

Kai Matsumiya

**Maryam Jafri**  
*Informational Packet*

wed-sun 12-6 & by appointment  
153 1/2 Stanton Street  
New York, NY 10002

[www.kaimatsumiya.com](http://www.kaimatsumiya.com)  
[info@kaimatsumiya.com](mailto:info@kaimatsumiya.com)  
+ 1 617 678 444

**Solo Exhibitions:**

- 2022** **Nonstop You** Kai Matsumiya Gallery, New York
- 2021** **A Broad and Narrow Point** Blaffer Museum of Art, Houston  
**The Winter of Our Discontent** Fotogalleriet, Oslo  
**Solo Show** Publics, Helsinki
- 2019** **I Drank the Kool-Aid but I Didn't Inhale** Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles  
**Roads to Serfdom, Repaved** Taxis Palais Kunsthalle Tyrol, Innsbruck  
**Automatic Negative Thought** Contemporary Art Gallery of Vancouver, Vancouver
- 2018** **War on Wellness** Kai Matsumiya Gallery, New York
- 2017** **Welcome To My Age of Anxiety** La Veronica Arte Contemporanea, Sicily  
**Frieze Focus** (solo presentation with Gallery La Veronica), London
- 2016** **Meditation Square (as part of Positions #3)** Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven  
**Independence Day 1934-1975** Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
**Economy Corner P!** Projects, New York  
**The Day After** Tabakalera Center for Contemporary Art, San Sebastian  
**The Day After** Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto, Toronto
- 2015** **Generic Corner** Kunsthalle Basel, Basel  
**The Day After** Betonsalon, Paris  
**Mouthfeel** Pori Art Museum, Pori
- 2014** **Mouthfeel** Gasworks, London
- 2013** **Backdrop** Bielefelder Kunstverein, Bielefeld  
**Staged Archive** Studiengalerie 1.357, Goethe University, Frankfurt
- 2012** **Stages** WYSPA Institute of Art, Gdansk  
**Sombras Coloniales** Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo, Seville  
**Geographies** Museum for Contemporary Art, Roskilde  
**Headlines and Small Print** (with Andreas Fogarasi), Galerie Nova/WHW Zagreb  
**Global Slum** Beirut, Cairo
- 2011** **Avalon** Picture-This, Bristol
- 2008** **Staged Archive** Galerie Alexandra Saheb, Berlin
- 2006** **Costume Party: Colony & Native** Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin  
**Janus** Helsinki Kunsthalle, Helsinki
- 2005** **Costume Party** Malmö Konst Museum, Malmö

**Selected Group Exhibitions:**

- 2021** **Blocks** Museum of Contemporary Art, Palermo
- 2020** **Invented Histories** Kindl, Berlin  
**Seismic Movements** Dhaka Art Summit, Dhaka
- 2019** **Undefined Territories** Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona, Barcelona  
**Deadwood** Nagel/Draxler Berlin  
**Object of Doubt** Gallery Danielle Arnaud, London  
**Slow Hand Movements** Boers-Li Gallery, New York
- 2018** **Front International** Cleveland Triennial, Cleveland  
**Athens Biennial** Athens  
**Riga Biennial** Riga  
**Group Therapy** Frye Art Museum, Seattle  
**Supplies & Demands** Maltz Gallery Otis College of Art & Design, Los Angeles  
**Post-Institutional Stress Disorder** Kunsthall Aarhus, Aarhus
- 2017** **Tous, des sang-mêlés** Musée d'Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Vitry-sur-Seine  
**Faits alternatifs** FRAC Poitou-Charentes, Angoulême  
**Being Prey** Espacio Odeón, Bogotá  
**Concrete Truth** ICSP International Curatorial and Studio Program, New York
- 2016** **Sao Paulo Biennale** Sao Paolo  
**Situations** Fotomuseum Wintherthur, Wintherthur  
**Dhaka Art Summit** Dhaka  
**Lost in the Archive** Latvian Center for Contemporary Art, Riga  
**Granpalazzo** Zagarolo, Rome  
**The State Plug** in Institute for Contemporary Art, Winnipeg
- 2015** **Belgian Pavilion, Venice Biennial** Venice  
**Gothenburg Biennial** Gothenburg  
**Fassbinder Jetzt - Fassbinder & Contemporary Art** Martin Groupius Bau, Berlin  
**Double Take** Nature Morte Gallery Delhi
- 2014** **Meeting Points 7** Beirut Art Center, Beirut (& travels to 21er Haus, Vienna; Institute for African Studies, Moscow; Contemporary Image Collective, Cairo)  
**Once Documentary** Camera Austria, Graz  
**Back & Forth: Forms of Distancing** Steirischer Herbst, Graz  
**The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes** Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver  
**CAFAM Biennial** Beijing  
**Incident Light** Blackwood Gallery, Toronto  
**Video Container: Touch Cinema** Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Miami
- 2013** **Fassbinder Jetzt – Fassbinder & Contemporary Art** Deutsches Filmmuseum, Frankfurt  
**Past is Present (Murals)** Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit  
**One Hundred Tricks, One Thousand Wiles** Mukha, Antwerp  
**When Attitudes Became Forms Become Attitudes** Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit  
**Contemporary Feminist Art in Scandinavia** Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, Kristiansand
- 2012** **Manifesta 9** Genk  
**Taipei Biennial** Taipei  
**Shanghai Biennial** Shanghai  
**When Attitudes Became Forms Become Attitudes** CCA Wattis, San Francisco

**Forays: Systems of Self-Interest** Galerie Fotohof, Salzburg

- 2011** **Communitas** Kunsthaus Graz/Camera Austria, Graz  
**Alternativa** WYPSA Institute of Art, Gdansk
- 2010** **Bucharest Biennial** Bucharest  
**Quebec City Biennial** Quebec City  
**Biennial Cuvee** OK Center for Contemporary Art Linz  
**Estrangement** The Showroom, London  
**The Creative Act** Henie Onstad Art Center, Oslo  
**No More Bad Girls: Unprepossessing Femininity** Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna (& travels to Stiftelsen 314, Bergen)  
**A Space of Their Own** Gallery BMB, Mumbai
- 2009** **Time out of Joint** The Kitchen, New York City  
**Contour, 4th Biennial for the Moving Image** Mechelen, Belgium  
**Land of Human Rights** (public project) Graz  
**Mise en Scene** Centre d'Arte Passerelle, Brest  
**Black Atlantic** AR/GE Kunst Museum, Bolzano  
**Den Frie** Den Frie Kunsthall, Copenhagen
- 2008** **Discourses of Emergence** Bodhi Art Gallery, New York City  
**Interfacing Practices** Galerie Magnus Mueller, Berlin  
**Present Perfect Portraits**, Martin Asbæk Projects, Copenhagen  
**Usable Pasts** Smart Project Space, Amsterdam
- 2007** **1<sup>st</sup> Thessaloniki Biennial of Contemporary Art** Thessaloniki  
**Meanwhile in Baghdad** The Renaissance Society, Chicago  
**V-Effekt** Nikolaj Kunsthall, Copenhagen  
**Notes on the Archive** IG Bildende Kunst, Vienna

### **Selected Bibliography:**

- 2020 Alison Hugill, *Interview with Maryam Jafri*, Berlin Art Link, January 2020
- 2019 Negar Azimi, *Spring Preview: Maryam Jafri at ICA LA*, Art Forum 01.2019  
Alex Greenberger *Winter Preview: Maryam Jafri at ICA LA*, Artnews, Winter 2019  
*Maryam Jafri Im Taxispalais Innsbruck* Der Standard 27.02.19  
Christine Toepfer *Maryam Jafri im Taxispalais* Camera Austria Spring.2019  
Isabelle Cheung *Interview with Maryam Jafri* Art Asia Pacific 03.2019  
Editor's Choice, *Maryam Jafri at Contemporary Art Gallery* Frieze.com, July 2019  
Mitch Speed, *Maryam Jafri at Contemporary Art Gallery*, Canadian Art, Fall 2019
- 2018 Rachel Churner, *Maryam Jafri at Kai Matsumiya*, Art Forum, 03.2018  
Michael Weinstein, *Critics Picks: Maryam Jafri at Kai Matsumiya*, ArtForum.com 03.2018  
Martha Schwendener, *Maryam Jafri at Kai Matsumiya*, New York Times, 02.2018  
John Chiaverina *Maryam Jafri at Kai Matsumiya*, Artnews, 01.2018  
Supplies & Demands, ContemporaryArtDaily.com, 09.2018  
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Emily Pothast *Group Therapy at Frye Art Museum*, Art In America, 12.2018

- 2017 Zachary Small, *At Frieze London*, Hyperallergic Oct 6, 2017  
Jonathan Jones, *Frieze review*, The Guardian Oct 6, 2016  
*Frieze Highlights in Pictures*, The Guardian, Oct 7, 2017
- 2016 Dan Fox, *Report from Sao Paulo*, Frieze Blog, 09.2016  
Michael Wilson *Maryam Jafri at P!* Art Forum, 05.2016  
Karen Schiff *Maryam Jafri at P!* Art in America 06.2016  
Blake Gopnik *Maryam Jafri Recalls When Minimal Meant Cheap*, Artnet.com 03.2016  
Tom McGlynn *Maryam Jafri Economy Corner, Brooklyn Rail*, 04.2016  
Paul O'Neill, Lucy Steeds (editors), *The Curatorial Conundrum*, MIT Press
- 2015 Moritz Scheppers, *Maryam Jafri at Kunsthalle Basel*, Frieze d/e, 12.2015  
Rahma Khazam, *Artist in Focus*, Frieze, 11.2015  
Verena Doerfler *Maryam Jafri at Kunsthalle Basel* Kunstbulletin 11.2015  
Elise Lammer *Maryam Jafri at Kunsthalle Basel* Spike Art 11.2015  
Jens Hoffmann, *Art & Politics Roundtable*, Mousse 10.2015  
Martin Hebert *Shows Not To Miss: Maryam Jafri at Kunsthalle Basel* (Preview), 09.2015  
Bonaventura Ndikung *Entangled Modernities* Art Review, Summer 2014  
Anne Fessler *Biennale Venedig: Die Zukunft ist auf Sand gebaut*, Der Standard 05.2015  
Anthony Downey (editor), *Dissonant Archives*, I.B. Tauris Publications  
Christopher Morton, Darren Newbury (editors) *The African Photographic Archive: Research and Curatorial Strategies*, Bloomsbury Academic Press
- 2014 Marina Vishmidt, *Artists At Work: Maryam Jafri*, Afterall Online, 03.2014  
Keren Rosenberg, *Maryam Jafri, Mouthfeel*, Art Review Online, 04.2014  
Colin Pery, *Mouthfeel*, Art Monthly 05.2014
- 2013 *Shanghai Biennale*, Kunstforum 01.2013  
Hili Perlson *Maryam Jafri: Who Owns The Info?* Sleek Magazine, 04.2013  
Stephanie Bailey *Interview with Maryam Jafri* Ibraaz, 11.2013
- 2012 Eva Scharrer, *Maryam Jafri: Beirut*, Art Forum critics picks, 11.2012  
Luigi Fassi, *Maryam Jafri: Between History and Geography* (Interview), Mousse Magazine, April-May 2012  
Emmanuelle Lequeaux, *Manifesta 9*, Guardian Weekly 08.2012  
Chris Clarke, *Manifesta 9*, Art Monthly 07.2012  
Kate Sutton, *Manifesta 9*, Art Forum online, 06.2012  
Krzysztof Gutfranski, *Maryam Jafri Interview*, Punkt Magazine, 05.2012
- 2011 Bettina Steinbruege, *Maryam Jafri* (feature article), Camera Austria, 12.11 Issue 116  
Hans Juergen-Hafener *Communitas*, Kunstforum International 07. 2011 Bd. 209  
Nora Theis *Viel Schein im Gemeinsam-Sein*, Art Magazine 06.2011
- 2010 Colin Pery, *Estrangement at The Showroom*, Art Monthly 06.2010  
Bridget Crone, *Maryam Jafri* (feature), AP Engine 06.2010  
Maren Luebke-Tudow, *Bucharest Biennial Review*, Camera Austria, 06.2010  
Valentina Iancu, *Bucharest Biennial Review*, Art Marigins 06.2010  
Christina Irrgang, *Bucharest Biennial Review*, Monopol 06.2010  
Katerina Gregos, *Raising the Phantom*, Mousse Magazine 02.2010  
Denis Isaia *Black Atlantic*, Flash Art Italia 02.2010
- 2009 Roundtable on *History & Fiction*, Texte Zur Kunste 11.2009 (with Yael Bartana, Clemens von Wedermeyer, Romauld Karmakar & Kathrin Peters)

Patricia Reed, *Interview with Maryam Jafri*, Art Papers 01.2009  
Judith Schwarbart, *Maryam Jafri & The Staged Archive*, Sum Magazine 04.2009  
Katerina Gregos, *Contour 4<sup>th</sup> Biennale for the Moving Image*, Catalogue, A Prior  
Luigi Fassi, *Time out of Joint*, catalogue, Yale University/Whitney Museum Press  
Chris Fitzpatrick, *Secret of the Ninth Planet*, catalogue  
Lugi Fassi, *Black Atlantic*, catalogue, Mousse Magazine  
Michelle Grabner, *Meanwhile in Baghdad...*, X-TRA Magazine, Winter, 2009

2008 Astrid Mania, *Schätze Hinter Dem Vorhang Aus Tand*, Artnet Magazin 05.03.2008  
Kristine Kern, *Perfekte portraetter*, Politiken 16.05.2008

2007 Hamza Walker, *Meanwhile in Baghdad*, The Renaissance Society, catalogue  
Jan Erik Lundstrom, Catherine David (Ed.), *Thessaloniki Biennale*, catalogue  
A.Vidokle (Ed.), *The Best Surprise Is No Surprise: An archive of e-flux*. JRP|Ringier  
Sanne Kofods (Ed.), *V-effekt*, Nikolaj Center for Contemporary Art, catalogue  
Sophie Goltz, *Notes On Archives*, Galerie IG Bildende Kunst, catalogue

### **Teaching experience:**

Professor of Contemporary Art, Oslo National Academy of the Arts 2016-present  
Guest Associate Professor, Funen Art Academy 2008-2010  
Guest Associate Professor, Foundation Program Royal Danish Art Academy 2004-2005

### **Education:**

Studio Art **Whitney Museum Independent Study Program** NY, NY 1999-2000

M.P.S Interactive Telecommunications Program/Interactive Media Arts Program **New York University/Tisch School of the Arts** 1996-1999

*Areas of study: Video art (studied with Peter Campus), computer programming, interactive art*

B.A. (with Honors) English & American Literature, **Brown University**, Providence, RI 1990-1994

*Areas of study: Literature, acting, postcolonial studies, semiotics*

### **Additional Teaching:**

**Goldsmiths Department of Visual Cultures**, visiting artist (2017)

**NYU Steinhardt Department of Art**, workshop and studio visits (2017)

**Bard CCS, Bard**, visiting artist (2016)

**MIT Program in Art, Culture & Technology**, Cambridge, visiting artist (2015)

**Tyler School of Art**, Philadelphia, visiting artist, Sculpture Department (2015)

**Ecole Supérieure d'Art et de Design Toulon**, Provence, workshop (2015)

**Ecole Supérieure d'Art de Nantes Métropol**, Nantes, workshop (2015)

**ERG**, Brussels, Lecture & panelist (2015)

**Central St Martin's**, London, workshop, Exhibition Studies MRes program (2015)

**Media and Design School**, Genk, visiting artist (2013)

**Academy of Fine Arts**, Seville, visiting artist (2012)

**Center for Women's Studies**, panelist, University of Zagreb (2011)

**CUNY Queens**, visiting artist, MFA program, NYC (2011)

**Oslo Art Academy**, Oslo, Department of Photography, workshop (10.2010)

**Jan Van Eyck Academy (Theory Department)**, Maastricht, visiting artist (2008)

**Jutland Art Academy**, Århus, workshop (2004, 2008)

**Royal Danish Art Academy**, Copenhagen, visiting artist, MFA Thesis Evaluator, Media School, DK (2010, 2009, 2003)

# ARTFORUM



Maryam Jafri, *Boy & Boy Continued* (detail), 2017, ink-jet prints, two sheets, 6 x 9" and 7 x 5" (depicted).

## Maryam Jafri

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I confess I've always secretly lusted after the giant, wall-hung crossword puzzles sold by such estimable purveyors as SkyMall and Hammacher Schlemmer. Measuring seven by seven feet and containing tens of thousands of squares, this is the kind of crossword that would require true commitment and would provide an unrivaled source of procrastination. Imagine my delight, then, upon seeing Maryam Jafri's crossword installation *Where We're At* (all works cited, 2017). Built within a one hundred-inch-square wooden frame in collaboration with *New York Times* puzzle maker Ben Tausig, Jafri's thirty-six-clue crossword was so large relative to the gallery space that it could be viewed in its entirety only from an angle. In the black squares that separate answers, the Pakistani-born American artist had placed books befitting the current political climate, from P. T. Barnum's *The Art of Money Getting; Or, Golden Rules for Making Money* (1880) to Friedrich A. von Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) and Nancy Isenberg's *White Trash* (2016). Jafri's purpose was to heighten the sense that "where we're at" is downright dire. Still, I saw a silver lining: *Solve this caustic crossword*, I thought, *and you might even become 7 Down* ("female with a perfect work-life balance").

The logic of self-help extended more literally to the exhibition's back room, where Jafri presented several sculptures assembled from silicone body parts, yoga mats, acupuncture needles, and cupping jars. The mixture of indignation and humor that governed the crossword—two clues: "TERRITORY POPULATED BY DISENFRANCHISED U.S. CITIZENS: ABBR." and "AMERICAN REALTY MOST EASILY GRASPED IN FICTION"—was replaced by cool sarcasm in *Self-Care*, a purple yoga mat cut and rolled onto a toilet-paper holder, and *ANT (Automatic Negative Thought)*, a white pill captured beneath a cupping jar like a bug trapped under a glass. One photo, however, maintained enough affect to make me wince: a framed image of a naked back with about a dozen cups distending the skin into bright-red welts. A torn photo of a smiling boy, casually dropped on the ground beneath a work called *Schadenfreude*, provided a bit of relief. It took a minute to recognize the patterned pillowcase underneath him; only then did I realize that the image was the right half of the one hanging on the adjacent wall, the one that had caused such discomfort. I had assumed that the torso was that of an adult, but returning to the image, I could clearly see the child's delicate features.

Almost as absurd as the juxtaposition and subsequent severing of the boy's face and body was the prominent digital watermark that labeled it as a stock photo. This image had none of the slick and sterile qualities of stock imagery; the boy lay on a jumble of sheets atop a black leather couch that appeared too haphazard to have been staged and too idiosyncratic to be sold—which made it that much more effective. The two-part piece *Boy & Boy Continued* stood apart in its simplicity and intensity, and served as a powerful reminder of how forceful Jafri can be with the barest of means. It was the visual equivalent of the answer to 1 Across in *Where We're At*: "SNAFU" or Situation Normal, All Fucked Up.

When leaving the gallery, visitors could take a printout of her crossword to complete on their own time. There was an implicit understanding that the puzzle, if done at all, would be completed privately, despite the invitation at the bottom of the page to contact the dealer for answers. By couching her critical commentary in a pastime—one that touts itself as more erudite than a coloring book but is just as escapist—Jafri generously, if counterintuitively, provided a chance for meaningful rumination, one that had the potential to spur outrage and even action, as opposed to just killing time.

—Rachel Churner



## Meditating Soldiers, a Giant Crossword Puzzle, and Yoga Mat Toilet Paper: Maryam Jafri on Her Exhibition 'War on Wellness'

BY JOHN CHIAVERINA January 19, 2018 9:15am



**Maryam Jafri** *American Buddhist*, 2016.

In 2008, Captain Thomas Dyer became the first Buddhist chaplain to serve in the United States military, and surreal video of him guiding soldiers through a meditation session on an Army base in Iraq features prominently in Maryam Jafri's piece *American Buddhist*. One of three larger works in Jafri's exhibition "War on Wellness"—on view through March 11 at **Kai Matsumiya** gallery on New York's Lower East Side—the video addresses contemporary conditions of American politics and healthcare by way of footage found on the internet.

The bizarre imagery of soldiers meditating could be read as parody. But the video was "sourced directly from the U.S. Army website," Jafri said while walking through her show. "And it's not about PTSD—it's about optimization for battle."

In making the piece, Jafri removed the credits from the video and turned them into a text work that she placed in the gallery next to a plush Buddha doll. Reciting the words before her, she said, "Camp Taji soldiers close their eyes and imagine they are somewhere else"—that kind of says it all."

Sharing a room with *American Buddhist* is a giant wooden crossword puzzle measuring nearly 9 by 9 feet, with a list of clues printed on a white wall adjacent to the piece. Titled *Where We're At* (2017), the structural work was created in collaboration with vetted puzzle master Ben Tausig, who operates out of a "puzzle lab" in Brooklyn and has contributed crosswords to the *New York Times*. He has also written a number of books on the subject, including 2007's *Gonzo Crosswords*.

*Where We're At* looks a bit like a shelving unit and doubles as one, too—the puzzle's black spaces are filled by books selected by the artist. Jafri came to Tausig with a fleshed-out concept. "I told him: crossword puzzle, books for the black squares," Jafri said. "I had certain things I wanted in there that are important to understand the current political moment—where we're at." Newt Gingrich's book *Treason* sits on a shelf alongside Milton Friedman's *Why*



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*Government Is The Problem*, while P.T. Barnum's *The Art of Money Getting* shares space with Ayn Rand's *Anthem*. Other titles include Nancy Isenberg's *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* and Stephen Mihm's *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*.

Taken together, the books suggest a meta-narrative about America's sustained rightward path. Given the era, however, there is one glaring omission. "As you can see, there's no mention of Trump—not in the press release, not here," Jafri said of her surroundings. Matsumiya, her gallerist, added, "We both agreed that privileging personality over the real issues is in fact very destructive."

