



ISSUE IN FOCUS
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reTHINK reIMAGINE reBOOT

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REMOBILIZE



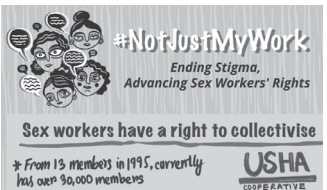
#BLACKLIVESMATTER

The Black Lives Matter campaign was created in 2013 by three organizers called Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in the US, as a response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman. The campaign works against violence and systemic racism towards black people, and is a rallying cry for ALL black lives striving for liberation.



PINJRA TOD

Pinjra Tod (Break the Cage) is an autonomous women's collective of students and alumni of colleges from across Delhi, India that seeks to make hostel and paying guest accommodation regulations less regressive and restrictive for women students. It also seeks to reclaim public spaces.



#NOTJUSTMYWORK

#NotJustMyWork is a campaign by CREA to draw attention to the myriad ways in which universal human rights apply to sex workers. Sex workers are organizing to claim and advance their rights as workers, as citizens entitled to social benefits, as part of the feminist movement, and as people entitled to a life of non-discrimination and respect. In partnership with the All India Network of Sex Workers, CREA is launching this campaign to suspend judgment around sex work.

Why are we here?

So much of our lives are under threat today. Restrictive political environments are posing serious threats to critical thinking, freedom of expression and human rights. States are silencing dissent in the name of national security.

In this moment of shifting power centers, feminists can no longer count on governance structures or human rights systems to protect or secure women's rights. Movements are gearing up in different ways to meet these unprecedented challenges. Feminists, activists, artists, allies and policymakers in their own distinct and diverse styles and artistic expressions continue to challenge, provoke, and reimagine another world.

The following nine key themes are presented and highlighted at reconference in multiple mediums and formats.



ABORTION Let's **rethink** cultural and popular narratives that guide the abortion discourse globally. Let's **reimagine** decriminalization by mitigating the effects of restrictive legislation. Let's **reboot** conversations on some of the most profound fault lines that have so far limited cross-movement alliance building on the issue of disability and abortion.

CONSENT Let's **rethink** critical questions about consent, recognizing the need to ensure that encounters are based on mutual and enthusiastic desire and not just permission. Let's **reimagine** how consent plays out for different bodies, in different situations

and in different people's lives. Let's **reboot** how ideas of consent can be used to expand an intersectional feminist agenda.

DISABILITY Let's **rethink** issues of disability and sexuality. Let's **reimagine**, through art and performance, women with disabilities as artists and build a powerful counter-narrative. Let's **reboot** conversations on some of the most profound fault lines that have so far limited cross-movement alliance building on the issue of disability and abortion.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE Let's **rethink** issues of gender, sexuality, disability, health and human rights, drawing upon

intersections with the environment. Let's **reimagine** models of resistance and leadership inspired by the collective power of women in environmental activism. Let's **reboot** our activism to address the inequalities faced by people on the margins because of environmental trends.

PLEASURE AND DANGER Let's **rethink** pleasure, danger and who is excluded when we talk about both. Let's **reimagine** social norms and popular culture that push for contradictory definitions of pleasure and danger. Let's **reboot** the idea of pleasure and danger as being a binary, and redefine them through the lenses of agency and autonomy.

SEX WORK Let's **rethink** the binary between feminism and sex work. Let's **reimagine** how we talk about sex work, and make the case for sex workers' rights and decriminalization. Let's **reboot** feminist organizations and movements to embrace sex workers' rights and the full decriminalization of sex work – as a feminist issue.

SEXUAL /GENDER DIVERSITY Let's **rethink** why we are choosing the language of 'sexual and gender diversity'. Let's **reimagine** ideas about sexual liberation, freedom and autonomy and place these back into the sexuality and gender discourse. Let's **reboot** the possibilities of cross-movement alliance-building and advocacy through narratives, stories and documentation.

SPORTS Let's **rethink** how to tackle discriminatory practices that act against women in sports on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, caste and ethnicity. Let's **reimagine** new perspectives and solidarities within and across movements. Let's **reboot** analysis around the policy and legal frameworks that restrict and control women in sports.

TECHNOLOGY Let's **rethink** the role and significance of technology in our lives. Let's **reimagine** the digital as a powerful political space of opportunities and threats. Let's **reboot** our activism away from the false binary of physical only versus digital only.

What to expect at #recon2019?

500+
 PARTICIPANTS FROM
 ACROSS THE GLOBE
180
 ORGANIZATIONS
50+
 SELF-LED MOVEMENTS
38
 ARTISTS

ART. EXHIBITS. DANCE. POETRY.
 THEATRE. CONVERSATIONS.
 INSTALLATIONS. CAMPAIGNS.
 PANELS. MUSIC. FILMS.
 CLIP REELS. SPOKEN WORD.
 PRESENTATIONS. PAINTINGS.
 MEDIA. PUBLICATIONS.
 PODCASTS. MOVEMENTS.
 STAND UP COMEDY. MIME.
 STORYTELLING. PLENARIES.
 WORKSHOPS.

Reconference is being translated into seven languages – Hindi, English, Bengali, Arabic, Spanish, French and Sign.

In 2011, CREA organized its first conference *Count Me In!* at Crowne Plaza Kathmandu, Soaltee. This was the only hotel in the city to adapt to the needs of people with disabilities. In 2018, when CREA began planning for #recon2019, this

hotel was our first choice.

This time, Crowne Plaza Kathmandu, Soaltee has made all outdoor spaces wheelchair accessible. The hotel has worked closely with us to build ramps and provide reasonable accommodation to people with disabilities. We have partnered with Planet Abled and have tried our best to make #recon2019 as accessible as possible!

CRIMINALIZATION

TODAY'S PLENARY

More harm than good
CHALLENGING
CRIMINALIZATION AND
EXPLORING FEMINIST
FAULT LINES

SPEAKERS: Monica Raye Simpson, SisterSong | Kholi Butelezi, SISONKE | Estefania Vela, CIDE | Rupsa Mallik, CREA | Jasmine George, Hidden Pockets and RESURJ
MODERATOR: Susana Fried



Monica Raye Simpson



Kholi Butelezi



Estefania Vela



Jasmine George

Increasingly, a range of allied movements are challenging the criminalization of sexuality, sexual conduct and gender.

What are the linkages between criminalization of sexuality and gender? What does this suggest for building stronger cross-movement alliances and strategies that encompass the range of linked forms of criminalization? How do we effectively engage allies to challenge the ways we do advocacy and activism taking issues around criminalization into consideration? How do we help show the problems of going down the path of criminalization?

Let's **rethink** criminalization and what it really accomplishes?

