AKINCI

Sarah Naqvi

Portfolio 2022

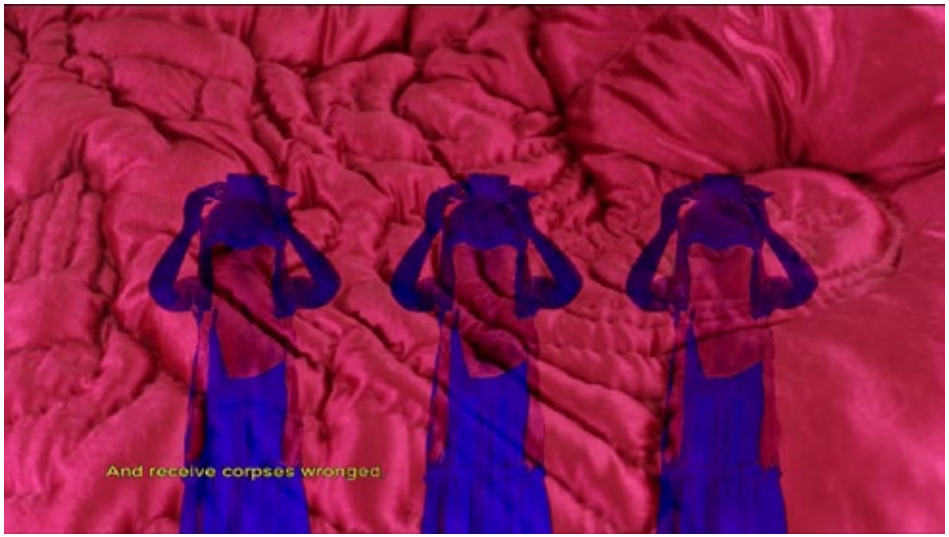
About

Sarah Naqvi (she/they, 1996, Mumbai) is an Indian contemporary artist, enrolled at the De Ateliers residency program in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Naqvi's works which received international recognition, have been described as subversive, and are noted to cover topics such as gender, sexuality, race, religion, while advocating for various social and feminist causes including that of body positivity.

Naqvi's most recent work includes the film 'How does one say queen in Islam', 2020. The film invokes formative childhood memories in a surreal surrender of self to unrecognised forces of time and space. It unravels imaginary, familiar, yet unplaceable terrains, that are marked by symbols of friendship and care that subvert the rigid structures of the patriarchy. In the wanderings of her dream, a young girl encounters those women who have fought for and formed her.

Naqvi is based in Mumbai/ Amsterdam. Their work engages in narratives themed around religious and societal stigmas. They had their first solo exhibition Bashaoor at Clark House, Mumbai in 2018, followed by their second solo exhibition, Sharam o Haya, at Ame Nue, Hamburg in 2019. In the same year, they were part of Heroines Now, a group exhibition at AKINCI, alongside Melanie Bonajo (NL), Anne Wenzel (DE), Gluklya (Natalie Pershina- Yakimanskaya) (RU/ NL) and Lungiswa Gqunta (SA). Their recent shows include Hunger at AKINCI (2020), Inherited Memory at Tarq, Mumbai (2020), Viral self portraits at Moderna galerija, Ljubljana (2020) and Escape Routes at the Bangkok Biennale (2020). Naqvi has been part of other group exhibitions such as A beast, a god, a line, curated by Para Site Director, Cosmin Costinas at MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum, Chiang Mai, Thailand (2020/21); Kunsthall Trondheim, Norway (2019); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland (2018); Para Site, Hong Kong (2018). Their work was also shown at TS1 Yangon, Yangon, Myanmar (2018); The Regimes of Truth, curated by Shaunak Mahbubani, New Delhi, Apexart NY (2018); Micro subversions Playbook, Conflictorium, Ahmedabad, curated by Avni Sethi and Venkataraman Divakar (2018) and The Exhaustion project, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, curated by Abhijan Toto (2018). They are currently a resident artist at De Ateliers in Amsterdam. Sarah was also one of the two representing artists for India at the Bangkok Biennale, Escape Routes 2020.

They were a recipient of 'The Phenomenal she' award in 2019 conferred by the Indian National Bar Association and the NID Ford Foundation Grant in 2018.



Still: ***How Does One Say Queen in Islam****, 2020, full HD single channel video film, 14:19 minutes, collaboration with Sophie Soobramanien and Hibo Elmi*

Still: ***How Does One Say Queen in Islam****, 2020, full HD single channel video film, 14:19 minutes, collaboration with Sophie Soobramanien and Hibo Elmi*

