VISUAL EXPLORATIONS IN RESPONSE TO

COMPULSORY HIJAB FOR IRANIAN WOMEN

By

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COMPULSORY HIJAB FOR IRANIAN WOMEN

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Abstract:
        Hijab or veiling became mandatory in Iran after the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the establishment of the Islamic government. The hijab mandate in Iran means women need to cover their head hair with a headscarf and wear a long, loose cardigan (manteau or chador) along with long pants to cover their bodies completely. This is theoretically to protect them from being stared at or harassed by men. Iranian women are required to wear the hijab in public every day of their lives. Girls start wearing the hijab when they start school at the age of 7 years. It is not mandatory for them to wear it outside of school until the age of 9 years. That age is known for being when girls start puberty and start seeing changes in their bodies. From age 9 years and older, women and girls not following the hijab rules face consequences such as being arrested, jailed, or harassed or, depending on the situation, being required to live in exile.
        The main goal of this thesis is to raise awareness of the hijab laws as an oppressive act towards Iranian women. The related thesis projects will give their viewers a stronger understanding of what compulsory hijab law is in Iran. Furthermore, the related projects represent the designer's way of protesting using the visual language of graphic design. It shows how graphics can be a powerful form for bringing awareness and a sense of empathy to viewers. The final exhibition includes a series of projects engaged with various media such as history textbooks, magazine covers, printed posters, video motion graphics, experience design, and photography.
        Each project tells a story of how compulsory hijab has affected Iranian women's lives over the past 40 years. The primary target audience of this research is Iranian men and women who have been silent about this suppression over the years. It is also intended for women who have blindly forced their daughters to wear a hijab without educating them about Islam and their choices. The secondary audience is non-Iranians who see the work in the gallery or online. Finally, this thesis is meant to be a part of the Iranian women's movement against compulsory hijab and to bring up the subject of gender equality in Iran.
        Note: This research and its visual explorations are only intended to bring awareness of the enforcement of the hijab for Iranian women who wish to have the choice to wear or not wear hijab. This is presented with all due respect to women who want to wear the Islamic hijab willingly and not by force. It is not intended to explore both sides of the argument of the hijab and is not a comprehensive research on this subject.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF HIJAB

The topic of this thesis is *compulsory hijab* and a selective personal perspective of its effects on Iranian women since its initiation in 1979. In this chapter, I provide a brief introduction to the history of veiling in Iran and Islam and how veiling in Iran has been practiced over the past 40 years.

Veiling History

Throughout history and in different cultures and religions, head hair has always had various meanings. Although there is nothing sexual about female head hair, it has been a symbol of sexuality in most societies throughout time. Furthermore, head hair has always carried a social message and communicated a specific status and many associate the hijab with Islamic culture. Researching history proves that Islam did not invent veiling, and it was around even before in various forms and meanings. Powerful men have tried to control female sexual power by popularizing head coverings for women and justifying it as protecting them from the male gaze (Zahedi, 2007).

One of the first evidences of veiling goes back to the Assyrian, Byzantine, and Persian Sasanian empires. Women from the upper class were the only ones who could afford to wear a veil, so they could be distinguished from the commoners and shielded from their impure gaze. Jewish and Christian women also used veiling. In each culture, a headscarf had its own, different social meaning. The one aspect of veiling that all the cultures had in common was that it symbolized modesty (Zahedi, 2007).

Veiling in Islam

Despite public belief, veiling was not common in these empires before Islam. At the beginning of Islam in the 7th century, Muslims changed to veiling after their exposure to the nations they conquered. It has been a long dispute between the Islamic scholars about how veiling is addressed in the Quran, the Muslim holy scripture. Two different verses from the Quran that pertain to veiling raise a crucial question: Is the verse referring to "veil" or just modesty in clothing? The first verse goes as follows and is from Surah 33:59, which was sent to the Prophet Mohammad and his family:

O Prophet! Tell

Thy wives and daughters

And the believing women,

That they should cast

Their outer garments over

Their persons [when abroad]:

That is most convenient,

That they should be known

(As such) and not molested (Ali, 1997).

The word *unknown* refers to women staying anonymous by covering themselves with a garment (*jilbab*) to avoid being sexually disturbed by men. The second verse is from Surah 24:31, which relates to the general law of modesty:

> And say to the believing women
>
> That they should lower
>
> Their gaze and guard
>
> Their modesty that they
>
> Should not display their
>
> Beauty and ornaments except
>
> What [must ordinary] appear
>
> Draw their veils over
>
> Their bosoms (Ali, 1997).

This verse indicates modesty and covering the chest and neck. There is no specific discussion on covering women's head hair in any of the verses. The word *hijab* is used in the Quran but with the meaning of *screen*. It is referring to using a screen when interacting with the Prophet Mohammad's wives. However, the word *hijab* was never used; referring to headscarf, veiling, and covering women's head hair is called hijab now and has become a part of the tradition of Islam over time. It started with the Prophet Mohammad's family and Muslim women from the higher classes, although the practice of veiling varied in different areas and cultures (Zahedi, 2007).

Hijab in Iran

In the Persian Empire, the custom of veiling was specifically practiced by people from wealthier families, and it took a long time for the Islamic veiling to become part of the religious requirements for all Persian women. During the 16th and 17th centuries, religious Mullahs earned more power in the Safavids dynasty and forced women to wear the hijab. The chador, a piece of clothing that covers head to toe (Figure 1), first started in this era. Women used chador when going to the city, especially in the capital, but it was not practiced as much in the other parts of the country because women had their own attire. Tribal women had the freedom to choose their head covering and its shape and color to express themselves.

Figure 1 Women in chador in the Safavids era

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Iranian travelers started going to Europe and were exposed to advanced economic progress and gender relations. This changed the perspective of many Iranian men and women. They felt the lack of education, the discrimination, and forced veiling to be interruptive to women's position in society. In the 1920s, women who were educated started independent magazines exclusively for women. These magazines discussed the subject of unveiling for women, but it was a

sensitive topic because some were supportive of and some were against this act (Zahedi, 2007).

Reza Khan

After discovering oil in Iran, Russia and England helped change the dynasty ruling Iran and made Reza Khan (the military commander) the new king of Iran in 1921. Reza Shah had a modernist vision for how Iranian men and women should appear. He was inspired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey's president, and how he was proposing a change in Turkey. Atatürk was the person who encouraged unveiling for the first time for Turkish women. Reza Shah shared the same belief but applied it differently (Zahedi, 2007). He was so affected by the changes happening in Turkey and Afghanistan that he banned Iranian women from wearing hijab on January 7, 1936. On this day, Reza Shah's wife and daughters went outside wearing hats rather than the hijab. Then the order was enforced by the police, who prevented women from wearing the hijab and pulled away their veils in public. For many women, unveiling was a dishonoring act and disrespectful to their beliefs. On the other hand, unveiled modern-looking women were how the regime wanted Iran to be presented to the world; thus, they were getting all the high-end jobs, and veiled educated women were banned from all job opportunities. This and some of the other corruption occurring during Reza Shah's rule increased people's dissatisfaction with him and resulted in him being overthrown.

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi

In 1941, Reza Shah was removed from his position, and his son Mohammad Reza

Pahlavi became the new king of Iran. Mohammad Reza Shah also wanted to modernize

Iran through the process he called "The White Revolution," in which everyone was

encouraged to dress in a more European style. In Mohammad Reza Shah's time, unveiled

women also received more respect and had more presence in public. However, everyone

believed that veiled women were still old-fashioned and not as modern and open-minded.

Soon, various attire and veiling communicated meanings of their own. Women's clothing

became a representation of their education, class in society, and religion.

Religious clerics were also earning more power and preached veiling for women.

One particular Shia cleric named Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini believed that a king's

power was inherently un-Islamic and that Shia tradition was to fight that power. He

presented numerous lectures against the Shah's ruling and that he should be more careful

or else people would be happy to see him leave. Because Khomeini was gaining

popularity among the people, the Shah sent him to live in exile. This move provoked his

followers to start a movement against the Shah and to demand changing Iran into a

republic. The corruption and unemployment issues increased people's dissatisfaction with

the Shah's regime, which was what finally started the Iranian Revolution in the 1970s.

The Iranian Revolution

On February 13, 1979, the Iranian Revolution came to an end with the Shah leaving Iran

and Khomeini returning to Tehran. By that time, many women had started wearing the

hijab not because they believed in it but because they used the hijab as a symbol of

resistance against the Shah's corrupt regime. They wanted to oppose the concept of consumerism brought to Iran by the regime and its propagation of a modern consumer woman (Tabari, 1980).