Let's **reimagine** the alternatives to criminalization. What happens when you decriminalize? What else needs to be done to address ongoing punitive policies and practices?

Let's **reboot** alliance-building across criminalized groups. How do we bring a broader perspective to our advocacy? How do we get movements that challenge criminalization in discussion with each other? Pictis rero tectemo

Criminalization is not the answer

Excerpts from writings by CREA's Executive Director Geetanjali Misra

In their article *Criminal Law, Activism and Sexual and Reproductive Justice: What We Can Learn from the Sex Selection Campaign*, Geetanjali Misra and Vrinda Marwah begin by exploring the complexity of determining evidence of and causes for a skewed female-to-male sex ratio.

The authors consider some of the messaging and advocacy intended to combat sex selection and ask whether these have inadvertently been counterproductive to a more transformative women's rights agenda. Ultimately they want to examine the question of what a principled use of criminal law may look like on the questions of sex selection and abortion and, by extension, on the broader spectrum of sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

They write that, "Criminal law is a site where activists have sought to inscribe or challenge the limits of sexual relations – saying no to coercive sexual conduct and yes to same-sex sexual conduct, for instance. And although we are often acutely aware of the limits of the law as a force for social and systemic change, law also becomes a

ready focus of a lot of our activism. When we engage with criminal law to further a human rights agenda, there are a range of issues, possibilities, and challenges that merit consideration."

Geetanjali Misra goes on to highlight the impact of criminalization in her article *Decriminalizing Homosexuality in India* published in *Reproductive Health Matters*. "This law had led to serious discrimination against people engaging in homosexual acts, who were subjected to frequent beatings and blackmail attempts by police, who used the threat of prosecution against them. NGOs working with sexual minorities have also been harassed and sometimes charged under Section 377. By stigmatizing homosexuality and threatening gay men with prison, the law is also likely to have impeded the battle against HIV."

India began its struggle to decriminalize homosexuality in 2001 by challenging Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. In 2009, when the Delhi High Court decriminalized adult consensual sex, Geetanjali noted, "With this, an eight-year advocacy campaign was



Geetanjali Misra

brought to a successful conclusion. A provision in the Penal Code of India that had endured since 1860, when it was imposed on all British colonies, was read down. The high publicity of the case has inspired debate and discussion among Indians who had not previously considered sexuality issues, opening minds and increasing the flow of new ideas. Across the country, the decision sparked celebrations among sexuality, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups, which see decriminalization of homosexuality as a vital step on the road to their acceptance by the wider society."

REREAD

Beyond Virtue and Vice

Rethinking Human Rights and Criminal Law

EDITED BY ALICE M. MILLER AND MINDY JANE ROSEMAN

An extract from the book's introduction... and more

Decriminalization campaigns for abortion, sex work, and HIV regularly produce empirical studies of who gets policed or goes to prison under these laws, with the factual evidence of the failure of intended effects and discrimination enlisted as part of the law reform efforts.

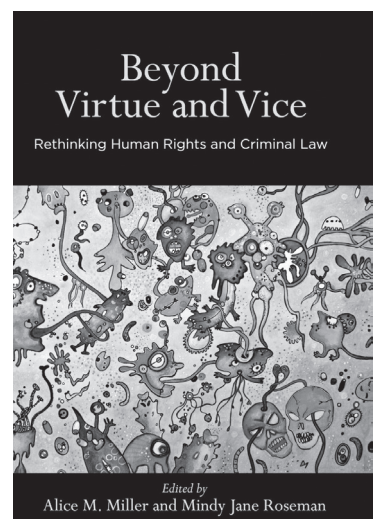
Our calls to use criminal law for our own ends require a similar commitment to empiricism – solidarity and empathy, at least rhetorically, open a path toward accountability: the obligation to know and respond to the distributional and proportional consequences of criminalization for all... It is a tall order: the cultivation of solidarity, empathy, and accountability, informed by an awareness of indeterminacy and the knowledge that if we hold back on revenge, some may well suffer unfairly through failure to redress. This is why we premise our rules of engagement on a cautious, even ambivalent regard for both criminal justice and human rights.

A GLIMPSE OF THE BOOK

In Part I, *Transnational Theory and Practice*, Janet Halley is in conversation with Aziz Ahmed. Alice M. Miller and Tara Zivkovic discuss how prosecution became the go-to tool to vindicate rights. Alli Jernow discusses human rights, criminal law and the regulation of sex and gender and Widney Brown reflects as a human rights activist.

In Part II, *National Historical Perspectives*, Sealing Cheng and Ae-Ryung Kim write about prostitution exceptionalism in South Korea. Sonia Correa and Maria Lucia Karam discuss Brazilian sex laws. Oliver Philips discusses laws and customs in protecting and patrolling relations of gender and sexuality and Mindy Jane Roseman writes about abortion in France.

In Part III, *Contemporary National Concerns*, Alice Miller is in conversation with Wanja Muguongo. Geetanjali Misra and Vrinda Marwah write about their



learnings from the sex selection campaign in India. Esteban Restrepo Saldarriaga discusses old moralities under new clothes. Rasha Mounneh discusses sex panics in Lebanon. Scott Long says objects in political mirrors may not be what they appear and Joanna N. Erdman makes an argument for decriminalization.

What has always interested me is the relationship between the viewer and the image – what I found in these animated light boxes – here there was something that was neither still nor moving but it was something in-between and it basically draws your attention in a very different way. It is like an interregnum – a space between. We are inundated with moving images and we are inundated with still images and here something else happens.

AG: Can you please tell us something about your personal and artistic journey?