The clues for the crossword puzzle come across in sometimes peculiar language. Take, for example, #14 across: "Dick Cheney went to jail for one." The answer? "DUI" The distinctive wording fits into the artist's larger practice, which includes a continued interest in text. Jafri's 2016 solo show at P! in New York focused on the design of generic-looking consumer packaging from the 1970s and '80s, with one standout being a photograph of a brand-free tin that simply read "CORNER BEEF" in a dated typeface.

The back room of "War on Wellness" plays home to pieces from the artist's larger series "Wellness-Postindustrial Complex." In broad strokes, the works engage the booming wellness industry, an increasingly wide realm that includes everything from Eastern healing strategies to new age self-optimization tactics. "For me, beyond the simple critique of this kind of hyper-commercialization and hyper-individualization of Eastern techniques, what's really important is discussing why people are so desperate for these solutions," Jafri said. "I can only see this in the context of things like the war on health, people's access to health, economic disposition, and social fragmentation, in this case of the precariat and the creative class," she continued.

A sculpture titled *Self-care* (2017) that affixes a modified yoga mat to a toilet-paper roll hangs on a wall near a silicone foot, acquired from a Chinese fetish retailer and poked with acupuncture needles. Another piece, *Depression* (2017), includes equipment used for the practice of cupping—a traditional form of Chinese medicine wherein a vacuum is created on the patient's skin via a glass cup—and an image of a famous celebrity cupping practitioner: Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps.

"It's really important to see the exhibition as a whole," Jafri said. "It's not just looking at symptoms—like, 'oh it's hipster decadence.' That's not interesting. I'm trying to go deeper and understand why this appeals now."

The issues are complex and not easily summarized. Perhaps it's best to look back to the crossword puzzle. "Here we have #12 across—'American reality most easily grasped in fiction,' " the artist pointed out. The answer: "dystopia." That, she said, "is where we're at."

# Maryam Jafri at ICA LA

March 20, 2019  
Text by Yxta Murray



Maryam Jafri, *I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale* (2019) (installation view).  
Image courtesy of the artist and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.  
Photo: Elon Schoenholz.

We sure did eat a lot of poison when we were young. Not just the comestible kind, though we ingested loads of that, too—the cyclamates in TaB, say, or the chlorpyrifos from our carpets. We also imbibed other toxins: racist caricatures filled our television screens; cosmetics packaging tried to convince women, people of color, and non-binary folks to hate ourselves; our bodies became fungible objects.

Maryam Jafri's show at the ICA LA, *I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale*, takes as its premise a joke about Bill Clinton, yet its real subject is the death of old, mostly bad, ideas. In making the body of work for the exhibition (titled *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation, 2014-2015*), Jafri researched the archives of food branding consultants, and from their notes, tracked down now-obsolescent goods from eBay or flea markets. She then assembled a series of readymades of doomed household products. Outmoded consumables, propped up on plinths like exotica found in ethnographic museums, fill the small exhibition space.

One vitrine contains a brown-and-white package of Fact brand cigarettes. Exquisitely-researched didactics narrate the demise of this and other products that Jafri appropriates. (Fact wasn't withdrawn from the market because it caused cancer, but because the Philip Morris brand Merit Cigarettes kept outselling it.) Then, there's the full-color, framed ad of two bottles of Spalding Sports Refresher, a heavily-sugared beverage marketed in the '90s, primarily to African Americans. The soda didn't croak because of allegations of food industry racism but because of "brand diffusion." Jafri hangs the photograph next to wall didactics explaining the history of the product; the dry presentation highlights the overly-fun branding of the product and the emotional manipulation therein. She further escalates the stakes with her display of Central Soya's "PLUSmeat," a soy-based meat replacement, which the company withdrew from grocery stores in 1975 due to low sales, and instead started vending to prisons. Jafri's signage explains that an inmate accused the Illinois Department of Corrections of cruel and unusual punishment when he grew sick from soy products the prison fed him.

Jafri's installation inspires the thought that maybe we, too, should always be suing. From the '90s rage for trans fats to contemporary facial fillers and addictive iPhones —when we read her ghastly histories we may fear that we will fall prey to some yet unknown corrupt brand. Jafri's work reminds us of how progress has made us healthier but creates an ever-renewing roster of dangers. Her work argues for educated purchasing practices, but even that may not do enough.

*Maryam Jafri: I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale* runs from February 10–June 30, 2019 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1717 E. 7th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90021).



Maryam Jafri, *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation: Spalding* (2015). Framed text, color photograph, objects, overall dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photo: Elon Schoenholz.



Maryam Jafri, *I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale* (2019) (installation view).  
Image courtesy of the artist and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.  
Photo: Elon Schoenholz.



Maryam Jafri, *I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale* (2019) (installation view). Image courtesy of the artist and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photo: Elon Schoenholz.



Maryam Jafri, *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation: Gerber* (2015). Framed text, color photograph, objects, wooden shelf, overall dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photo: Elon Schoenholz.





Maryam Jafri, *I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale* (2019) (installation view). Image courtesy of the artist and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Photo: Elon Schoenholz.

Galleries

## Maryam Jafri Recalls When Minimal Meant Cheap

THE DAILY PIC: At P! gallery, Jafri looks at discount modernism.

Blake Gopnik, March 17, 2016



**THE DAILY PIC** (#1513): The décor of my bathrooms took a dive somewhere around 1990, when supermarkets stopped offering their “No Name” products (aka “generic goods”). I had relied on them for utterly plain white boxes of Kleenex, marked only with the single word “TISSUES” in black Helvetica. Those went with my modernist interiors.

I hadn't thought of this until just the other day – I'd blocked out the pain of my loss – when I saw a lovely show of just such products, salvaged from the dustbin of history (and of dustbins) and put on display by the artist [Maryam Jafri at the gallery called P!](#) in New York.

On plinths and in photos, Jafri lets us contemplate such glories of design as a jar of peanut butter sold with a plain swath of Cooper Black letters on white, or a can of corned beef whose simple virtues are proclaimed in the pseudo-deco typeface called Bauhaus.

The gallery's excellent essay suggests that the products disappeared when supermarkets developed in-house budget brands whose look was a closer match to established products. That's no doubt right, but I'd like to add a footnote to that explanation: I have a sneaking suspicion that the pared-down design of No Name lines, for all its visual economy and no-nonsense approach, in fact reeked of elite tastes descended from the Bauhaus – and of the high prices associated with such tastes. To really communicate your intent to offer bargains, you had to go for low-end overdesign. I remember the day that my type-on-white "TISSUES" were replaced by a box bearing a sunset in pastels, floated onto a fake wicker background. I wept.

*(Photo by Sebastian Bach)*

## Maryam Jafri in Conversation

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Perwana Nazif | Los Angeles | 9 February 2019

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Maryam Jafri. Photo: Kristof Vrancken.

Maryam Jafri's series 'Product Recall: An Index of Innovation' (2014–2015) will be shown for the first time in its entirety in the United States at the Institute of Contemporary Art, [Los Angeles](#), between 10 February and 23 June 2019. The exhibition's title, *I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale*, references Bill Clinton's admission to (not fully) smoking marijuana when asked if he had ever broken an international law. By referencing a former American head of state who denied smoking marijuana by claiming he 'experimented with it', but never 'inhaled' it, the artist draws attention to an ideology of having it all without repercussions. Thirteen 'failed' 20th-century American consumer products make up 'Product Recall', exhibited with texts and photos that indicate branding and packaging aesthetics. These range from Kleenex tissue paper laced with pesticides, to Diet Pepsi baby bottles—items that have been 'relegated to the dustbin of history.' The work, as is characteristic of Jafri's practice, invites the audience to consider the hidden significance—and meanings—of archival materials.



Maryam Jafri, 'Product Recall: An Index of Innovation' (2014–2015). Framed texts, photographs, objects. Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea.

For a similar project, *Generic Corner* (2015–ongoing), the artist has assembled a collection of 'generic products'—consumer products from the 1970s with simple, black and white labelling. The aim of this form of branding—through the eradication of design, marketing, and advertising costs—was to allow for an affordability among consumers that became stigmatised, with these labels—and the purchase of products emblazoned with them—becoming a sign of poverty or of frugality. The project consists of products that the artist has sourced and presented on white plinths, along with still life photographs and a panel of text.



Maryam Jafri, *Depression*, from the series 'Wellness-Postindustrial Complex' (2017). Wood, silicone feet, acupuncture needles, glass cupping equipment, photograph, paper, egg carton. Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea.

With a BA in English and American Literature from Brown University, research plays a central part in Jafri's conceptual approach, which spans video, sculpture, photography, and performance. The artist's practice often deals with issues related to global capitalism, as seen in 'Wellness-Postindustrial Complex' (2017), a series of sculptures and photo works that examine the rise of Eastern wellness practices in postindustrial societies. Self-care is contemplated by Jafri as being representative of contemporary capitalism, whereby the DIY pursuit of one's wellbeing is a response 'to an age of economic dispossession and social fragmentation.' Sculptures include wooden structures from which silicone feet—sourced from online fetish stores in China—are jutting out, and embellished with acupuncture needles, along with a deep purple yoga mat has been cut to resemble a roll of toilet paper, hanging from a stainless steel holder. Photo works on inkjet paper include people undergoing wellness routines such as cupping.

In this conversation, Jafri comments on the nuances of her archive of failed and predominantly food consumer products in 'Product Recall', as compared to her other archival works.



Maryam Jafri, *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation. Fact* (2014–2015). Framed texts, photographs, objects. Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea.

Let's begin with titles. Your show at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles is called *I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale*, whereas the series exhibited is titled 'Product Recall: An Index of Innovation'. Could you elaborate on the connection between the two titles?

'Product Recall' is one complete work and the entire series will be shown for the first time in the U.S., where it should be shown since it's dealing with vernacular American consumer history. 'Product Recall' has been shown in many other places around the world, and some parts of it were shown in Front International in Cleveland. The work deals with consumer and food items that either failed or were withdrawn due to health reasons. I'm also looking at the cultural and political underpinnings of why certain things failed or were considered innovative and what that reveals as a kind of cultural anthropology.

Since this is the first time the complete series is being shown in the U.S., I wanted to contextualise it within the contemporary U.S. landscape. The alternative title—*I Drank the Kool-Aid But I Didn't Inhale*—adds a meta-layer to the project, with metaphors referring to eating, drinking, and ingesting, as well as a reference to Bill Clinton's claim that he smoked marijuana but didn't inhale. Taken together, the title considers this idea of having your cake and eating it too. This idea is paramount right now with the current administration and the promises that were made during the election campaign: we can have the

best healthcare, but no taxes; we can have a wall, and not pay for it ... all sorts of stuff. So the title reflects a desire on my part to highlight a certain American expectation of limitless growth without any costs, which has led us to where we are now.



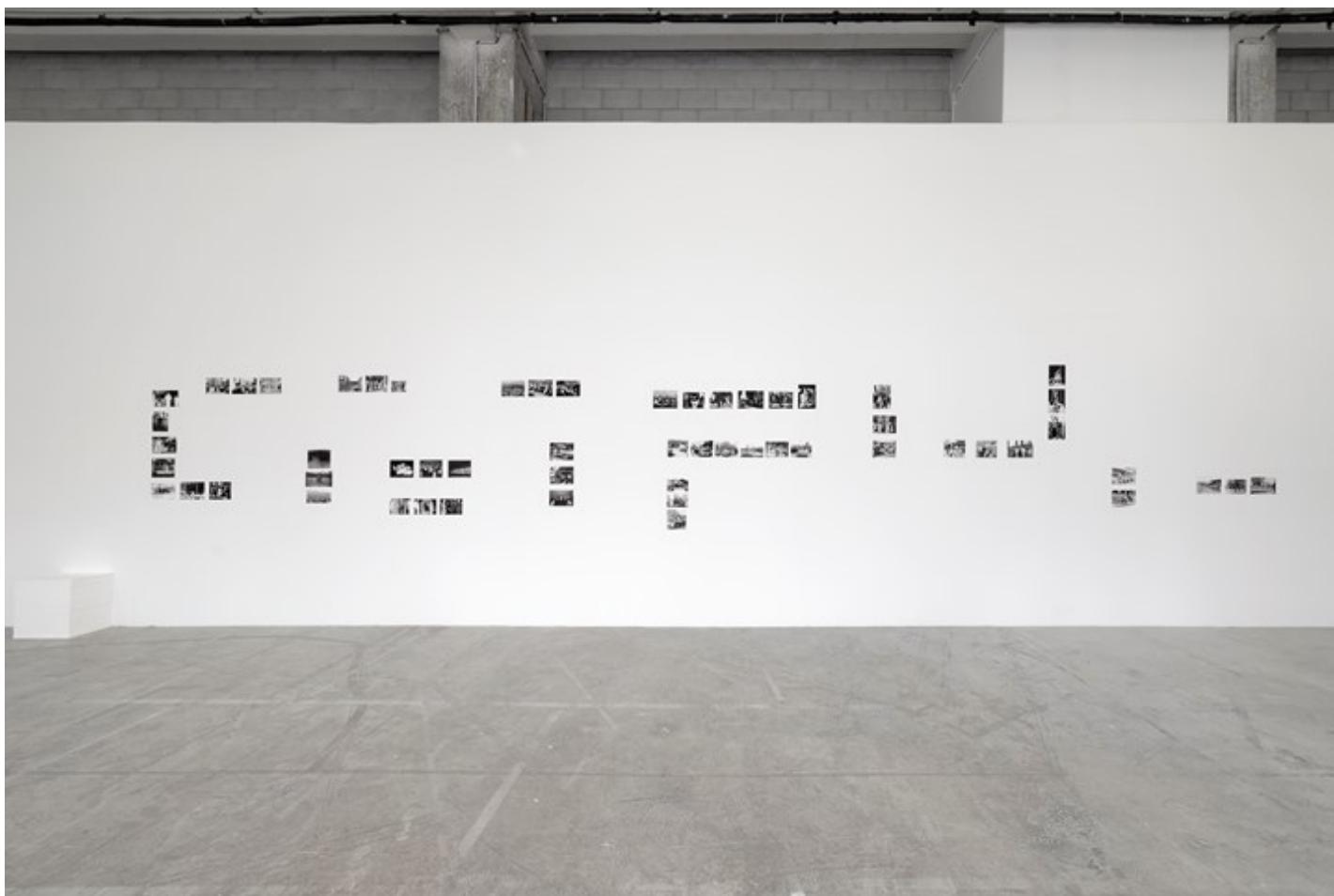
Maryam Jafri, *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation. Gerber* (2014–2015). Framed texts, photographs, objects. Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea.

**Many of your references are particular to American culture, such as the American products in 'Product Recall', which includes the diet pill Ayds and its radically altered insinuations during the AIDS crisis. What sorts of conversations do these references generate in Europe and Brazil, where you have also shown this work?**

Obviously, I did not vote for the current administration, but I want to make it very clear that I'm also trying to look beyond that. The current administration is a symptom—it hasn't come out of nowhere. A lot of the items on view in 'Product Recall' are about consumer culture in the U.S., but that culture is so internationalised now. People easily relate to it, but who doesn't have some kind of relationship to or at least recognition of McDonald's and Coca-Cola? People recognise the arguments and the fault lines these days, particularly within the art context. It's in the media, it's everywhere. It resonates, but my guess is that it will resonate on another level in the U.S.



I would never have picked the ICA title for a European show because 'I Drank the Kool-Aid' is a U.S. colloquialism. Not everybody is going to get it. I think there's a subtle layer. The work translates very well and it travels very well, but within a specific U.S. context, it is more an immediate knowledge.



Maryam Jafri, *Independence Day 1934–1975* (2009–ongoing). 60+ black and white photos, each photo approximately about A5 size (14.8 x 21 cm), archival inkjet prints, 1/5 + 2AP. Exhibition view: *The Day After*, Bétonsalon, Paris (18 March–11 July 2015). Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea.

A lot of your works deal with archives and contested history. Your photo installation *Independence Day 1934–1975* (2009–ongoing) brings together Independence Day photographs of former European colonies, while the film *Staged Archive* (2008) integrates national archives into a fictional narrative. Both of these works use archives to generate new associations with authenticated records or histories. In doing so, one could say that you are creating an alternative archive. Could you discuss the role of archives in your practice?

That's a really good question because when people think about archives, they often think of black and white photos in some dusty library. 'Product Recall' focuses on the archive, but it's got this pop element to it. It is an archive of what I would call 'failed pop'. With known brands such as Coca-Cola or McDonald's, recognition is immediate. With 'Product Recall', you recognise the general commercial language in which these consumer items are couched, but you don't recognise the specifics of certain products because they have been relegated to the dustbin of history. The products are both familiar and mysterious.

In the business press there is a stream of literature on why things fail. I read up on some of that literature before making this work. That led me to think about what failures and fissures can tell us about the contemporary consumer landscape or contemporary American capitalism, and in this case, food or everyday consumer products. This work came shortly after *Independence Day 1934–1975* (2009–ongoing), an archival research project that deals with photographs of independence day ceremonies in various Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries. Often people don't see the connection, but 'Product Recall' is an archive in a completely different way—an archive of products that have been relegated to the dustbin of history, but that reveal something about the cultural moment of their time.

In terms of research methodology, I'm not super systematic. A lot of my research involved reading business literature of certain products and talking to people who work in branding or in the food industry, and trying to access certain images or notes that they had during their time. It took a lot of work to contact people, but it was worth it. Someone would mention some product, and then I would start looking for it either in a flea market or eBay, and then that would lead me to other products.



Maryam Jafri, *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation. Pepsi Baby* (2014–2015). Framed texts, photographs, objects. Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea.

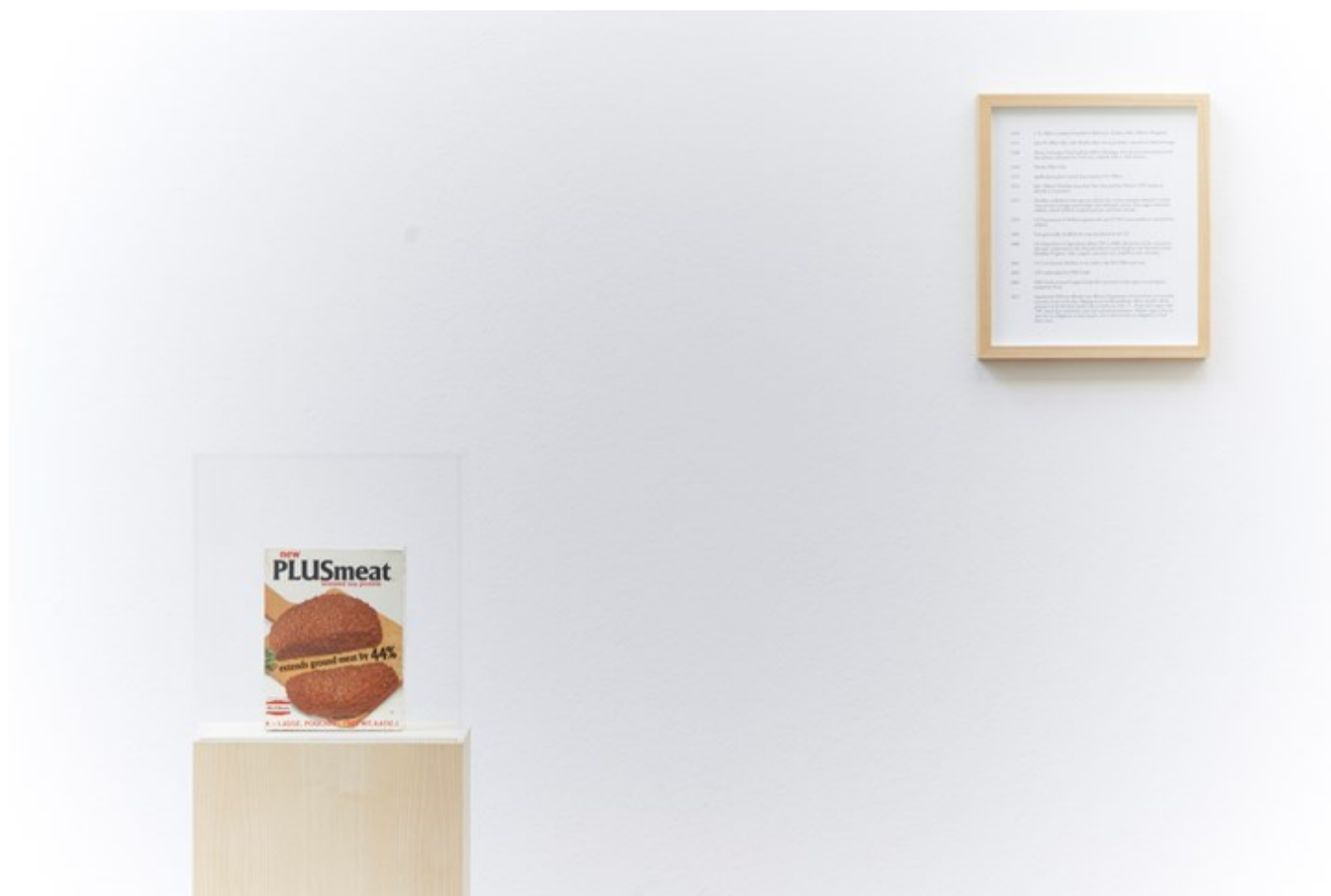
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**Was it easy talking to people involved in the products from the period you are researching in 'Product Recall'?**

No, it was not. Otherwise, the project would have been much bigger, but at a certain point, quantity will only get you so far. Adding more volume of information isn't necessarily better. I think the project involves 13 pieces or products right now and that is enough. When you're doing this kind of work and you're relying on the goodwill of others, there's always the need to negotiate access.

My interest is not so much in bringing hidden truths to light, but rather, reframing and recontextualising what people think they already know. That is the question for anyone working with these kinds of research-based methodologies in the 21st century, where the volume of information is increasing at exponential rates. Information is out there if you want it. It's much more a question of what you as an artist do with it, how you show it, and what conversations it generates rather than this kind of WikiLeaks *exposé*, not that it isn't important.

