



INSTEAD OF A RESOLUTION Nour Bishouty  
THE NEWLYWED Lauren Kohne  
HEARD OR DREAMED ABOUT Priya Nadkarni  
BETWEEN MEN Thomas Prutisto

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# FOREWORD

Jeanette Cole  
Studio Arts Program Director  
UMass Amherst

The artists in this catalog have spent the past three years intensely focusing on their artistic development in residence at the University of Massachusetts. Generationally they span three decades and are geographically grounded in three continents. Their investigations are in sculpture, installation, painting and video. The work of each bears little resemblance to the others, and yet, when closely examined, themes emerge that are shared, however separately expressed. In one way or another, ideas of legacy and labor appear in all this work.

**Nour Bishouty** centers her work on the narrative of a blind woman, whose existence is recounted in stitches of the artist's own hair on paper and in extracted and re-fabricated stamps from a passport. The objects re-enact the restless searching for a person and a place in the remnants of an archive, the legacy of which promises perhaps a faint reflection of herself. Integral to her

concerns is the laborious and difficult process; the materials resist her efforts, not unlike the borders and regulations which are blind to the needs of individuals. Her stitches form a shadow of her aunt's head, larger than life on the paper. She takes us to Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, back and forth. Her stamp sculptures sit, waiting for us to grab them and participate in this mad impatient world where persistent patient stitching is the only route to survival.

**Lauren Kohne** accumulates familiar objects: used coffee filters, coffee cups, and empty egg shells, their potentiality depleted. She saves them based on their attractiveness for some yet inexpressible purpose, and eventually, after long periods of waiting, configures them in a relationship to the viewer such as to imbue them with a story. The purpose is to transform their potential back to active usefulness. Like the three other artists, the figure is a key

component of the work, but in her case, the figure is the unseen viewer/participant. So the recycled material is saved, manipulated through painting, sewing perhaps; it is placed on the floor, the wall, on used thrift store furniture; and installed in the gallery so the viewer can walk into the story.

**Priya Nadkarni** focuses her work on legacy, our inheritance of all the images piling on top of each other from the cannon of art history and global culture, manifested as layers of clothing on her central figures and revealing themselves in a teasing undress. She differentiates this notion of legacy as distinct from historical quotation, which is certainly present, although not as critique, but the very subject of her work. The large canvases have rich multilayered surfaces. She smothers her centrally placed iconic women in volumes of fabric from 17th C. Europe, Africa and elsewhere. The women are from

historical artworks, anonymous media sources and from life. The painted surfaces seduce us to engage them, take them apart, and fold ourselves into them.

**Thomas Prutisto** asks, "What does it mean to be a man?" A father takes his son to the barber. We see, through his experimental documentary video, common performances introducing us to adulthood, and how that birthright is revealed as the barber wraps his client in the red and white stripped cape and trims his hair to form. Recording multiple haircuts, Prutisto reveals the subtle but very palpable social structure by which men pass along the process of attaining adulthood in a sanctuary where the barber functions as a kind of priest or shaman to maturity. The artist is an active performer, facilitating the interactions of the players throughout this 45 minute work as they are transformed into and revealed as a ritual

of human significance.

Each of these bodies of work shows us, in keenly observed and astutely portrayed ways, a little bit of what it means to emerge as an artist in the second decade of the 21st Century. They describe microcosms of a decade of challenges that we are more capable of facing and addressing because their work reminds each of us of our rich and vital legacy, emboldens us to understand ourselves and our world, and gives us the courage to invest our labor in the future.

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With gratitude,  
Jeanette Cole  
Studio Arts Program Director, 2014

# **INSTEAD OF A RESOLUTION**

Nour Bishouty

# NOUR BISHOUTY

## Statement by The Artist

This is how narrative begins: with an image, an indication, a provocation, an invitation for your undivided attention. It holds out the promise of a relationship and, at the same time, a reflection of your own image.

This body of work attempts to investigate and understand the functions of narrative as an accumulative, simplified and indexed order of elements (events, persons and times,) and ways in which it can become a medium for meaning and artistic production. My research and work engage certain personal or family narratives to locate and/or fabricate connections between inside/outside, private/public, and individual/collective.