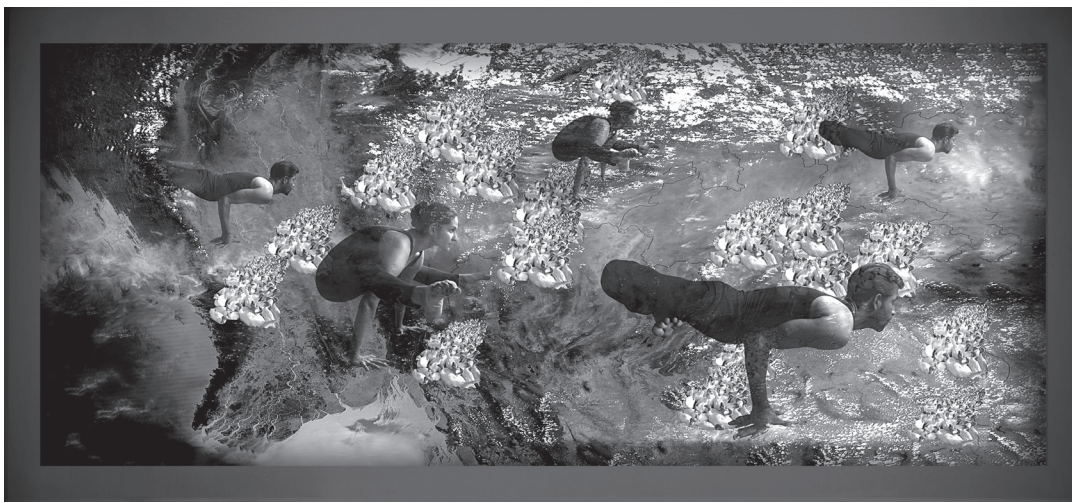
SC: I started as a documentary photographer and an activist in the women's movement. It wasn't that I was documenting the movement in any kind of journalistic sense. I was basically recording it for us, for our own history. I was literally pointing the camera one moment and shouting slogans the next. So it was really photographed from within. Those images for me were meant to circulate within the movement and challenge stereotypes. In mainstream media, you either had the helpless victim, the beautiful maharani or the consumer. These images were of women in struggle, militant women trying to change social structures, confronting patriarchy. A lot of that early period when I came back to Delhi and got involved with the women's movement, the eighties, was very much about dowry murders. I built up, over about more than ten years a substantial record of the movement, not just protest but also workshops, discussions, street plays, etc. By the end of the eighties, early nineties, I began to feel troubled by certain questions. It was increasingly clear that all photography was interpretive and that that no medium is transparent. So each image was produced through the subjectivity of the photographer and therefore the politics of the photographer. However, this was contrary to the canon of documentary street photography and the objective 'truth' claim of photography.

In my own practice, I found that this militant image that I had in a way developed and which had been circulated and had in many ways become the face of the movement, had become the new stereotype. I would see press photographers, reproducing that same shouting mouth and raised fist. That brought with it another kind of self-reflection. I felt that while I knew these women so well, they were my

An Interregnum

exploring the art of Sheba Chhachhi

Sheba Chhachhi is a photographer, women's rights activist, writer, installation artist. She has exhibited her works widely in India and internationally. In 2017, she was awarded the Prix Thun for Art and Ethics. In this interview, she talks to CREA's Arushi Gupta.



ABOVE *Edible Birds III*, Kukkut-Kak Asana, Myanmar Drought, Moving Image Lightbox, 2007
BELOW *Yamuna 3*, from *The Yamuna Series* (triptych), Moving Image Lightbox, 2005

sisters in the movement, humsafars (fellow travelers) walking together. The images that I had created over this decade represented only one aspect of who they were.

I then went into an experiment to develop collaborative staged portraits with seven women from the women's movement where I invited each woman to work with me to create a representation. This was very much about sharing [the] power of the photographer, changing the balance of power, giving the subject agency to determine how she is represented. I invited each woman [to] choose a place, to choose props, objects that would help tell her story. A posture. A gaze. Together we would create a kind of mise-en-scène – like a theatrical set up – within which she would pose, speak; I would photograph.

What I was trying to do was to create a space of inter-subjectivity where the image we were producing was not mine and it was not even fully hers but it was something that we had co-created because of

the empathetic space that we had created between ourselves. For me this was also trying to embody some feminist principles. I wanted to work these within the actual medium.

I was also troubled by the way in which photography is received... the gallery walk where you flip through the images the way you flip through the pages of a magazine. The first thing that I wanted to do was to take the photographs off the walls, take them into space and layer them, make the encounter complex and draw the viewer into the narrative. This led to creating large photo-based installations.

The work focused on women, on the body, cultural memory in the early years and then I grew increasingly concerned with urban ecology from around 2000. Personal experiences, encounters with certain situations, as well as reading, analysis, research fed into this concern. I do a lot of research, which is an integral part of my process. I began to work more with questions around

the city and ecology – this was in a way a continuation of the work on the body. I was looking at the body of the earth, the body of the city, and our bodies in relation to their conditions.

AG: Please share the idea behind the still and the moving images in the two series that are going to be exhibited, *The Yamuna Series* and *Edible Birds*.

SC: What has always interested me is the relationship between the viewer and the image – what I found in these animated light boxes – here there was something that was neither still nor moving but something in-between which draws your attention in a very different way. It is like an interregnum – a space between. We are inundated with moving images and we are inundated with still images and here something else happens. For a moment you think it's a video and then people slow down and they start looking. They

elicit a particular kind of attentiveness. And offer possibilities to build kinetic layers. I like to slow people down, to create embodied viewing. This underlies most of my work, particularly immersive installations.

AG: In one of the light boxes in *The Yamuna Series*, there is the image of a woman who is holding up papers and it is juxtaposed against the bank of the Yamuna and it's barren and you can see that it's dystopic. How did you conceive these juxtapositions as you were researching *The Yamuna Series*?

SC: Well I think it began with going to the Yamuna and photographing and finding this incredible white froth everywhere that actually looks quite beautiful when you just see it and then you realize that its pure poison, the water is extremely toxic. So there was this encounter with the river herself, with her condition and of course, all the research and reading about it. This connected with someone I had met some years before who lived on the banks of the Yamuna.

It's a curious story. She was someone from a middle class home who had gone to kill herself, drown herself in the Yamuna but was saved by a sadhu (ascetic). She then began living in this little hut on the banks of the Yamuna and became a sadhu herself. Then she faced a really ironical situation. As part of the drive to clean up the Yamuna what they really do is remove the poor. They destroyed a large community that was settled on the banks of the Yamuna for generations and turned the area into Yamuna Golden Jubilee Park. The [people of the] community that lived on the banks have been sent far away from their jobs, their lives.

So this woman was under threat of displacement. This was sometime in the late nineties. She was struggling to show that she had a legal right to actually live in the little hut on the bank of the river. A riverbank is home to many marginal lives and over the years of wandering and traveling, it's always been in any city, a very interesting place to go... and meet all kinds of people who do not fit into the mainstream, who end up on banks of rivers. At one time the banks were where civilizations started and now it's the marginal and the rejects that you find there. They are often very interesting people so I made friends with this woman and she told me about this struggle. I visited her over the years and the last time I saw her, she had this bunch of papers where she was trying to get ID proof as a sadhu. She later proved that she had a right to live there and to fight off the destruction of her home, for the time being.

When I was creating this project that encounter came back to me. It is not necessary that I am working on a project and everything happens at that particular time because these are ongoing enquiries, ongoing interests. The image of her holding her papers becomes emblematic of the precariousness and fragility of the lives of women in a hyper-developing city.

