

Zahra Mansoor

Words from the Curator

Zahra Mansoor's explorations express constellated living, memory, and imagination. Creating from personal narratives in the South Asian diaspora, she wills the tension between her upbringing, religion, and romance to pervade her work.

Echoing art as fieldwork, Mansoor begins with observation. Whether invited into spaces or entering her memory, her process parallels an ethnographer's, balancing experience and documentation with an old handy camera or scribbled journal, "*You never know what you'll use something for.*"

For Mansoor, materials are utterances. She never enjoyed painting on canvas; it is stiff. She gravitated to muslin for its skin-like texture. Deconstructing worn garments, she finds new creative plateaus. The hand actions in clothmaking compel her— for the care threaded in them and their alterability. Using fabrics and textiles— "*symbols of the exoticized female*"¹ she refashions meaning.

In rugs, Mansoor finds diasporic life, poetry, and, in its patterns, traveling stories. She speaks about a rug store in Union Square; the rugs came from different parts of Asia and the Middle East, and the salesman, with whom she would share tea, was from Iran. *My Biggest Fan (2023)* alludes to meanings carried on the move: a woman is sprawled on intricate folds, and the fan symbolizes "orientalized" beauty.²

Mansoor reclaims the mysterious, romanticized *woman* by bringing her into the known. *Thinking about you frequently (2023)* depicts two nameless women and the familiar and close mirrored in the artist's relationship with her own femininity and other women. *People that I miss, Doing what they love (2023)* portrays the hands of two close friends and different conflicts that pull on her heartstrings.

"*Art is borderless, so are human experiences,*"³ voices Mansoor. She translates this beyond the physical, constructing hyperreal⁴ landscapes intimacy. Her purple and warm tones evoke how nostalgia reaches into the past and the future—time is *always already*.⁵

Remembering, for Mansoor, is a living and making, as seen in her detailing the everyday terrain of family relationships. *If you can't forgive me, I won't complain (2023)* sees her peering over a cliff at herself, younger and in her father's embrace; reminiscence and resignation taint the image.

I don't like many of your ideas and thoughts, but I also don't like the idea of your hands shaking and shaking as the days go on (2023) melds dreamed and witnessed scenes, showing the nuances of being bound by blood and how absence occupies the spaces in between loved ones. "*Human relationships are complicated.*"⁶

For Mansoor, "*art making is about being alive and processing your life in non-isolation.*"⁷ She demonstrates the complexity, beauty, and universality of shared introspection.

¹ Zahra Mansoor, in conversation with ModA Curations, Mar 1, 2024.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Jean Baudrillard and Sheila Faria Glaser, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1.

⁵ Olivia Angé and David Berliner, *Anthropology and Nostalgia* (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 11.

⁶ Zahra Mansoor, in conversation with ModA Curations, Mar 1, 2024.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Works Cited

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