Numerous laws and rules were enacted to follow more Islamic regulations. On March 7, 1979, Khomeini announced that bareheaded women could not go to Islamic ministries. Women who were a part of this Revolution never aimed for the hijab to become mandatory; they were just using it as a testimony to show their objection to the Shah. Thus, women demonstrated against this rule for the following 6 days. This event was one of the most critical times in the history of the women's movement in Iran (Figure 2). They stopped protesting on the sixth day because the demonstration was becoming violent due to the police and street thugs. A women representative from this march became the voice for these women and sent their message of not wanting mandatory hijab to Khomeini. At the time, women were promised that hijab would not be compulsory. This was an empty promise that the government never maintained. Finally, hijab officially became mandatory for all Iranian women on August 9, 1983.

Figure 2 Women's demonstration on March 8, 1979, Tehran, Iran

A huge number of singers, dancers, actors, athletes, and highly educated women from upper class families emigrated from Iran at this time. Some actors who stayed in Iran to continue working in their field had to vow to never remove their hijab in public and to continue working with proper veiling (Figure 3).

Figure 3 An Iranian actor before and after the Revolution

Meaning of hijab in contemporary Iran

Hijab being mandatory meant that women could not walk outside of their homes without covering their head hair and body. The graffiti on the walls and a common slogan was "Sister, guard your hijab." The theory behind the Islamic regulations was that all men would always want to look at women in a sexualized way, and it was a woman's duty to protect themselves from the male gaze by wearing a hijab (Saper, 2018).

There are two acceptable forms of hijab in Iran (Figure 4):

1. Long black chador

2. A long manteau/cardigan that covers up to the knees and long sleeves that covers up to the wrists plus long loose pants as well as a headscarf or shawl that is neatly tied under the neck and completely covers the hair.

To walk in public without being arrested, Iranian women must choose one of these two options.

Figure 4 Women wearing manteau and chador as attire on streets of Tehran

Girls start wearing hijab when they go to school at the age of 7 years, but it is not mandatory for them to wear it until they are 9 years old. They officially must wear it everywhere else because that is considered the age they start puberty, when changes in their bodies become visible. After the Revolution, all Iranian women learned to cover their hair and body to (theoretically) stay safe and away from sin. This regime believed that veiled women should have the same social respect as unveiled women, and to achieve this all women should wear the same attire. This act was to help girls from religious families have the chance to go back to school and get educated, but many did not find this solution to be the best.

The regime believed that the hijab for women was a "moral cleansing" for the Islamic society of Iran. It has been propagated that female hair is seductive and tempting, so it must remain covered from men. According to a conservative Islamic outlook, "It has been proven that the hair of a woman radiates a kind of ray that affects a man, exciting him out of the normal state" (Yeganeh, 1993). Many slogans such as "The worth of a woman is in her veil" and "Veiling is a divine duty" covered the walls around the cities. On the other hand, women who did not wear hijab properly were considered prostitutes and were subjected to harassment. The slogan used for these women was "Death to the improperly veiled women"(Shirazi, 2019). In order to control these young women and make sure that the Islamic regulations are being followed, different police force groups have always been in charge of institutionalizing hijab in the country. They have been warning young men and women to follow the Islamic dress codes on the streets. The Morality Police (Gasht-e-Ershad) is the most recent religious police force observing people on the streets.

Morality Police (Gasht-e-Ershad)

In order to promote hijab and proper veiling, on December 4, 2005, during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government, the Morality Police was established. The Morality police are the main Islamic religious police or squad in the law enforcement of the Republic Islamic of Iran. They enforce religious observance and public morality on behalf of national or regional authorities based on their interpretation of Islamic dress codes.

The Morality Police travel in a van with a few women police officers and men soldiers. These vans are parked on crowded streets where a lot of people pass by daily.

The women police officers are the ones who approach young girls and women on the streets and warn them about covering their hair. In most cases, they ask the girls to step into the van and drive them to the station to have their photos taken and put into their records. Over time, people have learned disrespect for the Morality Police due to their unmannerly actions towards women. There are many videos online showing the violent contact of the Morality Police with young girls, dragging them into the vans. It was reported that in 2013, about 3 million women received warnings for loose and not proper hijab (Figure 5), which refers to a woman not following the proper morality laws in the way they dress (Maloney & Katz, 2020).

Figure 5 Morality Police stopping a girl on the street to warn her about her loose hijab

The reason women started creating protest campaigns was to raise awareness to the Morality Police's brutality towards what they call "bad hijab" women. They all believed that girls did not deserve to be treated this way, and they live with the stress of getting arrested daily.

White Wednesdays Campaign

Iranian women tried to amplify their voices through multiple campaigns and organized demonstrations. But, unfortunately, none of them were successful, given that they were always shut down. One campaign still moving forward is Masih Alinejad's White Wednesdays Campaign. This is one of the most popular campaigns run for women's rights.

Masih Alinejad is a journalist and a political activist who left Iran to live in exile (currently in Brooklyn, New York) in 2009. She has run many campaigns supporting Iranian women's rights. She started a Facebook page called "My Stealthy Freedom" in 2014. Masih asked women who are fed up with compulsory hijab in Iran to send their videos and photos to her (Figure 6). She then shared them all on her page, showing the world millions and millions of Iranian women who are struggling with this persecution. In 2017, she started a campaign called The White Wednesdays. This campaign is a silent way of protesting for Iranian women in Iran. Masih asked women to wear a white piece of clothing every Wednesday on the street and to take videos and photos of themselves and share them online using her hashtag. As mentioned earlier, she shares all of them online, bringing attention to this movement. Because many young girls have been arrested for taking their hijabs off or following "the Girls of the Revolution Street" (discussed in detail in Chapter 6), Masih's campaign was safer to ingest. Since the White Wednesday campaign began, anyone who wears a white piece of clothing on Wednesdays, woman or man, is considered a part of this movement (Shirazi, 2019). Masih has been one of the only people to try to be the voice of the women arrested due to speaking against compulsory hijab. As an Iranian woman, I also feel obligated to be a

part of this protest by wearing white every Wednesday and using my design abilities to

help similar campaigns grow.

Figure 6 The White Wednesdays campaign photo from My Stealthy Freedom Facebook page

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS PROJECTS

My perspective

Growing up in Iran after the Revolution, I was exposed to hijab from the beginning. I watched all the women in my family wearing it as they stepped out of the house. I started wearing it at the age of 6 years and on the first day of school. Although schools were separated for girls and boys, we had to wear uniforms. Attending school in an Islamic country, I was taught how important covering my head hair and body was in order to be a good Muslim and eventually go to heaven. On the other hand, I grew up in an educated and open-minded family that never forced me to wear the compulsory hijab. I did not start wearing hijab until the changes of my body were noticeable and I could not appear in society without being stared at.

I remember at the age of 10 years, I was stopped at an airport by the police and was forced to wear a headscarf before they would let me board the airplane. This experience caused me to feel anxious every time I wanted to enter a public place in which I had to be checked for my hijab. Every day, when entering my college, a woman was sitting at the door to check everyone's attire and see if we were following the Islamic

regulations. If not, we were prevented from entering the college no matter how important our classes or exams were that day. Some of these regulations were as follows: we were not supposed to wear nail polish, no tight pants, no sleeves higher than the wrist, and we must wear our cardigans long and closed. Wearing hijab has always been a limitation for me, my family, and all women who I came to know during the past 27 years of my life. The police officers' job on the streets is to make everyone feel safe, but not once have I felt this way, especially watching the Morality Police arrest young girls on the streets for expressing who they were through their clothing. In my opinion, compulsory hijab has just been a manifestation of a law that illegalized every chance of self-expression for Iranian women, such as dancing, singing, playing music, and biking.

I am not the only person who is against this oppression—millions of Iranian women also share my vision: women athletes, singers, journalists, artists, and some famous people such as Masih Alinejad or Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer and political activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. She has made a great effort for human rights, especially women's and children's lives, in her career. After she was informed of her win in October 2003, she gave her first speech without a headscarf, and she said, she is not ignoring any laws since she is outside of Iran and there is no force for wearing the hijab, so she chooses not to wear it. In Iran, she wears it because she must (Jazeera). Later, when she returned to Iran, officials asked her to answer questions about her actions. In order to stay safe and continue working as an activist, she had to leave Iran and seek refuge. Women like her are who inspire me to do this thesis and defend women's rights.

Starting my MFA in graphic design, I knew I wanted to be a part of a change in society. I started studying design activism and how impactful design can be on social causes. Using my graphic design skills, I decided to dedicate my research and thesis projects to shine a light on this discrimination towards Iranian women. The projects introduced in this thesis are my personal way of protesting against compulsory hijab and giving women who wish for their freedom a voice to be heard.

"Feminism has never been about getting a job for one woman. It's about making life more fair for women everywhere. It's not about a piece of the existing pie; there are too many of us for that. It's about baking a new pie" (Siegler, 2018).

