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Naked Women The Unity In Dialectic Forces

Nargges S. Albekord
University of Central Florida

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NAKED WOMEN
THE UNITY IN DIALECTIC FORCES

by

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Major Professor: Mark Price
ABSTRACT

This study investigates my art works, their context, content, and the process by which they were produced.

The first part of the study addresses my background ideas and philosophies, their impact on my works, and the environmental and psychological context which made those ideas relevant to my paintings. I am not concerned with answering the usual questions, *What is art?* and *Who is an artist?* My intention is to find out who I choose to be and what I choose to do.

The second part investigates the form and design of the art works— from the materials used to make them to the various formal elements utilized in creating them. The connection of form and content in these art works is emphasized.

The last part of the study investigates the influences of a few significant artists and the impacts of their works on my art.

The future of my art work is, of course, not predictable, and it does not depend on this study. This study is only as factual, reliable, and truthful as my art work is.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters as Bricks</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: CONTEXT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basics and Subject-Matter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society and “I”</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice, Freedom, Anxiety, and Change</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics and the F-Word</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity or Nudity</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: PROCESS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonding and Title</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror Image</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time, Light, and Place</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method and Material</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: *Self-Portrait*, 2010. Oil on canvas, 24" x 30". ................................. 23
Figure 2: *Self-Portrait*, 2010. Details. Oil on canvas. ........................................ 24
Figure 3: *Abstract of Me, Exposed series*, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 30" x 36". .......... 25
Figure 4: *I Am..., Brick Wall series*, 2007. Oil on canvas. 15" x 30". ......................... 26
Figure 5: *Bricks*, 2008. Oil on bricks, 4" x 3" x 6". .............................................. 27
Figure 6: *Brick Wall*, 2006. Lithograph on paper, 7" x 14". ................................. 27
Figure 7: *Beatrice My African Queen, Brick Wall series*, 2007. Oil on canvas, 24" x 30". ... 28
Figure 8: *Azita, Naked Women series*, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 15" x 30". ... 29
Figure 9: *Mina, Naked Women series*, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 30" x 36". .... 30
Figure 10: *Brittany, Naked Women series*, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 24" x 36". 31
Figure 11: *Shokooh, Naked Women series*, 2010. Oil on canvas, in two panels, each 24" x 30". 32
Figure 12: *Farah, Naked Women series*, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 22" x 30". .... 33
Figure 13: *Haleh, Naked Women series*, 2011. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 20" x 30". ... 34
Figure 14: *Hamideh, Naked Women series*, 2011. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 22" x 30". 35
Figure 15: *Sahel, Naked Women series*, 2011. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 22" x 30". .... 36
Figure 16: *Arezoo, Naked Women series*, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 24" x 36". 37
Figure 17: *Arezoo in progress*, 2010. Oil on canvas, left panel 28" x 36". ................... 38
Figure 18: *Arezoo*, 2010. Detail. Oil and acrylic on canvas, right panel 28" x 36". ............... 39
Figure 19: *Hamideh, process of right panel*, 2011. .................................................. 40
Figure 20: *Arezoo in progress*, 2010. ........................................................................... 41
Figure 21: Brittany in progress, 2010. ................................................................................................. 41

Figure 22: Arezoo in progress, 2010. ................................................................................................. 42

Figure 23: Palettes, 2010. ................................................................................................................ 42

Figure 24: Brushes, 2011. .................................................................................................................. 43

Figure 25: Arezoo in progress, 2010. ................................................................................................. 44

Figure 26: Haleh, 2011. Details. ......................................................................................................... 45

Figure 27: Haleh, 2011. Details. ......................................................................................................... 45
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This millennium began with a sudden and irreversible fusion of art, technology, and politics. The graphic images of September 11 attacks on New York and Washington DC, the scenes of subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the horrible images caused by Hurricane Katrina created an atmosphere of insecurity and fear in the US. Fear was briefly overcome during the exceptional campaign victory of Barack Obama, which surprised the world but inspired more domestic and social-political turmoil. Moreover, disturbing images of an unprecedented post-election uprising in Iran, and reports of an earthquake in Haiti—all delivered through media and social networks—inspired creations of related social-political art works. A few examples are: Julian LaVerdiere and Paul Myoda’s Tribute in Light over the Brooklyn Bridge; Shepard Fairey’s design in HOPE poster; Dawn DeDeaux’s Collaboration with Katrina; Iranian Green Movement honored by New York’s School of Visual Art by Where Is My Vote?; graphic designs in Cool Clips; and art prints by Shapard Fairey, Cleon Peterson, and Casey Ryder, Relief For Haiti.

