



دِلِ که سوز ندارد، دِلِ نیست

(the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)







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JAYCE SALLOUM / KHADIM ALI



reversed waterfall, Band-e-Amir, *Shahnameh* video still, 2010 (2008)

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shrouded...early spring morning from the hotel, Buddha monastery cave site, Bamiyan, Hazarajat, Afghanistan, 4/17/08 [DSCF3106]

Foreword

دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست (*the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart*) represents an ambitious project for SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre), bringing together Vancouver-based artist Jayce Salloum with Afghan-Hazara artist Khadim Ali. Salloum and Ali traveled together from Pakistan to Afghanistan to develop a collaborative installation that engages an important and timely cross-cultural dialogue.

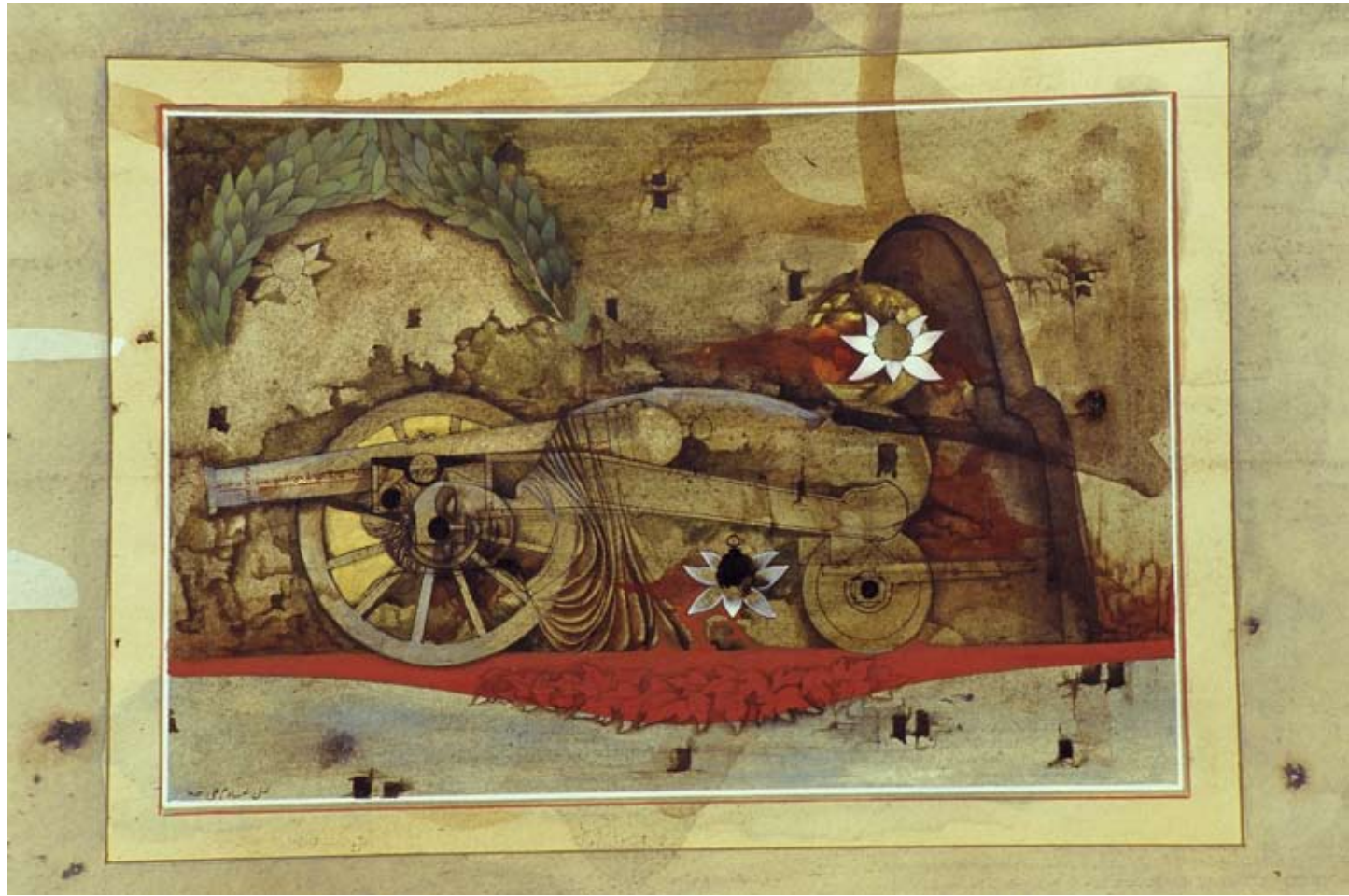
This project was initially developed as part of the Edges of Diversity series of commissioned exhibitions that were presented in conjunction with the On Common Ground conference organized by the Independent Media Arts Alliance and the Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art, Kelowna, BC, in 2008. We thank Arts Partners in Creative Development and the Audain Foundation for their early support of the project.

SAVAC is proud to be co-presenting a larger version of this project with the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, in collaboration with the 23rd Images Festival. “...*heart*...” will subsequently tour nationally and internationally, representing both an important accomplishment in terms of SAVAC’s programs, and an opportunity to engage new audiences in the consideration and discussion of contemporary art and culture from South Asia.

This significant project and publication could not have been achieved without the vision and dedication of SAVAC’s Executive Director, Haema Sivanesan, curator of the project as well as writer and editor of the publication. SAVAC is also grateful for the energy and support of the Alternator Gallery’s Director, Jennifer Pickering, in co-presenting a preliminary installation. We thank writers Paula Abood and Kathy Gannon for their thoughtful essays included in the publication, as well as SAVAC’s staff, Kohila Kurunathan and Srimoyee Mitra for their considerable contributions. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank SAVAC’s Programming Committee and our colleagues on the Board of Directors at SAVAC for their enthusiastic support.

Finally our warmest appreciation to the artists, Jayce Salloum and Khadim Ali for their courage, tenacity and vision.

Fayiaz Chunara and Oliver Husain
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors
SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)



Khadim Ali, *Bamiyan Series II*, 2003, 28 x 34 cm



collected fragments from the destroyed Buddhas, protected/sheltered/saved, caves site, Bamiyan,
fragments video still, 2010 (2008)



wrapped rocks (Buddha fragments), video still, 2010 (2008)



Untitled, 2007, 23.5 x 17 cm



marking, stamping out/down/erasure, Taliban et al, thrown shoes/prints and soot fired, caves at destroyed Buddhas site, Bamiyan, 4/08



of what remains, vestiges/relics/revisioned/revise, leaving Bamiyan, Hazarajat, Afghanistan, 4/22/08 [DSCF4035]

detritus, tanks and other armament, contested space/place, landscape of pain, monuments to past and present wars, 4/2008, Afghanistan



scenes / views grid, 2008



imagination, art class studio, Marefat High School, Dasht-e-Barchi, *Ostad Aziz Royish* principal, Western Kabul, Afghanistan, 4/12/08 [DSCF2125]



freshly tilled pastures (and our jeep), from home of Syed Mohammed Shah, Jaro Kashan e Band-e-Amir, Yakowlang, Bamiyan, 4/17/08 [DSCF3247]



highway rose stand, returning to Kabul, 4/23/08 [DSCF4338]



ubiquitous uses, sustainable crop, ready poles/poplars, salicaceous (willow family) trees of the genus *Populus*, 4/20/08 [DSCF3629]



gilded light life brilliant light, silk roads, flags and poplar trees outside Bamiyan, 4/18/08 [DSCF3285]



Untitled (Rustam Series), 2007, 40 x 22.5 cm



Untitled (Rustam Series), 2007, 30 x 41 cm

Absence as Presence:

An introduction to دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست
(the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)

by Haema Sivanesan

Dressed in black, the Taliban that day in March 2001, were preparing to dynamite the head when one of them contemptuously fired a round of bullets into the stone face smiling to itself...

After the gun was fired into the horizontal face it was noticed that a small point of light had materialised in each bullet hole, a softly hesitating sparkle. Over the next few instants, as more and more of the men took notice and stared uncomprehendingly, each of these spots grew in brilliance and acquired a liquid glint. Welling up in the stone wounds, the gold eventually poured out and began to slide down the features very slowly, striping the face, collecting in unevenly spaced pools on the floor.

As though they had come out of a trance, the men in defiant rage sent another dozen bullets into the idol but with the same result. In addition he now seemed to be opening fully his almost shut eyes, the lids chiselled in the stone beginning to rise without sound in what felt like an endless moment.

— Nadeem Aslam, *The Wasted Vigil*, 2008

An area of peace in an uneasy land

In April 2008, Vancouver-based artist Jayce Salloum travelled with Afghan-Hazara artist Khadim Ali from Karachi to Islamabad in Pakistan, onto Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and then overland into the Bamiyan Valley in the central Afghan region of Hazarajat. Their objective was to survey the landscape and its contexts, observe the situation on the ground, and engage in encounters that would provide insight into the lived conditions of the Hazara people, a persecuted Shi'a Muslim minority in a country that is predominantly Sunni. The artists travelled independently, and to some extent, clandestinely. The land is scarred by decades of conflict, ravaged by drought and desperate poverty, troubled by tribal rivalries, ongoing government corruption, and neglect, and a persistent Taliban presence. However, since Bamiyan was no longer in the international eye, the artists were afforded a great deal of mobility, and access to key people and sites. Of specific interest to this project were the ruins and cave sites of the circa fifth century Buddhas, destroyed by the Taliban in March 2001, as a site from which to locate a discussion regarding the complexity of the conflict in Afghanistan.