In response to my obligation

To address this issue, I proposed various projects designed to bring awareness to compulsory hijab in Iran and how it has affected Iranian females over the past 40 years. Iranian men and women who have not been actively involved in preventing this oppression comprise the primary audience of this thesis. It also includes women who have forced their daughters to wear the hijab without giving them freedom of choice. The secondary target audience is non-Iranians who visit the gallery or see the work online. The projects designed for this thesis vary in mediums such as poster, photography, book design, and video motion graphics. All of these projects speak to the audience in diverse ways, explaining the same issue and its effects.

Methodology

Two factors play an important role in why the main audience for this thesis is divided into two sections. The first reason is to bring awareness to the issue of forced hijab for Iranian women to a wide range of audiences. The second portion is the visual explorations and research to determine the best media/solution for an effective design activism campaign.

Iranians who are the primary audience of this activism campaign are the ones who are informed about the situation dictated in Iran but refuse to make a change. Veiling has become such a normal routine of Iranians' everyday life that they have forgotten about having freedom of choice in their apparel. They need to be reminded of this contemporary issue and how it has been and still is causing problems for young Iranian women. The secondary audience includes anyone who is being exposed to such a matter for the first time; thus, all the information shared with them is valuable.

The history zines are a pocket-sized book series that may be purchased by gallery visitors. The series has beautiful aesthetics and, at the same time, is very informative and an easy read. People who purchase the books end up sharing them with their friends and family, resulting in more exposure. Magazine covers with news titles from the future are illustrated in a realistic way, making it more relatable to the audience because happy endings are an undeniable human desire.

Researching how hijab has been taught in Iran to young boys and girls over the past 40 years, I came across the book *Why Hijab*. I used four quotes from this book on three posters and one chador mixing different techniques: photography and handwritten typography on 2-D posters and an object. Crafted work was preferred over purely digital

pieces in this project to enhance the human nature of the subject and make it more tangible to the viewers.

The video motion project pairs a visual narrative with audio that increases the sensory experience, helping the audience intimately connect with the issue. Phone camera videos give the viewer the sense of watching a documentary because all the videos come from normal people recording real life events.

All projects aim at both audience groups except one. The experience design piece in the gallery targets the secondary audience only. This piece demands its viewer to read the rules and follow the instructions in order to understand the concept and the struggle of wearing a proper hijab. This is to make it more tangible for people who have not seen or experienced this up close before.

Portrait photography is the final project in this thesis. The visual aspect of this project is dominated by real portrait photos of 6 Iranian women who immigrated to the United States seeking opportunities and freedom of choice. The three different versions of each woman's portraits show the viewer the lost identities of these women hiding behind a scarf. The difference between their personalities is noticeable through the facial expressions of each woman.

Preview of the subsequent projects

Project 1: The triplet history zines are the first project that is introduced in this thesis. The books discuss Iranian women's movements in three different periods. The first one covers the dates between 1799 and 1979 (before the Revolution). The second book is about the 6 days of the women's demonstration against compulsory hijab in March 1979.

The third zine tells the story of the post-Revolution period to the present. The objective of these books is to tell the story of women's rights from the beginning to the second target audience and at the same time remind the first target audience of these events.

Project 2: The second project pertains to a series of imaginary newsworthy events from a possible future that tell the story of Iranian women athletes of that time. It imagines a tomorrow without compulsory hijab for Iranian women and reflects the news of them becoming world champions through visual explorations. This project aims to explore illustration and typography for an advertising piece such as a magazine cover or flyers. It also targets both of the main audiences.

Project 3: The main content of the third project is a list of quotes extracted from the book *Why Hijab?* by Amin Keshvari. This book is a collection of answers to that question through the lens of the clerics or the Imams. This project contains three posters alongside one chador installation. This project aims to explore mixed media techniques; handwritten typography overlaps the printed photographs and a chador.

Project 4: This project is a video motion graphics projection project. This video targets both the primary and the secondary audiences. It contains videos of all women who took a stand against compulsory hijab, starting with Vida Movahed, the pioneer of this movement, in 2017. Twenty-nine of these women were arrested, and the video narrates this story through the lens of people's phone cameras. The intimacy of these videos enhances the sensory experience for the audience, which helps them better understand it. In addition to the video, three posters explain this movement and the reasons for it.

Project 5: The fifth project is about an experience design project showcased only in the gallery. The main target audience of this interactive piece is the non-Iranian women who come to the gallery. It gives them an insight into the experience of wearing a proper hijab and having their Iranian passport photo taken. This scheme contains visual infographics about the hijab laws in Iran and demands the viewers follow them.

Project 6: The sixth project is portrait photography. This project shows 18 different portrait photographs of six Iranian women, each in various poses. The three series of six photos show different faces of each woman: how they choose to appear in the United States, how they appear in Iran and how the government wants them to be. The objective of this project is to magnify the oppression within the compulsory hijab against Iranian women. The other aim of these photographs is to heighten the importance of photography in design activism.

CHAPTER III

THE TRIPLET HISTORY ZINES; INCEPTION / RESISTANCE / SILENCED

DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY AND BOOK DESIGN

The first project shows the history of the Iranian women's movement from 1799 until today in three different history zines. Each book is dedicated to a certain period. The audience will better understand the domineering state of hijab in Iran by reading these short history zines. These books avoid detailed and unnecessary information and only provide the reader with the essential content needed to understand the history of this subject matter.

Method

I found books to be the best scale for introducing this subject to the audience in the beginning. Books are dear subjects to many people, and they tend to buy, read, and care for and loan them to their friends and family, resulting in a wider viewership. These books include real photos of each happening along with a brief description. Writing and gathering all images and information was the first step towards the creation of this project. Numerous explorations were done to determine the size, color, layout, and typography of these books. Finally, it ended up with the best composition suited for this

content printed by a Risograph machine. This technique was chosen not only because it was aesthetically pleasing and had an old feeling, but also because it was very fast and cheap, making it the perfect solution for copying a large number of books in a short amount of time.

Risograph Printing Technique

Noboru Hayama was the founder of Risograph in Japan at the end of World War II. He mixed inks in his kitchen, and, after 18 months, developed Japan's first emulsion ink. Hayama called it Riso ink. He then expanded his company by manufacturing other duplicating equipment and finally establishing the Riso Kagaku Corporation. This corporation is also known as Risograph (*Side Story / RISO*).

This machine appears to be a regular photocopier, but it is quite different. It scans the original work and burns a stencil onto a thin paper called a *master*. The master then is attached to a cylindrical drum of ink and presses against the paper, which goes through the machine at high speed. The color drums are changeable, and each layer of color is printed individually in one run.

Risograph machines (**Error! Reference source not found.**) were used mostly to m ake copies for churches, schools, and businesses but now have become one of the favorite printing techniques for artists. This machine has three benefits compared with high-heat photocopiers. First of all, the ink and the master it uses are cheaper; second, it uses less electricity; and third, it requires less maintenance (*Rise of the Risograph, Part One*). For example, if someone needs 100 copies of a flyer rather than 10,000, Riso is the best solution because it is the fastest, cheapest printing method for smaller quantities. The

colors appear very deep, and the overlapping looks aesthetically pleasing when using a Risograph machine. Artists and designers love its texture, which varies depending on the kind of paper used, and the low price of prints. Artists are now using Risograph machines to self-publish their limited edition books or zines without being bound to a publication. There are numerous art book fairs worldwide that present and support self-published books annually. Since artists are writing, designing, and printing their own books and zines using this technique, the Risograph has grown its own culture and audience. I found Risograph the best method to be used for presenting these books since there are no regulations and rules to be followed when using this technique. The underground culture of Risograph gave me a perfect chance to publish this unwritten history in 3 united books that tells the story of Iranian women from the lens of a neutral party.

Figure 7 A Risograph Machine

Final Design

All three of my books were printed only in cyan using a Risograph machine. The reason is that in Iran, Risograph machines are usually used to publish news quickly and only in one color (black or cyan) for fast distribution. The photos have an old-style texture because of the way they were printed, giving them an appearance similar to a newspaper page. Each book was printed on paper of a different color depending on the subject and era in time. The first book was printed on yellow paper because the royal family ruled Iran before the revolution. The second book was printed on salmon-colored paper, symbolizing the violence during the women's demonstration covered in this book. The third one is on green paper because this color indicates the Islamic Republic of Iran after the revolution.

