

Vida Mehri's art works are originated directly from her personal life but they point at very crucial universal issues; indirectly thus effectively.

Her main focus on her art works are on the definitions such as Censorship, self-censorship, immigration, freedom of expression and also on the general idea of the effect of the social construction on shaping the characters. So, although it is not noticeable from the first impression, all her works can be categorized as political artworks.

Vida is a young Iranian female artist (born in 1984). She lived for 24 years in Iran and like lots of other young Iranians from the same generation (post-revolution), to continue her education and of course to experience an independent life beyond the borders of her limited context she left Iran in 2009.

By coincidence, her departure overlapped the protests after the presidential election in 2009 which ended up in violence. Vida started to study master of fine arts in Sweden and her mind was obsessed with all the violence, oppression, deprivation of freedom and unclear political future for her country. Whatever she wanted to create was being inspired by her main concerns. For her, her *art* was her *life*.

She started taking photos of her laptop with her camera while she was on Internet to catch up with the political news and keep in touch with her friends and relatives. She took plenty of photos constantly and she continued this habit for almost two years. *Hopes grow* is a project with prints of some of these photos which are covered by semi-transparent tapes. The whole work looks like a typological city map with a lot of personages on it. She purred green ink on these small personages so they look like a group of demonstrators in the city.

In 2010 she did another version with the photos she had achieved from Internet. She glued the printed photos on the fabrics and she started sewing some parts of the photos with different colorful threads. She used these threads to connect some parts of the images to each other, to add to them, to cover them, to exaggerate them and finally to censor some parts of taboos such as religious taboos (nudes, hair etc.) and political news about opposition in Iran by sewing Persian patterns on them. This project is called *Censorship is beautiful*.

During the process she wondered she can act as an *Iranian Censorship department* and start censoring her photos by sewing them according to her awareness about what is taboo and what is not, what is dangerous and what is not. In other words, she was preparing herself for an "imaginary exhibition" in Iran. She was making her pieces ready to get the permit to be shown in Iran but being critical in a tricky way; to criticize and to get the permit at the same time; to reveal and to conceal; to tell and not to tell; to talk in between the words.

In summer 2011, Vida traveled to Iran with her camera and started to experiment her ideas with this new medium. She made a short film with the duration of around 17 minutes with the title "My fingers grew and stuck to the asphalt". Her film was then selected and awarded in 14ème Festival des Cinémas Différents et Expérimentaux de Paris.

The story describes a city that is about to be poisoned by "Them". "Them" is an unidentified group, which remains mysterious throughout the entire story. In a metaphorical way, it represents the power, the so-called leaders; those who have decided to kill the citizens.

The main ambiguity that is raised is: why are they trying to kill the citizens?

Vida Mehri works with various mediums such as drawings, installation, mixed media and videos.

In 2011, while she moved to Bruxelles in Belgium to work on her artistic research in a post-master course in Sint-Lukas University, she started making a drawing series. This project is more personal and expressive.

The idea is focused on “Magical reality” in terms of the limits brought up by the definition of “Social constructionism”.

There is a vague narrative going on in the drawings that gives an opportunity of *open interpretation*.

Recently, Vida has made a new version of her coherent concept with the title *Punched*.

In this project she is trying to censor parts of the photos with a puncher. By default you can punch the margins of a paper, but she tries to eat up the margins by punching the photos and go through the center of the image. This action is more like a struggle; a struggle with her obsessions and with the definition of censorship. Finally, as if the struggle failed, she has not really censored those parts that we think needs censoring.

You can also see the leftovers of the punched parts as if you can touch the censorship!

*Vida Mehri* is playing with the definition of talking *in between the words*; the ability that their generation learned in Iran according to the limits and filters. She believes that Grotesque, satire, ambiguity and Irony are the tools of talking *In Between the Words*.

Currently she is interested by the idea of *Magical reality* in such limited societies as in Iran. This feeling might be familiar with the previous generation in Chili during the dictatorship period. She tries to highlight the ways people in such societies enjoy their life, criticize their contexts by using their extreme creativity and live at the moments by making magical realistic moments when they go beyond the rules and taboos.

*Jo Huybrechts, 2013*