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Nour Bishouty, *Instead of a Resolution* (detail), 2014  
stitched hair on paper and needlework frame, 80 x 44 in





# ODE-ESSAY TO SUDDEN SYNTHESIS: MIGRATION AS A SENSORIAL AND GEOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE

+Aziz is a NYC-based Cultural Analyst  
and Songwriter

**DIFFUSION OF BELONGING:** Between biological solidity and the neuron pattern spread. Across the flat screen with grace but not ease. Layer after layer, thickening juxtapositions, threads of narrative. Nothing gets in the way of belonging, connecting through an umbilical chord, carrying thread after thread, incremental improvements vs. gradual atrophy. Honesty in the most sensorial and tactile nakedness. Down to the bone, deep in spirit, through the pain, on the point, into the ring, a knot that starts to tear, a stitch that begins to wear. With belonging came manic attention, the domino impact of a personal revelation, sets belonging in motion, suspended above you like the ages.

**SUDDEN SYNTHESIS:** Bishouty pointed to the writing of Derrida in *The Work of Mourning*, discussing the signature of Michel Servière's: "Before anything else, even before the name, a signature bespeaks the possible death of the

one who bears the name" The hair as material in the artist's work resembles that signature; it is a signature of the body. For Derrida, the signature is a reminder of death itself, and by extension so are material belongings, photo albums and souvenirs. The artist also points out that "the signature emphasizes the human intention/desire to archive and keep something to oneself (also what I futilely attempt to do with my own hair)".

**SCROLL CANVAS:** A straight line she unrolls, a winding narrative finds a resting point at the absence of sight; her loss points to ours as the borders of sense-making tend to invert, folding in and out of cohesion. The geometry is logic, the pacing: An aid to cohesion. Memories standing still, with balance, only a hint of intuition and of habit. A membrane support system in a world of partial attention and memory loss. Artifacts soaked, even marinated by

intergenerational links, eager to fight against the tide of cultural amnesia and opening the floodgates of seeing without eyes.

**THE FICKLE STABILITY:** Nomadic by choice no longer. Heavy poetics that shape and poke holes in aspects of our identities, both good and bad, hang in relation to what can be termed an ideological supergrid. The most profound internal identities are marked by ecological control, a "lifestyle" that cuts across the spectrum of analog to digital. Ours is an age steeped in imagery, video, graphics, visualizations and remnants. Forget about an ecology of images\*, identity is a click away, a screen away. The analysts of humanities, arts and sciences cannot comprehend the light pouring in through the holes we craft. Once you leave, the land is lost and loss is a cycle, a twisted chase of projection, attachment is the white space of presence. The slight flickering of a

light, silky textile between the human anatomical and Earthly material

**STICHES & SEPARATION:** Do you exercise patience? More importantly, what do you do with your patience? A productive erratic compulsion juxtaposed against steady pulses of time-intensive and technically rigorous processes. Fleeting impressions that could blind. Layering on identity, sense of place, the globalized post-global, post-millennial, a contemporary condition structured by the availability of choice and suffering from a different kind of blindness. On a deeper level, within the layers of a personal narrative, one confronts the gravity of ancestry driven by, as the artist puts it: "persistent state of seeking". Each vignette is a rock turned over. Destination to destination. Compartment to compartment. Urbanity to urbanity. There are degrees of separation but a genuine attempt to embed the body vis-à-vis the hair,

closing the gap between the historical distance and the need to belong.

**GREEN PASSPORTS & THE BIOMETRICS OF DESTINY:** the passport is an artifact that combines citizenship and status, and plays an active role in the definition of mobility. It almost single-handedly determines the circulation of human bodies around the world, but it also forces us to deal with ancestral weight. In her passport stamps and silhouettes, Bishouty touches on issues of the migrant narrative, but from a remarkably differentiated point of departure; one that subsists on the intimacy of the personal. The heaviness of migration still comes across, as it often does with Levantine artists. Perhaps no other object in the world determines the human experience of loss like the passport.

**LOSS AND THE BIRTHING OF DESIRE:** A sudden synthesis. She came close



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Nour Bishouty, *Inside/Outside* (detail) 2014, Installation, wood and rubber stamps

to control. You wonder how she took it, staring deadly at the wall. A disappearance. This is a node she can't reach. She retires into a conversation, responding through the materialization of loss; it did not fall apart uncontrollably, it did not even come close to failure. In the end, it birthed a desire, a generous desire to uncover belonging, beyond archiving and reminiscing, a desire to shape a whole based on fragments. There is no nostalgia, only empathy.

The diffusion of power is a reality facing every state and institution in the world. Underneath the baseline of the status quo is people's artifactual-resistance, a resistance that takes form in the thoughtful preoccupation with the artifact.

