

## I, VIEW

There is no better reward than feeling seen – being recognized and accepted for who we are. Yet, there is a susceptible difference between being seen and feeling seen.

Often, the more we are seen, the more we tend to grow invisible.  
Often, something innately human is corroded by a gaze.  
Often, visibility becomes a trap.

A performer is always at the mercy of their beholder and we are all performing on a stage of sorts: for a camera lens, for a loved one, for a society, and even for ourselves. Imagined, assumed, digital, or physical, all the gazes we perform for are real. Yet, they are not equally piercing. Perhaps the most complicated of those gazes is the one that's cast across time.

The technology of the camera has afforded us the ability to erase the distance between the past and the present; the technology of the internet means that everything lives on forever. Yet, the camera also imposes an impenetrable distance between the beholder and the beheld, and between the beheld and everything that is out of frame. What does the camera alienate and who does it empower? What does it mean for us when still images are able to migrate through time as videos and as memories? Who would we be if no one was, is, or will be looking?

This exhibition explores the dimension of time in our understanding of identity, agency, and accountability. Who, or what, are we looking at when we look through the past?

Fatema Al Fardan

"Stereotypes I, II, III, IV"

2020, 5:30 min

In this single-channel video, Al Fardan records herself treating her abaya as skin. She is dually responding to a Western (ajnabi) gaze that notoriously regards the Khaleej as a cultural monolith and projects a binary of oppression on Abaya-wearing women, and the gaze of Khaleejis, who subcategorize other Khaleejis based on gender, tribe, religion, ancestry and language. In an interview with the artist, she remarks that "these assumptions are not offensive, just absurd." Here, the artist visually explores that absurdity, underscoring the ways in which othering is an inherent yet ridiculous part of identity formulation.

Mia Bailey

"Screening"

2022, 10:53 min

Two figures are dressed as green eyeballs, each separately immobilized in a red tube. At a glance, the two figures appear to form a single, albeit oddly concocted, pink, black, and yellow organism: a monster of sight. The two eyeballs wander freely and asynchronously across the room despite each figure's individual physical restraint. At any moment, each eyeball has its own unique vantage point, defined by its pinned position but ascertained by the whim of the wearer of the mask. This paradoxical arrangement underscores the significance of circumstance in defining perspective, both literally and figuratively. Who is really in control of the gaze?

Maitha Al Omaira

"Wandering Stars"

2021, 1:25 min

In "Wandering Stars", the artist investigates the typology of the heavens and the relationship between the planets and our emotional states through an introspective gaze. Assigning an emotion to each of the eight planets in our solar system, the artist draws on the 20th century avant-garde to depict the eye as a vessel of self-exploration in this video. The circular peephole in the center of the screen oscillates between the eye and what it holds, as the audio mimics the emotion conveyed by each scene. The background text consists of excerpts of poetry the artist collected while prompting participants of a workshop to reflect on her assignment of emotions to the eight planets. In a world of wandering stars and wandering eyes, what does it take to stay in lane?

Garreth Chan

"notsuoh, a problem"

2021, 3:52 min

"notsuoh ['Houston' read in reverse], a problem" fractures our understanding of sound, time, and image by challenging the assumption that human modes of communication are universally relevant. Taking on the viewpoint of an imagined alien species parsing information from Earth, the work strips away the semantic information from NASA's Houston Mission Control Center to retrieve the audio and interlaces footage from the Hubble telescope with overtly colorized footage from the Mission Control Center. In the words of the artist: "Our lives, our stories, our deaths are meaningful only because we impart meaning towards them and surround them with emotional and social context. To the outside eye, what we do is just noise and pixels, data to be discarded into the void."

Aliyah Alawadhi

"Science of Man"

2020, 1:05 min

This video, part of a series of five, explores the liminality of tradition and emerging digital subcultures through glitch art, deliberate text, and enveloping monotonous audio. Through the colorful digital glitches, pixelated images of historical monuments emerge, ever so fleetingly. At the bottom, the artist overlays verses from the poem "The Book of Genesis" (1975) by Amal Dunqul, which conjoins sanctified religious texts and revolutionary expression. The viewer is left scrambling to string all the elements together into a coherent narrative: one that ultimately points to the science of man.

Raheed Allaf

"Shoofeeni"

2019, 1:33 min

Overlaying archival footage from her third birthday party with contemporary forms of her self-expression, the artist opens up a conversation through time with her younger self. "Shoofeeni", Arabic for "see me", and a play on words for ( شوفيني as in 'what is in me') is a visual response to the question: who — or what — are we performing for? Here, the camera erases the distance between the artist's past and present selves but the work to reconcile the two is left for the viewer. In its oscillation through time, "Shoofeeni" beckons the question: where do the people in our digital archives go?

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IN COLLABORATION WITH

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Curators: Alya Alawadhi and Vivi Zhu

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