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The Unavowable Body: Radical Stillness in Mina Heidari's Ineffable Art Series

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Abstract

This article examines three artworks I conceptually frame as *The ineffable art series* by an emerging Iranian female artist Mina Heidari. This exhibition was initially showcased as a three-part drawing series at the 2025 *World in Balance* festival in Hamburg. The three artworks titled: *Condemnation*, *Decay*, and *Denial/Refusal*, are a meditation on feminine agency, embodied violence and the dialectics of silence and visibility. Heidari's work draws from her multidisciplinary background in art, science and activism as well as her censored Iranian context. Employing a philosophy of silence and opacity, where the unspoken becomes a site of agency and resistance, her art transforms personal and political repression into a universal feminist poetics of liberation. Through the recurring motif of a metonymic eye, she traces contours of an unavowable body, from violent exposure to a sacred disavowal, challenging viewers to engage not through sight but through embodied presence. Blending ethical witnessing with posthuman and queer feminist lenses, my analysis underscores how Heidari's drawings reconfigure the female body as a living archive of trauma and resilience. Ultimately, this article argues that Heidari's art suspends narrative closure to enact 'radical stillness', an unspoken poetics that reconfigures embodied silence as a potent language of resistance and ethical witnessing. Using the female body's fragmented vitality to defy patriarchal and colonial silencing, Heideri invites viewers to dwell in the unspoken—to honor the scars that persist, the fragments that haunt, and the opacity that protects, in response to acute and chronic trauma.

Keywords: unavowable body, radical stillness, sacred refusal, anatomical violence, embodiment, exposure, presence, opacity

Whereof one cannot speak, there one must be silent.

— Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1922.

Introduction: the unspoken as a radical aesthetic

Mina Heidari, an emerging Iranian creator, weaves a life of science, art, and advocacy into a silent rebellion against Iran's censorial constraints. From a young age of 15, she innovated dental medicine and later researched nanoparticles for multiple sclerosis, earning acclaim as her university's top researcher. She also taught animation and painting, and led an NGO to foster environmental consciousness through games and workshops. Unfortunately, her efforts were severely curtailed by political barriers—i.e., ongoing censorship and state violence, evident in crackdowns on protests, which create a climate of fear, silencing dissent, engendering anxiety and dissociation (Salimi et al. 2023). Now pursuing an MA in Visual Communication at BSBI Berlin, Heidari channels her experience into artworks that echo Persia's untold stories. Her work, born of a 'voiceless country, shuns direct confrontation, letting colors and shadows speak her silent resistance. Stifling her voice (creative expression), Iran's censorial sociopolitical environment shapes this non-verbal language, resonating with the festival's exploration of harmony amid global tensions— i.e., war, injustice, environmental crises. Heidari's philosophy invites viewers to pause and ponder, her art weaving ancestral wisdom with contemporary struggles. Rooted in Persian culture yet embracing global horizons, it mirrors a world yearning for balance, favoring quiet reflection over confrontation.

Heidari navigates the confluence of art, science, and activism in her three-part drawing series designated *The Ineffable Art Series*¹. She showcased her work at the *World in Balance* festival in Hamburg (March 2025), where diverse artists explored harmony across cultures and elements. Heidari's work emerges from a multidisciplinary practice and is deeply shaped by experiences of censorship and systemic silencing. She embraces silence and opacity as intentional strategies, treating the unspoken as a potent space for expression and resistance. This quiet resilience, forged on the backdrop of a context that sought to mute her, finds its fullest articulation in her contribution to the festival, which invokes the question: 'What is our wish for a world in balance, and how can we contribute to it?' Through her art, Heidari reimagines balance not as harmony achieved, but as a tension held; a radical stillness that speaks where words falter.

The ineffable art series entails three related artworks: *Condemnation*, *Decay*, and *Denial/Refusal*. Through a recurring motif of the eye², these artworks trace a psychic and somatic transformation— from an open, witnessing gaze to a fractured, haunted exposure, and finally to a closed, sacred disavowal. The transformative arc: from resilient confrontation (*Condemnation*), through fragmented persistence (*Decay*), to defiant withdrawal (*Denial/Refusal*), constitutes a dialectics of silence and visibility. I shall theorize the afore-mentioned modalities of the unavowable body as conditions of stillness, wakefulness and persistence respectively. *The still body* represents a state of embodied

¹ In the context of this article, the 'ineffable' is a conceptual framework of categorisation and/or analysis, incorporating artworks on subject matters, whose profound depths exceed the limits of ordinary language and/or symbolic expression e.g. embodied trauma/ violence.