Aapurv Jain | Aarathi Pai | Adelaida Garcia Codina | Aditi Gogia | Aditi Rai | Afrah Shafiq | Afroja Arman | Agnieszka Król | Ahodi Credo Addis Semevo | Aicha Chennaoui | Aiman Khan | Aldijana Silic | Alex Etchart | Alexa Bradley | Alexandre Paulikevitch | Amanda | Amanda Hodgeson | Amanda Van Deven | Ambika Tandon | Amina Bomzan | Amit Timilsina | Amreen | Amuda Mishra | A M Umsha Madumali Chandrika | Ana Francis Lopez | Anahita Sarabhai | Andrea Barragán Gómez | Angelina Cofer | Angelique Abboud | Anindya Hajra | Anisha Chandra | Anisia Byukusenge | Ankit Gupta | Anne Gathumbi Masheti | Anuradha Chatterji | Anustha Mainali | Aparna Uppaluri | Apekshya Niraula | Archismita | Arkana Khatoun | Arthur Mubiru | Arti Zodpe | Aruna Dholakiya | Aruna Rao | Arundhati Roy | Arushi Gupta | Ashley Edokpayi | Ashrafun Nahar | Asli Coban | Ayse Yesim Erkan Yetiser | Ayuma Shikuku | Azadeh Akhlaghi | Baaraan Ijlal | Babalwa Mtshawu | Balakirushnaraja Ashwiny | Bandana Sharma | Barbara Lotti | Barbara Tumwebaze | Barnali Chakrobarty | Barsha G C | Batte Shamilah | Berfu Seker | Betty Cheptoek | Bharat | Bharti Patel | Bhawana Rai | Bhawana Sitaula | Bhumika Shreshtha | Bijaya Dhakal | Biplabi Shreshtha | Bishakha Datta | Boglárka Fedorkó | Borislav Gerasimov | Brenda Akankwasa | Brenda Wambui | Bui Thi Minh Ngoc | C Van Der Vlies | Caroline Tagny | Cecilia Sotres Castillo | Charitra Kumari K C | Charlotte Rose | Christelyn Sibugon | Christian Cherene | Christina Zampas | Cindy Clark | Comfort Mussa | Cornelië Keizer | Crystal Rodriguez | Cynthia El Khoury | Cynthia Rothschild | Cynthia Steele | Damla Eroglu | Danielle Hooijmans | Danielle Nolen | Daniel McBride | Darcelle Lewis | Dareen Tatour | Dayanara Marte | Daysi Flores | Deepa Dahal | Deepak | Delphine Uwambayingabire | Devashri Mukherjee | Deya Bhattacharya | Diakhoumba Gassama | Diana Samarasan | Diksha Dubey | Dikshya Khadgi | Dipika Srivastava | Dipta Bhog | Disha Sethi | Dorothy Nakato Mubezi | Dulal Das | Durga Sapkota | Ebony Johnson | Edward Muir | Elaf Nasreldin | Elaine Bortolanza | Elie Chryssakis | Elizabeth Miller | Elizabeth Njeri | Elsa Oliveira | Emine Gulsah Seral | Emma Mogaka Kerubo | Emmanuel Ndbombi | Erica Lim | Erick Monterrosas | Erika Cortes | Essy Adhiambo | Estafania Vela | Ezster Kismodi | Farida Begum | Fatima Farhana | Florence Otieno | Fortunë Haziri | Gabrielle Le Roux | Ganga Thapa | Garima Shrivastava | Gayathri Thayappa | Geetanjali Misra | Gem Lualhati Daguman | Gema Hierro | Genesis Luigi | George Mwai | Georges Azzi | Georgina Anabella Orellano | Ghausia Rashid Salam | Gillio Baxter | Ginney Liu | Gita Das | Gladys Faith Njeri | Gomawati Pun | Gopi Shankar Madurai | Gopika Bashi | Grace Banu | Gretchen Killpack Burger | Grindl Dockery | Gunjan Dixit | Gurmid Singh | Gyanu BK | Haitske van Asten | Hajjara Batte | Hameeda Khatoun | Happy Mwendu Kinyili | Harsh Chauhan | Haydee Sarahi Gonzalez Rodas | Heidi Paredes Hawar | Helda Khasmy | Houyem Mchirgui | 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KC | Kusumu | Lalita Laura Kanushu | Lavanya Mehra | Laxman Rodriguez | Liesel Bakker | Lolita Chavez Lucinda van den Heever | Lukas | Luna Kiess | Macklean Kyomya | Madhu Mehra Mafijul Rahaman | Magdalena Firlag | | Maitri Morarji | Malashree Tharubai Mamata Shrestha | Mamta Singh | Manel Margarita Salas | Maria Diaz Ezquerro Maria Riot | Maria Soledad Liparelli | Maria | Marisol GarciaSegura | Mariya Taher Maryam Mayanja | Marygorety Akinyi Mayuri Karna | Mbombe Kagasi | Meena Melissa Wainaina | Meriç Doğan | Michelle | Milagros Olivera Noriega | Mille Dollar Monica Raye Simpson | Mónica Selene Zaidi | Muhammed Bhuiyan | Muktasree | Nadia van der Linde | Nampijja Shamim | Nancy Nothando Chabuda | Nandini | Nandita Roy | Nasala Chitrakar | Natalie Neonats Rai | Nida Mushtaq | Nidal Ayoub | Nidal Azhary | Nidhi Goyal | Nikzad Zanganeh | Niluka Gunawardena | Nishant Shah | Nishla Shayka | Nitika Pant | Nityanand Bhatt | Nohely Guzmán Narváez | Norma Roxana Diaz Laurente | Nthabiseng Mokoena | Nupur Basu | Nurhayatee Yusoh | Pabitra Majhi | Panchmani Vincent | Paromita Vohra | Payoshni Mitra | Peninnah Mwangi | Phoebe De Padua | Pim Savetmalanond | Pinki Pramanik | Pooja Rajiv | Poonam Kumari | Poornima Rajendra Mandape | Poornima Sukumar | Putheavy OL | Potluri Devi | Pradhanya Yonzon | Prakash Raj VM | Praneeta Kapur | Prashansa Karki | Prashansa KC | Prekchhya Shrestha | Priya Nanda | Purity Kagwiria | Purushotham | Pushpa Joshi | Pushpa Sharma | Pushpam Ghimire | Putul Halder | R Ramakka | Rabeya Sultana | Rachel Bali | Radhika Pariyar | Raghavendra Meera | Rahul Prajapati | Raina Roy | Rama Vedula | Ram Sasmal | Ramyata Limbu | Rani Kumari | Ranjana Dhami | Rashi Wadhera | Rashna Mahzabin | Reena Akshay Chaudhari | Rekha Chauhan | Rekha Yadav | Renuka Sanjay Kale | Reshma Valliappan | Reshmaben Vohra | Rhea Chawla | Rhoda Garland | Richa Kaul Padte | Ritambhara Mehta | Rituparna Borah | Roselyn Odoyo | Roua Al Seghaier | Ruby Johnson | Rudo Chigudu | Rukhsana Kapil | Ruokuobeituo Bibi Soho | Ruokuozotuo Kuku Soho | Rupsa Mallik | S James Victor | S M Kusuma Jayalath | S Thivya Rakini | Saartje Baes | Sabeena Gadihoke | Sabina Rashid | Sabita Lamichhane | Sadhna Prasad Sahar Yahiaoui | Sajju Maharjan | Saleha Rauf | Sally AlHaq | Sally Leiyen | Samana Lawati | Sameena Parveen | Samir Shah | Sancheeta Ghosh | Sandra Macias del Villar | Sandy Cioffi | Sangeeta Saini | Sanjana Gaiand | Sanjay Rana | Sanjida Arora | Sankari G | Sapna Kedia | Sara Hossain | Saraban Tahura Zaman | Sarah Baes | Sarah Green | Sarah Suhail | Sarah van Brussel | Sashwati Banerjee | Sattara Hattirat | Scheherazade Tillet | Semiha Ari | Senda Ben Jabara | Shabnam | Shadab | Shadi Amin | Shahana Siddiqui | Shahanoor Chowdhury | Shahina Yasmin | Shalini Singh | Shamala Chandrasekaran | Shamim Salim | Shanthi Muniswamy | Shanti Soundarajan | Shanti Tiwari | Sharanya Sekaram | Sheena Magenya | Shermal Wijewardena | Shikha Kiran Yadav | Shirmin Akther Dolon | Shivan Alungati Palin | Shohini Ghosh | Shoko Ishikawa | Shova Dangol | Shovna Pokhare | Shraddha Mahilkar | Shreya Ila Anasuya | Shuba Kayastha | Shuchi Tripathi | Sigere Kasasi | Siobhan Knox Reeves | Smarajit Jana | Smita Vanniyar | Smriti Lama | Snezhana Zubenko | Sofia Alessio-Robles Orozco | Sohila Mohamed Mahmoud Hassan | Sophoan Chan | Solange Bonello | Solome Nakaweesi Kimbugwe | Sreshta | Srilatha Batliwala | Srinidhi Raghavan | Srishti Jayana | Stuti Tripathi | Subha Wijesiriwardena | Subina Pariyar | Suchismita Mondal | Suchitra Dalvie | Sudarsana Kundu | Sudeep Chaudhari | Suila Safara Binte Hannan | Sukanya Guha Roy | Sumeera Shreshtha | Sumikshya Khadka | Sumudu Chamara | Sunita Kujur | Sunita Murmu | Suniti Neogy | Suprekshya Joshi | Susana Fried | Sushila Bhatta | Sushma Luthra | Susmita Lama | Swarnlata Mahilkar | Swatee | Syeda Samara Mortada | Tahira Kaleem | Tania Turner Sen | Tara Burns | Tasaffy Hossain | Tatevik Aghabekyan | Tenzin Dolker | Terry McGovern | Thea Khoury | Thenu Ranketh | Theresa McGovern | Tom Waugh | Tia Sasmita Sari | Tina-Marie Assi | Tishuana Edwards | Tshегоfatso Senne | Tugce Canbolat | Ukei Mura | Uma Budhathoki | Uma Paliwal | Upasana Shrestha | Urmila Salunkhe | Uwingabe Hassna Murenzi | Vaishali Sinha | Vandana Mahajan | Vani Viswanathan | Vanita Shrikant Mane | Vannsopharith Leng | Varsha Sarkar | Vasuki Jeyasankar | Venuri Perera | Vera Rodriguez | Victoria Tesoriero | Vuyiswa Sizzumo | Xiomara Carballo | Yajaswi Rai | Yashas Chandra | Yukta Bajrachary | Zainab Ibrahim | Zarghoona Wadood | Zelal Bedriye Aymen | Zoe Gudovic