Improvements in technology, communication, and information systems have blurred the borders between privacy and security (i.e. the WikiLeaks scandal; or communication, social-journalism and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook in the Iranian anti-government movement). These developments have generated vast amounts of information and discourse in the cultural and artistic realms. In the computer age, the world feels smaller, and distances seem shorter.

As the world struggles, the search for a singular truth from a lone artist seems futile. Ideas and philosophies in art formed in centuries long ago have been studied, revised,
undermined, or absorbed. The mass production of contemporary art in the commercial studios of China is disappointing to me, and the ideas, styles, and ‘isms in the current world of art are confusing.

I do not expect to find the answer to the questions, *What is art?* and *Who is an artist?* My concerns have been with who I *choose* to be, and what I *choose* to do. I choose to be a human being, a woman, and an artist. My art work is the result of subsequent choices in content and form, based on my life with others and on defining my personal characteristics and experiences (See Figure 1). My art is the reflection of my experiences as a free person who inhabits the same world as others.
CHAPTER TWO: DESCRIPTION

*Naked Women* is the title of a series of diptych portrait paintings (See Figure 9). The left panel of each diptych contains only the face of a woman—a friend or relative whom I find significant to interact with while portraying her. Her significance is that I know her or something about her—whether she knows it or not—which enriches and informs me. As Edward Hopper explains, “Why I select certain subjects rather than others, I do not exactly know, unless it is that I believe them to be the best mediums for a synthesis of my inner experience.”

There is not much to complicate these panels. Each face represents the identity and character of a specific woman as I see her. The similarities in color, light, and gazes among the faces symbolize the shared characteristics in all these women (See Figures 10-12).

Each second panel is a semi-blind self-portrait drawing, which appears to be the mirror image of the first panel. Loose but continuous contour line, minimal paint, washed marks, and preserved mistakes create honesty and freshness in each second panel. Each face represents the way I see myself in relation to each of the other women. Although the second panel faces are self-portraits, each is nevertheless different. The variations in these representations embody the distinctive features, impressions, and emotions that form one person (See Figures 13-15).

Background

I was born and raised in Iran, a country and a society with a rich and strong history. Proud of our ancient civilizations, we Iranians know that our history contains many setbacks and inconsistencies which made us durable but complicated. Our precious art, music, literature,
and poetic philosophies drive people to Sufism and calmness, while injustices, inequalities, and power struggles urge us to defend and fight for our rights¹⁴.

The influence of our surroundings on us is ongoing and intense. When I left home, I was still a young woman—released from restraints and newly exposed to autonomy. Living between two different cultures gave me the privilege to pick and absorb from both. The cultural, social, and political impacts of my middle-eastern motherland on me collided with the enormity, honesty, and frankness of my new western home. The intermingling of cultures through me influenced the content and formal design of my art works.

**Characters as Bricks**

The series of *Naked Women* marks the development and continuation of a symbolic idea, based on which my *Brick Wall* series was made (See Figures 3-7). A few years ago, fascinated by different characteristics and different women’s issues, I produced a body of work with a brick wall erected as its base and background. That project remained fluid, unsolved, and inexorable. A brick wall was an obstacle as well as a protective structure. It was also symbolic of the individual members of a society who are bonded by the cement of their social and cultural traditions and restrictions. It was also a symbol of the different characteristics of one individual shaped by shared ideas, beliefs, and emotions (See Figures 4-5).
CHAPTER THREE: CONTEXT

Introducing portraits and self portraits as sociological records, the contemporary English artist and writer, Julian Bell\textsuperscript{15} explains, “I have a face, but a face is not what I am. Behind it lies a mind, which you do not see but which looks out on you. This face, which you see but I do not, is a medium I own to express something of what I am. Or so it seems till I turn to the mirror. Then, my face may seem to own me; to confront me as a condition to which I am bound.”\textsuperscript{16} This statement resonated with me, and my face became my inspiration (See Figure 1).

Basics and Subject-Matter

In my art, I decided to go back to basics: To discover myself and establish my own artistic principles. Although I am not yet done searching within myself, I am pleased with what I have come upon, and I am delighted with what I have chosen to be.