² The "eye" is also a metonym for embodied existence/ the "body" as whole.

resilience amid trauma, characterized by a silent yet witnessing presence that resists erasure or reduction. This body is static yet defiant, a testament to survival that absorbs and reconfigures trauma rather than succumbing to it. This ineffable meaning is evoked in *Condemnation* (see fig. I), where a mutilated torso and cosmic eye confront trauma with a resilient presence, fusing surrealist and posthuman forms. In the Iranian context, trauma emerges as both acute (war, violence) and chronic (censorship, exclusion), embedded in Iran's oscillation between resistance and repression, often expressed through silence or coded cultural forms like art (Akhlaghi 2019).

The wake body symbolizes a state of disorientation and haunting exposure, defying normative alignment/ coherence. Thus, this body exists in a liminal space of disruption and memory, transforming ruin into a poetic archive of survival. In *Decay* (see fig. II), this unspeakable potency emerges as a forensic archive of unmade flesh, whose sensory fragments are scattered across a cracked terrain. *The extant body* constitutes a site of power reclaimed through opacity and a sacred refusal, asserting silence as a defiant act of self-preservation and agency. In *Denial/Refusal* (see fig. III), the closed eye and withheld look signal a rejection of penetration or external domination. In retrospect, therefore, the still body absorbs and resists the weight of trauma, the wake body scatters and haunts through its spectral intensity, and the extant body withholds and reclaims its agency. Collectively, the three works form a triptych of the unspoken, where silence emerges not as absence (of voice/ expression/ understanding, etc.) but as a potent language of survival/ self-preservation and agency.

Theoretically, Heidari's work engages a constellation of philosophical insights that frame silence as a radical aesthetic. Maurice Blanchot's concept of the *l'inavouable* (the unavowable) (1988:51) — a silence that harbors meaning beyond articulation, persisting through disaster and rupture, anchors this approach. Hélène Cixous's (1976) *écriture féminine* (female writing) amplifies this silence by privileging the body's unspeakable language over patriarchal logocentrism³, reconfiguring the female form as a site of resistance rather than submission. Christina Sharpe's notion of 'being-in-the-wake' (2006:15) adds a historical dimension, positioning the body as a living archive where violence reverberates, demanding an ethical understanding beyond visual mastery. These perspectives also converge with a posthumanist thought— i.e., Rosi Braidotti's 'porous threshold' (2013:131), Donna Haraway's 'cyborg imaginary' (1991:149), and postcolonial critiques such as Frantz Fanon's 'anatomical violence' (1963:39), to situate Heidari's art at the intersection of discourses on trauma, memory, gender, and power.

This conceptual framing illuminates the series' progression. In *Condemnation*, an anatomical gaze exposes a body that absorbs violence and persists, its silence reaffirming a refusal to be forgotten. *Decay*, on the other hand, transforms this exposure into a fractured archive, where disorientation— echoing Sara Ahmed's 'queer orientations' (2006:65), becomes a mode of haunting persistence, defying coherence. Queer orientations is Ahmed's way of thinking about how bodies are directed in space—not just physically, but affectively, socially, and politically. She rethinks orientation phenomenologically: as how we come to inhabit worlds that feel familiar, how we face certain objects, and how these

³ Term popularised by Jacques Derrida in 'Of Grammatology' (1967), referring to the philosophical and cultural privileging of logos (Greek for "word," "reason," or "speech") as the central means of meaning-making and truth.

orientations shape what is possible or intelligible for us. *Denial/ Refusal* culminates in a sacred disavowal, invoking Levinasian ‘ethics’ (Emmanuel Levinas, 1969:201) and Jean-Luc Nancy’s ‘being-with-one-another’ (2000:1), to demand an understanding that is rooted in presence rather than penetration. Across these works, Heidari’s silence is both subversive and poetic, a response to censorial muting that resonates with strategies of power and resistance.

The *World in Balance* festival, with its emphasis on harmony, ancestral wisdom, and collective contribution, provides a fitting crucible for this exploration. Heidari’s drawings do not offer prescriptive answers but reimagine balance as the suspension of tension—e.g., between violence and resilience, visibility and invisibility, past and present etc. Her multidisciplinary roots infuse this tension with a layered complexity, while her Iranian context lends it a visceral urgency. Jacques Derrida’s concept of hauntology deepens this temporal interplay, suggesting that her art inhabits a “time out of joint” (1994:20), where unresolved pasts infiltrate the present and gesture toward unrealized futures. In this hauntological frame, the artwork becomes a site of spectral return—a space marked by temporal dislocation and the lingering presence of what cannot be fully remembered, nor entirely forgotten. This article argues that Heidari’s unavowable body redefines silence as a radical aesthetic—an embodied, ethical act that challenges ocularcentrism and narrative resolution.