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\*Referencing 'On Photography' by Susan Sontag's where she concludes with a plea to diminish the uncontrollable proliferation of images.





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Nour Bishouty, *An Imperfect Narrative*, 2014, inkjet prints on archival paper



# THE NEWLYWED

Lauren Kohne

# LAUREN KOHNE

## Statement by the Artist

Simple daily movements etch themselves into her mind and body; making a bed, slipping her feet into a pair of socks, the creak of the floorboards as she paces room to room, the crackle of a sizzling egg on a pan. Replayed over and over, her recollections flash, invert, and twist, expressing her memories as a disjointed, albeit logical, fever dream.

The newlywed dwells in this gallery space, and her story is tethered to each sculpture. Her challenge is my own. Her obstacles, relationships, and expectations (and the silences accompanying them) conspire to construct this quiet architecture of isolated desperation.

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Salman Rushdie observes of the author Angela Carter, "... she opens the old story for us, like an egg, and finds the new story, the now-story we want to hear, within." In my own way I have chosen to reassemble the old - or discarded - and find in it something new. My process is to seek the scraps, residues, and essences of materials that have been left behind, and the accumulation of these things create foundations for my narratives. And so I contemplate the stories of these common, junked, and ephemeral, things. Whether purchased, found, or handmade, these artifacts (sometimes transformed, sometimes to let be) do account for some stranger's (or my own) line in the ledger of the world, and they propel me to imagine narratives which time will, inevitably, forget.



Lauren Kohne, *Bad Cups*, 2014  
Thrifty "white" mugs, 8 x 70 x 70"

## LAUREN KOHNE



Lauren Kohne, *dot, dot, dot*, 2013  
stamped silver, velvet box, 2.5 x 2 x 2"

Lauren Kohne, *Whiling* (detail), 2012  
eggshells, acrylic paint, oak table, 30 x 36 x 24"



# HEARD OR DREAMED ABOUT

Priya Nadkarni



# PRIYA NADKARNI

Anne Laprade, Director, Hampden Gallery, UMass Amherst

“It is a widely accepted notion among painters that it does not matter what one paints as long as it is well painted. This is the essence of academicism. There is no such thing as good painting about nothing.” Mark Rothko (1903--1970).

Priya Nadkarni’s paintings are without question, about something. They have substance. They tell stories. The impact of her work results in part from a consistent and sophisticated play of images that inform and engage through both revelation and concealment.

In *Diegesis*, Nadkarni paints a frenzied expanse of sugary color across the top third of the canvas that at first reads as an abstraction – a color field of sorts. In doing so, she takes us along on a journey that traverses Painting’s more recent history. As the reading of the painting unfolds, we come to see the repetition of flesh colored columns as a fence-like

segment of legs that end in bobby socks and party shoes. What first appeared as gestural abstraction now reads as a formation of young girls in pageant dresses—albeit distorted and absent of heads or facial features. Nadkarni is not out to preach to the converted here—she’s not delivering one-liners. The tales her paintings tell are more nuanced and open-ended. She asks her viewers to arrive at their own conclusions.

In “Three Women of Maria Teresa”, Nadkarni unapologetically quotes Diego Velázquez’ *The Infanta Maria Teresa of Spain* and at once we know that this work is linked to the history and progression of Painting itself. In this triptych, Nadkarni paints the outstretched hand in the left and right panels as directly quoted from Velázquez, while what is depicted beneath the lift of the hooped skirts is original Nadkarni. We can read



Priya Nadkarni, *Diegesis*, 2014, oil on canvas, 95 x 66 in



# PRIYA NADKARNI

Anne Laprade, Director, Hampden Gallery, UMass Amherst

the bold flat blue geometric shapes that comprise the negative space as a reference to windows, perhaps to stained glass, or we can accept these images and their consequent psychological tension as a nod to the 20th century's giant of the triptych, Francis Bacon. In this way, Nadkarni inserts her work into Painting's chronology and we accept it because the investigation feels authentic and the paint application has authority.

The more we look at Nadkarni's work, the more we are drawn in. Over time, what appears first as a portrait unfolds as a double portrait; what resides in Modernist space simultaneously resides in Renaissance space. These contradictions in Nadkarni's narratives take us deep into territory where what is concealed is as potent as what is revealed. Through her compositions, layered both physically and metaphorically, she sets us up to

examine dichotomies, to compare things that seem familiar but troublesome, to question the legacy and impact of inherited images and to fathom the possibility of painting to provide meaning.

