So Close; So Far

Reaching the Unreachable through the Process of Transformation in a

Drawing-based Installation

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"Hidden from every eye, and all things seen are from Him— that hidden One manifest in works is my desire." (Rumi, 80)

Abstract

So Close; So Far is a drawing-based installation that explores the Persian mystical tradition of transforming the self through the process of reaching for the unreachable. This thesis paper examines two main components of the installation: "Muqarnas", a suspended sculptural construction referencing Persian architecture, and "Self-portrait", a series of tableaux drawings reflecting my internal feelings and external appearance. Drawing upon Persian mysticism, this paper demonstrates the collaboration of the reachable, the external (zahir), and the unreachable, the internal (batin), to transform the exhibition, as well as the installation, the artist, the gallery space, and the viewer into one *whole. So Close; So Far* also investigates the potential of paper-based and nature-based industrial materials, mainly packaging cardboard and flooring paper, to express the idea of *the oneness of being*. Through this mystical lens, this paper explores how diverse concepts and elements cooperate to reach the unreachable and construct the *one*.

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Glossary

batin. Contrasted with the zahir, batin is internal, inner, and hidden (Batin). Whatever that is inaccessible. In this paper, *unreachable* is used interchangeably with batin.

dreamography. The term *dreamography* is my own translation of the Farsi phrase *khaab negari*, which means *to draw dreams*.

elm-e ladonni. *Elm* means *knowledge* and *Ladonni* means *innate*. The phrase Elm-e Ladonni references information or knowledge that someone possesses without any effort to learn.

eshragh. Meaning illumination, also refers to Suhrawardi's *philosophy of illumination*.

fana. Means to be faded, *Fana* in mysticism is a higher level in a mystic. In this level, the mystic becomes *faded* in Allah, or his creator, and sees nothing except the creator (Fana).

hijab. Besides meaning as a veil, hijab means cover and covering as well (Hijab).

Interuniversalism. An ontology founded by Mohammad Ali Taheri. It is a mystical ontology inspired by the oneness of being.

Kaaba. Located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, it is known as the house of Allah, Muslims' God. Muslims, anywhere in the world, pray in the direction of the Kaaba.

Kufic. It is a style of Arabic script.

mihrab. In mosques, the *mihrab* is an arch-like niche in the wall that indicates the qibla, the direction of prayer. Usually, an imam prays in a mihrab.

minareh. The tower of the mosque is called the *minareh*. Either a person or a speaker announces the time to pray from the top of the minareh.

Mowlana. Meaning *sir*, is a respectful term that Iranian use to reference Jalal-o-Din Mohammad, a mystic poet, also known as Rumi or Balkhi.

muqarnas. The three-dimensional geometric patterns that attach the ceiling to the wall. It is Islamic ornamented vaulting decorated with mold, tile, or mosaic.

Muqarnas. Borrowing its name from *muqarnas*, "Muqarnas" is the title of my sculptural piece. To avoid confusion I used quotation marks ("") whenever I refer to the artwork.

Nastaliq. The most famous style of Persian scripts. It is also known as the official script of Iranian.

taz'hib. The decoration of texts using floral and/or geometric patterns on the margin. Sometimes illustration of human figures or animals also can be seen in the design of a taz'hib.

tawaf. The ritual of circumnavigating the Kaaba by Muslims. In this ritual, a Muslim in order to become a Haji (male pilgrim) or Hajieh (female pilgrim) must walk around Kaaba for seven rounds.

the oneness of being. Translated from the Arabic term *vahdat Al-vojoud*, it means wholeness, unity in individuality. It is the core belief of mystics, such as Ibn Al-Arabi and Mowlana.

zahir. Contrasted with the batin, zahir is external, outer, and apparent (Zahir). Whatever that is accessible. In this paper, *reachable* is used interchangeably with zahir.

Introduction

This thesis project explores the process of self-reflection and self-discovery through two frames of reference: the practice of drawing and sculpture, and, the crossing of Persian and Western cultures. Although often viewed as being uniquely different, even oppositional (2D – 3D; East – West), my project is about creating unity by bringing together cultures and media in the form of a gallery installation titled, *So Close, So Far*. My approach toward my thesis project is intuitive. With creating coming before critiquing, I follow my inner voice to make decisions during my production process. I then observe, review, analyze, and argue to understand the intuition that influences my decisions.

This thesis paper draws from my personal history, my journey into Persian mysticism and highlights how my creative artistic process strives to transform the *unreachable* into the *reachable* and vice versa. The external or zahir (outward) is the *reachable*. It is easily accessible without contemplation. It is inclusive, unfolded, exposed, discovered, bright, bold, and continuous. It certainty exists, and it is almost impossible to negate. It is both the intention and the result of a process. In contrast, the internal or batin (inward) is *unreachable*. It is hidden and needs to be contemplated and discovered. It is exclusive, folded, covered, and shadowed. It exists, but needs to be explained, described, and proved. It requires a whole process to be understood. It triggers the idea or the intention for the process.

The paper continues with a closer look at my sculpture titled "Muqarnas": a central work informing my process and my installation. Based on the infinite geometric

patterns found in Persian architecture, "Muqarnas" is an unreachable and folded form that adds a third dimension into my installation. It makes a movement, directs viewers in the gallery, and transforms the gallery into a sacred place. It manifests the idea of the oneness of being. Ibn Al-Arabi, a Muslim philosopher, never employed the term *oneness of being* himself, however, the idea is influenced by his thoughts. Briefly explaining, the oneness of being means "there is only one Being, and all existence is nothing but the manifestation or outward radiance of that One Being." (Chittick, 79) With its repetitive, rhythmic, and harmonized pattern, potentially "Muqarnas" stands as a tool to reach the unreachable.

The "Drawing" chapter focuses on a series of drawings, titled "Self-portrait", the second main component of my thesis. These drawings are focused on the interplay between observational self-portraits and other diverse elements: lighting, repetition, a Farsi poem in Kufic script, and secondary images of distorted faces. Based on my experiences, there is an inseparable connection between text and calligraphy. Thus, in my drawings, where I felt the urge to express my inner self feelings with a poem, I wrote it in the Kufic calligraphy form. For centuries, the Quran was written in Kufic, and the use of this script contributed to transforming the gallery into a sacred place. The script itself is borrowed from one of Hossein Monzavi's poems that manifests humanity as the reflection of the universe, and follows the idea of oneness of being. Monzavi's perspective redefines different elements of my installation. Based on his poem, my drawings are the mirror that captures the reflection of the *oneness* that here is my sculptural piece, "Muqarnas".

The chapter "Distorted Faces" analyzes the effects of distortion in drawing components of the installation. Distorted faces are the result of freely expressing and releasing the internal through portraits. They depict the external or zahir and internal or batin at once. This way they are a mixture of the reachable and the unreachable and each of them manifests the Whole or the One.

In "Observational Portraits", the process is an inward transition that starts with a focus on the external. The process begins by freezing the moment with photography and ends with the drawing of the same moment on flooring paper using charcoal pencils. These sequential high contrast drawings follow triangular compositions and indicate an upward movement. By pointing to the sky, heaven, or God, this movement makes the piece sacred and unreachable.

The chapter "Material" describes the connection between the material and the concept of the oneness of being and also addresses time in the context of the thesis project. The installation is created with a focus on industrial paper-based materials, such as flooring paper and packaging cardboard. This choice has roots in my personal history. Besides, these materials collaborate in manifesting the idea of the oneness of being.

Finally, in my conclusion, time is introduced as a reachable-unreachable concept that assists to transform the practice, the gallery, and also the viewer. In the final chapter, describing the connection between time and the two main components of the installation, "Muqarnas" and "Self-portrait", I explain how time participates in the process of reaching an unreachable, and how it emphasizes the idea of oneness of being.

Self- Reflection/Self-Discovery

I was born and raised in Babol, a town close to the Caspian Sea in Northern Iran, in a family with a great interest in mysticism. At the age of fifteen, I started my journey to find my personalized definition of mysticism by reading mystic novels; such as Paolo Coelho's *Alchemist*. About a year after, a chain of mystic books led me to Carlos Castaneda's *Don Juan* series. I remember the very first exercise that this book proposed was to become in charge of own dreams. I used to dream a lot—unreachable, strange, repetitive, and consequential dreams that I had no control over. This exercise planted in me the idea of dominating my dreams. This was an introduction to the concept of reachable and unreachable. Dreams were reachable while I was dreaming, but after waking, they would become unreachable. This practice triggered the idea of transforming the reachable to unreachable by choosing the dream, and, transferring the unreachable to reachable by memorizing the dream and preserving it.