According to the French poet, artist and art critic, Albert Aurier, who was devoted to Symbolism, “To love is the only way to penetrate into a thing….understanding is in proportion to love.”\textsuperscript{17} To understand myself as my basic thing, I have loved myself. Loving myself has also helped me see others and manage my feelings toward them. I only find and recognize myself through looking at others whom I choose to see (See Figures 21, 22, and 25).

I became my own powerful object which Matisse explains as, “The object must act powerfully on the imagination, and the artist’s feeling, expressing itself through the object, must render it worthy of interest. It only says what one makes it say.”\textsuperscript{18}
Society and “I”

I do not believe that there is a predetermined and concrete essence in every human being that defines what it is to be a human. Instead, as a human being I create my own values and meaning for my life—including my art—through my consciousness. Therefore, I do not believe in the idea of unconsciousness, especially in art. I believe that an artist could and should be able to attentively learn and choose ideas that are going to be built up or created in his/her art. My art is not the accident of my unconsciousness, but the conscious choice by which I create and communicate (See Figure 27).

I also strongly believe in the impact of my surroundings and society upon me as I express myself. My belief that art and society are linked is one of the many things that connect me to contemporary art. Contemporary art is shifting away from universals to make the individual an end in itself rather than a channel to something greater. The postmodern I as an individual also comes naturally to me. In fact, there are many shared ideas in modernism and postmodernism which I embrace in my work. I reject boundaries between high and low forms of art, and I celebrate irony, parody, playfulness, fragmentation and discontinuity, ambiguity, and simultaneity (See Figures 2, 8, and 18).

Choice, Freedom, Anxiety, and Change

Believing in choice does not necessarily mean ignoring other philosophies. Whether or not I follow aspects of a philosophy, I do not believe in a global meaning or principles. What matters is the attitude one has toward freedom and responsibility, and the extent to which one acts in accordance with this freedom. When complete freedom leads to choice and comes with a great deal of responsibility, it causes anxiety and anguish. Using this existentialist approach,
I believe that I can harness this anxiety and use it constructively. The dread arising from free choice appears in my subject matter as well as in the look of suffering sitters (See Figure 9). After all, I am a compassionate artist reflecting my surroundings—like a mirror—and am sympathetic to the people who are in unfortunate circumstances.

This empathy and anxiety undermines the comfort I try to establish with my sitters who made the same choices as I did and had the same anxiety as I had. Instead of suppressing anxiety, which I embrace as inevitable, I use it as grounds for change. Moreover, acknowledging the conflict of contradictory forces eventually delivers the change and reduces the anxiety. Along with the good, beauty, life, and happiness, I accept the bad, evil, death, and sadness in every human being (See Figures 16-17). I also believe that in every person, every choice must be continually refreshed and reaffirmed to be permanent. This belief, in Naked Women, is realized by using expressive brush strokes (See Figure 26), juxtaposing complementary colors (See Figure 27), and contrasting my paintings (other women) with my drawings (self-portraits) (See Figure 16). I achieve balance in each diptych by manipulating the choice/change practices and what Hans Hofmann called push/pull effects (See Figure 13).

Feminism

By the mid-twentieth century, the involvement of women in the development of revolutionary ideologies and scientific achievements slowly forced advanced societies to value the existence of women in art and science. Along with these changes, new voices entered the art world. One of the more important voices was feminism, in which women are recognized as artists and their works were considered as art. Since then, women have more actively changed and defined the issues and directions of contemporary art.
Before women had substantial exposure as artists, they were primarily objects of the male artist’s gaze. The dominant mentality in society and culture was, as Simone de Beauvoir explained, “Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men. They show it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.” Therefore, an important aspect of feminist art has been its opposition to traditional ways of seeing women as formerly prescribed and institutionalized by men. I have gratefully borrowed this oppositional approach to express and exaggerate women’s representation in a different and novel way. I situate my sitters so that they do not need to pose erotically to be beautiful and attractive. The quiet boldness of my sitters, coupled with the intensity and earnestness of my self-portraits, celebrates women femininity, not their sexuality (See Figure 12).

