

Artist

Curator

Activist

# Portfolio

**Yama Rahimi**

2026



# About me



Yama Rahimi is an Afghan curator, artist, and activist based in Germany. His practice moves between curating and art-making, with a focus on creating space for voices shaped by censorship, displacement, and political violence.

He began his artistic journey in Kabul, studying film directing at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University. Working across experimental film, photography, and installation, his artistic practice explores memory, identity, and the conditions of visibility. His work has been presented in more than 25 exhibitions across over 15 countries, including at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, the Venice Biennale, and UCLA. At the core of Rahimi's work today is his curatorial practice. He is the curator of Hidden Statement – Art in Afghanistan, an ongoing exhibition project that brings together works by Afghan artists both inside the country and across the diaspora. Shown internationally, the project has developed into an evolving archive of contemporary Afghan art and was recognized by Monopol Magazine as one of the 100 best exhibitions.

His recent exhibition, Surviving Shadows, selected through the Apexart NYC Open Call 2025, focuses on the realities Afghan artists have faced since the Taliban's return to power in 2021. The project brings together artworks that have been destroyed, hidden, or smuggled out of the country, alongside photographs, videos, and personal testimonies. It highlights both the risks of making art and the persistence of creative expression under extreme conditions. Rahimi also expands curating beyond traditional exhibition spaces. Through the Freedom Canvas Initiative (FCI), which he founded, he curated a project in collaboration with the Lunar Museum of Art (LUMA) and Lonestar Data Holdings, sending digital works by seven Afghan artists to the Moon as part of a long-term archive. The project reflects his ongoing interest in how art can survive beyond borders, censorship, and even Earth itself. Alongside his curatorial work, he continues to support at-risk artists through advocacy and relocation initiatives.

Upcoming ...

# Water and Mirror

**Video Installation by Yama Rahimi | 60 Minutes**

This installation features interviews with 50 artists who share their experiences of life in Afghanistan and now in exile. Their voices come together, telling a collective story of transformation in 60 minutes. These stories are presented as voiceovers for videos showing water running in bathroom sinks.



# Recent Works

## Surviving Shadows – Afghan Art in the Face of Suppression

Curated by Yama Rahimi

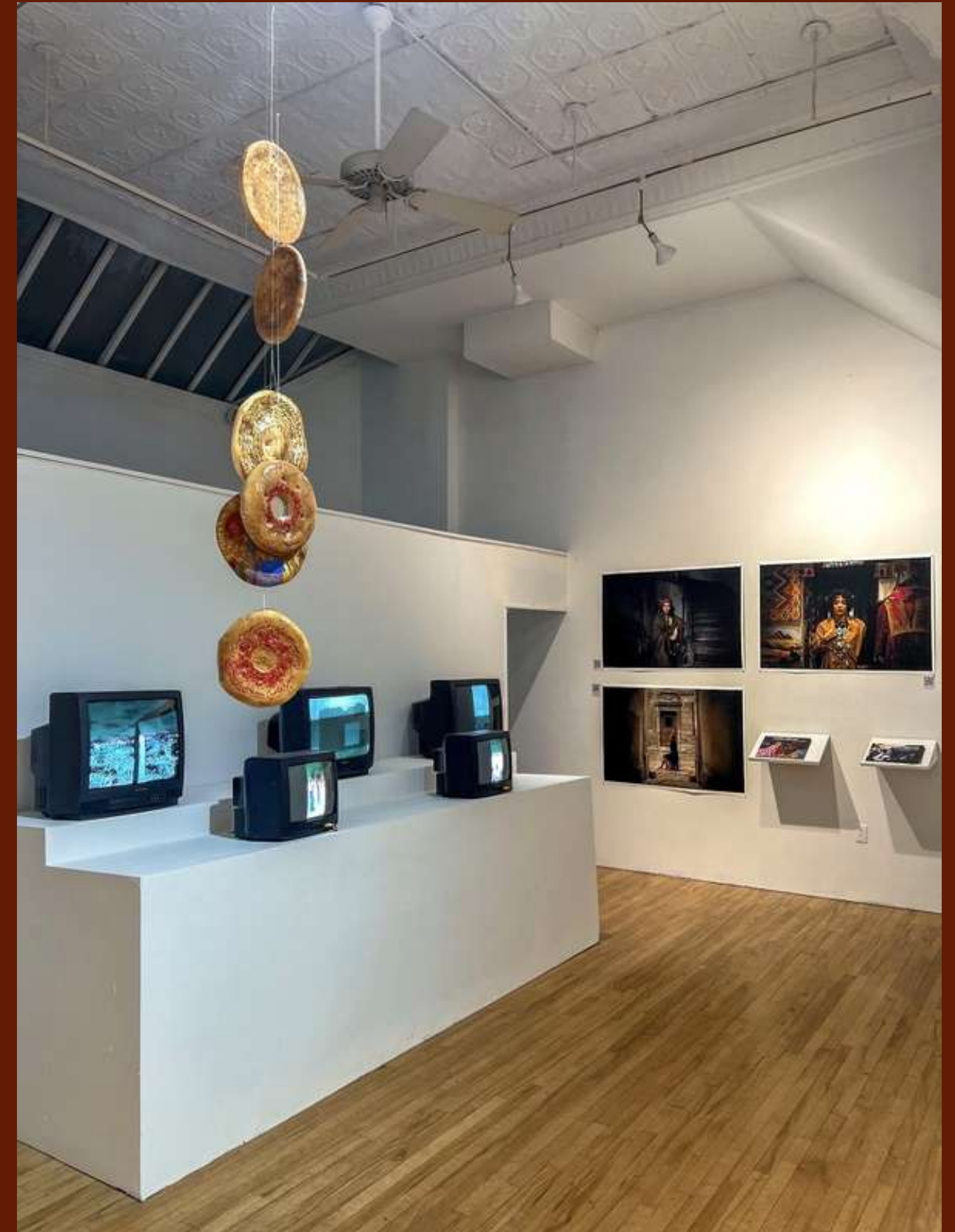
| apexart, New York City (Jan 16 – Mar 14, 2026)