Years later during my first degree, a design-oriented program in Fashion and Textile print at the University of Art in Tehran, I came across the same subject of dreams. To catch my dreams, I trained myself in *dreamography*. I was going to sleep with a sketchbook and a pen or pencil next to my pillow ready to draw the images of my dreams, right after waking up in a liminal stage (fig. 1 – 2). Then, after waking, I was able to go through initial sketches, recall those dreams, and finish them with more details or text. Using this practice, I was able to transfer my dreams from my subconscious to images on paper. As I remember, that was my first attempt to reach the

unreachable. Based on my dreamographic drawings, I wrote a play, designed costumes

and accessories, and directed a performative and staged theatrical fashion show

entitled *The Last 10 Minutes*. In that performance, seven actors, playing seven gods,

were talking in a short 10-minute meeting that finalized in hope for humanity and

introducing the apocalypse (fig. 3).

Fig. 1 - *Untitled (Dreamography),* pen and marker on the sketchbook, 2008.

Fig. 2 - *Untitled (Dreamography)*, pen on the sketchbook, 2008.

Fig. 3 - *The Last 10 Minutes*, Performance on Stage, 2010.

After moving to Canada in 2013, I faced the complexities of adopting to a new environment and culture. I was aware that focusing on a creative artistic process could help me with this transformation. However, in the chaos of this transition, which challenged all the accepted logic in my mind, I was not capable of mentally supporting any artistic practice. Meanwhile, while looking for a remedy, I was introduced to Interuniversalism, a mystic ideology founded by Dr. Mohammad Ali Taheri (born 1956 c.). The core of this concept is to respect and accept everything as a part of *the whole*. As is it mentioned on the official website, "one's status is intertwined with the status of all other beings." (Interuniversalism, 2012) Through Interuniversalism I became familiar with Persian mystics, such as Mowlana (Rumi), Hafez, Saadi, Khayyam, Attar, Hatef, Abu Saeed, Sohrawardi, and Ibn Al-Arabi. Learning about Persian mysticism, I found peace and relief. Then, I deeply felt an urge to start a journey of self-discovery, to discover, accept, respect, and organize my internal chaos. I was encouraged to explore the most virginal, imperceptible, and unreachable version of myself that I have never faced with.

Through this study of Persian mysticism, I came to understand that we are the sum total of our experiences. Thus, in order to step in this journey of self-discovery, I was motivated to reach out to my experiences based on memories that were standing far and unreachable to me. Finding the internal solace, the creative process was the only meditative exercise that could open a totally different window to my own self. During this process, I was able to recall the past and faded memories. Since then, I have employed this artistic practice not only as an expression but also as an acceptance and understanding of my transformation. At the same time, by starting

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studying Fine Arts at York University, I transformed from a designer to an artist. Along

with noticing my inner unreachable self, this journey resulted in different series of

artworks, such as *Figurative* and *The Book of a Chaotic Mind* (fig. 4 – 7). These works,

focusing on deconstruction and reconstruction of my body, experiences, and memories,

helped me to organize the chaos I reached during my internal observation. Starting the

Master of Fine Arts program at York University, I began centering myself, scavenging

my inside. My artistic process was transformed from an aggressive expression of

disorganized thoughts into a more curated representation of a mind that seeks balance

and harmony by accepting uncertainties.

Fig. 4 - *Figurative series, As I see I* – VIII, marker on canvas, 2017.

Fig. 5 - *Figurative series, Zygote*, marker on canvas, 2017.

Fig. 6 - *The Book of a Chaotic Mind*, details of installation, ink and graphite on paper, 2018.
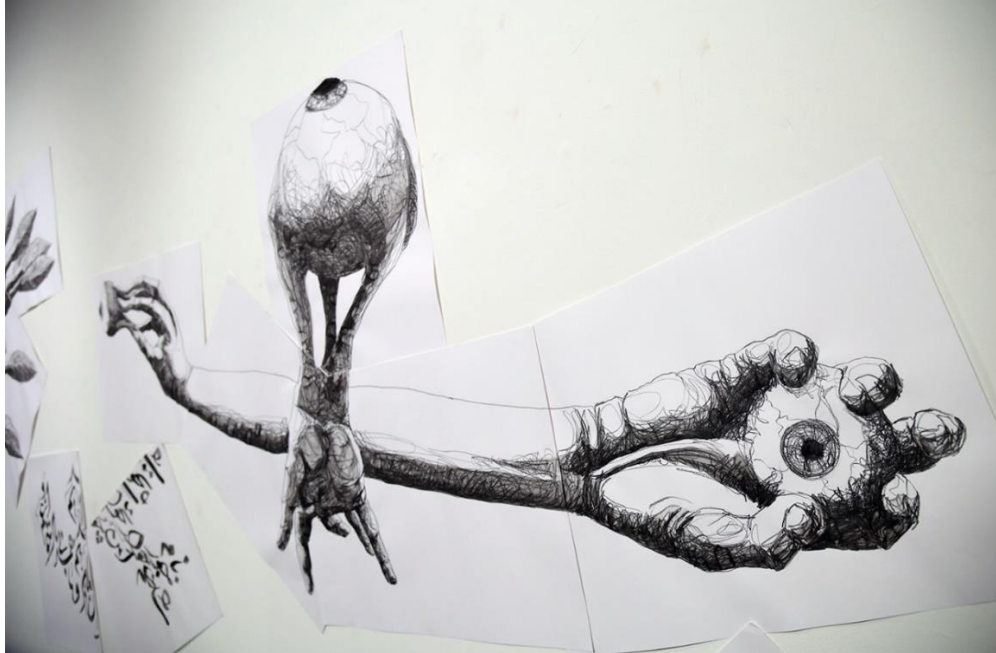
Fig. 7 - *The Book of a Chaotic Mind*, details of installation, ink and graphite on paper, 2018.

My thesis exhibition, *So Close; So Far*, consists of an installation of two main segments: traditional drawing (two-dimensional), and expanded approaches to drawing (three-dimensional paper-based). It explores poems, calligraphy, figures, sequences, and architectural elements. As with the tradition of Persian miniatures, (fig. 8) employing diverse elements to transform a single small paper into a stage for visual performance of a specific text, my thesis project transforms the gallery into a stage that displays my internal conflicts, paradoxes, thoughts, chaos, memories, and uncertainty. *The Seduction of Yusuf* is an illustration for *Bustaan-e Saadi* by master Kamal ud-Din Bihzad (1450 -1535 c.). In this miniature painting, Bihzad placed his figures, Yusuf and Zulaikha, on a Persian rug among architectural elements, doors, and arches that are covered with floral and geometric patterns. These figures are surrounded by empty but detailed rooms indicative of different sequences. Saadi's poem, written in Nastaliq, describes the story and decorates the page. All of these elements are combined and

together perform on the stage that the paper provides. In my gallery installation,

portraits on the wall, as different sequences, circle the detailed central piece,

"Muqarnas", that is inspired by architectural elements and geometric patterns. In one of

the drawings, a poem, written in Kufic script, interprets drawings as a mirror that is

faced to the viewer. The installation transforms the gallery into a stage that describes

my inner journey to transform unreachable into reachable. Like the miniature which

unfolds, but is still folded, *So Close; So Far* also partially reveals my journey, but does

not make it totally reachable to the viewer.

Fig. 8 - *The Seduction of Yusuf*, Bihzad, 1488. "File:Yusef Zuleykha.jpg." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 19 Feb 2020, <commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Yusef_Zuleykha.jpg&oldid=395977166>. Accessed 27 Feb 2020.

Artist Statement

Sculpture

"Muqarnas"

My practice as an artist provides for me a method to fulfill a very strong desire to center myself. "Muqarnas", a suspended sculptural work structured with repeated forms around a central axis is a reflection of my centering process.