All three covers look alike, making them consistent in design and relatable to one another. The title was written with a bold, thick typeface followed by smaller subtitles explaining the context of the book. The layout of the books follows an invisible grid system of 6 columns on each page. The titles, subtitles, quotes, and body follow a certain similar appearance. The design of the inside pages is very dynamic, leading the reader's eye from one page to another. Most information on one page would take 2 or 3 minutes to read, making it less tedious than an ordinary history book (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Triplet History Zines

Inception

The first zine is called *Inception* (Figure 9), which covers how hijab started in Iran and how women demanded their rights sometime between 1799 and 1979. *Inception* focuses on the period before the Revolution and the way women of Iran used to dress 40 years ago. It discusses how women gained their right to vote and voted alongside men for the first time in the history of Iran. The book also covers the White Revolution, the modernizing of Iran top-down by the Shah, and how religious people reacted to this revolution. Khomeini became the leader of the Islamic revolution, which changed the regime in 1979.

Figure 9 "Inception" zine spreads

Resistance

The second zine is called *Resistance* (Figure 10) and covers the 6 days after the Revolution, the period when women demonstrated against compulsory hijab. The women's rally on March 8, 1979, and the 6 days thereafter represent one of the most critical times in the history of the women's movement in Iran and the Iranian Revolution's fateful events. This demonstration ended in violence when the guard saw that women were not backing down. Street thugs also got involved, calling women names and threatening to hurt them. The photos all belong to those specific 6 days of demonstration. Despite women's persistence, the law of compulsory hijab was passed into law in 1983. This process is discussed in more detail in the book.

Figure 10 "Resistance" zine spreads

Silenced

The third zine is called *Silenced* (Figure 11), which covers women's movements after the Revolution. This book contains the new rules and laws passed to limit women in the way they appear in society. Women started showing their opposition to these laws by creating campaigns or organizing demonstrations. Most of these women ended up arrested or in exile. This book covers the story of the women of Iran today. It also ends with a message of liberty and how women have not given up on the idea of having the freedom of choice one day.

Figure 11 "Silenced" zine spreads

At the back of all of the books, this sentence was printed to prevent any confusion for the readers: "Do not treat this empirical source of information as an official and scientific resource. This content was collected on the internet from various sources such as Iranica.com & aasoo.com, etc." (جنبش زنان ایران)

The Colorful Dissenters

A small comic book called "The Colorful Dissenters" is an addition to the history zines. It is a six-page comic book that documents a true story based in Shiraz, Iran, in 1929. The story is of six women who were volunteer teachers at a school in town. They decided to change their black chadors into colorful ones when they went to school one day. The reaction they received from people on the street was terrifying, because they were stoned

28

all the way through town (Abdi, 1991). A very skillful artist when it comes to comic

books is Marjane Satrapi, an Iranian artist who is most famous for her comic book

Persepolis (Figure 12), in which she documents her journey with illustrations (*Guest*

Columnist Biography: Marjane Satrapi - New York Times). I have always admired her

storytelling style alongside her illustrations. So, after reading the story of the six women

in Shiraz, I instantly thought of Satrapi's work and how a small comic book about the

event could be impactful in this process.

Final Design

This comic book is 4×5 inches when folded. The small comic book was originally printed

on 11×17-inch green paper, double-sided. On one side is the story in both languages,

English and Farsi, along with the illustrations, and on the other side is the word *Freedom*.

This word is not visible unless the book is unfolded and flipped over. The illustration and the English translation of the story have all been printed in green because this color is a symbolic color for Iranians (Figure 13).

Figure 13 The Colorful Dissenters Comic book

Beyond this discussion of stories from the past to the present, the project in the next chapter questions a possible future for the women of Iran. It spotlights women athletes and their potential future if wearing a hijab was a choice.

CHAPTER IV

PROJECT 2

WOMEN OF TOMORROW

PRINTS

In this chapter, I explore the interaction of editorial design with illustrations and the concept of future possibilities. This project presents a series of magazine covers reporting a hypothetical future for Iranian women athletes.

Before the Revolution in Iran, a magazine called *Women of Today* (Figure 14) was dedicated to all Iranian women and their accomplishments. This magazine was shut down when the regime changed and Iran became an Islamic country and forced the hijab upon women. After 40 years, there are still a few magazines devoted to women on the newsstand, but there is barely a piece of news published about women athletes. After the Revolution in 1979, Iranian women athletes started to face limitations due to the restrictions that the hijab brought upon them. Because showing particular skin parts and hair is forbidden for Muslim women, it became really hard for them to participate in international sports championships such as swimming and canoeing. In one particular situation, a young girl who won the bronze medal for Iran at the Rio Olympics in 2016

was seen practicing taekwondo in Japan without wearing her hijab; therefore, she was forbidden to play for Iran's team for a while. She and many other women were devastated by the way compulsory hijab has affected their lives and careers; thus, most of them left Iran to pursue their careers and played for other teams.

Figure 14 Women of Today magazine cover, 1971

I found this to be the perfect opportunity to shine a light on these women who had the talent and the potential to become world champions but had their dreams demolished due to the limitations. *Women of Tomorrow* is a collection of magazine covers dedicated to women athletes from a hypothetical future. It reflects the old magazine *Women of Today* and gives it a new meaning by taking it one step further: the future. This series contemplates a potential future for Iranian women athletes if the hijab becomes optional in Iran. The collection contains 10 different sports, including ice skating, tennis, basketball, football, running, weight lifting, diving, karate, biking, and gymnastics.

Method

In today's Iran, having unveiled women on a magazine cover while doing a sport is forbidden, so using a Risograph machine emphasizes this concept. The Risograph underground culture gave me a chance to present a hypothetical future for Iranian athletic women. Various graphic design elements such as illustration, typography, layout, and printing came into play to bring this project to life. Risograph printing has always been a cheap, and fast way to make photocopies and spread the word. I wanted to treat this project as a piece of news that should distributed as soon as possible. The ink colors are the two colors of the Iranian flag: green and red. The color of the paper is fluorescent pink. Flyers that are usually distributed on the streets to people are all printed on fluorescent-colored papers to grasp people's attention, and the rationale applies to this project.

When showing this project in the gallery, there is a sign next to it that says, "Take your favorite news from the future." This is another souvenir that the audience can take home. Multiple people bought the whole package to frame and hang on a wall. It is aesthetically pleasing but at the same time has a very strong message, which will get through to people once they read it. The covers can be seen either as a whole package together or as individual artworks. Both carry the message to the viewers. One of the people who inspired me for the style of this collection was Sophia Chang, a creative artist who has been able to connect her visual narrative through illustration and design (Chang). One of her works that has been a great inspiration to me for this project is the way she redesigned old baseball cards (Figure 15). They each have unique graphics and typography, making them specific for each player.

Figure 15 Sophia Chang's baseball card designs

Final Design

Each cover has an illustration of a woman athlete based on real photos. The characters have no eyes, making them anonymous to the viewer; thus, they can be anyone from the future. Their apparel all have Iran's flag on them. The news and the title on the covers are in both languages, English and Farsi, making it more relatable to both of the target audiences. The design of the Farsi title of the magazine *Women of Tomorrow* was inspired by the old magazine *Women of Today* (Figure 16). The design follows the shapes of the title from the older version. The first target audience, who are the Iranians, can instantly tell the relation between the two due to their visual memory of the past.
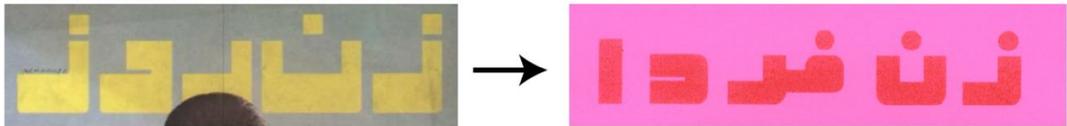
Figure 16 Women of Today magazine title to Women of Tomorrow

The word *Iran* was also written in both languages. The date for this magazine is "Unknown Future" because there is no estimation of when this would be a possibility for Iranian women. The subtitles on each magazine tell the news of an Iranian woman making it to the world championships in that particular sport or the team being sponsored by world-famous brands such as Nike or Adidas for the first time in the history of Iran's sports (Figure 17).

Figure 17 Women of Tomorrow *final cover design*

The next chapter discusses the combination of handwritten typography and photography to express a certain message.

CHAPTER V

PROJECT 3

"WHY HIJAB"

POSTER SERIES

This chapter questions some man-said laws for women to follow through a series of posters. These quotes were all pulled from a book called *Why Hijab* by Amin Keshvari. This book is a collection of answers to the question "Why hijab?" through the lens of the clerics or the Imams. It tries to convince the reader why the hijab is an inseparable aspect of an Iranian woman's life as a true Muslim. These quotes are what I was told growing up, and I had to follow them without question. On the other hand, I try to challenge and question what I am told to believe in. I started researching how the hijab was introduced in Islam, and I came across this book, finding out that none of these quotes came from the Quran or God. These rules and laws were gradually said by men who wanted to control women. The quotes used in this series are as follows:

- This is your crown.

- You will go to heaven.

- Your beauty will last longer.