My aim is not to uncover hidden knowledge. It's there, but the question becomes how to make it relevant—that's my role as an artist. Through framing or juxtaposition, something you might never have heard of might become relevant or tell you something you overlooked. That's very valuable, I find.



Maryam Jafri, *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation. Plus Meat* (2014–2015). Framed texts, photographs, objects. Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea.

**There is a levelling of language with the visual in your work, with text given equal importance. Could you talk about the role of text in your work?**

Text is quite prevalent in a lot of my work. For me, it's a personal affinity, as I studied literature. It's not some law that applies to all artists at all, but for me, when I see a photograph, I always need mediating information, such as a caption—especially these days when we are inundated with images. That's where I see my intervention as an artist. One thing to keep in mind about 'Product Recall' is that the text uses different voices and strategies. For example, some of it is a timeline of the product—the developmental stages of the product and what that reveals, when it was launched, why it was launched, who did it, and so on. Text plays different roles within this work depending on each piece. In one case, there is a small piece of text that is the jingle from the product's ad.

There's one product called Ayds, which was a diet candy. It had amphetamines in it, and it was very popular in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. In the eighties, their market dried up overnight with the advent of the AIDS crisis—despite the fact that it was spelled differently and it existed prior to the AIDS crisis—because they had taglines like 'Ayds keeps me slim', and 'Lose weight with the aid of Ayds'. There were other reasons as well. People became more health conscious and questioned what was in the candy, but I think it was mostly the unfortunate naming of the product.

To generate the accompanying text panel for this product, I cut and pasted online conversations on blogs and websites like 'My Favourite Products from the 70s' or 'I Remember the 80s', in which people reminisce about Ayds and talk about either how much they miss it or how it ruined their lives—although most people really miss it because they were overweight and claim it worked really well. I wanted the text to reflect some of that online culture and how people reminisce or exchange information online. The text panel for Ayds is a collage of these online voices. There's no 'analysis', but rather an almost found text. So, even within 'Product Recall', there are shifts. I always mix or shift voices so that some are personal, some informative, and some fictional, while others are more dry and factual, or forensic.



Maryam Jafri, 'Generic Corner' (2015) (detail). Installation. Dimensions variable. Exhibition view: Maryam Jafri, *Generic Corner*, Kunsthalle Basel (28 August–1 November 2015). Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea. Photo: Phillip Hänger.

I couldn't help but compare 'Product Recall' with 'Generic Corner', which you made for a 2015 solo show at Kunsthalle Basel, where we see an archive of products with white packaging and black text that are, essentially, unbranded. A lot of your work deals with consumer culture, including its psychological repercussions and motives and especially within this context of a global capitalist society. Could you talk more about this work in relation to what you will be showing at the ICA?

I'm happy you brought that up because one work often leads to another, and 'Generic Corner' was an example of where it developed very nicely. I was researching a lot of different products for 'Product Recall'. Somebody on a blog called 'I love the 70s' wrote, 'Hey, anyone remember those generic products from the 70s?', and then he had a picture of this black and white beer can. I started researching these products because I vaguely remembered them from the late seventies and early eighties, but not really. I was too young.

Generic products speak to a strange radical moment in the seventies, when there was this concept of an unbranded product, be it beer or peanut butter or cigarettes. There were factories and distributors, but no companies or logo or brand behind them. When I saw those products I immediately knew it was going to be another work—an archive just like 'Product Recall'. There is a nice visual contrast and continuity

between 'Product Recall' and *Generic Corner*. The former is failed pop: it's colourful and bright. In *Generic Corner*, you have analogous products, but they're unbranded and the packaging is solely black and white.

It's interesting because we are in a time when everything is branded or monetised, including the self. I did this work in 2015, but a lot of the places where these generic products were manufactured were manufacturing centres in the U.S., and a lot of the workers working on them were unionised back then. It was a very strange and interesting moment. The idea was that because you're not paying for marketing or branding, the savings were passed directly onto the consumer. It's antithetical to where we are now, where it's not the product, but the branding that is really the most important thing. Generic products were once stigmatised—if you shopped in the generic aisle, it was a sign of poverty or frugality, but not necessarily in a good way. Now, those products look hip. Text in packaging is so big now. It has come back as a kind of high-end niche marketing for wellness products and organic food.



Maryam Jafri, 'Generic Corner' (2015) (detail). Installation. Dimensions variable. Exhibition view: Maryam Jafri, *Generic Corner*, Kunsthalle Basel (28 August–1 November 2015). Courtesy the artist and Laveronica arte contemporanea. Photo: Phillip Hänger.

### Would you classify yourself as a historian?

No, because I don't think I'm systematic enough—it's a much more ad-hoc approach with a certain flexibility for what might be considered good or bad. Actual historians have a very defined method. In this age of fake news, it's important that you have people who are dedicated to empirically-verified or validated

results achieved through different tests and research using a number of sources. That work is important and I have a lot of respect for those that do it. But, the nexus between history and fiction is interesting. One now has to be careful with all these discussions around fake news. If I were to work on this border between history and fiction now, I would keep in mind the current context. If you are thinking historically, you're also thinking contextually. That's important.—[O]

# The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

## What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By ROBERTA SMITH, MARTHA SCHWENDENER, JASON FARAGO and WILL HEINRICH FEB. 7, 2018

Maryam Jafri

Through March 11. Kai Matsumiya, 153 Stanton Street, Manhattan;  
646-838-9595, kaimatsumiya.com.



"Where We're At," 2017, a Maryam Jafri work made in collaboration with Ben Tausig. Kai Matsumiya

You might think that the wellness movement was invented and is being propagated solely to promote peace and security in a conflict-riddled world. Maryam Jafri shows otherwise in her smart, unsettling exhibition "[War on Wellness](#)," at Kai Matsumiya.

The most prominent work here is a three-dimensional wall-size crossword puzzle developed collaboratively with Ben Tausig, who contributes crosswords to The New York Times. Clues relate to current and historical events: "material used in fracking" and "Dick Cheney went to jail for one" are examples. Sixteen books sit on little horizontal wooden supports in the dead spaces of the puzzle. They include titles that were popular after the 2016 presidential election: works by the economist Friedrich von Hayek, the authors Margaret Atwood and Ayn Rand, the mindfulness guru Jon Kabat-Zinn, Newt Gingrich and the 14th-century historian Ibn Khaldun, whose "Muqaddimah" is often cited as the first text about supply-side economics.

The leisurely crossword, hijacked here for more political, didactic purposes, is complemented by a series of sculptures focusing on the cult of wellness that has been booming in recent years, even in institutions like the American military. A found-footage video features the United States Army's first Buddhist chaplain, Thomas Dyer, leading soldiers in Iraq through a seated meditation and discussing how to find inner peace. The paradox of seeking inner peace within an atmosphere of armed conflict is left to the viewer to ponder. Sculptures made with silicone body parts purchased in fetish stores and pierced with acupuncture needles further suggest the insanity of trying to solve the mind-body problem and achieve personal and global wellness in cultures practicing principles that distinctly oppose it.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER



# ARTNEWS

## Meditating Soldiers, a Giant Crossword Puzzle, and Yoga Mat Toilet Paper: Maryam Jafri on Her Exhibition 'War on Wellness'

BY *John Chiaverina* POSTED 01/19/18 9:15 AM



Maryam Jafri *American Buddhist*, 2016.  
COURTESY MATSUMIYA



*Where We're At* looks a bit like a shelving unit and doubles as one, too—the puzzle's black spaces are filled by books selected by the artist. Jafri came to Tausig with a fleshed-out concept. "I told him: crossword puzzle, books for the black squares," Jafri said. "I had certain things I wanted in there that are important to understand the current political moment—where we're at." Newt Gingrich's book *Treason* sits on a shelf alongside Milton Friedman's *Why Government Is The Problem*, while P.T. Barnum's *The Art of Money Getting* shares space with Ayn Rand's *Anthem*. Other titles include Nancy Isenberg's *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* and Stephen Mihm's *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*.

Taken together, the books suggest a meta-narrative about America's sustained rightward path. Given the era, however, there is one glaring omission. "As you can see, there's no mention of Trump—not in the press release, not here," Jafri said of her surroundings. Matsumiya, her gallerist, added, "We both agreed that privileging personality over the real issues is in fact very destructive."

The clues for the crossword puzzle come across in sometimes peculiar language. Take, for example, #14 across: "Dick Cheney went to jail for one." The answer? "DUI" The distinctive wording fits into the artist's larger practice, which includes a continued interest in text. Jafri's 2016 solo show at P! in New York focused on the design of generic-looking consumer packaging from the 1970s and '80s, with one standout being a photograph of a brand-free tin that simply read "CORNERED BEEF" in a dated typeface.

The back room of "War on Wellness" plays home to pieces from the artist's larger series "Wellness-Postindustrial Complex." In broad strokes, the works engage the booming wellness industry, an increasingly wide realm that includes everything from Eastern healing strategies to new age self-optimization tactics. "For me, beyond the simple critique of this kind of hyper-commercialization and hyper-individualization of Eastern techniques, what's really important is discussing why people are so desperate for these solutions," Jafri said. "I can only see this in the context of things like the war on health, people's access to health, economic disposition, and social fragmentation, in this case of the precariat and the creative class," she continued.

A sculpture titled *Self-care* (2017) that affixes a modified yoga mat to a toilet-paper roll hangs on a wall near a silicone foot, acquired from a Chinese fetish retailer and poked with acupuncture needles. Another piece, *Depression* (2017), includes equipment used for the practice of cupping—a traditional form of Chinese medicine wherein a vacuum is created on the patient's skin via a glass cup—and an image of a famous celebrity cupping practitioner: Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps.

"It's really important to see the exhibition as a whole," Jafri said. "It's not just looking at symptoms—like, 'oh it's hipster decadence.' That's not interesting. I'm trying to go deeper and understand why this appeals now."

The issues are complex and not easily summarized. Perhaps it's best to look back to the crossword puzzle. "Here we have #12 across—'American reality most easily grasped in fiction,'" the artist pointed out. The answer: "dystopia." That, she said, "is where we're at."

# MARYAM JAFRI *Economy Corner*

April 6th, 2016

P! | FEBRUARY 25 – APRIL 3, 2016

In the mid 1970s consumer culture in the U.S. took a rare pause in its relentless appetite for brand name products. High inflation, the winding down of the Vietnam War, and the onset of OPEC and gasoline shortages all put pressure on marketing mavens to come up with a strategy that would address the budget-conscious consumer. By 1979, at least one third of all supermarkets in the country were offering generic brand grocery products. The average price of generic brands was 30 to 40 percent lower than the name brand products that they conditionally displaced. The marketing tactic of marginal differentiation, or fielding an ever-increasing proliferation of custom products of the exact same weight and content (i.e. regular Brillo and lemon Brillo) was partially arrested by generic and no-frills marketing. A rare self-correction—an uncanny kind of marketing humility—seemed to be taking place in certain aisles of American supermarkets.



Installation view: Maryam Jafri, *Economy Corner* at P!, February 25 – April 3, 2016.  
Photo: Sebastian Bach.

In *Economy Corner* the Pakistani-born American artist Maryam Jafri presented a fairly straightforward display of cultural artifacts from a historic “generic turn” in consumer marketing. As someone too young to have experienced first-hand the phenomenon of no-frills products, Jafri has a somewhat distanced take on the immediate effects of the era in which the plainly marked cans, packages, and bottles took on a temporary significance of a kind of hair shirt consumable. She has said, “To consumers then, the lack of design was a stigma, a sign of poverty, and these items were gradually phased out . . . But now the minimal design looks cool, almost chic, a monochrome Pop.”<sup>1</sup>

While it may be partly the case that to trade in these generics meant a virtual downgrading of one’s consumer credit rating, it is perhaps not the most significant outcome of this anomalous phase of brand disappearance. Yet to the artist’s credit she leaves the more complex questions arising from her minimal re-presentation of generic products fairly open to interpretation. There are many other implications to consider including the efficacy of such brand-less marketing on the bottom line of the corporations concerned and the subtle social portrait of a nation that might be teased from such impoverished design. Considering the “too much information” buzz kill of much research-based art of late, a light hand in conceptual research presentation is a welcome surprise.



Installation view: Maryam Jafri, *Economy Corner* at P!, February 25 – April 3, 2016.  
Photo: Sebastian Bach.

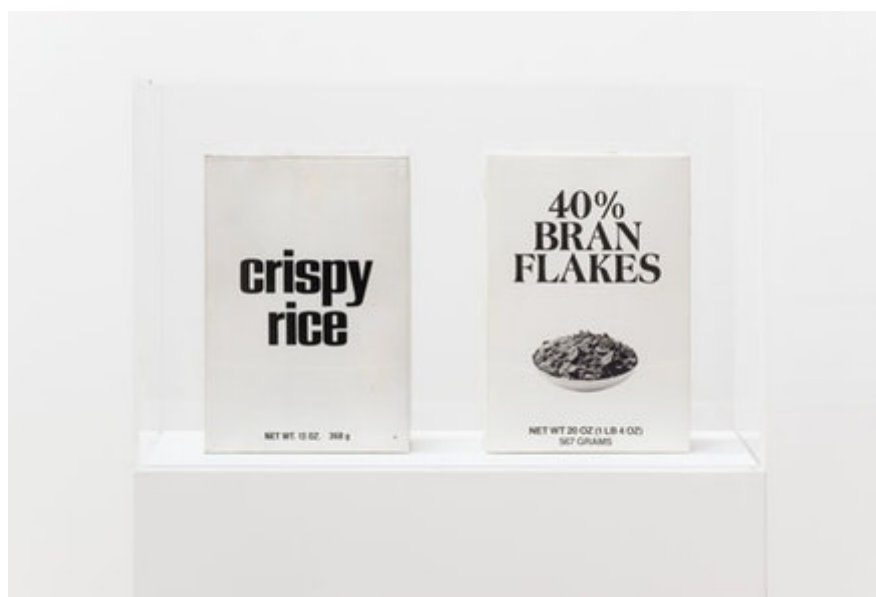
The show is appropriately stark in its design. Straightforwardly-framed and modestly-sized prints and off-the-shelf artifacts of such generic classics as *Generic Corner (Corned Beef)* (2015) and *Generic Baking Soda* (2015) recall the deadpan irony of Ed Ruscha’s imagery of appropriated American icons such as *Annie* and *Spam*. Like Ruscha, Jafri’s minimal formal intervention on a historically fixed, yet everyday, image in consumer consciousness uses the brand association as a force multiplier of cultural significance. Yet Jafri’s borrowings offer a much less obvious irony for the deeper, perhaps more

profound, paradox of social histories displaced and rearranged in a post-historical and materially underwhelming frame of reference. The assembled products read like instant ready-mades, yet they are also suffused by a nostalgic patina that relativizes their newness as contemporary art. Are these objects museum artifacts or has the culture that produced them (and the social ideologies contained and expressed within and without) become a museum piece itself? Or perhaps Jafri is pointing out that compulsive newness has an accelerated shelf-life.

The bold, black and white lettering and black bands that characteristically mark these generics can, as Jafri has said, be read as a new kind of Pop chic, but they seem more to represent a lost culture of brand loyalty, despite their non-descript labelling. It is as if the manufacturing of consumer desire is boiled down to its bare essence in these basic forms. The masks of all those other brands are torn off to expose identical staples, lacking in both histories and ideologies of consumer desire. What could be more radical and upsetting to the capitalist model of social abstraction than the pulling back of the ostensibly absolute curtain of commodity fetish?

In choosing to reach back in late 20th century history to cherry-pick this wildly unique experiment in under-marketing, Jafri seems to be pointing out the possibility of real political change via transparent aesthetic intervention. The generic as an aesthetic and political stance has lately been promulgated by such contemporary thinkers as François Laruelle and Alain Badiou. To some extent, the history of pragmatic philosophy from William James to Richard Rorty also privileges the generic as an underdetermined way for open inquiry and dialogue free from a priori philosophical “branding.”

Jafri’s spare installation deftly addresses these contemporary concerns. She isolates a historical event and turns its products back into discrete abstractions, yet with a curatorial clarity that also retains the bare physicality of the products’ original embeddedness in a specific phase of American culture. Within our present context of the perpetual advent of viral marketing to which consumers are subject (and often active perpetrators of) Jafri’s installation skirts a nostalgia for a more direct relationship between production and consumption, which helpfully broadens the discussion beyond stereotypical critiques picturing one’s subjectivity as all lost in the supermarket.



herself by confounding the role of the creative artist with that of the creative historian, which suspends the categorical imperatives and expectations of the viewer—somewhat like the projection of consumer desire caught up short by the blank presentation of generic marketing. If capitalism cannot be critiqued or refuted by traditionally discursive means, perhaps a focus on a temporary lapse in capitalist theology, as in no-frills marketing, can at least offer an introduction to the discussion of a generic commonality that undergirds a free market of ideas.

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1. "The Politics of Art: A conversation between Jens Hoffmann, Eric Baudelaire, Nina Beier, Maryam Jafri, Naheem Mohaiemen, and Pratchaya Phinthong." *Mousse Magazine* #50 (October/November 2015).
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## CONTRIBUTOR

**Tom McGlynn**

## Maryam Jafri

P!

Precious few artists, even in the wake of modernism's varying efforts to demystify and deconstruct originality, would wish to see their work labeled "generic." Maryam Jafri is a notable exception. Of course, it is not Jafri's project itself that bears this dour tag, but rather the curious subgenre of consumer good that she depicts and reproduces. In a flawlessly realized installation of small photographs and objects (most purchased, some reconstructed using photographs adhered to boxes), Jafri explored the phenomenon of the unbranded product, prompting a rereading of these minimally packaged items in the context of the history of art and graphic design.

As Prem Krishnamurthy clarifies in his accompanying essay, Jafri's focus is on the kinds of cut-price staples on offer in the 1970s through the early '80s, initially on dedicated aisles of supermarkets, the basic status of which was signaled by a pared-down livery of simple black lettering on a plain white ground. These humble packages rarely identified their manufacturers, and offered only the most straightforward description of their contents (a tin marked CORNED BEEF, for example, hints that there's nothing more you need to know about this stuff, so don't ask). This sacrifice of the decorative elaboration typically lavished on "name-brand" products lends their generic cousins a bare-bones vibe that hints at wartime austerity or the homogenizing influence of a totalitarian regime. They are recognizably vintage, but there's a futuristic edge to them, too. A tub of Soylent Green wouldn't look amiss. So what exactly remains when the window dressing and self-promotion

of consumer packaging are swept away? A surprising amount. Looked at today, these designs seem oddly self-aware, even stylish. Their simplicity, once a signifier of economy and functionalism, now seems to play on the use of text in Conceptual and post-Conceptual art. The typography is remarkably varied; far from relying on wall-to-wall Helvetica, the designers seem to have tried something new at almost every turn, with results that make for an entertaining associative puzzle.

Endearing too is the products' steadfast refusal of luxury. After all, who needs Chanel Gel Pureté when you've got a bar of SOAP at hand? Or a barrel-aged IPA when you've got a can of BEER on ice? In an era when a bar of wholesomely artisanal chocolate is irrecoverably bound to a fastidiously constructed brand, it's refreshing to see the trappings of "image" stripped off. In generic products, aesthetic considerations do of course remain, but they finally come down to nothing more than the play of one font against another. When generics were replaced by in-store brands (a small but important distinction) in the late '80s, designers' focus shifted from eschewal to imitation, and this essential purity was lost. Jafri's project presents a piquant capsule history of the way in which developments in graphic design and production are immediately absorbed into the economics of packaging, and thus intertwined with the onward march of capitalism.

—Michael Wilson



Maryam Jafri,  
*Generic Corner*  
(*Canned Beans*),  
2015, inkjet print,  
16 1/2 x 20 1/2". From  
the series "Generic  
Corner," 2015.



# Frieze

Features /

## In Focus: Maryam Jafri

21 OCT 2015

Same same but different



*Getty vs. Ghana (detail)*, 2012,  
eight photographs and four framed  
texts, dimensions variable. All  
images courtesy the artist

Whether displaying archival photographs to bring out their hidden significance, juxtaposing them with denunciatory texts or using sitcom-style dialogues to highlight the subtexts of video footage, Maryam Jafri upends the conventions of the documentary image. In so doing, she turns it into a springboard for her own meticulously researched politico-economic critique. As the writer Patricia Reed once observed, the Pakistani-born American artist works through, around and against documentary photography and film.

Take Jafri's photographic series 'Independence Day 1934–1975' (2009–ongoing), shown at Bétonsalon in Paris earlier this year. Here, Jafri grouped found images depicting the run up to independence of former colonies across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. She arranged the images according to the type of event, whether parades, celebrations or addresses to the nation. Although the protagonists differ, the photos in each category are remarkably similar. We see how African and Asian leaders adopted their departing colonizers' rituals and gestures, suggesting how quickly these fledgling nations assimilated European models. These similarities, however, can also be interpreted as a form of mimicry – an act that, as Homi K. Bhabha has pointed out, is close to mockery and has the potential to undermine power.



*Canned Beans*, 2015, photograph, 40 × 50 cm. Courtesy the artist

Likewise exposing the turmoil and uncertainty hidden in seemingly celebratory historical documents, *Getty vs. Ghana* (2012) – a photo/text work on display at Jafri's recent solo exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel – features two nearly identical photographs of a Ghanaian independence ceremony in 1957. Jafri's terse accompanying caption points out that the left-hand photo belongs to the Ghana Ministry of Information, while the right-hand one has been copyrighted by Getty Images and bears a caption that highlights the presence of the Duchess of Kent. The juxtaposition suggests how the types of access to an image can affect its meaning, while highlighting the risks of allowing private interests to wield control over a nation's photographic heritage. As in the series 'Independence Day', the documentary image becomes a battleground for conflicting interests.