Prior to developing "Muqarnas", I explored other ways to bring the third dimension into my drawings, as seen in a series of self-portraits called *Distortion* (fig. 9). The stereoscopic effect of placing two-dimensional drawings and three-dimensional folded-drawings next to each other and reaching the viewer's unreachable unconsciousness triggered the idea of adding the third dimension into my thesis project.

Fig. 9 - *Distortion*, charcoal and wrinkle on paper, 2019.

In Persian architecture, Muqarnas (âhupây) connect the ceiling of the dome to the wall (fig. 10). They are a three-dimensional visualization of two-dimensional geometric patterns. Islamic rules restricted painting and sculpture as they could reference idols and undermine the notion of Allah's power of creation. In contrast, to attract more readers, calligraphy and book design using geometric and floral patterns (taz'hib) were supported to bring beauty to the covers and pages of the Quran (fig. 11). In this duality, geometric patterns flourished and the abstraction of these forms was pushed beyond its imagined limits. Muqarnas is the result of the progress of evolution that found its place in holy sites, such as mosques.[1]

Fig. 10 - Muqarnas of Jameh-ye Atigh Mosque, Shiraz. "File:Jameh-ye Atigh Mosque - muqarnas - edit.jpg." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 21 Dec 2018, <commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Jameh-ye_Atigh_Mosque_-_muqarnas_-_edit.jpg&oldid=331971750>. Accessed 27 Feb 2020.
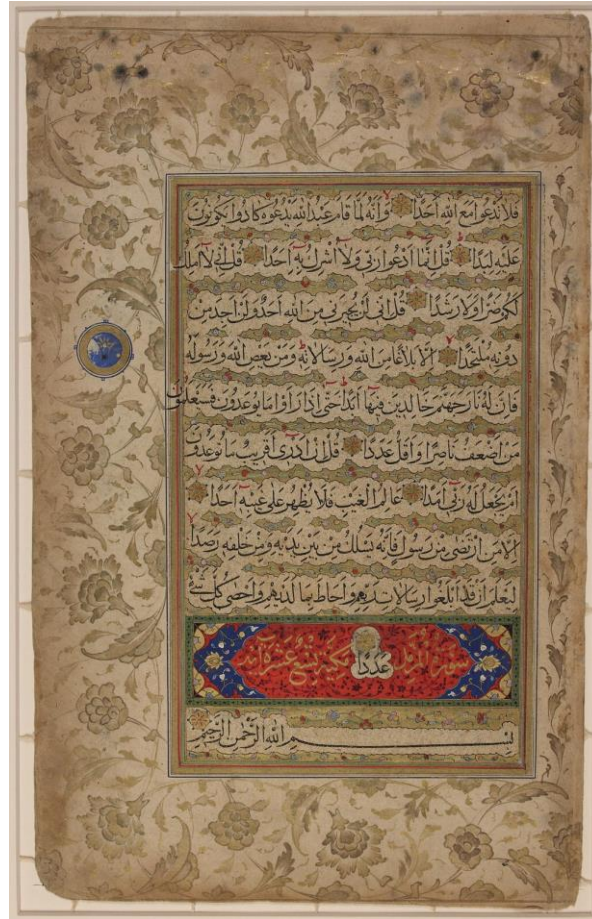
Fig. 11 - A page of a decorated Quran with taz'hib. "File:Naskh script - Qur'anic verses.jpg." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 16 May 2016, 21:43 UTC. 19 Aug 2020, 04:12 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Naskh_script_-_Qur%27anic_verses.jpg&oldid=196444919>. Accessed 19 August 2020.

It is almost impossible to live in Iran and not seeing any muqarnases at all, as they decorate many historical and cultural sites. I do not remember the very first time I saw a muqarnas. However, I remember once standing at the entrance of Jameh Mosque of Yazd, in my early twenties, and looking up to the ceiling of the dome that transforms into geometric surfaces of a muqarnas which finally attaches to the walls (fig. 12). The scene was impressive. The awe of detailed forms and seamless patterns of the muqarnas, covered with floral colorful designs, amazed me. The large-scale muqarnas,

located above eye-level, is almost impossible to observe it all at once. I was

overwhelmed by its unreachability.
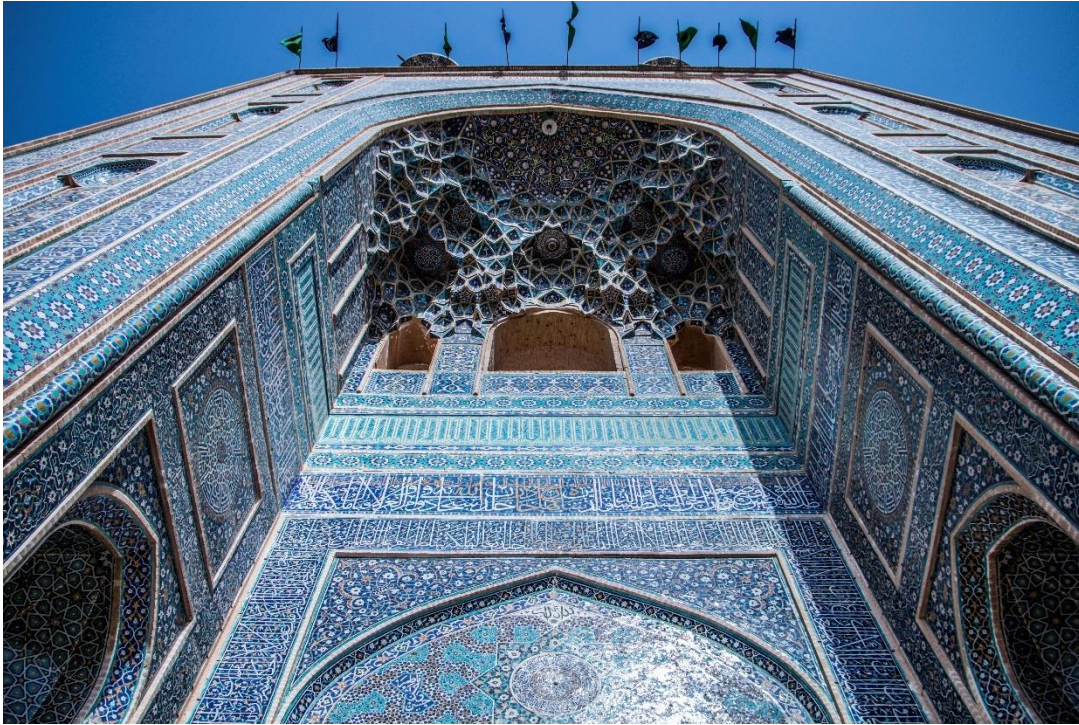
Fig. 12 - Entrance of the Jameh Mosque of Yazd. "File:نمایی از ورودی مسجد جامع یزد.jpg." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 19 Feb 2020, 13:17 UTC. 19 Aug 2020, 04:07 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:%D9%86%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C_%D8%A7%D8%B2_%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AF%DB%8C_%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9_%DB%8C%D8%B2%D8%AF.jpg&oldid=396092081>. Accessed 19 August 2020.

At that moment, I was transferred to an unknown unreachable historical moment.

I imagined the pilgrims coming from close and far with different intentions and looking at

the same thing that I was looking at. Would this specific location transport those pilgrims

as well? I cannot answer that. I just know, the folded pattern of the muqarnas uncovered

a connection between me and others who visited that site before and made all of us as

One. When I was purely experiencing that moment and that oneness, time stopped and

I felt centered and grounded. At that moment, the unreachable had become reachable.

In fact, that muqarnas made that specific moment both unreachable and reachable for

me. It was a so-close-so-far situation, like a dream. I could reach unreachable past moments while the present moment became unreachable, as it was a centering of myself in time.

Thus, in my practice, the strive to reach the unreachable, in this case, the experience of oneness, centrality, and grounding, I started to understand a muqarnas or, as Laura U. Marks describes, "unfold" it in order to "reveal an entire universe" (Marks, 5). In her book, *Enfoldment and Infinity: an Islamic Genealogy of New Media*, Marks writes about the idea of *unfolding* as a way to reach "an infinite number of folds" that, based on Deleuze, are "the smallest units of matter" (Marks, 5). In fact, my experience in Jame Mosque of Yazd was the experience of unfolding and reaching the infinite. The joy of that moment urged me to create my own muqarnas to recreate the same feeling.