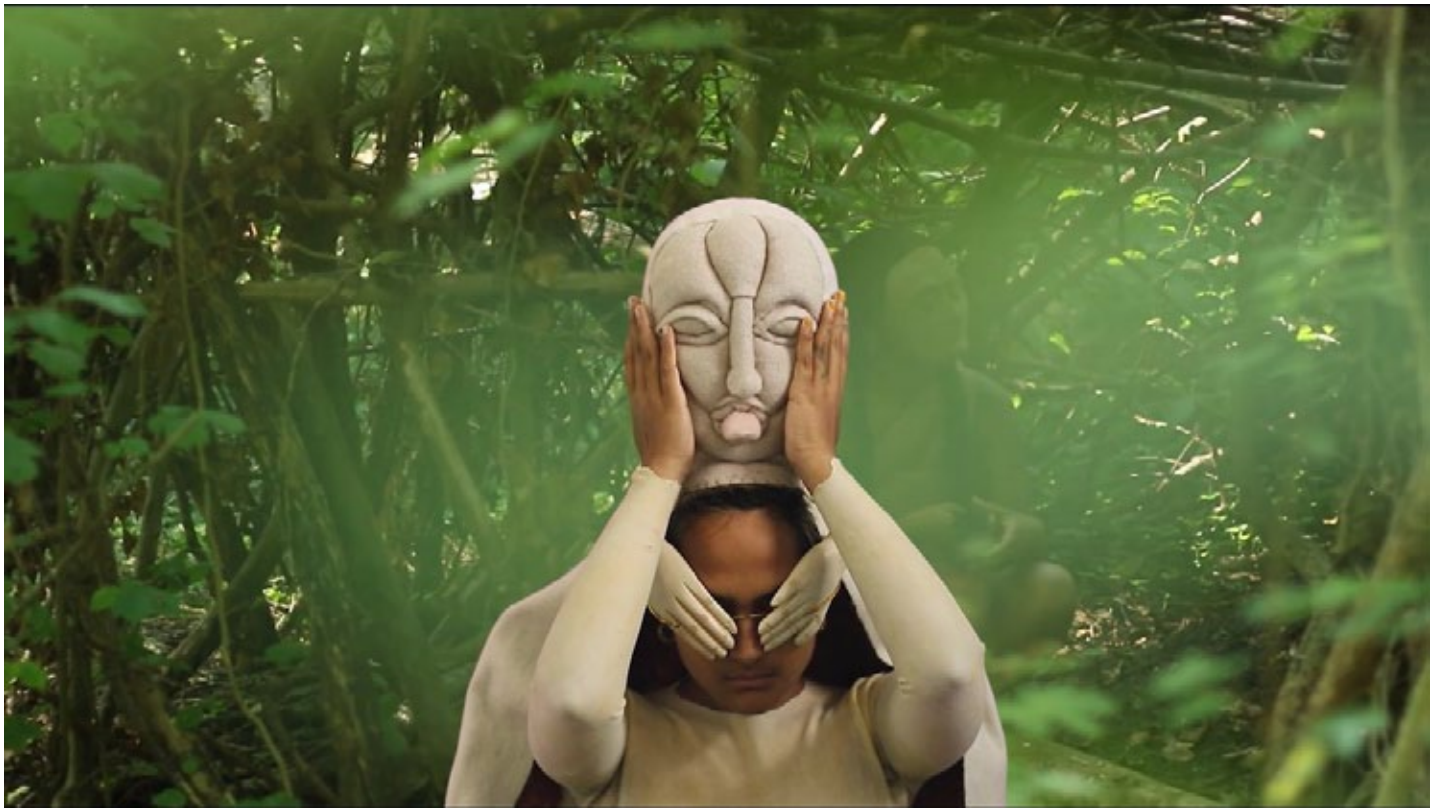
How Does One Say Queen in Islam

How Does One Say Queen in Islam? (2020), made specially for the Bangkok Art Biennale, Naqvi has constructed a new, personalised version of Islamic history, using words only uttered by women. Here, traditional forms of story-telling melt with tales and songs from their childhood in a dream landscape where female leaders, warriors, singers and revolutionaries jostle with the symbolic presence of their mother and grandmother.

On an embroidered quilt, on masks, and in a filmed performance that uses both, Naqvi invokes such diverse heroes as Queen Arawelo - the mythical leader of the Somali people, Razia Sultana - the 13th Century ruler of the Delhi Sultanate, Sayyida Al Hurra - the 16th century 'pirate' Queen of Tétouan, Umm Kulthum – the glittering Egyptian chanteuse and film star, Fatima al-Fihri – the 9th century founder of the world's first university in Fez, Asiya bint Muzahim – the adoptive mother of Moses in the Islamic tradition, the Queen of Sheba – the fabled ruler of Egypt, Ethiopia and what is now Yemen, and Khawlah bint al-Azwar – a legendary Muslim warrior at the time of Muhammad.

Together, with memories of their family and friends, in the shades of these eminent women they surrealistically celebrate liberation, affirmation, joy and hope.