- This is not a prison but a castle. (Keshvari, 2018)

They all refer to these as rewards for women if they continue wearing their hijab properly. These four sentences are just a few examples of hundreds more that are constantly told to young girls. These are the sentences that women are told even at older ages when stopped by the morality police on the street. This act of the Morality Police is called "Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil." This act is advised in Islam and counts as a reward from God to Msulims. This project shines a light on these quotes through a combination of photography and typography.

Method

Photography has always been one of the most impactful techniques for targeting a wide audience because it documents reality. At the same time, handwritten typography makes the work more humanized and relatable. The quotes are also rules made by men for women, and these human-said laws are better conveyed to the viewer when written by hand using hard, thick brush strokes and making the work more humanized. Pairing these two visual elements together, photography and typography, is a crucial part of this poster series. In the photos, the bright colors and the texture in the fabrics show the lively personality of a younger woman but wrapped in a piece of cloth. The last element is the real black chador worn by a manikin with handwritten typography, making the final powerful point of the quotes to the audience. The two artists whose work has been inspiring to me for this project are Luba Lukova and Shadi Ghadirian.

Luba Lukova is a designer and illustrator based in New York. She is known for her original image-making (Lukova). Her posters are simple, strong, and thought-provoking

(Figure 18). I also wanted to approach this in a bold, unique way, and her aesthetics and typography suited this project.

Figure 19 Luba Lukova's Poster Series

Shadi Ghadirian is an Iranian photographer whose photos have been internationally recognized, and she has published her own books (Issa, 2008). One of her series is called "Like Every Day," in which the women are not visible and the only aspect distinguishing the women from one another is the texture of their chadors and the object in the middle (Figure 18). I used the same technique to show the women's personalities in my photos through the pattern and the color of the shawl they are wearing.

Figure 18 Shadi Ghadirian's "Like Every Day" photography series (Issa, 2008)

Final Design

This project started with photography. The photos were taken of these three women from behind, emphasizing anonymity. The only aspect differentiating them is the color and the texture of their scarves, which expresses their personality. The photos were all printed on 30×40-in. matte paper. I explored different typography techniques on these photos, and after analyzing each angle, brush strokes appeared to be the most expressive. The quotes were all written by hand using a brush and black ink. The brush strokes are thick and rough, bringing a human touch to the writing and the message itself.

The last quote has been written on a chador worn by a manikin. Fabric is an important aspect of this thesis, and in this project, I tried to bring the real chador to life to the viewers who had not seen someone wearing a chador up close. After exploring various ways of writing on this fabric, I decided to write the quote in bold using white ink and a brush. The typography on the chador was done after the manikin wore it to ensure

legibility. The combination of having three flat posters with a real chador at the end

communicated the message more strongly than having them separated (Figure 19).

Figure 19 Poster series of "Why Hijab" at "Not Me" thesis show

The following chapter discusses how combining a video motion and a series of posters

show one true story.

CHAPTER VI

PROJECT 4

GIRLS OF THE REVOLUTION STREET

VIDEO MOTION

This chapter is focused on a video motion project titled "Girls of the Revolution Street." The content of this project is the story of the girls who took a stand to protest compulsory hijab in Iran. This project pairs visual and audio together along with three posters enhancing the sensory experience of both audience groups. Gathering the information needed for this project was a complex task because the videos and the reports for this movement were never officially broadcast by Iran's news media. This happening was posted by ordinary people on social media. In addition, this news was reflected on international news channels but never on Iranian TV. My project unveils the story behind the Girls of the Revolution in one individual project.

The Girls of the Revolution Street movement

In December 2017, a woman named Vida Movahed stood on a utility box on one of the most crowded streets of Tehran, the Revolution Street, and waved her white scarf tied to a stick (Figure 22). She was up there silently waving her scarf for 1 hr until the police arrested her. People captured numerous videos and photos of her and shared them on

social media. After a week, another girl stood on the same utility box on Revolution

street and waved her scarf silently. She was arrested too, but the movement had already

started because many others around Tehran and other cities in Iran also started following

Vida's gesture (Maloney & Katz, 2020)Twenty-nine of these women were also detained,

and some were sentenced to jail for more than a year. Soon after, Vida's gesture became

a symbol of resistance, and its silhouette was sprayed on utility boxes around Tehran and

other cities.

Figure 20 Vida Movahed on the Revolution Street, Tehran, Iran, December 2017

Video Documentary

When it comes to motion pictures, "truth" is relative to the way it is shown. A scene

taken from a particular angle of one subject without planning holds one truth, and the

same scene shot from another angle reveals another. Documentaries that use real videos

and are not influenced by the artists' decisions or manipulated specifically are more

relatable as the truth. The data given through a video projection (visuals and sound) provides the situation on which an audience bases their judgments. The relationship that exists between human life and film is how the audience understands a video documentary, knowing that life does not follow forms, but rather shapes it (Blumenberg, 1977). A documentary film that presents real footage helps the audience acknowledge the situation on a more tangible level. Thus, the video motion for this project is a mini-documentary movie that has not been manipulated in any way: The videos are used with their original form and sound.

Method

In this project, I explore visual narrative through video motion and posters to tell this story to the audience. The methodology used for this project is the research and combining it with motion video. All of this research had to be presented in a comprehensive format so that the audience could truly understand this movement and subsequent events. I determined that documenting Vida's movement in the form of a video and infographics posters would best inform the viewers. One of the people whose style is relevant to this subject is Kyle Cooper, a designer and director who has worked on numerous movies such as *Skull Island* and *The Great Wall* (Title). The way photos change in a split second and the impression that the video leaves on the audience is phenomenal. The sounds we hear in the exhibition are mostly parts of the interviews in the news, which makes it even more impressive to the viewer. Cooper's technique in cropping, fast motions, photo montaging, typography, and realistic sound effects are the main factors of his work that have inspired me for this project.

Final Design: Video Motion

This video is a collection of short phone videos by people who shared them on the

internet to give this movement a voice. The video starts with the footage of Vida, the

pioneer of this movement, and 29 other women who also waved scarves and got arrested.

The video goes along by counting the girls and showing each of their videos (Figure 22).

Then the viewer witnesses footage of the girls being arrested by the Morality Police for

not wearing their scarves. In the end, it shows more videos of women breaking the law

every day on the streets by not wearing their hijab and then sharing videos online. It ends

in a rather happier setting by showing that they are still hopeful for the future and are not

giving up on their rights.

Sound

The audio of the videos is all from their original voices, they just get louder or overlap

depending on how the movie is edited. There was no music played at the exhibition, and

the only sound heard was the voices from this video on a loop. The voices from this video

turned out to be the perfect soundtrack for this exhibition because the audience heard it

from the beginning and got to watch it completely as the fourth project in the show.

Screen

The video is projected on a huge screen on which Vida's silhouette was sprayed 29 times

(Figure 21). The screen is 9×6 ft with a 5-in. black frame. The frame is also around the

posters to unify their design. Spraying is a technique that street artists use to express their

objections to a certain situation. The street artist who inspired me to use spray paint on

the screen was "The Black Hand" (Hand). Black Hand's work is mostly about Iranian

women's rights, and his/her work can be seen all around Tehran until the police erase it

(Figure 23). Because this movement was also a form of protesting in the street and Vida's

silhouette became a symbol, I used a spray and stencil to spray her shape on the screen 29
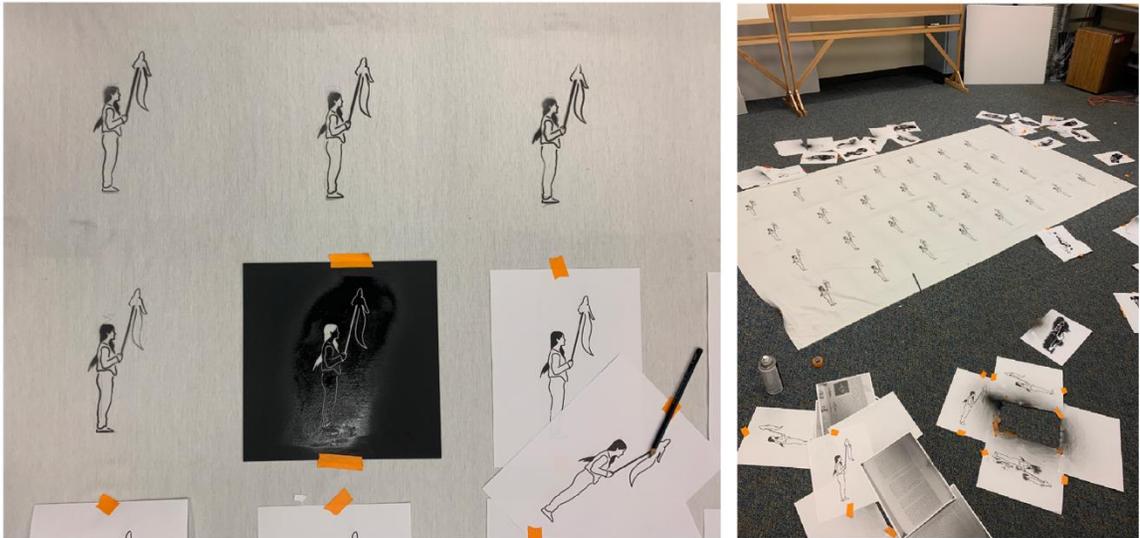
times.