Coming together to reimagine feminist futures

Questioning Dis/ability

The curated space provides a live and immersive experience using art, performance, storytelling and films on issues of disability and sexuality and the representation of women with disabilities. The core vision guiding the design of the space has been to challenge the prevailing and stigmatizing narratives that label disabled bodies as non-normative and asexual. The space will also be a site for cross-movement political engagement and alliance-building.

The following excerpt from *Imagery, Visibility and Disability*, a blog by Lizzie Kiama, Founding Director, This-Ability provides an insightful analysis of the way disabled bodies are categorized. She argues that this should not just be critiqued but serves as a means to redo socially constructed ideas of beauty.

Bodies are where we put our theories of social justice into practice. It therefore follows that the categories in which bodies are placed, willingly or unwillingly, need to be subject to careful critique. In a society driven by narrow, visual representations of standards of beauty (for example in media, advertising and popular culture), women with disabilities have been largely invisible.

Value is placed on bodies that most satisfy the socially constructed aesthetic, and because disabled bodies are culturally considered an aberration, they fall short and are therefore dismissed. This dismissal escalates into outright erasure because the effect of not being considered valuable means that disabilities are not represented, included or considered

for anything. The media, for example, responsible for pushing messages that shape the consciousness of societies, will always choose to play it safe by only aligning its messages to viewer expectations rather than challenging the norm that equates disabled women with asexuality...

Increasing the visibility of disabled women and awareness of their sexuality does not equate to a call for the sexualization of disabled women. Indeed, sexualization of the female body continues to be a concern for women's groups. Mainstream and digital media carry on driving attention towards body parts rather than whole women, counteracting the strides women have made in encouraging respect for the autonomous female body. Without falling into the trap of



Lizzie Kiama. One of a series of images commissioned by This-Ability Consulting as part of a photography series *Faces of Diversity*, aimed at creating visibility for young women with disabilities working to advance disability rights in Kenya. @ SRHM Guest Blog, July 2018

sexualization, erasure, stigmatization and exclusion must be countered, and the consciousness of society changed, through visibility and by challenging norms that equate disability with asexuality.

SEX AND DISABILITY THE FACTS

There are still lots of myths about sex and disability lurking around – and we're out to change that! So, we're throwing light on some common misconceptions about disability and sex. (From Australia's House with No Steps)

- FACT 1** People with disabilities can be sexual and enjoy sex!
- FACT 2** People with disabilities don't only have sex with one another.
- FACT 3** Sex is not just all about each other's 'privates.'
- FACT 4** People with a physical disability don't just 'lie there.'
- FACT 5** People with disabilities can and do use sex workers.
- FACT 6** People with disabilities can identify as LGBTIQI too.