"Muqarnas" I made can be unreachable in two ways. Physically, as a non-interactive 360-degree art piece suspended slightly higher than the eye-level in the gallery, and, through the complexity of its form, it is almost impossible to understand the relationship between its tiers easily. In that sense "Muqarnas" remains unreachable to the viewer until it is unfolded by either observation and contemplation or providing a description (fig. 13).

Fig. 13 - *Muqarnas*, cardboard and wood glue, 2020.

At first glance, muqarnas is a complex and confusing form; however, simplifying

it shows how it is constructed out of basic geometric shapes, such as triangles and

rectangles. Either in reducing the complicated solid shape of muqarnas to its segments

or building it out of very basic flat geometric forms, there is a transition quality. The

viewer starts with the *zahir* or external appearance of it and moves toward its *batin* or

inner form. So, to *reach* and achieve "Muqarnas," the viewer needs a transformation

that transcends time. In fact, the viewer needs time to understand "Muqarnas".

However, I, as the creator of the piece, know how all of these basic geometrical shapes

collaborate in order to create such a complex form. Thus, my understanding of

"Muqarnas" *after* making it and *in* the gallery is innate knowledge (Elm-e Ladonni).[2] For me, "Muqarnas", in the gallery, is already reached and transformed in zero time. I see its *batin* and *zahir* all at once.

With all its peaks and hollows, "Muqarnas" makes brightness and shadows. It is a perfectly symmetrical shape that involves darkness and lightness working together in harmony. Shadow in "Muqarnas" is the mystery, unknowing, and uncertainty. It is also a cover that guards the *whole* from being divulged. It forms shelters or caves in the body of the whole where the eyes may find rest. It is these shadows that make "Muqarnas" unreachable. In contrast, the bright sides of "Muqarnas" uncover and expose the remainder of the *whole*. By revealing its secret, the luminated part of "Muqarnas" renders it reachable and helps the mind to rest. In fact, the form of "Muqarnas" permits the existence of these paradoxical concepts beside and inside each other. In that sense, it is a perfect form that stands as an alternative for Yin and Yang and manifests the idea of oneness of being.

Michelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel, (1512 c.) might be the most ubiquitous example of the connection between employing art and a sacred place. Mark Rothko's paintings in *Rothko Chapel* (1964–71 c.), James Turrell's installation, *Live Oak Friends Meeting House* (2000 c.), both of which are located in Houston, Texas, are latter examples of this connection. However, sometimes the artist intentionally employs art to transform a place into a sacred one. Multi-media artist, Winsom's series of installations, *I Rise* (2019), at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, is a contemporary example of sacralizing places with art. Suspended at the center of the gallery, "Muqarnas" also transforms the gallery into a sacred place. This movement is

reminiscent of tawaf, the ritual of circumnavigating the Kaaba, the house of Muslim's God. In tawaf ritual, as the most essential part of a pilgrim journey, Muslims should walk around the Kaaba seven times. In the gallery, the journey will be defined by walking around "Muqarnas" as well. All drawings, with all information about my internal and external journey, are on the walls around the "Muqarnas", and the viewer, looking at drawings, turns around the "Muqarnas" and transforms into the pilgrim of my installation. Moreover, "Muqarnas" is an infinite form that can grow limitlessly. This quality is emphasized by its seamless pattern that follows a disciplined and symmetrical composition.

In a similar fashion to the *mihrab, minareh*, and dome, the muqarnas follows a vertical movement in its composition which could be read as a connection between the upper and lower realm (fig. 14 – 16). With its arch-like pattern of "Muqarnas", this movement is upward. Considering ancient beliefs about God or gods who live in the sky, "Muqarnas" points toward God. Moreover, in architecture, a muqarnas connects the ceiling of a dome to the walls. Interestingly, in the Persian literature, *dome* and *sky* are used interchangeably. Persian bedtime stories usually start with: *There was a One, which was the One, under the grey dome, there was no one except God.* Also, in Persian poetry, Hafez says: "I haven't heard a better sound than the love / that stays under this round dome" (206). As referenced in Persian poetry, the dome represents the sky, heaven, or a place that God lives in. So, a muqarnas can be read as a transitional path between divinity and creation. From the perspective of the creature, it is an upward bridge to holiness.

Fig. 14 - Dome of Sheikh Lotf-Allah Mosque, Isfahan, 17th century. "File:گنبد مسجد شیخ لطف الله.jpg."
Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 3 Feb 2020,
<commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:%DA%AF%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%AF_%D9%85%D8%
B3%D8%AC%D8%AF_%D8%B4%DB%8C%D8%AE_%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%81_%D8%A7%D9%84%
D9%84%D9%87.jpg&oldid=391971131>. Accessed 27 Feb 2020.
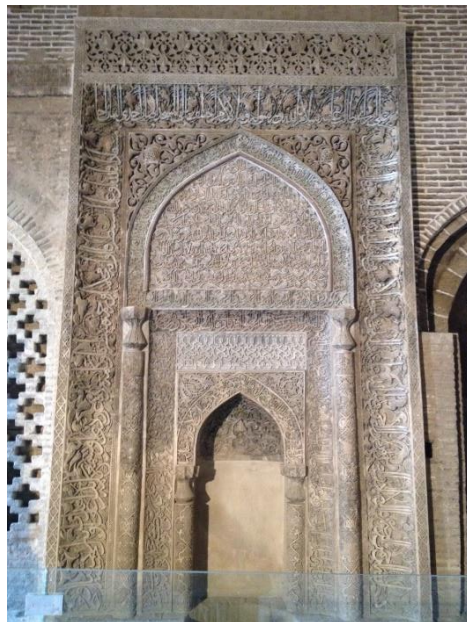
Fig. 15 - Uljaytu Mihrab, Jameh Mosque, Isfahan, 14th century. "File:Ja'me mosque-Uljaytu Mihrab-1.jpg."
Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 3 Jun 2020, 21:49 UTC. 19 Aug 2020, 02:50
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Ja%27me_mosque-Uljaytu_Mihrab-
1.jpg&oldid=423651383>. Accessed 18 August 2020.

Fig. 16 - Minareh of Jameh Mosque of Yazd, 12th century. "File:Jame Mosque in Yazd
(8906624110).jpg." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 30 May 2020, 06:43 UTC. 19 Aug
2020, 03:53
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Jame_Mosque_in_Yazd_(8906624110).jpg&oldid
=422637201>.

"Muqarnas" follows a repeating pattern. Each part of this pattern is reminiscent of

an individuality. However, as a whole, this repetition creates one unique visual rhythm

through a harmony that references the oneness of being. The process of creating

"Muqarnas" is also a repetitive and meditative process that harmonizes my thoughts

and allows my mind to reach for new ideas. It transports me from where I am to

everywhere and nowhere. It juxtaposes different timeframes on top of each other and

takes the concept of time out of its observational definition. Thus, it allows me to

experience the same moment I experienced under the ceiling of the dome at the

entrance of the Jameh Mosque in Yazd.

Drawings

"Self-portraits"

Like most, I was an abstract drawer as a child. I enjoyed exploring materials,
colors, and shapes on papers, walls, and other reachable surfaces. And since that time,
drawing remained the main part of my artistic practice as it shelters me. Protected from
the external world, the process of drawing takes me on an inward trip to contemplate
and discover my own self and my identity. It gives me the power to explore ideas,
concepts, bodies, faces, scripts, and dreams. In this process, I am able to deconstruct,
analyze, and reconstruct every single detail of any subject. It makes me limitless. In
short, drawing is the medium that allows me to reach the unreachable.

In the two-dimensional drawings that form part of the *So Close, So Far*
installation, I explore connection and transformation between reachable and
unreachable states. I see this part as connected to a *whole*. In the drawings, I created
large scale tableaux self-portraits, each containing a variety of elements and individually
possessing the ability to both stand as a separate and unified work. In this inclusive
"Self-portrait", all components can be defined by three main categories: *script*, *distorted
faces*, and *observational portraits*.