Stills: ***How Does One Say Queen in Islam,*** *2020, full HD single channel video film, 14:19 minutes, collaboration with Sophie Soobramanien and Hibo Elmi*



Still: ***How Does One Say Queen in Islam****, 2020, full HD single channel video film, 14:19 minutes, collaboration with Sophie Soobramanien and Hibo Elmi*

"The film, titled How does one say 'queen' in Islam invokes formative childhood memories in a surreal surrender of self to unrecognised forces of time and space. I begin with decisive women who have moulded my own surroundings and memories but, more broadly, I am concerned with how women have acquired agency and control tactically, by working against social hierarchies and, personally, I revisit those times when, during my childhood, women mould, change, even police, society. I imagine the archetypical 'auntie next door' whose business is everyone else's, and the role she plays in the lives around her which is amplified through a larger context. Although her power is marginal, multiplied it becomes very real.

The film unravels imaginary, familiar, yet unplaceable terrains, that are marked by symbols of friendship and care that subvert the rigid structures of the patriarchy. In the wanderings of her dream, a young girl encounters those women who have fought for and formed her. Her language and mother tongue, synonymous with safety, drift her to sleep, as two different generations sing lullabies of remembrance. Throughout this film, I place importance on women whom I recognise as reckoning forces; women who have changed the course of how and whom attains knowledge and who will continue to do so. Women who can fight in battles, who rule nations, and who can shape futures. They all come alive in imagination, walking on the quilt of today's resistance. Mothers, grandmothers, daughters sitting, their hands raised against oppression."

- Sarah Naqvi

Still: ***How Does One Say Queen in Islam****, 2020, full HD single channel video film, 14:19 minutes, collaboration with Sophie Soobramanien and Hibo Elmi*

Installation overview, Bangkok Art Biennale, Escape Routes 2020

(Left) ***Um-me-leila****, 2020, textile, lampshade, embroidery, and (Right)* ***Arawelo****, 2020, textile, slicone, paint, Installation overview, Bangkok Art Biennale, Escape Routes 2020*

Installation overview, Bangkok Art Biennale, Escape Routes 2020

Installation overview, Bangkok Art Biennale, Escape Routes 2020

***Aatein (Puppet)**, 2020, textile, wood, glass*

Installation overview, Bangkok Art Biennale, Escape Routes 2020

***Fatima**, 2021, textile*

***Nazli**, 2020, textile, iron, wire*

***Um Kulthum**, 2020, textile, paint*

***Salma**, 2020, Textile*

Installation overview, Bangkok Art Biennale, Escape Routes 2020

***The Blanket of Solidarity**, 2020*

***Ethymology of the erased**, 2021, Various materials and techniques, 59.4 x 84.1 cm*

Heroines Now, group exhibition overview at AKINCI, 2019, photo by Peter Tijhuis

***Suqoon (Relief)**, 2018, oil and acrylic on canvas, 55,88 x 86,36 cm, private collection*

Aks (reflection), *2018, acrylic on canvas, 55,88x 55,88 cm, private collection*

Heroines Now, group exhibition overview at AKINCI, 2019, photo by Peter Tijhuis

***Shanakht (Identity)**, 2018, natural dyes on cotton, 30,48 x 60,96 cm, private collection*

***Shanakht (Identity)**, 2018, natural dyes on cotton, 121,92 x 60,96 cm, private collection*

***Untitled**, 2017, embroidery on hoop, 28 cm diameter*

***Supper**, 2017, embroidery on hoop, 25 cm diameter, private collection*

***Caged**, 2017, embroidery on hoop, 25 cm diameter, private collection*

***Eden**, 2017, embroidery on hoop, 33 cm diameter, private collection*

***Safe Deposit**, 2018, watercolour on paper, 35,56 x 48,26 cm, private collection*

***Untitled**, 2018, watercolour on heavy weight paper, 40 x 28 cm, private collection*

AKINCI

CV

b. 1996, Mumbai, India.

Selected solo exhibitions

2019	Sharam o Haya, Ame Nue, Hamburg, Germany
2018	Bashaoor, Clark House, Mumbai, India

Selected group exhibitions

2022	Testimonies of othering and their impossibly possible futures, Curated by Zippora Elders, Kunstfort Vijfhuizen, NL
2021	That Those Beings Be Not Being, W139, Amsterdam. NL
	A beast, a god, a line, curated by Para Site Director, Cosmin Costinas at MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum, Chiang Mai, Thailand
2020	Escape Routes 2020, one of the two artists representing India, Bankok Art Biennale, Thailand
	Viral self portraits, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, Slovenia
	Inherited Memory, Tarq, Mumbai, India
	Hunger, AKINCI, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
2019	Kunsthall Trondheim, Norway
	Heroines Now, AKINCI, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
2018	Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland
	The Regimes of Truth, curated by Shaunak Mahbubani, Apexart NY, New Delhi
	TS1 Yangon, Yangon, Myanmar
	Para Site, Hong Kong
	Micro subversions Playbook, curated by Avni Sethi and Venkataraman Divakar, Conflictorium, Ahmedabad, India
	The Exhaustion project, curated by Abhijan Toto, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany

Residencies

2019-2021	De Ateliers, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Awards and grants

2019	‘The Phenomenal she’ award, conferred by the Indian National Bar Association
2018	The NID Ford Foundation Grant