'Product Recall: An Index of Innovation', 2014, installation view at Gasworks, London. Courtesy the artist

Also on view at Kunsthalle Basel, 'Product Recall: An Index of Innovation' (2014–15) tackles issues of manipulation and abuse of power, this time in relation to recalled or unsuccessful consumer products. The series features actual samples of a range of failed items, with accompanying texts and still-life images Jafri sourced from the archives of people in the food industry and branding consultants. One such product – a baby bottle bearing a Diet Pepsi logo – attempted to sensitize newborns to Pepsi (while encouraging their mothers to give them a completely inappropriate beverage). Jafri's accompanying caption reveals the name of a significant minority stakeholder in the venture – the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan – suggesting that, whether or not the teachers

knew how their pension funds were invested, they were in some sense complicit in the product's development, albeit to a lesser degree than the manufacturers.

In stark contrast to the colourful, branded items of 'Product Recall', Jafri's most recent work, 'Generic Corner' (2015–ongoing), comprises stark, minimal images and examples of the generic household and food products that appeared in us supermarkets in the late 1970s. These white packages, whose contents were identified in plain black type, eschewed design and marketing and were, consequently, significantly cheaper than those of competitor brands. Yet, consumers associated them with low-income budgets or suspected them of being of dubious quality, testifying to the importance of marketing in stoking consumer desire. Whereas pop art explored the coloured, branded imagery of the Campbell's Soup can, the ominously anonymous white items in 'Generic Corner' constitute what Jafri calls 'monochrome pop'.



*Mouthfeel*, 2014, video still.

Courtesy the artist

Pop is just one of the references in Jafri's work. Her practice also recalls conceptual combinations of images and text – from Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) to Hans Haacke's *Manet-projekt '74* (1974) and Taryn Simon's images of 'Contraband' (2010). As for Jafri's videos, they sit within a rather different lineage that includes Rainer Werner Fassbinder-style melodrama, Henrik Ibsen's realistic dramas and even us tv sitcoms, while pursuing similar themes as her photographic works. The subject of food production is central to Jafri's video *Mouthfeel* (2014), a melodrama set in the near future. The piece features a fictitious couple, who work for the same multinational food

company, arguing in the back of a luxury car over the potential health risks of their new product. The wife, a food technologist (played by Jafri), symbolizes an emerging multi-ethnic professional class, who adhere to the capitalist system and are as entangled in it as their white counterparts. The artist interrupts the drama with found TV advertisements that show how a regional West African company and a large multinational corporation use the same marketing techniques.

Jafri explores other forms of production and consumption in her video *Avalon* (2011), which contains footage of a facility somewhere in Asia that manufactures fetish wear. The images are interspersed with staged scenes based on interviews with end-users, one of whom, in a surprising twist, sees himself not as a passive consumer but as a sexual activist. Here, as in many of her works, Jafri shows how the documentary image can be a space for the expression of liberatory aspirations and desires as much as it can confine them.

*Maryam Jafri is an artist based in New York, USA. Her solo exhibition 'Generic Corner' is on view at Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland, until 1 November. Her work is also included in the Belgian pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, Italy, and the Gothenburg Biennial, Sweden, until 22 November.*

First published in Issue 175  
Nov - Dec 2015

## Hi Maryam (2021)

8:23 minutes, color + sound, portrait format



An artist is about to open an exhibition. Some people send her greetings wishing her well. Hi Maryam exemplifies the trend of pointcasting or one-to-one marketing—the delivery of a unique product or service to a single individual. According to one marketing consultant, the rise of the passion economy “is powered by new digital platforms that enable people to earn a livelihood in a way that highlights their individuality.” Unlike broadcasting or narrowcasting (Netflix and other streaming services), the passion economy favors pointcasting.

<https://vimeo.com/508376536>

password: helloThere

*note: this video is in vertical (portrait) format so please make big screen if u want to see complete frame*

## Home Office ft. Angola, Iraq, Vietnam, Vicodin (2021)



*Home Office* consists of a computer workstation playing Jafri’s video *Angola, Iraq, Vietnam, Vicodin*. The video investigates consumer culture through a transnational lens, witnessing how it both shapes and is shaped by local conditions and local desires. The computer is flanked by pharmaceutically-branded office supplies featuring logos of bestselling medications used to treat “diseases of affluence” such as diabetes, depression, heart disease, dementia etc.—conditions that are now epidemic worldwide. Unlike infectious diseases that affect the global poor, diseases of affluence are associated with increased wealth in a society.

iMac, computer table, office chair, pharmaceutically-branded office supplies, 14 min looped video + sound

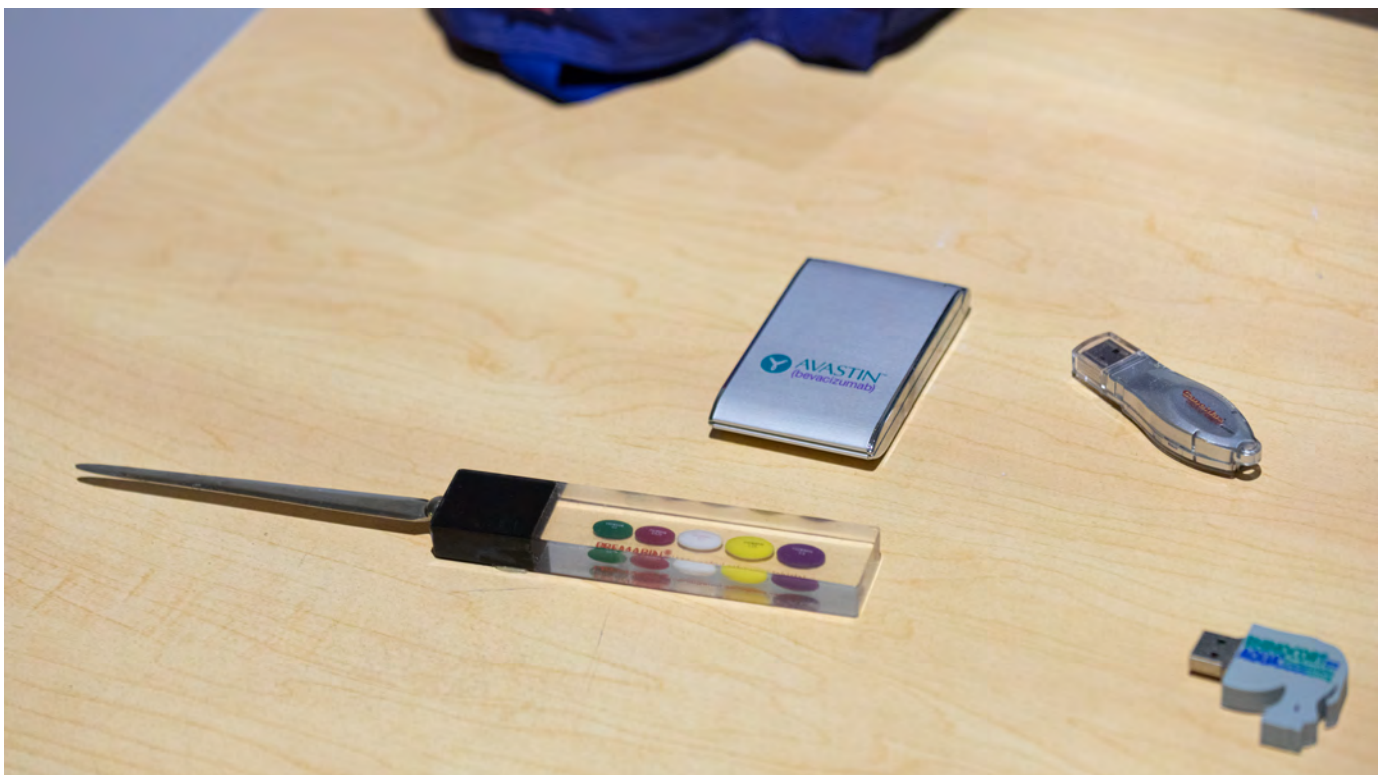
Video link (full length, preview quality, 14 minutes):

<https://vimeo.com/509730136>

password: vietnam



Lipitor® Mug (to lower cholesterol, #1 bestselling medication in the US), Lexapro® pen holder (antidepressant), AdderallXR® pens (for ADHD), Tamiflu® pens (anti-flu medication, stockpiled by the US government under orders from US President George Bush in 2005, major stockholder Donald Rumsfeld, former US Secretary of Defense), Ambien® tape dispenser and stapler (sleep aid), Geodon® paperclip holder (for bipolar disorder and schizophrenia), Aricept® notepad (for Alzheimer's), SancturaXR® mouse pad (for overactive bladder), PaxilCR® mouse (antidepressant)



Avastin® calculator (cancers, various), Premarin® letter opener (estrogen hormone therapy, post-menopause), Rhinocort® USB stick (allergy relief), Cancidas® USB stick, (anti-fungal medication)



## Email Chain in my Brain, Public Domain is my Name (2021)



Shortly after an exhibition opening, an irate member of the public contacts the art space alleging unauthorized use of his image by the artist. A condensed version of the email chain generated is presented on a series of (mostly) hanging metal plates. *Email Chain in my Brain, Public Domain is my Name* crystallizes my interest in the fault lines between art, law and ethics. Artists have long navigated the legal and ethical dilemmas posed by using other people's images—whether *by* others or *of* others. The internet has only intensified the situation, making it easier for artists to download material from online and rework it into their own creative expressions but it has also made it easier for people to track, trace and come after artists for allegedly misusing their images. Artists continue to be at the forefront of discussing the ethics of representation directly or indirectly in their work and the internet has given it a new twist, turning questions of representation into questions of control over one's own data.

4 metal plates (32.5 x 32.5 cm each), UV-print on aluminum, metal rod, c-hooks

**(Dis)appearance Online (2021)**



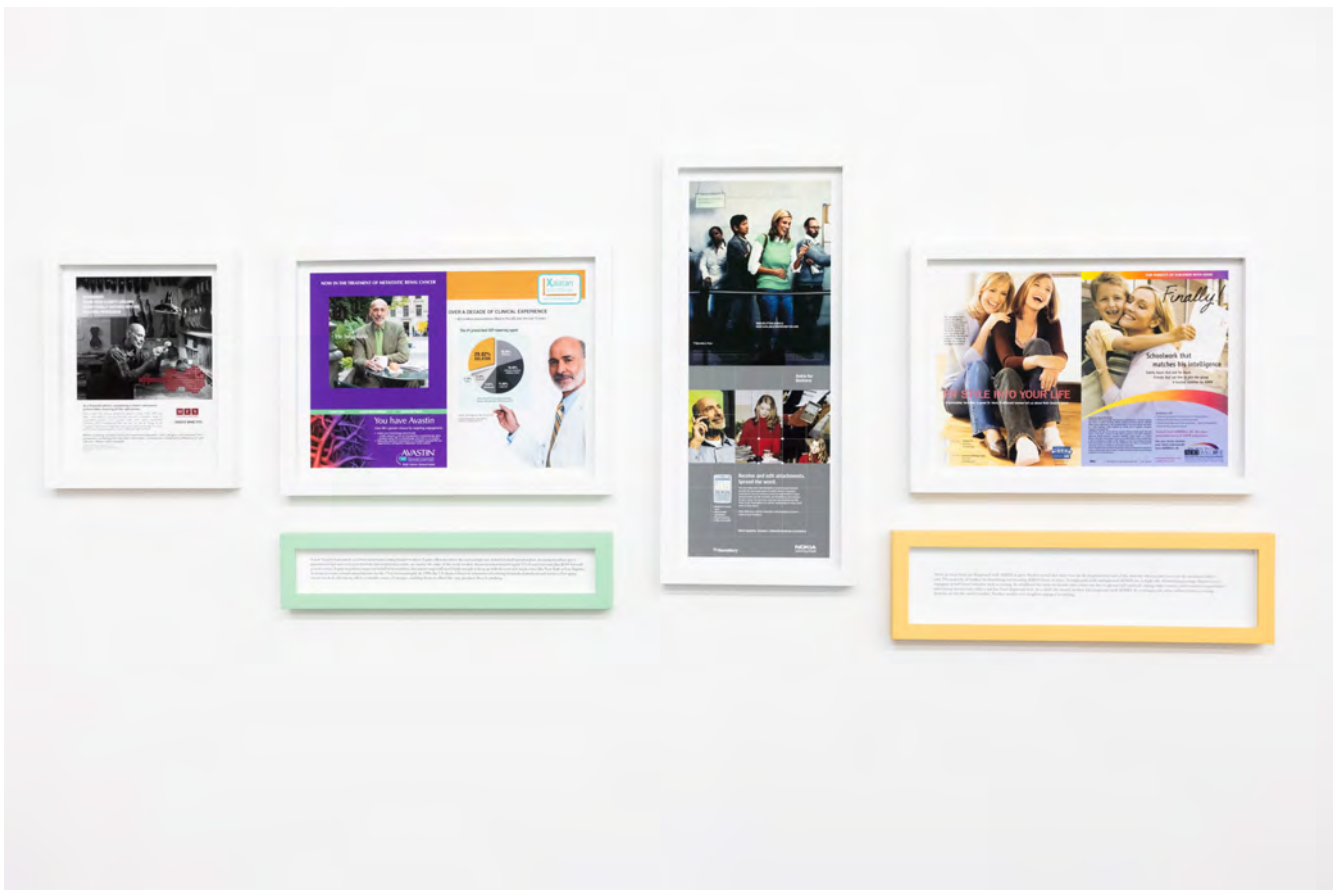
The internet functions as a vast and ever expanding archive of images, if it isn't online, it may as well not exist. But large amounts of information, including visual information, is also continuously expunged from the net. What happens to those exiled images? *(Dis)appearance Online* traces the status of key historical images from national archives in Iraq, Syria and Jordan and their appearance, disappearance and non-appearance online, in both public and commercial image banks. The work stands as an accompaniment and a post-script to my 2012 work, *Getty vs. Ghana*.

5 photographs + 3 framed texts  
Dimensions: apxm 2m/6.5 ft

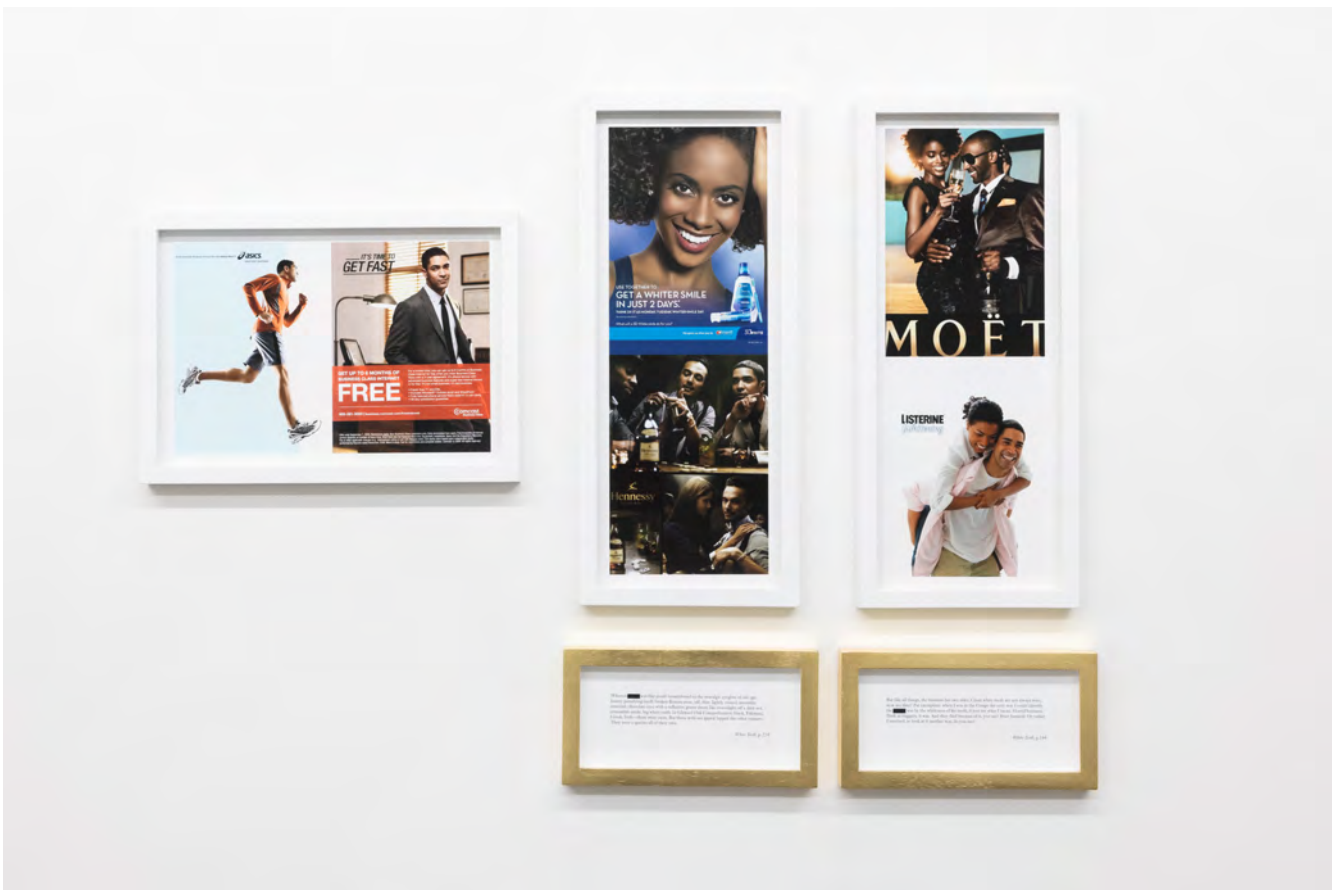
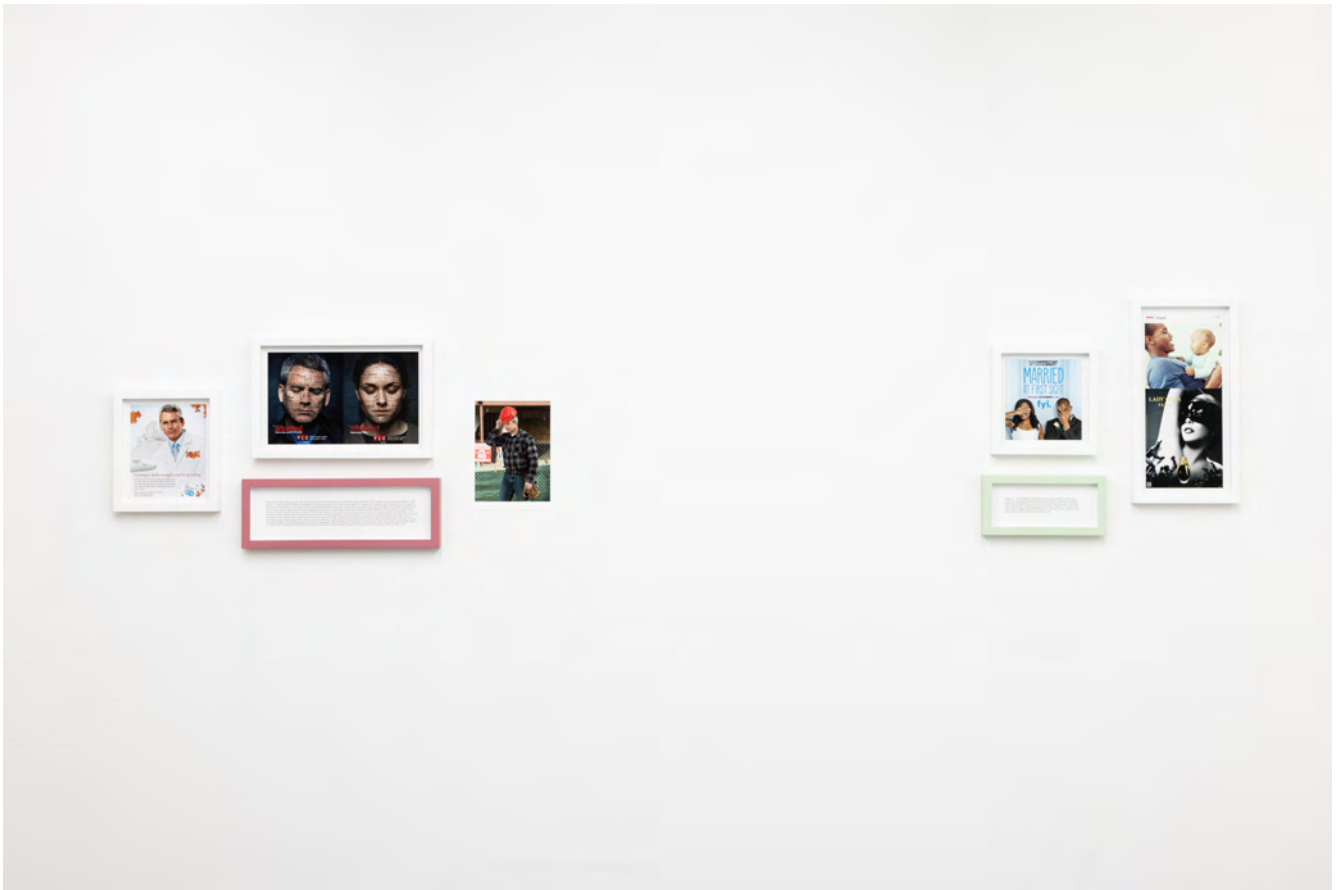
## **The Everyday Model (2021)**

The Everyday Model is a photo/text work centering on the phenomenon of “ordinary- looking” people who model for everyday consumer items. Arranged in clusters of framed images and texts, each cluster brings together different ads featuring the same model, often for competing or complementary products. By tracking the same individual across different ad campaigns, the disparate images compile a surreal visual archive of the self– one overlaid with corporate logos and advertising text. In their anticipation of emerging forms of subjectivity, one that is no longer solely performative but also branded, these images both point back to the era of mass media and forward to the rise of social media. Now everyone is an entrepreneur of their self, everyone has something to confess and someone to target, at least potentially. The images also reveal the flip side of the trend of carefully curated images on social media–if real people want to look like ads, ads now want to look like real people. Framed text panels, written by the artist, shed light on the specific product or target group in question, or the artist’s own relationship to the product, underlining how many of the ads feature confessional taglines. If confession first arose in a religious context, and later emerged as a psychoanalytic tool, now confession is a branding tool increasingly deployed online and off.