Script

In my world, I cannot separate poems and calligraphy from each other. I started
to learn Nastaliq, which is a Persian traditional calligraphic script when I was thirteen.
Using a reed pen and ink, Mr. Farzi, the master, wrote a sample in my notebook (fig.
17). The samples were lines of mystic poetries by Hafez. I practiced for one whole week
to write as perfect as the Master's sample. At the same time, I was trying to understand

the meaning of the line as well. I went through the Deewan-e Hafez, finding the poem that the sample was written based on, and contemplated on that poem and the specific line itself. The poem and the scream-like sound of writing with the reed pen when it was running out of ink connected me in the writing moment with the old unreachable Persian era. In that sense, calligraphy is timeless, it helps to reach unreachable moments. Since those times, imagining a poem, especially a mystic one, without calligraphy is disrespectful and diminutive. Thus, the script in my drawing, which is a mystic Persian poem, is executed calligraphically.
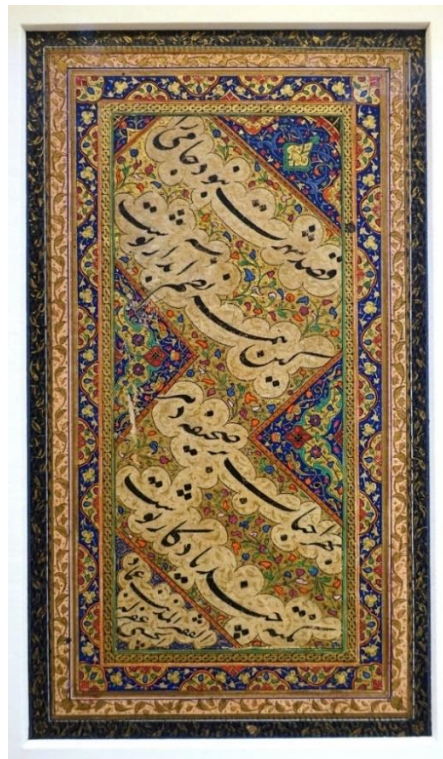
Fig. 17 - Nastaliq script by Master Mir Emad, 16th/17th Century. "Mir Emad Hassani." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 9 June 2019, <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mir_Emad_Hassani>. Accessed 27 February 2020.

Fig. 18 - Kufic script of *Mirror No. 1*, charcoal on flooring paper, 2019.

Text

Drawing is a meditative process. It is like emptying my cup and waiting for a refill. When I was working on the first part of my drawing for *So Close, So Far*, a poem by Hossein Monzavi (1946 – 2003 c.), a noteworthy Iranian contemporary poet, randomly came to my mind and I could not stop thinking about it. It was the same feeling I had experienced with poems written by Hafez in calligraphy classes. So, after finishing the first drawing, I have written the very first line of this poem in Kufic script, between a distorted face and an out-of-focused observational portrait (fig. 18). The poem, *Inside the Mirror*, is composed in Persian, and the following is my translated version.

What do you see through the mirror facing you?

You are the reflection of the universe, do tell, what do you see?

You confront yourself, staring at your own eyes

What do you see in those telling eyes?

You are your own wine, drinking from that wine too,

In your vessel, what do you see, except your own pains?

While you are lost in yourself with these intermediary eyes

What do you see in all these uproars and tumult?

The last chance for love and hope has been burnt on the gallows

Burnt in flares of wish, what do you see?

In that fireball that is called heart

And the wind takes it everywhere, what do you see? (Monzavi)

The line I chose says: "What do you see in the mirror facing you?" The poet, Monzavi, asks this question not because he seeks an answer, as he asks other questions in this sonnet and somehow answers them all with some hints. Indeed, his questions bring the reader face-to-face with some forgotten memories about the notion of humanity and the idea of oneness of being. He forces the reader to contemplate and discover all these forgotten memories. Talking about the oneness of being, Monzavi tries to reconnect the viewer with the *one* they are coming from.

The very first line talks about *the mirror*. What kind of mirror does he talk about though? A real mirror or a metaphoric one? Mirror itself is a *so-close-so-far* object. It is a real object, a thing, which is known and palpable for us. In this way, it is reachable or *so close*. On the other hand, the image it shows, the reflection, is not real, it is virtual. In this translation of the mirror, it is unreachable or *so far*. Based on this definition, the *mirror* is equal to so close plus so far, and equals to reachable plus unreachable.

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In the second line, he says: "you are the reflection of the universe, do tell, what do you see?" Referring to the second line, Monzavi states the human as a *mirror* that reflects the *whole* "universe". He talks about the human as "the reflection of the universe", or sees the whole universe in the human. And, this is the core of the oneness of being. At the same time that this statement partially defines the mirror, it also makes an ambiguity about the initial question. It might ask about the real mirror, the object, that reflects the reflection of the universe (the human/the reader), or it might be a question about the reflection of the universe through another human (another human who is the mirror that the reader faces in life). Defining drawings as mirrors and the reflection of the subject, and also, considering the viewer as the reflection of the universe or another mirror, when a viewer stands in front of any drawings in the gallery, the result would be an infinity mirror. This translation transforms the whole installation and gallery space into an infinite and unreachable place that looks reachable.

Bringing this line into the context of the installation, my drawings can stand as the mirror facing the viewer, showing them the reflection of the world. They can define my self-portraits within the *"*Self-portrait*"* as part of the viewers' *reflection of the universe.* In this sense, adding my self-portraits to the viewer's reflection, the drawings transform the viewer into wholeness. Also, my drawings are a mirror that reflects the image of "Muqarnas", which is suspended at the center of the gallery. In this lens, "Muqarnas" is the *whole*, the combination of individuality. The *mirror* or my drawings reflect details of this *whole* and transform them for the viewer. In this translation, "Muqarnas" represents the *one* or the *oneness* that includes every single thing, drawing papers are mirrors, and my drawings are the reflection of everything that is in "Muqarnas". Based on the

installation of my show, the answer to the initial question of the poem is: 'through the

mirror, you can see the oneness of being, the *Whole*.

Fig. 19 - Kufic Quran, gold ink on blue vellum, 9th – 10th Century. "File:North Africa - Qur'an leaf in Kufic
script - Google Art Project.jpg." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 10 Nov 2015,
<commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:North_Africa_-_Qur%27an_leaf_in_Kufic_script_-
_Google_Art_Project.jpg&oldid=178677357>.

Calligraphy

In calligraphy classes I learned to write in Nastaliq, however, later, I started to

learn the Kufic script (fig. 19). Unlike Nastaliq, which is part of the Iranians' everyday

life, Kufic is used occasionally; so, it is somehow a stranger to the every-Iranian. Even

sometimes, it might be understood as an invader or an intrusive element from Arabic

culture after Islam. Seeing myself in this script, I started to learn Kufic after moving to

Canada. I was seeking the time I had spent in calligraphy classes and the transition

from the moment to the timelessness. Learning Kufic helped me in attaining this

transformation, at the early stages of my immigration. Representing a physical transitional stage in my life, Kufic eased my transformation process from who I was to who I am.

In addition to unreachability, writing in Kufic I make the text sacred. The early Qurans were written in Kufic. Raised with the lessons of my mother, I have learned to respect the Quran and all its elements. This urge of respect still lives inside me and includes Kufic form as the transformer of the batin or inner of the Quran into its zahir or external. By writing in Kufic, I show my respect to Monzavi's poem that is concerning the oneness of being.

Kufic is less of a clichéd writing form, compared to other scripts, such as Nastaliq. It is simple with straight lines, and this simplicity makes it more real and less decorative. It is pure. Kufic writing has evolved throughout history from script on paper and pages of books to the walls, muqarnases, and the domes of Persian architecture. Then, it transformed and became more decorative and designed. The result of this transformation is called the Bannayi Kufic, or Architectural Kufic (fig. 20).

My intention in bringing the text in my drawings is to potentially add another layer of meaning to the drawing. In my creative process, readability is not the purpose. Thus, in my writing, I employed various styles of Kufic from different generations through a self-selective process that follows no specific rules. Sometimes, same as early Kufic text, I omit the dots, and sometimes same as decorative Kufic I add design. This freedom in choices satisfies me as it stands in opposition to the notion of calligraphy and I do not need to focus on the stability of adhering to a strict calligraphical rule-set. It makes an unreachable stage reachable for me.

Kufic is not a common script—not part of everyday life in Iranian, or even Arabic cultures—and as a result, it is not easy to be read. Its unreadable quality makes it unreachable. Also, by changing the composition of the words, I make it even more unreadable and; hence, more unreachable. If something is reachable for me but unreachable for others, does not it mean that I reach the unreachable?