Politics and the F-Word

In spite of all the achievements of the feminist movement, for many artists defining themselves or their work as feminist became problematic. Fear is multiplied in societies such as Iran’s, from which I have come, where just being an out-spoken woman provokes significant negative reactions and life threatening legal charges. I respond to this political frustration through my art. I position enlarged, front-facing women in their most natural gaze and poses. If that makes the portraits shocking or intimidating, it is not their fault; they have only chosen to be women.
Identity or Nudity

As always, the female figure, nude or clothed, has been a cultural battleground. The struggle over the representation of femininity and the nature of female identity without the appearance of the exposed body and body parts has been one of my challenges.

In Moslem societies, women’s natural identity is totally ignored, and real women have to cover their heads or faces; in Western societies, women prove their femininity by showing off their bodies. I am not embarrassed by the female body, but I choose not to communicate via images of the naked female body. This is because I believe the basic symbol of identity of most creatures is their faces. In my work, with a minimum of accessories, make-up, or surroundings, the artistically depicted face is the only authentic representation of my women sitters and their identities.
CHAPTER FOUR: PROCESS

I paint and draw my subject matter to create emotional content. I choose women I know as subject matter. The intimate conversations we have while I am painting provide the intensity that distinguishes my work from decorative art (See Figure 21).

As Matisse says, “Often a discussion arises upon the value of different processes, and their relation to different temperaments. A distinction is made between artists who work directly from nature and those who work purely from their imagination. I think neither of these methods should be preferred to the exclusion of the other. Often both are used in turn by the same man.” I work from my imagination to develop my content and work directly from my sitters in that process (See Figure 22).

Interaction

As the existentialist Oxford scholar and professor Christina Howells says, “Each person's freedom comes into contact and possible conflict with that of everyone else. Our being-in-the-world is bound up with our being-with-others.” I know myself as a socially active and multicultural woman. To me, strangers are friends whom I have not met yet. I love myself through being with others and being able to communicate with them. Finding similarities or conflicts in different characters fascinates me. Somehow, although it can be challenging, revealing these discoveries through my art empowers me.

I have selected my sitters from among women whom I know well enough to feel close to. We reveal our inner selves to each other but leave some questions unanswered (See Figure 20).
My choice to use twin canvases and with a measured space between them represents this distance.

I choose the size of my canvas, the range of my color palette (See Figure 23-24), and the type and direction of light that is suitable to each sitter during her first visit. I start the first sketch and undertone of the painting on the first day while she and I talk, laugh, cry, and share our experiences.

Bonding and Title

According to Lucian Freud, “Painters, who use life itself as their subject-matter, working with the object in front of them, or constantly in mind, do so in order to translate life into art almost literally, as it were… The painter makes real to others his innermost feelings about all that he cares for.”31 My sitters do not sit motionless and quiet for me. Our relaxed interaction and communication during the process of painting creates the bond between me and my sitters. I devote myself to my sitters; they become all I care about while my paintings make real of them to others. I almost fall in love with sitters just as I have fallen in love with myself (See Figure 14).

In return, my sitters open up with me, as if metaphorically undressing piece by piece and layer by layer. This is why I title this series Naked Women. As Matisse says, “The title will only serve to confirm my impression.”32

This bonding with my sitter is created by choice and is no accident. Therefore, I emphasize that by choosing the diptych as a format, it is one work in two—separate, different, and yet connected. I spread small background colors from one panel into the other to solidify the emotional bond with my sitter (See Figure 15).
Accuracy

As much as I am interested in painting from life, I do not paint in a *trompe l’oeil* fashion. I provide just enough accurate structural information about my subject-matter to avoid representational inaccuracy. My painting looks like my model as long as we both feel it has captured her real character. In regards to painting from the model, according to Van Gogh, “To get at the real character of things here, you must look at them and paint them for a long time.” Therefore, I expect that my experimentation with form and proportion of each face during my extensive study of it leads me to capture the meaning and accuracy of its expression, more than the look on its surface.

I know that in order to achieve accuracy in paintings, I can use photos, which I often take from my women and use as references. But, I prefer the interaction with and live study of my sitters, whether or not my paintings precisely resemble them (See Figures 20-22).

Mirror Image

Anatomic accuracy is forsaken in the right panel to allow for the so-called *blindness* of my contour drawing. I notate eyes, nose, and lips on the right panel, but I often sacrifice those marks to retain the intensity of my self-portrait (See Figure 19). *My Naked Women* also symbolize the impact of two characters on each other, in spite of their superficial differences (See Figure 25). I use different painting styles to emphasize this duality and the dialectic tensions within and between the diptych’s characters.
**Time, Light, and Place**

Studio sessions times are set by my sitters and me, based on our convenience. My need for natural light makes us schedule paintings during daylight. Shadows are thus natural in my painting. I admire Caravaggio’s chiaroscuro, but I do not model from velvety darks to brilliant lights the way he does.\(^{34}\) Natural light exposes many other colors on the face as well. Consequently I employ some arbitrary colors that appear amid reflected natural light. I allow myself to exaggerate my shadows or highlights (See Figure 13).

