibrant, challenging, and emotional adventure into spaces of great complexity, simplicity, and intellectual charge. I have experienced and observed struggles and triumphs on my journey, and have engaged with the lives and minds of others as fellow travellers. I am marked by them, and by the experiences this adventure has offered, and shall continue to reflect on the ongoing dialogue I have started with Iran presented in this thesis. I have sought to exercise sociological imagination in projecting the lived experiences of my fellow travellers engaging with a paradigm of personal and collective histories which are ongoing, implicate my own, and more significantly register those of my fellow travellers'. To exercise closure, or to arrive at an absolute and concrete conclusive statement about the aspirations and hopes of the participants, art educational processes, and the meaning of identity will be contrary to my perceptions and methodologies. Our search, and my work and learning shall continue. The findings from this study, selections of data or the views of the participants and my videos, are the subjects of two papers at Guanajuato University and 'El Quijote' museum in Mexico in June 2005, and at an international forum on contemporary Iranian art at Oxford University in July 2005. Whilst work in progress, my new video 'Silent Lips', and investigations in clay engage and feed my imagination in the studio presently, the invitation for a book proposal for I.B. Tauris will instigate new enquiries into the lives of young women in Iran. I have no doubt that this thesis shall make a contribution to current discourses in Iranian Studies, generating new interest and research possibilities for myself and for others in the field. Thus, interdisciplinarity, and qualitative Intercultural/international research offer inspiring prospects for future learning.

In this chapter I shall first recall the structure and the elements of my argument in response to the research questions. Secondly, I shall continue to engage with the idea of space, and invite my reader to step into a new marginal and external space away from the site of art education, in the interiors of Tehran taxis, to attend to their oral histories in order to reveal more of the bigger picture in society. And thirdly, I shall return my reader to the site of art education and reflect on the views of Dr. Javadi, theoretician, art tutor, and member of the academic council from Tehran University, and Mr. Karim Khan Zand, practicing artist, atelier owner, and sessional tutor from Al-Zahra University (previously seen in Chapter Four, Text V). I shall thus create an opportunity for the continued consideration and cross-examination of the perspectives discussed in this thesis, and my commitment to my adopted tools of deconstruction and différance.

The structure for my argument

In Chapters One and Two, I present a case for the study, and analyse the means for implementing it. I set the scene historically, clarify the site and area of enquiry, discuss 'The Archaeology of Self', and my plan of the interdisciplinary, multi-media thesis. Whilst Chapter One contextualises the study of art education at Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities, Chapters Two and Three deconstruct my philosophical and conceptual framework, and the structures I have employed to attend to the processes of research in Tehran and in Canterbury. Thus opportunities for intercultural collaboration with the country of my birth, contribution to new knowledge through international education and global art discourses, and the exploration of the interrelationship of those discourses to the identities of the participants have been created. Further, the cultural/historical element in art and design research has facilitated a crucial framework for my studio based enquiries to unite with my enquiries in social science illuminating personal and collective existences. Overcoming perceived boundaries between these research disciplines has caused theories, methodologies and outcomes to work simultaneously and in continuums.

My choice of ethnographic tools has allowed me to critically enquire, create reflexive spaces to analyse the responses to my enquiries and observations, have a personal voice and to collaborate with Tehran. This personal voice is located both in the written text, and in my installations of ceramics and videos, illuminating aspects of my multi-identitied cultural perceptions whilst also recognizing the participants' collective and individual identities. The Derridean notions of deconstruction and différance have been particularly pertinent instruments to search and contemplate layers and traces in knowledge spatio-temporally, illuminating the origins and cycles in events and phenomena. As a consequence, I have created texts and spaces to include multiple perspectives in a constructed architectural space, and in order to manage and reconstruct the participants' lived experiences and histories. Thus the interrelationships of ethnographic texts and art, shifts in socio-political orientations, significant critical incidents and identities, and autonomy and agency to resist power, have been related. These processes have at once created methodologies and outcomes.

The multi-media thesis

The thesis presents the staffing and curriculum structures, Text I, at Tehran University, which provide a template for state university art education in the Islamic Republic. The academic and administrative councils emerge as the governing and decision making bodies at both Tehran and Al-Zahra campuses. These structures are influenced by the 1979 Revolution and the change of regime. This has created profound ideological polarities in perceptions, affecting tutors' status and curricula design. As a consequence interior and exterior spaces have emerged influencing private and public behaviours in art and in society. However, the thesis demonstrates how the tutors and students collaborate and create autonomous spaces

where art training continues to evolve. The critique sessions with Mr. Vakili in Text I, and with Mrs. Mohassess in Text III, the life class in Text IV, and the atelier system, and the efforts of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in Text V, take us to these collaborative interiors and their variety, and show how art education is thriving in Iran. Interestingly it is the experiences of the female student body from Al-Zahra University which prompt and express gendered characteristics visually, through painting and drawing the nude. In contrast, Tehran University students engage more frequently with public and 'conceptual' art. Whilst the studio interiors of the latter allow for art discourses to be carried out freely (Mr. Daresh's political statements in Text II, and Texts I, and III), fuller expressions of art practices in public spaces are at times sanctioned by the Heraasat ethic guardians (Text I).

Text IV demonstrates the fluidity in identities through intellectual presences. The life class manifests itself as a lively and multi-identitied and multi-cultural demimonde, where partnership and autonomy structure behaviours. The Ashoora street vigil in the same text echoes such qualities in behaviours in a mid-town neighbourhood. It also demonstrates how religion and tradition are significant elements in Iranian culture and national identity, and how both are claimed and implemented by people according to 'their' interpretations, resisting the contemporary governmentally manufactured ideologically-based interpretations. Conflicts in vision and perception are thus clarified. Further in Text IV, the personal and collective voices of seven women and one man create a paradigm conceptualising, consolidating, and projecting a critical discourse and intellectual identity which is at once local and global. My voice in this thesis, whether through my writing, ceramic sculptures or videos manifest my membership of this paradigm. Thus the participants in Tehran and Canterbury, each according to their art training, personal histories and spatio-temporal contexts, critically analyse and address issues. The societal shortcomings, the misperceptions of the country's governing bodies, the misinformation of the outside world about Muslim women, and the profound disinformation and costly opportunism of the world's dominant political and economic powers and discourses are thus examined. The participants demonstrate astounding degrees of consciousness and determination striving to articulate multi-identities which are at once tacit and fluid. They shape ideas, structure lives, and construct worlds which best express their hopes and aspirations from personal, national, and global perspectives.

The thesis demonstrates how the participants share the global discourse of world art, and how they view the heritage of world art as their own and engage with it. It emerges that except for nudity and eroticism, Eastern and Western boundaries in visual culture are blurred at the site of research, and continuity in world cultural heritage and history is maintained and worked with. Further, the discussion of 'Theory' is taken highly seriously at the research site; Texts II, III, V, and Shiva Sadegh-Zadeh in Text I, are examples of both the complexity of art history taught and learnt, and the success of the student body in remaining deeply rooted in the Iranian cultural sensibilities and iconography. This is despite the lack of adequate

resources. The participants, including myself, instinctively seek and pursue both Western and Eastern art heritage and discourses to express and communicate ideas.

Moving spaces, the taxi drivers' text

Tehran is a large and crowded capital city, not unlike Mexico city, Cairo, or Athens. It lies at the foot of the Alborz mountain range which offers possibilities for hiking, skiing, and outdoor eating. There are numerous and well used parks in Tehran, where amidst the chaos and the hustle and bustle of a big city, uniformed gardeners attend to trees and flower beds with great care. There are tens of cultural centres where the arts are performed and viewed. Tehran is complex but not particularly cosmopolitan; it accommodates a variety of life styles from the economically vulnerable, basic and modest, to the traditional and the highly avant-garde. It struggles with serious traffic and pollution problems; I have witnessed, experienced, and performed my part within its ungainly saga. Travelling in this traffic, weaving through urban and social spaces in the heart of society form the bigger context for the study. My video 'Deconstructing Alien Geography' in Chapter Five, references qualities of this public space.

The interiors of taxis posit cultures in a space between spaces, a gap or a non-place, departed from one point and not yet arrived at the other. This is a movable cultural and intellectual feast for the ethnographer, it offers oral histories and critical/analytical views. I shall recall three extracts from my research diary to illuminate these cultures on the move, touching on the aspirations of fellow humans, and the educational insights from under the 'chador'. I shall offer the remaining two extracts from the taxi drivers' text in **Appendix Twelve.**

November 16th 2002, Taxi driver the poet, orange taxi hailed down in the street; on the journey from Tehran Bazar to Tehran University

> "I see you are carrying a tape-recorder. Are you actually recording? Are you a journalist? … Right, right…I see, a researcher… Are you recording me now?…Is your machine on? Who are you researching for? What, a doctorate in art education from a British institution?…. Are you sure that is wise? A British University….! How interesting…an Iranian woman researching for the British…imagine that!… Be careful, the British have a history of colonialism, don't add to their bank of 'information'…. Of course, of course, 'knowledge' is important…. I suppose what I mean is that they know what to do with knowledge…they allocate budgets to collecting 'knowledge'…. But tell me this: what good is recording the sounds of taxis and motorbikes in the middle of the Bazar to research? How does that work? … Oh I see, just experimenting with the new tape-recorder you just bought… Record sounds up-town, at least there is less pollution up-town…. Imagine it,… recording the sounds of the Bazar!

"Can I ask you something? Can I send a message to the West? Will you tell them this? Will you tell them that the poet says:

> 'I am the eagle… I am the eagle sitting on the barn wall… I am the eagle. My wing is injured! My wing is injured today… And I am sitting on the barn wall! Oh you beautiful owl, you have your barn! Oh you beautiful owl you are safe in your barn! But I am the eagle, and this barn is not my place of flight! I am the eagle; I fly the greatest of heights!…. It is just today that I am sitting on the barn wall… I am the eagle and my wing is injured today.'

Will you tell them about the poet?"

January 8th 2004, Taxi driver Mr. Agheeli, private taxi called by phone; the journey to the Iranian Artists' Forum

"I see you are heading for the gallery, are these things you have just collected paintings? Oh prints…. So large…are you some kind of artist then… I am asking because I am interested in the arts. I have never had an opportunity to study it or anything, but…well I make models of aeroplanes…. Well I used to make them. In fact you might say I was good at it because a research institution got wind of it and bought the whole lot…. I believe they have made a permanent collection of them in their company. They were very interested in my ideas. They asked me if I was an inventor! You see I would look at lots of pictures of planes in technical periodicals and based on what I had seen I would make them in 3D… Sometimes I would juxtapose parts according to my own intuition to see what the new finished piece might look like. You see, I really enjoyed crafting them…making them smooth and beautiful. I feel I could have done something more concrete with my ideas, but when you do not have the right qualifications it is very difficult to get a decent job in the aerodynamics department in the manufacturing industry. I was good at drawing as a child you see… so it stayed with me. I still make things because I am retired now, well I say I am retired, but this taxi job helps me to supplement my income…I have two children at university… In fact you might know one of them, he does music at Tehran university in the Faculty of Fine Arts…

"This business of retirement is a joke, the cost of living is so high that no retirement benefit could stretch enough to cover costs! At any rate my lady wife would not like me around the house all the time! At the moment I am working on a large bird. I am carving it in walnut. I am rather stuck, the neck…it is vital that the neck is long…but I am afraid the wood might break…. Really? The neck

could be in several parts? Thank you…I will look at some art books, there must be art books in the library. I can easily go to the university quarter where all those book shops are….. You said 'Modern Art'? Yes I will write it down.

"So when is your exhibition? Is it possible for people such as me to come to the gallery? I would like to see what your sculptures are like! Galleries are not the kind of places I visit normally, but I am interested now…thank you for inviting me, I shall come.

"Incidentally, what do you think about the…excuse me…the nudity and immoral programmes on television in the West? Now that we have satellite television channels, our children are in danger of losing their tradition….What do parents think about these things over there? Do they have any means of protecting their children? They must have traditions…values."

November 9th 2002, Communal route taxi towards Tehran University; these accommodate five passengers and travel on specific routes

Taxi driver to man getting in: "I stopped for you but you did not see me! I was holding up the traffic for you! You've got to jump in quickly, life is fast!"

"No, I was not sure whether you were stopping or not…you were edging forward. As a matter of fact I have just returned from that eye hospital just up the road! I am due for an operation. I normally drive myself to my factory outside Tehran early morning. But today, at this hour, I thought it would be quicker if I caught these 'route communal taxis'…. They want to charge me extra for putting me in a private hospital bed, but I have been paying my insurance contributions for the last thirty years and I am damned if I pay a penny more!….It has now come to this…they want to sell you the same hospital bed you are entitled to anyway! They call this a new scheme to upgrade treatment! Now, if there was not an upgrading system, I would be entitled to the same standards they are going to charge me extra for! Would I not? There is no law, there is nothing in this country."

Two lady passengers sitting in the back are in conversation with each other. They are wearing at least two layers of covering on their heads, a black head scarf and a chador over it. They appear to be traditional and devout in the way they are dressed, they are also extremely articulate. One says to the other:

"No I think you are mistaken mother, she is going to do a degree in tourism now. She was going to do …what did you call it…? …a degree in 'trade insurance' before, but she has changed her mind. She thinks

> anything to do with insurance will ultimately be a world of desks and telephones, where tourism might actually have some travelling involved…. Trade insurance…. Can you believe it… you can do any degree you wish these days! A degree in trade insurance… it is marvellous really!"
>
> The front passenger's mobile rings ….he proceeds to give a detailed account of the hospital upgrade to someone!
>
> I get off to catch the next communal taxi suitable to my route, towards west Tehran, the university campus.

The two ladies in the back of the taxi make me think about 'tradition and modernity' for some time. Who is to say which is which?[42]

Interview with Dr. Javadi[43] from Tehran University

> "Islamic thought has many definitions and interpretations regarding the arts, society, economy, politics, etc.; the outlook, however, is always from a critical political perspective. What is pure Islam and what it means, what is Islamic art and what it means, what is Islamic dress and what it means, and what is an Islamic society and what it means are problems we need to solve. It has become clear in practice, that as a society we have to actually experience these processes…. This is the first experience of an Islamic Government in our country, and Islamic intellectuals have different readings of religion.[44] At the

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[42] I remember my home as a five-year-old. Upstairs there was an elegant room where cut velvet, low, 1920s style furniture, lace curtains and framed family photos and fine ornaments existed next to a balcony where tomatoes were being dried, pickles were being made and stored, and a crop of sour grapes hung to dry in the sun. Next door, my eldest brother practised Persian classical music on his violin, and on the steps onto the upper floor, my middle brother constantly fixed the ball-bearings in his roller skates and made little lanterns to hang onto his kites which he flew in summer nights. Down below, my grandmother would be sitting on the floor murmuring verses from the Quran while my father fed us with Persian cakes and Armenian salamis. Then suddenly when I was eight, the whole of the upstairs changed into a room with angular dark navy armchairs on simple legs, dark blue curtains with jazzy bright red and yellow Cubist abstract forms, and new multi-coloured large crystal vases. As a child I didn't know what was modern and what was not; and the same goes today.

[43] Dr. Javadi wears her black chador over an often carefully chosen headscarf and 'roopoosh'.

[44] These different readings have caused great losses in the 'cleansing' processes from the outset of the revolution with little or no sense of accountability.

moment the ones who make the decisions are in disagreement with one another. The religious left wants more freedom, liberation and awareness. It is not possible to close people's eyes in the name of religion, it is unacceptable, we must find answers for our youth and for our women. But this struggle is still young. The practices of the Islamic government, particularly because of the global political conditions, must be progressive and develop with the culture of contemporary thought. But locally it is operated on a traditional basis and foundation.

