

HAYV KAHRAMAN'S BODYSCREENS: SKIN, DEPTH, AND SURFACE

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### ABSTRACT

Hayv Kahraman is most widely known for her large-scale paintings of pale women with skin like silk and soft clouds of dark black hair. She often draws on her experiences as an émigré from Iraq to represent the challenges that surface as a result of one's identity. Having observed in such works how the body is undermined by volatile abstractions like nationality and gender, I will argue that in introducing the operation of a scanning device into her practice, Kahraman comes to reconfigure these terms through what Christine Ross has termed "precarious visibility." Destabilizing optical perspective requires that the interface of the viewing experience be reshaped, and seeing the female body threatened by a loss of agency, Kahraman reconsiders its very surface, turning body into a screen. This thesis will therefore examine what I will call "bodyscreens" made by Kahraman. The first chapter will argue that in meditating on surface and body, the artist is revising minimalist practices, such as those of Robert Morris, which confront the viewer with objects that emphasize their exteriority. In asking why Kahraman chooses to represent the body as a minimalist object with *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal*, I will rely on the philosophy of Elizabeth Grosz to demonstrate that by inscribing her internal body on an object's skin, the artist is showing that as a screen, the body's significance can permute, dismantle hierarchies, resist categories, and expand the possibilities of subjectivity. The second chapter will discuss how

this melding of inner and outer is also an explicit engagement with architectural spaces. Kahraman links together memories of *mashrabiya* screens; the category of sexuality; and the viewer's immersion in architecture to produce what Giuliana Bruno describes as what can be called filmic spaces. This intersection of traditional Islamic media with the ongoing redefinitions of the screen in museographic spaces establishes new forms of dwelling and journey that contrast with the colonizer's desire to enclose and fix. I will conclude by discussing Kahraman's performance art and ask what relationship between evasion of identification and intersubjectivity she proposes in projecting her story onto the bodies of her actresses.

## APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled “Hayv Kahraman’s Bodyscreens: Skin, Depth, and Surface” presented by D. Marselle Bredemeyer, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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It has been an honor to study modern and contemporary art with Dr. Frances Connelly, who welcomed me into the master's program and taught me to write and think like an art historian. Her feedback on an early paper about Hayv Kahraman was the starting point for organizing the ideas that would inform this thesis. It was a thrill when Kimberly Masteller from the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art agreed to be on my thesis committee. As the curator for the exhibition on Islamic art from past and present that served as my introduction to Kahraman's work, she is whom I have to thank for these ideas even coming to life in the first place.



I owe any success from the past few years to my parents, who instilled in me an appetite for curiosity and hard work; to my poppa, Carmen Luisi, whose advice was “go to school for as long as you can afford to, and then go a little more”; and to my meema, Marie Luisi, for all her enthusiasm and love. My fiancé Bobby did all the things I could ask a partner to do and more to help me continue to work full time while earning my Master of Arts degree over three short years. Finally, I am grateful for the English professors I met in my undergraduate career who let me write about art before I knew there was an entire field of study devoted to its history. Part of me still lives in the world of those literature classes where I learned to write critically, think creatively, and always strive to become a better reader.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As scholars of art history and contemporary visual culture trace the artistic arc of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, their discourse often centers on the experiential and relational dynamics that objects put into play. In Caroline Jones's view, a work of art is not merely a work, but it is actually *doing* work, she writes "to produce new kinds of subjects."<sup>1</sup> Giuliana Bruno imbues material with a capacity for action as well, "emphasizing the etymological root of *medium*, which refers to a condition of "betweenness" and a quality of 'becoming' as a connective, pervasive, or enveloping substance."<sup>2</sup> With the proliferation of newer and newer imaging and fabrication technologies, and the support of cultural institutions which facilitate immersive installations, the media that artists turn to often elide categories. The medium is not the message buried beneath the content, but the subject itself as it engages us in a renegotiation of our relationship to the flows and perspectives of a space. This thesis takes an interest in how Minimalist artists, and particularly Robert Morris, were involved in initiating this transition from attention to the representation of subject matter to a focus on the tension activated between subject and object by sheer materiality. While Minimalist artists generally rejected representation, yet implied corporeal presence in their works, artists now present the body in these minimal forms. Hayv Kahraman is one such

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Jones, "Biennial Culture and the Aesthetics of Experience," in *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*, eds. Alexander Dumbadze and Suzanne Hudson, 192-201 (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality and Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 5.

artist, who, using clinical scanning technology, strategically references Minimalism and its history in order to reconfigure the terms of self, space, and identity.

Hayv Kahraman is most widely known for her large-scale paintings of pale women with skin like silk and soft clouds of dark black hair. Her images are often haunted by suggestions of violence and loss. Sometimes they are disturbing because they directly portray acts of aggression. Since beginning her career as an artist in 2006, she has repeatedly returned to the theme of society's treatment of women. *Honor Killing* (figure 1), an early work on paper, depicts systematic violence against women carried out in the name of religion, where twelve women wearing black veils hang from a tree. The hanging of women is referenced again in *Migrant 1* (figure 2), a painting in the *Waraq* series that is made to look like one in a deck of playing cards. In these images, the artist also delves into the category of identity in migrant populations, a second thread that runs throughout her practice. On each playing card are two images of a man or woman's torso, connected, one right side up and its mirror image upside down. The motif of two selves in one illustrates the double lives that migrants sometimes experience, and which Kahraman herself has described encountering, when moving to a new country. The woman depicted in *Migrant 1* may have escaped the threat to her life she was facing in her homeland, but, alienated by her language or her skin, she nonetheless faces a death of self in her new country.

Kahraman's subjects often float in airless spaces, against the raw material of the painting's surface (frequently wood, drywall, or paper), like in an illuminated manuscript, making many of her figures feel simultaneously still, confrontational, and lonely. Grids or anthropometric lines that measure out proportions often intersect the bodies as well, most likely in reference to the fracturing of identity that migration across geographic borders can

prompt. Having fled Baghdad with her family in 1991 at the age of 11 due to increasing violence against the Kurdish population her family is a part of, Kahraman is drawing on her personal experiences of crossing into foreign territories when mixing imagery of maps and women. Before eventually arriving in Sweden and being placed in a refugee camp, Kahraman, her mother, and her sisters were stalled along their trip in a series of countries in the Middle East. The girls' father arrived a year later, at which time the family settled in the town of Hudiksvall.<sup>3</sup> After growing up in Sweden, Kahraman continued to move across borders: first to Italy to study graphic design at the L'Accademia d'Arte e Design di Firenze, then back to Sweden for web design education, and finally to the United States in 2006. At this time, the U.S. war in Iraq was in its fourth year.

This conflict, and the events that preceded it, have generated an interest among Americans in the cultures—although they are often considered in a monolithic manner in Western media—of the so-called Middle East. In the past decade, curators in the US and Europe have considered topics such as the veil, feminism, and the relationship between past and present in contemporary Islamic art.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, there has been an intensification of hatred or suspicion on people in the United States who are members of the Muslim community, or perceived to be so because of their skin.<sup>5</sup> The attention, whether overtly

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<sup>3</sup> Yasmine Mohseni, "Of Violence and Beauty: Hayv Kahraman's women," *Modern Painters*, April 2012. <http://yasminemohseni.com/of-violence-and-beauty-hayv-kahramans-women/> (Accessed October 1, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Two examples are "Veil: Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art," held at the New Art Gallery Walsall in 2003 and "The Fertile Crescent: Gender, Art, and Society" held at the Rutgers University Institute for Women and Art in 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Racist stereotypes, sometimes masquerading as jokes, were leveled at Kahraman when she first moved to the United States and was living in Arizona. She specifically recalls a

negative or dehumanizingly curious, has the effect of dissecting a person as if she were under a microscope. Kahraman's paper works, such as *Anthropometric Arch* (figure 3) and *Anthropometric Front and Back* (figure 4), which are illustrated with ink and strands of long black hair, touch on the relationship between studying a body and measuring it against abstract preconceptions about figuration and identity. Anthropometry has historically been used in pseudo-scientific literature to categorize bodies by race and establish parameters for what is "normal," according to systems of white supremacy. In addition to struggling with the political climate permeating her social circles in the United States, Kahraman describes feeling guilt that she was living safely in a country that was engaging in war with her own homeland.<sup>6</sup> Though she previously focused on graphic design, during this period between 2005 and 2007, she began to turn to painting as a way to work through these series of conflicts.

By 2011, Kahraman's paintings had earned her a nomination for the Jameel Prize, which is awarded internationally to celebrate contemporary art that fuses traditional Islamic influences and modern practices. The *Waraq* series was shown widely as part of the subsequent tour of the award nominees' art, which traveled through California, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom. Kahraman soon after began to expand her repertoire, incorporating internal, corporeal openings into her figural representations of émigrés and the shaping of their identities. These forms were introduced in 2012 in her third solo show, titled

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comment alleging that her being Iraqi meant she probably kept guns nearby out of ingrained paranoia from war. It is ironic for an American, living in a country in which states favor easy and unrestricted gun access as well as the right to conceal and carry, to characterize an entire culture for such a practice, even if it were true. Yasmine Mohseni, "Of Violence and Beauty: Hayv Kahraman's women," 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*Extimacy* (figure 5), at the Third Line Gallery in Dubai. On the gallery walls hung large wood panel paintings of women, who across their bodies held curved, symmetrical shapes. These elegantly extracted impressions on the surfaces are outlines of Kahraman's body, viewed in cross-sections. After finding out that her neighbor owned a 3D imaging tool used to digitally scan archaeological objects, Kahraman underwent a full scan of her own body, and digitally sliced the resulting figure into over 500 shapes, which were then printed out for use in art.<sup>7</sup> The subjection of her body to scanning is an act that metaphorically performs the alienating of one's identity from the self under an objectifying gaze. I contend that this encounter with a device epitomizing the objectifying gaze facilitates bodily representations which then counter the primacy of vision in public exchange by introducing a haptic element.

For *Extimacy*, Kathy Davis wrote that Kahraman is "more inner directed, depicting women as agents who extract slices from their own bodies" and rethinking the terms of embodiment and agency.<sup>8</sup> This strategy of exploring identity through the representation of our visceral depths has taken on new possibilities as artists in recent decades make use of clinical imaging technologies. Such tools allow for the probing of the biological body in a way that stamps it with personal traces of emotion, memory, and meaning. Especially since the 1990s, clinical imaging devices, like computed tomography, have been used by artists globally to take unusual close-ups of the body. South African photographer Gary Schneider,

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<sup>7</sup> Kahraman cites her influence for taking this approach to looking at the body as coming from Wilhelm Braune's book *The Atlas of Topographical Anatomy*. Published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it contains images of horizontal dissections done on cadavers. Dina Ibrahim and Hayv Kahraman, "Figuration and the Body," *ArteEast*, July, 1, 2012. [http://hayvkahraman.com/press/ArteEast\\_Figuration\\_and\\_the\\_body\\_2012.pdf](http://hayvkahraman.com/press/ArteEast_Figuration_and_the_body_2012.pdf) (Accessed October 1, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Essay for *Extimacy*, via personal correspondence.

inspired by the Human Genome Project, used dental X-ray, electron microscopes, and a retinal camera to create intimate images of both skin and internal biological matter, hands or sperm cells, for example. In Brazil, Diana Domingues's installations *A-Feto* and *A Ceia* featured walls of moving ultrasound images that produced a living, breathing space in which the body became a rhythmic and organic presence.