Since the early centuries, the colossal figures of the Buddha had been a defining feature of the Bamiyan Valley’s arid landscape. The Hazara people believe themselves to be descendents of the sculptors who produced the majestic images. In 1998, the Taliban entered the city of Bamiyan, and during the years that followed, the Hazaras were targeted as “infidels” under the Taliban regime, with several massacres being reported between 1998 and 2000.¹ In her essay in this book, Canadian journalist Kathy Gannon details her experience as one of twenty foreign journalists invited by the Taliban to view and report to the world on the destroyed statues. In a report for Associated Press on 26 March 2001 she wrote, “Taliban soldiers have been waging a battle for Bamiyan... They initially captured the area in 1997; since then, international organizations have been worried about the fate of the Buddhas.”²

The Hazaras perceived the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas as an act of terror and humiliation, designed to seal the Taliban’s capture of the Bamiyan Valley. However, the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas was also undoubtedly a gesture of provocation and defiance aimed at the international community, coming six months prior to the attacks of 9/11.³

دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست (*the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart*)⁴ is a collaborative installation in the form of a personal archive consisting of photographs of various sizes arrayed in conceptual clusters, juxtaposed alongside miniature paintings which contribute a narrative and allegorical thread. Also included are ambient and documentary videotapes, and various collected ephemera, including objects, documents, notes, and maps—the evidence of a journey. The artists’ methodology comments on that of an ethnographer’s, proposing a detailed description of a culture through various modes of documentation, but bringing an artist’s critical and aesthetic perspective to the reading. The format of the installation develops in the manner of Salloum’s previous projects, such as **كان يا ما كان** (*Kan ya ma kan*) *There was and there was not* (1988-1998), a homage and account of the city of Beirut following the Lebanon war, which Salloum describes as “a transposition of a working studio...”⁵ Similarly, “...heart...” is a complex installation that incorporates a range of visual material, indicating a discursive process of inquiry.

The photographs included in “...heart...” are intimately observed, providing a richly textured and evocative account of the envioning landscape of Afghanistan. The photographs draw on visual themes and methodologies informing Salloum’s ongoing project, *untitled: location/dis-location(s)* (1996-), which captures ordinary, even banal, scenes of cities and urban streetscapes, and which are characterised by qualities of chance, spontaneity, and happenstance. Like an urban archaeologist, Salloum uses his camera to develop a reading of place that takes note of the idiosyncrasies of the everyday—its provisionality, its flux and change, its mundane and detailed complexity, examining life at the margins of capitalism, its destitution and dysfunctions. The photographs included in “...heart...” are attentive to the quotidian details of the Afghan environment: of looming, snow-capped mountains viewed through dusty windows, of picturesque landscapes littered with disused tanks and war artillery, of repeated images of the rotting debris of war alongside moments of enduring life: a pigeon sheltering in the alcove of a restaurant, a budding dandelion in a bed of hail, a shocking pink tarpaulin pegged out on a line.

Salloum’s photographs record in some detail, the barely disguised relics of the Soviet-Afghan war, and attempt to capture and comprehend, if not reconcile, both beauty and trauma—the dramatic majesty of the sheer mountains and flat plains, the derelict hulks of long abandoned war machinery. These images of the landscape convey an eerie stillness, a sense of desolation, but also an austere elegance. The carefully composed photographs are attentive to details, and are evocative of the mood in Afghanistan beyond the frontline of war. They depict the scarcity of things, and the frugality of living, recorded

as a photographic catalogue of piles—sticks, rocks, scraps, shrapnel, junk, and disused parts. Every object is worthless, yet every object is precious, forming a record of what John Berger describes as the “poverty of the new capitalism.”⁶ In turn, this poverty rubs up against a desire amongst the people in Afghanistan, as elsewhere in the developing world, for the basic privileges of modernity—for education, opportunities for women, dignified work, essential civic amenities, for hope.

Arranged in thematic constellations, the clusters of photographs play with scale and composition, often developing patterns of repetition and reiteration, which produces a mode of visual analysis. The photographs develop a sense of journey or itinerary, providing an impressionistic account of the landscape of Afghanistan.

Ali’s miniature paintings interpolate a reading of the photographs and videotapes, recording the destruction of the Bamiyan cave sites since the Taliban’s ruthless shelling of the city’s historic Buddhas in March 2001. Drawing on a culturally specific and narrative visual language, which conflates myth, poetry, and allegory, with human experiences and real world events, Ali’s earliest paintings (2003), are formal and measured in their composition, using austere colours, and a watercolourist’s style to convey a dark, funereal mood. Subsequent paintings grapple with the ongoing social and psychological impact of the Taliban’s persecution of the Hazara people, and the current conditions determining the fate of this community.

In the installation, the paintings, videos, and photographs mediate each other, unsettling the critical contexts and art-historical lineages of each artist’s work, reviving a sense of density and juxtaposition characteristic of Salloum’s previous projects. Drawing on the archival form, “...heart...” is designed to engage the viewer in an active process of reflection and knowledge construction, encouraging the viewer to make sense of the material in terms of his or her individual experience. Salloum explains with relation to earlier bodies of work,

...viewers became part of the process [of...] choosing their own paths, initially seduced, compelled, and confronted, making decisions, and in this manner being responsible for visualising and reconstructing their own cultural/political perceptions...⁷

Accordingly, curator Jen Budney proposes that the central concern of Salloum’s practice is epistemological, [the works] ask questions about what we know, why we know what we know, and how we acquire our knowledge, as well as how our knowledge relates to our understanding of truth, belief, and justification...⁸

The effect is to disrupt the passive consumption of images in order to destabilise “naturalised” discourses and categories of knowledge, or, “...to counteract the fulfilment of knowledge”⁹ by revealing its contingencies.

“...heart...” further engages this idea of challenging categories through a collaboration that brought together Salloum’s practice—which is squarely situated within the discourse and problematics of North American conceptual, photo-based art—with Ali’s practice, which is grounded in a post-colonial genre of South Asian miniature painting.¹⁰ The specific critical and political concerns of Ali’s practice are often lost in the contextualisation of his work within art historical discussions regarding the problematics of his genre. “...heart...” provided an opportunity to revisit Ali’s body of work, to engage

and consider the contemporary concerns at the core of his project, to consider his paintings as a type of document, and to bring them into a relationship or dialogue with Salloum’s discursive approach. “...*heart...*” spanned an especially difficult time in Ali’s life, as the war in Afghanistan escalated, as Pakistan teetered on the brink of becoming a “failed state,” and as the separatist insurgency in the border state of Baluchistan intensified, forcing him to flee his home city of Quetta, Pakistan, to begin a new life in Australia. Throughout this time, the collaboration demanded a sustained relationship of friendship, trust, and patience, a process which was by turn frustrating, confronting, bewildering, and exhilarating—a process that confronted those of us immediately involved with the project with the lived realities of the situation in the region. Through the process of this collaboration, it became apparent how the case of Bamiyan located the fault lines, the ideological divides, the inequities, that underlie the current conflict in Afghanistan: of the excessive wealth of nations against the desperate poverty of others; of the impossibility of modern democratic or secular nationhood when warlords hold the rule of law; of the isolating speed and impact of global change, technology, and commerce for a nation without basic infrastructure.

In her essay in this book, Paula Abood writes of the consequences of the persecution of the Hazaras in Afghanistan, with many Hazaras seeking asylum in foreign countries. Abood writes specifically from the Australian context, where in recent years, hundreds of ethnic Hazaras have risked their lives on illegally operated boats to seek asylum in Australia, only to be held in detention by the Australian government.

The situation of the Hazaras underscores a larger dilemma: what would have been the fate of the Hazara people if US forces had not invaded Afghanistan following 9/11? What will be the fate of the Afghan people when NATO troops withdraw? “...*heart...*” reflects on this precarity, a sometimes-latent volatility, which post-9/11, raises important critical and ethical questions.

In this regard, Salloum and Ali’s collaborative process proposed a different kind of ethnography: one which subverted empirical observations and generalisations in order to maintain an open-endedness by which to describe a culture in process, a culture in transformation through a long period of crisis. In its open-endedness, “...*heart...*” is an “ethnography” that implicates the viewer. It is in this sense that the project does not propose to be an objective record (ethnographic document), but invites subjective responses (personal archive), encouraging the viewer to examine their individual response or relationship to the situation being represented through the project.

And the poet in his solitude turned towards the warlord...

One of the videos included in “...*heart...*” records the ruins of the Bamiyan Buddhas. The silent, looped footage pans across a vast and enigmatic array of sandstone rocks—the rescued fragments of the colossal Buddhas—sorted into piles, catalogued and housed in sheds near the original cave site. A related cluster of photographs depicts larger ruins on site, wrapped in high tech plastic. This material documents the ruins of the Buddhas at a specific moment in history, at a turning point, a time of transition between destruction and conservation, or possible restoration.