Surviving Shadows responds to the profound crisis facing artistic life in Afghanistan following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. This exhibition brings together works by Afghan artists both within the country and across the diaspora to document how creative expression persists under censorship, violence, and displacement.

The exhibition features work by

Fatimah Hossaini, Jeanno Gaussi, Maryam Gholam Ali, Jahan Ara Rafi, Ayatollah Ahmadi, Angela Gulistani (Kimia), Farshad Akbari, and Waisuddin Mohammadi, alongside contributions from 10 anonymous artists based in Afghanistan.

Through photography, video, installation, text, and personal testimony, Surviving Shadows forms a living archive of artistic resilience. It presents images of works that were destroyed, hidden, smuggled out of the country, or created in new contexts within the diaspora. The exhibition foregrounds both the risks of artistic practice under repression and the determination of Afghan artists to create and bear witness. Selected through the apexart NYC Open Call, Surviving Shadows expands the conversation around artistic survival, memory, and resistance, offering a space where voices once silenced are seen and heard.



# Recent Works

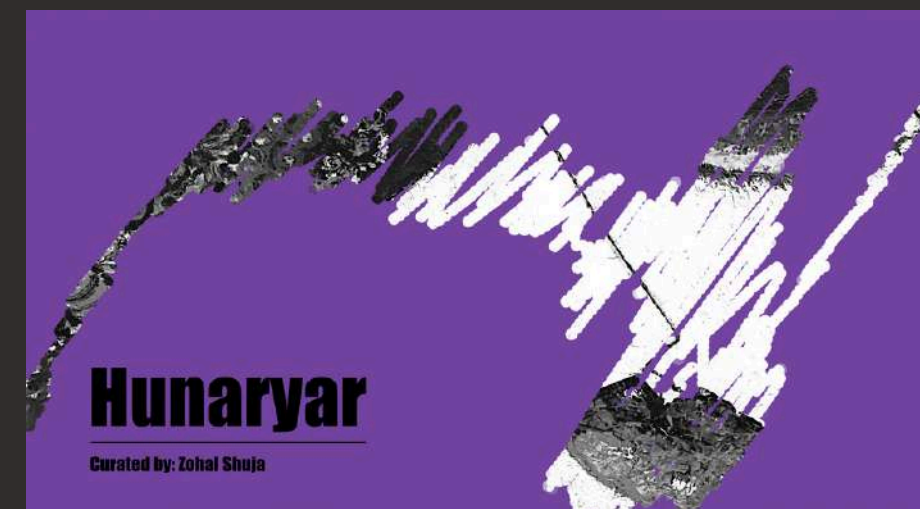
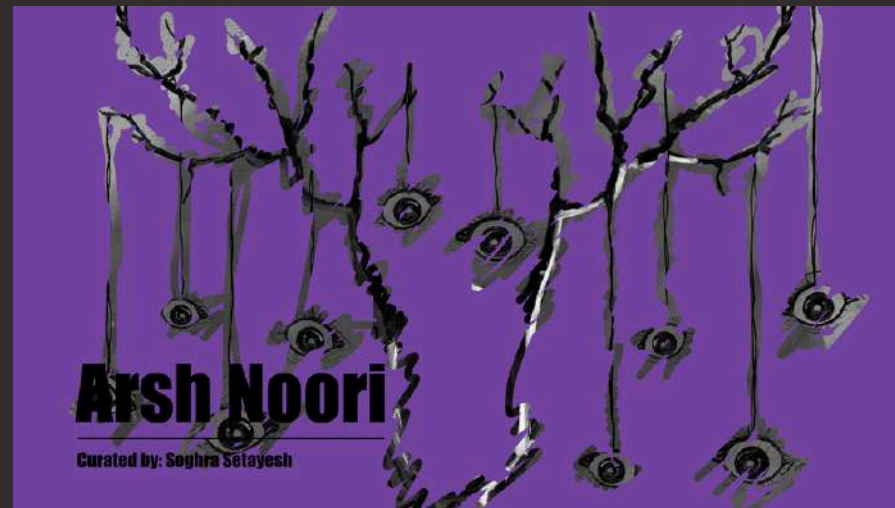
## Hidden Statement – Art in Afghanistan