16 framed images, 2 unframed images, 9 framed text panels



*The Everyday Model (2021), Installation views & details, The Blaffer Museum Houston, 11.2021*



*The Everyday Model (2021), Installation views & details, The Blaffer Museum Houston, 11.2021*

Special Advertising Section

"My daughter and I share everything—including our search for the perfect pair of jeans. While my daughter wears her low-rise jeans with everything, my favorite pair has a looser fit, perfect for a casual weekend at home."

## FIT STYLE INTO YOUR LIFE

Comfortable. Versatile. A great fit. Here, 5 different women tell us about their favorite jeans.

**MY JEAN: Eased Fit**  
mid-rise  
straight leg

**MY JEAN: Juniors Vintage Jean**  
low-rise  
slimming fit

Jeans that fit.  
Beautifully.

FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH ADHD

# Finally!

## Schoolwork that matches his intelligence

Family hours that last for hours  
Friends that ask him to join the group  
A trusted solution for ADHD

**Important Safety Information**

ADDERALL XR was generally well tolerated in clinical studies. The most common side effects in studies involving children included decreased appetite, difficulty falling asleep, stomachache, and emotional lability. The most common side effects in a study involving adults included dry mouth, loss of appetite, insomnia, headache, and weight loss.

ADDERALL XR may not be right for everyone. Patients should speak with their doctor if they have a history of high blood pressure or any heart conditions, glaucoma, thyroid problems, emotional instability, mental illness, or a known allergy to this type of medication. If you are currently taking or have recently taken a type of antidepressant called a MAO inhibitor or have a pre-existing structural heart abnormality, you should not take ADDERALL XR. There is a potential for worsening of nicotine or verbal tics and Tourette's syndrome.

Abuse of amphetamines may lead to dependence. Misuse of amphetamines may lead to serious cardiovascular adverse events. A patient should report any new psychological symptoms to his or her physician.

**ADDERALL XR\***

- Has been evaluated for safety in over 20 clinical studies
- Shares a 65-year history of clinical research
- Works fast for the start of the school day—with or without food
- Offers all-day symptom control

**Doctors trust ADDERALL XR, the most-prescribed brand of ADHD medication.**

**Ask your doctor whether your child could benefit from ADDERALL XR.**

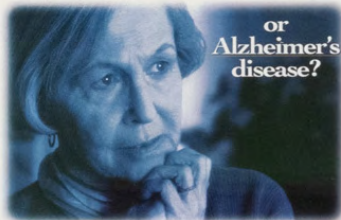
[www.adderallxr.com](http://www.adderallxr.com)  
1-800-705-1513

ONE DOSE DAILY  
**ADDERALL XR** <sup>®</sup> <sub>®</sub>  
1 mg, 3 mg, 6 mg, 9 mg, 12 mg, 18 mg, 24 mg, 30 mg, 36 mg, 48 mg  
Generic Name: lisdexamfetamine D,RS, trans-enantiomer mixture  
Amphetamine, Amphetamine Mixture, Amphetamine Sulfate

In the above collage, the same model serves as the mother in both ads (even wearing the same type of sweater) but in fact all three of the models unwittingly play supporting roles in a family drama starring ADHD. The left side features an ad for finding correct-fitting jeans for girls, the right an ad for improving academic performance in ADHD-afflicted boys. ADHD is often overdiagnosed in boys but underdiagnosed in girls. One sign of ADHD in girls is the prevalence of an eating disorder. The male-to-female ratio of ADHD in adults is more even, due to greater self-referrals among women—often older women only recognize their ADHD after a son has been diagnosed first.



Is it just forgetfulness...



• Memory loss • Asking repeated questions • Trouble using words

When signs like these begin to affect everyday life, they may not be a part of normal aging. They may be signs of Alzheimer's disease, an incurable progressive illness that robs patients and their families of a lifetime of memories.

Today, however, the outlook for many is becoming more hopeful. ARICEPT® is a clinically proven, once-a-day prescription medicine available to treat symptoms in patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. Already over 400,000 patients in the United States have begun ARICEPT® therapy.

ARICEPT® is well tolerated, but some people do experience side effects like nausea, diarrhea, insomnia, vomiting, muscle cramps, fatigue, and loss of appetite. In clinical studies, these effects were generally mild,

temporary, and went away with continued ARICEPT® use. 2% of people taking ARICEPT® experienced fainting.

Only a doctor can evaluate symptoms such as forgetfulness and diagnose Alzheimer's disease. Speak to a doctor today about the benefits of ARICEPT® in treating Alzheimer's disease.

ONCE-A-DAY  
**ARICEPT®**

(donepezil HCl)

TODAY'S TREATMENT  
FOR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

To learn more, call toll-free today:

**1-888-999-9616 ext. 14**

Please see additional important product information on accompanying page.



The above image juxtaposes two ads featuring the same elderly woman. The two taglines unwittingly form a single sentence, bridged by the downwards arrow – "YOU AREN'T HERE. Is it just forgetfulness...or Alzheimer's disease?" Unlike the other framed text panels in the series, this one is intentionally left blank.

Model 500 (2019)  
Maryam Jafri

Model 500 is a metal and vinyl sculpture focusing on music and politics, specifically on Detroit Techno, a genre of music I have long enjoyed. Model 500 is configured as a 10 x 10 grid in the guise of an American crossword puzzle. However the black squares typical of a crossword puzzle are here replaced with vintage 1980s Detroit Techno LPs mounted on the metal plates. The puzzle is made up of 100 metal plates (325 x 325 cm each) strung together like a net. In the early 90s, techno quickly gained popularity in the Europe before being reimported back into the US as “European dance music.” The African-American, Detroit-based origins of techno are often overlooked. As noted by Ben Tausig, the music and the culture of techno reflect an elaborate artistic and technological response to the transition from industrial to post-industrial world, as well as an innovative approach to the possibilities of modern machine technologies and their application to music. The artwork resembles a minimalist sculpture, an LP display structure, and a metal fence or urban barrier but more than that, it is also functional - it is an actual solvable crossword puzzle, created in collaboration with the crossword puzzle constructor and music historian Ben Tausig. The clues are written in black vinyl directly onto the wall nearby. A take away of the puzzle is available to visitors who wish to solve the puzzle. Answers are available upon request. The title for the work refers to the name used by Techno pioneer Juan Atkins which in turn is of course a riff on Ford’s Model-T.

Dimensions: 335 x 685 cm (puzzle alone is 335 x 335, vinyl text alone is 200 cm wide)

Materials: Aluminum, paint, LPs, plastic, vinyl lettering on wall, A4 paper takeaway

Commissioned by TAXISPALAIS Kunsthalle Tirol





Across

- 1 Designer Gucci
- 5 15-Across singer (and rarely-credited female techno pioneer) Grey
- 10 Belleville Three-member Atkins whose synth-funk experiments became emblematic of techno
- 11 Dutch electronic label greatly influenced by Detroit techno
- 12 Forty \_\_\_ and a mule
- 14 Girl's name meaning "prosperous in war"
- 15 Early techno group including Kevin Saunderson and 5-Across
- 17 Traffic court letters
- 18 U.S. agency behind the largest electronic surveillance program in world history
- 19 Org. that deals with hydrocarbons
- 22 Clone of the Commodore 64 game Space Taxi
- 24 1987 Rhythm is Rhythim classic that sat at the intersection of Detroit techno and Chicago house
- 28 "Open your eyes / Clean out your ears / 'Cause the music is fresh / And the beat is clear / I \_\_\_ sit and set the record straight" ("No UFOs" lyrics)
- 29 City often called the Detroit of Italy
- 31 Typeface inspired by motor sport culture and high speed, used primarily in displays and headings, and which pairs well with the "teknø" typeface
- 33 Education technology company that uses interactive robots
- 34 Steel used to reinforce concrete, whose first industrial use was in 1910 to build the Packard Motor Company in Detroit
- 35 Austin festival begun in 1987, which was among the first to include techno artists in its program, for short

Down

- 1 Steely Dan album sampled on Anthony Shakir's "Arise"
- 2 Makers of a VR immersive headset
- 3 Fix, usually by hand, rarely by machine
- 4 Nonstop
- 5 Machine running Cubase, perhaps
- 6 Acronym in drafting conservative legislation
- 7 The most powerful character in the Xbox game Bayonetta, due to his ability to create weapons from LPs containing the crystallized voices of angels
- 8 UAW, YMO, MPC, et al.
- 9 "Peace!" (or an all-girl K-pop group)
- 13 Monopolize, perhaps
- 16 One channel of a Numark mixer
- 19 First name of the first U.S. citizen to be targeted and killed by a U.S. drone strike, which was ordered by Obama
- 20 Resident Advisor app, which marries big data and electronic music to track the world's best parties (available on iTunes)
- 21 Sound card used in early computers and synthesizers, which was based on Yamaha's YM3812 sound chip
- 23 Info on the door of a record store
- 25 Series of mainframe computers made by Olivetti
- 26 Smoothing algorithm that filters out noise from the resulting signal, and is used in stock trading
- 27 Automotive lubricants
- 30 "The \_\_\_ Dance Sound of Detroit" (1988 compilation and milestone in the introduction of techno to Europe)
- 32 Mad Mike's activist, politically trenchant collective, known for scratching messages directly onto their vinyl in response to the killing of Malice Green by the Detroit police, for short

Model 500 (2019) Installation View: Taxis Palais Kunsthalle Tirol



Model 500 (2019), Detail

# Model 500

By Maryam Jafri & Ben Tausig 2019

## Across

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	15				16				
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24			25				26	27	
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31				32		33			
34						35			

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## Maryam Jafri

Mariam Jafri Vs. Maryam Jafri (2019)



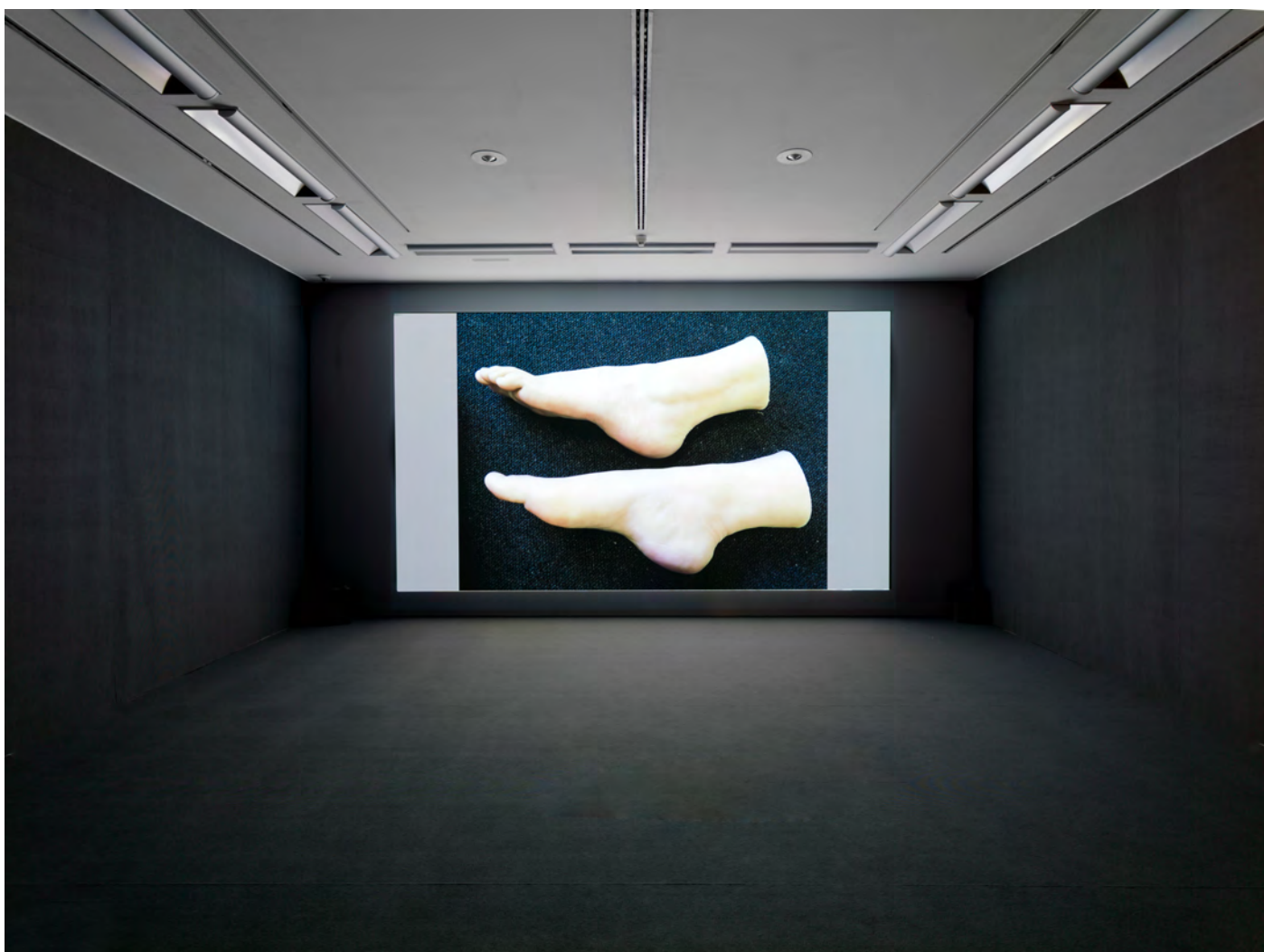
The starting point for the video is an image of my sculpture, *Anxiety*, that has been turned into a stock photo for licensing on the Getty Images website, without my prior knowledge or permission. Getty Images is the largest stock photo agency in the world. Getty took the photograph at Frieze Art Fair in London in October 2017. The voiceover traces the work's trajectory from a readymade sculpture for sale at an art fair to a stock photo for licensing online and finally, to a video commissioned by a Kunstahalle, a space meant to guarantee the autonomy of art. The work reflects upon the role of originality, artist labor and copyright in our culture of sampling and remixing. The video's title references the caption accompanying the photograph which misspells my name. The title also references an earlier work I made in 2012, called *Getty Vs. Ghana* which examined the unauthorized copyrighting of African independence day photographs by multinational stock photo agencies, including Getty Images and Corbis.

Single screen video with sound, 9:11 min

Co-commissioned by Taxis Palais Kunstahalle Tirol and Contemporary Art Gallery of Vancouver

Vimeo link: <https://vimeo.com/318712169>

Password: stock



Mariam Jafri Vs. Maryam Jafri (2019) Installation View: Taxis Palais Kunsthalle Tirol

Maryam Jafri

## **Where We're At (2017)**

**Where We're At** is a 10x 10 wooden grid made in the style of an American crossword puzzle. However the black squares typical of a crossword puzzle are here replaced by actual physical books glued directly onto the wooden surface. The books span historical, contemporary, academic, pop, self-help, business and fiction genres. The artwork contains elements of both a sculpture and a bookshelf but more than that, it is also functional - it is an actual solvable crossword puzzle, created in collaboration with noted crossword puzzle constructor Ben Tausig. The clues, focusing on inequality, deindustrialization, recent history, and random political factoids, are written in black vinyl directly onto the wall nearby. A take away of the puzzle is available to visitors who wish to solve the puzzle. The answers are available upon request.

The inspiration for the work comes from a famous list of six books circulated by the New York Times shortly after the surprise results of the 2016 US Presidential elections which supposedly shed light on some of the historical and economic factors behind the result. Since New York Times, and just about every other media outlet, incorrectly predicted the results of the 2016 election, one wonders if the editors actually read their own list. The 16 books I've selected feature one or two of these books but also others that I think are relevant to understanding historical and economic roots of the present political moment. These books include seminal works by Friedrich Von Hayek (economist from the Austrian school of economics, the precursor to the Chicago school), novels by Margaret Atwood, Ayn Rand and Newt Gingrich, advice books by PT Barnum and Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Ibn Khaldun's Muqqadimah, a 14<sup>th</sup> century book cited by many as the first work on supply side economics.

2017, Wooden Grid, Books, Vinyl, Paper handout.  
Dimensions: 490 cm x 254 cm

**ACROSS**

- 1 BOHICA (bend over, here it comes again) relative
- 6 Title for William Bennett, e.g. (alternate spelling)
- 10 Site of an 8th-century battle between the Franks and the Umayyad Caliphate
- 11 XXXL, say
- 12 American reality most easily grasped in fiction
- 14 Dick Cheney went to jail for one
- 16 Set right again
- 17 One was hurled at Greek prime minister Papandreou at a trade fair on 9/11
- 19 Hazmat listed as number 1999 by the United Nations
- 20 Material used in fracking
- 22 Credit default trade
- 25 They're neither 50 nor Grey, but in between (hint: think sadistic billionaire, popular with key demographic of married suburban women)
- 28 "They can't lick \_\_\_ Dick" (Nixon campaign slogan)
- 29 Term used to lump progressive and reactionary forces together, usually by concerned centrists
- 31 Bitter, in French
- 32 Jealous's former org.
- 35 First half of Citizen Kane's last phrase
- 36 Dull state

**DOWN**

- 1 Abbr. before Louis
- 2 "\_\_\_ Is Not Enough"
- 3 Nixon's preferred media
- 4 Snack served by workers earning \$15/hour in a growing number of U.S. cities
- 5 Cold War power, briefly
- 6 The most silent member of the Supreme Court
- 7 Female with a perfect work-life balance
- 8 Once more, in dialect
- 9 Consult the Times, e.g.
- 13 Offensive in 1968
- 14 Government department without a homeland: Abbr.
- 15 "Er..."
- 18 Tolerate
- 21 Number you might text, briefly
- 23 It has an atomic number of 79
- 24 Territory populated by disenfranchised U.S. citizens: Abbr.
- 25 Engage in a debate, say
- 26 \_\_\_ Economicus
- 27 Cosecant's reciprocal
- 30 Word before Jose or Diego
- 33 <http://www.bienialbahana.cult...>
- 34 Number with its own day

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		20		21		22		23	24
25	26				27		28		
29					30				
31					32			33	34
35					36				

# WHERE WE'RE AT

BY MARYAM JAFRI & BEN TAUSIG 2017

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- 8** Once more, in dialect
- 9** Consult the Times, e.g.
- 13** Offensive in 1968
- 14** Government department without a homeland: Abbr.
- 15** "Er ..."

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9
10						11			
		12			13				
14	15			16					
17			18		19				
		20		21		22		23	24
25	26				27		28		
29						30			
31					32			33	34
35					36				

**18** Tolerate

**21** Number you might text, briefly

**23** It has an atomic number of 79

**24** Territory populated by disenfranchised U.S. citizens: Abbr.

**25** Engage in a debate, say

**26** \_\_\_ Economicus

**27** Cosecant's reciprocal

**30** Word before Jose or Diego

**33** <http://www.bienialhabana.cult.>\_\_\_

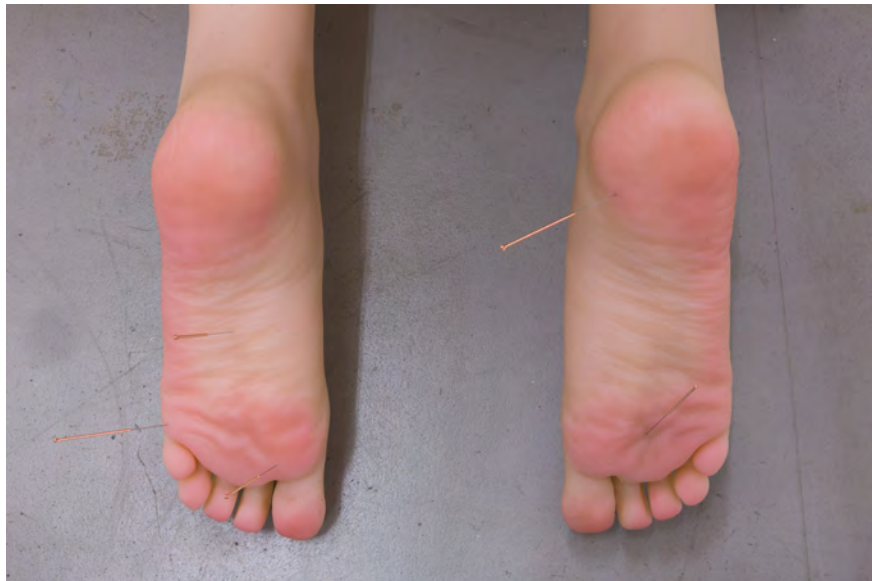
**34** Number with its own day



Maryam Jafri

### **Wellness-Postindustrial Complex (2017)**

**Wellness-Postindustrial Complex** is a series of sculptures and photo works centering on the growing popularity of Eastern technologies of self-care including yoga, acupuncture, and meditation. The wellness trend, particularly emblematic in a growing number of global cities (New York, London, Los Angeles etc), aligns perfectly with the personal responsibility and self-help ethos of contemporary capitalism and represents a predictable response to an age of economic dispossession and social fragmentation. The body is increasingly experienced as a site of anxiety-fueled narcissism and self-surveillance that is politically and economically produced as workers, particularly members of the creative class, are left with only their labor power as their sole means of support and forced to desperately seek out DIY, self-help solutions. Postindustrial workers (artists included) are especially drawn to the mind/ body connection emblematic of Eastern healing techniques because for such workers, it is their minds (creativity) that is their labor power and these alternative practices are marketed as offering access to mental optimization via the body. The sculptures and photo works in the Wellness-Postindustrial Complex series present a view of the body that is rough, mute and fragmented. Materials include wood, silicone, acupuncture needles, cut up yoga mats, cupping paraphernalia and more. The sculptures and photos despite their personal and seemingly interior tone, deliberately incorporate mass produced objects such as silicone body parts sourced from online fetish stores in China and stock photos (presented with their watermarks), underlining how the search for interiority and personal narratives leads paradoxically but logically enough, to the exterior world.