Ruins, Jalal Toufic suggests, are “places haunted by the living who inhabit them.”¹¹ For the Hazara, the ruins of the Buddhas are the ruins of an identity—symbolic of an originary sense of connection to a place, and evidence of the Hazara people’s place in Afghanistan’s history. The ruins of the Buddhas,

however, conserve a violent and traumatic history, as indicated in another of the videos that takes the viewer through the maze of caves within the site. The ambition to re-construct the Buddhas from their ruins, suggests a process of recuperation – a process of remaking or rehabilitating history and identity—to restore a symbolic order, a dignity, a sense of being.

In another video, the viewer is taken through the labyrinthine caves into what would have once been the belly of the smaller Buddha.¹² Here and there, Nasir Mudabir, Director of Historical Monuments in Bamiyan, points out jewel-like fragments of fresco paintings: the rainbow halos of Buddhist divinities, the folded knee of a saffron-robed monk, now barely recognisable. The soot-stained domes of the interior of the caves are desecrated by scores of boot prints of Taliban soldiers.

Ali paints these caves in a series from 2007. The monumental, sheer cliff wall is articulated only by the honeycomb fenestration of the ancient cave-dwellings once inhabited by Buddhist monks. The massive, vaulted niche of the colossal, standing Buddha appears in Ali’s paintings as an abstract, mutating, shadowy form that dominates the landscape. In front of this niche, Ali has painted a bountiful fruit tree, as though an offering, symbolising hope and abundance. In other paintings, he employs a motif of tulips, the harbinger of spring, new life, renewal, and the emblem of the Hazaras. Surrounding these optimistic scenes are jarring images of tanks, guns, grenades, and other war artillery; a Taliban fighter firing at the serene face of the Buddha; a jet plane colliding with the hollow cave where the Buddha once stood. These paintings incorporate elements of children’s drawings from workshops held in Bamiyan, exploring the impact of decades of war and Taliban indoctrination on the minds of children.

Another theme throughout this project is *The Shahnameh*, an epic eleventh century poem by the Persian poet Ferdowsi, which examines the moral codes informing a virtuous mode of sovereignty. Of particular interest is the story of Rustam and Sohrab. Sohrab, estranged from his father since birth, meets his father Rustam, on the battlefield. They fight on opposing sides of the battle. Unaware that Sohrab is his son, Rustam kills Sohrab—who is unable to retreat from the battle. The story deals with the futility of war, and the tragedy of misplaced heroism, within the larger context of an epic poem concerned with the ideals that constitute a model form of nationhood. Ali draws on this theme as an allegory that resonates widely within his community, retrieving a story told to him by his grandfather.

In one of the videotapes, Syed Mohammed Shah, an impoverished farmer living in the mountains of Band-e-Amir, northwest of Bamiyan, recites from the story of Rustam and Sohrab. He says, “My father used to say that whenever you are sad you should recite *The Shahnameh*. It is good for people to read it because it counsels us and makes us happy.” *The Shahnameh* provides a reassurance, an antidote, a comfort, a retreat to the past, by which to comprehend and withstand the hardships of the present. On the other hand, another pair of paintings (2007) responds to Ali’s encounter with a boy named Rustam, who was unaware of the mythic status of his namesake. The boy’s only association with his name was that of Rustam-e-Parzand, a Taliban concept used to enforce an idea of omnipresent vigilance or surveillance. Ali explores how cultural icons are commandeered and subverted to serve multiple ends.

Like many artists of his generation trained at the National College of Art in Lahore, Pakistan, Ali’s work underscores the need for a progressive and democratic, or socially just approach to politics in the region, obliquely positioning a critique of jihad. When read in the context of the recent history of the sub-continent, Ali’s paintings, like those of his contemporaries, engage the discourse of an incipient modernity, where, in Pakistan as in India, this notion of modernity in art develops, and is informed by the discourses of nationalism and negotiates a relationship between past and present, tradition and innovation.¹³ In Afghanistan, however, an indigenous discussion around a notion of nationalism

is yet to be formed, as society struggles to gather itself through and despite ongoing decades of war. The struggles of the Afghan people recall an observation by the cultural collective, Urban Subjects, on Salloum’s work in the former Yugoslavia. They ask,
Where do agency and identity exist when the national scale has been obliterated...?
What happens to the scale of the body when the spaces that make it are re-territorialised after such a crisis? At what scale does ethnicity ground itself, or how is it resisted when the nation as a contingent universal is re-spatialised?¹⁴

It is as though the situation in Afghanistan describes an inverse to the situation of the former Yugoslavia: of how to imagine a national scale in a context of persistent tribalism; of the seeming naivety of attempting to impose the political conditions of a democratic nation-state where the ethnic and geographic landscape remains fragmented, and in ruins.

It appears that *The Shahnameh* remains apt as an allegory, or parable, for the struggle towards nationhood in contemporary Afghanistan.

Kin. A fellowship of wounds.

A striking aspect of “...*heart*...” are the portraits, which form a significant cluster of photographs in the installation. These portraits have the utilitarian and uniform aesthetic of bureaucratic practices of photography—passport photographs, identity cards, licences, school photographs. Arrayed together in grids, they suggest a community or population, a larger cultural identity, which describes the landscape of Bamiyan as a site of human struggle. The portraits convey the vulnerability of the people—the innocence of the children, the trust of the young women, the worn faces of the men—and examine the character and resilience of human subjects living in conditions of ongoing conflict.

Salloum remarked to me that the idea to photograph a series of portraits came about from watching Ali take photographs of the people around him. He describes the process of making some of the portraits in the market in Bamiyan:
...I walked up and down the street “speaking” in gestures with one word at my disposal... I made my way down the street, and had soon amassed a collection of sixty or seventy images at close range while holding the camera up between the person and me, for just long enough until the smiles stopped, and there was that space/time where an unsureness arose, a faint question, then I took the picture.¹⁵

In this recollection, Salloum describes the precise moment of an encounter wherein the condition of alterity is revealed—in the uncertain and disarming moment of a pause where his subjects reveal a vulnerability, a tension, a truth. The subjects of these pictures are unnamed, but not necessarily anonymous, their individuality being articulated by the tilt of the head, an irrepressible grin, a weariness, an aloofness, a quizzical gaze. These are not the blank gazes of contemporary photographic portraiture. The photographs capture an intensely direct gaze that addresses the viewer, engaging a relationship between the subject and the viewer. These pictures locate an ethical dimension to the concerns of the project, compelling us to ask: Who are these people? What is my relationship to them? What is their relationship to this seemingly parched, post-apocalyptic landscape? What is our responsibility or obligation to these people? Are they antagonists or protagonists? Victims or survivors? How have they survived?

Another grid of portraits was taken by Ali at Marefat High School in Dasht-i-Barchi district, a vast Hazara enclave in Kabul. It originally functioned as a co-educational school, but following a government edict, now operates in two sessions—a morning school for the girls, and an afternoon school attended by boys. A video loop depicts the girls at morning assembly in the courtyard of the school under a brilliant blue, spring sky. The girls sing the national anthem and school song, then make their way to the classrooms—an image of future promise. This cluster of material reflects on the aspirations of future generations of Hazaras, some of who are now returning to Afghanistan after having lived as refugees in Iran or Pakistan. The building of schools has been a key development project, assisted by foreign aid and international peace-keeping forces. For the Hazara, education is perceived as a means to a better life—a means to achieve justice, social equality, and human rights. A recent New York Times report states,
Since the 2001 invasion, an influx of Hazaras has changed the composition of the capital. More than a million Hazaras now live here, making up more than a quarter of the city’s population...with a new generation of Hazaras attending school in relative security, and motivated by their parents’ dispossession, their success could alter the country’s balance of ethnic power.¹⁶

This article suggests that the Hazara revival is being built on education. It notes that these gains depend on the Taliban never returning to power.

In a 2004 interview with anthropologist Virginia Whiles, Ali stated,
Schooling is sacred... I feel my work is a form of revenge because when I am working I feel I am doing something against ignorance... we Afghans [Hazaras] have never had the chance of showing that we can do something, we have been treated like animals by the Taliban... I would love to work in a world without discrimination as to where you are from.¹⁷

This emphasis on education, including education for women, indicates the progressive inclination of the Hazara people, but also outlines a notion of education as a means of resistance. Fittingly, Salloum and Ali’s project takes its title from the Marefat High School’s school song:
O God bless me with a heart, full of love. And fill that heart with love and feelings for humanity / The heart which does not feel the pain of others, is not a human heart / And a sad heart full of sorrows is only water and clay / Fill my heart with fire until that fire burns my whole body / Bless me with a tongue that can always speak about the pain of others / Bless me with compassion and fill my heart with love and feelings for humanity...

دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست (*the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart*) represents a complex and ongoing project. Focusing on the destruction of the colossal figures of the Buddha, the project records the destitute conditions in Bamiyan, and reflects on the sites of signification and rupture shaping aspects of the lived experience of contemporary Afghanistan.

