



## SANAZ MAZINANI and The Found Image

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TUSSLE MAGAZINE: Can you walk us through your process while collecting images? Are all the images sourced from the Internet?

SANAZ MAZINANI: Yes, I have been collecting images for at least ten years now. I grab screen shots and download images from news organizations and popular media sites. I am mostly interested in archiving current events, so that I may have a chance to think through those issues and perhaps work with them from some distance at a later point. My collection is themed by subjects such as “explosions”, “explosions in Iraq”, “Hollywood explosions”, but also includes folder titles such as “celebrity twins” and “celebrities in military gear”.

I like to see how my searches generate different results based on my geography and over time. I download images from a rather varied set of online sources such as social media feeds, government websites, and blogs by American soldiers. General themes deal with the representation of war on popular news media. I am interested in exploring the way we consume this information and are expected to react to it.

TM: Do you use any other sources for images? Can you explain your process when manipulating the images? What are you hoping the manipulation portrays to the viewer?

SM: I sometimes use my own photographs in the work, but this occurs less and less every year. I find there are just so many images that surround us everyday on so many screens that aiming to decode them might result in some rather intriguing finds.

I don't make work with the intent to sway perspectives, but aspire that the work, through manipulation and pairing of images might result in highlighting issues that we often do not have the time and space to discuss. For example, creating a platform to think about the militarization of our culture and perhaps talking through the subject.

TM: You have recently exhibited your video "Threshold", was it an easy transition from working with images to working with video? Are you planning to produce more video work?

SM: I have been downloading videos for a few years now and with “[Threshold](#)”, I was excited to make the 4K video using excerpts from Hollywood movies. The five-minute piece compiles scenes from 11 recent films where the moving images are mirrored and multiplied near beyond recognition.

For me, the symbolic likeness of an explosion stands in for an act of violence, but also for depictions of power. Simultaneously magnificent and consuming, the explosion becomes a sublime entity to be feared and adored. Here, the explosion’s ability to obfuscate becomes a metaphor for politics, a symbol for the veils that simultaneously obscure and complicate reality.

The patterns of Islamic ornamentation created as a video loop and echoed in the six channel sound element build through repetition. By re-presenting the image of an explosion as a metaphor the symbolic value of the phenomena is examined, providing a chance to consider the complexities of entertainment, mass media and the violence of war.

Currently I am working on a new video that uses footage shot and uploaded by soldiers on some of the 600 plus US military installations overseas.

TM: The recent exhibition of your work surveyed the last 12 years of your practice; may you outline what was involved while organizing this show and the significance of the location of the gallery space?

SM: Yes, I was thrilled to have a survey exhibition of my work at Ab-Anbar Gallery in Tehran. This was the first time that I have shown my work in Iran, so the Gallery Director and I thought it would be great to present an introduction to an audience who was familiar with the work but had not yet seen it in person. We selected five projects from the past 12 years and dedicated a unique space to each project.

The gallery space is rather distinctive, as it’s a five-level apartment built in the 1940s that’s been fully converted to a gallery space. It is actually a rare building with exemplary architecture for the early Pahlavi period when apartment buildings were first getting popular in Tehran. So it lead to a rather special exhibit, where you can walk from one room to the next and experience different projects, styles, and approaches in my practice.

Ab-Anbar also produced a handsome catalogue for the show that was designed by the preeminent design firm, StudioKargah. It is a beautiful object, which switches from English to Farsi text depending on which end of the book you begin with.

Overall the show was a rather important one for me as it was a bit of a coming home: an occasion for me to share with my family what I have been doing in North America for all these years. But also, the show afforded me a platform to engage with a brand new audience - to have some of the most meaningful conversations about art and politics that I have ever had a chance to experience.

TM: You split your studio time between San Francisco and Toronto how does this affect your practice?

SM: The past couple of years have gone by like a whirlwind. Between travel and splitting my time between the two cities I have learned to be rather exacting with my time. San Francisco is where I mostly make my work and produce exhibitions. I have a big studio in SF with lots of natural light. It is also where I keep my Epson 9890, so really great place to make my big prints. I use my time while travelling to catch up on reading and to push my research forward. And my

Toronto time is often split between digital production and studio visits with artists whose practice inspire me to keep my own work fresh and meaningful.

TM: What is coming up next for you?

SM: Wow! Next is an exhibition at the West Vancouver Museum that opens on April 12th. The show is titled "Mirrored Explosions" and is curated by Pantea Haghighi. I am rather excited about heading for the very first time to Vancouver to exhibit work from the series "Frames of the Visible".

In July, I will be heading to Rio de Janeiro for a collaborative project commissioned by the Fly Under the Radar Biennial. I will be in in Rio for two weeks collaborating with Brazilian artist Anna

Azevedo on a public art project.

Later in the summer I'll be finishing up a sound installation with my brother, Mani Mazinani, for a group exhibition in Toronto's Koffler Centre of the Arts.

TM: May you share a few of your main influences?

SM: A couple of all time favourite art stars for me are Ellsworth Kelly and Agnes Martin.