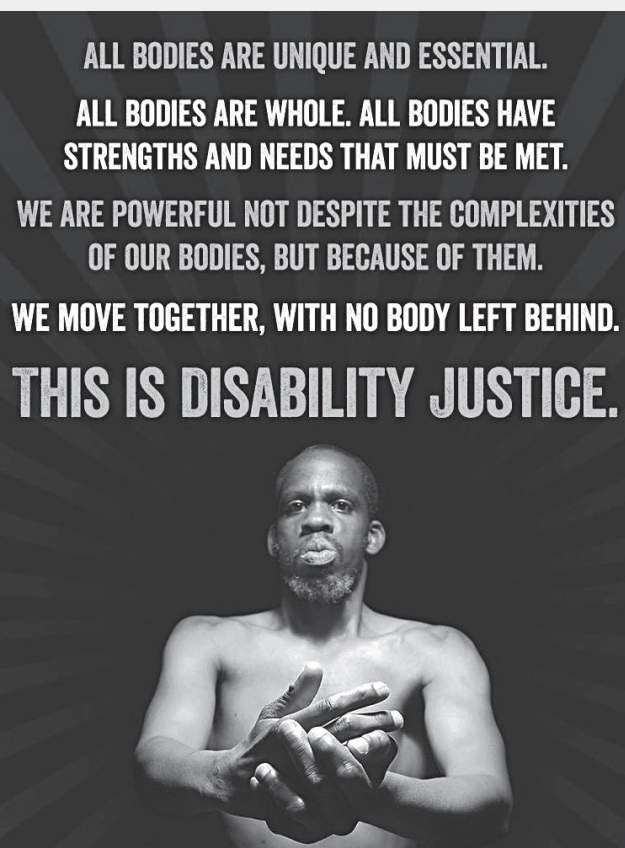


Photo of Leroy Moore by Richard Downing, text by Patty Berne and Sins Invalid, layout by Micah Bazant

DaDaFest: Encountering sexuality through disability and deaf arts

The following is an extract from an article titled *Artivism and the Last Avant Garde: A Route to Sexuality, Embodiment and Disability Justice* published in the journal *Arrow for Change* by Janet Price, a disabled feminist and academic.

Started in Liverpool over 30 years ago, DaDaFest (the Disability and Deaf Arts Festival) acts as a channel for developing and sharing the ideas of disability artists, art that serves as a force to claim justice and rights for disabled people. DaDaFest advocates for disabled artists to develop professional and artistic skills, and cuts through the discrimination they face within both the art world and amongst the broader public.

Producing a wide range of visual and performance arts and working through local and global connections, one of DaDaFest's aims is to challenge assumptions about disability... the work DaDaFest produces is often edgy, challenging heteronormative disability stereotypes, questioning fixed ideas of the 'body beautiful,' and undermining stigma and prejudice about beliefs of disabled people's non-sexual lives.

The dance work of Claire Cunningham [one of the UK's most acclaimed disabled artists who is associated with DaDaFest] takes us back to dreams, the things

we yearn for, to the potential moments of intimacy in our lives. Claire's dance partners are the crutches she uses to move around in the world, her supports, always by her side, indispensable, solid – but not renowned for speaking. Yet with Claire, they become garrulous, voluble, sharing Claire's desires as an extension of her body. In the short *Ménage à Trois*, when Claire says "We click!" we see the connections weaving through her crutches to the invisible figure of Claire's, perhaps of our own, desire...

As individuals reach out and use art to make relationships across differences, build connections that allow them to understand more of the injustice others face within disability, sexuality, and its related



intersections, and in turn respond to these through creating and sharing art, they discover ways to build alliances of people campaigning for disability rights and justice. And together these groups connect to create a more just and equitable world.



SECTION 377 THE LONG FIGHT

6th September 2018 will go down in history as the day the Supreme Court of India upheld equality, non-discrimination and dignity of persons, and decriminalized the archaic Section 377 of the Penal Code. Section 377, which was introduced into Indian criminal laws in 1860, criminalized adult same sex consensual sexual relationships.

"History," the Court observed, "owes an apology to the members of this community and their families, for the delay in providing redressal for the ignominy and ostracism that they have suffered through the centuries. The members of this community were compelled to live a life full of fear of reprisal and persecution. This was on account of the ignorance of the majority to recognize that homosexuality is a completely natural condition, part of a range of human sexuality. The mis-application of this provision denied them the fundamental right to equality guaranteed by Article 14. It infringed the fundamental right to non-discrimination under Article 15, and the fundamental right to live a life of dignity and privacy guaranteed by Article 21. LGBT persons deserve

to live a life unshackled from the shadow of being 'unapprehended felons.'"

The journey to decriminalization began in 2001 and was anything but easy. The cornerstone of the petition was the cross-movement collaboration and consultation with multiple rights groups including child rights, LGBT rights and women's rights. Importantly, the petition did not pray for striking down section 377 but to read it down to exclude adult consensual sex in private. The prayer was extremely strategic and thought through, ensuring that all rights-based organizations were on board. It was, however, more than a legal battle.

While decriminalization was always part of the struggle, social acceptance has always been a bigger and more deep-rooted challenge. The story of India's journey to decriminalization is definitely not complete without acknowledging both sides of the coin.

To strengthen the petition, which was filed by Naz Foundation India Trust in the Delhi High Court and to highlight violations, a coalition of LGBT rights, child rights and women's rights activists came together and intervened in the petition,

adding their voices to Naz.

The coalition, called Voices Against 377, was a group of 12 organizations (CREA, Tarshi, Sama, Prism, Haq, Breakthrough, Anjuman, Jagori, Nirantar, Nigah, Partners for Law in Development & Saheli) and five individuals (Pramada Menon, Sumit Baudh, Ponni Arasu, Lesley Esteves & Gautam Bhan).

Voices against 377 launched large-scale education campaigns raising awareness on the issue among the general public, the media, the health professions and students. Activities included demonstrations, press conferences and a 'Million Voices' campaign, which gathered tens of thousands of signatures against Section 377.

In 2009, the Delhi High Court, in what was a groundbreaking judgment, decriminalized homosexuality observing that "...Indian constitutional law does not permit the statutory criminal law to be held captive by the popular misconceptions of who the LGBTs are. It cannot be forgotten that discrimination is [the] antithesis of equality and that it is the recognition of equality which will foster the dignity of every individual."

However, fundamental rights weren't upheld for long and in 2013 the Supreme Court, in an appeal filed by certain conservative groups, recriminalized homosexuality. The

court justified this on the ground that "(W)hile reading down Section 377 IPC, the Division Bench of the High Court overlooked that a minuscule fraction of the country's population constitute lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgenders..."

Despite the decision, the fight did not stop. People were shocked and let down by the decision. But people within the community supported each other and decided to fight harder. Activism did not stop. Groups and organizations continued to work with various stakeholders. Courts might not have recognized the fundamental human rights of LGBT people, but activists were determined to work from the ground up and push back.

