

KubaParis

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Dissolved binarities – An interview with Nadira Husain

<https://kubaparis.com/nadira-husain/>



Nadira Husains (*1980, lives and works in Berlin) work sways between different sets of issues regarding self-reflection, reality and fiction, history and presence, canonized norms and alternative drafts. With various materials used in her work and different approaches towards her ideas, Husains presents kaleidoscopic insights on the discussed topics. KubaParis talked to the artist about her work, disparities between the medium and the idea, the furry subculture movement and further upcoming projects.

Some of your works, like “Turbo Queen” (2017), consist of ikat, a dyeing technique that is rich in tradition. Regarding the famous saying by McLuhan – “the medium is the message” – why did you choose ikat as a part of some of your works?

It has never been an obvious thing for me to use a white canvas to start a painting. I see a canvas as a piece of fabric. I guess the surface on which I paint becomes part of the painting itself.

The ikat weaving process allows to create visual patterns within the texture of the fabric. The threads are dyed in some part and while being woven a motif is designed. I use this pattern in the textile as a structural layer for the painting.

I have been working with Ikat or with Kalamkari (Indian dying techniques) because of my great aunt Surrayia Hassan Bose, who dedicated her life to the valorization of traditional Indian crafts in the field of textile since the Independence. Using such techniques is probably for me a way to relate to the know-how and crafts techniques, which tend to disappear because of globalization and mass production. Adding a layer of use-value to an art work is also meaning full to me.

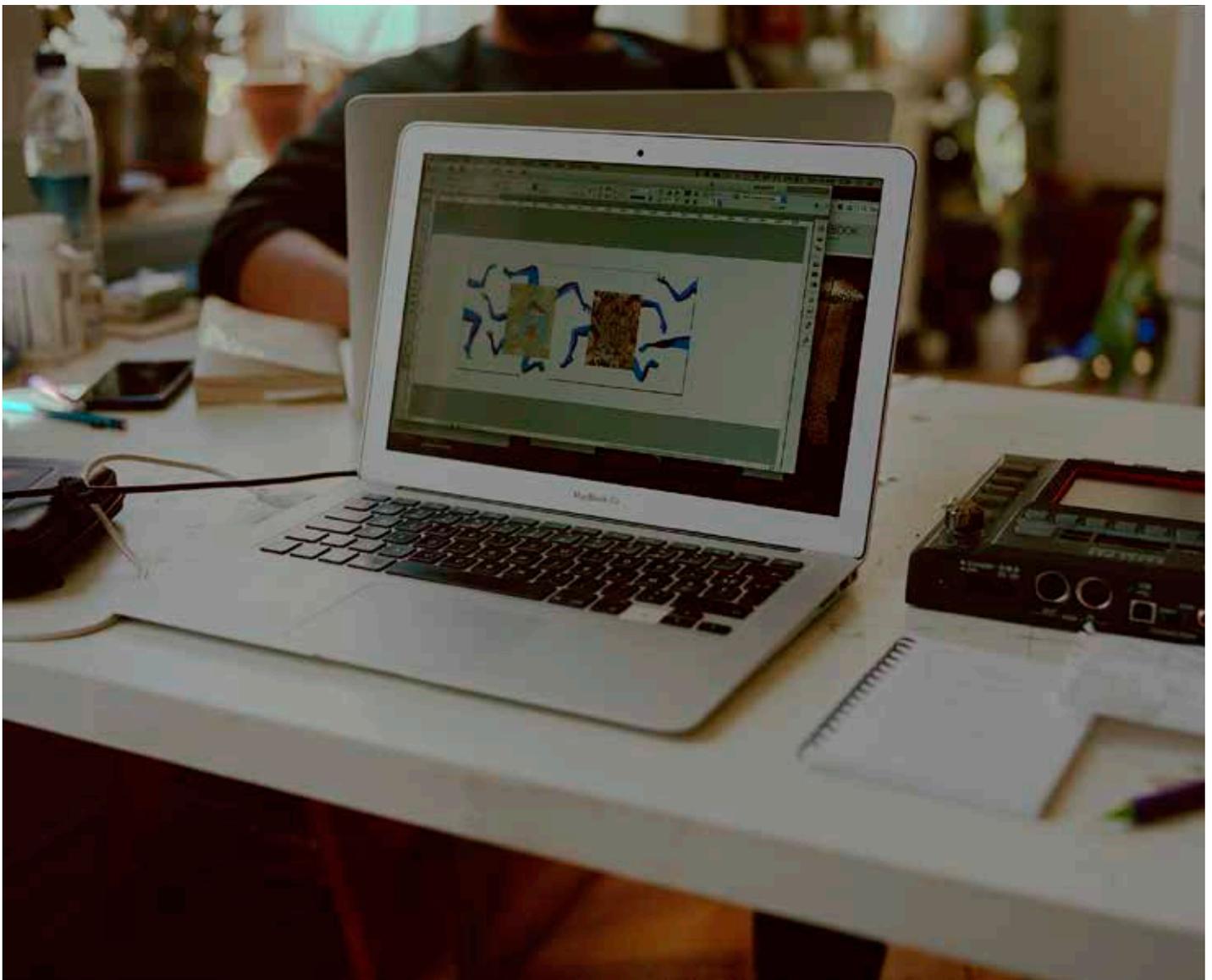
I would like to know more about your work process. How do you decide which medium you use for the ideas you have?