Endnotes

- 1 Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Massacres of Hazaras in Afghanistan*, February 1, 2001, C1301, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a87c4.html>, accessed February 22, 2010.
- 2 Kathy Gannon, report to Associated Press, 26 March 2001, available at <http://wwrn.org/articles/13942/?&place=afghanistan§ion=buddhism>, accessed March 9, 2010.
- 3 Refer for example to Finbarr Barry Flood, “Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm and the Museum,” in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol 84, No 4, (Dec 2002), 641-659. Also see Pierre Centlivres, “The Controversy over the Buddhas of Bamiyan,” in *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, [online], February 2008, <http://samaj.revues.org/index992.html>, accessed November 13, 2009.
- 4 Hereafter referred to as “...heart...”
- 5 Jayce Salloum, “Sans titre/Untitled: The Video Installation as an Active Archive/2006,” in Charles Merewether (ed.), *Documents of Contemporary Art: The Archive*, (London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2006), 185.
- 6 John Berger, *Hold Everything Dear: Dispatches on Survival and Resistance*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 120.
- 7 Salloum in Merewether (ed.), 2006, 185.
- 8 Jen Budney, “history of the present/map of the world,” in Jen Budney (ed.), *Jayce Salloum: history of the present*, (Saskatoon, Kamloops, Charlottetown: Mendel Art Gallery, Kamloops Art Gallery, Confederation Centre Art Gallery, 2009), 8.
- 9 Mike Hoolboom, “From Lebanon to Kelowna: An Interview with Jayce Salloum,” in Mike Hoolboom (ed.), *Practical Dreamers: Conversations with Movie Artists*, (Toronto: Coach House Press, 2008), 188.
- 10 The phenomena of contemporary miniature painting as a critical practice owes its origins to the visionary artist and teacher, Zahoor-ul Aklaq (1941-1999), who aimed to create a dialogue between the technique and conventions of the traditional miniature, and the conceptual concerns of Western modernist painting. Contemporary miniature painting has developed as a genre that critiques revivalist practices of miniature painting, typically founded on practices of “copying,” and which were officially sanctioned as a state art under General Zia-ul Haq (1924-1988). Both the “revivalist” and “contemporary” genres of miniature painting are engaged with the process and problematics of defining the social and cultural antecedents of Pakistan—a post-colonial nation, in the sense that it was brought into being through the political processes of India’s decolonization. Miniature painting as a contemporary genre is resistant to the nationalist underpinnings of the revivalist mode, and increasingly engages a transnational discourse. See Virginia Whiles in *Contemporary Miniature Paintings from Pakistan*, (Fukuoka: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, 2004), 55-56.
- 11 Jalal Toufic, “Ruins,” in *We Can Make Rain But No One Came To Ask: Documents from the Atlas Group Archive*, (Montreal: Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 2006), 8.
- 12 The Taliban destroyed two sculpted figures of the Buddha over a period of weeks, beginning in mid-March 2001. The smaller, eastern Buddha was known locally as Shamama, and stood one hundred and twenty-five feet (38.1m) tall. The larger figure, referred to as Salsal, stood one hundred and eighty feet (54.9 m) tall.
- 13 See Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism? Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, (Delhi: Tulika Press, 2000). See also Iftikhar Dadi, who argues that the concept of nationhood in Pakistan has “persistently been a fragmented and over-determined concept,” which overlooks the cosmopolitanism of the region. Iftikhar Dadi, “Art in Pakistan: the First Decades,” in Salima Hashmi (ed.), *Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, (New York: Asia Society, 2009), 39.
- 14 Urban Subjects, “untitled Part 2: beauty and the east (2003),” in Budney (ed.), 2009, 61.
- 15 Fion Meade and Jayce Salloum, “Re: Documentary Practices,” in *Fillip*, #10, Fall 2009, 104.
- 16 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/04/world/asia/04hazaras.html>, accessed February 2010.
- 17 Khadim Ali, quoted by Virginia Whiles in *Contemporary Miniature Paintings from Pakistan*, (Fukuoka: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, 2004), 62.



passing by two women walking, car Allah/mirror, outside the AKHS - Agha Khan Health Services Hospital, Bamiyan, 4/16/08 [DSCF2917]



colour sways - swaths of, lending light, pink awning/blue sky, village restaurant/cafe, on the way back to Kabul, 4/23/08 [DSCF4259]



piles/fragments/ruins, some that is left of the Buddhist statues (constructed 100-490AD), bodily discarded (destroyed by Taliban, March 2001), pieces protected/sheltered, torn, {saved for possible reconstruction @ \$45 million each} at the caves site, Bamiyan, Hazarajat, Afghanistan, 4/16/08 [DSCF3081]



stark land bright sky, near spring, Band-e-Amir, *Shahnameh* video still, 2010 (2008)



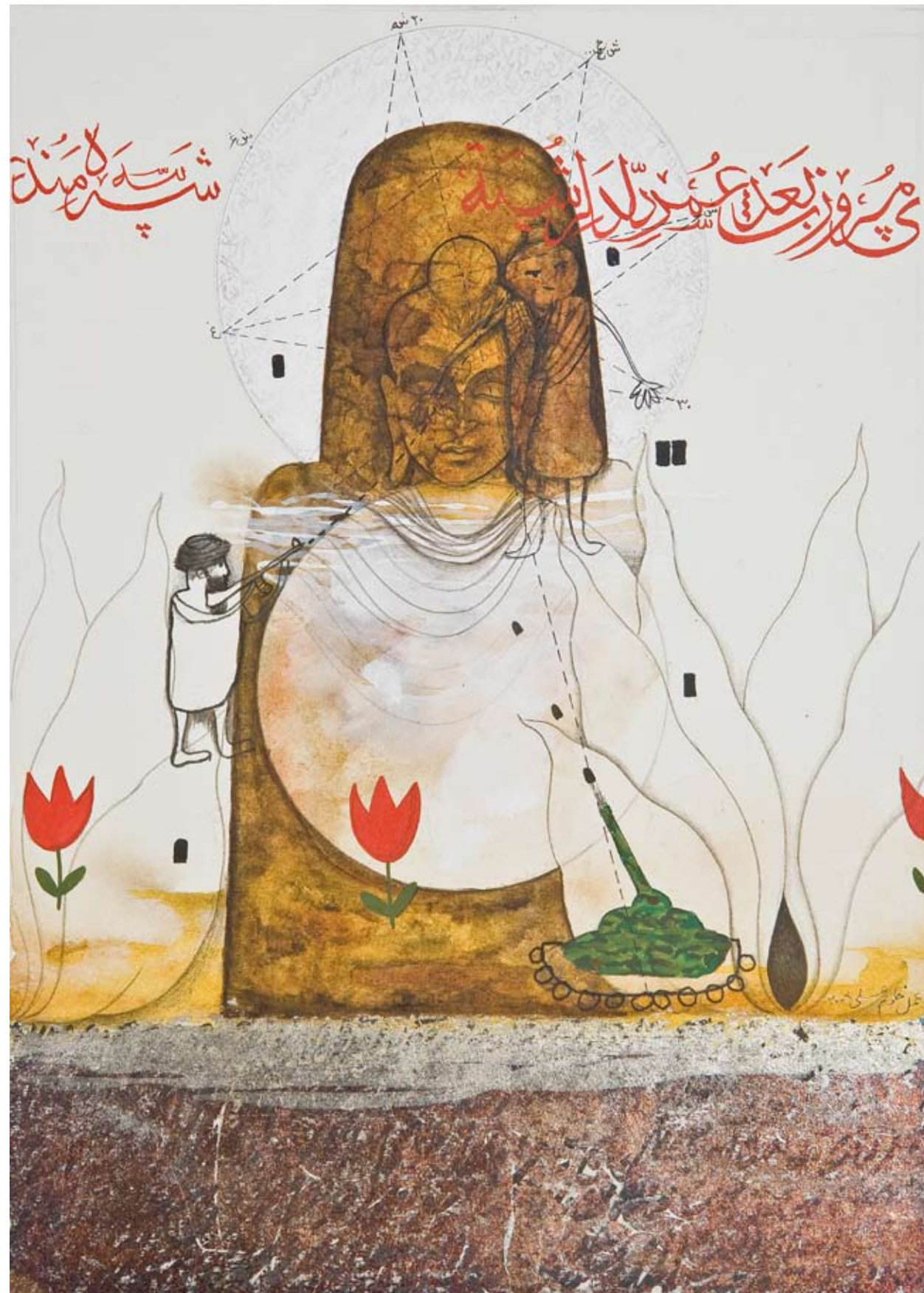
remnants/debris after spring thaw, Band-e-Amir, *Shahnameh* video still, 2010 (2008)



afterwards, cargo container by side of highway, returning to Kabul, 4/23/08 [DSCF4360]



Rustam, 2009, 32 x 42 cm



Untitled, 2007, 26.1 x 18.8 cm

A Stairway Within the Mountain:

Bearing witness to the destruction of the ancient Bamiyan statues of the Buddha

by Kathy Gannon

There was still a little chill in the air when we boarded an old, Russian Antonov An-24 prop plane at Kabul airport.

The Taliban were watching us closely as we moved single file through the hatch at the back of the plane. We were heading to Bamiyan. The giant Buddha statues, hewn into the sandstone mountain in the third to fifth centuries, had been blown up just a few weeks earlier. The Taliban were taking us—a small group of journalists in the country—to see their handiwork.

The world that had already learned to revile the Taliban, appalled by their treatment of women—yet surprisingly unconcerned that many of the people who replaced them held the same views—had wept at their destruction. The Taliban were under United Nations sanctions, ostracized, and pretty much demonized by the time they stuck sticks of dynamite in the side of the Bamiyan mountains, and reduced to rubble statues that had stood for more than fifteen centuries.