What's clear is that Nadkarni's paintings speak a language that is full of inflections from the art historical canon but that, at the same time, are refreshingly peppered with the idioms of experience and investigation. Nadkarni's paintings deliver a promise to engage our senses and our intellect. They hook us with weapons from Paintings' arsenal: imposing scale, energetic paint application, imagery that is simultaneously familiar and fresh. They do what we want art to do: They make us look... and keep looking.



Priya Nadkarni, *Three Women of Maria Teresa* (detail), 2014  
oil on canvas, three panels 155 x 62in





Priya Nadkarni, *Three Women of Maria Teresa*, 2014  
oil on canvas, three panels 155 x 62in

**BETWEEN MEN, A FIRST-PERSON DOCUMENTARY VIDEO**

Thomas Prutisto



# THOMAS PRUTISTO

Text by Susan E. Jahoda, Professor,  
Photography, Digital Arts  
UMass Amherst

*Between Men* is an experimental documentary that explores stereotypes of masculinity. Tom Prutisto, a filmmaker in his early fifties, has a particular interest and curiosity in this subject as his own lived experience as a father and husband seems to contradict the stagnated popular definitions of what it means to be a man. Indeed, current census data and surveys reveal that men remain rare in stereotypically feminine positions like pre-school teaching and nursing while women are working in fields once dominated by men.

The site for *Between Men* is a local barbershop in the university town of Amherst, MA. Prutisto, himself a customer for three years, starts conversations with other regular customers asking them questions about male role models in their lives, their jobs, their frustrations and joys at being fathers, sons, lovers, and husbands. The participants are culturally and ethnically

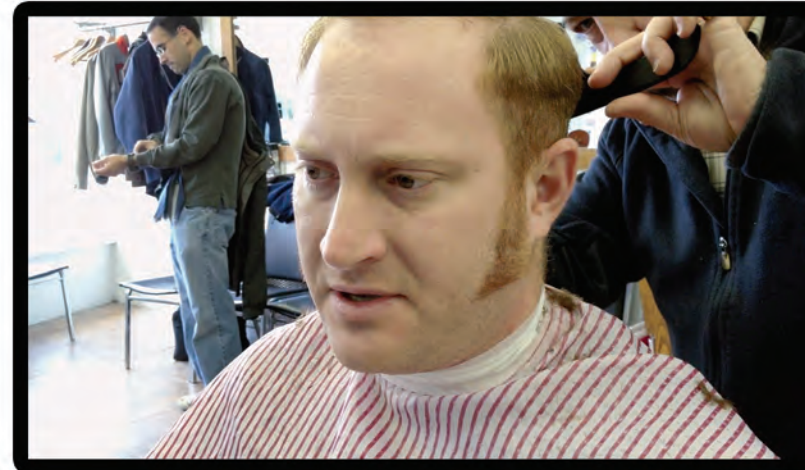
diverse as is their age range. They are also, for the most part, middle-class. Strategically, Prutisto includes himself as an interviewee, the man behind and, through the use of mirrors in the barbershop, in front of the camera. His multiple subjectivities place him in an (in) between space, the same space the other men who are having their haircut occupy; for they are also filmed and recorded through mirrors. Prutisto remarks that the act of seeing oneself in a mirror (while being un-made and re-made) places one in a vulnerable and a self-conscious position, creating a potential opening for reflection.

*Between Men* offers a glimpse into a rare world where, perhaps for the time it takes to get a haircut, men are willing to speak from the heart about how difficult and complicated it is to navigate the terrain of masculinity.



Thomas Prutisto, *Between Men*, a first-person documentary video, 2014  
Single Channel Digital Video, Duration: 45 minutes





Thomas Prutisto, *Between Men*, a first-person documentary video, 2014  
Single Channel Digital Video, Duration: 45 minutes



## EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Instead of a Resolution, Nour Bishouty  
Herter Gallery, UMass Amherst  
April 18th - 30th, 2014

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Between Men, a first-person documentary video, Thomas Prutisto  
Herter Gallery, UMass Amherst  
April 18th - 30th, 2014

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The Newlywed, Lauren Kohne  
Student Union Art Gallery, UMass Amherst  
April 14th - 18th, 2014

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Heard or Dreamed About, Priya Nadkarni  
Hampden Gallery, UMass Amherst  
May 1st - 8th, 2014

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