Fig. 20 - Bannayi Kufic script on tile, Kashan, 14th century. "File:MIK - Schriftfliese.jpg." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 22 Dec 2015, <commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:MIK_-_Schriftfliese.jpg&oldid=182549016>. Accessed 27 Feb 2020.

Fig. 21 - Studio wall covered with Distorted Faces, charcoal on paper, 2018 – 2019.

Distorted Faces

The initial motivation behind starting drawing a series of distorted faces was to enable myself to freely express my inner thoughts and emotions. By employing free-form lines and allowing myself to spontaneously follow their development intuitively, I was able to create portraits not about a mirroring likeness, but rather a reflection of interiority. The most important rule in this practice was to feel free while drawing, even if the final portrait is fully deformed or distorted (fig. 20).

With these drawings, I aim to bring the internal outward, or in another word, to replace the external with the internal. In these drawings inner feelings are dominant. Inner expression affects the appearance but does not completely cover it. Still, facial

features are recognizable. The face is a face but carries senses that may come from other parts of the body, or they might be even a reflection of the outside. They can be that *mirror* that reflects the *universe*. Distorted faces transform a face to feelings, to the mirror, and to the universe. They juxtapose reachable and unreachable on top of each other. They expose the batin and zahir of the self. This *self* might be my inner or maybe the self of the universe. Thus, each of them can be the *Whole* that depicts the oneness of being.

On the drawings, distorted faces appear in order. First, in "Mirror No. 1", they are drawn in a way that shows them on a separate paper. It is like drawings inside another drawing (fig. 21). The shadows of the papers, which placed them in the drawing, are drawn sharp while pointing down. These shadows move eyes downward and stand against the movement of observational portraits in the same drawing. On these drawings distorted faces have their specific and defined place in the composition, they are exclusive of observational portraits. There is no mixture at this stage. They appear in the absence of those observational self-portraits. It seems at this stage they are in conflict and cannot coexist. When a distorted face appears strong in the middle of the first drawing, right next to the text, the central observational portrait becomes blurry and out of focus. On the right side of the same drawing, the second distorted face fades when the observational self-portrait is focused.

Then, in "Mirror No. 2", they are out of their own defined papers and share the drawing paper with other elements. In this piece, three distorted faces appear between two observational portraits. Here, there is no drawing inside a drawing, now, all is just one work (fig. 22). It could be read as a movement toward releasing and revealing inner

feelings. It depicts an action, a transformation, a transition, and a journey from internal to external. If the first mirror (drawn paper *in* the first drawing) is removed and the reflection were to become a part of the main mirror (the paper *for* the drawing), could it be read as acceptance? Possibly the first step toward becoming one whole?

In the third drawing, "Mirror No. 3" there is an absence of distortion. But instead, an observational-drawn hand coming down from the center of the paper, where there is a gap between two representational portraits (fig. 23). This hand can symbolize the transformation of the distorted faces that attempt to become part of the external. It can be read as the main step to create harmony between internal and external. They have begun, it seems, to coexist. Their frequencies which were different seem to have transformed, have overlapped, and have interchanged. It is unclear to me what will happen next.

Fig. 22 - *Mirror No. 1*, charcoal on flooring paper, 2019.

Fig. 23 - *Mirror No. 2*, charcoal on flooring paper, 2019.

Fig. 24 – *Mirror No. 3*, charcoal on flooring paper, 2019.

Observational Portraits

Before discovering my interest in drawing distorted faces, I was aware of the joy I found in executing observational portraits. In contrast with the experience of distorted faces, this process usually starts by observing the external and continues with the discovery of the internal. Earlier, in combining portraits and other parts of a human body, I was exploring and reaching an unreachable transformation of the human body (fig. 24). In this exploration, I also found the self-portrait drawing as a way to reach my unreachable self (fig. 25). However, after distorted faces, I started to go deeper with the self-portrait. I already had distorted faces representing the freedom of expression of the inner of the person that I wanted to explore. And with the new series of observational self-portrait, I wanted to examine a new perspective of the self.

Fig. 25 - *Portrait of Tina*, pencil on paper, 2017.

Fig. 26 - *Self-portrait*, pencil on paper, 2017.

In these observational portraits, I intend to reach the distortion through visual and physical features, by changing environmental elements, such as light. This time, the focus of the distortion was on the physical appearance, the facial features, and moving toward the inside.

The process starts with photography. I take pictures of myself, using a top head spotlight in a dark studio. The purpose of taking these pictures is to capture the reflection of myself. It is like looking into a mirror that preserves images. So, I freeze my

reflection with a camera, and then, using charcoal pencils, I interpret the frozen moment on industrial flooring paper.

In capturing different moments next to each other, there is a repetition, rhythm, seriality, and even sequentiality in these portraits that follow an ambiguous order. Each drawing containing multiple portraits indicates a multi-sequential frame. They commune with one another, and connect to the viewer.

The observational portraits are drawn with high contrast. Showing the two very ends of the contrast spectrum emphasizes the integration of the darkness and light in *one* single image. Thus, like "Muqarnas", having both darkness and light in high contrast portrait drawings expresses the concept of the oneness of being. With this manifestation, it transforms the unreachable *Whole* into a singular reachable part. In addition, moving from one side to the other manifests the transformation of my palpable part of my identity, my being, and my journey.

The movement resulting from the contrast and also the composition of observational portraits is upward. As discussed in the "Muqarnas" description, this upward movement can refer to the upper realm, the sky, or heaven. Also, it is reminiscent of a poem by Mowlana (1207 – 1273 c.) that says: "we are from the upper realm and we go upward / we are from the sea and we go to the sea".[3] It also references a passage of the Quran: "To God we belong and to Him we shall return" [2:156]. This reunion is the core belief of mysticism that I have learned in my journey. In light of this core belief, I feel that my observational portraits make drawing sacred.

On the left side of the third drawing, I drew the details of a muqarnas, which is the reflection of the suspended "Muqarnas". The placement of elements in this drawing suggests the "Muqarnas" as the source for the central observationally-drawn hand. In this case, "Muqarnas" is the engine that transforms internal to external, distortion to something observable, batin to zahir. "Muqarnas" might be unreachable itself, but as a whole, it transforms the unreachable into the reachable. Thus, at the same time, It folds reality or reachable and unfolds unreachable or another realm that hosts distortion.

Fig. 27 - Detail of *Muqarnas*, cardboard and wood glue, installation, 2019.

Summation

The choices I have made leading towards the creation of the installation *So Close; So Far* are intuitive. During my creative process, I follow my inner voice, and then, I look for reasons. Suhrawardi, the Persian thinker and philosopher (1154 – 1191 c.), calls this approach "eshragh", which means *the "observation" comes before the "argument"* (Hosseini, 31). Thus, after creating the individual parts of the thesis show, observing, analyzing, and contemplating these decisions, I was able to recognize that my choices and methods have their roots in intuitive understanding. I have examined various instances of reaching the unreachable. In this exploration, the transition and transformation of the whole are influenced by *mysticism*. This is a window that I opened up to find my mystical journey, and now, it influences all my decisions: from the very beginning to this very moment, from basic to advanced, from the materials I use to the transformation of time.

Materials

There is a Farsi idiom that says '*all the trash will become useful one day*'. I was raised respecting this idea. As far back as I remember, I was the paper-collector in our family, and my locker was filled with paper-based leftovers from other family members. I collected every paper that others did not want them in the hope that one day I will resurrect them into a piece of art and transform them into a valuable object. As an artist over the years, I have worked with other materials; however, I found myself more compelled by the capabilities of paper and paper-based products. I feel paper as part of my own self, identity, and body. I can easily express myself by writing or drawing on

paper; so, it is fair to say that paper transforms my place into a safe place. It is a reachable material with the potential to discover the unreachable.