Using natural light is also part of my metaphoric process. Under the influence of Persian poetry—classic or contemporary—I believe that natural light symbolizes absolute truth, purity, virtue, freshness, and innocence, as well as energy and power.

**Method and Material**

Form and design are as Edward Hopper says, “...merely a means to an end, the tools I work with, and they do not interest me greatly for their own sake. I am interested primarily in the vast field of experience and sensation which neither literature nor a purely plastic art deals with.”\(^{35}\)

I use oil paint in the left panel to take advantage of its richness, texture, looseness, and potential color palette (See Figure 27). I start my gessoed canvas with sketch and under-toned gestural painting (See Figure 17). I let the paint dry and adjust its composition before I color it. I select and pre-mix some of my colors before my sitter arrives, but I mostly mix, intensify, or dilute my colors while she is there. I try to make a color as soon as I notice it and before it disappears in her movements or light change (See Figure 26). I follow Matisse who says, “My choice of colors does not rest on any scientific theory; it is based on observation, on feeling, on
the very nature of each experience.”36 I cannot hide my passion for paint; I have fun with it, even in front of my sitter.

I admit that sometimes I explore certain colors to exercise their effects on the eye as Wassily Kandinsky theorizes it,

_The eye is strongly attracted by light, clear colors, and still more strongly by colors that are warm as well as clear; vermilion stimulates like flame, which has always fascinated human beings. Keen lemon-yellow hurts the eye as does a prolonged and shrill bugle note the ear, and one turns away for relief to blue or green....But to a more sensitive soul the effect of colors is deeper and intensely moving. And so we come to the second result of looking at colors: their psychological effect._37

However, I utilize the symbolic (more than the scientific) effects of arbitrary colors (See Figures 12, 15, and 16): Turquoise is a Persian color; red is for pain; orange is for sorrow; yellow is for wisdom, and etc.

Almost everything is different in the right panel, including the method and material I use to make it. I draw my self-portrait with a pencil and darken it with a charcoal pencil. After a few smears of charcoal on designated areas, I brush matt medium and water over the drawing and let it run and drip. When it dries, I follow the contour lines with black acrylic paint and revisit some areas with a slightly thicker brush (See Figure 19). I cause my line drawing to look flat and informal (See Figure 18). I believe that it is not minimal but is instead ambiguous.

Although I choose this panel to be different from the left panel to express the dialectics of the two, each is part of the other in forming a unit. In explaining his process of painting, Matisse says, “As far as I am concerned, painting and drawing are one.”38
CHAPTER FIVE: INFLUENCES

The French Existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, believed that human existence is not an abstract matter, but is always situated ("en situación")\(^{39}\). As he remarks in Existentialism is a Humanism, "Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards."\(^{40}\) I might not notice the influence of another artist or style at the moment of creating my art, but when the time comes to define myself and my work, I see the footprints of others on it.

In my work, I do not favor any artist because of the flag or ‘ism under which he or she creates. I follow, reject, respect, or borrow and learn from artists and their work process selfishly and only if it can help my understanding, purpose, and desire to create and produce my work. I sometimes admire an artist or a piece of art, but I do not seek any mutual understanding or shared feelings with them. No connection! Andy Warhol is an example.

Some artists, moreover, intimidate me more than they influence me. I am impressed with their avant-garde styles, daring attitudes in life, and energetic expressions in their art, which encourage me to focus more on my own work. They include Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Willem De Kooning, Arshile Gorky, Egon Schiele, Alberto Giacometti, Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud, Robert Rauschenberg, Judy Chicago, Philip Guston, Louise Bourgeois, and many classical and contemporary artists.

