

IMKAAN (Photo Essay)

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In 2017, as an Indian Kathak dancer and photographer, I collaborated with an Iranian underground dance artist Hedyeh Azma currently based in Oslo, Norway in a dance project entitled Imkaan as an exploration of visual storytelling. Through our cross-cultural intersections, we attempted to interact and move, as photographer and dancer, to witness and record the ambiguity of the moving body in transition. Dance and censorship have been interconnected in both our cultures. These photographs are a way of seeing our relational journeys with dance, freedom, censorship as a dancer through our friendship and collaboration. Imkaan which means possibility in Persian and Urdu, uses the camera as a witness to explore both transformative self-performance and identity- creation in multiple landscapes.



1. In the heart of the Middle East, and inside the geographical border called Iran, she birthed. A rich and colorful land, full of diversities and warmth, full of limitations and stagnation. Amidst loud laughter and deep cries, of passionate love and furious hatred, she opened her eyes and stepped onto the ground.





2. As she was growing up, her body became ever more subject to numerous cultural codes and social protocols. She was always carrying this political body with her in every single moment of her life.

3. As time unfolded, her body seemed to dissolve into the fabric of her surroundings, blending among other bodies with similar accents, similar behaviors, and alike habits. She was growing, and her dreams were growing. Dreams, the whispers of potential futures.





4. It is the imagination that flies, the wishes, the fantasies, they shape the desires, the goals, the next steps and the way to perceive your future. I dyed my hair, wore my scarf, wore my lipstick and went out to the streets to search for ways to make my dreams come true.



5-6 What you may call a fence, was my constant companion, an integral part of my upbringing, familiar to me and only me. Let me say that I enjoy the freshness of the rain drops and the gentle caress of the wind against my skin. Let me choose not to dislike the grey gloomy sky that creates those raindrops. You see, I only dance among the fragments of that fence, my fingers gracefully navigating through them.



7,8- Dancing in the darkness; there's allure in dancing amidst shadows, yet now I yearn for light— more light— so much light that can reveal even the slightest crease on my face, caused by the bliss of movement. But here I stand, shrouded in shadow, those lines unseen. I crave to witness the imprints of my existence upon the world. Do I depart, or do I ignite a light here?



9. I left home, allowing the sun to caress my hair... My movements revel in the warmth of the light...But where am I now? Who observes me? Do they comprehend my motions? Am I lost in their midst? I yearn for a home, not the one I left, but a radiant one, where my hair can dance freely under the sun.



10- I dream of having a wing, travelling to a land that is my land, a free one, a one where I dance in light. Dreams, the whispers of potential futures...