Depression (2017)  
wood, silicone feet, acupuncture needles,  
cupping glasses, photograph, paper, egg carton  
75 x 37 x 61.5 cm



Self-care (2017)  
metal toilet paper holder, yoga mat  
20 x 13 x 23 cm



Installation View 01.2018, Wellness-Postindustrial Complex

MARYAM JAFRI

Meditation Altars: *American Buddhist* (2016) & *Meditation Square* (2016)

Meditation Altars consists of two sculptures, *American Buddhist* (2016) and *Meditation Square* (2016). Both sculptures investigate the use of meditation as a soldier training device by the US Army. Unlike the traditional view of basic training, immortalized most notably by Kubrick's film *Full Metal Jacket* in which American soldiers prepare for combat under the training of a sadistic taskmaster, these new techniques deploy a more holistic approach. *American Buddhist* displays a video of a soldier meditation session on a US Army base in Iraq. The video is a public domain video sourced directly from the US Army. Around and below the flat panel monitor are several plush toys of stuffed Buddhas meant for children, garlands of fake orange flowers and a framed text panel. The second sculpture, *Meditation Square* features a 60 cm bronze replica of the Saddam Hussein statue in Firdos Square being toppled in April 2003 during the Iraq war. Necklaces of wooden prayer beads are draped around the statuette's neck, an allusion to both the ropes seen in the news photographs and to Saddam's execution by hanging. Below the statue, on the two lower levels of the altar, are eight framed photographs sourced from various US Army websites, showing images of soldiers meditating, often with eyes closed and in lotus position as well as one group photograph of soldiers reposing in the aptly named Corpse pose. *Meditation Square* literalizes the promise of mind over matter, taking it to its absurd but logical conclusion – the soldiers appear to be destroying the bronze statue with the powers of their own optimized, meditation-fueled brains.

2016, wood, bronze, framed photos, monitor, headphones, objects.  
Installation dimensions variable



American Buddhist (2016), Installation view: Van Abbemuseum

## Generic Corner (2015)



Generic products were everyday household items that appeared in supermarkets in the late 1970s across the United States. The typical package design was a white label with black text merely identifying the contents. The idea was that by eliminating all design, marketing, and advertising costs, the savings could be passed directly onto the consumer. Regional factories and distributors, often powered by a unionized work force, supplied these generic items to their local supermarkets. The generic items occupied an aisle of their own and were 25-45% cheaper than their branded counterparts. Shopping in the generic section was considered somewhat of a stigma and I have yet to find anyone who will admit to it. By the end of the 1980s with the rise of the mega-grocery chains, the plummeting price of color printing, and the increasing importance of branding and design as business tools, supermarkets replaced generic brands with their own in-house store brands that mimicked the look and feel of their branded counterparts and which were placed right next to them on the same shelf. *Generic Corner* focuses on this once widespread, now mostly forgotten phenomenon in consumer culture. The installation brings together a series of still life product photographs, a text panel, and a display of vintage generic products on white plinths.

*Generic Corner (2015), photographs, text panel, plinths, objects. Installation dimensions variable.*



*Generic Corner (2015)*





*Generic Corner (2015)*



*Generic Corner (2015)*



*Generic Corner (2015)*



*Generic Corner (2015)*



*Generic Corner (2015)*



*Generic Corner (2015)*



*Generic Corner (2015)*



*Generic Corner (2015)*



**MARYAM JAFRI**

**Product Recall: An Index of Innovation (2014-2015)**

**Product Recall: An Index of Innovation** combines framed texts and “still life” product photography of unsuccessful food products from the private archive of an anonymous former brand consultant and found objects amassed from the personal collections of other food industry figures. These elements combine to recount an alternative cultural history of industrialized food production in the 20th century that focuses on products that were either recalled or failed to find widespread consumer appeal. With reference to the vernacular language, imagery and iconography of advertising and product displays, the installation reveals how agribusiness and the innovations of laboratory science are implicated in the mass circulation and consumption of everyday commodities.

*Product Recall: An Index of Innovation 2014-2015, framed texts, photographs, plinths, objects. Installation dimensions variable.*



*Product Recall: An Index Of Innovation (2014-15)*



Fact Magazine was a magazine founded in 1964 by Ralph Ginsburg and legendary graphic designer Herbert Lubalin. It covered controversial topics such as interracial marriage, police brutality, the right to abortion and the then largely unknown link between smoking and cancer. In Ginsburg's words Fact Magazine was "a magazine of dissent that will try to improve society by bringing to light information otherwise suppressed." With a circulation of 250,000 at its peak, Fact Magazine lasted until 1967 when Senator Barry Goldwater successfully sued for libel.

Fact Cigarettes was a brand of cigarettes launched in 1976 by British-American Tobacco featuring a new technology called purite granules. According to the vice president "doubt is our product since its the best means of competing with the body of fact in the minds of the general public." Fact Cigarettes lasted until 1978.

Name	Fact Magazine
Product	"A magazine of dissent that will try to improve society by bringing to light information otherwise suppressed."
Launch	1964
Circulation	250,000
Publisher	Ralph Ginsburg
Art Director	Famed graphic designer Herbert Lubalin, creator of iconic 70s font Avant Garde.
Notable topics covered	Interracial marriage, Vietnam War, police brutality, the tobacco industry, the right to abortion, safety of American cars.
Withdrawn	1967 after Senator Barry Goldwater successfully sues for libel and Ginsburg forced to declare bankruptcy.

Name	Fact Cigarettes
Product	"Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public."
Launch	1976
Manufacturer	Brown & Williamson, subsidiary of British American Tobacco.
Competitors	Merit Cigarettes by Philip Morris and Real Cigarettes by RJ Reynolds.
Withdrawn	1978 after being outsold by Merit Cigarettes.

*Text Frames: Fact Magazine, Fact Cigarettes*



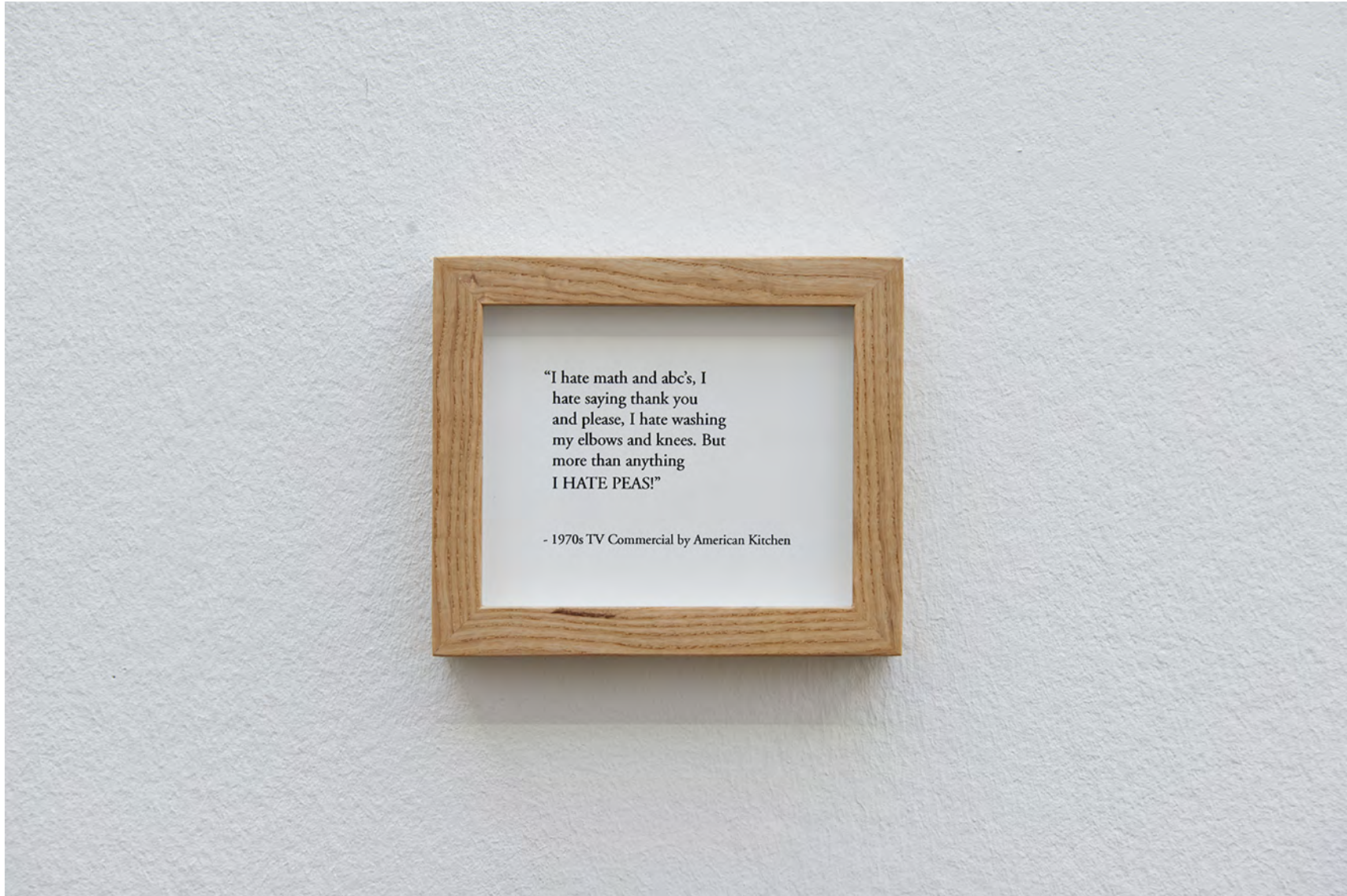
*Product Recall: An Index Of Innovation (2014-15)*



*Product Recall: An Index Of Innovation (2014-15)*



I Hate Peas was a product introduced in 1972 by American Kitchen. It was aimed at kids who hated peas. The product hid vegetables inside frozen french fries to fool unsuspecting kids..As the box stated, the product combined ‘pea goodness and potato flavor.’ Other products in the same series included I Hate Beets and I Hate Corn.



*Text Panel, I Hate...*

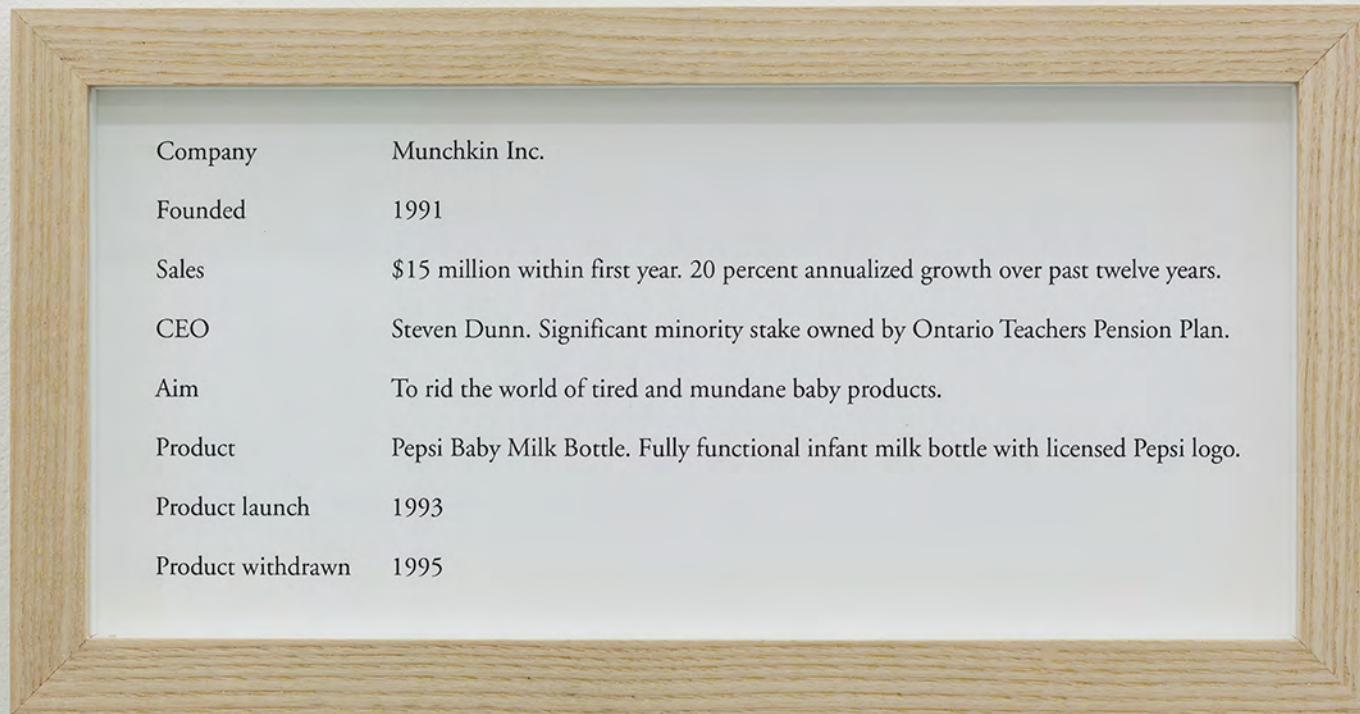




*Product Recall: An Index Of Innovation (2014-15)*



Fully Functional Infant Milk Bottles With Pepsi Logo (detail)



Company	Munchkin Inc.
Founded	1991
Sales	\$15 million within first year. 20 percent annualized growth over past twelve years.
CEO	Steven Dunn. Significant minority stake owned by Ontario Teachers Pension Plan.
Aim	To rid the world of tired and mundane baby products.
Product	Pepsi Baby Milk Bottle. Fully functional infant milk bottle with licensed Pepsi logo.
Product launch	1993
Product withdrawn	1995

*Text Frame, Pepsi Infant Bottle*



In 1983 Kleenex launched Avert Virucidal, the world's first tissue paper laced with pesticides sold directly to consumers. Despite \$5 million of research and another \$1 million of marketing, the product failed, as consumers were reportedly turned off by the word 'Virucidal.' In 2004 the product was relaunched, with 'Virucidal' replaced by 'Anti-Viral' and an updated package design. Kleenex Anti-Viral has generated sales of \$140 million in 22 countries.



*Ayds Diet Candy (out of business after advent of AIDS crisis)*



*Ayds Diet Candy (detail)*



PJ Squares was launched in 1994. The aim was to build a better, faster peanut butter & jelly sandwich. Comprised of a slice of peanut butter on one side and jelly on the other, the consumer merely had to unwrap and place between two pieces of bread.

Uncrustables were launched in 1995, frozen, ready-to-go peanut butter & jelly sandwiches that thawed naturally without the need for a microwave. Marketed to busy parents, they could be taken out of the freezer in the morning and be ready to eat by lunchtime.

PJ Squares was taken off the market in 2000 after losing market share to Uncrustables. PJ Squares still required the addition of bread whereas Uncrustables came fully preassembled. Uncrustables have since become a bestselling product.

## **Mouthfeel** (2014)

**Mouthfeel** combines staged and found footage to explore the politics underpinning the industrial production of food. The staged scenes are based on an original script by Jafri and focus on the conversations of a middle class married couple who work for the same food multinational – a cross between Nestlé and Monsanto. Their exchange is inspired by theatre and television, where socio-political analysis is played out through everyday, familial dialogue.

Set in the near future, the wife, a leading food technologist, and the husband, a senior brand manager, find themselves stuck in a chauffeur-driven stretch limo at a security checkpoint in an unspecified global city. The wife, played by Jafri, has uncovered a potential health problem with their new product, which her husband is determined to cover up. Along with excerpts of found footage sourced from different countries in the global south and which act as “commercial breaks”, these scenes address themes of convenience, good taste, and the disparities between mass and artisanal forms of production.

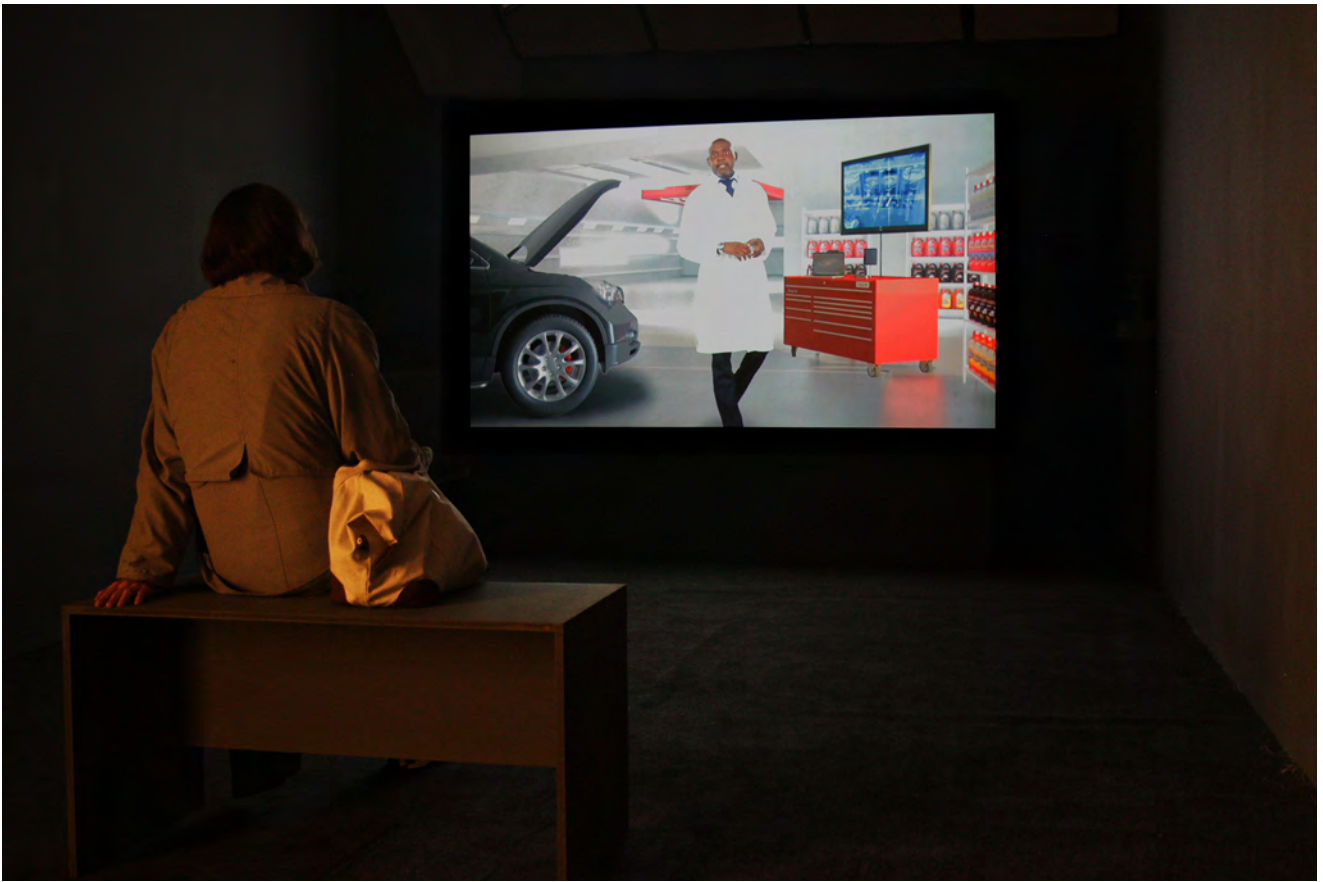
By bringing together television, the car, and processed food, ultimately then what is at stake in **Mouthfeel** is the culture and business of consumption, unchecked and aspirational, global and yet also locally specific. That culture first arises in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century USA but certainly does not end there...

*Mouthfeel (2014), single screen, 2k HD video with sound, 21:34 min*





Mouthfeel (2014) Video Stills



Installation View - Gasworks (03.2014)

## Getty vs. Ghana (2012)



The left image is from the Ghana Ministry of Information, the right from Getty Images. The Ministry identifies their image as G/1180/1, Getty identifies theirs as 50405305. The back of photo G/1180/1 bears a purple stamp stating *Copyright Photographic Services, Ministry of Information, PO Box 745, Accra. All rights reserved....*

Recently, while browsing the Getty Images website I realized that several historical photographs from Ghana that Getty Images had copyrighted, I had already seen at the archives of the Ghana Ministry of Information. The specific images claimed by both Ghana and Getty were not just any images but rather Ghana independence photos from March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1957 – documents of the first instance of liberation of sub-Saharan Africa from Western rule. Digging deeper, I uncovered a trail of errors (wrong dates, incorrect captions) and manipulation of original photographs, errors ranging from seemingly accidental to more deliberate. **Getty vs. Ghana** takes the overlapping images in both image banks and posits them not to speculate on the past but to tap into contemporary concerns about copyright, digitization, and the foreign ownership of national heritage.

8 photographs + 4 framed texts

*nb: two related works are also available – Corbis vs. Mozambique (2012) and Getty vs. Kenya vs. Corbis (2012)*



*Installation View: Belgian Pavilion, Venice Biennial 05.2015*



The left image is from the Ghana Ministry of Information, the right from Getty Images. The Ministry identifies their image as G/1180/1, Getty identifies them as 50405305. The caption accompanying the Getty image states *Dancers of Kofi (L.) dancing with Ghana Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah (C) at the Ghana independence anniversary.* A special note accompanying the Getty image states: *No resale application can without the prior permission of Time, Inc. Contact your local office to see if we can clear this image for you.* The back of photo G/1180/1 bears a purple stamp stating *Copyright Photographic Services, Ministry of Information, PO Box 745, Accra. All rights reserved.* The Ghana Ministry of Information charges \$4 per photograph for reproduction and licensing. Licensee must credit the Ministry.