Rather than reducing an individual to universal human matter, as imaging is intended to do in the medical office, in art, the biological self is deconstructed and its role in shaping us is supplanted by the activity of accumulating the particularities of experience through which bodies are socially (and technologically) constructed. We may recognize certain organs or cells as belonging to a male or female person, but they reduce our associations with the experiences of these embodiments to abstractions. Schneider and Domingues are loosely connected by the psychological implications of their works, in which we find both comfort and vulnerability in surveying the universal unrecognizability of our bodies on the microscopic or segmented level. This strategy has been useful for women artists in reclaiming how their bodies are viewed. Pipilotti Rist's 2004 video installation *Stir Heart, Rinse Heart*, for example, projects detailed and colorful magnetic resonance and electron microscopic images, among others, alongside a filmic narrative about human rituals to illustrate the visceral aspects of fantasy and power.

Hayv Kahraman's art bears more meaningful similarities with Mona Hatoum's since both artists flatten inner and outer in their manipulation of the clinical eye. Kahraman and Hatoum do not merely traverse the same landscapes of the body and art history as artists who are women, but as women who live as exiles, and, furthermore, as women dwelling in Western countries where the Middle Eastern body is often perceived as that of an adversary

or as an exotic object. Though an invasive and graphic installation, Hatoum's *Corps Etranger* (figure 6) bears some conceptual similarities to Kahraman's orderly geometric objects *Quasi-Corporeal* (figure 7) and *Icosahedral Body* (figure 8).<sup>9</sup> The viewer of *Corps Etranger* enters through the door-shaped opening of a tall, sterile looking circular structure. In the center of the floor is a projection of video images of Hatoum's body. Recorded with an endoscope, the film draws the viewer into the artist's body's orifices while the sound of breathing and blood pumping plays through speakers. Hatoum's and Kahraman's works disorient the viewer by confusing the boundaries of the human body.

As Christine Ross has written, Hatoum's *Corps Etranger* exemplifies contemporary art practices based on modes of abjection that open up the body in order to call for a shift in perception on women's identities. When made abject, the body threatens stereotypical approaches to "identity" because the viewer "never quite succeeds in differentiating the self from this abjected other."<sup>10</sup> Kahraman's sculptures *Quasi-Corporeal* and *Icosahedral Body*, two objects which I will discuss extensively, could not be called abject or grotesque, though they seemingly carry the imprint of a dissected body. Yet like Hatoum's installation, which entices the viewer to enter its abject space, these objects simultaneously repel and attract viewers, with undulating and pointed-edge circumferences that invite one to approach or

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<sup>9</sup> Hatoum is an artist that Kahraman cites as an influence, so she would be aware of *Corps Etranger*. Yasmini Mohseni, "Beyond the White Cube: The Rich Mosaic of Hayv Kahraman's Art and Life," *Huffington Post*, March, 22, 2012. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yasmine-mohseni/hayv-kahraman\\_b\\_1370563.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yasmine-mohseni/hayv-kahraman_b_1370563.html) (Accessed October 1, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Christine Ross "Redefinitions of Abjection in Contemporary Performances of the Female Body" in *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, ed. Frances Connelly (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 282.



even transgress their wood boundaries. In comparing these works, I launch new questions and come back to those proposed above. Is the viewer an intrusive presence or a participant in an exchange when the body becomes the explicit medium of our experience? How is the dissected body made animate or inert? Why is Kahraman intent on representing her body in such an open but structured way (as a Minimalist object), and finally, what proposition is made about the relationship between subject and object?

I argue that Kahraman's sculptures based on the scanned shapes of her body are turning from a visual representation of the undermining of the body by volatile abstractions like gender and race into what Christine Ross has called an operation of "precarious visibility," and that this approach reframes the body as a site of resistance and becoming. Ross describes the qualities of precarious visibility as including "embodied notions of finiteness, identification failure," and "informational and bio-technology."<sup>11</sup> In each of my chapters, I will refer to these terms to study the aesthetics of Kahraman's renegotiation of the terms of power and body. The application of this concept to Kahraman's practice is particularly necessary, as many writers and journalists frequently note the influence of Japanese, Persian, Renaissance, and Arabic styles on the artist's works, but none critically examine how embedded her work is in contemporary strategies and aesthetics. By not situating her work in a broader theoretical framework, art critics lose the socio-political implications of Kahraman's representations of the body. Art historian Maymanah Farhat highlights a similarly limiting tendency to consider art from the Middle East only in relation

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<sup>11</sup> Christine Ross, "Introduction: The Precarious Visualities of Contemporary Art and Visual Culture," *Precarious Visibility: New Perspectives on Identification in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 5.

to itself.<sup>12</sup> Farhat argues in a review of the exhibition *The Fertile Crescent: Gender, Art, and Society* that, “by using a historical perspective, the exhibition could have afforded a level of seriousness to its emerging artists with an examination of the formal and conceptual shifts that can be found in their varied works.” I am taking up this call as part of my thesis by focusing on the “work” that Kahraman’s art does in transforming the body into a surface where interior and exterior spaces converge.

During the shift Kahraman underwent from painting to making sculptural objects with her body, beginning around 2011, she still maintained her focus on skin as a symbolic site of history and biography. Semiotician Walter Mignolo, himself a migrant from Argentina to the United States, has written on Kahraman’s work through the lens of border consciousness. The migrant’s identity, he explains, is not formed from an intimate personal space, but “emerges from his awareness of being seen” and “being seen as a lesser.”<sup>13</sup> This approach alone, one centered on these artworks’ expression of the personal experience of migration, is of significant value for advancing the interpretation of Kahraman’s highly symbolical fractured and dissected forms. However, the personal, biographical interpretation is one that risks permitting non-migrants to disconnect the art from their own experience and categorize it as outside of their relationship to the external world. Kahraman is nonetheless very clear that she sees her works as projections and extensions of herself.<sup>14</sup> What is the

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<sup>12</sup> Maymanah Farhat, “Precarious Symbolism: When the Political Sphere Overshadows Art History,” *Art Journal* 72, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 95.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Mignolo, “*Let the Guest be the Master: Border Thinking and the Aesthetic Potential of Migrant Consciousness*,” for Jack Shainman Gallery, <http://hayvkahraman.com/press/Mignolo%202013.pdf> (Accessed October 1, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Dina Ibrahim and Hayv Kahraman, “Figuration and the Body,” *ArteEast*.

relationship between the biographical and the theoretical in the art of the body? Does articulating these works as bodies line up with a phenomenological experience of them?

In looking to answer such questions, I draw from Mignolo's reflections on migrant consciousness and my observations on Kahraman's art and propose the term "bodyscreen," taken from the name of one of Kahraman's own works, to define an aesthetic strategy, employed by the artist, that attempts to reshape the possibilities of living within a dominant culture that defines a person by his or her skin. The bodyscreen operates by presenting the body as a screen—a surface that can shape spaces and recast a multitude of projections and meanings. Bodyscreens meld together interior and exterior bodily elements, producing uncertain boundaries that imbue the art with a certain agency as it unsettles the viewer's frame and relationship to it. This term, I hope to argue, is a portable one that might come to illuminate other contemporary practices that incorporate the experience of the body. Applying it to Kahraman's art, I propose that the bodyscreen manifests in three ways: as sculptural object, architectural structure, and filmic frame.

The first chapter of this thesis will argue that in meditating on surface and body, the artist is revising Minimalist practices, such as those of Robert Morris, which confront the viewer with an object that is rational and carries with it an implied independence from subjectivity of the artist. In exploring why Kahraman chooses to represent her body as a Minimalist object considering the legacy of the trend, I will rely on the philosophy of Elizabeth Grosz to demonstrate that by inscribing her internal body on a geometric object's skin, the artist is showing that as a screen, the body's significance can permute, dismantle hierarchies, resist categories, and expand the possibilities of subjectivity. The second chapter will continue an analysis of Kahraman's art through Grosz's lens. It will primarily focus on

the bodyscreen as an architectural force through which limits of public and private space are un- and reformed. I will discuss the influence of Islamic architecture and culture on these works. Moreover, I will rely on Giuliana Bruno's research on the fragment of architecture as a filmic image to argue that Kahraman's spaces embody feminist empowerment. Finally, I will conclude by discussing Kahraman's performance art and ask what relationship between evasion and dispersal of identification and intersubjectivity she proposes in projecting herself onto the bodies of female performers embodying her persona.

Though the world is getting smaller because of globalization, it would be hard to argue that our borders are becoming any less contentious points of political and cultural tension. I hope to show how Kahraman's bodyscreens are offering an aesthetic strategy for coping with divisions we cannot deny, even as the conditions of life today often demand we uproot ourselves, leaving many to forever struggle to answer the question, "Where are you from?"

## CHAPTER 2

### HAYV KAHRAMAN'S GEOMETRIC BODIES AND MINIMALIST ART

Shifting from painting to object making in 2011, Kahraman explained on her blog, “A new obsession of mine is GEOMETRY, geometric solids and how they occupy our spatiality.”<sup>1</sup> This interest, and her following move from painting to sculpture, recalls the direction that artists took in the 1960s in their rejection of illusionism and in pursuit of fully self-referential art. Though critics have interpreted such Minimalist fabrications as being unemotional, aggressive, and anti-aesthetic, using Minimalist art’s familiar strategies, Kahraman infers that this practice’s subjective dimensions are actually quite open and can be expanded upon. Throughout this chapter, I turn to two of her works, *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal* and consider them in comparison with several works by Robert Morris in order to investigate how she is revising the relationships among subject, object, and space.

Kahraman’s entry point into this geometric and conceptual lexicon is through the themes of exile and alienation that she explored in her preceding paintings. Her works are connected by their continued investigation into “the link of borders and divisions created geographically as well as corporally in the form of dissections”<sup>2</sup> These are complex ideas, but explored with seemingly simple and pared down forms. Extending theoretical approaches to Minimalism to discuss Kahraman’s objects, I intend to show how the intersection of these contrasting qualities achieves an affective dimension that heightens awareness of looking at and being looked at by bodies that are categorized as aberrant.

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<sup>1</sup> Hayv Kahraman, “Corporeal Geometry?,” *The Artwork of Hayv Kahraman*, November 10, 2011, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://hayvkahraman.blogspot.com/2011/11/new-obsession-of-mine-is-geometry.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*Icosahedral Body*, comprised of twenty connected wooden triangles, and *Quasi-Corporeal*, made from twelve wooden pentagons, each have organic round shapes cut from their “skin.” The clear-varnished, pale wood is highly anthropomorphic, with the cuts in the approximately half-inch thick material even revealing several layers of compressed panels that call to mind layers of dermal tissue. What the layers do not do is imply a body’s depth; instead, both the front- and backside of each piece of wood is covered in the same shade of veneer. Although *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal* have an inner space and an exterior surface, they are all epidermis on all sides. Ironically, we become aware of this play on depth because Kahraman opens up the depth of her own body to us by way of the organic forms through which we see into her object. These shapes are derived from the same scans of her body that she selected from when creating works for her solo exhibition *Extimacy*, in which the subjects of the paintings held sections of the body across their torsos. They are cross-sectional slices, and offer a unique perspective of the body, one much less familiar to the public than that of the traced profile.