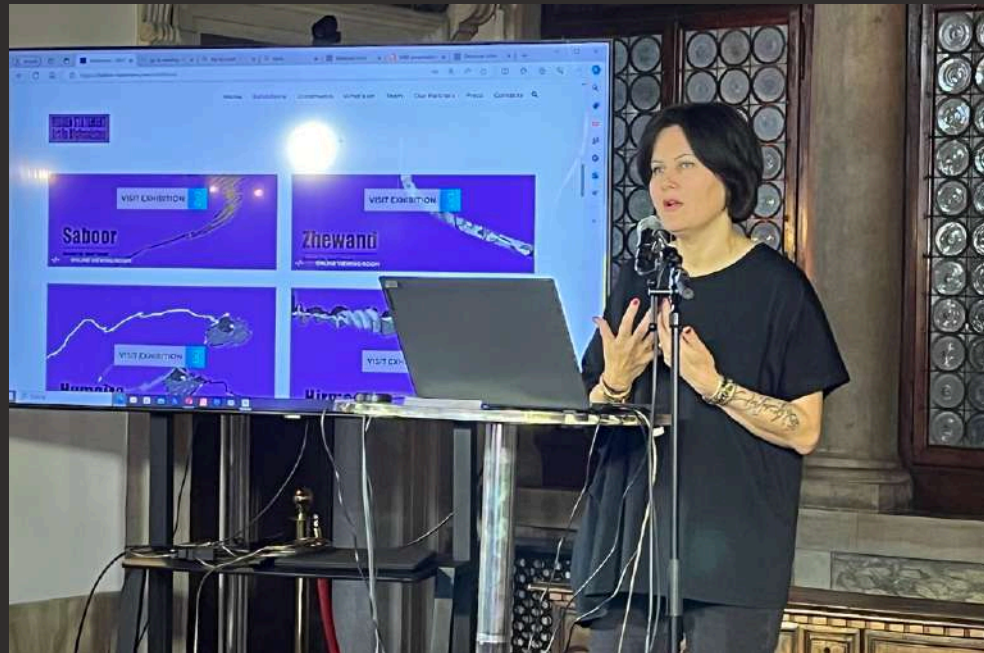
create a platform dedicated to building a digital contemporary art archive of Afghanistan. Our goal is to offer a space where people can learn about Afghan art, connect with Afghan artists, and preserve their work digitally. This is crucial, as we don't know what will happen to the physical art pieces in Afghanistan.

So far, 36 individual exhibitions have been made public, with up to 300 more planned. These exhibitions have been shown in various locations, and in 2023, our initiative was recognized as one of the top 100 exhibitions by Monopole Magazine. Our long-term aim is to establish a comprehensive digital contemporary art archive for Afghanistan, providing a valuable resource for anyone interested in Afghan art while safeguarding these works.

## Our collaborators







# Recent Works

## **KLEINE BOOTE (SMALL SHIPS)**

**Experimental Short Film**

**2024**

**00:13:00**

**Shooting Location: Germany, Afghanistan, Iran, Ethiopia, Turkey**

Small Ships is a whisper across waters—a tender offering of wood and feather, carried by the wind's gentlest breath. Each ship, woven from street-found remnants and fallen wings, is a quiet witness to longing, a message without words that drifts through the currents. Born from Marcus Kreikerbaum's hands, they are not vessels for the body but carriers of a wish—a dream for sanctuary, for spaces untouched by war's reach. As these fragile ships set sail on rivers and oceans marked by conflict, they trace invisible lines, connecting distant waters with silenced voices and unheard hopes. They are symbols of something achingly simple yet profound: the ordinary human wish for freedom, safety, and passage to peace. In this film, waters meet waters, wishes meet wishes, and in their quiet journeys, we glimpse a world more bound by dreams than by borders.