The color images are from Corbis, the black and white images from the Mozambique National School of Photography Soares Machel, head of the Marxist political party FRELIMO, declares the independence of Mozambique from Portugal and becomes Mozambique's first president. The date is 25th June 1975 and Mozambique is one of the last African countries to gain independence. In 1995 Corbis bought the legendary Paris-based photo agency Sigeur for seven million dollars. Among the fifty million images in Sigeur's collection included three two color photos of Machel, shot by PJ Laflotte, one of the founders of Sigeur. In 2005 PJ Laflotte quit Corbis, citing differences with management. In 2010 Corbis Sigeur declared bankruptcy after lawsuits from photographers over unpaid royalties. Corbis transferred all assets to the UK in order to avoid paying fees imposed by French courts. Photographers were offered new contracts directly with Corbis as the result of their photography. Most chose to sign with Corbis. The official archive of FRELIMO held a photograph almost identical to the Corbis one of Machel making the independence speech. FRELIMO does not allow the reproduction of photographs in its archive under any circumstances. The Mozambique National School of Photography acts as a photo agency for local photographers. Photographers deposit their images with the agency and get 50% of the royalties. The agency charges \$10 per photograph and maintains a comprehensive digital archive. The agency holds eight images from 25th June 1975, including the two black and white ones of Machel, seen here.





The top image is from Getty Images, the bottom from the Kenya Ministry of Information. Both images are dated 1963, exact dates unspecified. Getty Images states that their image depicts Jomo Kenyatta being sworn in as the first Prime Minister of a newly independent Kenya. The Kenyan Ministry states that their image depicts Jomo Kenyatta being sworn in as Prime Minister during internal self-rule. On 1st June 1963, Kenya attained internal self-rule. On 12th December 1963, Kenya attained independence from the United Kingdom. Both images show the insignia of Queen Elizabeth II on the chair behind Kenyatta, adding credibility to the Kenyan Ministry's assertion that the occasion is internal self-rule, and not full independence. The Getty image is classified under the Halton collection. In 1945 magazine publisher Edward Halton founded Halton Picture Library. In 1957 Edward Halton sold the archive to the BBC. The BBC Halton Library was sold in 1988 to Cable TV entrepreneur Brian Durnach. The Halton Durnach Collection then acquired the Keystone archive, made up of three major British newspaper collections, and thus inherited the Kenyatta image. In 1996 Getty paid seventeen million dollars to purchase the Halton Durnach collection, comprising by then some fifteen million images. A few months earlier, Corbis had purchased the Bettmann Archive, the world's first commercial image bank, also comprising some fifteen million images. According to Corbis, an image from their Bettmann collection, pictured below, is one of Kenyatta being sworn in during independence.

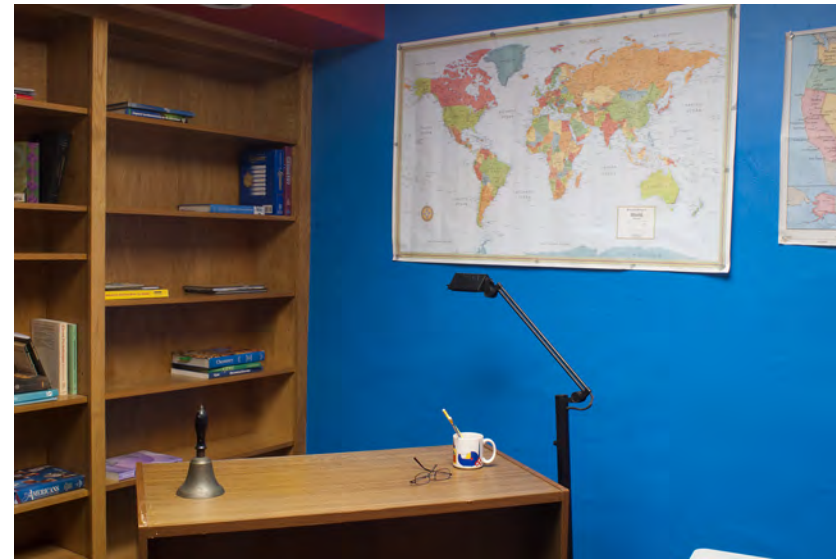


***School/Hospitals/Prisons*** is a series of three photo/text grids focusing on School, Hospital and Prison theme rooms for S/M role-play. The project continues Jafri's interest labor extends it, for the first time, to questions of architecture and site. In some of the images the human figure is noticeably absent whereas others actively feature the human figure or its stand-in – mannequins, costumes, props. Short text panels written by Jafri accompany the photos and supply odd facts and surprising connections between the sites. The photos are all sourced the dungeons themselves and evince a deadpan, vernacular touch. At first glance what seems to unite the sites is that they are all representations of something else – architectural simulacra – but in fact they are all sites for labor as much as desire, they are used as much as imaged, produced as much as imagined, with real effects economically, physically, psychologically.

Special note: *School/Hospitals/Prisons* is a subset of a broader photo/text work called *Global Slum* focusing on changing conditions of labor, with nine grids in total. *School/Hospitals/Prisons* comprises the first three grids.

***School/Hospitals/Prisons*** (2012), 3 Grids (each grid has 8 photographs + 1 text), each grid approximately 110 x 80 cm / 43 x 31.5 inches



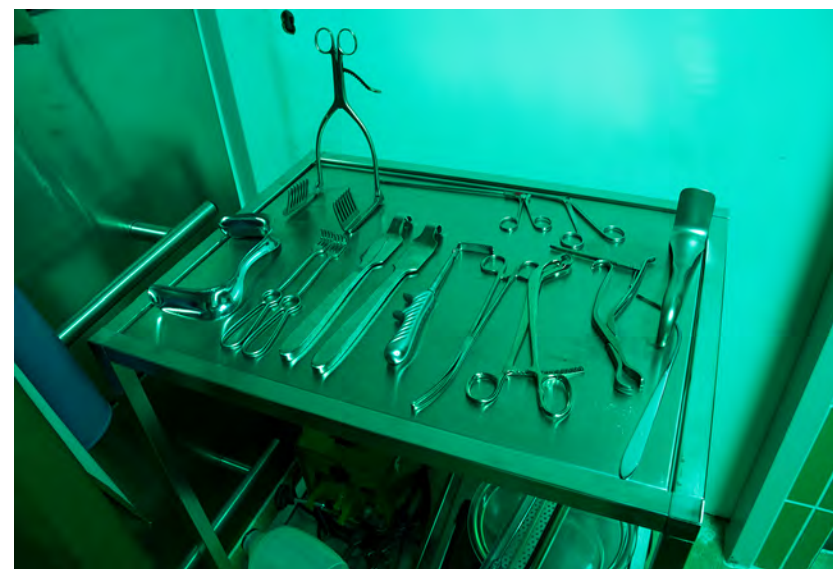


These rooms are sites for S/M role-play - a role-play performed not for an audience or a camera but for a client. The clients will tell you that as far as they're concerned the role-play sessions on offer here are a form of therapy. The dungeon keeper in Munich agrees, saying he has merely updated the classic Freudian couch with an expanded scenography. The women working here will tell you that to them these rooms are offices.



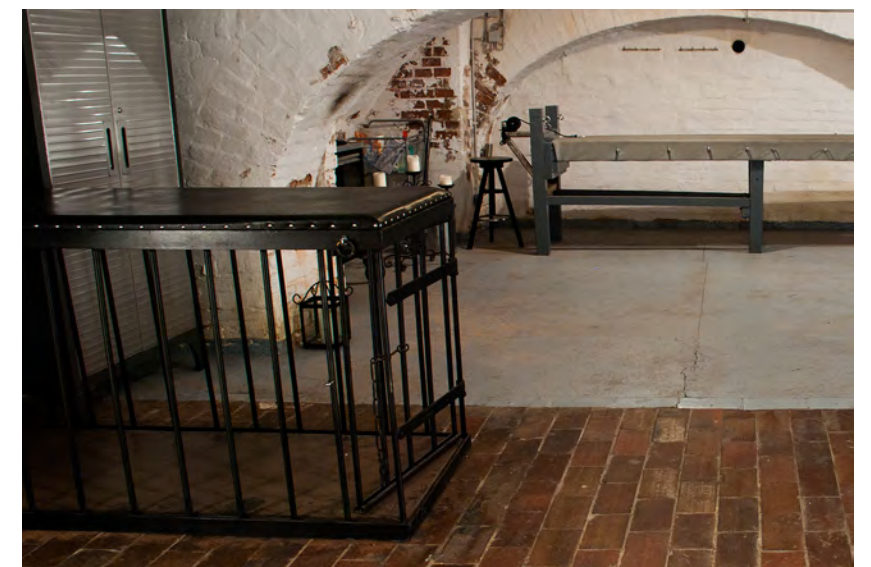


Dungeon websites routinely list CBT under services provided. In the outside world CBT usually stands for Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, a form of therapy that has gradually eclipsed Freudian psychoanalysis. But within these walls CBT stands for Cock & Ball Torture.





Doors lead to other doors, hallways lead to other hallways, or the same hallway transforms itself into some other hallway as it snakes through the site. Outside there is a vast open air stable for pony play, downstairs a large hall for slave auctions. The dungeon keepers in Berlin call their dungeon a work of art and refer to the women working there as artists.





"Global Slum" at Beirut, (solo show), Cairo 02.2013

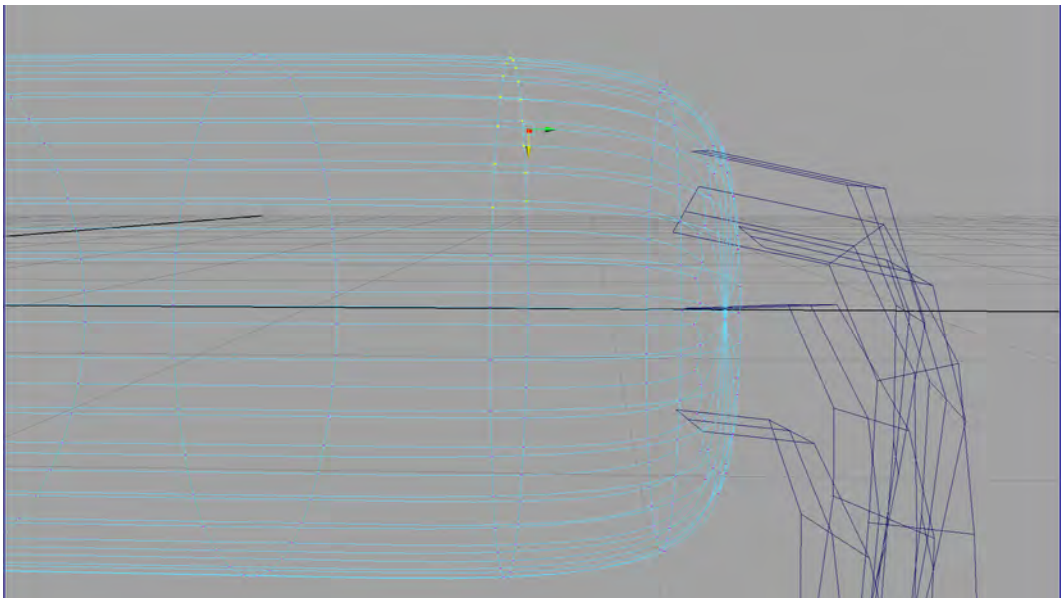
Avalon (2011)

11:44 minutes, HD

In 2001, in an unnamed country, a man known as F.R., was given \$700 USD by his father and told to make something of himself. F. R. founded a multi-million dollar clandestine company that secretly exports fetish wear to the West. The dozens of mostly female workers believe themselves to be sewing body bags for the US military, jackets for psychiatric patients and props for circus animals.

**Avalon** combines documentary footage from the factory with staged scenes, shot on a purpose built film set in Bristol, speculating on the end users of the products. The staged scenes, based upon extensive research and interviews with real life persons, present an actor playing a client of a dungeon undergoing a role-play session purporting to provide intense psychological experiences.

**Avalon** takes the story of F.R. as the point of departure for a complex meditation on the links between affect, labor and commodity under contemporary global conditions. Juxtaposing the world of the stage with the world of the factory, and performativity with production, the film probes the different but interlocking forms that work takes today, from the production of goods to the production of subjectivity.



Avalon (2011) Video Stills



Avalon (2011) Video Stills

## **Death With Friends (2010)**

Directed by Maryam Jafri

HD, 9.23 minutes

**Death With Friends** is based on the Baburnama, the diary of Babur, founder of the Mughal Empire (1526-1856) in South Asia. This famous diary, written between 1504-1529, represents the first known instance of autobiography in Islamic literature.

Published shortly after 9/11 in a new English translation, parts of the diary eerily parallel the present day situation in the American-led Afghan War. Babur writes in detail about his continual attempts to conquer Kabul and the border areas of Afghanistan/Pakistan. However, other parts of the diary present a radically different view onto this contested region. Interspersed with bloody accounts of conquest are carnivalesque descriptions of wine and opium induced parties populated by glittering poets and dancers.

**Death With Friends** was shot in a film studio in Mumbai with a group of actors on a golden stage, containing a few key props. The geometric set design combined with carefully choreographed camera movements, emphasizes the links between architectural and psychic space. A voice over, adapted from the Baburnama, accompanies the scenes. The pronounced theatricality of the film serves to remind the audience that a text is being translated, interpreted, performed.





Death With Friends (2010) Video Stills



Death With Friends (2010) Video Stills

Maryam Jafri

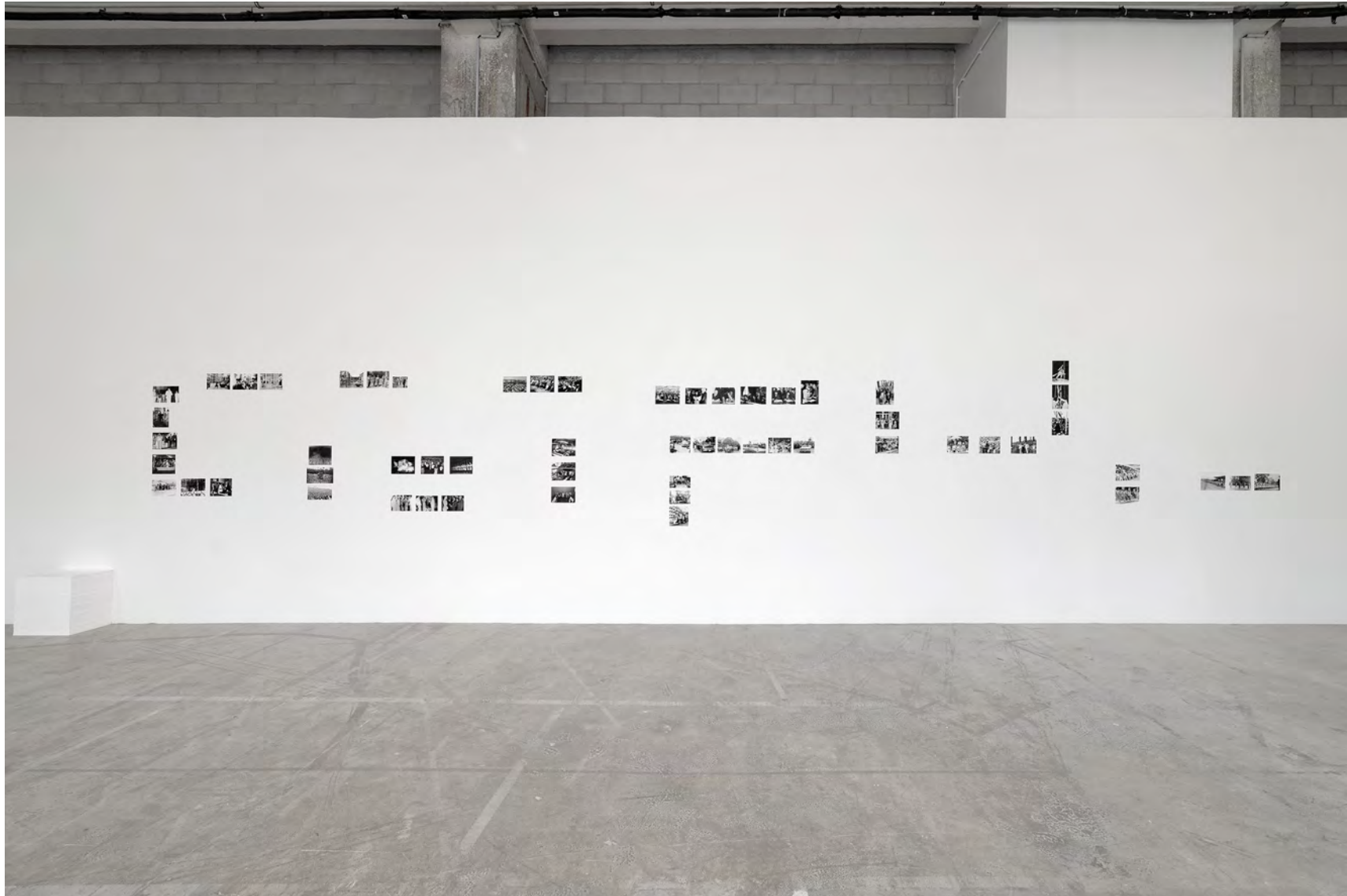
**Independence Day 1934-1975 (2009-ongoing)**

*Independence Day 1934-1975* features over 55 archival photos culled from more than 30 archives of the *first* Independence Day ceremonies of various Asian, Middle Eastern, and African nations including Jordan, Kuwait, Indonesia, India, Tunisia, Ghana, Senegal, Syria, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Vietnam (South), DR Congo, Burkina Faso and Algeria. A key feature of the work is that the photos are sourced primarily from public archives in the Asian and Africa countries themselves.

The first Independence Day, leading up to and including the formal ceremony, unfolds as a series of highly codified rituals and elaborate speech acts enacted across public and elite spaces. The swearing in of a new leadership, the signing of relevant documents, the VIP parade, the stadium salute, the first address to the new nation, is all supervised and orchestrated by the departing colonial power. The photographic material is strikingly similar despite disparate geographical and temporal origins as it reveals a political model exported from Europe and in the process of being cloned throughout the world. The photo installation emerges as a typology, poised somewhere between a grid and a storyboard. Although a great deal of research has been done on both the colonial and the post colonial eras, this project aims to introduce a third, surprisingly neglected element into the debate – that 24 hour twilight period in between, when a territory transforms into a nation-state.

*Images courtesy of: Teen Murti Archives (India), National Archives of Tanzania, Mohamed Kouaci Archives (Algeria), National Museum of Syria, Sami Moubayed Archive (Syria), National Archives of Malaysia, Ghana Ministry of Information, Kenya Ministry of Information, Rift Valley Railways Archive (Kenya), Radiodiffusion Télévision Nationale Congolaise (DR Congo), Personal collection (Sudan), Mozambique National School of Photography, National Archives of Indonesia, Kuwait National Oil Company, Cosme Dossa Archive (Benin), National Library of The Philippines, Rizal Library at Ateneo de Manila University, Andre Zoungrana Archive (Burkina Faso), Presidential Archives Republic of Tunisia, National Library of Jordan, Royal Court Library of Jordan, Senegal Ministry of Communication, Photo-ANTA (Madagascar), National Archives of Sri Lanka, Lake House Archives (Sri Lanka), Fraternalite Matin Archives (Ivory Coast), Morocco Ministry of Communication, Agence Burundaise de Presse (Burundi), Anonymous, etc.*

55+ black & white photos, each photo approximately about A5 size (14.8 x 21 cm/5.8 x 8.3 in), archival inkjet prints



Installation View, Betonsalon 03.2015



Installation View, "The Day After" (solo show) Betonsalon 2015





First Speech To The New Nation



First Speech (Detail)





First Speech (detail)



At The Stadium & Raising The New Flag



Raising The New Flag



Raising The New Flag (detail)