In discussing his use of CT imaging to create artworks, physician Kai-hung Fung describes the process of constructing a body through scanned cross-sections as presenting multiple challenges to even the most experienced clinicians.<sup>3</sup> An activity as rhythmic and subtle as a patient’s breathing can cause aberrations in the shapes that appear on a clinician’s screen. The body, he tells us, is always undergoing interpretation, even when placed under the most objective lens. Kahraman further obscures this exercise of locating an actual site in a replicated image by having made her sculptures fully formed shapes that do not emulate the

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<sup>3</sup> Kai-hung Fung, “Artwork Using 3D Computed Tomography: Extending Radiology into the Realm of Visual Art,” *Leonardo* 39, no. 3(2006): 187.

outline of a human body. Furthermore, as one looks at either of the geometric bodies, she also catches a glimpse of the object's opposite side. Since each of the panels is perforated by a unique pattern of corporeal shapes, a viewer's movement engages the layers of the work. There is not a single perspective from which the outlined forms line up; they are always eclipsing or framing the shapes of another panel, and they unfix the eye's focus on the object's shell. Identity is wholly elusive as the body refuses to cohere.

Because of the sculptures' makeup of bare and practical materials, wood panels and industrial aluminum brackets, and the numerous straight edges that so precisely define their space, each of the geometric bodies at once passes as something familiar. Like a Donald Judd object, they betray no physical evidence of an artist's hand and draw attention to their fabricated origin. To Robert Morris, and readers of his 1966 essay *Notes on Sculpture*, they would be recognizable in relation to the criteria he laid out to distinguish outdated practices that emphasized illusionism and opticality from "the better new work [which] takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision."<sup>4</sup> His parameters included that sculptures should be colorless, simple polyhedrons that were neither so small as to be intimate nor so large as to be overwhelming in comparison to the size of the human body. By tracing a connection between Morris's approach to sculpture and Kahraman's geometric bodies, I argue that the large polyhedron shapes have much in common with Minimalist sculpture from the 1960s. This link is important because Minimalism's insistence on the presence of the object introduced new models of subjectivity that entailed physical encounters which formed the basis of

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture Part II," *Artforum* 5, no. 2 (October 1966): 22.

knowledge, a model which Kahraman revisits in order to undercut the accepted distinction between subject and object.<sup>5</sup>

Minimalist sculpture generally proposes an encounter between the viewer and the object that underscores or disrupts the relationship between physical presence and the formation of subjectivity. Using Robert Morris's *L-Beams* (figure 9) as an example, a work comprised of three boxy, L-shaped units that lie on the ground in different positions, Rosalind Krauss writes: "Part of the meaning of much of Minimal sculpture issues from the way in which it becomes a metaphorical statement of the self understood only in experience."<sup>6</sup> The objects are not wholly formed prior to their particular properties becoming perceived as the viewer moves around in the gallery space. Krauss describes the *L-Beams* as causing a fundamental dissonance between what is known—that the beams are all identical—and what is perceived—that each uniquely claims and shapes our space.

Kahraman's sculptures confront our system of knowledge in a similar way to that of Morris. In doing so, they expose the viewer's desires and expectations as they relate to our interaction with an abstract representation of corporeal presence. What appears to be a fixed and inanimate sculpture is sensed as provocative and precarious in light of our motion. This connection with Minimalism is significant not merely because it extends the engagement with geometric, minimal shapes into contemporary practice, but because Kahraman is

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<sup>5</sup> Susan Best summarizes and explores the consequences of the two leading models of subjectivity in Minimalism proposed by Thierry de Duve and Rosalind Krauss. While Krauss attends to the motile experience of the viewer, de Duve explores how Minimalism produces temporal conflicts and a theatric space. These theories' irreconcilability leaves ample room for interpretations of the subject in late Modern art. Susan Best, *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," *Artforum* 12.3 (November 1973), 43-53.



inserting her identity into this process. In doing so, she prompts an interaction with her body—a body which is exiled, marginalized, and sexualized—while obscuring its features so that it cannot be made into an Other. Prejudices or stereotypes that a viewer may have about “brown” skin are displaced in the experience of the abstracted form of Kahraman’s body, enabling one to see the distance between the actual encounter and the constructed preconceptions about it.

Kahraman has described the edges of these works as representing a fractured geography.<sup>7</sup> The precisely rendered geometric outlines can also be read as a reference to patterns encountered in Islamic art, but it is clear that the sculptures are not merely representational pieces.<sup>8</sup> Instead they stand for corporeal presence in the space of the viewer, devoid of subjective expressive qualities that would prompt biographical association. In the years before these works were created, Kahraman set herself against practices that reject figurative references. Discussing her Renaissance influences and the global success of her work, she explains: “A lot of people don’t understand contemporary art. My work is figurative and so one might be able to enter it more easily than [a work that is just] a scratch on a canvas.”<sup>9</sup> Accessibility to meaning is defined here by the use of readable textual imagery, a transmission of experience by way of narrative that allows one to examine the body under particular cultural systems. Kahraman has embraced a discursive approach to

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<sup>7</sup> Hayv Kahraman, “Corporeal Geometry?”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Yasmin Mohseni, “Inner Travels of Hayv Kahraman,” *Canvas* 5, no. 6 (November/December 2009), accessed December 5, 2014  
[http://hayvkahraman.com/press/Hayv\\_Kahraman\\_Canvas\\_Nov09.PDF](http://hayvkahraman.com/press/Hayv_Kahraman_Canvas_Nov09.PDF).

communicate the precarious conditions of life for women from the Middle East through her art. Her transitory departure from figuration is not an abandonment of these feminist concerns, even though overt depictions of women are made absent. I argue that Kahraman is revising Minimalism in her creation of *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal* because there is a political value in the phenomenological approach that anthropomorphic geometric objects broach. Furthermore, this avenue renders new possible bodies to challenge problematic categories.

### **Experience, Knowledge, and Political Spaces in Phenomenology**

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology came to inform art historical discourse in the 1970s as Minimalist and Post-Minimalist artists departed from forms of meaning rooted in metaphysics and instead sought to ground signification in the space of experience.<sup>10</sup> Though Minimalist artists were turning away from the precedent that the artist's intention could be received in the viewer's reception of the work, the works themselves do not so much refute this past as abandon it. As Krauss wrote in *Artforum*, these artists "are not, for example, offering a new account of intention, because to do so would leave them trapped within the privacy of a mental space which the old one entailed."<sup>11</sup> Such projects are oriented toward removing psychological traces from sculpture as a way of allowing for a corporeal and public encounter. Krauss saw the *L-Beams* as particularly emblematic of the way a handful of sculptors had embarked on "the discovery of the body as a complete externalization of the Self," described in Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the (entirely physical)

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<sup>10</sup> Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility, Reflections on Post '60s Sculpture," 44.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

body. As one's presuppositions about geometric space are emptied out in front of the feeling of reality, Krauss argues that the viewer is directed toward a "coalescing in experience and of a realizing of the self."<sup>12</sup> This transformation is marked by tension and affective exchanges that vary in relation to the work.

Kahraman's organized patterns of cutout shapes on each of the panels of her sculptures convey, initially, a sense of harmony and containment. If we imagine these qualities to be constant in the work, then the mind is positing something similar to what Krauss describes is thought when one first looks at the *L-Beams*, in which an understanding of the shapes as identical is held. In relation to the body, however, it is "impossible to really perceive them [...] as the same."<sup>13</sup> The stability of Kahraman's patterns similarly begins to diminish as the viewer physically encounters them. Describing her interest in the use of patterns and symmetry, Kahraman has said, "I'm attracted to the idea of symmetry as a representation of the sublime in a Kantian sense, and how these systems of patterns can be a reflection of the infinite."<sup>14</sup> An experience of the sublime is one that embodies both discomfort and pleasure as the limitations of the body become crystalized in the presence of

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<sup>12</sup> Cognitive scientists have discovered innate proclivities for pattern finding, and found evidence that both hemispheres of the brain enable the process of perceptual constancy to take place, meaning that we are able to come to recognition of objects from multiple viewpoints. It is not that there are ideal forms or *a priori* knowledge we impose on the world, but that the world does come to "coalesce" insofar as our neural system is equipped to gain consciousness from it through action. Dahlia W. Zaidel, *Neuropsychology of Art: Neurological, Cognitive and Evolutionary Perspectives* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2007): 122-126.

<sup>13</sup> Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility, Reflections on Post '60s Sculpture," 43-53.

<sup>14</sup> Yasmine Mohseni, "Beyond the White Cube: The Rich Mosaic of Hayv Kahraman's Art and Life," *The Huffington Post*, March 22, 2012, accessed December 1, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yasmine-mohseni/hayv-kahraman\\_b\\_1370563.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yasmine-mohseni/hayv-kahraman_b_1370563.html).

an expansive force. Kahraman envisions her own body as a reflection of this force in *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal*, staging a contrast in which Minimalism's totality becomes interrupted by an unfixable map of the self. Knowing that the shapes in the sculptures belong to a deconstructed body, one begins to look for recognizable forms in the wood. Small circles appear to indicate fingers or toes, and symmetrical, curved oblongs are identifiable as sections of the torso, though only in a general sense. One is never able to pinpoint just which spot on the artist's figure is being looked at, in part because the unusual cross-sectional perspective leaves us to grapple with a view of the body that unifies both internal and external components on one plane.

Morris has also experimented with reducing the body into such specific sites that it becomes unfamiliar. In 1963, for the work *Portrait*, Morris painted eight bottles that were supposedly filled with different body fluids, lining up each one in a row of boxes and labeling them by their content on the bottom of the shelf. That same year, he made *Self-Portrait (EEG)* using an electroencephalogram to record himself thinking for as much time as it took to print a sheet of his brain waves that were as long as he was tall. So that image would be a "true" portrait of self, he thought only about his life. Krauss writes that, with such works, Morris was looking to challenge "the Cartesian attempt to locate that part of the body where the connection between it and its mental counterpart takes place."<sup>15</sup> In searching for a single internal mechanism that is responsible for consciousness, the external self becomes dismissed as superfluous. Morris follows this position to its absurd conclusion, showing how endless divisions of the body would bring us no closer to an understanding of the thinking,

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<sup>15</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York: Guggenheim Publications, 1994), 8.

feeling self. The search for a representation of the whole person within individual sets of coordinates is fruitless for the viewer of these two works.

It is this approachable external presence that is elusive in Kahraman's sculptures as her cross-sectional shapes fail to cohere into one schema. What makes Kahraman's body become sublime is that it increasingly slips away from the mind the more one comes to identify its discrete parts. As the body evolves into something that is uncontainable, other features of the sculpture undermine the stability of the viewer's space as well. Because *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal* are built from pointed triangles and pentagons, they do not have perfect circumferences, meaning that as one moves around the sculptures, his or her distance to them is always shifting. The edges where the shapes meet are closer to the viewer than the flat area within each one. Movement around the shapes creates a sensation of a rise and fall in the object that is suggestive of a breathing process, especially once one is aware of the corporeal associations. As one realizes that he or she is closer to the object's edges than expected, it takes concentration away from the work of cataloguing the body's parts, and heightens awareness of the fact that our proximity to art is always being monitored by guards and other museum or gallery patrons.