Anatomical gaze: violence and resilience in *the still body*

The first drawing in Heidari’s series, *Condemnation*, unveils a surrealist tableau centered on a headless female torso—crouched, cracked, and overgrown—rendered in dense, velvety graphite gradients that shift from shadow to stark relief. This mutilated form, simultaneously voluptuous and scarred, emerges as a topography of acute trauma and survival, its contours blurring the boundaries between body and landscape, human and posthuman. Cracks cleave the skin like seismic fault lines, exposing raw edges that glisten with implied depth; roots twist and braid across limbs, anchoring the flesh to an earthy vitality; and strange vegetal intrusions—thorned tendrils and bulbous growths—sprout from open wounds, recalling the hybrid anatomies of Wangechi Mutu, whose work melds organic and alien forms to interrogate bodily violation (Schoonmaker 2013). Atop the decapitated shoulder, a bird perches in a fragile nest—an image at once tender and absurd, teetering between rebirth and parasitic complicity. On the right, a disembodied hand intrudes from the upper corner, its spectral fingers clutching a scalpel that hovers over the flesh, poised to inscribe the final mark of external violence.

At the left margin, a striking form anchors the composition: a planetary eye, rimmed with swirling embryonic currents and tethered to the torso by jagged, lightning-like lines. Initially suggestive of a womb—round, pulsating, generative—it resolves into a cosmic witness, its gaze both ancient and immediate. This eye does not merely observe; it feels, remembers, and testifies, implicating viewers in a reciprocal exchange. Blanchot’s assertion that ‘the eye does not see: it exposes’ (1982:163) resonates here, framing vision as a wound rather than a clarification—a piercing that binds seer and seen in mutual vulnerability. Stripped of humanist markers (speech, head, identity), the female body speaks through its surfaces—an *écriture féminine* of flesh, in Cixous’s terms, where the unspeakable asserts itself against silencing. The eye’s ancestral resonance—divine,

collective, or self-aware—amplifies this voice, refusing erasure even as the scalpel threatens to cut deeper.



Fig. 1. Condemnation, Mina Heidari (2025), graphite and charcoal on paper. Exhibited at the World in Balance Festival in Hamburg (March 2025). Courtesy of the artist.

Theoretically, *Condemnation* engages posthumanism's porous boundaries, as articulated by Braidotti (2013), where the body transcends its humanist limits to become a site of multiplicity—human, vegetal, geological. This hybridity absorbs violence yet persists as a living archive, its cracks and growths testifying to resilience rather than collapse. The scalpel's patriarchal cut, evoking medical, colonial, or gendered domination, recalls Fanon's analysis of colonial violence as an anatomical assault on the body politic (1963); yet Heidari counters this with a vitality that defies overdetermination. The bird's nesting, ambiguous as it is, suggests a reclaiming of agency—nature inhabiting the wound, turning violation into a site of potential. Haraway's cyborg imaginary further illuminates this fusion: the body, fragmented and overgrown, becomes a cyborgian entity (1991), neither wholly natural nor wholly violated, but a resistant amalgam of both.

The grayscale palette intensifies this interplay, suspending the drawing in a timeless dimension where ancestral memory and posthuman futurity collide. The tonal gradients—soft around the eye, harsh along the cracks—create a palimpsest of rupture and resonance, layering the weight of history with the possibility of becoming. Lightning-like lines connecting eye to torso evoke a synaptic charge, suggesting not just observation but a visceral, embodied connection—a witnessing that pulses through the flesh. This temporal collapse aligns with Heidari's Iranian context, where censorship's silencing force is met

with a silent resilience, a refusal to be forgotten that echoes the *World in Balance* festival's call for harmony amid turbulence.

The drawing's surrealist morphology—blending human, animal, and botanical forms—produces a visual language of dream and wound, inviting viewers to confront a series of urgent questions: What does it mean to bear violence without being wholly defined by it? How does the body persist when stripped of its humanist frame? And what gaze returns when we look upon such a form? The planetary eye, with its embryonic rim, shifts the semiotic charge from fertility to consciousness, implicating viewers in a cosmic reciprocity. It is not a passive symbol but an active force—watching, feeling, resisting—countering the scalpel's cut with an unyielding presence.