The plane ride through the hulking Hindu Kush mountain range was both frightening and inspiring; frightening because our Taliban steward said the Bamiyan airport was under siege so we would be landing on an outcropping. “You should pray because we haven’t landed here in many years.” More than a decade, to be exact. But inspiring because of the purity and serenity the snow-drenched mountains invoked in a land convulsed by war. The pilots were Afghanistan’s best—returned from Saudi Arabia where they had been flying Hajj pilgrims to Islam’s holiest sites of Mecca and Medina. Those were the only international flights allowed by the United Nations sanctions, which were imposed to press the Taliban to stop growing poppies, treat women better, and shut down terrorist training camps.

In the days leading up to the destruction of the Buddha statues, the world vacillated between outrageous indignation demanding the Taliban save the Buddha statues, and desperate pleading begging the religious militia to spare the sandstone masterpieces.

Even within the Taliban *shura* (or grand council) there was dissent to their destruction. The Taliban leadership was not a monolith in thought, but the West did not understand that. In fact, the West knew very little about them. Several among the Taliban leaders also pleaded the case for the statues. One Taliban member of the shura pleaded with his fellow Taliban to spare the statues saying, “Destroying them would be like cutting the throat of my son. They are our past and our future.”

But by March 2001, when the statues were blown up, the Taliban had been so thoroughly isolated and made paupers that their only source of income was from Al-Qaeda's rich Arabs, including Osama bin Laden. It was their strict Wahabi interpretation of Islam that demanded the statues be destroyed. The Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, an unforgiving man with one eye, had just one year earlier promised the world's Buddhists he would protect the statues. He said the statues were no longer worshipped in Afghanistan, which meant they did not offend the Taliban's interpretation of Islam, which had some differences from the Wahabi interpretation followed in Saudi Arabia.

But that was in 2000.

Things were unraveling for the Taliban movement. They had no money, no access to markets, development. Their army was still fighting with the Northern Alliance in very small pockets of the country, but the battle required manpower and money. They had plenty of fighters, though the fiercest by all accounts were the Arabs who fought under the Al-Qaeda banner. But money they did not have. The Taliban's reliance on their Arab fighting friends was complete by 2000. By all accounts the defense ministry was under Osama bin Laden's control, and the only money in its coffers was Al-Qaeda money.

The carefully placed and detonated explosives that brought down the two statues, while leaving the mountain in tact, were the work of the Arab fighters. We saw the evidence that March day, in Bamiyan. As we approached the mountain where the giant Buddha statues had stood, two truckloads of men roared past, kicking up a cloud of dust that only partially obscured them. My Afghan-Hazara colleague, Amir Shah, who was at my side whispered in my ear. "They're Arabs. All of them. They are Arabs."

We drove to the base of the larger of the two statues. It had stood fifty-five metres tall. The smaller one that had stood at thirty-eight metres was often referred to as a female. At the base of the statues were giant mounds of rock that had been the statues. The Taliban had warned us not to try to take a piece as a souvenir. They said they would search us before we got on the plane. I took my chances, and quietly slipped two pieces into my computer bag.

I climbed to the base and looked up at the enormity of the outline. The statue outline could not be destroyed, and even more remarkable to me was the staircase that weaved and winded its way to the top of the head of the Buddha, but from inside the mountain.

It was awe-inspiring that in the early centuries, workers were able to chisel a stairway inside a mountain. At regular intervals there were internal platforms, where it is certain that the monks of that day would collect to meditate. Small niches had been carved at each landing. Within these niches it was likely a small statue of Buddha had been placed, and had long since been stolen or destroyed. The staircase weaved to the top of the mountain, and at strategic points it opened onto the statue. You could imagine these craftsman leaning out into the mountain from these openings, and lovingly carving their masterpieces.

It was a tragedy that the statues were destroyed. But it was also a tragedy that Afghanistan and Afghans were ignored, and had been ignored for decades.

At the time of the world outrage at the destruction of the statues, most Afghans were overwhelmingly sad. They were sad because their history was being destroyed.

But they were sad for another reason as well. They were sad that the world could be so moved by the destruction of the sandstone statues, but seemed complacent at the fate of ordinary Afghans who were starving because of a drought that had lasted five years. The drought had wiped out the cattle of thousands of nomadic tribes. Both the tribesmen and their cattle had to be airlifted by dangerously unserviced Taliban helicopters (unserviced because international sanctions prevented spare aircraft parts to be provided to the religious militia), to watering holes, or they would die.

They understood the dislike for the Taliban. They, too, were unhappy with them. But they had lived through the mujahedeen government that had preceded the Taliban, men who had the support of the West, and who had killed fifty thousand ordinary Afghans, and destroyed the Afghan capital of Kabul during their rule from 1992 until 1996. These men are back in power today, returned by the West. Some were even responsible for the gaping holes in the face of the Buddha statues put there by their rocket launchers back when they thought their physical presence, even in stone, was against their interpretation of Islam. Then, the mujahedeen had taken direct aim at the faces of the Buddha statues.

But at the time, the attacks of September 11 had not yet happened. It was not known what would happen to Afghanistan, to the people. But what did seem plain that April day, as dozens of Taliban gathered behind the Antanov aircraft after we had boarded and pushed it to get it going, was that Afghanistan had tough days ahead. No one knew at the time just how tough.



assembly promises, the future beckons, hope springs eternal, all is at stake, girls shift 6:30am > lyrics: “..the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart..”, Laisa-e-Maarifat (Marefat School), Dasht-e-Barchi, *Mualim Aziz Royish* principal, Western Kabul, Afghanistan, 4/12/08 [DSCF2104]

Seeking Asylum:

Afghans in Australia

by Paula Abood

*A stunning dusk in Bakwa and Sadyan
Reveals the face of every Afghan
Tired of war, hunger and drought
Waiting for the beloved who have gone without¹*

These lyrical lines were written by Afghan women under the most difficult of circumstances: during the events and aftermaths of September 11 including the invasion and bombing of Afghanistan, the anti-refugee / anti-Muslim campaign of the 2001 Australian Federal election, the incarceration of Afghan asylum seekers – many of whom were Hazara young men, the drowning of refugees en route to Australia from Indonesia, the pushing back of boats full of asylum seekers by the Australian Navy, and the dumping of Hazara refugees on isolated Pacific islands like Nauru.

*My homeland, Afghanistan, my spirit and soul
I have a recurring dream to reach a goal
Never will I forget your beauty or scape
It moves me to live in hope*

I approach the task of writing about “Afghanistan” as an outsider with a critical sensibility of how Afghans have had few opportunities to speak of their experiences in their own voices and on their own terms. The projects that I have been involved in are fundamentally about storytelling and representation, and so the texts that figure in italics, in between these brief paragraphs of mine are the translated words of the Afghan women who participated in community cultural development projects² between 2000 and 2006 in the suburbs of south-west and western Sydney. This region is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse spaces in Australia where exiles and émigrés, outsiders and all manner of people breathe and break naan together.

*I scream out to the world
But no one hears my voice
No one listens to my words
Who could imagine war³*

The back-story to these lines is indeed harrowing, with tomes worth of words and commentaries, and not enough to capture the suffering of the past decades. The few events I cover here seem to me to be the ones that have impacted most harshly on the most vulnerable of subjects – in particular, women, children and Hazara young men – many of whom arrived as unaccompanied minors to seek refuge, to seek asylum in Australia.⁴

In October 1999, the federal government led by a deeply conservative Prime Minister introduced a new regime for refugees: the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV). This visa, aptly named subclass 785, was just that; it effaced all the rights ordinarily afforded to refugees because they happened to arrive by boat, or in government terminology, as “unauthorised arrivals”. The term “queue jumper” became a derogatory moniker in the Australian vernacular that specifically referred to this group of asylum seekers who were mostly Afghans, Iraqis, Kurds, Palestinians, Iranians and Tamils. In the instance of young Hazara men, their families pooled all available resources and borrowed heavily to invest in a son, a brother, or a nephew, so that he may arrive in a place that would provide sanctuary for their loved one, and eventually others, in the family. On arrival, they were summarily incarcerated in prison complexes around the country in accordance with the policy of mandatory detention. The place names still bring a chill to those who endured the traumatic months and years behind the razor wire at Woomera, Baxter, Port Hedland, Villawood and Maribyrnong.

*I left home to be free
To escape cruel war and tyranny
I came here in a broken down ship
But was enslaved as a refugee*

Inside, conditions were deliberately harsh, and asylum seekers were deprived of the most basic of human rights, with many falling into depression and mental ill-health. These refugee detention complexes were run by Australasian Correctional Management (ACM), a private company owned by Wackenhut, and subsidiary of multinational security giant Group 4 Securicor. The Minister for Immigration and department officials were thus able to evade their responsibilities of “duty of care,” and the children, men and women thrown together inside experienced the full effects of the violence of racialised punishment, Australian-style.