Though my experience is limited by having only viewed *Icosahedral Body* in person, I imagine that because its triangular panels are smaller and more numerous than *Quasi-Corporeal's* pentagons, the experience of finding oneself in unsettling or surprising proximity to it is more pronounced. The patterns on the panels of the two objects are unique arrangements as well, however, they appear to cause similar shadows to be cast onto the floor around the objects, extending a few feet out from their bases. Despite the viewer's effort not to touch the work, it can metaphorically touch the viewer back; these projections are part of

the work. They are layered in tone, and while the shadows continue the impression of corporeal shapes onto the floor, some are faint or eclipsed because the light flattens the levels of patterns. The shadows also allow for the possibility that one could unknowingly walk over or stand in them, but whether the discovery of this meeting is an uncomfortable surprise that makes one feel like an intruder or a pleasant encounter that encourages an intimacy with the work depends on the viewer. Kahraman has said that these objects stem from her survey of the corporeal effects that geo-political borders have on the body. The theme of uncertain boundaries connects the shadows to her interest in cartography, but they also prompt consideration of the gray areas between private and public space that women find themselves negotiating as they step outside of the roles that are perceived as appropriate for them.

The mixture of anxiety and desire stirred by the presence of these objects, which specifically bare evidence of Kahraman's body, pushes forward questions about the relationship of the exile with the rest of the world. As a woman, and as a woman from Iraq, the artist is also subject to Orientalist projections by viewers from Western countries where her works are often displayed. The use of a digital scanner in the construction of these pieces simultaneously speaks to both of these issues. By subjecting herself to such clinical photography, Kahraman is mirroring the intense scrutiny women who look like herself undergo in the name of campaigns for national security. Now that full-body scanners are familiar to all air travelers, intrusions into the body are an experience shared by many adults across different demographics. However, racial profiling enacts its own kind of surveillance upon the body, one that is not relatable for those free of it. In thinking of the scanner as a kind of diagnostic tool used on the body that is potentially "abnormal," this other layer of the Middle Eastern woman's experience is apparent; to be imaged is to suggest that something is

wrong with the subject. This scrutiny is also a form of objectification that parallels how Edward Said describes the Western gaze being directed at women from Islamic cultures.<sup>16</sup> In this light, and because Kahraman had her body scanned while she was fully unclothed, the objects are a kind of inverted nude, deflecting the gaze that finds erotic pleasure in the Other's skin. Kahraman acknowledges her awareness of being looked at in this way. In his fictionalized account of the exhibition *Let the Guest Be the Master*,<sup>17</sup> Walter Mignolo imagines brown-skinned women who silently approached visitors and handed out cards that include pieces of Kahraman's writing such as:

I'm a commodity. My paintings are a commodity. My figures are a commodity. I pose in the nude and photograph my body to use as outlines for paintings. [...] I provide for you in my rectangles. I know you like it. That's why I paint it. To catch your gaze. To activate your gaze. I want you to buy me so you can look at me all day long. I'm your little oriental pussycat. You can pet me I don't bite.<sup>18</sup>

If the scanner is an increasing presence in our world, Kahraman does not let the audience forget how complicit they are in the processes of surveillance. It is unavoidable that we observe each other and our differences, but underlying our exchanges are dynamics of power. For this reason, the issue of control can also be identified as a topic the bodyscreen is connected to.

It is the viewer's effort to control the sculptures' elusive bodies—to discover more in a search for a conclusion—that elicits an urge to reach through their wood surfaces. With our

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 6.

<sup>17</sup> While the two objects discussed in this chapter were not featured in this exhibition of Kahraman's work that is addressed by Mignolo, they trigger similar questions about space and looking that were raised by the show.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Mignolo, "Sensing Otherwise: A Story of an Exhibition," *Ibraaz* September 30, 2013, accessed December 1, 2014 <http://www.ibraaz.org/projects/57/>.

ability to touch repressed by the expectation that we keep our physical distance from the sculptural object, a discomfort over one's own body begins to set in because it becomes less than the free subject we consider it to be. Drew Leder describes how the body's ability to function in daily life stems in part from its ability to forget itself in the hum of proprioception. With the body being set on quiet mode for the parts of our lives in which we mostly feel "healthy" and "normal," "forgetting about or 'freeing oneself' from the body takes on a positive valuation."<sup>19</sup> Leder suggests that as a result, when we are forced to pay attention to our body, its appearance can make it seem alien or problematic, a situation he calls "dys-appearance." One way in which the body can come to dys-appear is through socially generated self-consciousness. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty, Leder describes that we typically exist with others in a state of "mutual incorporation," but that it only takes a slightly judgmental gaze or overtly distanced body language to make one feel that their body is a strange or object-like thing.<sup>20</sup> Even the most subtle of shifts in a friend or stranger's behavior can make us acutely aware of our own activity in a negative way. In formal spaces, like galleries and museums, breeches in "normality" can be even more acute because of the behavioral conventions that are deeply internalized.

Because of their unrelenting illegibility and resistance to conceding the primacy of viewer's presence over their own, Kahraman's sculptural objects bring about a feeling of "social dys-appearance." The loss of control earlier acknowledged thus continues to amplify

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<sup>19</sup> Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 69.

<sup>20</sup> Leder also says that physical pain and disease are primary causes of dys-appearance, because they make us realize how objectively physical we are. Christine Ross has applied the approach on disease to an abject reading of Mona Hatoum's *Corps Etranger*.



as one's body faces a virtual and literal pushback. Through her art, Kahraman is empowered to reverse the social dynamics that she has often found herself objectified within as she faces curious looks or fields intrusive comments about her Iraqi heritage. Erosion of control is a central topic in Merleau-Ponty's discussion on freedom and intersubjectivity. He explains that because consciousness is a result of the body in action, objects and other beings shape us with or without our recognition or consent. He argues, therefore, that freedom is "not on the hither side of my being, but before me, in things," and as a result, "we are involved in the world and with others in an inextricable tangle."<sup>21</sup> In contrast, rationalism had previously entailed a reality in which phenomena were "inert forms immune to knowledge but available for subjection of the will."<sup>22</sup> To become unmoored from our assurance of self in the ways one does with either *L-Beams* or *Quasi-Corporeal* has an affective value that affirms the world not already wholly constituted; loss of control is in this context a reminder of the possibilities that exist in our response to new physical knowledge. The exile's experience, for example, magnifies the limitations of and possibilities for exchange in social spaces.

Kahraman creates a space, through perforated surfaces, in which we can only know the relation between her body and the sculptural object through time and movement, not an optical assessment. Her body fails to conform to intellectual conjectures about its identity. This dismantling of mind over body is what makes the "bodyscreen" a strategy for empowerment. Phenomenology's emphasis on the externality of life means that, "In learning about others, we recognize the provisional and relative nature of our own existential choices

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<sup>21</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 1962), 452.

<sup>22</sup> Diana Coole, *Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics after Anti-Humanism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 26.

and are therefore encouraged to be self-critical.”<sup>23</sup> Kahraman’s sculptures challenge the visitor’s space in a way that the visualized body cannot because it is vulnerable to myriad of preconceived ideas about who the Middle Eastern woman is. They provoke an accounting for one’s actions: are you a witness or an intruder? Does the desire to touch spring from hope for exchange or need to control? Minimal art raised questions about how the body comes to know the world, and this discussion is continued in the bodyscreen as mind, body, self, and other are emptied out in lived experience.

### **Critiques of Inner and Outer**

The external qualities of sculpture that form Morris’s primary concern also serve as a template for coming to imagine surface as a screen. These are Minimal objects that make meaning direct and visible, but also play out shifting perspectives in motion, and call out psychological projections.<sup>24</sup> Most closely related to the sculptures by Kahraman discussed in this chapter, *Untitled (Ring with Light)* (figure 10), a fiberglass, not-quite-complete circular shape comprised of two halves of a ring, leaves its inner space open and its border porous. Kahraman’s organic cross-sections produce the same activity: an opening up of space, meaning, and in her case, skin. These works share similar proposals about the meaning of the body, implying that it is defined by context, rather than innate rational systems. Kahraman,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 136.

<sup>24</sup> The meaning of these projections can be read in multiple ways. Susan Best describes Michael Fried’s claims that the works of Tony Smith were “assailing” and “aggressive” a form of part-object projection, in which “some truth about the object” fosters a paranoia that the thing is causing something to happen in the person subjected to it (p 24). However, as I intend to explain in this chapter, I am primarily concerned with Krauss’s view that Minimalism is a rejection of *a priori* understanding of space. In this sense, the screen is both ambivalent to our reactions and dissolves information we bring to it.

however, moves away from the self-referentiality of Minimalism, performing her awareness of identity and cultural signification. She explicitly states: “I reject the Cartesian dualistic philosophy of mind/body. The body is never simply just a physical object, but is contingent on social, cultural, and economic attributes and an embodiment of consciousness.”<sup>25</sup> What Kahraman describes is the body as a kind of screen, upon which inner and outer life is broadcast on the same plane.

Elizabeth Grosz’s philosophy conceives of the body as a Mobius strip, with interior and exterior facets as a single side that forms a whole. This concept has been pivotal for Kahraman’s practice. For the artist, the analogy unravels a history that has long associated the mind with masculinity and the body with the feminine.<sup>26</sup> Because mind is seen as the greater of the two poles in this binary perspective, women’s experiences are marginalized and belittled. To reimagine these entities as being only discursively defined as separate breaks a template that fits bodies into patriarchal categories. More importantly, it reveals the possibility for the body to permute and become an accumulation of exchanges rather than a permanent lack. For the migrant, whose identity is written on his or her skin as one moves across borders, the Mobius strip is also a metaphor for how these inscriptions sink through to the entire self. As Grosz concludes in her reading of psychoanalytic theory:

[What it] makes clear is that the body is literally written on, inscribed, by desire and signification, at the anatomical, physiological, and neurological levels. The body is in no sense naturally or innately psychical, sexual, or sexed. [...] This implies that the body which it presumes and helps to explain is an open-ended, pliable set of significations, capable of being rewritten, reconstituted, in quite other

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<sup>25</sup> Hayv Kahraman and Myrna Ayad, “Q+A,” accessed December 1, 2014 [http://hayvkahraman.com/press/HK\\_Extimacy\\_Essay%20QA.pdf](http://hayvkahraman.com/press/HK_Extimacy_Essay%20QA.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

terms than those which mark it, and consequently capable of reinscribing the forms of sexed identity and psychical subjectivity at work today.<sup>27</sup>

This potential is the core of the bodyscreen. It is a site for projection and calls for a recasting of the exterior. The freedom claimed for the person who becomes a bodyscreen is not a mere superficial control over self, but a command of space and subjectivity that opens new ground for exchange with others.

Without a critique of the inner and outer spaces of the body, the understanding of the self in the world falls into “the impasses of reductionism.”<sup>28</sup> Working within a movement that generally dislocated the supposed superiority of the mind over the body, Morris’s externalization of the world serves as a point for feminists to revisit as they formulate new possibilities for intersubjectivity through art. Kahraman uses her unfamiliar and elusive bodily patterns in combination with strongly defined geometric shapes to engage mind and body, provoking a tension between the settled and the unstable which pries at the border between self and other. The bodyscreen’s links to Minimalism inform it as a strategy for insisting on a work’s presence, redefining meaning as a product of contextual relationships, and turning fragmentation into a backdrop against which wholeness undergoes liberating reemergence. For the artist who is an immigrant, this undoing of preconceptions and already-configured identity that is offered through the bodyscreen opens an infinite number of permutations through which to cope in and with spaces of difference.