In her condemned yet vital still body, Heidari's silence emerges not as absence but as a radical presence—a refusal to be erased or reduced. The cracks do not merely break; they harbor growth. The eye does not merely see; it testifies. The vegetal intrusions do not merely mark contagion; they signal life. This is not a corpse but a living archive, its scars like sigils of survival. As the opening gesture of the series, the still body establishes the anatomical gaze as both violent and resistant, setting the stage for the disintegration of the wake body and the containment of the extant body. Here, Heidari's philosophy of silence takes root, transforming the mutilated form into a site of unspoken defiance, a body that speaks through persistence.

Fractured archive: exposure and persistence in *the wake body*

The second drawing in Heidari's series, *Decay*, marks a stark shift from the visceral coherence of the still body to a state of disintegration, presenting a disjointed sensory field that resists wholeness. Executed in graphite and charcoal with sharp tonal and color contrasts, the composition scatters a constellation of body parts across a cracked, arid plane that evokes both desiccated earth and scarred flesh. The eye, grotesquely enlarged and vascular, commands the left side of the frame, its surface webbed with veins that branch like tributaries, echoing the fissures that fracture the central terrain. Stripped of any anchoring facial context, this eye is no longer an organ of perception but a terrain of exposure; a forensic fragment bearing the weight of endured violence.

At the heart of the drawing, a jagged, skeletal form protrudes from the central crack, its ambiguous identity oscillating between claw, fossil, or desiccated seed pod. This protrusion suggests a dual temporality: entombment, as if buried by time, and emergence, as if clawing toward the surface. To the right, darkened organic clusters—curling, mineral-like masses and vegetation, gather in dense, almost aggressive formations, resisting the soft gradients that cradle the eye on the left. This tonal dissonance intensifies a palpable tension between vulnerability and rupture, between the fragile remnants of sensation and the harsh landscape that encases them. Unlike the condemned still body, which retains a mutilated yet recognizable feminine form, the wake body offers no unified body to anchor desire, pain, or identity—only the debris of an unmade existence, strewn across a barren expanse.

The dispersed organs float in isolation, watchful yet severed from their organic harmony. They chart a landscape of aftermath, a cartography of what has been lost or endured. This fragmented archive aligns with Sharpe's concept of the wake, where the body becomes a site 'where the past that is not past reappears' (2016:9). For Sharpe, the wake is both a

mourning and a haunting—a space where historical violence persists in the flesh, refusing erasure. Here, the eye, forced open and exposed, does not command its field but drifts within it, a spectral witness to its own undoing. Its vascular surface, pulsing with life yet detached, embodies this haunting persistence, a testimony etched in the very act of lingering.



Fig. II. Decay (Mina Heidari, 2025), graphite, charcoal and colored media on paper. Exhibited at the World in Balance Festival in Hamburg (March 2025). Courtesy of the artist.

Philosophically, the drawing evokes Blanchot's notion of the 'disaster' (1986:28)—a rupture that does not end but lingers in fragments, defying narrative closure. Blanchot's disaster is not a singular event but a condition of being, where meaning emerges in the refusal to cohere. In the wake body, this refusal is visceral; the body cannot be anatomically restored, nor can its violence be neatly resolved. Instead, the work insists on the persistence of sensory memory, scattered like relics across a ruined terrain. The eye, in particular, becomes a site of disorientation, haunted by what it cannot unsee, its gaze turned inward as much as outward. This aligns with Derrida's concept of hauntology, where the present is infiltrated by ghostly traces of the past, rendering 'time out of joint' (1994:10). Heidari's silence here is not mute but cacophonous; a disorienting chorus of fragments that testify without speaking.

The ambiguity of the skeletal protrusion deepens this forensic poetics. Is it a relic of past harm, fossilized in the earth, or a nascent form breaking through—a claw of resistance, a seed of potential? This indeterminacy mirrors Ahmed's exploration of "queer orientations" (2006:65), where disorientation becomes a mode of survival, a refusal to align with normative structures. In the context of Heidari's Iranian background, marked by censorship

and repression, this disorientation takes on political weight. The body's dispersal resists the state's demand for legible subjects, instead scattering its testimony across an unreadable landscape. The organic clusters on the right, wild and untamed, further this resistance, suggesting a life force that defies containment or control.