"What we had imagined in an Islamic government in 1979 and until the death of Imam Khomeini in 1989 was totally different. He was an upright human being and a potent leader. He provided strong leadership. He was an inspiration. Think about the way a handful of students occupied the American embassy in Tehran without bloodshed, and think about the conflicts and bloodshed around the world now, the Basques, the Irish, the Palestinian question, and Afghanistan. The war with Iraq (1980-1988) was imposed on us, Sadaam Hussein was armed by the west and attacked our borders, and devastated our collective strength. In those eight years what should have been spent on developing our country was spent on the war. The destruction was unbearable. But sadly with the war we have regressed. The transition in thought that had started with the Revolution of 1979 was, unfortunately, stopped in its tracks. President Khatami is an enlightened cleric and fights this regression but he remains a cleric! Our President and his Parliament had a clear majority in 1997, 80% of the votes, but in effect they have no power. Our youth are tired of religious ideology, they want a government, a democratic government!

"In those early years women leapt forward by decades, much more so than men. Hejab or dress codes for women is imposed on women, whilst it is mandatory that it should remain a matter of choice. This lack of choice is not in the country's interest. Unfortunately men in our society have regressed and impose their ideology on women in the name of religion. It is laughable to even think that if one's hair is not covered one is destined for 'hell', these laws are interpreted and created by men. We should talk about the aesthetics of our religion. One of my most important teachers, when I was at high school, was my RE teacher…she had the shortest of skirts…but I still remember her powerful teachings."

Extract from an interview with Iraj Karim Khan Zand, sessional tutor at Al-Zahra University

> "I create images, I create sculptures and objects, I create them to sit in space, to interact with space, to interact with human beings. This is what I do, this is my identity. It is what I am giving my life to. My identity is the air I breath in the studio.
>
> "The students, in my view, those who are eager and search, looking and struggling to find answers through their art, we must see that, that is their identity. The processes that help them articulate their thoughts, that is their identity. I don't believe we can teach our students 'identity', nor can we ask them to look for it in the 'motif' of our antiquity. It is there in them. It grows in them, or at least it should do, and we should help them… I am helped by poetry, our language and its idioms and its subtleties, and its iconography in our heads. All this is in the air I breath: my poetry, my language, my sense of place, all of it. Now if people, here or in the West, or wherever else in the world are ignorant of these things it does not mean I am ignorant too."

The participants in the this study regard themselves as free-minded thinking individuals who wish to negotiate the meanings of art, identity, culture, justice, religion, tradition, language, etc. They wish to celebrate their cultural heritage, whether Muslim or otherwise, according to their personal perceptions and intellectual trajectories. The vision of the Islamic Republic focuses primarily and predominantly on promoting the excellence of Islam based on the interpretations of the clergy, and the limitations of their understandings. These are not and cannot be accepted as absolute by the nation who aspire to, and demand, autonomous or progressive interpretations. Although the collective identity of a nation involves language, cultural heritage, political history, geographical boundaries, religion, and tradition, a one-dimensional address of any of these elements in the life of a nation will prove problematic. Religion cannot be the instrument with which the state rules its citizens; it cannot be used as the tool to impose identities.

As for the art students in Tehran, they are exposed to the dynamic and complex inner world of ideas, imagination, perception, and self-search. This is a sensory path of transcendence, reflection, and light. It discusses interspaces, where one might simultaneously belong and be in exile. This is an inner revolution, it is a quiet march of self-realisation.

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Appendix 1: Dress codes as cultural signifiers

Prior to his return to Iran from exile in early 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini had given his word that secular life would continue, and religious laws would not be imposed on Iranians. Within a year of the 1979 Revolution however, interpretations of 'Islamic law' replaced civil laws regarding women as the new realities of life. One such reality is the Islamic dress code which women must observe in public by law. Although this is considered a minor issue by many who face greater socio-economic and socio-political hardships, a great number of women in Iran find such laws an imposition on their personal liberties. The most favoured interpretations of this dress code by the Islamic hardliners in the regime, including women, is the black chador or wrap which is worn over a well secured headscarf, coat and trousers. Versions of this are observed by many governmental employees simply to keep their jobs. Within the last decade, however, other interpretations are frequently adopted by women according to age, class, education, income, religiosity, residential location, and familial traditions. In order to acquaint the reader with a flavour of such dimensions in interpreting the dress code, I present observational notes from my research diary at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art whilst waiting to be seen by its Director.

> March 15, 2002
>
> The junior administrator, and the personal assistant to the director have several desks, telephones, computers, book shelves etc., in a large room/hallway which could also be described as a large and smart reception area with Bauhaus style black leather low furniture. These ladies wear their often dark coloured headscarves, black, brown, navy etc., centrally placed, and well secured under the chin with a pin. They do not show any hair above their foreheads, and have absolutely no make-up on. They wear simple, long, ankle length, 'roopoosh' or overall coats often with matching trousers. These are mostly mass-produced in heavier mixed fabrics which might be slightly starchy. These two ladies are 'front of the house' in the senior management area, and their status requires that they adhere to the expected dress codes in full. The PA in particular seems to have great authority, evident in the polite and clear, but firm, manner of her speech. There is a sense of urgency in her actions, and her several phones ring constantly. She obviously manages the Director's diary and time. She is fluent in English, and highly analytical on art and socio-political issues. She was an art student at the time of the revolution studying dance. I do not believe she has got used to the dress codes.
>
> In one of the side rooms there is a young lady who occasionally comes out with a fax or an emailed message; she seems to know some foreign languages too.

She is in a long black roopoosh which is highly styled, and waisted; the cut is well considered and interesting. One knows immediately that this lady's roopoosh is fashioned and not at all ordinary. This young lady's hair, under a wrapped rather than 'clipped under the chin' black headscarf, is curly and big. It pushes out in ringlets here and there. Her stylish dark blue jeans almost cover her soft flat shoes and one feels a sense of delicate and well-pampered youthful presence.

The tea lady is also in a black headscarf, trousers and well worn slightly crumpled up cotton roopoosh, but this is more like a working uniform. The headscarf is worn with a casual air, and it does not seem to matter. The creases in the tea lady's roopoosh are very different to the soft creases in the linen coat of the previous lady. It is quite possible that the tea lady comes to work wearing a 'chador' or the black overall wrap, over her roopoosh and removes her chador during the working hours. The tea lady seems observant, if not curious, about who she serves the tea to; she carries her tea tray with such deftness and pride you would think she was Cleopatra attending to Anthony with life saving refreshments. She is generous and offers one a second glass of freshly brewed scented tea. Obviously, these last two ladies are not 'front of the house' people, and consequently can afford to appear less austere in their clothes and manners.

A Miss Mahdavi comes in from the National Heritage Centre, or 'Markazeh Miraaseh Farhanggi', located in the next block. She has a couple of invitations for the private view of the major show on Iranian modernist painters Mr. Arabshahi, and Mr. Zendeh Rudi. She is dressed very similarly to the administrators, but is not as careful in her voice and language. For example she casually addresses me and asks me if I have an invitation to the show already, because she can bring me one!

Some time passes and a lady comes in to ask for more technicians, she is talking into the mouth piece of her mobile phone. She is in a light cinnamon colour linen trouser suit fitted at the waist, the jacket falls to about ten centimetres or three inches above her knee. Her headscarf, perhaps in a loosely woven soft linen/silk mix, is a radiant apricot cream. It lightly rests over her head with most of her hair visible, each end of the headscarf crossing very loosely well below her chin falling over her shoulders to the back. Her neck is in full view. Her eyes and face are fully but carefully and subtly made up, applied as if on a delicate painting, the colours almost matches her clothes. She is the curator working with the two modernist painters one of whom lives in Paris. She is also an art tutor at Honar University and a practicing painter/installation artist.

About the same time an older lady walks in. She talks and laughs freely and is greeted by everyone warmly. She is a well know Iranian Armenian art critic. She could be walking on the left bank in Paris. She wears a brightly multi-coloured silk headscarf, cream short coat over casual trousers and nylons. Several male members of the senior management team, some of them artists from the 1970s, rush out to greet her and they all disappear to the big conference room to discuss the opening of the show, much laughter and pleasantries are exchanged.

The interpretations of the dress codes for high-income women in uptown Tehran are highly fluid; one notices the conspicuous sartorial stance of these fluid interpretations matching any rich society with or without the headscarf.

Appendix 2: Example of one week's research diary

Saturday November 9th 2002

Tehran University, Sculpture Studio: Mr. Daresh's session, Tehran University, 9-11am

Sculpture Studio: Mr. Hokama's students, Tehran University, 1-2pm

Meeting with two 3rd year sculptors, Elahe Hassas and Shirin Shamat-pour appointed by Mr. Daresh to me, in relation to their request of a talk and slides of my own work, 2-3.30pm. I combine this talk with the slides I have taken to Tehran of Picasso's contribution to the ceramic arts and its influences on the development of my own work. I also show Giacometti.

Sunday November 10th 2002, Tehran University

Dr. Moghadam's class. He tells me that students are away on projects. He sends me to Dr. Goodarzi's class

Dr. Goodarzi's class 9.30-11.30 am, this was a session in graphic design, for the cover design of books.

The bench in front of the Visual Arts Lobby, Tehran University. 11.30-12am.

This is a 'space' where students mingle, and lots of informal conversations take place. This is also the space where I had the conversation with students who wished to know more on gender issues currently discussed in the West 12-12.30 pm

Being available on this bench has given me an opportunity to participate in the university lives of the students. This is the space where, eventually I conducted my recorded interviews in front of the staff. This is also the space where Dr. Moghadam, the new Head of Visual Arts at Tehran University was addressed by the students to give his written consent to my first slide aided talk in the Department. He did, but first looked into my eyes and said: "Anything problematic in them?" To which I replied "No." We both knew that we were talking about 'nudity and erotic art' which are not tolerated in the Islamic Republic of Iran. But this does not mean they do not exist.

A regular visitor was Mojtaba, a lively, intelligent and confident young man who is in his first year majoring in Painting. He often stops me to show me bits of work from his portfolio, all of which are more to do with 'graphics' rather than paintings. He has published some of them in Italy and Japan. He is the student who asked me, in Dr. Javadi's class, how to be scientific about painting. I lend him a copy of David Shutt's recent catalogue. He looked at it, every page, and then lifted his finger in the air animating, "Perspective".

Lunch at the canteen, women only except for the servers. Amazing space, amazing hot food, amazingly subsidised. I realise this is a 'private' and intimate space just for women, but I realise that it disturbs me profoundly. I have difficulty coping with this 'imposed privacy'.

Mr. Motabar's Atelier, North Tehran, 6pm onward. We talk about Euan Uglow. Mr. Motabar can be visited on Sundays and Thursdays in the afternoon, 4 pm onwards. There are many students drawing.

Monday November 11th 2002

Al-Zahra University, Meeting with Dr. Shad and the unhappy PhD student who says she does not get any supervision 10-12am

Short time in the small library for the plastic arts at Al-Zahra, the Faculty of Fine Arts' library at Tehran University is much more substantial; then lunch at the Tutors Canteen watching the 'men of cloth', the clerics.

Al-Zahra University, the Dean Dr. Mazaheri's session on Byzantine art, all afternoon

Tuesday November 12th 2002

I am not expected anywhere this morning, so I spend three hours putting my notes onto my laptop.

Visit the Cinema Museum on my way down town to Tehran Contemporary Museum of Arts

Meeting with Dr. Sami-Azar, Director of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts to discuss 'public art' and the Museum's activity and possibly show photographs of my work. My appointment is at 3, but he does not see me till 4 pm. I spent 20 minutes with him and give him a copy of my proposal and a short summery of what I have collected in the way of data. He listens with interest, and gives permission to Mr. Elahi, head of public relations, to give an interview about the museum's activities. Just before I leave I ask him if I might show him a few images of my work. He points to the large conference table and says "would you mind setting them out". He goes to his desk and speaks on the phone, he returns and looks at the images. He picks one up, I tell him that they would be suspended with very fine fishing line. His eyes light up. He asks me if I follow the work a certain Italian sculptor. I say that unfortunately I am not familiar with that artist. He asks me how many I would hang in my installation, I say between 30 and 40. He says that it could look really great and that I should choose one the affiliated galleries to the museum and hold a show in Tehran. He says "Invite me to it and I will come". I am dizzy with excitement, collect my photos and thank him and before he changes his mind, say goodbye. Just before I exit his office area, he calls to his, personal assistant Mrs. Forooghi and says "Tell Mr. Ismael-Nia to assist Mrs. Holliday to hold a show in Tehran".

I stay at the museum afterwards looking at art. I try not to think how I would do the show, I feel overwhelmed. Around a quarter past five I realise that I am hard pushed to find a taxi because it is time to break fast (the lunar month being the month of fast, Ramadan). I ask an artist currently showing computer/digital art at the "New Art" exhibition whether I might be able to get some food at the museum at this hour, bread and cheese and tea. He tells me to wait for a few minutes. He returns and says that he has fixed it with Mrs. Forooghi, personal assistant. to Dr. Sami-Azar, that I should stay as their guest. I am rather shocked, but I think it is fantastic and generous. The colours and aromas of my childhood memories of 'fasting' and 'breaking fast' pass through my mind. I feel quite shaken with emotion. At 5.30 pm. I join the senior management table in the canteen where the aromas of Persian cuisine is intoxicating, but it is the memories that dazzle my mind. Mrs. Forooghi welcomes me with great openness and smiles. I sit next to her. This leads to meeting two other sculptors, a female stone carver who has just returned from a trip to Japan as the guest of their government, and a male sculptor who is developing his wood firing kilns outside Tehran. They have, independently, just dropped in at the museum as many artists do sporadically. I realize that she is the Secretary to the Society of Iranian Sculptors. She tells me that she has just completed carving 10 meter high pieces. There is much jolly/chitchat and friendly interaction. It is all very informal. I notice that although we have all started eating the wonderful food, Dr. Sami-Azar has not joined us yet. I ask Mrs. Forooghi whether he has gone home. She tells me that he is extremely pious and he waits for some moments in his office at the time of breaking the fast, he then does his evening prayers, and when he is ready, he joins everybody at the canteen and eats something light. She tells me that they hardly ever leave the museum before 8 pm.

Wednesday 13 November, Tehran University

Gender Seminar organised by Somayeh and Nazanin and others 12.30-14 pm

This was a discussion of how to take ideas forward rather than 'What Is Gender", or "What is Liberation", or "What is Feminism". Amongst the thirty or so students, five were male. It appeared that the girls would like to work with the boys rather than being subjects of their gaze or 'girlfriend material'. They said they have little opportunity to work together simply because they are not allocated small areas, or studio spaces to work in. We came away with the idea that they should meet in groups to go to galleries and the museum where they can discuss art. I suggested that they should found a club where art videos can be collected and made available to groups of students for discussion. I also suggested group sessions in parks, for drawing. The outcome was that they have to create situations of art-based interaction, rather than trying to solve 'gender issues'. Through working together they might come to an understanding of gendered issues. I made an example of a talk I went to at 'BERA 2002' where Professor Valerie Hay talked about herself as a staunch feminist for the last thirty years

and not yet respected for what she does by some of her male students as well as male colleagues. My point being that these are on-going issues.

During this session, held in the gallery, I notice Dr. Kafshchian, Head of Visual Arts, stepping in for just a moment or two and then leaving.

Thursday 14 November, Mr. Vakili's atelier

Recorded conversation with Mr. Vakili who is an invited drawing tutor at Al-Zahra University.