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<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press), 60-61.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 210

## CHAPTER 3

### THE FILMIC BODY AS A NEW SITE OF DWELLING

In tracing connections between Minimalist art and Hayv Kahraman's contemporary practice, I have shown how artists have embraced the design of geometric objects with fluctuating perceptual qualities in an attempt at overturning the ideals rooted in Cartesian dichotomies. Within this binary system, the mind, perceived as the isolated seat of reason and logic, has long been associated with masculinity, leaving the physicality its feminine foil. *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal* each undermine this dichotomy by transposing a female form onto ideal shapes. The emergence of exteriority as the primary condition of the melding of mind and body also manifests questions about how bodily self-awareness emerges and is shaped by interaction with bodies and objects. An engagement with Minimalism's contested architectural legacy serves to connect several of Kahraman's multi-media works in a development of spaces that complicate an understanding of bodies as private and contained entities in the contemporary landscape. These works therefore turn phenomenological concerns that have been critically explored in Minimalism toward questions of gender, race, and difference and how these categories are constructed in relation to architectural surfaces.

In 2012 and 2013, when Kahraman began to use the scans of her body to build three dimensional works, she was exploring architectural concerns across a variety of media. Her painting *Bab el Sheikh* (figure 11) is one in a series of representations of domestic Iraqi floor plans. In it, women with white gossamer skin twist around the outer edges of the wooden panels. While their faces are opaque, Kahraman renders the women's bodies in a nearly transparent layer of oil paint, with limbs that float near colorful squares of pattern

disappearing behind them completely. It is the courtyards of traditional Iraqi homes that these spaces represent. The figures' inability to appear within them is a reference to the social practices of greeting guests that take place in Iraqi homes. It is customary for men to receive male guests in the courtyard while women stay in the home behind *mashrabiya* screens. Prior to these years, in 2008, architecture was a source for Kahraman as she wove together the experiences of émigrés who left the country in staggering numbers to avoid wars. Her installation *Al Malwiya* (figure 12) is an inverted representation of the Al Malwiya minaret in Samarra, Iraq, constructed from 1800 reproductions of the artist's *Waraq* playing card paintings, the small portraits in which immigrants are themselves images of worlds upside down.<sup>1</sup> The return to architecture that Kahraman initiates in the context of the body scanning process departs from this representation of identity in the sense that it connects the viewer with the present space and not to the historical narrative. Kahraman uses cultural references like *mashrabiya* screens to examine the construction of bodies in private and public spaces.

What her painting *Bab el Sheikh*, the object *Icosahedral Body*, and the wooden *Body Screen* (figure 13)--a rectangular work made to look like a *mashrabiya* (figure 14) that is also punctured by the outlines of Kahraman's body--share is the wager put forth by Elizabeth Grosz, that the subject can be thought "in terms of the rotation of impossible shapes in

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<sup>1</sup> This structure, a historic and beloved landmark in the country, was damaged during the U.S. occupation of Iraq when American soldiers used the tall religious structure as a lookout. Nada Shabout, "Personal Protestations: Hayv Kahraman and the Iraqi Diaspora," February 2010, accessed February 9, 2015, [http://hayvkahraman.com/press/Nada\\_Shabout\\_essay.pdf](http://hayvkahraman.com/press/Nada_Shabout_essay.pdf).

illegible spaces.”<sup>2</sup> The Möbius strip that Grosz and Kahraman both refer to as a metaphor for the body is one such “impossible” shape, since it does not fit the biological definition of the body as skin and viscera. In relation to *Bab el Sheikh*, it also describes the experience of the women behind the screens, as the possibilities of becoming completed bodies is thwarted by cultural or racial structures, both at home and abroad. Illegibility concerns the outsider spaces in a culture where such marginalized bodies develop their form. In *Bab el Sheikh*, the illegibility of the space is quite literal: the position of the women cannot be seen by those in the courtyard even if it is acknowledged.

Between the legible and restrictive codes of architecture develops the production of illegible spaces, wherein the limits delineated by walls create a flow of in-between areas, whether abstract or practical. It is within these negotiations of borders that our public bodies are privately and semi-privately shaped, echoing Grosz’s claim that “The overlapping fields of architecture and culture, which congeal identities [...] are also sites for the unhinging of identities and the initiations of pathways of self-overcoming.”<sup>3</sup> This proposition helps to frame the relationship between Kahraman’s body scan works and architecture--and the importance of their entanglement--as one cannot look at the figural outlines of the artist’s body without also seeing through them to the other side of the room. Through an impossible body, one that is fragmented and inverted, the viewer partially observes how others move in the space behind it. As these people are reconstructed and imagined in our mind's eye as all

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<sup>2</sup> Kahraman has cited Grosz's philosophy as an influence on her practice, and she explicitly references the idea of the Möbius body coming from this source. I expand on this application and look to Grosz's writing on architecture as I consider the element of public space in the artist's work. Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2001), 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 102.

one, I argue that we are also invited to reflect on how this process of positioning and filling in identities happens in the background of our daily interactions. Kahraman's bodyscreens suggest that skin is a surface that projects its history of dwelling. She does this through the medium of the screen because it enables her body to layer space and project other figures across it.

### **Interdisciplinary Spaces in Modern and Contemporary Art**

The unfolding of the body against architectural backdrops can be seen as early as 1964 with Robert Morris' performance *Site*. In this work, the artist moved large plywood slabs across the stage, in the process revealing that behind the wooden scrim lay a nude Carolee Schneemann, propped up against a pillow in the same pose as Edouard Manet's *Olympia*. Upon encountering Morris's environment *Passageway* (figure 15), viewers entered into a constructed plywood hallway only to find themselves pinched by its narrowing dead end. The shrinking space prompted an interplay of skin and wall that defined bodily limits within the tension that unfolds through movement. As Mark Linder has shown, the room and its architecture was always implicated in the rejection of illusionism, even when artists like Morris would deny that the environment of the space was a concern.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on the literal conditions of space into the gallery provoked a cataloging of objects' relationships with each other, according to Linder, and some resisted acknowledging this effect because it risked effacement of the art.

Contemporary artists like Kahraman no longer find that art's formal identity is at stake as architecture comes into play. Kahraman is using the medium of the screen to initiate

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Linder, *Nothing Less Than Literal: Architecture after Minimalism* (Cambridge: Mass.: The MIT Press, 2004), 122-125.



what Giuliana Bruno has described in visual culture as “an architecture of relations,” which provides a, “mobile place of dwelling, a transitional space that activates cultural transits.”<sup>5</sup> Where the notion of embodiment thrived in late modern art, it is now being complicated by artists who are directly engaging with the interdisciplinary dynamics of space that others have tried to brush aside and disguise. Homi Bhabha describes interdisciplinarity in scholarship as “a desire to understand more fully,”<sup>6</sup> which requires foregoing specialization in the pursuit of questions that extend beyond the scope of one subject. Kahraman turns to architecture, object making, and digital technology to find alternatives to the problems created by systems that categorize and fragment bodies. These actions, I will argue, turn the artist’s body into what Giuliana Bruno calls a “film body,” devising a corporeal architecture that produces feminist reanimations of space. These spaces assume the presence of the female body that is otherwise denied visibility within environments that have been built with men in mind, and they empower women by conveying their interest in looking at others rather than positioning them as objects.

### **Turning into Screen**

I will first account for the presence of screens as they appear in public spaces today, ultimately leading to an argument that outlines the significance of Kahraman’s use of the *mashrabiya* to mediate the experience of her body by viewers. The *mashrabiya* is a traditional element in architecture across Arab regions, and Kahraman’s references to it, whether directly in *Body Screen*, or subtly, as with the *Icosahedral Body*, show how it is

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<sup>5</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 8.

<sup>6</sup> “Translator Translated: W. J. T. Mitchell Talks with Homi Bhabha,” *Artforum* (March 1995), 80-83, 110, 113.

integrated into the contemporary perspective as well. As a screen, its visual properties morph and are illuminated by the environment. In *Cranium* (figure 16), made in 2012, the *mashrabiya* becomes illuminated through a rawhide canvas by means of LED lights, serving not only as an architectural screen, but also as a projection of shapes upon a textural surface, much like a film. The *mashrabiya*'s potential to become cinematic is also explored by Azra Akšamija, whose *Mashrabiya* installation at MIT (figure 17), which shifts shapes as the viewer moves parallel to it, unfolds as in a series of multiple frames per second. Anila Quayyum Agha's installation *Intersections* (figure 18) immerses those who gather in the surrounding gallery space in shadow projections of geometric screen patterns inspired by the Alhambra fortress. Viewers who turn to face the wall see their own silhouette emerge within the ornate systems of lines, as if standing between a projection camera and the film screen at a cinema.

These permutations of the *mashrabiya* are intertwined with the reality that much of contemporary life is mediated by the interface of the virtual screen, while at the same time, motion picture cinemas have been shaping the development of museums' and galleries' "visual, theatrical architecture" ever since both began rising in popularity.<sup>7</sup> Kahraman's bodyscreens invoke what Bruno calls cinematic "layers of projection" that absorb the viewer in atmospheric envelopes, amplifying the connections between surface and skin.<sup>8</sup> If the transformation of architecture into "screens" in contemporary museographic spaces is a strategy for reengaging skin with materiality, then it must be asked how Kahraman's bodyscreens are proposing configurations of identity and intersubjectivity in a way that her

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<sup>7</sup> Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 73-106.

paintings have not. *Mashrabiya*s meld physical bodies and architecture into one when at least two individuals are standing on opposite sides and one is looking through to the other. In this way, the bodyscreens suggest connections between people in proximity to them while also mediating or denying access to their identities. They allow for multiple possible subjects who can occupy the space around the bodyscreens and interchangeably challenge each other's viewing privilege by allowing individuals to semi-privately observe people who may or may not be aware they are being watched.

In her 2014 *Collective Performance* (figure 19), Kahraman offered up her own specific lines of inquiry about how her body is accessed by viewers in gallery spaces. This performance takes the form of an autobiographical lecture by Kahraman about her life and art practice. However, the narrative is delivered by three women of color who each take a single turn at the podium reading from the artist's personal prose. As they speak, documentary photos on a large projection screen illustrate the prose. Kahraman multiplies her identity in this performance by virtually projecting it onto the bodies of the women who portray her and ultimately denying viewers her corporeal presence. Through them she launches questions that touch on her own experience and, on another level, speak to that of women who are marginalized because of the color of their skin, sex, or ethnicity. "Am I a commodity?" one of her performers asks of the audience, "Are my paintings and figures a commodity?"<sup>9</sup> The simple answer, she concludes, is that they are. Often lifting poses from Renaissance nudes, or using light skin as a way to appeal to Western tastes, Kahraman says that she is trying to

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<sup>9</sup> Quotes in chapter taken from transcript of the performance provided by the artist. Full performance available at: "Hayv Kahraman" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXTapGZhnGg&feature=youtu.be> (accessed February 9, 2015).

provide what the market demands of her, inviting the buyer by affirming: “You can pet me if you like.” At stake are the terms of pleasure--whose we deem acceptable and how we are expected to submit to it for validation and visibility within a culture.