Formally, the drawing's stark contrasts—between the eye's soft gradients and the terrain's jagged edges, heighten its affective power. The cracked plane, resembling both soil and skin, collapses human and geological time, evoking a palimpsest where violence is sedimented yet alive. The sensory organs, though isolated, remain alert, watchful sentinels in a field of ruin. This tension between exposure and persistence reconfigures perception not as mastery but as survival, challenging viewers to read the body's debris as evidence of what has been endured rather than what can be repaired. Heidari's silence in the wake body is thus a radical act of exposure, a refusal to reconstruct, a demand to witness the unmade.

Within the series, this drawing serves as a pivot, bridging the visceral confrontation of the still body with the inward turn of the extant body. It strips the body to its rawest traces, amplifying the violence of the first work while preparing the ground for the third's containment. The eye's forced openness—haunted, vulnerable, yet enduring—sets the stage for its eventual closure, suggesting a transformative arc from external rupture to internal refuge. In this fractured archive, Heidari's philosophy of silence emerges as both disorienting and defiant, aligning with the *World in Balance* festival's call to reimagine harmony not as wholeness, but as the persistence of fragments in a turbulent world.

Sacred disavowal: containment and stillness in *the extant body*

In the third and final drawing of the series, *Denial/Refusal*, the artist turns decisively inward, presenting a closed eye and withheld look as the culmination of her meditation on stillness, embodiment, and resistance. Rendered in a masterful interplay of graphite and charcoal, the eye dominates the composition, not as an organ of perception but as a sealed vessel, swollen with the unspoken weight of endured trauma. Its lid, thickly fringed with lashes that curve like a protective lip, is both tender and taut, suggesting a strain that belies its apparent repose. From the center of this closed surface, fine tendrils—hair, root, vein, or nerve—radiate upward in a tangled, organic lattice, evoking a subterranean network that pulses with interior life. Below, the lower half of the image thickens with dense, directional strokes resembling fur, feathers, or folded skin, abstracting the body into a guarded, tactile topography. This is no longer a legible anatomy but a somatic landscape, dense with sensation yet withdrawn from scrutiny.

This closure is not passive acquiescence but an agentive gesture—a sacred disavowal of the viewer's desire to penetrate its meaning. Where the open eye in earlier drawings signifies exposure, surveillance, or submission to the gaze, the shut eye invokes Cixous's feminist call for a bodily opacity that 'does not return to the light' (1976:885). For Cixous, this opacity is an *écriture féminine*—a writing of the body that resists patriarchal demands for transparency and legibility, asserting instead the primacy of the unspeakable. Here, the eye's refusal to open becomes a political and poetic act, a reclamation of agency in a context shaped by Iran's repressive censorship, where Heidari's voice is historically muted.

The drawing aligns equally with Sharpe's concept of 'wake-work' (2016:14), where the body carries the sediment of historical violence as a living archive. The shut eye, swollen and fibrous, is not a void but a repository—holding trauma, memory, and ancestral residue within its sealed contours. It becomes a metaphorical threshold; a wound that will not bleed, a scar that conceals its origin, a door that bars entry while hinting at depths beyond. This threshold suspends the series in what Blanchot (1988) terms radical stillness—a silence that is the speech of the unspeakable. For Blanchot, such silence does not negate meaning but harbors the unavowable, that which exceeds articulation yet demands recognition.