I am a content-driven artist. As Bell indicates, “Looking at the world art history, there is no limits of portraiture, especially self-portraiture, as a tradition. Either the meaning of selfhood and individuality, or the concerns of the societies have constantly driven artists to do portraiture.”\(^{41}\) I choose portraiture and figure paintings because I like to engage people and their issues. I am artistically inspired by them and my experiences with them (See Figure 20).
Resemblance or Impact

Although the purpose, process, and content of my work differentiate it from some other artists’, my paintings stylistically resemble their work. The juxtaposition of two different images, along with the duality, ambiguity, deformity, and unfinished elements in my diptychs, might recall some works of the Abstract Expressionist, Jackson Pollock, or the Neo-Expressionist, David Salle. Nevertheless, we portray different states of mind.

Dream versus Reality

One of Pollock’s last paintings, Portrait and a Dream⁴² is perhaps the closest to those of my Naked Women. In his painting, Pollock mixed two techniques, combining dripped and poured passages with brushed passages when he gave up painting on the floor and returned to the easel and the brush.⁴³ Portrait and a Dream splits the wide canvas into two distinct styles — figurative and abstract. On the right is a tortured head, perhaps a portrait of himself or Krasner, while the left is poured black enamel swirls.⁴⁴ The portrait is colored with patches of bright red, blue, and yellow, with black sketchy lines; the left side — the dream — is a monochromatic, tangling, connected lines of abstract patterns, covering the canvas from edge to edge, with so-called all-over painting.

I cannot speculate on Pollock’s intentions in this painting; however, I believe that our content and subject matter are far from each other. Color palettes, line qualities, and compositions stylistically differentiate us. Pollock said in an interview about his colors, “I have always been very impressed with the plastic qualities of American Indian art….Their color is essentially Western, their vision has the basic universality of all real art.”⁴⁵ This is unlike my color preference. In a 1956 interview, he said, “When you’re painting out of your unconscious, figures are bound to emerge.”⁴⁶ I never base the emergence of my images on unconsciousness.
To me, this would be an excuse not to think in art making. I am not surprised that his art was the subject of psychoanalysis by Jungian analysts of his time.\textsuperscript{47}

Instead, I respect Jackson Pollock for his freedom, daring, and so-called action paintings. I also admire him for introducing the concepts of \textit{allover} and wall painting, both of which distinguish his art from the tradition of easel painting.\textsuperscript{48}

\textbf{Duet or Duel}

The most similar Salle’s works to mine are his plates of the \textit{Canfield Hatfield}\textsuperscript{49} series of work. Salle has tried to forge an unpromising mix of secondhand, disassociated elements into a new, original conception.\textsuperscript{50} The plates are in two halves of pastiches of unrelated and separate images, with no personal or social content. His use of typical pornographic (copied from his own photography rather than published sources) poses of women clearly distinguishes his art from mine.

Salle’s supporters thought that works like these should be read as a commentary on the naked women, the sexism such imagery represents, and the role of the nude in the history of art.\textsuperscript{51} I agree instead with the \textit{New York Times} art critic, Roberta Smith, who wrote about Salle’s work, “In Mr. Salle’s paintings things are kept as far apart from one another, in terms of meaning, emotion, style or actual space, as the canvas will bear. The spaces between things signal the absence of barriers between, say, art and design or proper and improper behavior.”\textsuperscript{52} Smith believes that, after twenty-five years, Salle’s works of 1980’s “still unsettle, still resist assimilation”, and “show a young artist coming into his own: a precarious balance of dystopian and decorative.”\textsuperscript{53}
Although the juxtaposition of different styles in my *Naked Women* might resemble David Salle’s *Canfield Hatfield* plates, my context and content position them at a distance from each other.

**Conceptual Inspirations**

Regardless of the format, style, time, or medium of each artist, writer, or poet, I am conceptually impressed by several of them in creating my art. Something that I cannot change is that I am an Iranian-born artist, and I was raised in Iran in my and Iran’s better years.

**Music, Poetry, and Literature**

Persian classical and contemporary literature, poetry, and music have been the most influential forces on me as I make art. After living more than half of my life in the United States, I hum, and sing Persian poems or songs when I make art. Only a few of my art works fit in the category of Middle-Eastern art though. On the other hand, I do not like labeling myself or my work in general. In fact, I agree with another Iranian-born artist’s objection to such categorization; in a column on artreview.com, Kamrooz Aram— whose work was internationally offered for sale at many well-known auctions and galleries— called the label *Arab and Iranian Art* a *misleading and irresponsible category*. He wrote, “The intentions are at once benevolent, generous and apparently progressive, and yet their benevolence and generosity are underwritten by a continued need/desire to control and create a mythology of the East as other.” I find myself under the influence of Amer Ghada, Shirin Neshat, and Mona Hatoum, as well as Elizabeth Payton, Cindy Sherman, Alice Neel, and Frida Kahlo. However, I am also influenced
by Persian classic poets such as Hafez or Rumi despite the fact that I am not a sufi. As one of very famous Rumi’s poems exhorts:

*Come, come, whoever you are.*
*Wanderer, idolater, worshipper of fire,*
*come even though you have broken your vows a thousand times,*
*come, and come yet again.*
*Ours is not a caravan of despair.*

I allow myself to borrow some of the energies I find in Shahrnush Parsipur’s magical-realism stories, or Forough Farrokhzad’s courageous poems. Parsipur’s women characters in epic stories are as magical and strong to me as in her memoir—stories of jail-mates in the prisons of the Islamic Republic. Of one of Parsipur’s books, it is written in *The Feminist Press,* “Touba and the Meaning of Night explores, from a distinctly Iranian viewpoint, the ongoing tensions between rationalism and mysticism, tradition and modernity, male dominance and female will. Throughout, it defies Western stereotypes of Iranian women and Western expectations of literary form, speaking in an idiom that reflects both the unique creative voice of its author and an important tradition in Persian women's writing.” Parsipur’s balancing of tensions between dialectic forces became one of my initial motivations for creating my *Naked Women.*

I found this balance in Forough’s poems as well by acknowledging the duality of light (*Moon*) inside the darkness (*Night*), and letting *my gaze destroy itself in the pupil of somebody else’s eyes.* As a part of one of her poems, *Another Birth,* translated by Karim Emami, like many other times, Forough dares to talk about her feelings,
...Life is perhaps that enclosed moment
when my gaze destroys itself in the pupil of your eyes
and it is in the feeling
which I will put into the Moon's impression
and the Night's perception...⁶⁰

Most of Forough’s poems express this kind of duality. She is the first poet/artist that I ever knew who did not hesitate to express her femininity in her work. In another poem, It Is Only Sound That Remains, translated by Michael Hillman, she says,

...why should I stop?
cooperation of lead letters is futile,
it will not save the lowly thought.
I am a descendant of the house of trees.
breathing stale air depresses me.
a bird which died advised me to
commit flight to memory.
the ultimate extent of powers is union,
joining with the bright principle of the sun
and pouring into the understanding of light.
it is natural for windmills to fall apart...⁶¹
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Our age of expanding technology has given rise to new social media and made available vast amounts of information. We are suddenly and intimately aware of wars, economic reforms, and revolutions around the world.62 This has created in me a sense of digression and, therefore, instability. On the other hand, the bombarding of information and images has alienated me neither from myself nor the societies to which I belong. Instead, it has driven me back to my senses. I have gone back to basics to find out what I want to be and what I want to do, to discover myself, and to establish my own artistic principles.

I choose to be an artist whose work is the result of choices in content and form, based on my personal and social characteristics and experiences. Therefore, my art is the reflection of my experiences as a free person who inhabits the same world as others.

The future of my art work is not predictable. If I knew what exactly I want to change in my work, I would have changed it by now. I only know that I am a content and socially conscious artist. Women and their issues inspire me and my art. They will be presented in my art work as long as they exist and as long as I create art.
APPENDIX: IMAGES OF MY ART WORK
Figure 1: *Self-Portrait*, 2010. Oil on canvas, 24" x 30".
Figure 2: *Self-Portrait*, 2010. Details. Oil on canvas.
Figure 3: *Abstract of Me, Exposed series, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 30" x 36".*
Figure 4: *I Am...*, *Brick Wall* series, 2007. Oil on canvas. 15" x 30".
Figure 5: *Bricks*, 2008. Oil on bricks, 4" x 3" x 6".