Pleasure is intimately tied to the access one has to the world, epitomized in the figure of the *flâneur*, who in walking the streets of modern Paris freely, casting his consuming gaze in all directions.<sup>10</sup> Kahraman’s travels as an exile bring about an encounter with a different history of mobility, one that precludes the familiarity of space achieved by the *flâneur* in his wanderings. Making familiar spaces of one’s urban environment is a complicated affair when the concept of “home” has become an impossible category in the way that Kahraman describes it. “I will always be a tourist wherever I go,”<sup>11</sup> she says, suggesting that the option to return to Iraq to live is closed to her, the memories of her childhood marked by a precariousness that is incompatible with rediscovering home. I argue that the bodyscreens allow Kahraman to imagine her own body as a site of dwelling, one that is not fixed by geographic boundaries, nor able to be categorized and passively consumed by a modern-day *flâneur*. They allow for discovery of our surroundings in a way that assumes and engages differences between genders, sexes, and races because each body can become a filmic subject as it is perceived through or looks through a bodyscreen.

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<sup>10</sup> The concept of the *flâneur* is considered in Bruno’s writing as she reconfigures dwelling and domestic spaces as sites of voyage and proposes a *flanerie* figure. Bruno, “Fashions of Living: Intimacy in Art and Film,” *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts*, 163-187, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Ana Finel Honigman and Hayv Kahraman, “Interview with Hayv Kahraman,” *ArtSlant*, November 2009, <http://www.artslant.com/la/artists/rackroom/55926> (accessed February 9, 2015).

By turning her body into a screen, Kahraman is showing that filmic spaces introduce ways for bodies to rebuild the terms of their subjectivity. When she describes the process of having her body digitally scanned in the *Collective Performance*, she considers how what I am calling becoming a filmic body involves a transformation of preconditioned roles. While black-and-white photos of Kahraman's uncloaked back--covered in a white powder needed for the camera to produce images--slide across the projection screen, the third performer in the performance reads the following: "As I stood there, my nude body being photographed by a man operating this scanning device, I felt a *loss* of agency. A resignation and submission that made me somehow feel *domesticated*, *comfortable*, and *familiar*." Clinical scanning is acknowledged to be an objectifying process that requires long periods of absolute stillness while submitting to an apparatus that recognizes you only as pure corporeality. It is a metaphor for the way voyeuristic gazes make the person who is their object feel out of control of his or her body. However, the product of these scans, outlined across Kahraman's wooden surfaces, transform the relationship of the woman to others in semi-private and public dwellings by allowing individuals to take a dominant viewing position.

*Body Screen*, a rectangular screen that directly references the *mashrabiya* with its interlacing of intricately patterned sections, draws on Kahraman's own memories as it produces a contemporaneous tension in the gallery space. Though she herself describes how women in Iraqi homes came to possess a kind of power over the men because of their ability to observe without themselves being observed, as Walter Mignolo's own writing on his experience of this work demonstrates, the experience of looking at the screen is also one of being on a particular side of it where another implied viewer can look back. Mignolo describes this experience by asserting, "All of a sudden you feel as if you are in a courtyard,

being observed from the small room you cannot enter. The *Mashrabiya* is blocking the entrance.”<sup>12</sup> This moment prompts an important realization of his own “objectness,” as Mignolo begins to think how, as a frequent air traveler, he is often exposed to strangers as a scanner photographs his nude body. The proliferation of biometric technologies, intended to classify and detect individuals who may be security threats, increasingly erode the privacy of the body. Kahraman’s works can underscore for the viewer the body’s vulnerability in public, but they also offer a subversive sense of privacy that is not typically granted within public spaces.

Visible allusions to nudity set the *Body Screen* apart from *Icosahedral Body* and *Quasi-Corporeal*, though all three reference the same set of body scans. The upper register of *Body Screen*, a vertical rectangle comprised of two squares, links together carved sections of female torsos in a lattice pattern. Rather than one side being a mirror of the other, these figures have a fully carved chest on one side and an anatomical backside on the other, signifying that the opposite side of the screen is not a reflection, but its own specific space in which another person’s position is implied. Erotic surfaces are key to what Bruno says is the “film body,” which is the crossing over of the motion picture to architecture through their mutual framing of a viewer who is the purpose for the wall/screen.<sup>13</sup> The female body, and especially the body of the “other,” as described in critiques of orientalism, is already an erotic object in most spaces, but as the subject of Kahraman’s bodyscreens, it inverts the

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<sup>12</sup> Walter Mignolo, “Sensing Otherwise: A Story of an Exhibition,” September 30, 2013, <http://www.ibraaz.org/projects/57/> (accessed February 9, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Bruno, “Bodily Architectures,” *Assemblage* 29, no. 19 (December 1992), 110.

passive character of bodily consumption because the screens themselves resist voyeurism through their dissected corporeal shapes. It comes to shape space, rather than ornament it, sexualizing viewership by both drawing in the heteronormative male gaze only to obscure its ability to enclose the other's body, and by marking museographic architecture as occupied by a female observer.

Elizabeth Grosz writes of the necessity of built environments that open up “illegible spaces” in a culture that is constructed on the pretext of a gender neutrality, its universality only a disguise for phallocentrism that erases the specificity of other sexualities. She says that to realize the impact of this structure on culture “means clearing the way to create other kinds of productive spaces in which other kinds of corporeality--women's, among others-- may also be able to develop their own positions, perspectives, interests, productions.”<sup>14</sup> The process of scanning and fragmenting her own body is described by Kahraman as a process of cleaning and rebuilding her “brown skin.”<sup>15</sup> In making herself into a bodyscreen, creating a filmic space that acknowledges the framing of the body by architectural conditions as well as the ways in which corporeality leaves its impressions on space, she also rebuilds entire structures of viewing and enables possibilities for becoming. The exteriorization of self, which connects these works to Minimalism's foregoing interior space and the prioritization of external experience, is also a way for an artist defined by the categories of her nationality and gender to assert that these markers are not metaphysical signifiers, but constructions brought about by history and lived through the mediums of space. As such, they permute and

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<sup>14</sup> Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, 40.

<sup>15</sup> Hayv Kahraman, *Collective Performance*, performance, March 7, 2014, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Mo.

transfer meaning as they touch other worlds. Bodyscreens show how this process involves the creation of illegible spaces since they traverse the categories of geometric sculpture, architectural barrier, and filmic frame. They do not clearly define one perspective or mode of viewership, but favor motion and the shifting power dynamics that underlie intersubjectivity. The references to Kahraman's body that mediate this experience resist projections against the woman's body, positioning it instead as a form that can be strange and confrontational.



## CHAPTER 4

### SELF-EFFACEMENT AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY ACROSS KAHRAMAN'S BODYSREENS

I have argued that in Kahraman's bodyscreens, there is a tension between the artist's offering of specific traces of her body and biography and her simultaneous resistance to confronting the viewer with a legible self. While Kahraman has projected her image throughout most of her works—referencing photos of her own body as a model when she paints figures in traditional media—the introduction of the scanning techniques in her recent sculptures enabled a repositioning of corporeality and identity in more precarious terms. The shifting nature of these categories is evident in the experience of viewing *Icosahedral Body* and *Body Screen* because of the intersubjective dynamics that these works put into play. One cannot look at these works without also seeing that others are able to see back through them at oneself. By mediating the viewer's observations with her body in this way, Kahraman both immerses the spectator in her skin and broaches self-effacement.

The entanglement of these states is also a suspension of clean divisions between subjectivity and objectivity, one that has significant meaning as the categories of feminist and Middle Eastern art are further established within the context of museum exhibitions. While the growing interest in these fields has signaled an institutional embrace of cross-cultural communication, inclusivity, and their ability to effect social or political change, it also fixes artists within a frame that risks limiting approaches to their practices. I have situated Kahraman's works within a broader historical framework that prompts investigation beyond merely tracing their Middle Eastern sources and influences. Doing so has permitted me to account for the complexities of identity and interpersonal exchange in contemporary art. Through fragmenting

the body in her works, Kahraman renders the self analogous to a transmutable surface. In this sense, her practice ties in with the phenomenological implications of Minimalist art. However, it also expands these prior approaches to sculpture by implying the intersubjective possibilities created within uncertain boundaries. I would like to conclude by discussing the role of self-effacement in art in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the political ramifications it has had in reforming the body as a site of resistance.

Self-effacement was Minimalist artists' driving force, manifesting as artists removed the signs of their own hands in an effort to distance their work from mythologies about the meaning of art and the subjectivity of the art producer. This strategy is also present in Kahraman's scanning, since the clinically imaged body is unrecognizable even though it is closely linked to the body of the artist. By slicing her corporeal data into flat and unfamiliar shapes, she eludes identification of her person even further while nonetheless relying on scientific imagery of her body. Although her *Collective Performance*, in the guise of an artist lecture, is structured by an autobiographical narrative, it renders a fragmented body as well, as authorship becomes contested each time a new actress takes over oration of the story. In distancing herself from the narrative, Kahraman projects the specifics of her own experiences as an exile across the bodies of women who are also, because of their skin tone, up against challenges created by racism and xenophobia in Western countries and may or may not share her experience as a migrant. She writes of the performance, "I am concerned with the multitude not the self. This is not only my story. It can be the story of more than 5 million people within the Iraqi diaspora or any diaspora."<sup>1</sup> By having different women tell the story of another person as if it were their own,

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<sup>1</sup> Hayv Kahraman, "Collective Performance," (description, personal website) <http://hayvkahraman.com/14/performance.html> (Accessed February 23, 2015).

this performance stitches together a chain of effacement, first with Kahraman removing herself from speaking, then with each performer bearing the experience of the artist rather than her own.

One reading of this process would be that it generalizes experiences of women who are already stereotyped within hegemonic discourses. However, we must also consider that it was developed within a mode Kahraman's work that I have argued is using the language of the screen to prompt permutation and layer our experience. Rather than attenuating the importance of particular expressions, self-effacement can broaden the potential for emotional connections to them. Susan Best writes on the almost ironic impact that this strategy has had since it evolved throughout the 1960s and 1970s, stating, "Contrary to all expectations, the eclipse of authorship intensifies the expressive and affective dimension of art."<sup>2</sup> Withdrawing personality can emphasize the viewer's own space and emotion, heightening a desire for empathy when a work stops short of reciprocating it. Work resisting mutual coherence in this way places viewers in a position of vulnerability, as I have described previously in relation to her sculptures.

Though offering empathy can empower people to overcome deeply entrenched and artificial divisions, it is possible to extend its impact beyond merely an individual encounter and instead approach it as an emotional foundation for meaningful transformation. By articulating that many people could speak of loss, rejection, and violence as though they were each telling a part of one longer piece about history and war, Kahraman seeks to effect a politically charged web of empathetic transmission. Judith Butler in particular has argued that the acknowledgment of vulnerability as a shared condition of human life can be a catalyst for a type of political reform rooted in an ethos of solidarity. Her proposal suggests that in sensing vulnerability and becoming

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Best, *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde*, 139.

aware of the impact of or need for another's actions, the overlap between the coming into the self as an "I" and our immersion in already established social structures becomes apparent.

Therefore, she writes that we should come to ask ourselves the following question:

If I am struggling for autonomy, do I not need to be struggling for something else as well, a conception of myself as invariably in community, impressed upon by others, impinging upon them as well, and in ways that are not fully in my control or clearly predictable?<sup>3</sup>

By contesting our agency, and our movement through the world as contained subjects, Kahraman's bodyscreens nonetheless make possible a coming together of oneself with other people across space and cultures.