I have discovered the paper's potential over the years. Employing paper-based materials for my thesis project helps me to focus more on the execution. Paper's limits and possibilities do not distract me in the process and contribute to the transformation of the moment and the place I am working in. By focusing on the use of paper in my work keeps the thesis project materially consistent. Also, paper carries with interesting paradoxes. It is both historical and contemporary, malleable and stable, delicate and strong, precious and utilitarian. It has been a key medium for capturing marks, but still pushing its boundaries creates new translations of the material. It can reflect a very light mark while naturally is a very forgiving material. Being a natural product, the paper itself is a material that has transformed and once was alive. Then in my process, while it transforms my space, I transform them into art. It is like an unfinished negotiation, an infinity mirror that makes the paper alive again in my art process. This idea of returning reminds me of the line quoted earlier from Mowlana's poems: "We are from the upper realm and we go upward" (see pp 38), or "He who abides far away from his home / Is ever longing for the day who shall return" (Rumi, 3).

"Muqarnas" is constructed using industrial packaging cardboard and wood glue (fig. 26). The packaging cardboard I used is paper-based, cheap, light, ephemeral, biodegradable, widely available, industrial, crafty, and an everyday material. Packaging cardboard is used to protect goods during transit or in storage. It connects to my intentions in making "Muqarnas" as it transforms and centers me, my practice, the

gallery space, and the audience. The cardboard protects the content of the "Muqarnas", the oneness, the wholeness, and its centrality.

To start the process, I first visualized a two-dimensional geometric pattern in three-dimensions. The rest is a drawing process that employs a utility knife as the mark-making tool. I measured every single piece of the "Muqarnas" on cardboard with a ruler, cut them with a utility knife, and attached the pieces with wood glue.

Packaging cardboard is usually a *container* that is less valuable than the *contents*. "Muqarnas" exposes the cardboard and transforms the *container* into the *contents*. With this transformation, the zahir, or container, or cardboard becomes valuable as it is part of the whole that includes every valuable content and batin.

In the cutting process, each piece of cardboard is an *individual* segment, and after gluing, they become *one*. In this scenario, the utility knife cleaves pieces from the whole, forever changing them. After getting shaped, reformed, and re-defined, wood glue transforms these pieces into a whole that has a different value and definition from cardboard packaging. Protecting cardboard pieces from falling apart and acting as a catalyst, wood glue itself is the subject of transformation in this process. Wood glue is white and easily identifiable before application on the cardboard. After, although, it becomes transparent and loses its sticky characteristics as it becomes a part of the whole.

Mowlana says: "I see an eye in every universe / I see a universe in an eye. If you see two you are seeing double / But I am not and I see one" (227). In the content of this poetry, the cardboard is "Muqarnas", the utility knife *is* "Muqarnas", the wood glue *is*

"Muqarnas", and the "Muqarnas" *is* "Muqarnas" and at the same time, it *is* all of those materials simultaneously.

The drawings in my thesis project are executed with a charcoal pencil on industrial flooring paper (fig. 27). Charcoal is traditional, temporary, fragile, industrial, ephemeral, and spreadable. Applied in layers, charcoal pencil allows high contrast and an extreme blackness without saturating papers. It is a pencil format that prevents smudges and keeps the paper clean. It is an inexpensive and reachable material with the ability to capture unreachable. As was explained before, if the paper for drawings is the *mirror* that reflects the *universe,* the charcoal pencil is the light that captures the *universe* in the *mirror.*

Charcoal, similar to paper, is a transformed material derived from natural sources. It is one stage before becoming ashes, a stage just before fading into nature, or *fana* in nature, becoming one with the whole. After transferring to the paper and leaving its marks on it, it becomes one with that paper. It transforms to the whole as it would have in its *ash* stage, and it is now *fana* in the drawing. In other words, drawings transform charcoal and paper into one whole.

Flooring paper is an inexpensive, heavy, textured, industrial, and contemporary material. Its neutral colour connects it to the cardboard and the "Muqarnas". The purpose of the flooring paper is to protect the flooring from unwanted damages. During construction and renovation, it covers the floor; it is flooring's *hijab.* It lies on the floor and hides zahir. In my process, I change its purpose and I define a new cycle for it. I lay it on the floor, and lie down, and draw myself on it, and finally, I hang it from the wall.

Now, it reflects my inner world. In this transformation, I add a reflection, a universe, a life, and a value to it. It exposes my internal, my batin, my unreachable.
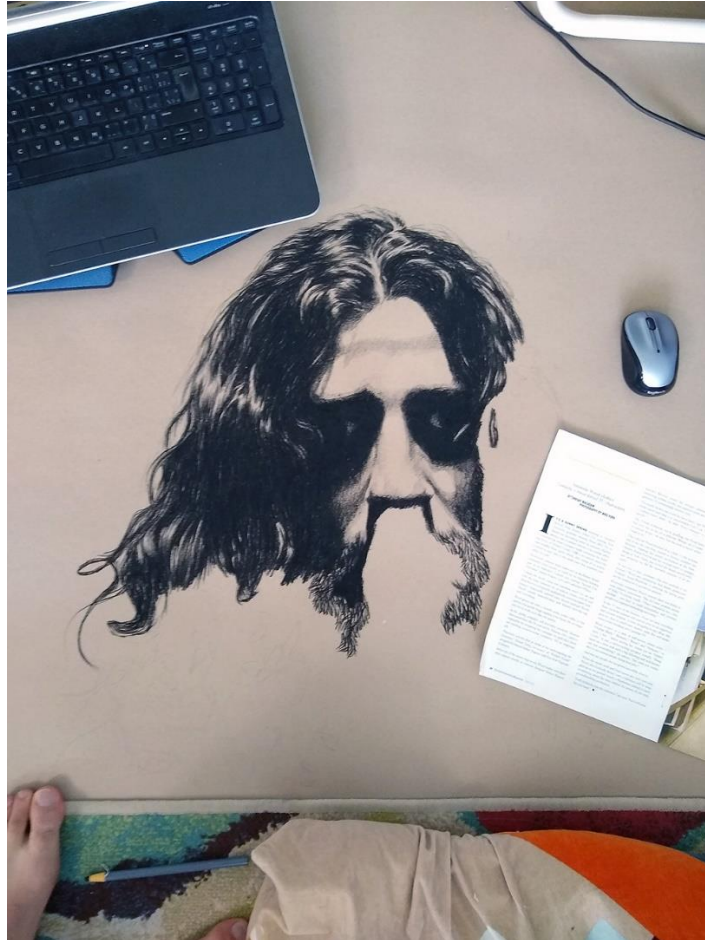
Fig. 28 - The process of drawing *Self-portrait* on the floor, charcoal on flooring paper, 2019.

Conclusion: Loops in Time

Time is both a reachable and unreachable subject. Like a mirror, time also can be both close and far. This very moment is completely reachable, it is unfolded, zahir, and palpable. However, a moment after, that last moment is completely unreachable, folded, batin, and impossibly far. Time is woven into my installation, and has much more in common with it than what appears on the surface.

The 360-degree shape of the "Muqarnas" and its seamless pattern create a loop. The viewer can enter the loop by looking at it and gets trapped moving around it. Because the loop is subject to time and the viewer's movement is not restricted to any specific direction, then, the viewer can move forward and backward in the *time* of "Muqarnas".

Each of the self-portrait drawings, including distorted faces and observational portraits, belong to a specific frozen pictorial moment, and each carries its own temporal reference. Divided into different sequences in the drawings, the viewer can look at the different moments and they can *travel in time*, forward and backward. I allow the viewer to move inside the time that was assigned to me. Each drawing includes multiple timeframes; so, they are multi-sequential. A viewer observing all of these works of paper, as a whole, looks at different times in just one moment. This way, the time definition is different in my drawings.

Walking around the gallery and following the sequence of drawings creates a varied loop that exhibits time. The walls of the gallery are the perimeter of an assumptive circle that loops, and it takes the whole time of the loop. In this tawaf-like movement, the "Muqarnas" is the center of the circle. This centering means "Muqarnas" takes no time in this circular loop, but overlaps all the times of this loop (fig. 28). In all ways, it is timeless, and therefore, unreachable.

In other words, if the paper surfaces of the drawings are mirrors, then each portrait is a reflection of "Muqarnas". By extension, "Muqarnas" can be seen as a combination of all these individual timeframes. So, time loses the definition fixed to each self-portrait, and "Muqarnas" becomes a timeless source for all of the self-portraits and

all timeframes they reflect. This means "Muqarnas" is a source of time, a moment-generator that defines the time, while its own time is different from ours.