# KLEINE BOOTE

A Film by  
**YAMA RAHIMI**

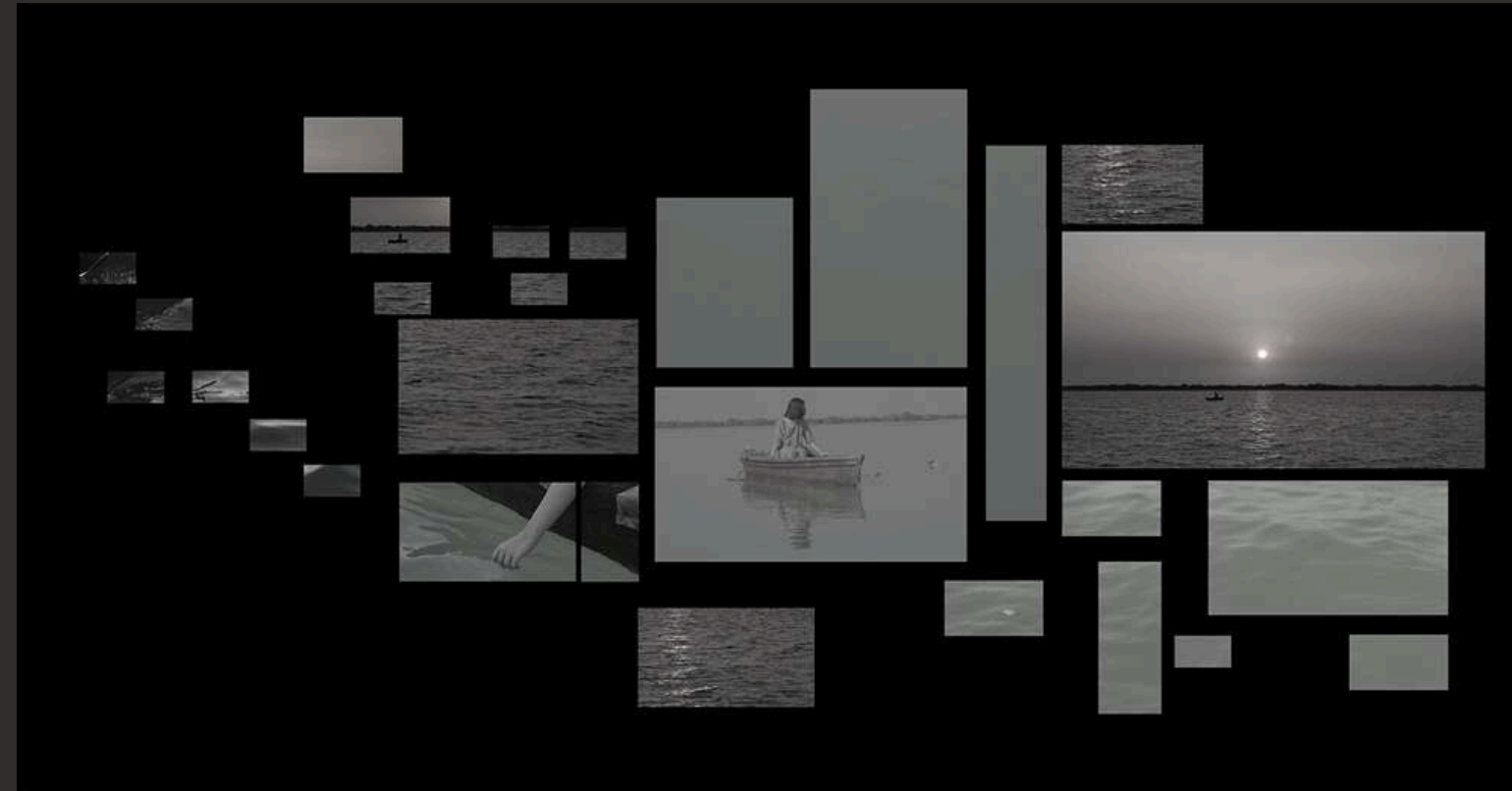
ARTISTIC  
FREEDOM  
INITIATIVE



Brüche, 02.03 - 02.06

## SHOOTING LOCATIONS

Germany | Afghanistan | Iran | Ethiopia | Cyprus (Mediterranean sea) | Turkey  
Experimental Short Film | 2024



**Eva**

**2020**

**Tragedy – A Short Feature Film**

**00:04:57**

Eva envisions a life of freedom and self-reliance, a world unbound by constraints.

Yet, she remains confined, isolated, and deeply entangled in the fabric of a patriarchal culture.