Self-effacement is also a viable strategy for Kahraman to express ownership of her body as it is examined within the confines of exhibitions that connect artists from the Middle East. Interest in Islamic art has spurred the development of new museums of art that collect works from countries with large Muslim populations across the globe. Though linking together artists from different countries and regions brings out the commonalities among their practices and highlights important relationships to past and present, it also defines them in geographic and cultural terms that are not so distinctly underlined when exhibiting artists from North American and European countries.<sup>4</sup> In José Muñoz theory of disidentification, he writes that artist Felix Gonzales-Torres, a gay man and Cuban-American citizen living in New York City, questioned representational identity and the pressure on people from multicultural backgrounds to reduce themselves to exotic symbols. Muñoz writes that

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, (New York: Verso, 2004), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Anna Chave has also researched how women making Minimal art were defined in relation to their gender in ways that the men, including Robert Morris, were not, even though their biographies had as much to do with the development of their careers. Anna Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (March 2000), 149-163.

Gonzales-Torres “depended on a minimalist symbolic lexicon that disidentified with minimalism’s own self-referentiality,” which served as a “refunctioning of minimalism that allowed him to rethink identity and instead opt for disidentity.”<sup>5</sup> For Gonzales-Torres, and for Kahraman, this return to Minimalist vernacular “provides pictures of possible future relations of power.”<sup>6</sup> Kahraman has embraced her Iraqi identity in more literal ways than Gonzales-Torres did his own heritage. She has returned to this symbolism in her work in 2015,<sup>7</sup> creating a series of paintings that illustrate scenes from her childhood and communicate the conflict she has felt in relating to her Iraqi heritage since immigrating to Europe. These paintings make stylistic references to 12<sup>th</sup>-century illuminated manuscripts.

By offering the term bodyscreen as a concept for defining how Kahraman merges the interiority and exteriority of corporeal presence, I have proposed that her strategies are related to those of other artists who are investigating how the self unfolds in relation to its surroundings. As artists employ nontraditional technologies in their production, they follow the orbits that bodies are regularly undergoing in the rapidly developing worlds of security, medicine, and communications, finding ways to pronounce identity through various new visual languages, such as 3D scanning. As these transformations take place, the art historical discipline needs to adapt to combine and coin a new lexicon that encompasses how the use of these technologies opens the body to new interpretations. While the development of the

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<sup>5</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, (University of Minnesota Press: 1999), 165.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid,178.

<sup>7</sup> *How Iraqi Are You?*, was exhibited in February of 2015 at the Jack Shainman Gallery during the writing of this thesis. <http://www.jackshainman.com/exhibitions/20th-street/> (Accessed February 26, 2015).

notion “bodyscreen” is closely tied to Kahraman’s works I have discussed in this thesis, it can also be applied to expand the interpretation of artworks by other contemporary artists such as Mona Hatoum and Pipilotti Rist. The materials these artists have used include projective surfaces with bodily textures, folds, perforations, and architectural implications that confuse the boundaries of viewership for the viewer, imply that the artwork possesses certain qualities of agency, or heighten the affective potential of experiencing these works. Phenomenology, gender theory, and biographical analysis are important frameworks for building a cohesive approach to art works and histories. As shown in my examination of Kahraman’s works, these approaches should be considered elastic and intersectional, capable of engendering a multiplicity of access routes to contemporary art that will erode the calcification that stems from labels based on identity politics alone.

ILLUSTRATIONS

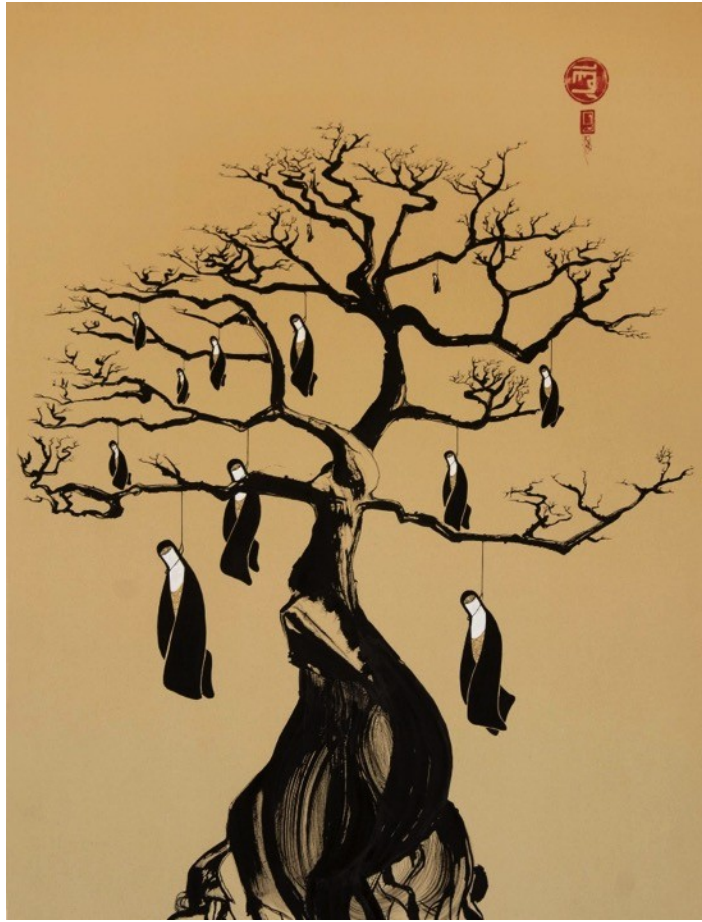


Figure 1: Hayv Kahraman, *Honor Killing*, 2006, Sumi on paper, 23” x 60”.



Figure 2: Hayv Kahraman, *Migrant 1*, 2010, oil on panel, 45" x 70".



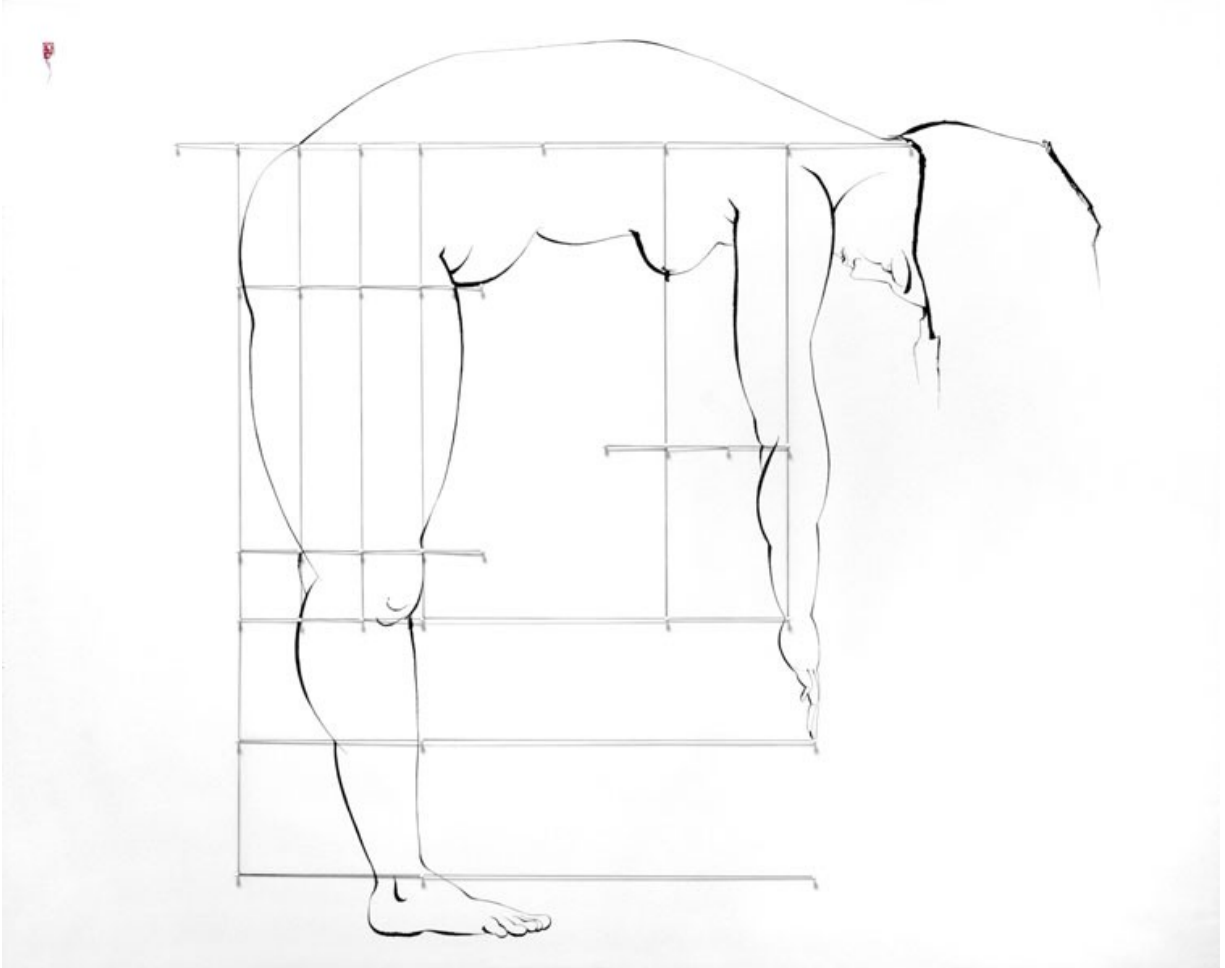


Figure 3: Hayv Kahraman, *Anthropometric Arch*, 2011, Ink, hair, and pins on paper, 40"x50".

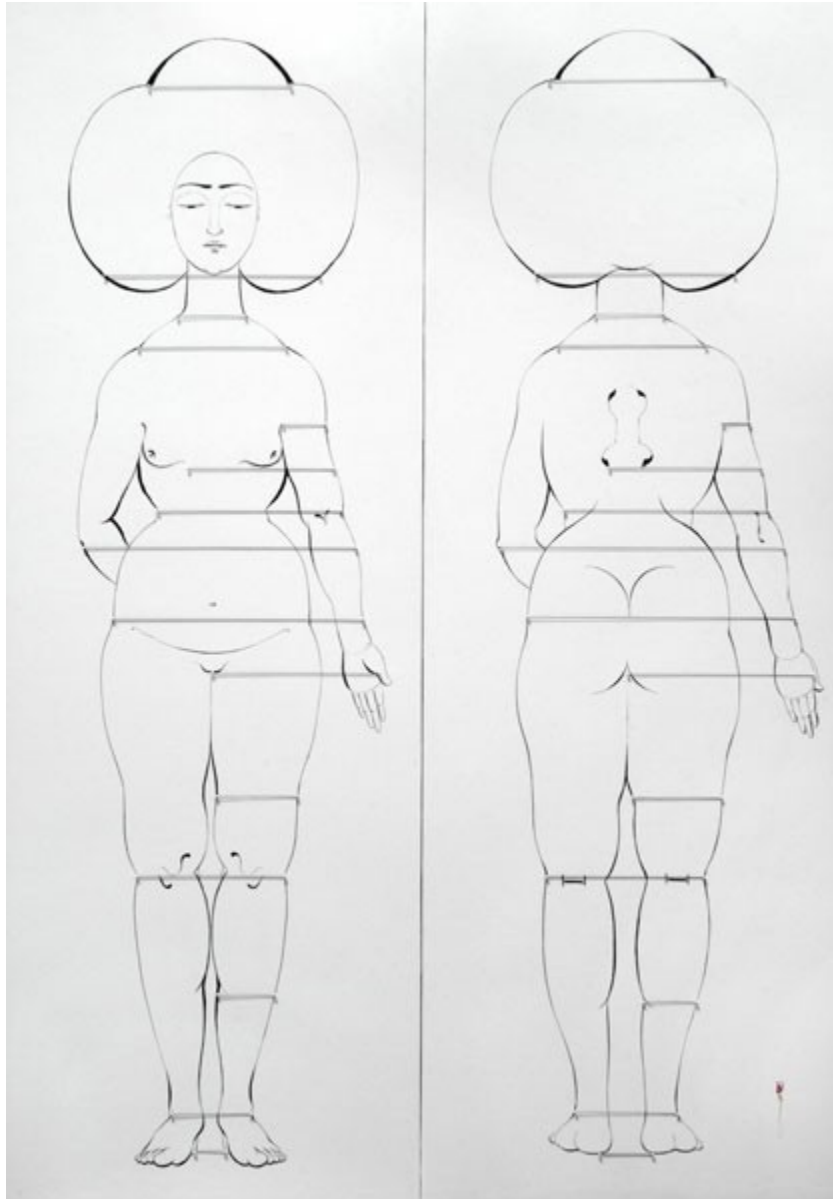


Figure 4: Hayv Kahraman, *Anthropometric Front and Back*, 2011, ink, hair, and pins on paper, 100" x 70".