Appendix 3: Summary of data collected

In summary, the core data I collected included:

Conversations and interviews with 9 female students at Al-Zahra University and 11 female 15 and male students at Tehran University

Conversations and interviews with 8 tutors at Al-Zahra University and 9 tutors at Tehran University

Descriptions of 4 2-hour sessions on theory, 5 crits, 6 sessions of studio practices in painting, ceramics and drawing, and 2 Vivas at Al-Zahra University, and 9 2-hour sessions on theory, 3 crits, 7 sessions of studio practices in painting, sculpture and drawing, and 5 Vivas at Tehran University

Descriptions of 9 visits to 5 ateliers

Descriptions of: regular visits to private views at galleries; visits to 2 international conferences on visual art, 3 private views, and several biennales at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary art

Descriptions of 4 art-related events in people's homes

Recorded conversations and interviews with 5 taxi drivers

Descriptions of visits to 3 shrines and 1 religious event

200+ photographs of students at work, classroom, studio and campus scenes

Comments from students, tutors and others attending the 'Archaeology of Self' exhibition

This resulted in 90,000 words of research diary.

Appendix 4: Extract from research diary concerning visual research

Research Diary, May 15th 2003

Dear Dave,

As part of my commitment to the programme set at the annual review, I have spent three weeks away in the US and Italy focusing on visual research. Unfortunately I was not able to secure a visit to the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia as they are only open three days per week and they were fully booked until the end of April when I rang in the first week in March. I list the collections I did manage to visit below. I am also enclosing copies of related handouts for my participations in the Iranian Cinema courses (Year I, and Year III) in the Media Department.

The Cone (sisters) Collection in Baltimore Museum of Modern Art: Cézanne's Pines, Degas' Dancer, Seurat, and Matisse, with a special show of Leon Backst's designs complete with Ballets Russes Costumes

The Luxury Arts of the Silk Route Empires at the Sackler and Freer Art Gallery in Washington D.C. This included outstanding metalwork and ceramics from ancient Iran as well as frieze fragments and paintings from China and Afghanistan. The Sassanid metalwork, silver ewers inlaid with gold, from 2nd C. AD in Iran are particularly relevant to my studio-based investigations. These dancing creatures are ichnographically related to Rome. I found this particularly interesting as examples of cross-cultural 'East-West' exchanges in that era. They provide possible precedence and context to my work in 'The Archaeology of Self'.

Collections of early sculptures by Louise Bourgeois, and Alexander Calder at the National Gallery in Washington D.C. I have been interested in both artists particularly in relation to my hanging methods, but it was a huge treat to see such a large collection of Bourgeois' sculptures on show in one place, I was indeed lucky to have been there. They are very different to her recent works with mirrors and water at the National Gallery show 'Encounters', and her Spider at the Tate Modern.

Frida Kahlo at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, in Washington D.C.

Contemporary ceramics and paintings at a number of small private galleries in NY city. I am constantly reminded of the diversity of the ceramic arts when I visit New York. I am constantly amazed at how widely the idea of the vessel is explored and presented. There are also increasingly notable wall plaques, thought hardly any as exciting as Claudi Casanovas. I am inspired, however, and hope to create some new vessels in the future.

Roman sculpture, and clay works from Susa in ancient Iran, at the Vatican Museum. The latter were breath-taking, I knew some of these works from the Metropolitan Museum in New

York, but I was delighted to realize this time round that some surfaces and colours they used in Susa were not dissimilar to my own white finishes. You realise we are going back to 2nd, and 3rd millennia B.C., and that I locate my mindscape is such archaic landscapes. 'Psychogeography?' The former, have inspired me to create a number of simple and small clay forms, which I shall present at my annual review.

Revisiting the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican, I was gripped by images of the fall of man in the Last Judgement Frieze by Michelangelo. His floating/falling figures in that blue space/atmosphere alerted me to my own sense of transience.

Contemporary paintings and ceramics in small private galleries in Rome, this was wonderful in that I could easily have exhibited in the same spaces and with intercultural rigour. The most interesting clay installations were of life size majolica dining chairs in bright colours in the manner of the 'Constructivists', very colourful and very Italian.

Roman antiquity and architecture, particularly useful to me at this stage of my studio research in terms of observing form in architectural space. I had hoped to understand, and internalise a sense of form in space, I think this is happening.

Appendix 5: Experience of abuse

4.6.03

Dear Dave Shutt

I am writing to you in your capacity as my 1st supervisor in the research programme I am undertaking in Art Education. On Wednesday May 28th I was in the Department to use the clay mixing machine in the glazing area in the ceramics studio. The technician with whom I normally liase on such occasions was not in the department but at the main campus attending to the graduation show. Seeing the BA course director in ceramics in the staff room I asked if my using the machine would be alright. This was simply to know if the noise might be disturbing should there be a meeting scheduled in her office next door. In response, Ms. —— proceeded with remarkably abusive and angry language on the nature of my character and conduct. She basically repeated again and again that I was a disappointment! She said that I was a manipulative person using people to get what I wanted! That I had manipulated her, and she regretted having supported me, and that all I had done was to use her! She said several times that she felt used by me! I really cannot imagine how this can be. She then proceeded to ask me why I had "gone above her" and complained to the new head of department about her. On my explaining that no such meeting or discussion had ever taken place and that I did not know what she was referring to, she aggressively questioned me and complained about my having telephoned my supervisor in Greece instead of consulting her about my work! I explained that I was in contact with my supervisor when I needed to, but Ms. —— insisted that there were particular and manipulative goings on! That I had keys! She asked how and through what channels I had come to possess keys to the department and the glazing materials cupboard. At this point the department's secretary joined us and said that she had been instructed to make these keys available to me. Ms. —-'s manner was violent, and her questioning me and the implication that I had acquired these keys through irregular means was intolerable. Her tone and shouting and aggressive manner is impossible to put into words. I find it degrading to report her openly verbally-abusive language, intentionally attacking my integrity. It embarrasses me to recall it and I deeply regret having to write its account.

This is not the first time Ms. —- has behaved like this, she has on several occasions, I recall six, asked and ultimately demanded that she should have something to do with my supervision. I have found this too patronizing and humiliating to recount to anyone, especially when she is simply not qualified. On one occasion she actually cornered me in the corridor and looked into my face and demanded that I do something about it. She was embarrassingly worked-up and out of breath. On another occasion she asked me who I reported my hours to, implying that I was in some way not fulfilling my commitments to my research or teaching! On that particular occasion I was due to give a two hour presentation/discussion on the main

campus, and I said that I found her line of questioning too aggressive, and simply walked out. I felt utterly bullied and was not able to shed the humiliation for some time. I have been unable to do any work since Wednesday, as I am rather anxious that she would continue this type of behaviour towards me; I am not able to allow or tolerate this pattern of behaviour. On my leaving the staff room on Wednesday she lifted her finger in the air and shouted out after me that the "conversation" had not ended yet and that it shall continue.

Is this unprofessional behaviour acceptable, I wonder! I find it extremely damaging working conditions.

Yours,

Mehri

Appendix 6: A work in progress report

October 2002, Mehri Holliday, a show of ceramic sculptures, art as self-knowledge in The Archaeology of Self

> "Archaeology is much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new forms of positivity, and of sudden redistributions." (Foucault 1972, p. 169)

Introduction

The body of work presented in this show, 'Archaeology Of Self, is the outcome of ten weeks of rigorous studio led research into a set of ideas in response to a particular ancient landscape in the central regions of Iran (maps on show). The experience has in turn illuminated a state of mind that is at once familiar and unknown. This paper aims to explore some thoughts and relationships concerning the inter-connectedness of such ideas whilst giving a full account of the processes. The ideas that have emerged during these processes both in the studio and out are: exploring a sense of space, and recovering an emotional charge instigated by a particular location which has triggers off imagined worlds. How might this emotional charge be articulated in objects? And how might the creation of such objects provide tools for interpretation accessing metaphors?

I have discovered that the processes themselves have instigated a set of enquiries, considering making art as an engagement and exploration of 'knowledge'. If so, could the process of 'making' objects or creating art in the studio be analogous with writing academic papers? Might these objects be regarded as created 'texts' or histories which could then be analysed and related to wider issues in life, and the concept of identity? How might such concepts relate to others, and can the 'universal' be accessed through the 'particular'?

In the following paragraphs I shall attempt to clarify and connect the strands of thought regarding these ideas; the physical and cognitive experiences as well as processes in the studio that I believe to be the sub-structure of the objects on show. Whilst I consider these pieces as work in progress and part of the wider context related to my PhD thesis, they have nevertheless been means of discovering metaphors and an end in their own right. These metaphors act as tools to understand and interpret both abstract and conceptual ideas which have intellectual connotations. One such metaphor is imagining the figure, the human form, as a landscape of complex and beautiful structures possessing force, layers, and spaces where sacred ideas or objects are guarded deep within.

It is vital, however, that the pieces on show, these fragments from my imagination, communicate visually and sensually on their own merit and 'happen' and become 'complete'

in the mind of the viewer regardless of the analytical deconstruction in this paper, for this show is primarily a visual celebration.

Part One: The origins of the pieces

In preparing the grounds for securing access to my 'research site' in Tehran, a totally abstract notion at the time, I took a trip to Tehran in December 2001. My frame of mind at the time was one of anxiety and great excitement particularly because the universities who constitute the subject of my research had neither knowledge of me nor my intentions. I was indeed setting off for the unknown, hoping to create possibilities, develop roots and to start the process of research in its fundamentals. This was not unlike the practices in the studio, taking the ideas to a mound of clay.

During the course of this visit, however, I travelled to Persepolis in the central Province of Fars (the name Parses or Persians comes from this place), where there is evidence of a civilization that existed from 4000 B.C, climaxed around 1000-500 B.C. and was subsequently conquered by Alexander of Macedonia in 320 B.C. It did not die however, and by 100 A.D. new dynasties succeeded in developing more complex architecture, language and script and instead of fighting the Greeks they fought the Romans! The reliefs, texts and visual narratives, on mountain side tombs of kings at Naqsh-e Rustam in the vicinity of Persepolis give an account of such wars and exchanges.

Not far from Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rustam, I visited an ancient and, in contrast to Persepolis, chaotic site where only one or two slabs of marble were buried in the ground and nothing else was visible except for thousands of tiny pottery shards which must be around two thousand years old. These tiny fragments impressed me with their worn beauty and made powerful references to concepts of history and knowledge. I collected a few pieces of pottery and glass, some less than an inch wide, that in their varied thicknesses, complexity of clay compounds, execution of design, and in some cases the delicacy of glazes are evidence of a diverse and sophisticated industry and art form. It is probable that this place, called Estakhr today, was once the site of important workshops catering for the demands of a well developed civilization with a skilled society of artisans. Though the makers of these artworks and kingdoms had perished, reminder of frailty of man, the remaining historical, archaeological and cultural fragments stood strong and telling of human nature.

A sense of space

Once back in Canterbury I washed and cleaned these fragments and took clay prints from them; this I did by pressing, rotating and repeating the fragments of designs into wet clay. I created, or rather discovered, ways of developing patterns. Through this exercise I felt close to the makers of ancient artefacts and imagined how their ancestors might have discovered

and evolved their ideas of patterning simply by rotating or repeating a motif. I also realized that the shallow relief residues on the surfaces of these fragments held aesthetic charge. I became mindful of the implications of how the relief-like, incomplete presentation of an idea, of a whole philosophy, is sometimes more effective than its exhaustive realization (Nietzsche 1986).

My thought process was alerted to a number of metaphors with cultural meanings. The early explorations of script in the region through seals, for example, and its development into clay tablets. These tablets (represented in the slide collection also on show) depict abstract mark-making as means of communicating specific ideas; sometimes as few as four or five linear gestures onto wet clay, and sometimes format arrangements in groups resembling squares and circles suggesting divisions and portions, or systems for accounting. Such mark making alerted me to the cross sections in historical time, as archaeological layers, suggesting possibilities of analysing them as specific texts. Not only as objects, but metaphors with poetic implications of human frailty and transience on the one hand and hope and endurance on the other.

Although prior to my visit to Tehran I had intended to explore porcelain as my material and the idea of geometry through the process of making ‘banners’; I found myself abandoning any such intentions. Instead I developed a sensual interaction with a different type of clay, creating a number of abstract objects in ‘relief’. These were minimal in execution and immediate in tactility, showing surfaces with the particularities of my tools, not over handled or modelled. They at once held qualities of paintings, drawings and sculpture. The choice of clay was vital in contemplating particular qualities of texture, and under-firing the work kept the clay alive, unvitrified. It became clear to me that the archaic sites I had visited, that sun bleached land with a certain glow, dotted with ancient architecture, tombs and carvings in relief, had left an impact on my mind that could not be ignored. My subconscious and my tools and materials were telling me something about my state of mind and its relationship with a certain geography.

These pieces are in the show.

A subsequent active period in the studio resulted in developing these ideas further but still in relief. By March 2002 I had discovered new metaphors to express a state of mind. These were:

imagined surfaces rather like a flattened and shallow aerial view of land, where its skin, crust and substance were highlighted by the occasional marks made by man. The iconography of tombs and scripts combined with a sense of opulence, induced by my materials, produced abstraction and form. Drapery, skin, flesh and bones were implied on these surfaces

imagined forms, a landscape of the figure, a fragmented torso for example whose curvilinear lines gave it life. This landscape, even in its fragmentation and chaos of mark-making, one hoped, would imply something of the idea of the whole. Cultural debris were scattered over these fragments, sometimes misplaced, sometimes precious and sometimes deposited as though thrown into a rubbish tip inside recesses and private spaces

of animate qualities, in movement, with an active stance active. This 'intention in movement' was a clear move away from the tablet forms I had made earlier. These new forms implied female qualities and were headless.

Three of these pieces are in the show mounted against the wall in order to emphasise their relief quality, and to reference their origins in Estakhr. I have used light golden sand to create the 'base' from which the pieces rise, important both visually and conceptually. The small fragments of metallic oxides, fired glasses, and silica, arranged in front of these pieces show the analysis of the materials I engage with as a ceramicist. This is in reference to the scientific nature in the clay arts, also providing a symmetry between the fragments collected at Estakhr near Persepolis and the ones produced as the result of my investigations. The cycle of reconstruction through deconstruction is of interest to me.

In retrospect, I can also link the processes described above to Foucault's concept of the concept of knowledge, he says:

> "knowledge as ideas; made up of perspectives, laws, terms, explorations and definitions produced and valorised by disciplines, fields and institutions through the application of scientific principles."

I believe I have engaged in processes which explore forms of knowledge, the investigation and application of scientific principles, theories, ideas, temperatures, chemical combination of the oxides, glaze developments etc. In the following paragraphs I shall attempt to reflect on abstract knowledge, and how in Foucault's terms "different and new knowledge emerges from the struggle between the different areas within a culture" (Foucault, cited in Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000, p. xiii). The 'culture' in this case is the culture of 'theory' and 'aesthetics' as conceptual tools.

Part Two: Theoretical considerations – a biographical description of evolving ideas

My investigations in the studio had to be abandoned at this point as I was due in Tehran to follow up access procedures and start field work at Tehran and AI-Zahra Universities. These institutions constitute my research site and the show offers a visual connection with these sites through 80 slides projected during the show.