## **I Am 40 Years Old**

**2019**

**Video**

**00:04:42**

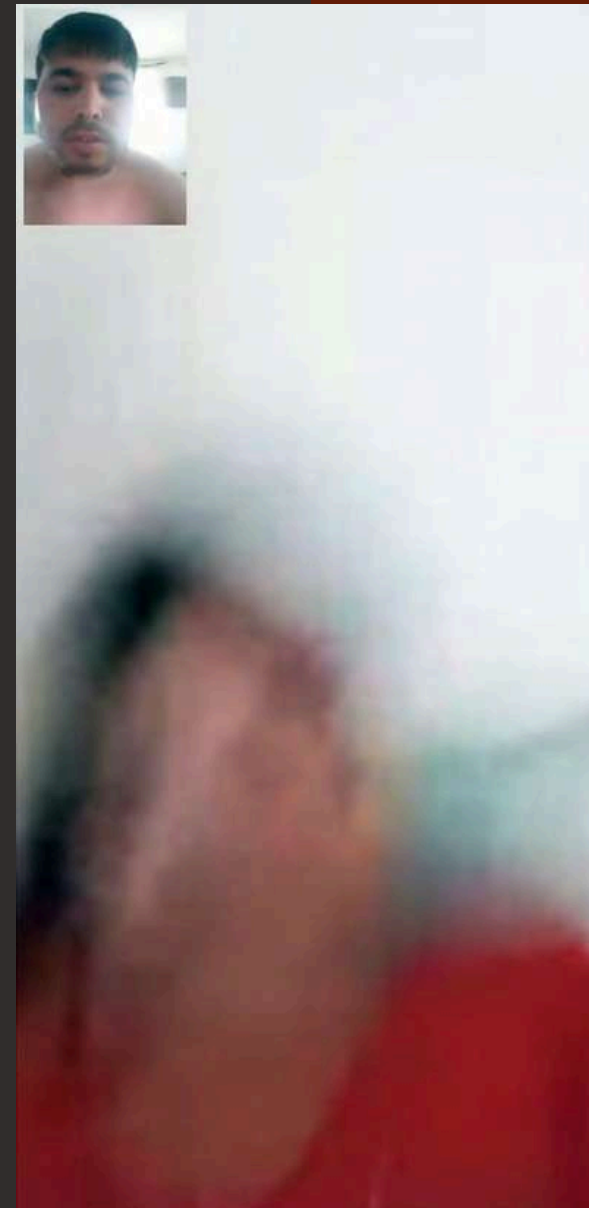
In this evocative short film, four balloons in striking colors—red, white, black, and blue—hover on the brink of bursting. Each balloon is struck by three distinct shoes: one belonging to a man, another to a woman, and the third to a child, represented by a plaything. This powerful imagery symbolizes the relentless impact and hardship endured by the people of Afghanistan over the past 40 years.



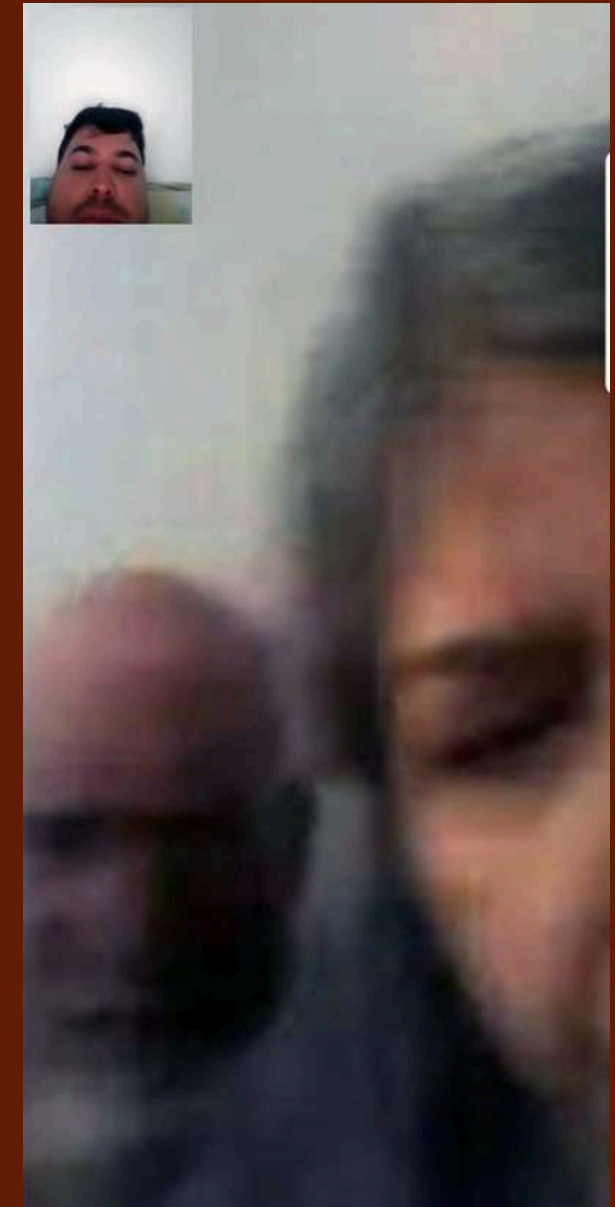
**Who am I?  
Photography  
2017 - 2019**

In 2015, I migrated to a new country, finding myself in an uncertain and disorienting situation. Surrounded by a foreign language, culture, and way of life, I felt like an artist unmoored—my identity and purpose fractured. In my homeland, I had a job, was an artist, and a lecturer, firmly rooted in my community and work. But in this unfamiliar land, I was unsure of what I should do next.

"Who Am I?" explores the internal conflict of migration and the crisis of identity. Through photography, this project delves into the search for one's place in a new world, capturing the emotional transformations that come with displacement. The work reflects the complex feelings of alienation, self-discovery, and the search for belonging, as it raises the question: "Who am I?" and how can I reconnect with myself in a foreign world?