Figure 5: View of the exhibition *Extimacy*, 2012, Third Line Gallery, Dubai.

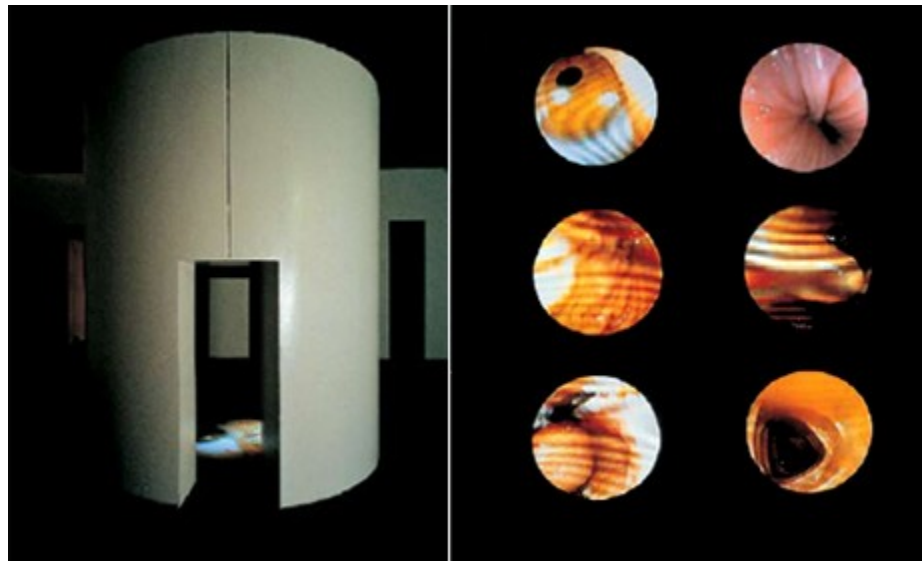


Figure 6: Mona Hatoum, *Corps Etranger* and installation detail, 1994, video installation with cylindrical wooden structure, video projector, video player, amplifier and four speakers, 137 13/16" x 118 1/8" x 118 1/8".



Figure 7: Hayv Kahraman, *Quasi-Corporeal*, 2012, Maple wood with aluminum, 87" x 80" x 80".



Figure 8: Hayv Kahraman, *Icosahedral Body*, 2013, Maple wood and aluminum, 85" x 85" x 85".

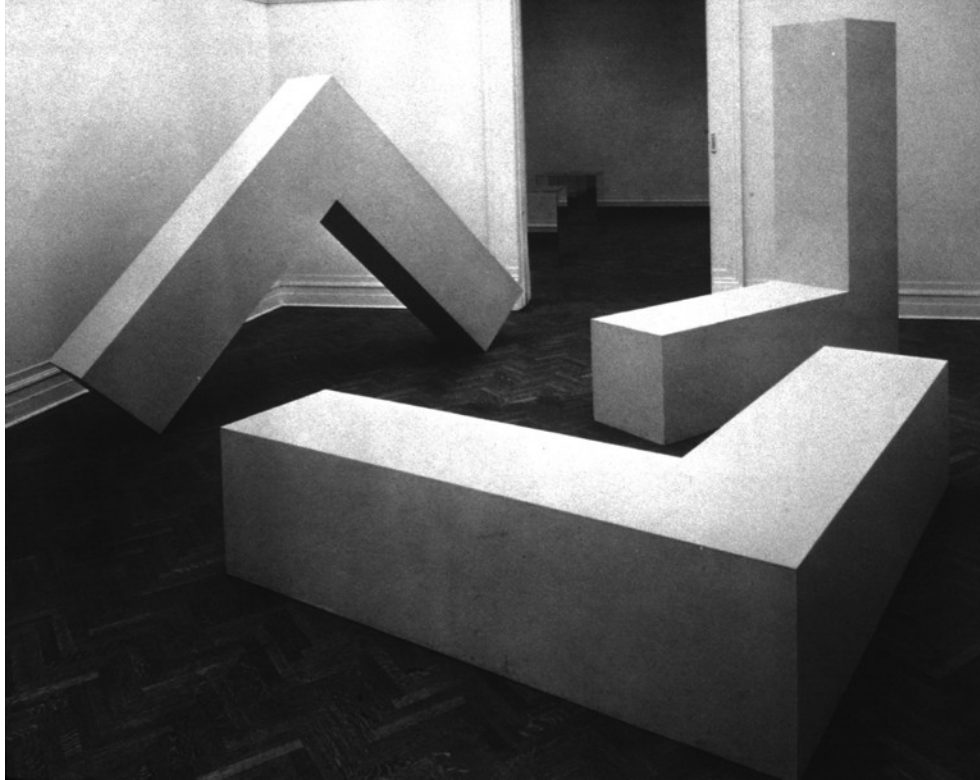


Figure 9: Robert Morris, *(Untitled) L-Beams*, 1965, originally plywood, later versions made in fiberglass and stainless steel, 8' x 8' x 2'.



Figure 10: Robert Morris, *Ring with Light*, 1965-1996, painted wood and fiberglass, fluorescent light, two units, 97" diameter.



Figure 11. Hayv Kahrman, *Bab el Sheikh*, 2013, Oil on modular panel, 103'' x 176''.





Figure 12: Hayv Kahraman, *Al Malwiya*, 2010, 1800 playing cards that are reproductions of paintings, wire, metal, thread, 60" diameter x 5'.



Figure 13: Hayv Kahraman, *Body Screen*, 2013, Walnut wood, 34" x 78" x 2".



Figure 14: Artist unknown A *mashrabiya* window cover, 19<sup>th</sup> century, 83'' x 45'' x 8''.

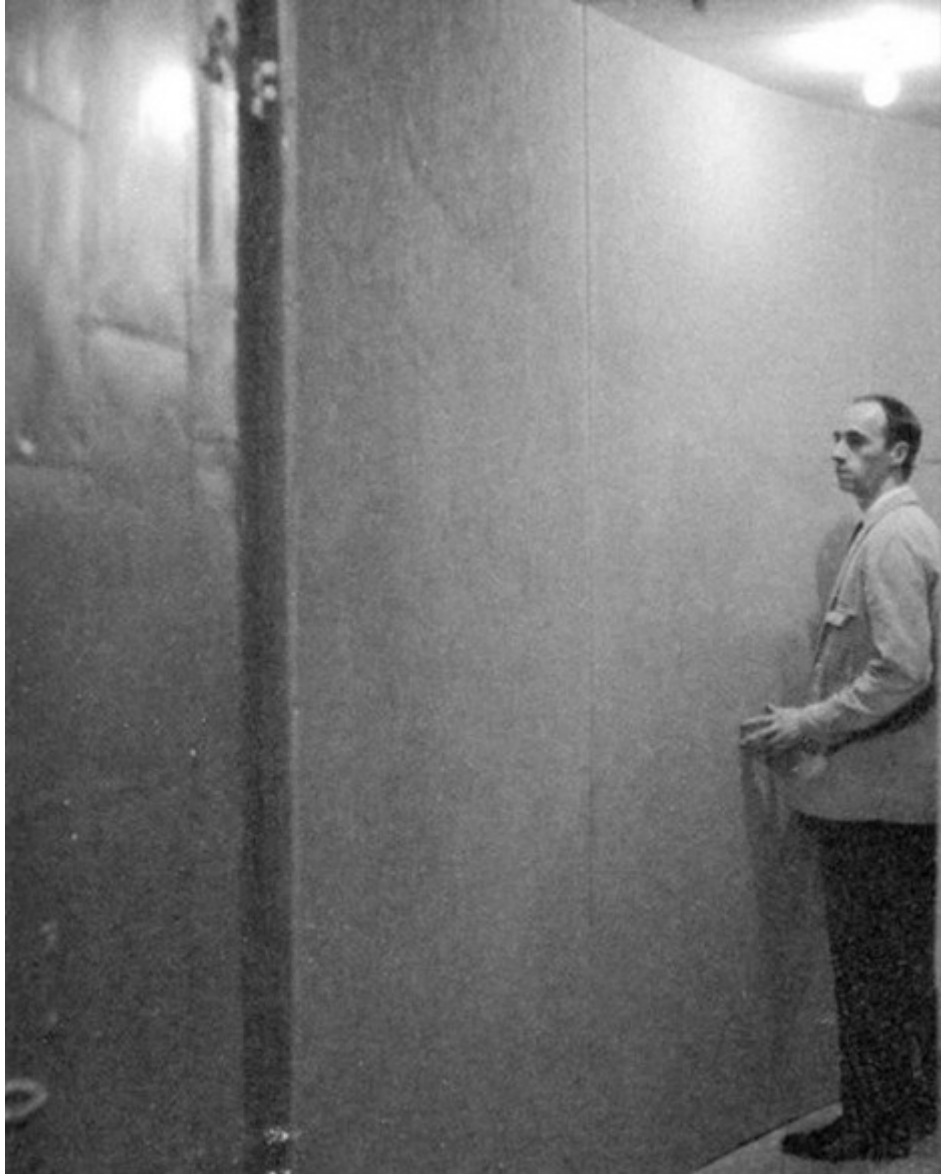


Figure 15: Robert Morris, *Passageway*, 1961, curved plywood, 50' long.



Figure 16: Hayv Kahraman, *Cranium*, 2012, rawhide mounted on polycarbonate, LED box, aluminum, 44" x 54".



Figure 17: exterior view, Azra Akšamija, *Mashrabiya*, 2013, lace, wood, fish wire, dimensions unknown.



Figure 18: Anila Quayyum Agha, *Intersections*, 2013, laser-cut wood, 6.5' x 6.5' x 6.5'.



Figure 19: Hayv Kahraman, Scene from *Collective Performance*, 2014, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City Missouri.



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## VITA

Since graduating with her bachelor's degree in English from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, Marselle Bredemeyer has pursued a career in publishing while continuing to foster her interests in contemporary art and literature. As a graduate student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, she presented papers on Middle East art and served as president of the Graduate Art History Association. As an editor at a medical journal professionally, Marselle's research has been influenced by her exposure to the clinical approach to the body as well as the technology that enables closer and stranger images of it. After completing her Master of Arts degree, she plans to continue writing critically about contemporary art while pursuing further editorial roles.