The studies or work so far designed, however, were presented to the MA group at the Art Department (March 7th 2002 the night before my departure to Tehran), along with a small selection of projected images of my visit to Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rustam and Estakhr, illuminating the depths of a 'past' and relating it to the present. The cultural and social characteristics specific to the people who occupied those sites, their Zoroastrian belief systems, their Mithraic cult/mythology inherited by Roman soldiers, and the current political picture in Iran, kept the group enthusiastically engaged for three hours. I believe that the discussion, the slides of the sites in Naqsh-e Rustam and my studies in clay presented to the group, alerted our collective imagination to trans-cultural 'spaces' and to discussions of global art. It seemed to me that the talk had unravelled or decoded a 'text' that was mine but was also relevant to the experiences of the members of the group. There was an understanding of the concepts, there emerged questions and enquiries with both aesthetic and cultural implications. Much valued opinions were given that could only be achieved through an art discourse and the theoretical consideration that goes with it. Numerous references to art historical concepts, both Western and Eastern traditions, were made by the group, enthusiastically chaired by Bob Stone. We contemplated Arthur Danto's view:

> "there cannot be an art world without theory, for the art world is logically dependent upon theory... " and that art theory detaches objects from the real world and make them "part of a different world, an art world , a world of interpreted things" (1981, p. 135)

This seemed to be apt since we systematically explored, interpreted, and articulated notions related to human and aesthetic experiences. We, as a group, had engaged in wider discussions in history, art, multi-culturalism, and global attitudes and perceptions. Foucault's theory on knowledge became highly relevant.

On my return after three months there followed an intense period of research, eight weeks from mid July 2002, as my supervisor encouraged me to prepare a show for late September in time for the new academic year. As an undergraduate student I was interested in 'significant form' and archaic landscapes, and I had worked with the formal qualities in cylinders and cones. Towards the end of my project I had arrived at exploring surfaces by cutting my large cylinders and cones open. This exposed the inside of the 'wheel thrown' pieces highlighting the fine incised lines possessing dynamics of their own. Still interested in significant form (the human form included), I continued exploring the structures of surfaces.

Exploring the idea of sculpture, I found some answers in the writings of Herbert Read who negotiates the place of sculpture through its being an object. He says:

> "Sculpture begins as a 3-dimensional art; that is the 'speciality' it shares with architecture, the art most nearly related to it. But sculpture is solid, whereas architecture is hollow .... Sculpture suffers no such necessity; it can be free, and

> perfectly free. The earliest known piece of sculpture, the prehistoric ivory statuette from the Grotte de Lespugue, has no base. Sculpture can be something to hold in the hand, or carry in the pocket.... It can hover in the air.... The base has inevitably shifted the centre of gravity of the sculptured object.... There is no intrinsic reason for such a limitation" (Read 1990 P ix and xi)

My interest in surfaces, and my ceramic pieces having developed as baseless slabs of clay, found a domain in Read's Modernist perspective. I decided to hang or suspend these from a muslin covered wooden grid. Thus they "hovered in mid air'. I thought at the time that they might also form a circular/spiral form through hanging.

The relationships between the power of the fragment and one's power to perceive the whole through the fragment has been referred to. I discovered 'the effectiveness of the incomplete' to be a terminology shared by a number of art historians, art critics and philosophers (Adrian Stokes, E.H. Gombrich, Herbert Read, Melanie Klein, Michel Foucault and Nietzsche amongst others) who believe that our minds draw on psychological resources to make complete the fragmented imagery, object or concept. These theories supported my experiences, and the possibility of isolation in idea, and site specificity of my studio research were no longer threatening. I discovered wider points of reference for the work while still keeping it personal and with its own identity.

At times I even understood Foucault stating that

> "historiographic and philosophical expression to this modern relationship to the past through the notion of 'archaeology' as a methodological swerve away from historical study and as the re-creation of the life of the past as a whole and towards a treatment of texts which is akin to the archaeologist's patient reconstruction of surviving fragments" (cited by Bann 1995, p. 26).

In developing the work to the stage presented at this show, it has been my intention to create or reference an idea, of a particular form in movement. The analogy of mountains and hills, their upward/outward thrust, with the waisted figure proved exciting and with a gentle twist I managed to convey what I was looking for. The plastic qualities in the particular clay I used were rewarding in this instance. The strong associations between this subtle movement and the idea of dance I managed to consolidate in the art historical analysis and readings of Painters such as Ingres and beyond his perceptions to the period of 'L'Age d'Or'. The Tanagra figurines and the oblique 'movement of the Greeks' also come to mind here whilst the evidence regarding musicians such as Barbad and Nakisa of the ancient Persian courts provide more interconnections. I can trace my personal sensibility towards the idea of dance back to my childhood. More recently however, September 1992, I saw Matisse's 'La Danse' at the major retrospective of Henri Matisse in New York. The idea, the colour, the handling of

the paint, the size of the painting and the circular and connected formal arrangement have left me with a profound sense of transandency. This experience sparkled with profound relationships in my mind. I have been fortunate enough to see several versions of this painting. "La Danse" painted in 1910, a reference to the red figure vase paintings of the Classical period, was commissioned by Sergei Shchukin and is at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Also, I am certain that the idea of dance in the poetry of the classical Persian poets such as Rumi is pertinent here. Herbert Read's analysis of such suggestive forms and lines supports this interconnection. He says:

> "Arabesque, a word often on Matisse's lips, is a linear conception; it is also, in its Oriental origins, a decorative conception. It is an escape from mass and volume, towards movement or action, and that of course, with many qualifications" (Read 1987, p. 36).

I have also been familiar with the paintings by Degas for some time and find his dancers possess qualities of movement that find particular resonance in my mind. The surfaces and handling of colour, mostly pastels, in Degas' paintings have been of great interest to me. I find his surfaces, the skin textures, of his women at their 'toilette' breath-taking. It has recently come to me that my mother's skin and flesh were not dissimilar to such surfaces. I saw much of her in an undressed state as she so frequently washed my sister and I either at home or at the more elegant public baths when we were young children. There is a certain texture that I associate with her body and I have rediscovered it in Degas' surfaces. 'The Archaeology of Self' has become particularly poignant for me through this discovery.

These thoughts have come in the process of making the work. It is just possible that I have stored such images in my subconscious and that the quality of light and the textures in the landscape at the sites I visited, have prompted my sub-conscious to produce the type of work on show! In fact, through my studio practices I have become alerted to a number of associations urging me to new readings of my own text. I am encouraged by the writings of Barthes and Derrida to read my sculptures as texts. The studio led research has indeed acted as tools of interpretation to understand the complexity of such texts as well as providing the type of insights I need, again as my tools, to more fully understand the complexities of the institutions that are the subject of my study in Tehran.

Part Three: Methodology and aesthetic consideration

Every detail related above is part of my methodology because methodology is the process of thinking, planning, and executing the work or study. Amongst these are the exploration of plastic qualities of clay; the manipulation of firing temperatures; reading on theory; gallery visits; drawing and printing; keeping notes; flexibility when disasters happen (as it did in the drying processes) and demonstrating mental energy by taking up new strategies. I am bound

to acknowledge a few points more specifically at this juncture however. Some seventy kilos of clay, 200 hours in the studio and out, two firings for each piece, a handful of oxides and two buckets of glazes have dominated my life in the last few weeks. I have been totally faithful to my materials and discipline and have enjoyed exposing the very 'grain' in the clay body at times and highlighting it by the thinnest of glazes. The experiments to achieve these have been numerous. My most dominant influences in the field of ceramics are, as always, the clay works of Picasso, Ewen Henderson and Ryoji Koie of Japan. I never tire of looking at the work of these artists. The Seljuk period, $10^{th\ t}$ to early 13th centuries, have produced some of the most exciting ceramics in post-Islamic Iran, re-discovering the 'composite white fritware' from ancient Egypt. This clay composite is not dissimilar to the clay I have used. What I find particularly moving in Seljuk ceramics is the 'free' handling of very subtle glazes and colours, and the way the qualities of clay at the height of its plasticity has been preserved in the final work with hardly any 'tidying up'. Indeed the 'wet look' of these forms and the freedom of decoration, often categorized as naive, and the translucency of the glazes have been an inspiration to me. I admire the sense of transcendency the makers of these forms demonstrated in their art. My own experiments with glazes and colours proved to be a challenge particularly because the subtleties I had imagined, were at times impossible to achieve; many pieces are only partially glazed.

To work with double sided slabs of clay at the soft/wet buttery stage is a huge challenge and has serious consequences in the drying process when worked in scale. This is because there is no base to these pieces, they are dried and fired flat, resurrected only after the second firing. Many unfired pieces were lost in the first two weeks in transportation from the studio to the kilns. The shrinkage rate is always a shock.

The methodology however, is not confined to the studio. Trips to the British Museum to observe the quality of antique marble statues, drawing and photographing have given much needed visual nourishment. The Nereid Monument, Lykian tombs, for example, provided cross-cultural references in idea and form. I have been fascinated by the accounts of the wars and the landscape of the Lykian culture in S.W. Turkey. These were shared by the Greeks and Persians around 390 B.C. The Assyrian reliefs in the same hall at the British Museum confirmed the legitimacy of the white, tin oxide, in my work. The Tate Britain and Sir Soane's Museum gave some ideas for exhibiting fragment. This gave me an opportunity to examine my own idea of hanging the show and suspending the pieces in mid air. The Tate Modern provided energizing visual input through a particular collection on show of the sculptures of Moore, Rodin, and Giacometti.

The time in the studio, however, is a time that the maker is left alone with the materials; carving, cutting and forming these abstract sheets of clay from a prepared mound seemed intuitive. My numerous drawings simply informed this intuition at different levels just like the

few shards I had collected had alerted me to memory and imagination. I believe these pieces became real and assumed life in the landscapes of my mind, pre-existing all the reading and looking and searching, and I was simply being the archaeologist, deconstructing/reconstructing aspects of my own text. These pieces must be viewed as the abstraction of my experiences in clay.

Music is important in my work. I have looked to music, fragmented and trans-cultural music of George Crumb, to consolidate the idea of movement and also universality in art, for that is what I aspire to. I edited a short track from 'Bones and Bells' in the 'Black Angels' album. Professor Hancox very kindly arranged its reproduction on a disc at the Music Department with my particular timed intervals. Although I work in silence there is always a quality of sound that I imagine for the work. Bones and Bells is particularly relevant to this body of work.

I included my experiences in Tehran and Persepolis in the form of eighty slides presented in the show on a timed rotation. This brought people with similar aspirations into our space from Tehran and Al-Zahra Universities providing crucial context for research as a whole. They gave their consent at the time of photography. Most of them are concerned with the very issues we struggle with in relation to art and aesthetic education. One must admit, however, that they suffer from limitations imposed by political systems and the lack of crucial resources. I welcome their presence as I respect their endurance and their dignity.

Part Four: Experiences in Tehran

The following short extracts are from data collected at my research sites at Tehran and AI-Zahra Universities where I spent an initial two months observing students and tutors engaged in the teaching and learning of art education. I believe there is particular relevance between my studio based research and research in Tehran.

May 21, 2002, Al-Zahra University, Tehran

> I walk into the painting studio where I have seen a painting that interests me, to look for the young woman who painted it, but she is nowhere to be found. I walk around and hope that she will turn up today as we had agreed. She did not turn up on the previous occasion. Some time passes and I see at the other end of the corridor a young woman appearing with her rucksack carrying what must be the large painting I have asked to see again.
>
> When she reaches me she tells me her name is Anahita, she is 21 and a second year painting student. She has a quietly assertive gaze, her step is sure, she wears blue jeans worn and shredded at the hem and sneakers. Apart from her loosely worn headscarf and knee length cotton coat, she looks like any art student

anywhere in the world. Her hair is pushed out of her scarf onto her forehead and she has no intention of adjusting it. I notice she has two paintings. She tells me that she has just finished the other one, last night! These paintings are self-portraits. They show Anahita's face with big staring eyes and then a pool of sharp saturated colour pouring down her canvases. Almost pure orange and a warm read. These pools of colour are covers for her body, parts of which push out into space. In the orange one the belly and then pubic area below, in the red a young breast.

I have seen Anahita painting in the corridor in front of the studio before, but she was painting the lavatories in cool greys and blues. I had noticed her dedication on several occasions when I was passing, in fact I had photographed her. These two large (approximately 100cmX6ocm) paintings are so very different in the handling of the paint, palette and subject matter. I ask her about them. She mentions Egon Schiele and books. But she moves on to tell me that she is short of space in her dormitory. It becomes clear that not everybody is allowed to see these.

Anahita is from a Southern province and away from her loved ones. She has painted these for herself. She tells me that her father is a sociologist and her mother runs an after school art class.

By this time several other people have gathered around us. Two are male painting tutors, Mr. Vakili, and Mr. Karim Khan Zand. The former volunteers some advice on the textures in the colours of the background in her paintings. There is no depth but there are several mixtures put down as flat patches of colour, a variety of very pale yellow/white greys. She says what is in her paintings is what she intended to do. The two male tutors and the few students gradually wonder off. I look for a suitable spaces to photograph Anahita with her paintings. She asks me what I think of them. I tell her I admire her and her paintings and encourage her to continue. I tell her about a small transcription I did of a Cézanne painting, and how I learned about the tens of mixtures that he had used to cover an area of 20X25cm. I explain that I would have never guessed this just by looking. She listens with interest. I ask Anahita to hold the orange painting in front of her face ... it is a self-portrait after all I say. She likes the idea and as I hand her the painting that we had put against the wall, she holds it at an angle in front of her face so her body and the painting line up. I tell her that I would like to interview her when I return in October if I may. She agrees. I ask her permission to show the photographs. She looks at me, smiles for the first time, and says yes ... opens her arms and embraces me ... I cannot say anything

> else, I am afraid my voice might not come out ... I have a class to observe and am very glad of it."

I would never have understood Anahita if I had not been myself active and struggling in the studio to resolve issues to do with art and identity. Gender issues, however, would be part of my 'deconstruction' of data and Anahita would be very much part of that chapter in the thesis. Her autonomy not only astounded her tutors but also her peers. Her personhood seems to be the single most crucial point she wishes to raise. At 20 and in the confines of her dormitory she is working to tell us of her state of mind. I know what that means, hours, days of struggle to resolve a piece of work in the studio. Perhaps this 'struggle' is our common identity. She is hanging herself with the threads of her scarves, with her oils, on her canvas in front of our eyes. Her art education is giving her the tools she needs although scornful of the outcome. Anahita showed me her work because she mentally connected with me through art she felt no barriers, and I am glad to be the bridge between her space and ours in this research.

Appendix 7: Comments on Tehran exhibition

Viewers' Comments about the show

Below are a selection of comments from my visitors' book, and given to me verbally; because I did not ask for permission, I am unable to disclose names.

Mr. Motabar, painter and art jurist for national and international biennales: "This is serious work. It is very serious. It is an intelligent and sensitive address of a number of ideas. This body of work should remain in Iran."

"Who is to know the secrets of the rose garden?"

Writer, critic, art collector: "This body of work is highly original, it is 'virgin'; it should not be allowed to leave this land. It should remain here in its entirety.."

Female artist: "Please come and talk to our art video makers about how you perceived this short video. Perhaps you can help them understand that there is no need for words, calligraphic elaborations and poetry in videos."

Viewer: "I love the video, the nude foot is beautiful."

Architect: "I love the nude foot, it is erotic."

Sculptor: "I have stepped into the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, reflected on it, and reluctantly stepped out."

Sculptor: "The surfaces of these female forms have been cut into with sharp tools, these marks are not made by caresses, is this a metaphor for women's experiences? I wish we could have a discussion."

Theatre designer: "As you can see this is my third time visiting your show, this time I have brought my students. I salute you for the immense life, desire, fervour, exuberance, knowing, and technique flowing from your hands. How alive this clay has become."

Artist: "Daring, daring, daring! So, political discussions are possible in Iran after all?"

The Council of Iranian Sculptors: "Very well done, you have broken new ground."

Mr. Nasr, painter and art jurist for national and international biennales at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art: "I am gripped by your work, I think there are similarities between my paintings and your sculptures. I would like to talk to you about colour! I am not sure I understand the reason behind some of your surface treatment, let us discuss our work."