Figure 21 The process of spraying the video screen

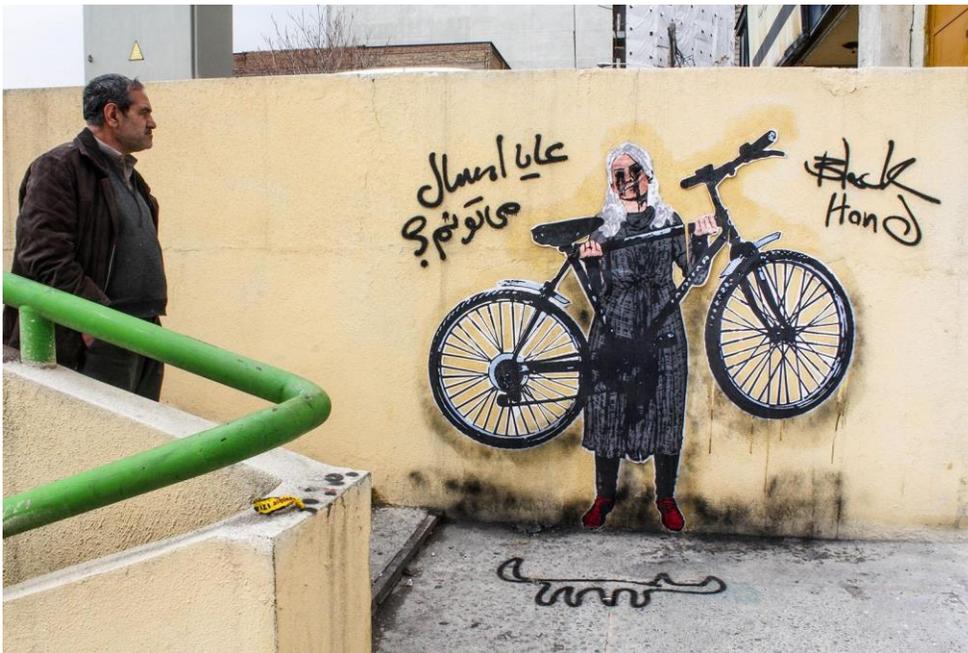*Figure 22 The final composition of the screen with videos being projected*

Figure 23 Black Hand's street art on women's authorization to bike in public, Tehran, Iran

Triplet Posters Design

Next to this video projection, three posters explain this movement to the viewer in detail and how the utility box Vida used became a symbol of resistance. The posters have realistic line drawings of people who took a stand, in addition to the illustrations of the utility box's changes through that period. Along with the images on the posters are explanations discussing the steps happening in this movement in detail. The layout of the poster is very dynamic, following an invisible grid system and leading the eye in different directions with bold titles in both languages, English and Farsi (Figure 24). The first poster described how the movement started by Vida Movahed and what happened to her and her lawyer afterward.

The second poster tells the story of the utility box that became a symbol of resistance for many Iranian youth. The specific utility box on which Vida stood became the one place other girls climbed in order to show their support for Vida and this movement. The government wanted to shut this down before it became problematic and to avoid dealing with big demonstrations; therefore, they put a policeman next to the utility box on Revolution street to keep everyone from climbing on it. One policeman standing next to the box 24 hours a day was not helping them, so they welded a gable roof on top of the utility box to prevent everyone from standing on it. People did not give up, however, made a small stand on top of the gable roof to make it a flat surface for girls to stand on. This process had never been presented in one infographic poster in this specific way. Visualizing this process on this scale is an eye-opening experience for the audience exposed to this subject matter for the first time.

The third poster is simply talking about the other 29 girls arrested all over Iran due to taking a stand and waving their shawls to the crowd. Besides these 29 girls, other women got away before police caught them, and more interesting, among these women, some men also supported this movement and took a stand. The men who did so were arrested by the police and let go the same day.
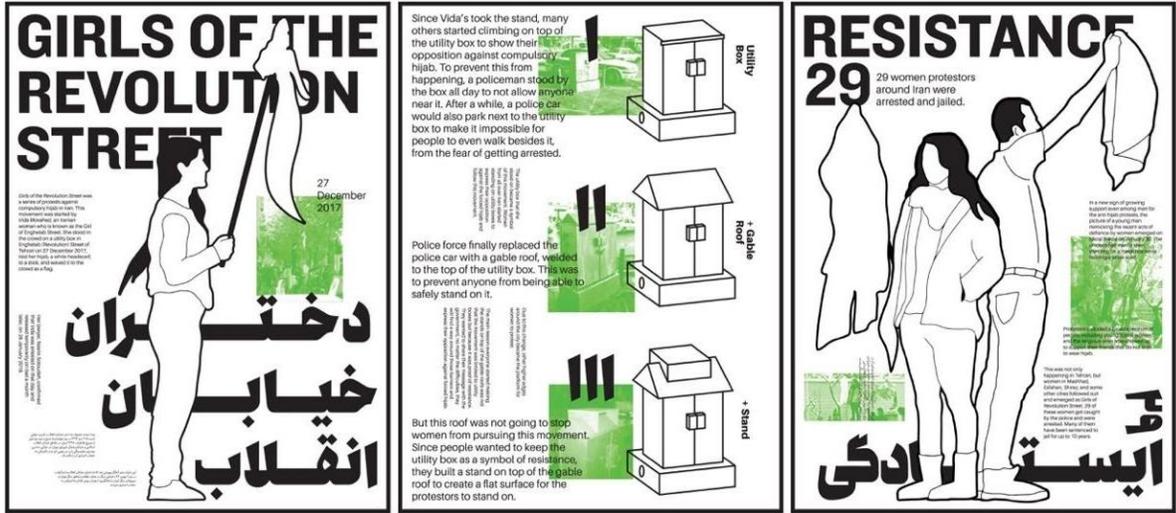

Figure 24 The triplet infographics posters for "The Girls of the Revolution Street"

A white scarf tied to a stick hangs next to the video, giving the viewers a better understanding of how it looks in real size. The pieces of white cloth with sprayed silhouettes on them were for everyone to take home so they could feel involved in this movement (Figure 25).

Figure 25 The final composition of "The Girls of the Revolution Street" project

The project discussed in the following chapter is a little contrasting to the others, as it is an experience design. The audience interacts with this project by reading and following its guidelines to understand why this process was necessary.

CHAPTER VII

PROJECT 5

TAKE YOUR IRANIAN PASSPORT PHOTO

EXPERIENCE DESIGN

In this project, women in the secondary audience have the chance to take an Iranian passport photo of themselves. This project includes a photo guide along with the steps that the viewer has to go through in order to understand this project and walk out of the exhibition with their photos.

Iranian women are constantly struggling with the way their hijab is positioned on their heads. It is a never-ending battle when it comes to having it in the perfect form. These women have to wear their scarves when driving, holding babies, carrying groceries, other tasks of daily life. Speaking of my own experience as a woman who lived with this situation for 24 years, although I should be used to this way of life, I struggle every time I want to enter governmental and religious places or take my passport photo. I always went to school feeling stressed because I had to make sure that I followed the guidelines to be let in. This experience inspired me to create this project and give the secondary audience of the exhibition, especially the women, an unforgettable experience.

They are not only experiencing wearing a scarf through their visit to the show, but they also walk out with their Iranian passport photo.

Method

This piece is specifically designed for women from the secondary audience who walk into the show. In this part, a poster, an infographic, a photography piece, and an interactive element complete one another in order to convey one particular directive. The audience experiences a different approach to forced hijab after being exposed to Iran's history and movements. At this stage, they adjust their hijab in the mirror following the guide. This part might take longer than they think, and that is part of the process; they realize how hard this step is. Then they have to pick an object (in this case, the camera) off the wall and interact with it. In the end, they walk out of the show holding their Iranian passport photo with either a red or green sticker. Viewers interacting with an art piece in a show and then stepping out of it with their own photos is one of the most effective ways of moving the conversation outside of the show and to a wider audience.