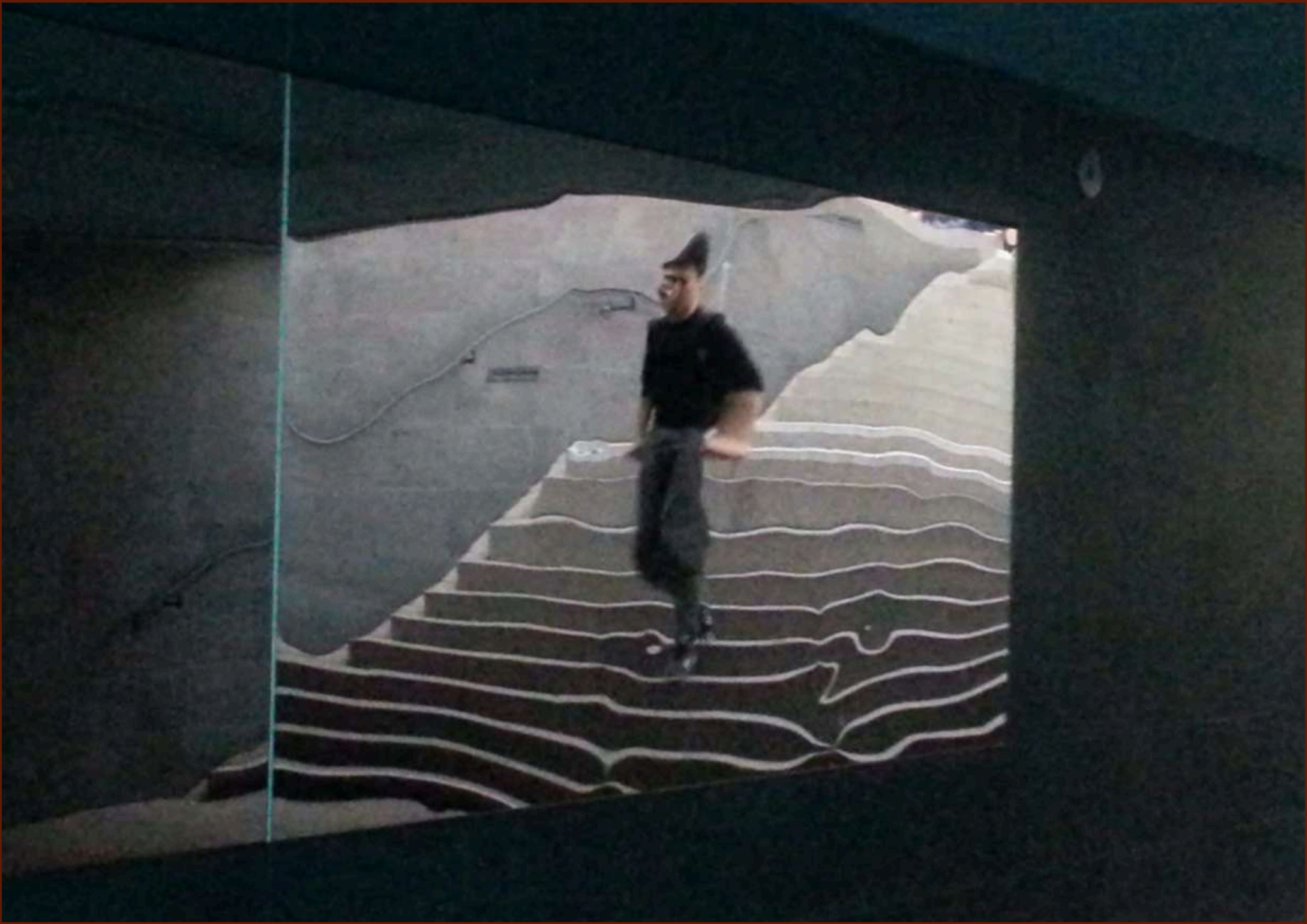


**Video call with my wife**



**Video call with parents**

self-portrait



self-portrait

**The Cold Look**  
**Collection - 2013-2017**  
**Women's Rights**  
**Photographs: 8 Pieces**  
**Film: 3 Pieces**  
**Installation: 1 Piece**

"The Cold Look" gives voice to the oppressed women of Afghanistan, spanning across the country, allowing them to scream the pain of being marginalized in every corner of society. It speaks to their disenfranchisement, their placement as the second gender (*le Deuxième Sexe* / Simone de Beauvoir), the denial of their human identity, the endless cruelties they endure at the hands of men, the injustice of the government, and the chilling gaze of their oppressors. This work invites you to engage in the search for an end to this suffering.



**I and You**

**2015**

**A Short experimental Documentary-Film**

**00:08:21**

For decades, women in Afghanistan have endured profound physical abuse in countless forms—and continue to do so. Yet, their intellect, creativity, and potential remain largely ignored, unacknowledged, and untapped by society.



## Creation Song

### Experimental Short film, 00:07:17, 2014

Creation Song delves into the systemic denial of women's personal identity and human existence. It portrays how their needs, desires, and lives are dismissed, trivialized, and exploited—subjected to manipulation and physical domination. This poignant film reflects the deep anguish a conscious mind endures in the face of such pervasive inequality and injustice.