Well known ceramic artist: "Thank you for bringing this work to Iran, how you did it I cannot imagine. I love the soft weightlessness of them in midair, flying."

Mr. Karim Khan Zand, sculptor and painter: “Your work has created much discussion in Tehran, … it has created continuous ripples and thought.”

Well known female international sculptor/stone carver: “A masterpiece! I wonder if we might find some time to discuss form, I think it might have been good if some pieces were curved more.”

Viewer: “ This show is rubbish, I don’t understand anything.” (Signed) graphic artist.

Female viewer: “You have captured what I consider to be the essence of humanity, its search, movement, and life.”

Participant female students from Tehran University: “This is us, these are about us! I can see myself here.”

Participant from the ‘Private Life Class’: “Oh my god, that is my body, that is exactly the angle of my hip to my upper thigh.”

A group of male students from Tehran University on their second visit to the show: “We want to ask you something. We have been thinking, and want to offer you a price for one of the pieces…that one, we love it, how did you do it, it hangs in two sections, but at angles…that liquid blue, we love that… Yes we thought we create a co-op and buy it.” One says: “I really want to take it home tonight.”

Mr. Vakili: “These pieces are about our antique lands, they depict our mythology.”

Student: “The encounter with fire has experienced this stone.”

Young woman: “I don’t understand art, but if angels could have fossils, these would be the fossils.”

Student: “I have met my body in your installation.”

Viewer: “Hello, I am Jack, happy to see your show.”

Viewer: “I have not been able to sleep, your sculptures… I don’t know, they are haunting.”

Artist: “These are angels… flying. Broken, yes broken, but still flying angles.”

Female psychoanalyst: “These pieces have a scent, I can smell them.”

David Shutt’s statement for viewers in Tehran

I have included this in the Appendices because as a ‘cultural artefact’ it created discussion in Tehran amongst the viewers who could read and understand English. Many of these viewers told me that they found his analysis fascinating, and that it was good that he shared his idea with his artist colleagues in Tehran. They felt this to be a form of cultural exchange.

"This exhibition of prints, ceramics and video by Mehri Honarbin-Holliday displays an extraordinary depth, range and virtuosity. It goes deep into history in contemporary media, dealing with issues of time, space and surface, in a richly imagined and completely coherent way.

"Shards of pottery from the ancient past mingle on gorgeously orchestrated surfaces in the fragments of text, rich jewel-like colouration in glass glazes set against dry biscuit finishes, suggestive of the arid desert, and water-formed sand. Dance and rhythmic pulse inform the intuitive phrasing of the installation; and we realize that the spacial intervals in the suspended ceramics resonate with a coherence analogous to the intervals of time in the video.

"Rhyming shapes in the intervals create integrated clusters of harmony in the dancing figures, whose surfaces suggest the clinging fabrics of Nereid figures of classical sculpture. There is an extraordinary wealth of metaphor, and range of associations, from East and West. The richness of surfaces in the ceramics are translated with equal verve and textural variety in the prints. There is an equally dynamic grasp of the potential of this medium to celebrate her ideas.

"Body art and ornament play their roles, and it is interesting to realize that whilst most of the figures are female, there are two male torsos hanging next to each other on the wall. Clearly the dancing figures, from the sedate to the frankly erotic, are empathetic projections of self. They are as personal as the dance steps, both assertive and emphatic – and they are the feet of the artist that we see in the video.

"It is interesting to see that she has avoided the containing and compliant metaphors of the vessel in this recent work. Even the sculptural funnels are not designed to contain – they tower and aspire in rising rhythmic ascent. But there is doubt and consideration here: the ascent is not a single-minded and systematic raising of aspiration; we have to occasionally drop back to the lower level. The columns themselves are 'grounded' in a swelling kiln-like base. These pieces seem to be charred, smoked and flaked like embers subjected to great heat in the flames. They are also more clearly subject to the forces of gravity, and their surfaces suggest a different quality and imaginative projection on the clay, the metaphors of earth and fire, as opposed to those of air and water more evident in the dancing body rhythms of the suspended pieces, suffused with light. The video pulls these divergent ideas together and acts as a summation."

David Shutt

January 2004

Appendix 8: A visual culture

Research Diary, February 2002, Remembering my first experience in art

My earliest childhood memories of particular significance and relevant to the concept of self-expression are of my maternal grandmother when I was about four or five years old. She was the oldest person I have ever known and looked quite ancient. She was tall and slender, with warm brown eyes, totally unadorned, her hair in a braid twisted into a bun at the back of her head and almost always in a black buttoned-up structured velvet jacket. In her skirt pockets she carried dried white mulberries, tall green raisons, dried peaches and apricots, and roasted hemp and wheat seeds. She treated us to a handful. She enjoyed smoking a water-pipe on occasion and we were told that in her youth she carried a silver cigarette holder in her bosom. I loved the scent of her tobacco and the 'bubble' sound she created when smoking the water-pipe, and although she did not embrace us, ever, when I remember her I feel warmth and a certain sense of intimacy. A pious widow, she seemed to pray a lot and although she did not live with us she visited frequently but always rushed away on account of urgent matters. She lived somewhere quite unlike my mother's secular household where religious attitudes were regarded as suspect but were tolerated with disinterest and as an aspect of life.

My grandmother taught Qoranic recitation and Islamic practices for women and I believe had a good income from it because she travelled abroad on pilgrimages and brought back colourful toys from far away places. Her voice, diction and judgement in articulating consonants and vowels to the desired beat, but more importantly 'accurate length and breadth' were what people marvelled at. Qoranic texts were to be recited in a clear voice and excellent diction as far as my grandmother was concerned, because she could then hear it even if from two rooms away, and could respond with her corrected version. She also told stories of Houris and Parries the female creatures of heavens, who lived in the distant clouds and always in the heaths of the 'Seventh Heaven'. I do not recall her ever holding a pen and writing anything however, perhaps writing skills were subdued by tradition for women of her generation, she was born in the late 19th century.

What I do remember my grandmother holding, on one occasion when I was not yet at school, is a piece of charcoal in one hand and an egg in the other. She was drawing. With some concentration she steadily and patiently organized the white surface of the egg into equal segments from one pole to another with strong black vertical lines. There is pleasure in this memory as I can still see, in my mind, the charcoal giving out a slight puff of tiny black dots around her drawing. She would gently blow away these black specks in order to keep her eggshell surface clean. She would then place her charcoal in the centre of the stripy form taking it around to locate and draw its equator. Once she had established her spheres, she would then draw fine circles within each segment from top to bottom, almost touching the

sides. These increased in size as they approached the equator and decreased again when nearing the other pole. This made a pattern of relationships. Finally she would divide each circle into equal portions by intersecting the diameters at right angles, giving each portion a name or identity by marking the centre with a letter. I have since wondered the meaning of this ritualistic performance, maybe pre-Islamic! Did each circle and the cross section within it mean to symbolize an entity? To disperse bad spirits, my grandmother would throw a fine white cloth over the egg whilst still holding it and call out the names of every member of family, friends and relatives, pressing down on the centre of each circle at the cross-section with a tiny silver coin. To my astonishment, at some point and with the name of a particular person the egg would shatter, and like a drop of weighty liquid hit the hard surface of a container beneath!

This account holds three intelligible concepts for me. The first is the geometric composition of forms that were adopted to orderly organize the surface of the egg into spaces, the second and particularly exciting is the significance of the circle and the square as primary forms. The incorporation of text with such formal composition, the use of language, and the significance of adopting letters as signs and symbols remain a mystery to me. Thirdly, the veiling and abstraction of an idea, the use of the cloth over the egg, the way it was used to create or conceal a parallel and imagined world or idea fascinate me. The idea of the visible and the invisible is pure abstraction for me. I think there might exist relationships between my personal preference of choosing chalks/pastels to draw with, and the visuality of my grandmother's ritualistic drawing creating puffs and dots of charcoal rising from the egg surface. Whilst I shall never know my grandmother's precise thoughts, I am intuitively prompted to look for and relate these ideas to greater concepts in Iranian art history and the development of its iconography. For this, I need to investigate the earliest manifestations of what might be considered as artistic expression and find some relevance to the contemporary artistic output. I would be well advised to take up Roger Fry's belief that the study of art history needs the co-operation of a number of sciences and should be 'inextricably interwoven with Anthropology, the History of Religion and with Classics' (Gombrich 1965, p. ix), which in this particular case would be Persian antiquity instead of the Greek and Roman cultures.

Tehran, May 19th 2002 - Friday, A day off

This morning everyone is out either playing bridge or on a religious pilgrimage, the two seem to intersect quite easily in this family of mine. I want to do something on my own. I would have really liked to go to the National Gallery on a day like this, or the Tate Modern, I have that longing for seeing art; it is pushing my thoughts in the corner of my mind. It is a public holiday and the museums in Tehran are closed. I set out I don't know for where. I do this at times and something reveals itself, and develops.

As I am walking I am reminded of the Tajrish Bazar, I shall walk it I say to myself, and look at its architecture, and its covered 'round' square. As I walk it I notice the nut shop with the very best varieties of pistachios, maybe six types, arranged in huge sacks. Sacks and sacks of hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts and dried peaches and plums, I like this visual display. Although a public holiday many little shops are open. The bread shop is open, as is almost always, and the huge round 'sheets' of bread are sold as they come out of the oven, I really must buy some before I go away. The olive shop too, there is that particular scent around this shop's doorway. An old fashioned and dense smell of un-refined food, just like bits of Italy! I look up and see hundreds of flags hanging, making for a see-through ceiling. I walk to the end of the Bazar and notice the little shops that sell religious reliquary, I pass them, by a few steps. I stop in front of the short staircase that goes down to the shrine. I watch everything but particularly the clusters of people for some time, maybe twenty minutes. Formally it is very interesting, men, and women who look like cones and cylinders, women because they are wearing the chador, and men because they look well fed. Their leisurely pace makes them appear floating, especially because I am higher up than they are, at the top of the stairs. I want to go in, perhaps it's the architecture, it is so beautiful, but realize that I have no socks on and feel uncomfortable about going down, submitting my shoes and walking the shrine in bare feet. Is it allowed anyway? I continue to watch. It is nearly prayer time and I really want to go in. I decide to look around for a sock shop. I eventually find a vendor and buy a pair of black cotton socks, they should cover my feet and ankles up to my trousers nicely. I put them on in some corner behind a strawberry seller's stand. I don't think anything or anybody can stop me now, I am going to the shrine, I am determined. I climb down the stairs, borrow the chador head cover that is supplied for free, there are tens of them in a pile some flowery in fine voile cotton and some black with bold patterns. I put one over my head, walk across the court to the shoe keeper, submit my shoes and enter the shrine. This entrance is for women. There are tens of women in prayer. I wish I could film their movement. There are all ages and almost all classes and types. I wonder why they are there, I wonder about my place in all this. I only wanted to look at the architecture, I feel dissatisfied that the central shrine which should be a large full cube is halved to segregate men and women in order they move comfortably. It bothers me that only half of the silver chamber is available to me to touch and look through. I want to walk around the whole cube, half is not satisfying enough, well it is just half. I pay attention to the detail of the silver work. You can see through the negative spaces created by a filigree of geometric/interlocking forms. The Beautiful and cool metal gives warm emotion, it is scented with the rosewater the attendants bestow it. The geometric knot system gives hollows, as if tiny windows to another world, spaces within spaces, marked with a fine band of emerald green cloth in knots in remembrance. There is a glass cube inside that houses money in notes and coins… alms. I enjoy watching the arms and hands that try/struggle to reach, to touch these silver filigree walls, this shrine; I do the same. It is no longer an

automatic move for me, I distance myself from anything ritualistic these days. What is this ritualistic automatic movement anyway? Why are these hands in hope of reaching, reaching for the silver wall of the shrine? Or is it to grip something symbolic, and hold it firm as if to make it promise something vital. This silver geometry is felt in remembrance? Remembering a belief system from within? I see its strong aesthetic power. I think of this in slow motion, I imagine this in slow motion…. It is so beautiful moving back and forth. It should be filmed, I think. Not the bodies or the faces, just the hands and the arms reaching for something; something from deep within. The occasional sound of prayer intervenes.

I move on leaving this half chamber. No I do not like the 'half' thing. I think of women in Iran, are they halved? Maybe publicly. No one should be halved. I arrive at the hall that surrounds the middle shrine, the silver cube. I stand here for ages. Tens of women are in prayer in front of me, standing, bending. I imagine their mouths moving, they have their backs to me. Their black and the white chadors over their heads, they are 'whole' forms. They cannot be halved. I look at the ceiling. It is large, and I watch its expanse covered with very fine tiny reflecting geometric pieces of mirror set patiently one next to another making the most spectacular repeat pattern. Crystal chandeliers hang down and the mirror work reflect the light in thousands of shifting/shimmering pieces: colour and light pour everywhere, the colours of the fine bright carpets beneath, the colours from the large glass in the arched windows, lots of yellows, lots of different whites, blues and reds… Colour and light… Colour and light. The ceiling moves with reflected light and the movement of life beneath. It is like a movie of just colours. I am mesmerized. There is another patch of moving colour further on. This large patch does not have any warm colours, it is just light and then the tiny pieces of mirror that appear dark, there is a shift of brilliant light and shade, what has just been bright becomes dark…they move… I feel dizzy… This is a performance of light, geometric light… No it is me, I change the reflection as I move my eyes. It is me in the ceiling, each tiny mirror reflects me. It is an image. It is a performance. It is the light that performs…..

I stand there for some time and touch the mirror wall behind me. They are in relief, very subtle relief. Some pieces are only like a brush stroke. A search for similar experiences move around my mind. I am not in control of this, such needs for associations are automatic…I think of paintings… architecture… precision… a structured and luminous surface. I touch the mirrored wall and I think of jewels in paintings. I excavate some images from my memory. I remember a pear painted by Euan Uglow, with glowing tiny facets. I think of that postcard I have of the pearls in a painting by Georges de La Tour. I feel a need of knowing who perceived this mirror geometry. Who were these craftsmen who created these walls and ceilings and what drove them. What did they imagine they were creating, was it just light they were reaching for? I am stunned by this choreography, the dancing ceiling, chains of reflections, moving women without faces. I watch the whispering forms, tiny mirrors of light

and shadow and the tiny sounds of prayer…all hankering after the abstract… I collect my gaze and reluctantly take my leave.

Slowly, I walk through the lines of praying bodies, now seated…now standing… lips that whisper, eyes that flicker, word patterns…. I recognize these words only because I know them, they are abstract and hushed sounds: Ssss, Hhh, Aaaa. I am happy with this abstraction.

Outside there are people having picnics of bread and cheese, on a family outing. So simple and modest, so matter of fact. This space belongs to them, and they are claiming it. I am offered some dates by an older man. I take one and murmur a prayer, my words have become abstract sounds too. I have an intention to say something positive, something that can only have a place in my imagination as if a reliquary of another world, an abstraction. But all I digest from my own prayer is a word rhythm, a pattern of sounds…Abstract sounds…communication through abstraction… We are all doing it!

The architecture of the shrine is powerful, I take a last look and imagine it without the crowds, such symmetry… such balance… I exit from the main gate onto the street handing in my borrowed chador. Outside I light some candles arranged in a box by a woman vendor. I create another version of light and movement and become a moving dot in the crowds in the Bazar.