Final Design

This project contains one infographic pointing to the parts of the face that should or should not be seen in the photo. In addition, there is a written guideline that the viewer reads to understand this step. Furthermore, a series of self-portraits show the right way to wear a scarf for a passport photo as well as a number of wrong attempts. The hair that is out of the scarf in the false images has been marked with red dots (Figure 26). There is a mirror next to a frame on the wall to adjust their hijab in the mirror and stay in front of

the frame to take the photo using an instant film camera. When leaving the show, they

receive approval or disapproval from me by a red or a green sticker along with a note

about what they just experienced (Figure 27). A red or a green sticker dots are such

simple graphic design elements but here they are representing a stronger message to their

audience. The red dot means that you are denied and you have to try harder than this. It

is also representing the struggle each woman has to go through to avoid receiving a red

dot (denial).

Figure 26 Final Composition of the interactive piece in "Not Me" thesis show

Figure 27 The photo approval with the exit note

The future plan for this project is to move this experience design project to an online platform using a QR code. Thus, anyone from anywhere could scan a code and have access to the guidelines, then take a selfie of themselves wearing the hijab, and the online system would instantly give them approval or disapproval with the reasoning behind it. The next chapter discusses a series of portraits that contain 18 different photos of six women in three specific poses.

CHAPTER VIII

PROJECT SIX

HIDDEN IDENTITIES

PHOTOGRAPHY

"Hidden Identities" is a collection of six Iranian women who lived in Iran most of their lives, hiding their true selves. They have all suffered the enforcement of hijab in society. Now, living in America, they have the chance to appear as they wish. In this project, photography is used to narrate their story through portrait photography. The series of portraits target both audience groups at the same time.

Portrait Photography

Portrait photography, or *portraiture*, is a form of photography that aims at capturing one's personality and feeling. The direction the person in the photo is looking, their apparel, and where they are standing give the viewer enough background information about their character. The tension between the photographer and the subject in the portrait is revealed to the viewers. This brings up whether the audience sees the subject in the portraiture as another person or as an object. In other words, the audience can also ask whether the photographer saw the person in the photo as a subject or as another person,

and that should be understandable from the photographs. The feminist world has long been discussing the male gaze and objectifying women (Freeland, 2007)The photographs of this project also bring awareness of this theory but show the person's personality as well.

Method

For this project, I found it best to use portrait photography to share these women's stories. In these three different groups, they each appear in different apparel and personalities at the same time. The photos were all printed life-size, making them more relatable to the viewers. They were also placed at eye level to give the audience a sense of looking into a mirror. It enhances the sensibility in the viewer due to the number of the photographs. This project wants to share a very personal and strong message with both target audiences.

Shirin Neshat is an Iranian visual artist who has been focusing on women's rights in her artworks and movies. Her portraits from the "Women of Allah" series (Figure 28) comprised the project of hers that was a big influence on my style. The impression that her portraits leave with the audience is remarkable (Artnet). I found her feeling towards hijab in contemporary Iran and how she shows it in her work to be very similar to mine.

Figure 28 Shirin Neshat self-portrait from the series "Women of Allah"

Final compositions

There are 18 photos in this series, divided into three groups of six. The same six women were photographed in three different types of apparel showing various impressions and feelings (Figure 29). The layout of the photos places each woman in the same spot in every group of photos. In the first group, the women are not wearing any kind of hijab. They have been photographed in the way they wish to be seen and how they are. These women appear in society in America (where they immigrated) this way. They were not given any directions on what to wear or how much makeup to apply (Figure 30).

Figure 29 The process of taking portraits

Figure 30 The first group of photos from the series "Hidden Identities"

The same women were asked to bring their scarves from their last flight from Iran. In the first group of photos, these women are true to themselves and how they wish to appear, but in this one, they wear a hijab and show how they looked in Iran. The only way for them to express their personalities is the color and pattern of their scarves because they must be fully covered. Some of the photos capture the struggle they are having with wearing their hijab. This refers to the previous project in which the viewers experienced the same process and exertion. The expression on their faces also shows their true feelings towards this act (Figure 31).

Figure 31 The second group of photos from the series "Hidden Identities"

The last and the third group of photos are the same women being forced to wear a chador on their heads (Figure 32). In this group, they do not even get the chance to express their personalities. The only aspect distinguishing these women from one another is their facial features. They can be easily be mixed up with one another. This last step is how the government prefers women to appear, all in black and having the same shape so none can stand out. In the view of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the less that women protrude and are looked at, the better. Thus, they stay away from the male gaze or harassment. Clothing is a way to express personality, and the women in these photos show no personality, as they all look the same.

Figure 32 The third group of photos from the series "Hidden Identities"

This project was the last and final project of this thesis show (Figure 33). The next chapter talks about the ultimate design of the thesis exhibition. It also shows the identity designed for this show, which includes a poster and an invitation card. A video motion of the poster was also designed for promoting the show on social media.

Figure 33 The final composition of the portrait series; "Hidden Identities"

CHAPTER IX

EXHIBITION DESIGN

NOT ME

All of the projects explained in the previous chapter including the history zines, magazine covers, posters, video motion, and photography were displayed at the Modella Art Gallery in downtown Stillwater, Oklahoma. The following floor plan of the gallery shows the layout and the directions the visitors walked through to view the exhibition (Figure 34).
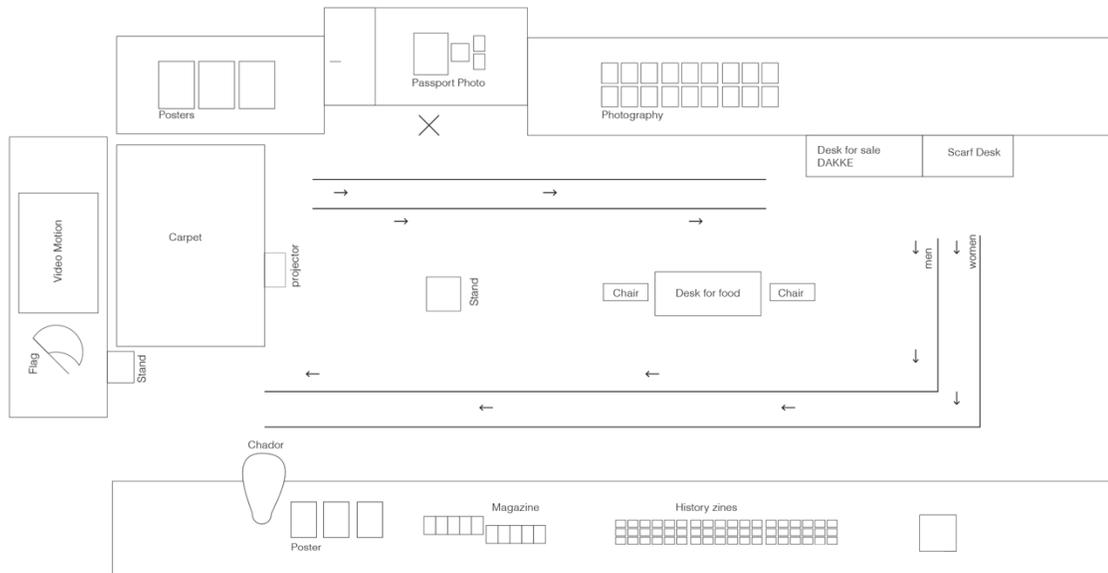

Figure 34 Modella Art Gallery floor plan for thesis show

As they walked into the gallery, the women visitors were asked to wear one of the

scarves that were on the table (Figure 35). There was a sign on top of the table that asked

them to wear a scarf when walking through the show to have a better experience of this

subject matter. (There was no force for anyone who did not wish to wear it. This step was

completely optional.) If any of the women visitors wanted to experience the interactive

piece in the exhibition, they had to pick from the scarves at the beginning of the show.

Figure 35 The scarves available for women to wear at the gallery

There were two different lines and arrows on the floor, green and red, guiding the

visitors' path through the gallery (Figure 36). The word *Women* was spelled next to the

red line, and the word *Men* beside the green one separating the two genders' walking

paths. This sets apart women and men, as they usually are in various places such as buses

and subways in Iran. The lane for women was narrower than the lane for men,

symbolizing that men always have the upper hand in the Islamic republic.