Exhibitions:

This powerful work has been exhibited internationally at esteemed venues, including:

- 2016 UCLA New Wight Biennial
- 2015:
  - Ballroom Marfa, Marfa, Texas, USA
  - The Cultural Centre of Belgrade, Belgrade
  - Fundación PROA, Buenos Aires, Argentina
  - GAMeC, Bergamo, Italy
  - Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California
  - Hanoi DOCLAB, Hanoi, Vietnam
  - Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turkey
  - MAAT - Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon, Portugal
  - Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland
  - n.b.k, Berlin, Germany
  - NCCA, Moscow, Russia
  - Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong
  - Project 88, Mumbai, India
  - Tromsø Kunstforening, Tromsø, Norway
  - Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK
  - Goethe-Institute, Kabul, Afghanistan
  - Women Film Festival, Herat, Afghanistan

Awards:

Creation Song received the Best Cinematography distinction at the Student Film Festival, Kabul University.



**Images, creation song**



**Yell**  
**2015**  
**Photography**

Women carry screams that never find the air,  
their voices folded into the silence of a culture  
where cries once loud dissolve into whispers within.  
Their pain lives in the shadows of their eyes,  
a labyrinth of quiet despair only the brave dare enter—  
but who will seek the truth hidden in their gaze,  
the untold stories of their silenced souls?



**Eternal Gaze**  
**2015**  
**Photography**

A reflection on the perpetual objectification of women,  
where visibility or concealment offers no escape from  
being sexualized.



**Venus**  
**2015**  
**Photography**

Both embody timeless grace, resilience, and an enduring connection to cultural and spiritual identities



## Photography



**Small Bride, 2013**



**Shadow, 2015**



**I and You, 2015**

## Identity

Performance art

Dehmazang Square, Kabul, Afghanistan

04, 22, 2015

06:45 - 08:00 AM

The first group of blindfolded individuals stands opposite the Parliament building, symbolizing the dealers—those who trade in the lives and fates of others, their eyes blind to the consequences of their actions.

The second group, their faces obscured by books, represents those cursed by knowledge—people bound by oppressive forces and standing in the direction of the university campus, where their potential for enlightenment is stifled.

The third group, hidden behind colorful curtains, symbolizes those who manipulate and destroy the lives of others through deceit, plotting, and surveillance. They face the zoo, a place of captivity and control, mirroring their own grip on freedom and truth.





**Farkhunda**  
**Kabul, Afghanistan**  
**Performance art**  
**2015**

"Farkhunda" is a performance aimed at revealing the true nature of men, exposing the hidden realities beneath societal masks. Through this act, new identities were exchanged between Farkhunda and the men involved, challenging the power dynamics and societal roles imposed upon them. The performance stands as a statement on identity, power, and the consequences of violence, shedding light on the darker forces at play within society.





## Kites Need Strings Installation 2018

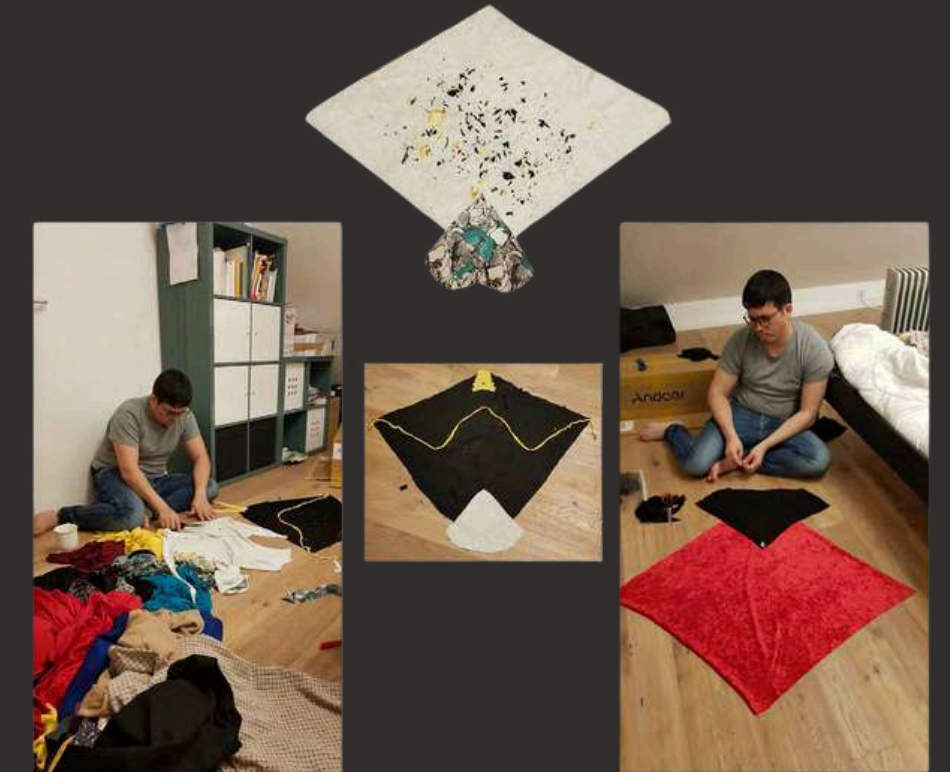
A refugee camp in Lorch am Rhein, a place where life is reduced to the essentials: eating, sleeping, and the solitude of the toilet. In this suspended existence, where the world outside remains distant and unknowable, I learned to fly—not with wings, but with words. A simple gesture, a suggestion from Marcus Kreikebaum, a professor from EBS Universität, became the thread that connected me to the sky. Through his guidance, I found language, work, and ultimately, a new path.