Generally, every single time frame lasts as much as its time is defined. Meaning that each and every timeframe eventually passes, expires. If this is so, then the past is dead based on the passage of time. However, through my gallery installation, this notion of a dead past, or the expiration of time, is questioned. All self-portraits stay in the gallery representing the same fraction of time every single moment, and furthermore, they do not die. Thus, their time does not die, or if it dies, it is reincarnated in the form of another moment in time. This exhibition brings dead time to life. It reminds me of a poem by Mowlana:

Go and die, go and die,

For this love go and die,

When in this love you die

You will let spirits fly.

Go and die, go and die,

Fear no death, don't be shy

When in this dust you lie

Your spirit will soar up high.

Go and die, go and die,

Let this existence pass by

This existence is your tie

And prisoners you and I.

With an axe cut the tie

And this, your prison, defy

When your chains you untie

With Kings, identify.

Go and die, go and die,

The handsome King satisfy

For the Lord when you die

Your glories multiply.

Go and die, go and die,

Like the tearful clouds, cry

When the cloud has run dry

You are the light of the eye.

Silence try, silence try

As close as you get to die

All your life, you apply

Your sigh and silence deny. (Rumi 84).[4]

Since the beginning of this journey, I have read books, reflected on ideas and

concepts, and have expressed and gained an understanding of my inner self through

my art. This thesis installation exposes the zahir, the external appearance of this ongoing journey; and the thesis paper uncovers the batin, the internal. It explains the logic of the choices I have made, even intuitively. These two practices assist me in organizing my mind. In the studio, through both the creating/making and writing process, I became aware of the accumulation of my thoughts, concepts, ideas, memories, and experiences that I have faced on the journey that shaped and transformed my identity. Then, by categorizing them, they helped me to center myself. And as a result, I am now aware of my internal choices. It made some room in my cup for new materials. In the end, I should confess that in this transformative journey I have learned about my intentions; however, there are still some unreachable uncertainties that I desire to understand. But at least, all these efforts contributed to the understanding that this journey will never end, as this poem that is attributed to Mowlana says:

Everyday I meditate upon this, and every night I groan

Why is my own existence to myself the least known?

Whence have I come, why this coming here?

Where to must I go, when will my home to me be shown? (Rumi 114)[5]

Fig. 29 - Suspended and centered *Muqarnas* between drawings of *Self-portrait*, installation at the Varley Art Gallery, 2020.

Notes

1. Prohibition of painting and sculpting from a live model in the early Islamic period and the effect of this banning on geometric patterns is a common topic in art schools. I have studied them in art school as well. In the essays "Colouring the Words: Reproduction of Persian Literature through the Art of Iranian Miniature", by Dr. Leyli Jamali, which is published in *Literature and Interarts: Critical Essays*, and *Introduction to Islamic Art*, by Rabah Saoud, these topics are mentioned. (See citation for more details about these sources.)

2. Obviously, I have searched and studied different types of muqarnases in order to make my sculptural piece, "Muqarnas". Here, I argue about "Muqarnas" and not about other muqarnases. My intention to use this term is to credit *time* as an important element for us in order to *reach* a concept.

3. This poem is sonnet number 1674 in Mowlana's Divan-e Shams. I recalled and translated this poem from Farsi to English. Unfortunately, I do not have a published book or an e-book that I can reference the exact page number based on it; however, in the citation, I included an online source, *Ganjoor*, for accessing this poem in Farsi.

4. *Rumi 84* is the title of the page that I found this translation. (See citation for more detail about this source.) For this poem, I have included Shahriar Shahriari's translated version, as the translator tried to keep the rhymes and rhythm of the poem.

5. This poem is very famous and common, and I recalled and translated it as I was writing the paper. This poem is attributed to Mowlana; however, not all editions of

Mowlana's book include this poem. Unfortunately, I was not able to find it in my book as well. Again, I used Shahriar Shahriari's translation and *Rumi 114* is the title of the webpage that includes this poem both in Farsi and in English. (See citation for more detail about this source.)

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Appendix: Thesis Exhibition Documentation

Fig. 30 - *So Close; So Far*, installation view, 2020.

Fig. 31 - *So Close; So Far*, installation view, 2020.

Fig. 32 - *So Close; So Far*, installation view, 2020.

Fig. 33 - *Mirror No. 4*, charcoal on flooring paper, 2020.

Fig. 34 - *Mirror No. 5*, charcoal on flooring paper, 2020.

Fig. 35 - *So Close; So Far*, installation view, 2020.

Fig. 36 - Connection between *Mirror No. 6* and *Muqarnas* in *So Close; So Far*, 2020.

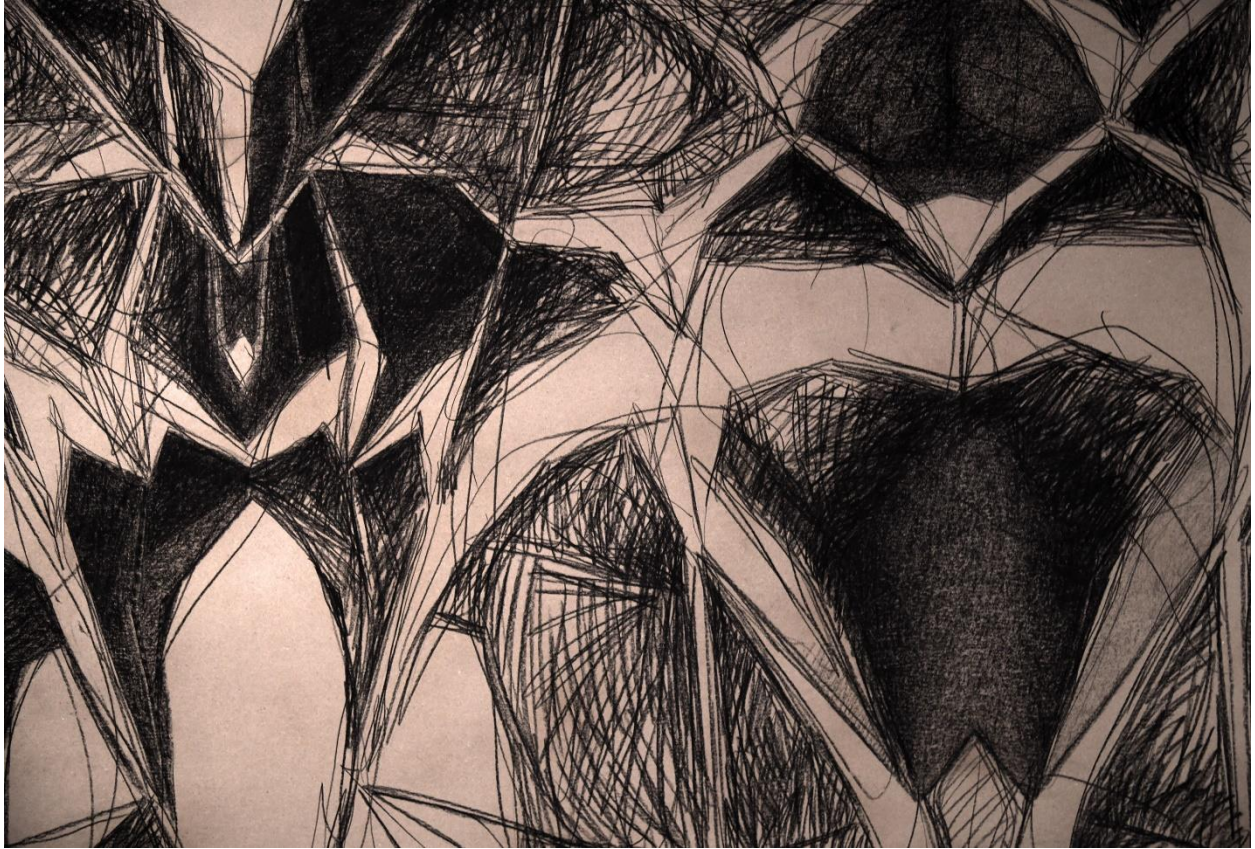Figure 37 - *Mirror No. 6*, charcoal on flooring paper, 2020.

Figure 38 - Details of *Mirror No. 7*, charcoal on paper, 2020.

Figure 39 - Mirror No. 8, charcoal on paper, 2020.

Figure 40 - Details of *Mirror No. 8*, charcoal on paper, 2020.