Visiting shrines in Mashad, October 25th 2002

I rise at 6 this morning and look out of the window; I cannot see the sunrise although I know it is there deep under the clouds. Like so many things in life, it is a question of knowing through experience. Sensing. So, the sun is there, I know it is, I just cannot see it this morning. I can see much else. The golden dome and minaret of the shrine in the distance, not shining this morning because of the early morning pale mist. The blue of the other domes punctuate space, dotted around. I watch the multitudes of arches, almost without people at this hour. I am watching this, 9th century site (late 2nd A.H.) the tomb of the 8th Shiite Imam Reza and the most important religious venue in Iran from my (VIP!) suite on the 6th floor of 'the best hotel' in downtown Mashad in the province of Khorasan, some 1000 km in NW Iran.

Everyone is sleep. I have my filter coffee, watch some more and decide to go for a walk in the courtyards of the shrine, I want to enjoy their architecture. I so love these courtyards especially when they are not crowded. I weave through the streets which are being swept.

The 15th century Ivan and Courtyard complex at Goharshad Mosque are a beautiful extension at Imam Reza Shrine. The complex geometric tile work in this monument holds the highest number of colour combination in Iran apparently, over fifty I am told. I sit at the worn marble fountain base for some minutes, it is a very large octagonal form with acute arched angles. There are several sprinklers. The sound and movement of water are heavenly in the fresh of

early morning, everything is so crisp. There are four upright four-sided drinking fountains around the octagonal marble base, their arches match. I put my hand in, water is so curious to touch, cool and weightless. I walk towards the inner sanctuary, just one or two men about, I observe a student and master in discussion. They are seated on the red carpet, a man of about 25 and a boy of 15-16 or so. They seem to be referring to a handwritten text on the lap of the former. I sense a kind of love between them, they are almost one, and a sense of reasoning in their discussion. They are perfectly ordinary, no particular religious clothing, no scull cap, but I do wonder about the content of their discussion. Perhaps it is best I do not know, we cannot expect to know everything, because we won't.

There is an important library and a religious school on Goharshad compound. Some steps away there is a document on the wall about the history of this place. Something like "This monument was executed on the orders of her ladyship Gowhar-Agha the wife of Shahrukh, son and successor of Amir Timur in 821 A.H. L." There is a table on one side with many small prayer tablets in unfired golden clay, some are very well worn and shine with age. An elderly small-framed clergy next to me points one out and says that it is from the sacred clay of Karbala in central Iraq. I am surprised that he speaks to me, being a cleric, and I treat myself to a conversation with him. We talk very naturally and I enquire after the two rings on his fingers. He tells me that one must be careful when wearing such rings in order not to be disrespectful to the names of saints engraved in the stones. I say that I like his very long prayer beads, he tells me that there are 99 single beads each inlaid with the names of Allah in silver. I feel happy about this exchange, and look towards the East wing, I decide to visit the library. I ask an attendant who is reciting the Quran where the library is, he points me to its direction and says it won't be open, because it is not 8 o'clock yet. I ask him where I might be able to get some literature on this particular monument/mausoleum/mosque. He volunteers an attendant in the distance to take me there. This attendant is very quick and rushes me through some very beautiful architecture, vast room into vast room with tall arched windows in coloured glass. I note the clusters of five interconnecting vast rooms, I remember this to be a characteristic of Persian architecture. We arrive at a door with a plaque: 'International Relations Hall'. My companion sends me in and leaves. This is a huge hall, inside a middle aged man in a light coloured suit greets me. I explain to him that I would like some written information on the design of Imam Reza compound and its mosques and monuments. He says "May I ask for what purpose?" I explain that I need to see the plans and might need to quote some facts and figures about the geometry of these designs for my thesis. He points me to a row of chairs and I sit down. I note there is a large TV screen with prayers in Arabic and English subtitles. I fill in a request form, and my host fetches me a number of brochures and says that I may also take any two books from the stands at the far end of the hall, as I am entitled to them as a visitor. We go there together and I choose one on 'Islamic Morality For The Youth' and one on 'The Life Of Her Holiness Fatima the daughter of the Prophet

Mohammad'. These shall go to towards my literature review, I think to myself. Then, my host, very gently, says "I wonder if you could be kind to us and look at the 'English' of a couple of documents we have prepared and tell us if they read well". I am surprised and I say that I should certainly like to help if I can, and will have a look. We walk to a large desk at yet another side of this Hall and he points me to a chair. He then fetches two sheets of paper on which he has written a certificate for embracing Islam as a faith, and a certificate of marriage. The wording is almost perfect and I negotiate with him some new clauses. This takes around 30 minutes and finally between us, we organize two simple documents with spaces for names, nationalities, passport numbers, dates and signatures etc. We also put paragraphs indicating that these papers have 'no other legal value' and that they are 'for registration purposes only'. We communicate very well. He asks me in which country I am pursuing my studies. He tells me that he has lived in the US himself. He then goes to a room behind his desk and brings me a translation of the Quran and a handful of postcards and says that he is grateful to me for my assistance. He says that a couple from Italy and Switzerland converted to Islam and married at the mosque only yesterday, and that they are coming back today to collect their documents. He also tells me that it was a very moving occasion to witness, and that is why he had initially wished to put a statement in the certificates noting the profoundly emotional state of the Italian and the Swiss during the procedures. But he now agreed with me that it was not necessary to mention their tears, deeply touching though it all was.

It occurs to me that this side of Islam could be talked about a little more, where are the BBC cameras now, the ordinariness of the decent existences of millions is overshadowed by political games.

I say my goodbyes to my now 'colleague' and rush to my hotel, they must be wondering where I am, and what I am up to. When I arrive at my smart hotel I am told by my companions that they have been worried about me, and that they have already breakfasted. I have been away for three hours.

I have used my English Quran on several occasions.

Appendix 9: Mr Motabar

April 24th 2002, Mr. Motabar, term 5, (year 3), drawing

Mr. Motabar is about 60 and has a calm easy manner with great concentration. He is in a warm brown moleskin loose jacket with a zip in the front over a textured stripy shirt showing a white vest underneath. This goes with warm brown corduroys and lace up suede shoes. He wears very pale almost rimless glasses.

I have introduced myself very briefly in the entrance to the staff room on the ground floor of the department, but am delayed and have missed going to class with him. When I join him I pull up a chair not far from his desk and where I can see everyone and sit down. He comes to me and listens very attentively to what I have to say (we continue our discussion started downstairs about why I am at the University observing practices), he says he understands and will talk to me soon and leaves me to attend to the students.

One student puts a tape in the tape recorder and all through the class music is played, this is not too loud but it is just above the sound of the individual discussions between tutor and student as well as the students themselves. I believe the tape recorder belongs to the gallery. I have seen in here in a different session.

Class starts at 9.00 a.m. sharp but the set up is already arranged in the centre of the top part of the gallery which might be around 40x12 metres. This set up consists of plaster casts of busts, torsos and heads. They are larger than life size and are arranged at slightly varying heights. There is a large brown tree trunk, cut flat at the change of plane of its branches, placed at the base of the set up.

At the beginning of the class there are two or three students setting up their places and tools. More come in and by 9.15 there are 9 young ladies, and 6 men of whom three are 40+. One I have met before in Dr. Moghadam's wall painting/mural class where he has submitted studies for a mural in welded metal relief.

Mr. Motabar does not address the class as a group but is walking around circulating and looking at where the student is setting up her/his work and examining the angle/view of the set up for that particular student. There exists a quiet understanding of what is supposed to be happening.

Natural light pours in from the enormous windows on the one side and the band of light windows at the top of the wall on the opposite side. Although it is very sunny outside, there is no direct sun disturbing the class. There are tens of easels and small benches and chairs with arm rests which one can use to write on.

Students mostly choose to draw on their knees on A3 loose paper stacked and attached to a clipboard. One tall male student draws on an easel. Many draw with pencils, but charcoal and conte is also used. Everyone is working with concentration.

Mr Motabar comes to me and asks me to pull up my chair nearer to his desk, he then proceeds to give me some information.

"My postgraduate education was interrupted in the US and I returned to Iran in 1976. The curriculum here was the same at the Beaux Arts in Paris then. Although we did not have a nude life class, we did have the anatomy class where men and women posed in minimal clothing, discreet underwear for example. Students often got together and girls in leotards posed.

In my class in the US we also had the model walk around sometimes, I thought this was very useful as I myself explored the body in movement. Now, here, we use the 'antique'. We believe in letting the students discover their sensibilities. But very often this is confused with lax work! It must not be. This is very serious work. You see, it is like a driving lesson, I am the driving instructor, the student is the one who should do the driving. I sit next to my student and give advice most suitable for that particular situation. The student should discover the language of drawing, they must find it through discipline. Later, when I see the student has understood and gained fluency I can recommend simplification, exaggeration, distortion and abstraction. But this discipline is often lacking, indeed rare.

Mr Motabar moves away and engages with students. I hear some instructions: Give time, look at the line…you see the curve that follows it…look…only put down what you see…time…give it time…look.

Everyone is working, the tape is playing, the plaster casts (two identical male torsos, female head with masses of hair pouring down her front, male bust, male head) make a huge mass on a desk and two higher stands, the dark large tree trunk sits on the floor. The contrast of the white of the plaster and the deep brown of the tree is striking as are the differences in their textures.

Mr Motabar joins me again and continues our discussion:

> Unfortunately one's colleagues are not always of the same opinion, but I believe drawing is absolutely fundamental. I am known for this here. My work is recognized in Iran. I have sessions here and at Azad University. There is occasionally the one student who becomes interested in drawing as the essence in all art. If you don't have drawing as the substructure, you cannot put paint down directly on the canvas, that is why in your class in England students put paint down directly.

> The students do sometimes pose for one another here, but I have heard them complain about all these layers of clothing…. But we are limited and have to work within our limits. An artist must be like a soldier, she/he must soldier on.

Mr. Motabar leaves to attend to the students.

One female student walks around and watches others' work. The impact of the noise outside is slightly lessened by the music. I decide to show some courage and get up from my seat and notebook to look around and take some photographs. One of the male students joins me but we do not speak in order not to disturb the others.

I hear Mr Motabar give instructions: What you are doing is a lie… Look… Look at your subject carefully.

I later see that student to restart on a new sheet of paper using her thumb and charcoal to measure.

Mr Motabar talks to another student: …You have chosen to deal with the light…Let the light clarify the line. Mr. Motabar often sits next to the students working with them.

We continue with our discussion. Mr. Motabar says:

> I would prefer them to use plum lines, but I am prepared to go from the back alleys and find the connections…horizontals and verticals…you can discover these things from various ways… Whilst we possess this quality of artistic substructure in our literature, in our poetry, we lack it in our painting…This is our dilemma! The tradition of the academy has not settled in our psyche… Everything has been disrupted! This type of drawing is precise, we are not about to exaggerate the line here. I want my students to understand this first before doing anything else.

It is now just over the one hour since the start of the class. Students ask for a break, one is sent to fetch tea for everyone, I am told they take turns to bring in some cakes or biscuits. There is a large box of delicate Danish pastries that is offered to everyone. Mr. Motabar says that this is the tradition of the class and it also saves time.

During this break I ask two of the older male students why they are doing art. One responds quickly and says that he is an army officer and is reading law and art to use in his work. He has a beard and unhealthy teeth. He is outspoken and at some point in the conversation responds to my comment of 'there are such paradoxes in this (our) society'. I have said this because someone has asked me what I have observed so far. He says paradoxes or opposites exist in any society like they exist in a drawing…in a drawing we have very dark and very light…. I smile at this.

The second man in his middle years says he would tell me why he is doing art later. And when class resumes, he pulls up a chair and sits next to me. I imagine he is going to draw from a new angle, but I realize he has started talking to me.

His name is Hossein, he tells me that he is from the lower income layer in society and that he is SHIMIYAEE which I try to work out. I realize that it means he is affected by biological/chemical weapons in the Iran Iraq war. Hossein tells me that he has problems breathing sometimes and his lungs do not function properly. He says that he hears noises in his head. He has tears in his eyes as he talks to me. He is clean and tidy in his appearance, unshaven, in clothes that one could associate with rural life. He is articulate. He says that he finished the Honarestan (secondary school in art) when the war started (September 1981-July 1988). He had to go to the front, and he did with three of his best friends. There were five of them in his platoon and that he witnessed three of his best friend get killed. He regrets not having gone to the front with his best friend the night he got killed, he had asked Hossein to stay with him that night.

Hossein has to stop once or twice in order to collect himself. He has tears in his eyes. He shows me his brief case where he keeps a plastic bag of medicines. He says he loves oil painting and that he specializes in portraiture. He is well known in Semnan, north-east of Tehran by three hours. He travels to Tehran three days per week and is nearly at the end of his art course. He shows me a sheet of paper that shows the modules he has covered. There are only one or two areas that are not crossed out yet. I ask him if he looks at books or paintings in Museums to see how other people have painted portraits. He says that he has only recently managed to buy a house and he is rather short of money, even coming to Tehran is expensive for him. I am very moved by his account as he tells me so openly that he is looked after by The Martyrs Foundation and that he specialises in Martyrs' Portraitures.

Mr. Motabar notices this private discussion but does not interrupt us. I am rather worried that he might consider me rude to create a private discussion, independent of the purpose of the class which is drawing.

At 11.30 sharp Mr Motabar leaves me his card, on my notebook, and leaves. I am still in conversation with Hossein. Most of the students pack and leave except for one girl who must have come in just before Mr. Motabar leaves. She comes to me and asks me what I am doing. I explain. She tells me that she is a graduate of Al Zahra University and has just completed her MA at Azad University. She intends to travel to the US for another MA. She has many questions. I advise her to put together a very good portfolio and slides for her interviews in the US.

Four other students gather around me. A young man says that it was he who organized Mr Motabar's class. I ask how so, and he says that he had heard that Mr Motabar was an

excellent tutor and therefore rallied others to persuade the Director of the course to employ him, so Mr Motabar has only been teaching them for two terms.

The older student who also fought in the Iran/Iraq war and is now an Officer and studying law and art tells me that the choice of tutors is not always based on the needs of the students but the inter-relations of the Director with his friends. He makes an example of Dr. Moghadam being brought from Khorasan (N-E Province) by Dr. Hosseini-Rad. I mention that this is the case everywhere and give some examples at my department in Canterbury. I also mention that it is for their particular expertise that they were invited to teach at my department. One young man comes forward and says that there is no proper system in Art Education in this place (in the country). He would like to know why in his national entrance exam, he had to show his aptitude in religion and Islamic ideology. He repeats: Why? The young lady who is going to the US says that he is absolutely right. She adds that the designers of these courses have no idea what they are doing.

This becomes a pretty heated discussion and many opinions are given. The consensus is, however, the lack of understanding of the designers of the course of what Art is about.

My companion of the last hour, the chemically affected student, goes and has a brief chat with one other older student who is still drawing. He comes back to tell me that in the National University Entrance Exams, there is a box where students connected to the Iran/Iraq war put a check mark which facilitates certain considerations.

At this point I am exhausted and say that we might meet again and say goodbye and leave. It is now 12.15, p.m. and I left the house at 7.30 a.m., I arrive at home at 2.00, p.m.

On the back of the card that Mr. Motabar has left me there is a note saying the times he at his atelier. I telephone him on the following Sunday and go to visit him

May 2nd 2002, Manoocher Motabar's atelier

I arrive at 4, p.m. but the session is from 2-6, p.m.

This is in a leafy quarter of N. Tehran and on the 1st floor of a three storey building. He gently greets me and shows me a seat next to him. There are three young girls and one young boy sitting and drawing from a plaster cast of 'The Slave'. This is a long room which holds a desk and a swivel chair at one end and a table and two easy wooden arm chairs at the other with big windows. The windows continue to an area that is like a kitchen and tea is brewing. Mr. Motabar tells me to help myself if I would like any. Near the kitchen there is a large and long mirror and a woman is doing a self-portrait. There is lots of space for all this and I later realize that at the end of this large room behind the desk there is another room where four young people are drawing from a 'still life' set up. There are some drawings and small paintings on walls. Two of them are of 'nudes'. There is a large counter where a stereo sound

system is placed with tens of CDs. There is some hushed music, something like Bach, is playing. Two more students come in and sit to work. Girls take their head scarves and coats off.