*My wounded heart cries bitterly longing
My face tells the story of despair and separation
In the beautiful land of migration
The buds of my thoughts are blossoming*

When the refugees were eventually released after years of protests, which included the sewing up of lips, hunger striking, drinking detergents, climbing on roofs and breaking out, they were given temporary protection visas. This meant that they could not sponsor their families and thus be reunited with wives, sisters, mothers and daughters; nor could they leave Australia. If they did, they would not be allowed to re-enter. This ultimately forced women into taking dangerous risks in order to be reunited with their husbands, brothers and fathers, with many dying or drowning on the way.⁵

*I miss you mother, I am alone
That I should feel so sick for my home
If only you knew what I have gone through
Then you would hurry to see me too*

Amidst all of this, the hysteria that followed September 11 painted local Muslims here as a potential threat and newly arrived refugees as dangerous interlopers. The construction of the refugee in such racially troubling ways provided immediate legitimacy to the Howard government’s brutal disciplinary practices towards those seeking asylum.

*God has given me a pure heart
There is no one who knows even a small part
Of my suffering, no one knows my mind
That is why understanding is hard to find*

The discourse of Islamic fundamentalism became the primary framework that served the dual purpose of racialising Muslims and authorising the government’s neo-colonial interventions in Afghanistan and later Iraq. This was a highly racialised discourse and underpinned the Howard government’s electoral strategy that won them the November 2001 poll. Merging traditional anti-immigrant politics with the politics of anti-terrorism, this election became otherwise known as the “race election”. As xenophobic and racial fantasies captivated the white imaginary, this instance of hyping up paranoia around border control and national security provided Australians with a new “race devil” to position themselves against: the Muslim asylum seeker.

*Fled from homeland to be free
On a broken ship in a stormy sea
Reaching the land with so many scars
The voices of Iraqis and Afghans behind bars
Ask, is it my fault we are human beings?*

The abiding memories and physical images from this period are of drowning women and children, young desperate men jumping onto razor wire cutting themselves to pieces, children lying listless with severe depression, women’s scarves being pulled from their heads. There are hundreds of stories like these: of suffering and death, of violence, wilful negligence and rank indifference. Perhaps the most affective gesture to mark the inhumanity of what transpired over this past decade in Australia was the act of refugees sewing their lips together in protest at being punished for seeking asylum. The brutalisation of refugees and the serial breaching of human rights thus marked the beginnings of the 21st century in Australia.

*It is the Hindukush where I send my cries
The place where the ambassador of my wish flies
She speaks loudly of love of Ghor, Jalalabad and Mazar
Before she vanishes and dies*

Australians, and all citizens and subjects of nations involved in the US-led militarist intervention in Afghanistan, have a humanitarian responsibility to the civilian population and to the refugees that the turmoil and ruptures have produced. Thousands of women have been widowed and live in a state of abject poverty in camps, cities and towns. The Hazara, especially, remain vulnerable as the complex

interplay of Afghan politics remains precariously volatile, having endured waves of anti-Shia and anti-Hazara violence over the last decades, and indeed over past centuries. There is a huge burden on the Afghan diaspora to support those who remain in a perpetual state of uncertainty on the fringes in their homeland, in Pakistan, Iran, and Indonesia.

*Longing to see Sakhi to offer my prayers
I cross the tulips through the desert
Crying aloud, the tears run down my face
I yearn for what I don't yet seek*

Creative engagement with Afghan women and girls in Sydney has centred storytelling as a way of affirming and sustaining individuals and community in a time of crisis. Indeed, poetry plays a critical role in the cultural life of Afghan communities, and it is in this mode that the traumatised often find their voice. For those working towards a more just world, the challenge is to make safe spaces for minority groups, especially the marginalised and silenced, so that they can tell their stories in enabling and empowering ways. And so begins the process of transformative change.

*Filled with joy like a bud bursting with life
My heart beats quickly like a small bird learning to fly
A tableau emerges before my very eyes
A season of beauty, it must be springtime*

Endnotes

1 The *Dobaiti Poetry Project* was initiated by Rukhshana Sarwar, a community leader, educator, advocate, translator and poet living in Sydney. Her capacity-building work with the Afghan Women’s Network and expertise in the literary form of Dobaiti enabled the development of this project. A small group of dedicated artists worked with Afghan women to develop their creative expression through prose and Dobaiti poetry. The Community Cultural Development Program of the NSW Ministry for the Arts funded this first stage in 2004. A complex and challenging project, two publications emerged from this process: one a bilingual collection of the creative expression developed by the women, titled *Poetry Across Rooftops*; and a second book which critically mapped the participatory creative processes and its impact titled *The Afghan Women’s Dobaiti Poetry: A Community Cultural Development Project*. Both were published in 2006 and funded by the then Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council for the Arts in 2005. All the poems in this paper were variously created by Rukhshana Sarwar, Zahera Noor, Sediqa Anwari, Toorpikai Hashemi, Nooria Razban, Nadera Hakimi, Aqila Hassani, Lailuma Reza, Nabila Mushrif, Samila Hatami, Aqila Reza, Latifa Ahmadzai, Habiba Shafaq, Nasima Rafat and Hadisa Aymaq.

2 Community Cultural Development (CCD) is a term that has come to define a set of practices that enable communities to develop and express themselves through the modalities of art and culture. It is a collaborative process based on the foundational principles of social justice, access, participation, self-determination and human rights. What makes CCD unique is the empowering creative process that takes place between communities, artists and arts workers. Refer to Rukhshana Sarwar and Paula Abood (eds) *Poetry Across Rooftops: Contemporary Writings by Afghan Women* (Sydney: Bankstown Area Multicultural Network Inc, 2006) 25-26. Abood 2006: 25-26).

3 Samila Hatami, “And if I should die...” in *Bread and Other Stories* (Sydney: BAMN, 2001) 13. This project was initiated by Bankstown Area Multicultural Network (BAMN) and the Afghan Women’s Network in 2000 and funded by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts in 2001. Community-based storytelling workshops culminated in this publication of new writing.

4 “Most [unaccompanied children] are Hazara boys aged between 15 and 17 whom their parents put on boats because of the common Taliban practice of raiding villages, kidnapping children and forcing them to perform tasks such as walking through minefields ahead of Taliban troops. There are also quite a number whose parents have been killed and who have been sent out by the extended family.” Margaret Piper, Refugee Council of Australia. <http://webdiary.com.au/cms/?q=node/2482>,

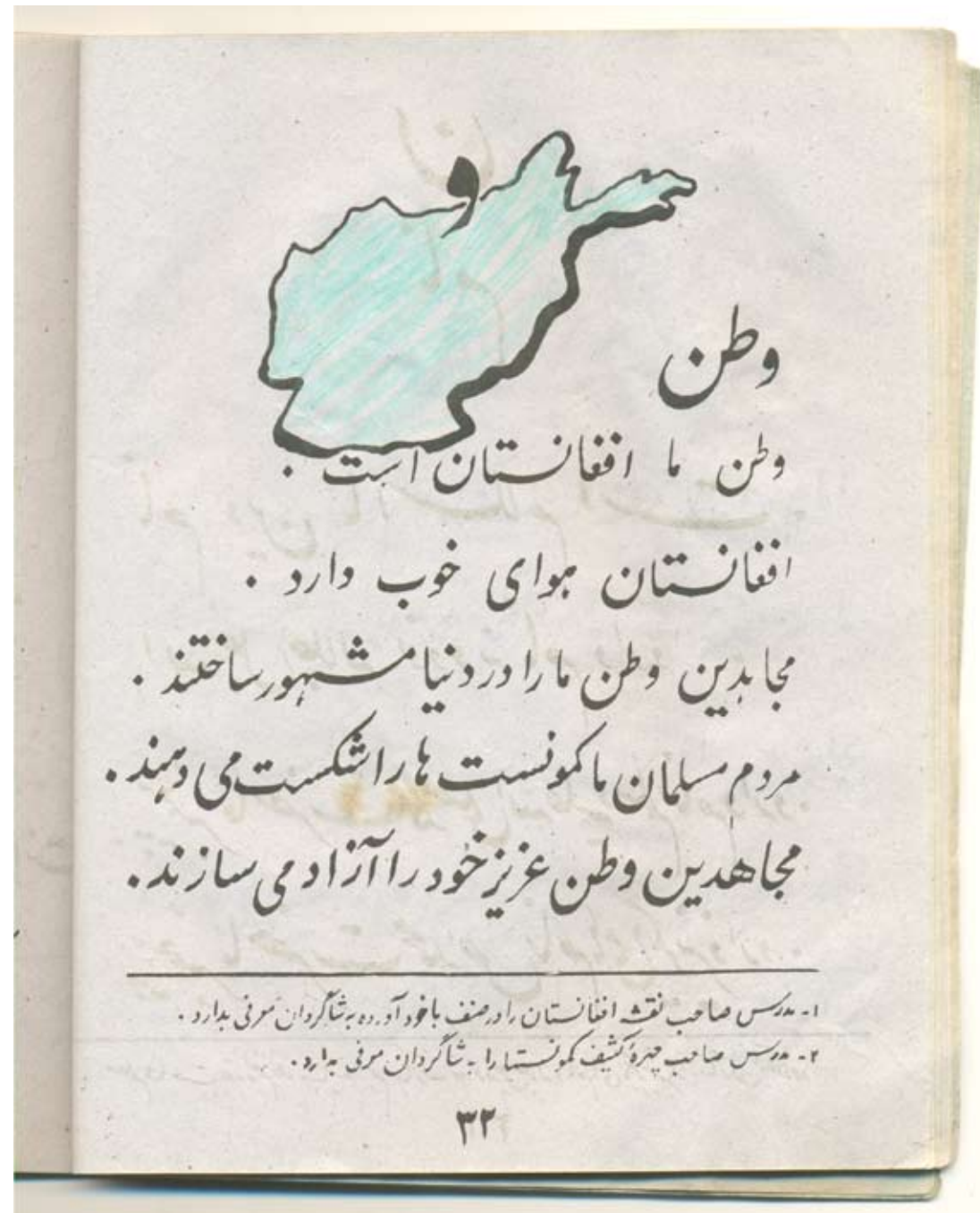
5 Human Rights Watch found that “Australia is the only country to grant temporary status to refugees who have been through a full asylum determination system and who have been recognized as genuinely in need of protection for 1951 Refugee Convention reasons...Australia is the only country to require refugees who have already been recognized as genuine refugees, as a result of rigorous and demanding determination procedures, to re-prove their claim in light of new circumstances, several years later [and]...Australia is the only country to have legislation permitting refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention to remain in the limbo of temporary protection forever. <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/refugees/australia051303.htm> Many activists linked the restrictions on the rights of TPV holders to the mass drowning of mostly women and children on the boat, the SIEV X in 2001. Many on that overcrowded boat were forced into making this perilous voyage so that they could be reunited with their husbands, fathers and families in Australia. <http://sievx.com/>; <http://www.sievxmemorial.com/> The Howard government made no secret that this policy was meant to deter would-be asylum seekers. The Rudd government quietly abolished this version of the TPV visa in August 2008. <http://www.immi.gov.au/legislation/amendments/2008/080809/1c09082008-05.htm>