I start with a medium because I am in general interested in it, or I find it beautiful, or because it has some specificities I want to deal with. Using several media in a pictorial practice allow to transform and to challenge my painting process. When I give a sketch to a craft-man who will reproduce it with dyes on a piece of cotton (kalamkari), the painted image circulates and is transformed through this collaboration.

Your work consists of interweaving's of western and middle/south-eastern techniques and motives. This inherent dialectic of your work seems to be an answer towards the euro/western-centric art and art history. How would you describe this part of your work? Do you consider your work as a political one?

I am not sure if it is an answer but I definitely try to reflect and react on how euro/western-centric as well as male dominant art and art history condition our response to images by generating certain canons, which are not satisfying at all. My work is not dealing with this issue as a topic or a subject but I try to research and to generate other scenarios. We are so conditioned by those patterns that it is very difficult to emancipate from them. I guess I also deal with the paradoxes and ambiguities of the complexity to emancipate from dominant cultural and social conventions. The questions I raise with my work are certainly political.





Your solo exhibition “Rider, Path and Vehicle” at PSM Gallery confronted the visitor with different and intense interactions of sculpture and painting. How did you decide over the display and how did you incorporate the recipient into your thought process while developing the show?

As painting on a white canvas is not the most obvious thing to me because I first see the materiality of the textile on which I could paint, I perceive the painting for its material/physical potentialities. In that sense, we are not only relating to images while being confronted with paintings.

In „Rider, Path and Vehicle“, the paintings are dealing with hybrid beings in between humans and horses, but somehow everything painted is close to the real dimension of the human. I wanted to activate the circulation in the space so that the visitors could encounter the different being-paintings with their own body.

I often generate spatial painting installations in which I look for an energetic circulation within the space.

“Rider, Path and Vehicle”, is a show about „a trip“. The hybrid beings of the paintings are not settled in a fixed identity therefore the display should be kept fluid.

Varied forms and bodies that either relate to the reality such as the human body or animals or to fictional forms emerge as a dominant theme in your work. Especially female bodies appear in your paintings, never as normative forms, but rather as fusions of human bodies with fictional elements, like in “Drift: Juvenile Crisis” (2015). It reminds me of the non-essentialist, non-binary approaches from scientists like Donna Haraway, who tried to dissolve the boundaries between male/female and physical/metaphysical. Would you consider thoughts like these (from the gender studies) as a part of your approach to show imaginary forms of a body, that doesn’t exist in our so called “reality”?

Yes definitely.

Do you know the *furry* sub-culture movement? It consists in people who are keen on anthropomorphic, imaginary or mythological animals. In this movement, some persons are interested in *fursuiting*, which means that they like to incarnate themselves as a being with a costume, they perform their own *fursona*; others are the artists, those who are inventing creatures for comics for example.

I am not directly performing the beings, which are populating my work but I am very much interested in the empowering capacities they can provide.

Can you tell me about your upcoming projects?

At the moment, I am working on a solo exhibition, which will open end of June at Villa du Parc, Annemasse, which is in France, touching Geneva.

The space has two floors and several rooms in which I will deploy several chapters of a story. The show is called: Pourquoi je suis tout bleu? (Why am I blue?)

Interview by Seda Pesen

Pictures by Johannes Kuczera