Figure 6: *Brick Wall*, 2006. Lithograph on paper, 7" x 14".
Figure 7: *Beatrice My African Queen, Brick Wall* series, 2007. Oil on canvas, 24" x 30".
Figure 8: *Azita, Naked Women* series, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 15” x 30”.
Figure 9: *Mina, Naked Women* series, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 30" x 36".
Figure 10: Brittany, *Naked Women* series, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 24" x 36".
Figure 11: Shokooh, *Naked Women* series, 2010. Oil on canvas, in two panels, each 24" x 30".
Figure 12: Farah, Naked Women series, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 22" x 30".
Figure 13: Haleh, *Naked Women* series, 2011. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 20” x 30”.
Figure 14: Hamideh, Naked Women series, 2011. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 22" x 30".
Figure 15: Sahel, Naked Women series, 2011. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 22" x 30".
Figure 16: Arezoo, *Naked Women* series, 2010. Oil on canvas in two panels, each 24" x 36".
Figure 17: Arezoo in progress, 2010. Oil on canvas, left panel 28" x 36".
Figure 18: Arezoo, 2010. Detail. Oil and acrylic on canvas, right panel 28" x 36".
Figure 19: Hamideh, process of right panel, 2011.
Figure 20: Arezoo in progress, 2010.

Figure 21: Brittany in progress, 2010.
Figure 22: Arezoo in progress, 2010.

Figure 23: Palettes, 2010.
Figure 24: Brushes, 2011.
Figure 25: *Arezoo* in progress, 2010.
Figure 26: Haleh, 2011. Details.

Figure 27: Haleh, 2011. Details.
ENDNOTES

1 Alessandra Stanley, p. C1.
2 Jeff Navin.
3 Robert Elisberg.
5 Shepard Fairey.
6 Dawn DeDeaux, Shrouded Tree #1, Collaboration with Katrina series, digital photograph 2005.
8 Shepard Fairey, Cleon Peterson, and Casey Ryder. Relief For Haiti. Prints based on photography by Tao Ruspoli. 2010.
10 Roger Cohen.
11 Simone De Beauvoir, The Second Sex. (US translation 1953); in Cotkin, p. 11.
12 Edward Hopper; in Renner, p. 10.
13 Marguerite Del Giudice, pp. 42-43.
14 Del Giudice, p. 48.
15 Julian Bell, grandson of an English painter, Vanessa Bell, is himself a painter and writer. Author of Bonnard (1994), and What is Painting? Representation and Modern Art (1999) and he is a regular contributor to the Times Literary Supplement, Modern Painters and the Guardian. www.jbell.co.uk/biography/julianbell.htm.
16 Julian Bell, p. 5.
17 Albert Aurier, Essay on a New Method of Criticism, (Mercure de France, Paris, 1890-1893, p. 175-176); in Herschel, p. 87.
19 Arnason, p. 736.
20 Howells.
21 George Cotkin.
22 Arnason, pp. 600-601.
23 Linda Nochlin; in Macadam, p. 114.
25 Griselda Pollock; in Robinson, pp. 208-209.
26 Jori Finkel, p. 118.
27 Judy Chicago, p. 126.
28 Vincent Van Gogh, “Yet I prefer painting people’s eyes to cathedrals, for however solemn and imposing it may be, there’s something in their eyes the cathedral lacks, namely the human soul;” in Leeuw, p. 44.
29 Matisse; in Herschel, p. 135.
30 Harwell, p. 8.
31 Lucien Freud (Initially a conversational lecture, ‘Lightning Conductors’, with David Sylvester, for the Oxford University Art Club in May 1953, revised with Sylvester’s help and broadcast a year later on the BBC Third Programme and published in Ecounuter, July 1954); in Feaver, p. 26.
32 Matisse; in Herschel, p. 135.
34 Ann Landi, p. 103.
35 Edward Hopper; in Renner, p. 9.
36 Matisse; in Herschel, p. 135.
38 Matisse; in Herschel, p. 142.
39 Jean Paul Sartre, en situación; in Existentialism.

Bell, p. 6.


Leonhard Emmerling, p. 81.

Clare Oliver, p. 38.

Jackson Pollock; in Emmerling, p. 18.

Jackson Pollock; in Oliver, p. 39.

Arnason, p. 416.

Arnason, pp. 416-417.


Arnason, p. 703.

Arnason, p. 703.


Kamrooz Aram; in Pollack, p. 85.


Shahrnush Parsipur is an Iranian female writer. Internationally recognized because of her *Women Without Men*, a story based on which Shirin Neshat made her first feature film; her film won the best director award in Venice Film Festival; in Parsipur.

Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967) is the most famous woman in the history of Persian literature/poetry; in Farrokhzad.

Shahrnush Parsipur, *Khaterate Zendan (Prison Memoir)*, a book in Farsi, of her memoir of five years in prisons of the Islamic Republic. She has been arrested four times, without any official charges, hearing, or trial (p. 13).


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