I help myself to some tea. It is 'Teacher's Day' and students have brought some delicate cakes. I just smell them. They smell so wonderful. I tell Mr. Motabar that I love the light pouring in through the windows. He says that he can see that I love being here all together. He says that often when people study art when they are older, they develop deeper sensibilities! He says to appreciate beauty one has to distance oneself from it first. He says it is like drawing, to see the line, you have to distance yourself from it and feel it with your mind.

Mr. Motabar sits in his large wooden armchair covered with lots of fine kelims and tells me that when he went to the US it felt as though he was on the top of a tall building looking at his home country. He started understanding many things about Iran then. As though he could see the whole that was made of many parts…

I ask him why he teaches, he tells me that it gives him a good feeling to give something… He feels something good inside when he gives something back…

I ask him about identity, and he says he does not believe in it. (I think he is referring to the sense of identity that seems to be the governmental line that involves Islam and the Islamic heritage rather than a personal concept).

I ask him about Modernism in art, and he says that we do not have a modern identity in art, that we have never had a chance to develop this concept in our psyche as a nation.

He leaves me to attend to the students, he discusses their work with them in a quiet voice. This gives me a chance to write my notes.

When he returns I suggest to him that I consider his work as 'modern' so how could he say that it does not exist. He tells me that Modernism in art is a discussion, an ongoing discussion, and that we have no share in this discussion. He says that it is a question of participation!

Mr. Motabar tells me of his exhibitions in New York and Switzerland where he exhibited several nudes. He tells me that the current social and political structures in Iran and its demands are provoking new emotions. He says that he has had to rethink and although he has always hated this coverage of the women (he makes a gesture with his hand around his face), he nevertheless started drawing human again, form but this time with a cover on it. He tries to find the form hidden under all this covering up through his senses. He is forced by his need to draw, he adds, and to take up new ways.

I comment that his work is still, in a way, beautiful. He says it is art that does this, he draws what he sees; what he senses is hard and aggressive… "These covered women I draw…they

are not beautiful…they are worried and they are closed forms… These forms are not tender… they are rough. My feelings about the traditional cover for women are destructive. I have had to transfer my skills from one type of form to another…. If you see them as beautiful, it is art that does this."

I mention Giotto's friezes I have seen in Italy. Mr. Motabar says that Italian art is indeed mind- blowing. He speaks of Michelangelo and how he saw 'form', the figure, the leg, in the block of marble and how he set out to reveal that form which was really already there!

Mr. Motabar says that he likes this way of analysis that I do, he tells me that I attend to things deeply, and he says that it is good that I am doing this research. He says that art gives an inner confidence. He asks me what kind of work I do and I tell him that I shall show him some photos next time we meet.

I get up and look at the work of the students. I ask one older man how long he has been coming and he tells me that he sits and waits for his daughter sometimes and whilst waiting he draws. His daughter is in the 'still life' room and she has been drawing with Mr. Motabar for some years, since she was 12, and now she supervises the beginners. He also tells me that she is about to start her university degree in architecture and that she draws at home a lot.

The woman who is doing a self-portrait in front of the mirror tells me that her generation have suffered the most in Iran, because they had seen life before the revolution and it is much more difficult to learn to live in this era. It is unbelievable that the revolution happened 23 years ago and people talk about it as though it has just happened. The shock and the impact of the revolution is felt so deeply in people's lives.

It is 5.30 and the door bell goes, Mr. Motabar always has a little look through the window before he presses the little electric button to open the door! It is a young lady who has come to collect a painting for an exhibition. They young lady is charming and although Mr. Motabar is very reluctant to give work, he does so eventually. He says that he does not wish to exhibit under a political title. The exhibitions is to raise funds for Palestinian children.

Mr Motabar tells me that he'll put together some information about himself, articles etc., that might be useful to me. I thank him for this and reluctantly get my headscarf and coat and leave. I try to find an adjective for this man who weaves in and out of the students with unrushed yet purposeful steps. His laughter and sense of humour have a sardonic flavour and I feel it in his art. I suppose these things are his intellectual saviour, forming his identity.

May 2nd 2002, Manoochehr Motabar's atelier, Tehran

Mr. Motabar is about sixty, tall, has a considered step when he walks ... he does not rush, and speaks little and unexpectedly with an ironic smile. Often he gives the answer to a question sometime later ... but he is always there, attentive and gives his full attention to things. I have

also found him attractively sardonic at times. I am told by my family that I am like that. His atelier is a wonderful place with windows that bring in beautiful light. In the centre of the large apartment there are some plaster casts, notably a version of one of Michelangelo's 'Slaves'. Usually a number of students (4-5) sit around these casts and draw. There is a room at the far end where a few students draw from still lifes and flowers, nearer the windows there are a couple of large mirrors when on one occasion I noticed a woman working on a self-portrait. Everybody draws in pencil and some classical music is played softly on the substantial music centre and its numerous discs. On the walls are drawings and a few paintings of Mr. Motabars'. On one wall he has numerous images of Degas' sculptures of dancers. He must have an additional room where he paints that is not open to us, perhaps he paints downstairs where his family live. I met with Mr. Motabar at Tehran University where he holds two three hour sessions of drawing per week. He subsequently invited me to his atelier in the north leafy suburbs of Tehran. The following are a few extracts of conversation useful for the purpose of this paper.

Mr Motabar tells me that essentially he is a painter of the nude and that in his exhibitions in New York and Switzerland he has shown several paintings of the nude. He tells me that the current social and political structures in Iran and their demands are provoking new emotions. He says that he has had to rethink his position and although he has always hated this "coverage" of the women (he makes a gesture with his hand around his face), he has nevertheless started drawing and painting form again, but this time with a cover over it. He tells me that he tries to find the form hidden under all these layers; he is forced to take up new ways because of his need to draw.

I comment that his work is still, in a way, beautiful. He says it is art that does this, he draws what he sees; what he senses... "they are hard and aggressive... these covered up women I draw ... they are not beautiful ... they are worried and they are closed forms.... These forms are not tender ... they are rough. My feelings about the traditional cover for women are destructive. I have had to transfer my skills from one type of form to another.... If you see them as beautiful, it is art that does that`.

Mr Motabar talks to me about the genius of Michelangelo, how he was able to see and sense form, the human form, its exact place in space, the exact proportions of a knee in a block of marble.

Mr. Motabar tells me that Modernism in art is a discussion, an ongoing discussion and that he has no share in this discussion in Iran. He tells me that Modernism for him is a question of participation, through his art and intellect. How, then, could he feel part of this discussion if he is not participating in it; he asks me. He says---What is important is to look at the same horizon rather looking at one another".

I identify with Motabar on many levels but most crucially that one must feel a participator in affairs one is passionate about. To an outsider like me he seems engaged and busy, but obviously he feels marginalized. He feels close enough to me, both as an artist and a messenger to speak like this. I have experienced what he is going through, ironically I have experienced this in England.

The idea of 'cover' over form is also discussed in my work and in my show I have a ceiling of muslin to protect suspended pieces underneath which is a temporary lifting of the cover. This shift of where one's footing is, is extremely interesting. But more importantly both Motabar and I regard art as knowledge and I have witnessed his systematic, scientific approach in teaching it to his students. I want to be his tool to participate in the "ongoing discussion" of Modernism in some form. I must. I want him to be present in my writings for his dignity and his love and respect for art and his students. MY research must reflect his views.

May 23rd 2002, Mr. Motabar's atelier

It is my last week in Tehran and I have come to visit Mr. Motabar and pick up some leaflets he promised me. It is very nice to see him and I start noticing the books that he has everywhere. They are both in Farsi and English. He is playing Baroque music. The cluster of young girls (5 of them) sitting around the plaster cast in a semi circle with their clip boards and concentrating on their drawings, is very beautiful and peaceful. I imagine them in a painting, they all have ponytails bunched up into a bun. This accentuates the roundness of their heads, I notice their necks and shoulders. I wish I could paint this. This reminds me of a painting by Matisse in Morocco, I am reminded of men in round turbans.

I have taken my niece Saara with me, I introduce her to Mr. Motabar and as they engage in a conversation I continue looking at the backs of the young girls drawing. I ask Mr. Motabar if he has painted this and he laughs…

I notice the computer desk, I think I had missed it last time I was here, and there is a young man working at it. I also notice the black and white photos of Degas' dancers and Picasso's atelier.

Mr Motabar asks me how my research is developing, and I tell him about the teaching I have observed. I also tell him that the extreme differences in the behaviours in private and public spaces are really interesting. He looks into my eyes and smiles. I also tell him that I don't know whether I am right but I think when it comes to practicing art, everyone seems to be in such a rush! Mr Motabar says that in his opinion as a nation "we are extremely intense and this gets in the way of contemplation and introspection… He says "We eat too fast, we make love too fast, we are in a hurry all the time. Besides as artists as soon as we sell a few pieces, we become arrogant and stop working hard. Yes there is something in what you say, the roots of it are that we do not appreciate art or the job of the artist profoundly enough."

The doorbell goes and two young ladies (17-18) come in take their headscarves and coats off and excitedly show some drawings to Motabar. They are of architecture, of buildings. He spends a few minutes studying them. He then points at one and says "You could have been more brave here… you seem so afraid… Hers is not particularly special but she has broken what she was looking at into sections always watching for the proportions and attending to the proportions in each section. I shall fetch you that book by Seyhoun (a renowned architect and Head of Visual Arts at Tehran University decades ago before the revolution

He then addresses both girls "The background should be considered more seriously… don't lose the quality of your line, you must show your intention. If you cannot see the windows well enough, imagine yourself in them, standing by them…the negative spaces, the dark is important space."

At this point one of the girls asks him to draw what he means. They all move to the desk area at the other end of the large room. The bell goes again and someone lets in two young men. They get a chair and set themselves a place to draw.

Mr. Motabar comes back after a while and reminds me to help myself to tea. He says "In art very few people can hope to be gifted, geniuses… But everyone can be hardworking. Working hard and systematically creates potentiality. To be in a hurry is of no use. Quantity is also important.

I ask him about his views on gender. He tells me that before the revolution gender issues were evolving and resolving…but now I should see for myself…

He sees something and goes towards one of the girls… "Don't make scratchy lines back and forth, look and put down what you can see…I don't know how you can draw and talk at once!"

H comes back to me. We talk about my work and I show him some photos of my tall and black pots. He says some interesting things about some of them and then turns to my niece and says "There is suffering here, suffering has made them beautiful, artists suffer." We talk about my return to England and he says he misses proper 'life classes'.

It is just before 6, p.m. and we decide to leave Mr. Motabar to his students.

Oct. 10th, 2002 , Motabar's atelier

I have just returned to Tehran for the second leg of my data collection.

I have two catalogues of DS's work, and my only precious copy of Euan Uglow's show of 1998 for Mr. Motabar.

I ring the doorbell and go upstairs. I have already seen him at Tehran University so he knows I am back. He greets me gently and looks at my coat and says "Are you cold". I reply "No,

but I don't have a summer roopoosh" and we laugh. He has lots of students working. I go and take my coat off and sit down. After 10-15 minutes he looks at me and says "you remember that you can serve yourself some tea". I go to pour some but the pot is empty. After some moments he goes to the kitchen area and makes some and looks at me and smiles.

I have unpacked the chocolates I brought him and the pile of catalogues and put them on the wooden arm of his chair. I put myself on the bench covered with beautiful worn rugs. I look at the feet of the two young men who are drawing and exchanging ideas about their drawings. They are wearing such wonderful, the state of the arts sneakers. I decide to photograph the shoes of young people in Iran.

Some 45 minutes later Mr. Motabar comes and joins me, I put down the article I have found and am enjoying reading on deconstructing art when critiquing it. He looks at everything, all the catalogues I have brought him. I sit quietly. Then he looks up and says "I am seeing this too late in my life". He is looking at Uglow's paintings. He is almost inaudible. I say "It was the only thing I had that I thought you might like. Also DS's catalogues." He looks up and says "**How you flow on us**". I am surprised at his choice of words, it is almost poetic, well it is poetic. He then says "You understood my needs". He gets up and leaves me to attend to the students in the end room. I feel very good about his reaction. What a phrase …. "**How you flow on us!"** As if I am a river, how nice.

When he returns I explain that DS suggested, judging by Motabar's drawings, that I should take him a book by Muybridge because he would be interested in 'movement'. Motabar says that DS understood well and is right. Then I explain that I could not find a book I could afford, but also wanted to show him Uglow's work. Motabar does not say anything and keeps looking at the reproductions in the catalogue. He points to a few and says that how nobody would understand it here, meaning in Tehran. I know he means the intellect and the exactitude in constructing meaningful surfaces. I say that I think lots of people would understand it, it is not hard to understand, also because his work is so beautiful. People understand beauty.

I drink my tea and watch his students. He is gone again. It is nearly 6.30 pm and students are preparing to leave. When he returns, he points at me whilst talking to a woman who is drawing, and says, "You can see that she (Mehri) gives her tutors a hard time, can't you". He uses "geer mideh" and he says he wishes he had a student who was like me and "geer mideh". We all laugh. He then for the first time introduces me the student body aloud and says that not only I wrote down his responses to my questions carefully, but I also read them to him to see if I had interpreted them correctly! He then shakes his head and says he wants a student like Mehri.

The student ask me about the exhibition at the Museum as New Art or Conceptual Art. I say I have seen it. She asks me what I think of this type of art. I explain. She is surprised. I say that the Director of the Museum is, in my opinion, a very clever man. He is attracting young

people to the museum and I say that I thought the quality of work was good. Motabar says, yes but it is a Museum, not a gallery. We talk around the subject and Motabar says that conceptual art is a development of Modernism and that the students are now hanging to this 'concept' thing and overlook the proper paths to arrive at art issues. He believes that the processes of understanding, the mental journey from drawing, understanding the anatomy, thought and perception are avoided for the sake of being so called 'up-to-date'. He believes that 'ART' is a concept. I tell him about how at my school there is a great emphasis on drawing. He listens to my description of the life class for all first year students and subsequently for painting and sculpture student and anyone else who wishes it. He says that he would like to organize a talk for me at Azad University. To tell the students about all this at Azad University which is a private university that has a reputation for being more free in its approach to education including art education. He says that I should think about it.

We talk some more and then I leave. The woman gives me a lift to the nearest taxi place in her beautiful white old, old 'beatle' with all the original fixtures. She says lots of people are waiting for her to sell it or to die, but she has no intention of either, she occasionally pulls it out and does not want to part with it. I tell her that I would never sell it if it were mine.

I see Mr. Motabar at the University on the 19th and he says, "Yes…yes, I was thinking about you and what you were saying about conceptual art, and the young's need to find ways of expressing themselves meaningful to them, I liked it, you were speaking for yourself without taking sides. Write them down, write them down. See if you can prepare a talk." I tell him that I am off to the Sculpture Studios to observe Mr. Daresh's class, and that two talks are already organized for me, his eyes light up, and he says, "I knew it"

Mehri's exhibition, January 2004

Mr. Motabar comes twice. He listens to everything that I say or others say. He does not say anything, just looks at everything and meditates on the prints for some time. Before he leaves addressing myself and his two companions he says "This is serious work, it is a serious, sensitive and intelligent address. This body of work should be left here in Iran."