some of the students at the Laisa-e-Marefat (Marefat High School), Dasht-e-Barchi, *Mualim Aziz Royish* principal, Western Kabul, Afghanistan, early morning of 4/23/08



some of the students at the Laisa-e-Zukoor (Boy's School), Bamiyan, Hazarajat, Afghanistan, 4/16/08



Wa for watan
 Afghanistan is my country.
 Afghanistan has a very good climate.
 The mujahadeen made our country famous worldwide.
 Our Muslims defeated the Communists.
 The mujahadeen made our country a free land.

Teachers should introduce the map of Afghanistan to the students.
 Teachers should introduce the dirty face of Communists to the students.

(from 'Math and Deri' text book produced by the US government ca. 1984, used till 2000 in mujahadeen controlled areas & Pakistan refugee camps; after fall of Taliban in 2001, the US government purchased & burned the books)



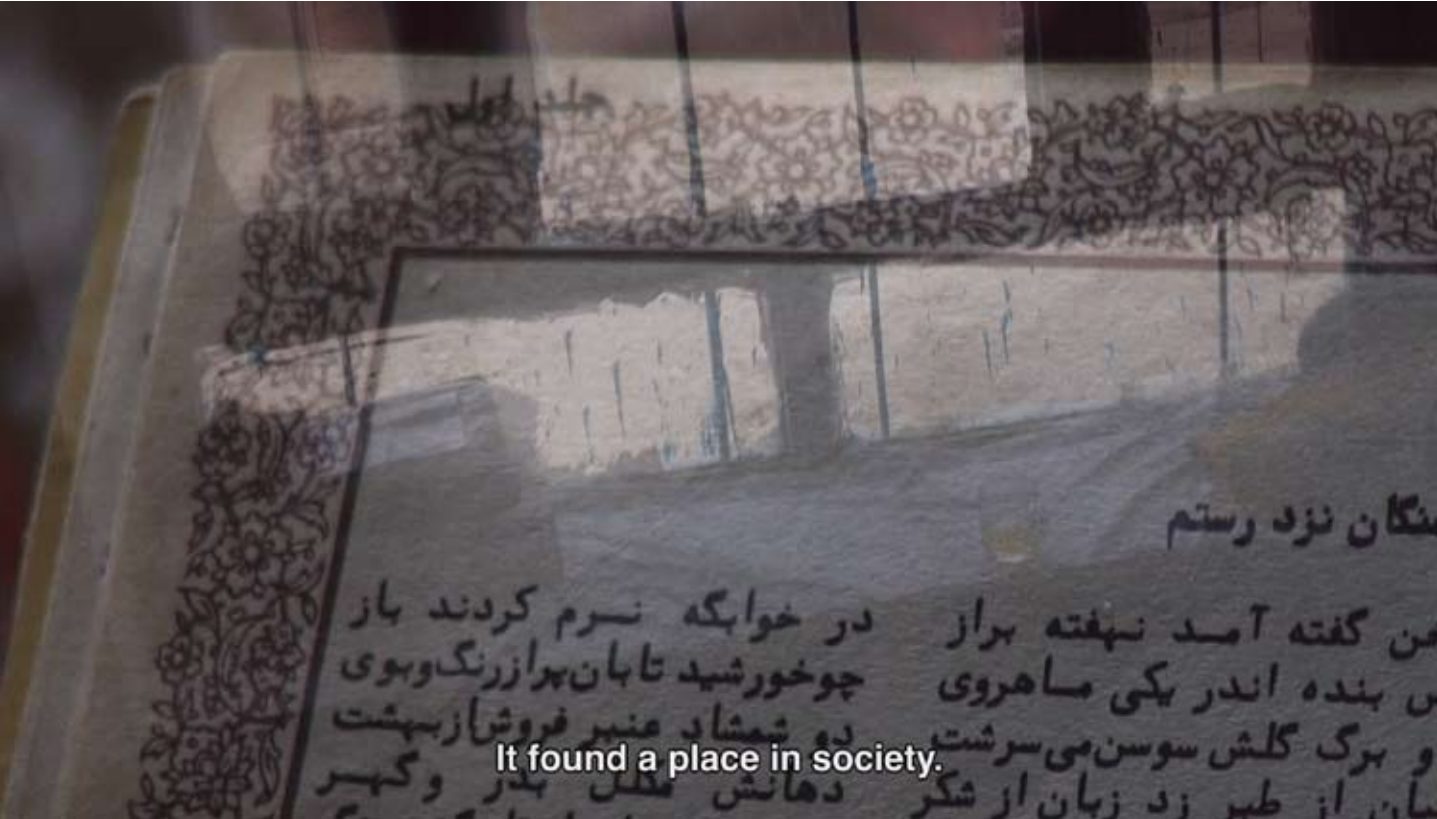
transient shapes, parched plains, canal routes, view of from, Bamiyan, 4/22/08 [DSCF4006]



student's drawing, from 'Absent Kitchen' workshop at Laisa-e-Zukoor (Boy's School), Bamiyan, Hazarajat, Afghanistan, 4/16/08



Syed Mohammed Shah, reciting Tahmina & Rustam section, Band-e-Amir, *Shahnameh* video still, 2010 (2008)



Shahnameh/tea/view at/from home of Syed Mohammed Shah, reciter, Band-e-Amir, *Shahnameh* video still, 2010 (2008)



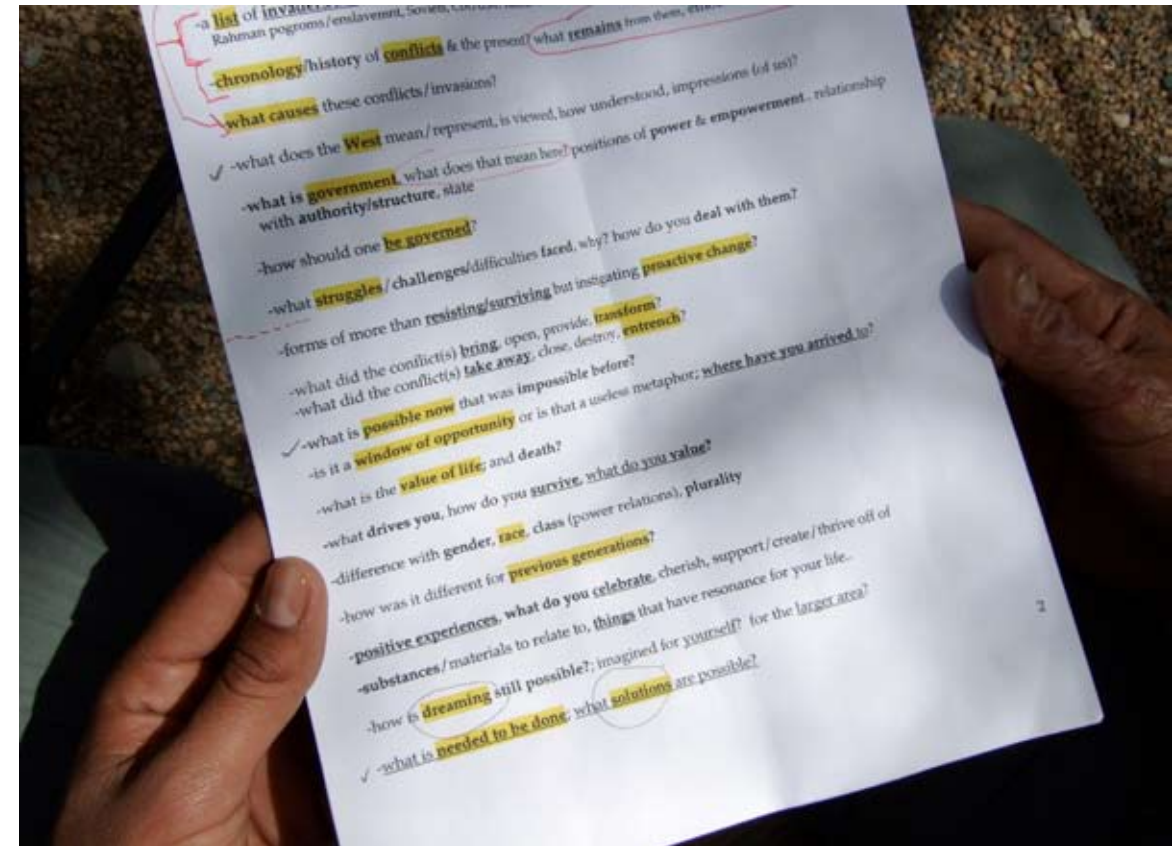
Rustam & Sohrab, 2010, 70 x 55 cm



working images, 4/08, Afghanistan



cell signal search – after work, Khadim, Zia & Sanji, Shumbul, 4/22/08 [DSCF4091]