During this time, sexual assault laws in India changed. Specific laws protecting children from sexual abuse were introduced. Rape laws were amended to include non-penetrative rape. The two grounds – that Section 377 protects children from sexual abuse and that it protects women from non-penetrative vaginal rape – which were being used by conservative groups to push for retaining Section 377 in its original language, were now specifically covered by criminal law.

In addition, in 2017 the Supreme Court in a 9 judge bench decision, while upholding the right to privacy as a fundamental right observed

that the rights of the LGBT community are "not 'so-called' but are real rights founded on sound constitutional doctrine. They inhere in the right to life. They dwell in privacy and dignity. They constitute the essence of liberty and freedom. Sexual orientation is an essential component of identity. Equal protection demands protection of the identity of every individual without discrimination."

It was the collaborative effort of the queer community and its allies and the decade-long consistent struggle with a dose of the changing legal narrative of the country that led to the 6th September 2018 judgment.

As the court said, "(W)e must, as a society, ask searching questions to the forms and symbols of injustice. Unless we do that, we risk becoming the cause and not just the inheritors of an unjust society. Does the constitution allow a quiver of fear to become the quilt around the bodies of her citizens, in the intimacies which define their identities? If there is only one answer to this question, as I believe there is, the tragedy and anguish which Section 377 inflicts must be remedied."

Together for Yes and a Historic Referendum

In 2018, The People's Republic of Ireland held a historic referendum, whereby through a majority vote the 35-year-old 8th constitutional amendment which equated the life of a pregnant woman to the fetus, making abortion highly restricted, was overturned.

The landmarks in the evolution to the abortion laws in Ireland can be traced back to 1992 where a 14-year-old victim of rape was prevented from travelling to England to terminate her pregnancy. The Supreme Court overturned the initial decision, holding that the credible threat of suicide was grounds for abortion in Ireland. After the Supreme Court judgment, two amendments were passed that effectively allowed Irish citizens to travel to another country for a

legal abortion. In 2012, a woman called Savita Halappanavar died in a hospital in Galway because she was refused an abortion during a miscarriage, due to the presence of a fetal heartbeat. Halappanavar's death led to widespread protests, and in 2013, the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act was passed, which legalized abortion for when doctors think a woman's life is endangered by the pregnancy. In 2015, The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended a referendum on abortion.

In 2016, a citizen's assembly was established in Ireland to consider Irish abortion laws. It was during this time when one of Ireland's most successful campaigns began. The Together For Yes campaign was a national civil society campaign

to remove the 8th amendment from the Irish constitution. The campaign successfully mobilized groups across the country and resulted in 14,000 submissions being sent to the assembly. Activists' proposal was to allow abortion on the following grounds – sexual violence, fetal non-viability, fetal disability, and danger to health or life. "Most activists in Ireland did not want grounds-based legislation. We wanted free, safe and legal abortion as early as necessary, and as late as possible, without restriction," said Maria Ni Fhlatharta, campaign coordinator. However, the situation for Irish women had become so unviable that activists realized that even the smallest wins were necessary, especially since strategic litigation was very difficult in the Irish context because of the 8th amendment.

On receiving the proposal and after a series of discussions, the assembly decided that abortion till up to 12 weeks without restriction was the most humane way to

go forward. The government held a referendum based on this proposal by the assembly. People across the country were mobilized both offline and online through awareness campaigns and voting registration campaigns. In 2018, the referendum was passed overwhelmingly in support of overturning the ban on abortion, effectively replacing the 8th amendment. The Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 was signed by the President of Ireland in December 2018, and passed in both houses of parliament. It allows abortions to be carried out up to 12 weeks of gestation, and in certain circumstances, either before or within 28 days of birth.



Remembering Savita Halappanavar

RELOOK



The Pink Chaddi Campaign (or Pink Underwear Campaign) began in 2009 in India in response to an incident of mass sexual harassment against women coming out of a pub in Mangalore, Karnataka on Valentine's Day. Chaddi is a childish word for underwear and slang for right-wing hardliner. The campaign invited people to send pink underwear to the leader of the right-wing group which orchestrated the harassment.

Making *Ask the Sexpert*

Sex is a joyful event.
Dr Mahinder Watsa

Vaishali Sinha's *Ask the Sexpert* tells the story of Dr Mahinder Watsa, a legendary 90-year-old sex advice columnist from Bombay, India. The film has garnered great reviews and standing ovations after its India premiere, and has received multiple awards, including the Critics' Choice Award in India in 2018. Vaishali will screen the film at #recon2019.

CREA's Sanjana Gaiind spoke to her about the film.



REVIEW

WATCH *Ask The Sexpert* at #recon2019.

MEET Vaishali Sinha to hear more about how this columnist gained popularity even while a ban on comprehensive sex education in schools is adopted by approximately one-third of India's states.

SG: What made you make this film?

VS: I wanted to make a film about the spaces where everyday urban Indians are able to discuss their innermost desires, fantasies, dilemmas around sex and sexuality. And because I like character-driven films I wanted to use the lens of a sex educator or a therapist.

Dr Mahinder Watsa and his column *Ask the Sexpert* were the first things that came up on my search. His popularity was undeniable from the get-go. His column

can be found daily in the *Mumbai Mirror* and several other cities where that newspaper reaches. Most locals wake up to that column with their morning cup of tea. But more popularly screenshots of his daily column spread quickly via messaging services like WhatsApp as young and old share them between each other.

SG: A memory from filming with him that makes you smile?

VS: Here is an example of one of his

notoriously famous answers from the column.

Question: "I have a goat. Her name is Ramila. I have been thinking about how it would feel to make love to her. Is this normal?"

Answer: "Ask Ramila."

SG: What's cooking next?

VS: I'd be happy to discuss it a bit further down the road. Alongside I'm also developing and gestating a couple of new ideas... but I'm also open to new stories!

SG: Why did you think it was important to make a film about this?

VS: Sexuality education! I felt there is often a polarization of the topic in news debates – sexuality education is either called imperative or corrupting. I wanted to use the format of vérité filmmaking to really understand how conversations about sex and sexuality with an educator or a therapist could truly play out. Ultimately in doing so, I was able to explore themes such as pleasure and equality.



The Political Cabaret of 4 Queens

La Banda De Las Recodas is a cabaret show under the concert format of Mexican popular music in which the Hermanas Carrilla make social and political criticism with each song. This is one of its most popular shows and has been screened at various festivals in places such as New York, Chicago, Brazil, Argentina and Denmark.

SG: How does it feel to be in Kathmandu with only three queens (Cabaréxeta, Reina Chula and Escritora)?

4Q: Well, we are really sad about that because we are always happier together, but Nora is making a great project in Mexico and we are reaaaaaaally excited to be here.