Appendix 10: Paryush

I met Mrs. Paryush Ganji-Khayam at Al-Zahra University twice, and followed her class with 2nd year students specializing in textile design. Both sessions were about work in progress, transcribing colour and design from the Modernists into an imagined design and outcome for a summer headscarf. She was not recommended to me by the Dean, I found her in the garden and asked her if she was a tutor and if I could go to her class and spend an hour with them. Paryush thought this was an interesting proposition and asked me why I wanted to do it. Once I explained to her that I was a researcher from a university in England, she participated with great enthusiasm. After the second session I asked her for an interview, and within a fortnight she invited me to her house for the recorded interview because she though it quieter than Al-Zahra University campus. She gave me a copy of her course outline and her CV.

19 November 2002, Recorded interview with Paryush Ganji-Khayam at her house in Chizar, North Tehran.

I arrive at her vast and beautiful apartment in a two storey house at 3 pm, where she comes to the door downstairs through the leafy garden to meet me. She tells me that they share the garden with the family who live downstairs. Paryush is a practicing and exhibiting painter. Smiling and proud, she shows me her large studio which opens to a small balcony overlooking old and magnificent plane trees, looking at her paintings she says “From geometry to Rothko”. I photograph her next to a painting of approximately 3.5x2.5m in progress. Paryush is in a long straight skirt and matching long sweater/jacket in dark purple/aubergine, over very similarly coloured tights. Her sitting room wall is a patchwork of 2D art, the wall itself is hardly visible. Almost all of the paintings are by Iranian artists. Traditional turquoise blue pots and kelims and rugs in geometric designs and warm reds punctuate her living quarters with colour. Her own paintings are minimal in pallet, lots of saturated deep reds and bright orange reds, and blacks. She has had numerous exhibitions at home and abroad and has had residencies in Oman and Japan in connection with her research in textiles. Paryush is calm with a sense of purpose in her conduct. She is a combination of education and sincere sense of tradition and Iranian cultural identity. She is happy to see me and offers me wonderful tea served with dates. I put my questions to her over tea and she responds as follows.

Before I respond to your questions, I would like to tell you how much I admire you and the energy you expend, your enthusiasm, in what you are doing in your research in Iran. You have come with courage posing a set of questions to all of us at difficult times, hoping to reflect on a near to the truth picture. This is rare, who would do it? It is important, very important, I believe there is very little awareness and differentiation outside Iran between Iran

and its neighbouring countries. The pictures from Afghanistan and our geographical proximity to it and a number of other countries in the region do not help us at all. I have travelled extensively in Central Asia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and things are different here in this country even at these difficult times, we are not known for who we are as a nation, and the way we are in our culture.

To respond to your question on the infra-structure of the course design and my teaching, I proceed with a programme which is flexible but is written down. I have created the structure of the courses I teach. I have been engaged in teaching art and Textile Design at Al-Zahra for the last 18 years, I have worked in a number of universities and still do at Honar University, as well as the National Heritage Foundation, so I have expertise in my discipline. At the outset (of the Revolution) there were a thousand and one methods and procedures put forward by a an 'abstract' committee elected by the central government. But seldom by specialists and therefore not of much use to the student body and the tutors. I came in, returning from a job in a textile museum in Washington, with two other ladies, one an architect trained in Iran, and the other a fine artist from Beaux Arts in Paris. You see my husband and myself said to one another one day, let's leave this golden cage, this Washington, it is enough, so we returned to Iran in those dark days of the war with Iraq. I have taught and developed my teaching as an specialist in the field and have written a very specific structure for each year. This is based on my education and training in Iran from the age of 16 in pre-university art school (Honarestan), at Central St. Martins and at Chelsea Art College in London. I also spent one year at the Beaux Arts in Paris. Never finished anything. One did circumnavigate the globe those days in a confusion of leftist ideology and political identity. Cuba was the big one on my list… such illusions…!

I believe the student body today is much more realistic and clear about what they want; I admire this quality, their lives have been tough, so they understand much more than I did when I was their age. I am close to my students, they talk to me and as you know in art one makes personal relationships, my students give me energy… However, the period of 'educating myself' followed by employment in Germany and the US. Now, based on such experiences, I have written the programme, gradually honed it down, and I can say that we have reasonable results. Two of my students from Textile Design have gone to Japan to do MA degrees and are both now scholarship students there, engaged in PhD research.

In our 'crits/judgement' (pronounced as in French 'joojman') sessions right through the academic year we have an open door policy and many join us from other disciplines to observe, as if an open lecture. Each student presents their work and others comment and examine the quality of colour and design, and its relationship to the task set. The end of term questionnaires express some satisfaction from the student body. I insist I must be left free in judging the course design/programme, I insist on it. Being autonomous on the issues

regarding course design is related to who I am and my personal understanding of art as well as my expertise. I have worked with several Deans, Dr. Faramarzi was one of them and he was always, always supportive of my efforts and encouraged me to continue. His understanding and encouragement was vital in my professional development. You see, I am someone who paints regularly and holds exhibitions, spontaneity is part of my mind set; although my work is highly ordered and geometric in concept. This is reflected in my course design and the way we work in class. For example, When I was the drawing tutor at Azad University I got my students to wear tight light clothing and pose for the class. This exercise had its uses in that the structure of the muscles could be read. I found a complete skeleton somewhere and put it next to the model for the complementary architectural structure to the human form. One can improvise, it's a language, understand 90%, express 70%. I arrive at these decisions about both my art and my teaching through remaining active myself and open to new ideas that broaden my way of doing things. The famous saying from Madineh Fazeleh 'do not enter if you do not grasp geometry' has a symbolic meaning for me and is never far from my mind.

One reason for my having survived professionally is the fact that I am a sessional/invited tutor and not a tenure tutor. I am not a member of the official academic council. If the authorities are not satisfied with the way I work, they can release me. I have resisted the permanent academic status so far, it is ideologically bound. This is highly significant in not becoming involved in the processes of self-censorship. I resist self-censorship, I get up in the morning, put my lip stick and my scarf on and go to work, I need the income. I have supported my family financially all my married life. But it must be said that the developments in codes of behaviour and dress in the last few years compared with 18 years ago are astonishing. We are moving forward. Sadly, in the West, there is no consciousness of women like me in Iran; there are considerable numbers of us contributing, and defying restrictions as much as we can. I for one refuse to apply self-censorship and insist on thinking freely, despite the head scarf. You cannot touch my mind.

I cannot control the number of hours that is allocated to the subject areas. These are too few, only half a day or one day per week in the specialization studio is not sufficient to develop the potential of a student. They have so very many subjects to deal with; it is unbelievable the range subjects they have to tackle in an art programme.

November 4 2002, Al-Zahra University, Paryush Ganji-Khayam

This is a 'crit' session first thing, 8.30am. Six high drawing tables of 1.5X1m dominate the room, they are similar to the type architects use, there are also a number of small desks and chairs. There are seven students selecting work to go on walls, two more arrive a little later and quickly unpack their folios and put up work. The tutor is working with the students to

make these selections. Light is flooded in through the big windows at the end, the trunks of the plane trees shine with light, outside. Some time passes, I take photographs.

The tutor looks around and addresses everyone. “The task has been to transcribe a painting of your choice from the modernists to develop your ideas in designing an imaginary chiffon headscarf, considering colour, form, and dimensions suitable for the summer.”

Three painting students come in as observing guests and find a spot and listen and watch.

There are transcriptions from paintings by Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, and Fernand Legér. The tutor asks if anyone has looked at Paul Klee, and the response is that there were not any books in the library. I am reminded immediately that Dr. Shad, Head of Painting at Al-Zahra reminded me to mention the shortage of resources, very small art library and lack of up-to-date books in my report.

Students give their responses to each selection of work. Terms like freedom of form and colour, translucency in relation to colour and the idea of the ‘chiffon’ as a material; the freshness and degree of dilution in colours is contrasted to dense and saturated colour. The term ‘pokhteh’ literary meaning ‘well-cooked’ is used to support the latter! An idea emerges that simplicity or lightness of brush-marks or designs is a good thing, that work does not have to show the ‘toil’ of the painter. It is implied that ‘less is more’ is desirable though often a difficult goal to achieve, requiring deeper understanding of design and idea.

One student has taken the colour ‘deep red’ from a painting by Picasso and has worked with it rather than transcribing a whole picture. As a result there are a selection of deep cool reds, to cooler reds and mauves, to deep purples and violets. Much discussion is encouraged by the tutor around the thinking processes of an artist. Mrs. Ganji makes a point of conceptualising colour so that it also becomes an inner sense and process. She says: “work-think-experiment until it becomes a cycle in your head”. She continues with words such as “perseverance, decision making, and outcomes as part of the cycle”.

Another person’s work is critiqued by a fellow student as over linear and regimented and more like wrapping paper than a summer scarf. The class discuss how summer colours might be reminders of summer light, smells, and even flavours. Yellows and limes, and pinks are discussed and recommended as colours that ‘jump out’ and catch your attention. Sense of touch is mentioned in design and in colour.

A transcription of a painting by Matisse is determined by everyone to be successful, the tutor discourages the use of terms such as ‘I like it’, ‘it’s good’ and suggests that they are not fit for an artists. She says that the students should try to understand something about the work, how it is done, and why it is done in that way. She insists on persevering and thinking about ideas, or repeating ideas. The tutor asks whether the ‘Fauve’s palette’ was considered in this transcription. Many say not. Much discussion is held about fresh colour out of the tube.

Before the session finishes for a break, I ask the students about the range of subjects they do, I am given an endless list: history of painting from 19th century onwards, history of civilizations and their art, photography, colour experiments in natural and synthetic dyes, photography, history of costume design, history of textiles in Persian antiquity and the development of pattern. Everyone complains about religious studies being repetitive and redundant because they have been studying them since junior school. One student mentions the lesson on 'Repentance' or 'tobeh' and says that they have not done anything to repent.

Appendix 11: Mr Zargham

24 April, Tehran University, Mr. Zargham, Year II, Painting

I find Mr. Zargham and his students setting off with paints, boards, and low easels heading for outdoors, on the campus. I follow them and in order not to disturb anyone I find a spot by running water and sit on the ground and write my notes. The students find patches of the garden and set their work up. I overhear some students discussing the clothes Sales! Two students use their mobile phones. Some students wear a cotton overall to paint in. Gradually everyone chooses a subject and proceeds with work. After some time I take a walk to look at people's work. Mr. Zargham is in discussion with a student who has not brought the right canvas: "How do you suppose cardboard would be of any use to you? Your paint is ruined just as soon as you put it down. You could have at least applied a little linseed oil (roghaneh barzak) before starting to use your paints!" As he walks away from that student, he tells me that he teaches colour, and that 'proportion' is a significant part of his teaching. He explains that last term there were 30 in the group, and they have now been divided into two groups of 15. He says that today the class will develop some skills in observing the quick changes in light and colour outdoors. He says that the air is so fine these days in early spring, and the students would benefit from being in nature, he smiles and says that it is not a bad thing to sense colour, and touch. He leaves to attend to the work of four female students who have formed a cluster, none work on easels, but have A3 boards. I notice that several have chosen to paint the trees, one in particular has located a shed in the distance behind the trees and has carefully studied it in blue paint. Almost all canvases are bought, they are secured with shiny drawing pins on the edges, this is the characteristic of manufactured canvases. One girl is painting the tiny pink roses in bloom on a black background, she is very fast and puts down some very bright and lively pinks. Her friends comment that she should have brought and embroidery kit instead! She laughs and says "Impressionism".

20 meters away, there is another group of students painting, the one in a white overall is painting the landscape around him. He says that he has been discussing his palette with Mr. Zargham and they have been talking about trees, and how trees don't have to be brown at all. I photograph him and choose a spot to write my notes.

Mr. Zargham comes to me and says that painting is to do with intuition as well as technique and expertise. He says "Painting has to happen inside the head first, some equations with the inner soul must take place. He says that he is watching to see how the students develop their palette from the three primary colours. He then says that a painter should awaken the innate genius, the instinctive consciousness.

I ask Mr. Zargham whether any of what he says has anything to do with his Islamic beliefs. He says “Whatever you want to call it, Islam, Islamic identity, truth…. It has to come from engaging with the paint and the mind. It is necessary to dissolve into the work, into the idea, into the sensory explorations, and that is truth, identity, Islam….. all these things will mean the same thing…. They become one thing.”

Appendix 12: Taxi Drivers

January 6th 2004

Taxi driver the civil engineer, orange taxi hailed down in the street; the journey from Al-Zahra University to my residence

> "You don't mind if we go from the highway, avoiding Niavaran and Dezashib streets, we'll cut a lot of local traffic there!…. Are you an academic, you look like one! Do you teach at the University? …I am a university graduate. It takes one to know one! I am a civil engineer from Sharif University. Oh you know Sharif University; it is one of the best in industrial and mechanical engineering, but it is not in a neighbourhood like this. It is in south Tehran. You don't happen to know any professors there, do you? Right, you live abroad, I could tell… Well something about the way you were standing, not your clothes so much, …but something different about your expression…. Well I might as well tell you why I am driving a taxi, being a graduate of Sharif University and all that! I have two little girls and a lot of other mouths to feed! There were no jobs for a young graduate when I graduated…, a few years ago now! They say it is better now, for employment I mean, but I don't think so….I am the generation that witnessed the war with Iraq, it was damaging, it damaged this nation. If one was not killed in it, through sheer good luck, it left deep psychological wounds….I see it in myself, I am restless all the time, a bit mad…. Even if there were suitable jobs available, do you think I would have the state of mind to cope with one! All those bombardments….I feel agitated just talking about it…. No, if you were not here during those years when the world sat silently and let it all happen to us, when Sadaam was armed up to his neck by the West to kill one million youth,… then you would not understand what I am saying to you now! You will excuse me of course for being so blunt…."
>
> "Here we are, please will you allow me not to charge you your fare? I mean it, be my guest…it would be a pleasure, I have taken you for granted, as though you were my sister, and given you a headache talking so much."

January 30 2004

The retired army officer taxi driver, private taxi called by phone; journey to Tehran University

> "Excuse me… did you ring for your taxi twice this morning? I am sorry if you have been waiting for 25 minutes, but I was told to pick you up only five

minutes ago! ….Look, I am going to try my best and cut through the traffic going from the back streets and get you to your appointment…. There was no need for making you wait in the street all that time, I have been sitting in the office for the last half hour to be given a passenger…but nobody told me… You see the owner of this taxi agency has gathered all his cronies and gives them as many journeys as he likes, but I am just an employee…not a relative... and if I object, they will just say do not come to work in the morning! They do not understand what management means…they have no notion of 'directing' fairly and systematically! It is just like the government, no planning, no management, no justice, nothing for our youth…with this high rate of unemployment. No wonder they are becoming drug addicts, so many take drugs.

We are not a poor country, we have oil, we have gas, we have a great wealth of minerals. We are practically walking on gold, but we have no management, no direction. All this government does is regarding the promotion of the clerics and the most fanatic ideas possible. Nothing to do with Islam. Nothing at all to do with Islam. Some narrow and self-beneficial interpretation of Islam. These clerics do not understand 'ideas'. They do not possess the expertise to cope with ideas. They do not understand the concept of fiscal policies and long term planning. They do not understand the relationships between inflation and economic growth….look at the population of Tehran, more than a third of it are villagers coming to look for work… how can a cleric who has been practicing praying all his life understand these concepts…And they are our leaders…just because they attend public prayers they get posts. Exactly like the taxi agency. Why do you think I am driving a taxi…because I need the money. I am a retired officer and have to supplement my income….

"Here we are, at Tehran university and it is one minute to 10! And you are going to make your appointment! …I told you I shall put my mind to it….I did notice though that you looked a little pale when I was racing down that stretch on the highway, but we made it on time!"