

Taraneh Hemami

When you hear the words “Most Wanted” you immediately might consider a rather terrorist-like conspiracy of sorts. San Francisco-based Iranian artist, Taraneh Hemami related to the initial accusations thrown upon the Arab-American and Muslim culture once 9/11 struck, and in result, she created a series of identities, based on the Identifications brought about the FBI who had immediately conjured 72 MOST WANTED suspects on their website. Following the terrorist act, racial profiling became an immediate form of social abuse to the general public in light of a religious epidemic that brought about blurred arraignments of people’s faces.

Heroes Martyrs Legends is a series of headshots of young Iranian student activists, executed before and after the revolution (1357/1979), representing the outcry of a generation dissolved in the zeitgeist of the romantic notion of a selfless revolutionary who in massive unified action, contributed to a major shift in the political direction of the country and the faith of the region.

Fragmented, with varied degrees of articulation, the images for the series are downloaded from various internet sites, their bitmaps translated into beads, to create a commemorative to a silenced generation.

Image and text courtesy of the artist

Heroes, Martyrs, Legends 2008
6 mm faceted beads, thread and steal



1st row: Mohammad, 360; Asmar, 1360; Yousef, 1352; Shireen, 1354

2nd row: Mehrnoosh, 1350; Yousef, 1352; Tahereh, 1355; Naaser, 1360

3rd row: Syroos, 1350; Ghazaal, 1356; Mokhtar, 1362; Behrooz, 1350

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Obscuring identity, Hemami decided to take it further, and continue this disagreement over the Other, based on their physical appearance, though out of focus, still very much identifiable to its stereotypical counterparts. Dark/olive skin, facial hair, and a woman in a head scarf, become the fear of the suspect and no longer the fear of the exonerable or the, in fact guilty.

Hemami, exiled from her Iran during her teens, can relate to the displacement brought about her own identity involving her new foundations on the West coast. With a new set of eyes, leering in to see what does the Other look like, she created out of a series of drawings and prints, a design of 72 mug shots of unknowns. Hemami ends up designing the anonymous portraits as a large beaded curtain made out of plexiglas. Walking through such a curtain can only increase the distortions, and what might seem unimportant actually hits you in the face everyday.