Figure 36 Separating women from men by stickers at the show

Before going through the first project in the exhibition, the visitors stopped at the first

sign with the artist's statement along with an infographics poster explaining what kinds

of hijabs are acceptable in Iran (Figure 37). There was also a sticker that said, "Please

follow the Islamic dress code," which was displayed around the exhibition. This sticker is

an original copy of the version we see in Iran glued on the walls in public places (Figure

38). It is to remind women to watch their scarves and hijab in such places.
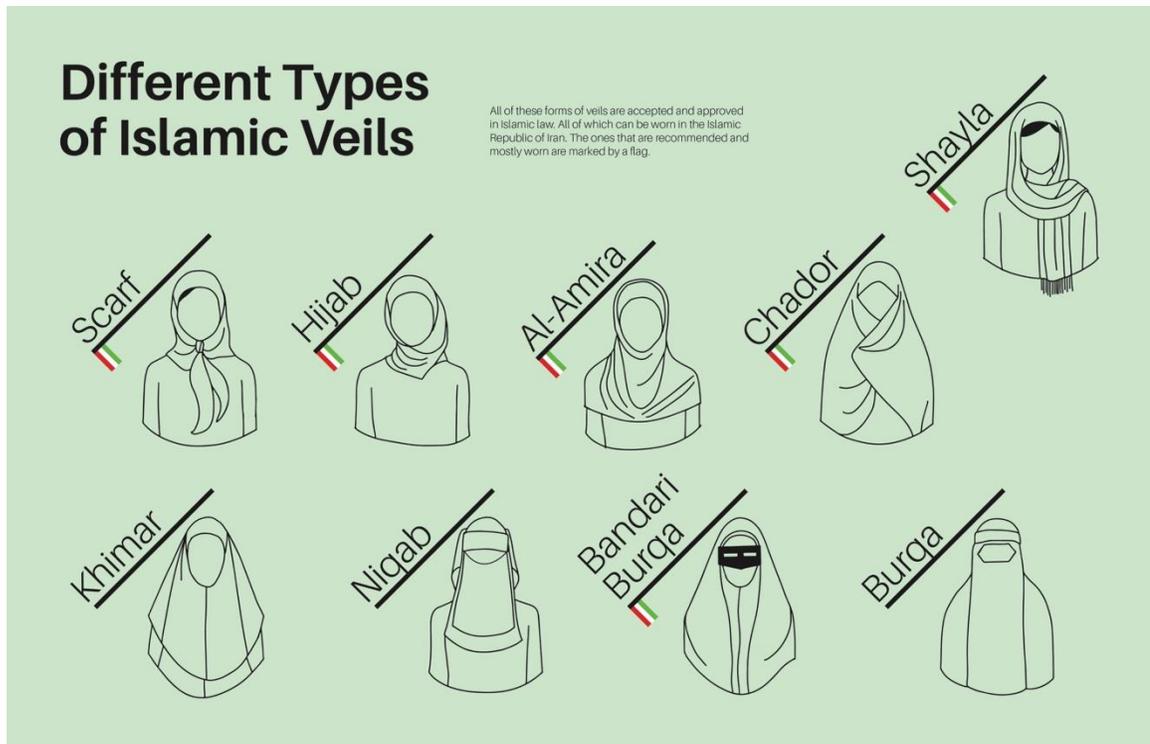
Figure 37 Infographics on different types of veils

Figure 38 Follow the Islamic dress code sticker in English and Farsi

At the end of the show, a table was dedicated to the pieces that the visitors could purchase. This table was called *DAKKE*, which means "small shop" in Farsi. Visitors could pay for their purchases or just make donations through Venmo or cash (Figure 39).

Figure 39 DAKKE shop at the gallery

A poster and an invitation card were designed to advertise this exhibition around

Stillwater, Oklahoma (Figure 40-Figure 41). The invitation cards were distributed in the

art department of Oklahoma State University and around campus. This exhibition was

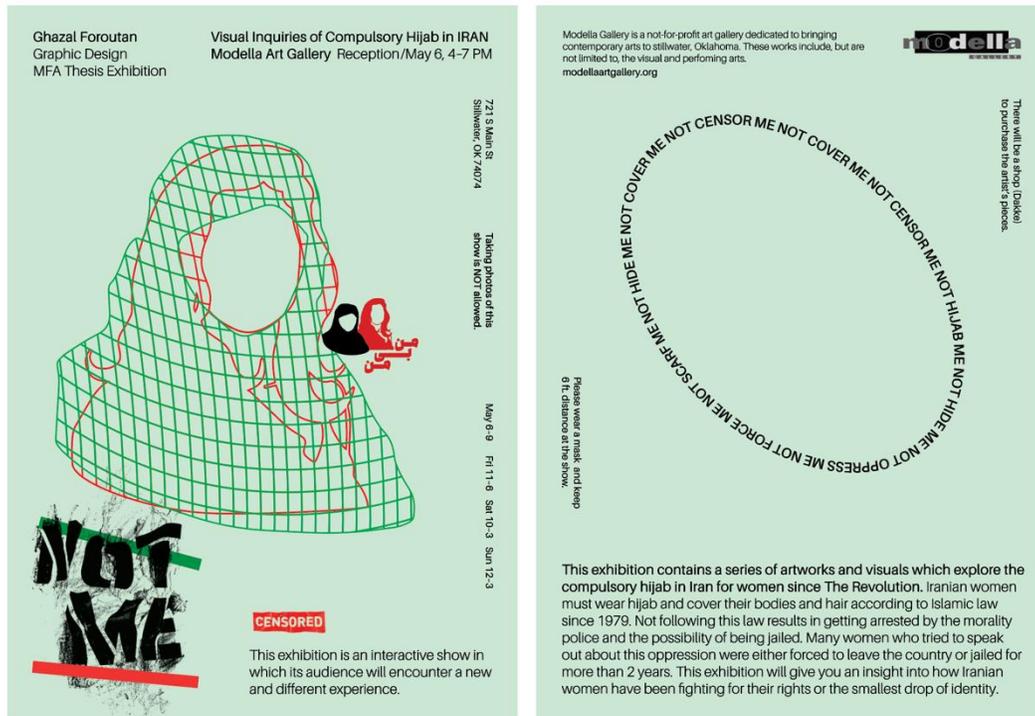promoted on online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and email.

Figure 40 "Not Me" thesis show final poster design

Figure 41 "Not Me" exhibition invitation card

Taking photos of the show and sharing them online was forbidden for the visitors due to the sensitivity of this subject matter. I, as the artist, feel safer if I know how and when the projects are shared. A sign that said "No photography" was also installed around the exhibition for awareness purposes.

Audience Feedback

Women who walked in the show had a hard time keeping their scarves on the whole time, and they all confessed to their struggle at the end. The fact that women were targeted firmly in this exhibition made them feel insecure and weak. At the same time, men who visited the show felt uncomfortable having more freedom and space than women. Most of them found the situation unfair and discriminatory. Some men found the concept of compulsory hijab not only offensive to women but to men as well. Although men were

not targeted directly in pieces, many felt offended because they thought men had been

considered creatures without self-control and that the tiniest piece of hair or skin could

seduce them, which is not true. The goal was to feed everyone enough information about

compulsory hijab in Iran that they walked out the exhibition more knowledgeable than

before. I believe proper expectations for this show were met, as I heard everyone's

feedback at the end of the show.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH GOALS

This thesis study created various projects in multiple media and scales on the subject of compulsory hijab for Iranian women since 1979. Every project tells a different story of compulsory hijab but carries the same message of how it has affected Iranian women's lives. It starts with introducing how forced hijab has been in Iran around different periods, what is happening at this moment in Iran and what a future without compulsory hijab can look like for Iranian women. This exhibition will continue its journey by participating in various exhibition shows around the USA.

There are a few lessons I learned during the process of this research which is worth mentioning. The last project, Hidden Identity, was supposed to be considered portraits used in passports, but the concept took a different turn since they were not presented in a passport format. Various adjustments were made to the newer version this project in order to bring back the conversation of lost identities. Videos project motion pictures alongside sounds which leaves a deeper mark on the audience's mind. There are two lessons I learned about the video motion project when presenting such a sympathetic subject. The first lesson is to always double check the technical side of video projectors to be certain of its accuracy. The second lesson was about the story's narrative that I

intended to end with a happier point of view, but the video should have ended in a rougher way to mimic this movement better. My biggest takeaway from most of these projects was that I played it too safe by staying in my comfort zone; therefore, the upcoming plan is to break these boundaries and think beyond the box.

The plan I have for the future of this research is to bring all of these projects to one website. In this way, a wider range of audience members would be able to see and read about this research and leave comments and give feedback. The History Zines and the Women of the Tomorrow are all available for sale and ships worldwide. The online versions will also be available for everyone to read on the same website. Project number 5 (experience design) is one of the parts that will be expanded to different formats in the future to assure that it is communicating the right idea to the audience and not taken lightly. The message it carries is so strong that no one should walk from it without experiencing the pressure of its concept. Various other projects will be added to this series as I continue working on this research. The next project will be redesigning "the White Wednesdays" campaign and giving it a whole new identity while bringing more awareness by producing merchandise for sale.

There has not been extensive research or a number of projects done on this subject matter due to its sensitivity and the lack of reliable resources; thus, this thesis counts as one of the first contributions to Iranian women's rights. I think this research introduces its subject to an adequate degree, and I expect to see more designers exploring this territory in the future. I believe that graphic design plays a crucial role in shaping society and changing the culture through visual experience, and I intend to be a part of this development.

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