SG: Why the name 4 Queens?

4Q: It's a saying in Mexico (a popular one) to call someone you kind of like. Something like sweetheart.

SG: How long have you all been together?

4Q: 21 years!

SG: How did you get together to make this troupe?

4Q: We studied in two different acting schools in Mexico City and we had a music teacher in common. He joined our groups for a workshop and started to share his interest in satire and political cabaret. When we realized we had been together five years, we decided to call ourselves a company.

SG: Tell us about your company in Mexico City and how all of you have been running this for over the last 14 years?

4Q: We have had our own theater for the last 14 years. We separately started studying feminism and then

we started to incorporate feminist issues in our shows. That became our perspective over the years and an artistic way of our creation.

SG: What are some of the exciting stories or memories from all the shows that you have done?

4Q: We will always remember when we broke a piñata with the face of Trump in New York or when we had a performance at the Mexico City Congress and half of the Congress persons were really angry.

SG: What are you looking forward to at #recon2019?

4Q: Learn, and learn, and learn again!





By an Eye-Witness 2019-12

Azadeh Akhlaghi

In 2014, Golnaz Fakhari interviewed Azadeh Akhlaghi, for *Art Radar*. The article has been reproduced below.

Azadeh's photo series – *Me, as the Other Prefers* and *By an Eye-Witness* – being exhibited at the reconference, have been curated by Sabeena Gadihoke, Associate Professor at Jamia Millia Islamia.

GF: After majoring in computer science, what made you decide to become a photographer?

AA: It was really a long-term process. I was always fascinated by the world of art. When I was sixteen, I wanted to be a poet and, only a few years after that, I started to do journalism work. But even when I moved to Australia to pursue my Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, I knew that it wasn't what I wanted to do for a living. So I started to take some elective courses in photography. Well, initially I wanted to pursue a career in movie production, but I knew it needed money and resources that I didn't have. So I focused my time on photography. And then I came up with this project and I have to tell you, the process of completing this project was very similar to producing a movie.

GF: What was the main purpose of this project and how did you come up with the idea for it?

AA: I was always curious about Iran's complex history and I knew that there was just this truth that was hidden somewhere and we couldn't find it. The truth behind all of these deaths and the reason that made these characters – my characters – risk their lives so that the next generation could live better and happier. It was just something that I could not understand. And what was more interesting was that some events have happened in Iran over and over again. It is as if some historical events are repetitive, and this repetition was the main reason for this project.

I wanted to focus on the fact that all of these frames are from my own perspective – the artist's view. The truth could not be exactly what is shown in these images and I could never reach the whole truth. I wanted to emphasize my own

presence as a representative of the next generation in the images. With this project, I needed to remind our people that a dark energy and potential has always repeated itself during our history and that this history needs to be remembered.

GF: How did you decide on the characters and the moments that you wanted to capture?

AA: I spent a long time reading about each of them, I sort of lived with these characters for a long time in my head. The main point was to capture moments in history that there were no photos of. I was trying to portray and stage some very important historical events that no one has witnessed. Initially, the images I took were more than seventeen, but during the progress of the project, some of them were cut out. For example, Dr Fatemi, Iran's Foreign Affairs Minister from 1951 to 1953, was one of those characters. He was executed, but since there were some images available from the aftermath of his death, his image was cut from the project.

GF: Could you tell us more about the photograph of Dr Mossadegh? Does this image somehow mark the identity of this project?

AA: I can't really say that, but Dr Mossadegh is a prominent figure and personally I feel a deep connection to him. Because of that, his death and its aftermath were very important to me. And what was very disappointing was that historical sources about the day that he died are very limited. One of the things that I really struggled with was that we couldn't find out how the weather was the day he died. Was it sunny, rainy or cold? And this was just one of the smallest shortcomings. The focus in Dr Mossadegh's image is the absence of Iranian people during that day

– a historical absence – and, in my opinion, the pain which resulted because of that absence is still carried by the people.

GF: Why didn't you revisit the aftermath of the 1979 revolution again and especially the Iraq-Iran war?

AA: The main reason was that I only wanted to go as far as the onset of the Islamic Revolution. I didn't want to work on recent history. But after further consideration, I thought that some characters, like Shahid Bakeri and Ayatollah Taleghani and their deaths were also among the tragic deaths in Iranian history.

GF: The project has been deemed 'political' and 'controversial.' What was your audience's reaction to the project?

AA: I can't really argue. Of course, it got a lot of attention even before the show, but I think most of the reactions were positive. To tell you the truth, I saw a lot of unexpected reactions during the exhibition. The gallery was full of people the whole time, to the point that some of them weren't able to see the images closely. People would hug me and some of them actually started crying during the show. An old lady came to the gallery and said that her son had called her from Berlin and had asked her to come and see the exhibition.

In my opinion, it was as if people had never got the chance to mourn these deaths and now, this project and the images in front of them had given them the time and the instrument to release their agony and pain.

GF: What challenges did you face when you were working on the project?

AA: The most challenging aspect was the shortcomings in [available] history and the limited resources we

Azadeh Akhlaghi was born in Shiraz in 1978, grew up in Mashhad and studied computer science at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. She was passionate about photography since 2000. In 2005, she met the renowned Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami and was convinced to pursue photography as a career. She worked as assistant director to Kiarostami in Iran between 2005 and 2008, while she made a few short films that were screened at festivals in Oslo, Busan and Berkeley. Since 2009, her interest shifted to staged photography. Azadeh is a Sovereign Arts Prize Finalist in 2016, a recipient of a prize from the UN-Habitat Photography Competition 2009, London.



Me, as the Other Prefers 2007-09

had for some of these characters. There were no writings or photos of these deaths and for some of them, I had to rely on the memory of my interviewees – individuals who were present at the time of these deaths or had close relationships with these people.

Also, sometimes, in a moment of shock, when something has happened, the brain loses its [capacity to] function. For example, when I witness a tragic moment, something horrible, I can't hear anything. My eyes somehow lose sight and I have to check with other people to see whether they have witnessed the same thing. During this project, when I spoke to people, I understood that many of them had seen something that hadn't actually happened.

GF: What are some of your other projects? Could you tell us more about them?

AA: *Me, as the Other Prefers* is another big project that I did in 2011. *Reflection of Self* and *Suspension in Tehran* are my other projects. *Suspension in Tehran* was a series based on the obscenity of cities, especially Tehran, and how youngsters are somehow suspended within this concept.

Me, as the Other Prefers was a twenty-part self-portrait through the eyes of 'others', depicting how people try to be the person that others want them to be. This 'being' can be seen in the way they dress or talk, or even what is expected of them. I wanted to show how this gigantic 'other' determines how we live.