VIPs Watching



Girls Marching



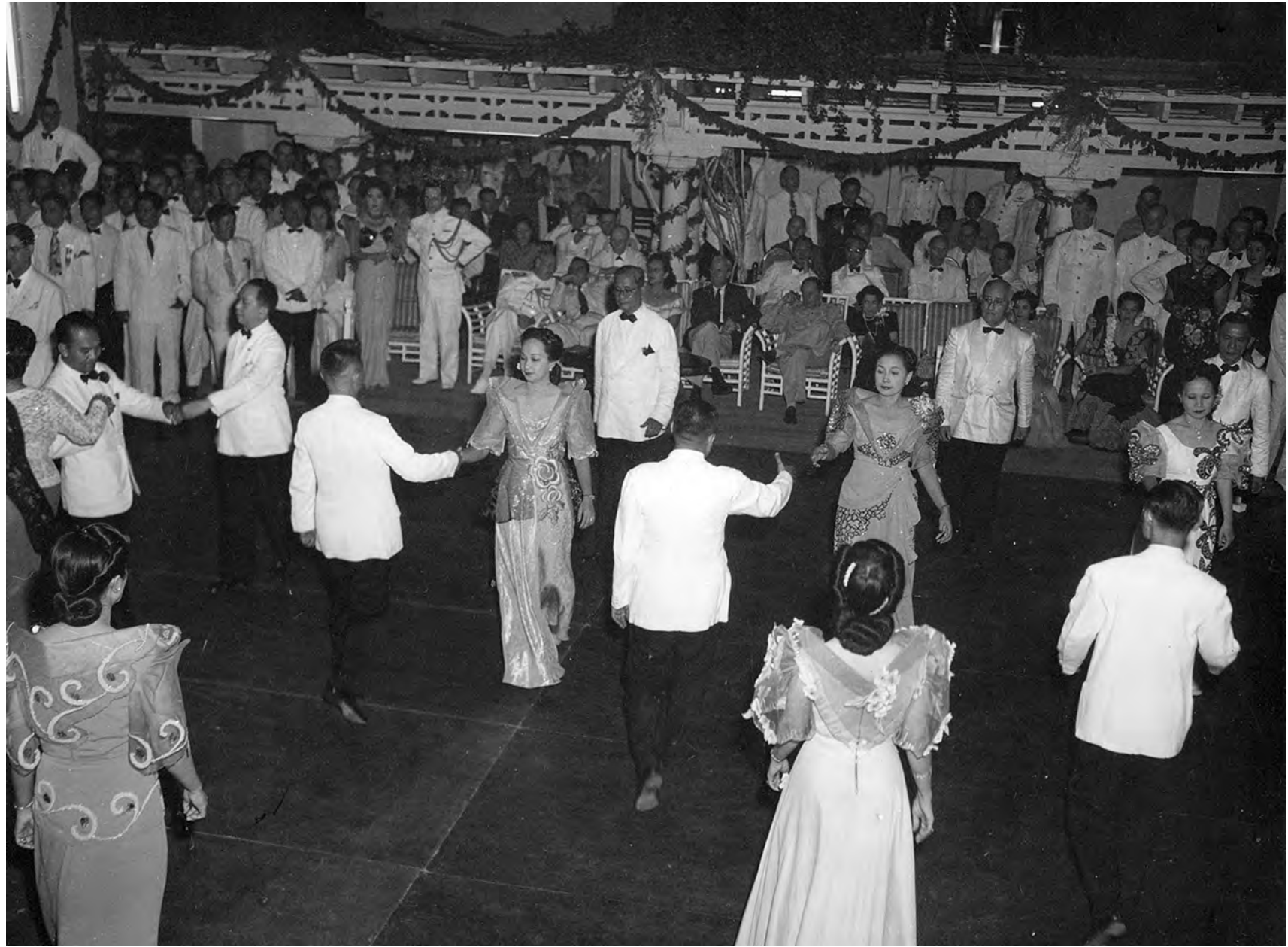
Signings, Parades, Celebrations





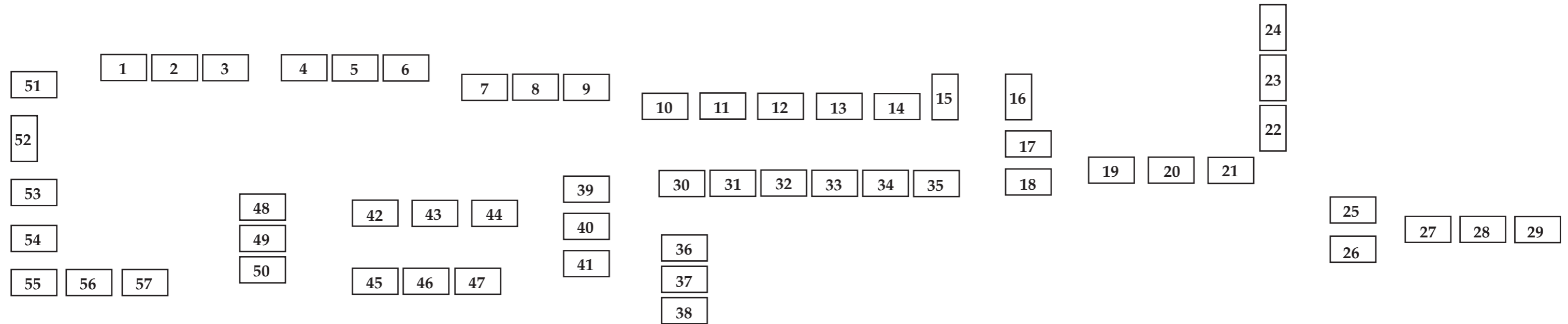
At The Parliament





# Maryam Jafri

## *Independence Day 1934-1975*



### PROLOGUE:

1. Street riot, 1946 Indonesia
2. Street riot, 1962 Algeria
3. Donating blood to FLN Fighters, 1962 Algeria
  
4. Jomo Kenyatta on Trial, 1952 Kenya
5. Women Fighters FLN, 1960 Algeria
6. ID Check, 1959 Kenya
  
7. Central Indonesian National Committee, 1946 Indonesia
8. National Bloc, 1934 Syria
9. Quit India Movement, 1942 India

### NEGOTIATIONS:

10. About To Sign Independence Agreement, 1956 Morocco
11. About To Sign Independence Agreement, 1946 Jordan
12. Signing Independence Agreement, 1960 Madagascar
13. Signing Independence Agreement (Never Honored), 1936 Syria.
14. Signing Independence Agreement, 1956 Tunisia
15. Signing Independence Agreement, 1961 Kuwait

### AT THE AIRPORT:

16. Dignitaries Arriving, 1961 Tanzania
17. Dignitaries Arriving, 1957 Malaysia
18. Spectators Waiting, 1957 Malaysia

### AT THE STADIUM:

19. Watching The Parade, 9 December 1961 Tanzania
20. Proclaiming Independence, 31 August 1957 Malaysia
21. Saluting the New Flag, 12 December 1963 Kenya

### THE NEW FLAG:

22. Raising the New Flag, 1 June 1955 Tunisia
23. Raising the New Flag, 31 August 1957 Malaysia
24. Planting the New Flag (on Mt. Kilimanjaro), 9 December 1961 Tanzania

### AT THE STADIUM:

25. VIP Women, 7 August 1960 Ivory Coast
26. VIP Men, 1 August 1960 Benin

27. Girls Marching, 1 July 1962 Burundi

28. Girls Marching, 17 April 1946 Syria

29. Girls Marching, 5 August 1960 Burkina Faso

### PARADES:

30. Bourguiba's Return From Exile, 1 June 1955 Tunisia
31. King Baudouin I and President Kasavubu, 29 June 1960 DR Congo
32. President Senghor, 4 April 1960 Senegal
33. President Nyerere Waving, 9 December 1961 Tanzania
34. President Ngo Dinh Diem, 1955/1956 (Date Contested), South Vietnam
35. President Kenyatta and Prince Phillip Waving, 12 December 1963 Kenya

36. Celebrating, 25 June 1975 Mozambique
37. Celebrating, 5 July 1962 Algeria
38. Celebrating, 15 August 1947 India

### AT THE PARLIAMENT:

39. Granting Independence, 4 February 1948 Sri Lanka
40. Granting Independence, 6 March 1957 Ghana
41. Granting Independence, September 30 1966 Botswana

### CELEBRATIONS:

42. Fireworks Over New Delhi, 15 August 1947 India
43. VIP Party, 4 July 1946 Philippines
44. Thirty-One Gun Salute, 9 December 1961 Tanzania

45. VIP Party, 17 April 1946 Syria

46. VIP Party, 15 August 1947 India

47. Reception (After Round Table Conference) Brussels, 21 February 1960 DR Congo

48. Crowd, 15 August 1947 India

49. Crowd, 1 January 1956 Sudan

50. Crowd, 12 December 1963 Kenya

### ADDRESS TO THE NATION:

51. Sukarno, 17 August 1945 Indonesia
52. Shukri al-Quwatli, 17 April 1946 Syria
53. Sheikh Al Sabah, 19 June 1961 Kuwait
54. Samora Machel, 25 June 1975 Mozambique
55. Justin Tométin Ahomadégbé, 1 August 1960 Benin
56. Manuel Roxas, 4 July 1946 Philippines
57. Julius Nyerere, 9 December 1961 Tanzania

**IMAGES COURTESY OF:** Teen Murti Archives (India), National Archives of Tanzania, Mohamed Kouaci Archives (Algeria), National Museum of Syria, Sami Moubayed Archive (Syria), National Archives of Malaysia, Ghana Ministry of Information, Kenya Ministry of Information, Rift Valley Railways Archive (Kenya), Radiodiffusion Télévision Nationale Congolaise (DR Congo), Personal collection (Sudan), Mozambique National School of Photography, National Archives of Indonesia, Kuwait National Oil Company, Cosme Dossa Archive (Benin), National Library of The Philippines, Rizal Library at Ateneo de Manila University, Andre Zoungrana Archive (Burkina Faso), Presidential Archives Republic of Tunisia, National Library of Jordan, Royal Court Library of Jordan, Senegal Ministry of Communication, Photo-ANTA (Madagascar), National Archives of Sri Lanka, Lake House Archives (Sri Lanka), Fraternelle Matin Archives (Ivory Coast), Morocco Ministry of Communication, Personal collection (Botswana), Agence Burundaise de Presse (Burundi), Anonymus.



Installation Views, "The Day After" Betonsalon 03.2015

Maryam Jafri

## **Nogales (2008)**

*Nogales* pairs an image of the walled town of Nogales, divided along the US/Mexican border with an audio recording of Ronald Reagan's famous speech at the Berlin Wall, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

On June 12, 1987 President Reagan, standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, condemned the Berlin Wall as "the brutal division of a continent" and the "restriction on the right to travel, an instrument to impose upon ordinary men and women the will of a totalitarian state." Twenty years later, Reagan's own country, including his home state of California, is erecting a border wall to keep out 'illegal' immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The result is a series of divided towns, with family members, neighborhoods and entire communities cut off from one another. Following a strategy I first explored in my work *Siege of Khartoum*, I have deleted specific names - Berlin, Europe, and Mr. Gorbachev – but kept the rest of the sentence structure intact. The image shows the town of Nogales now divided into Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Mexico. The image also reveals the economic interdependence of the two zones. Factories in Nogales, Mexico provides the cheap goods that stock the malls of Nogales, Arizona and tourist thrills such as low priced alcohol and strip clubs which are conveniently dotted along the streets closest to the border wall.

Update 2017: I made *Nogales* in 2008 as a response to the militarization of the US-Mexican border, a buildup that most politicians, including Obama and Clinton, voted for. The Mexican side of Nogales is also the town where the current administration is deporting people to, perhaps because the wall makes a good photo-op to whip up support among its core voters and promises more to come... Whether or not they can keep that promise will be up to the rest of us.

*Nogales* (2008), Lightbox, audio track, 3'25"  
Dimensions: 108 x 70 x 6 cm

Link to audio track:  
<https://vimeo.com/214855929>  
password: Reagan



## **Staged Archive (2008)**

8.23 minutes

A man gets into a car and goes for a drive; he reaches an unexpected destination-- a courtroom awash in fiery colors, populated by people from his past. Mixing reality with fantasy, present with past, the film's multiple voices and images flicker like phantoms across the bleak landscape of memory. Unfolding as a series of identity and spatial shifts, cycling through multiple film genres (film noir, courtroom drama) but remaining faithful to none, *Staged Archive* has the elusive logic of a dream and the fevered mood of a suppressed memory that reemerges in nightmare form.

The film's narrative is inspired by the travelogue genre of literature that peaks during the Victorian era and continues until just before WWII. A common theme is that of missionaries and travelers voyaging to the far reaches of the globe, often with disastrous consequences. Joseph Conrad comes to mind of course but other writers have also explored the genre, including Somerset Maugham in his celebrated short story 'Rain' which centers on a missionary's suicide in the South Pacific.

The archival photos used in *Staged Archive* come from the National Archives of Ghana. They show images of a Mobile Cinema, a van carrying a portable 16mm projector, linen projection screen and a mini electrical generator. Missionaries used mobile cinemas to project scenes from the Bible in the middle of anywhere and everywhere.





**Staged Archive** (2008) Video Stills



Installation View: Contour Mechelen, 4th Biennale for the Moving Image (2009)

MARYAM JAFRI

*Siege of Khartoum, 1884* (2006)

Description: *Siege of Khartoum, 1884* appropriates iconic images from the Iraq War (such as the capture of Saddam, the tearing down of Saddam's statue throughout public squares in Iraq) and combines them with archival news texts from earlier points in history. The texts come from the archives of *The New York Times*, *The Daily Telegraph (UK)* and *The Times (UK)*. The articles span from the period of high empire (late 19th century) to the present day. They include Winston Churchill's journalist writings while battling Mahdists in Sudan (1898), British attempts to suppress the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya (1950s) to anonymous American journalists depictions of the conquest of the Philippines (1920s), Vietnam (1960s) and Panama (1990s).

The project traces the narratives of Empire at work in the present moment. The 27 photo-collages work map the narrative arc of earlier colonial wars of conquest and reveal the way in which the Iraq war and the War on Terror conform to this predetermined script.

Dimensions: 27 A1 size (23.4 x 33.1 inches) photo-collage posters, archival ink-jet on Hahnemuehle paper



Installation View: Meanwhile In Baghdad, Renaissance Society 2007



## THE BAGHDAD OF THE FUTURE



TO THE PEOPLE OF BAGHDAD

In the name of my , and in the name of the peoples over whom he rules, I address you as follows:

Our military operations have as their object the defeat of the enemy and the driving of him from these territories. In order to complete this task, I am charged with absolute and supreme control of all regions on which troops operate, but our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators. Since the days of Halaka your city and your lands have been subject to tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk into desolation, and your forefathers and yourselves have groaned in bondage. Your sons have been carried off to wars not of your seeking, your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men and squandered in distant places. O people of Baghdad! Remember that for 26 generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have ever endeavoured to set one Arab house against another in order that they might profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to and her Allies, for there can be neither peace nor prosperity where there is enmity and misgovernment. Therefore, I am commanded to invite you, through your nobles and elders and representatives to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of who will accompany the Army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen in north, east, south, and west in realizing the aspirations of your race.

## FREEDOM FOR THE ARABS



## Exhibit A

As President Bush was suddenly trying to make clear last week, the man he had called a thug and a criminal is entitled to a fair trial. is supposed to be treated like anyone else. But his case presents legal problems that are not like anybody else's, and that will likely delay a trial for months. The defense will almost certainly demand files from the Central Intelligence Agency, since General worked for the agency for years, and for a time while George Bush was director. Nevertheless, the Justice Department said it reviewed the files before the invasion and decided it would still seek a trial. But the General still contends that he was not within the jurisdiction of American courts. His lawyers are also expected to argue that enormous pre-trial publicity has made it impossible to find an unbiased jury. Many of these problems could be finessed: Both sides say they want a trial, but, given the disclosures that General could make, both might be willing to strike a deal, too.

## The General Goes to Court

After several unsuccessful attacks on Captain McNeill's Zariba U's Zariba at Gebile, the Mad Mullah, while retreating towards Welahed, encountered the main British force by chance on the 4th inst. The Camel Corps and Mounted Infantry immediately attacked the Mullah, routing his forces and pursuing them throughout the night through the mountains. One hundred of the enemy were killed, the Mullah and the Sultan of Nur narrowly escaped capture. The British losses were two men killed and five hundred wounded. The Mullah is believed to have taken refuge in the Mijertain country.

## THE EXPEDITION AGAINST THE MAD MULLAH





Yesterday afternoon the Home Office authorities decided to offer £1000 reward for the apprehension, or for such information as shall lead to the apprehension of the persons who caused the explosion at Victoria Station, and attempted the outrages at the Charing-cross, Paddington, and Ludgate-hill Railway stations.

The announcement of the reward will be accompanied by the description of four men whose movements have been to some extent traced. It has been proved that the actual perpetrators of the outrages were from . Even the routes by which they came are known. They had evidently come direct from , and the fact that the found in the Portmanteau at Paddington bears date February 6 may indicate the time when they started their journey.



Elaborate precautions are being made at every railway station throughout the country to prevent explosions. Under the powers of the Explosives Act of last session Sir William Harcourt has directed that all suspicious parcels are to be opened at the railway stations.

## THE DYNAMITE OUTRAGES



## U.S. ENCOURAGED BY [REDACTED] VOTE



United States officials were surprised and heartened today at the size of turnout in [REDACTED] presidential election despite a [REDACTED] terrorist campaign to disrupt the voting. According to reports from [REDACTED], 83 per cent of the 5.85 million registered voters cast their ballots yesterday. Many of them risked reprisals threatened by the [REDACTED]. The size of the popular vote and the inability of the [REDACTED] to destroy the election machinery were the two salient facts in a preliminary assessment of the national election based on the incomplete returns reaching here. A successful election has long been seen as the keystone in President [REDACTED] policy of encouraging the growth of constitutional processes in [REDACTED]. Captured documents and interrogations indicated in the last week a serious concern among [REDACTED] leaders that a major effort would be required to render the election meaningless. This effort has not succeeded, judging from the reports from [REDACTED].



The Anglo-  
Oil Company's tanker British, Advocate pulled away from the refinery quayside here today with 11,500 tons of fuel oil bound for Trincomalee, Ceylon. It was the first oil in upward of forty months to move freely into world markets. The cargo was the first oil purchased by a consortium of eight major foreign oil companies under a forty-year agreement signed in  
yesterday by  
The last unfettered oil cargo left here in the hold of the British Sailor June 21, 1951, less than two months after  
then Premier, had nationalized Anglo-  
vast concession here. Today's sailing marked the end of what probably will be called the  
era after the now-imprisoned leader, who had evoked the forces of emotional nationalism and xenophobia that eventually brought about a violent reaction—a royalist uprising that overthrew him fourteen months ago.



General Schwarzkopf, reached by telephone at his home in Maplewood, N.J., tonight, declined to comment on Moscow reports linking him with the present turmoil in  
. His visit to  
was purely a personal one, he explained, adding: "I went there to call on some friends whom I had struck up an acquaintance with during the years I was in  
reorganizing the National Gendarmerie. I was not there this time in an official capacity and I conducted no business there." Asked to comment on the present  
political situation, he explained that he preferred not to since he had been out of touch "for too long a period." He reorganized the Gendarmerie between 1942 and 1948 at the direction of the United States War Department.

### Schwarzkopf Declines Comment



OIL MOVING TO WORLD MARKET

Between the two sailing dates the British maintained an economic blockade against oil as a result of  
intransigence over the issue of 'compensation for the nationalized' holdings. The Abadan refinery, the world's largest, was virtually shut down. The consortium, which is composed of Anglo-  
, a Dutch, a French and five United States companies, will operate the oil industry through two Dutch-registered companies.

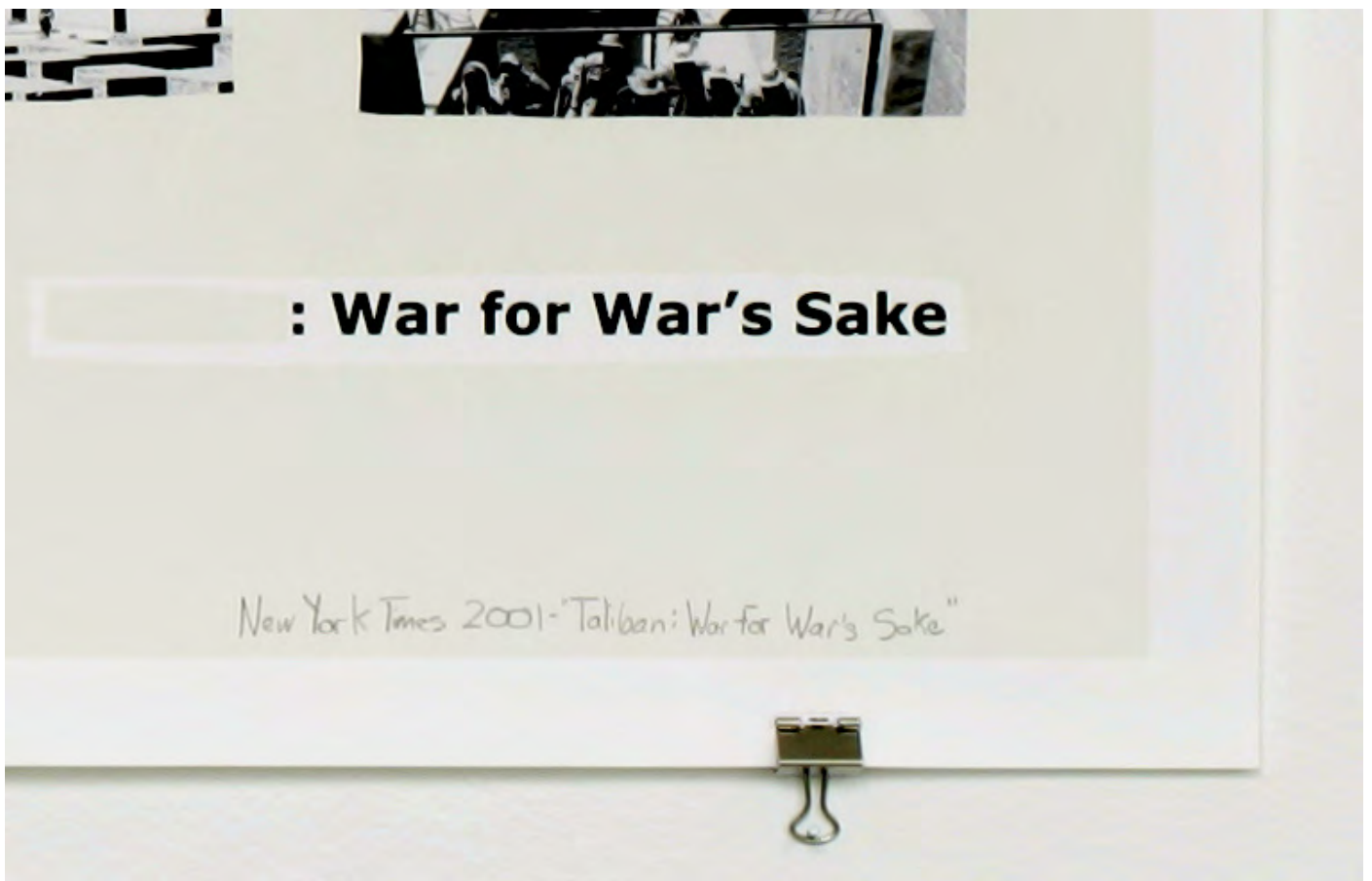
# Public Opinion

The \_\_\_\_\_ people overwhelmingly approve of the sending of United States troops to remove Gen. \_\_\_\_\_ from power, and they want them to stay for at least six more months, according to a poll taken in \_\_\_\_\_ that was made public last night by CBS News. Ninety-two percent of the 794 \_\_\_\_\_ adults interviewed said they approved of the sending of the troops, and 64 percent said they strongly approved.

\_\_\_\_\_ seemed optimistic about their future, with 90 percent predicting their country's situation over the next few years would improve as a result of the invasion.

But 74 percent said the American troops had used the right amount of force, and 87 percent, said "the price paid by \_\_\_\_\_ to overthrow the regime was worth it," even given the casualties and vandalism. Those directly affected by the invasion agreed. More than 80 percent of both those who suffered property loss and those with a friend or relative injured said the price paid by \_\_\_\_\_ to overthrow General \_\_\_\_\_ "was worth it."

## Strongly Back U.S. Move



\*in the actual installation, the date is handwritten in pencil on the right bottom corner of each poster