“Kites Need Strings” is a reflection on the journey of displacement, of being untethered and seeking connection. It is the story of transformation—how a simple encounter, a kind gesture, and the warmth of a helping hand can become the string that lifts us from the weight of despair. This project weaves together the threads of migration, identity, and hope, symbolized by the kite in flight, tethered yet free.

As refugees, we are shaped by the forces of war, uprooted by the endless waves of conflict that have marked our history. We are kites in the wind, carried by currents beyond our control, seeking the stability of a string. And yet, as we soar, we carry the pain of a broken home, displaced but ever reaching toward the horizon.



**Exhibition  
Leibniz Forschung zentrum Berlin 2018**



# Exhibitions



## The cold look

17. September 2017

– 20. January 2018

Frauen Museum - Wiesbaden

<https://www.frauenmuseum-wiesbaden.de/en/node/422>



## Eye Spy

22. September - 6. October  
2016

NEW WIGHT GALLERY

Los Angeles, CA

<https://sarahsmalik.com/eye-spy>

# Exhibitions



## **Creation Song**

2016

EBS - Germany

<https://wiesbaden-lebt.de/impressionen-aus-afghanistan>



## **Fail Early and Often**

2019

SAP

<https://news.sap.com/germany/2019/06/design-thinking-kunstaussstellung/>

# Exhibitions



## **Artists' Film International**

2015

Whitechapel Gallery

<https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/artists-film-international-autumn-2015/>



## **10th Anniversary Screening**

**Artists' Film International**

**7 – 17 September 2017**

<https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/10th-anniversary-screening-artists-film-international/>

# Honors and Recognition

2024

ArtsLink International Fellowships:

US Residency

Host: Magnum Foundation



# Honors and Recognition

Jury

2023

Follow Fluxus-Stipendiatin 2023: Maja Smrekar

<https://www.wiesbaden.de/kultur/bildende-kunst/preise-stipendien/fluxus-2023.php>



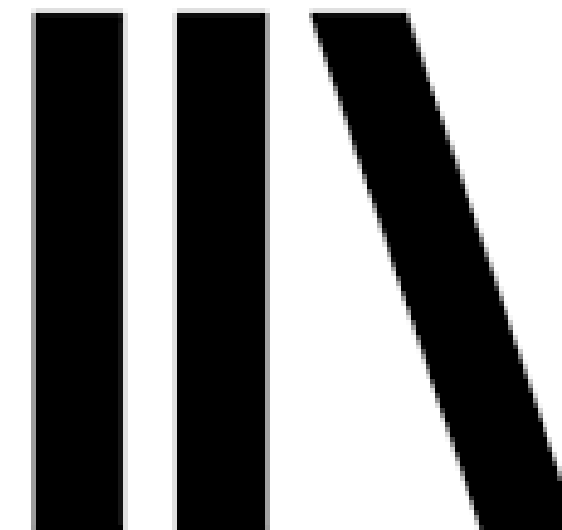
# Honors and Recognition

2023

Board Member

NKV - Wiesbaden

<https://www.kunstverein-wiesbaden.de/impressum>



# Honors and Recognition

2025

Apexart

NYC Open Call Winner

<https://apexart.org/rahimi.php>



**apexart**

# Honors and Recognition

2025

Founder and director of

FCI - Freedom Canavs initiative



**Freedom**  
Canvas  
Initiative

# Honorary Work



**2011 - 2015**

**CCAA - Kabul, Afghanistan**

**Position: Teacher of Photography, Editing**

This section highlights the time spent in a role as a dedicated teacher at the Center for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan (CCAA), where I contributed my expertise in photography and editing, fostering the next generation of Afghan artists. My role was rooted in a commitment to education and empowerment, passing on essential skills to students in a challenging and evolving environment.



# Honorary Work



**January 2019 - Present**  
**Caritas Verband - Geisenheim**  
**Project: Action Mensch - Hand in Hand**  
**Position: Photography and Video Teacher**



It is both an honor and a privilege to teach art photography to refugees from diverse backgrounds in the same place that once welcomed me as a refugee. Having experienced the support of this organization two years ago, I now have the opportunity to give back by sharing my knowledge of photography and video. This project, Action Mensch - Hand in Hand, embodies a full circle of community and solidarity, fostering creative expression and skill-building among those who have sought refuge.

Caritas Verband - Geisenheim  
Projekt: Hand in Hand

# Collaborate With Me



☎ 004917662729062

🌐 harmony@yamarahimi.de

📧 <https://www.yamarahimi.de>