in the process, revisional routes, taping notes, Agha Khan Hospital, Bamiyan, 4/16/08 [DSCF2892]



blessing, those that cannot see, roadside on the way back from Panjab to Bamiyan, Behsuod, Maidan Wardak Province,
 Hazarajat, Afghanistan, 4/20/08 [DSCF3566]



shards and stones, shredded substance, constructs and surface gestures,
 quarry on the way to Band-e-Amir, 4/17/08 [DSCF3127]



prayer song, student at Laisa-e-Maarifat (Marefat School), Dasht-e-Barchi,
 Western Kabul, Afghanistan, 4/12/08

Artist Biographies

Jayce Salloum's practise exists within and between the personal, quotidian, local, and the trans-national. His work engages in an intimate subjectivity and discursive challenge while critically asserting itself in the perception of social manifestations and political realities. He has worked in installation, photography, drawing, performance, text and video since 1976, as well as curating exhibitions, conducting workshops, and coordinating a vast array of cultural projects. Salloum has exhibited at the widest range of local and international venues, from the smallest unnamed storefronts and community centres in his downtown eastside Vancouver neighbourhood to institutions such as the Musée du Louvre, Paris; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada; Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Centre Pompidou, Paris; CaixaForum, Barcelona; 8th Havana Biennial; 7th Sharjah Biennial; 15th Biennale Of Sydney; Museum Villa Stuck, Munich; Robert Flaherty Film Seminars; European Media Art Festival; Biennial of Moving Images, Geneva and the Rotterdam International Film Festival. His texts have been featured in numerous journals and publications, most recently in *Projecting Migration: Transcultural Documentary Practice* (Wallflower Press, London, 2007), and *The Archive* (Whitechapel, London/The MIT Press, 2006) and most recently in *Damp: Contemporary Vancouver Media Art* (Anvil Press, Vancouver, 2008) and *Practical Dreamers: Conversations with Movie Artists*, (Coach House Press, Toronto, 2008). *Jayce Salloum: history of the present*, a survey exhibition of twenty-five years of Salloum's practice is touring Canada until 2012, and the accompanying monograph was published last fall.

Khadim Ali (1978) is a Hazara artist currently based in Sydney, Australia. Most recently he trained in contemporary miniature painter at the prestigious National College of Art, Lahore, Pakistan, and in mural painting and calligraphy at Tehran University, Iran. His work has been exhibited in museums and biennales including the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan; The Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia; the Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival, Melbourne, Australia; the Venice Biennale, Italy; the British Museum, London, UK. His work is held in numerous private and public collections including the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Author Biographies

Paula Abood is a community cultural development worker, writer, educator and filmmaker based in Sydney, Australia. She has worked with immigrant and refugee communities over the past 20 years in a diversity of settings. She has written for performance, radio, publications and film. Her works include *The Afghan Women's Dobaiti Project* (2006), *The Book of African Australian Stories* (2006), *Darkness over Paradise* (2006), *Of Middle Eastern Appearance* (2000), *Waiting in Space: New Australian Writings* (2000), *Gibran Khalil Gibran* (1999), *Bukra fil Mish Mish* (1998), *She Played the Derbaki* (1996), and *the politics of belly dancing: a choreopoem* (1994). She was the inaugural Artist-in-Residence at NSW Government House in 1997, awarded a 3 month research residency at La Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2007), and the recipient of a Western Sydney Artists' Fellowship (2007) from Arts NSW for the project Race and the City. She has completed a doctorate on race, gender and representation of Arabs in Australian popular culture. She is the artistic director of the short animation film *Huriyya and her Sisters* (2009).

Kathy Gannon is a journalist and author of *I is for Infidel*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2005) a book that gives perspective to the Afghan struggle and the Taliban. She is an Associated Press correspondent covering the tribal areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, reporting on Taliban and Al Qaeda issues. Gannon was the 2002 recipient of the International Women's Media Foundation Courage in Journalism Award, and the recipient of the Edward R Murrow Fellowship from the Council on Foreign Relations (2003-2004). Gannon was born in Timmins, Canada, she currently lives in Islamabad, Pakistan. She was one of 20 foreign journalists flown by the Taliban to report on the destroyed Buddhas on 26 March, 2001.

Haema Sivanesan is a curator with particular interest in the historical and contemporary art of South and Southeast Asia. She is currently the Executive Director of SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) in Toronto. From 1996-2004 she was the Assistant Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. She has curated several independent projects including a major exhibition for the Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival, Melbourne, Australia (2006) and was an invited zone curator for Nuit Blanche, Toronto (2008). Her writing has appeared in various publications including Art Monthly and Artlink (Australia), Art India and Marg (India), and FUSE (Canada) she has contributed to a range of exhibition catalogues including *Dancing to the Flute* (1997) and *BUDDHA: Radiant Awakening* (2001), published by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She recently contributed to the monograph, *Jayce Salloum: history of the present* (2009) accompanying Salloum's major survey exhibition.

Acknowledgements

Jayce Salloum: My deepest gratitude goes to my parents, Helen and Abraham Salloum without whom none of this would have been possible, and to my sisters and brothers who have supported many improbable journeys - sometimes unknowingly. Love and thanks to Karine, Mireille and Jen for their ongoing and endearing support. A heartfelt thanks to all the people encountered, who generously offered themselves to be videotaped and/or photographed, and who trusted me with their images and words. My gratitude to Mike Klein, my long-time colleague and dealer at MKG127, Toronto; Habib Ghani, my translator in Sydney; The Canada Council for the Arts for their valuable assistance; project funders Arts Partners in Creative Development and The Audain Foundation; and Artspace (Sydney, Australia), who gave me the opportunity of time and space to prepare some of this material.

Khadim Ali started out as the unknown voice on the other end of a few Vancouver-Quetta/Karachi phone calls and emails, and developed over our intense period of collaboration in Afghanistan and Pakistan (and subsequently in Sydney) to become much more than a project collaborator and colleague, but a deep friend who will always be a part of me. This project would not have been achievable without the prescient vision, insight, and dedication of Haema Sivanesan, who in Sydney, invited me to commence the journey of this project, and who awoke to our calls in Toronto at 4am from the snow-covered peaks of the Kothal-e-Hajigag mountains, telling her of the intensity of our experiences and the unspeakable beauty of the Hazarajat highlands and the rest of Afghanistan that stretched beyond in all directions.

Khadim Ali: I would like to express my immense gratitude to Haema Sivanesan, who has curated this amazing project, and for her constant support, motivation and encouragement to work alongside Jayce Salloum who made this project unique. I would like to thank him for his support and guidance. I am also thankful to my family and friends who have rendered their whole hearted support at all times for the successful completion of *“the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart”*.

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Haema Sivanesan: My warmest thanks to the artists, Jayce Salloum and Khadim Ali, whose kindness, generosity, friendship, courage and commitment to the project has exceeded expectation. Thanks to Jennifer Pickering and the staff at the Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art, Kelowna, whose early support of the project was invaluable. Thank you to Scott Miller Berry, Pablo de Ocampo and Jacob Korczynski at the Images Festival for collaborating with SAVAC in making the Toronto presentation possible; Francisco Alvarez, Laura Comerford, Seema Hollenberg, Tricia Walker, Mary Montgomery and the exhibition project team at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto for co-presenting the project in Toronto. Thank you also to Anita Dawood, Nada Raza and Louise Sunderland at Green Cardamom, London, UK for logistical support; and to the lenders to the exhibition.

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Peace.

Credits



SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) is an artist-run centre dedicated to the development and presentation of contemporary visual art by South Asian artists. Our mission is to produce innovative programs that explore issues and ideas shaping South Asian identities and experiences. We encourage work that is challenging, experimental and engaged in critical discussions of visual forms and processes, and which offer new perspectives on the contemporary world.

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pp 1 and 60: detail, spring thaw, ground, Band-e-Amir, video still, 2010 (2008)
pp 2 and 59: detail, spring sky, Band-e-Amir, video still, 2010 (2008)
All paintings opaque watercolour with gold or silver leaf on wasli paper, courtesy of the artist and private collections.
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