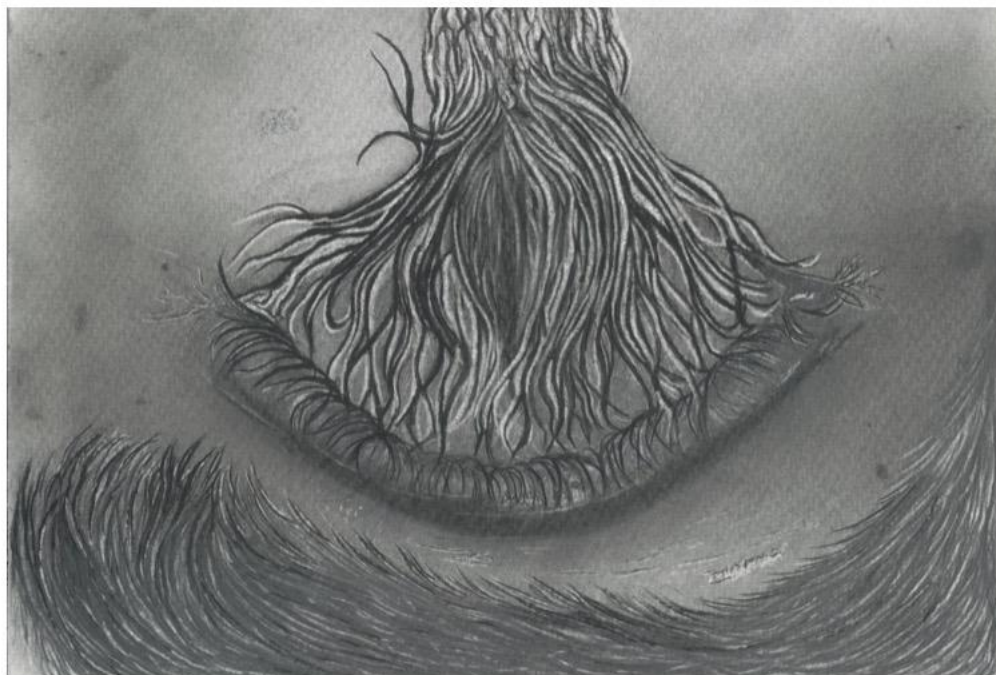


Fig. III. Denial/Refusal, graphite and charcoal on paper. Exhibited at the World in Balance Festival in Hamburg (March 2025). Courtesy of the artist.

Philosophically, this gesture resonates with Levinasian ethics of the face, where the other's presence commands responsibility without requiring comprehension. Though Heidari's eye is closed, it retains a face-like quality; its refusal to meet our gaze does not diminish its ethical claim but intensifies it, compelling a perception rooted in presence rather than visual mastery. Nancy's (2000) notion of being-with further enriches this reading; the shut eye exists in a relational space, not isolated but co-present, inviting viewers into a shared stillness that transcends the ocularcentric imperative to see. This perception beyond sight—demanding patience, care, and attunement, echoes the *World in Balance* festival's call for harmony, reimagining balance as a tension held rather than resolved.

The drawing's formal qualities amplify this tension. The interplay of graphite's soft gradients and charcoal's gritty density creates a seductive surface—lush, layered, almost palpable—yet the image remains emotionally guarded, inaccessible to interpretive

conquest. The tendrils radiating from the lid suggest an interior vitality that persists unseen, akin to roots beneath soil or nerves beneath skin, while the fur-like strokes below evoke a body that feels rather than reveals. This somatic intensity rejects catharsis or narrative closure, offering instead a sacred refusal—a disavowal of the viewer’s expectation for resolution or healing. In its place, Heidari asserts the unspoken as a site of memory and resistance, a space where the female body, so often violated or exposed (as in the preceding drawings), reclaims its sovereignty through withdrawal.

This refusal carries a temporal complexity. The shut eye suspends the series not in linear conclusion but in a liminal duration; past violence, present containment, and future possibility coiled into a single, unresolved moment. Bergson’s concept of duration, where ‘the present necessarily occupies a duration’ (1988:137) that binds past and future, illuminates this temporal fold. The eye holds history/ contextual experience within its closure, yet its vitality hints at what might yet emerge. This suspension aligns with Heidari’s broader philosophy of silence, forged in the stifling Iranian context—a silence not of defeat but of resilience, a beginning rather than an end. Here, the unavowable persists, not as absence but as a potent, sacred presence.

In the context of the series, the extant body completes a psychic arc from violent exposure to intimate containment. Where the still body confronts trauma with a witnessing gaze and the wake body scatters the body into a haunted archive, this final drawing seals the journey in radical stillness. It does not heal the wounds of the prior works but honors them, transforming silence into a language of defiance and care. Heidari’s art thus dialogues with the festival’s question—how to contribute to a world in balance—not through answers, but through a refusal to simplify the unspeakable, inviting viewers to dwell in its sacred, unyielding depth.

The eye’s journey and poetics of silence

As discussed in the foregoing, Heidari’s series traces a profound psychic and somatic arc from exposure to disavowal, mediated by the eye’s transformative journey through her distinct yet interconnected drawings. This progression—spanning *Condemnation*, *Decay*, and *Denial/Refusal*—constructs a dialogue with silence as a radical aesthetic, synthesizing an array of theoretical threads into a cohesive argument about embodiment, resistance, and experience. Each work builds on the last, reframing the female body’s fragmented vitality as a site where the unspoken asserts its power, challenging conventional modes of perception and narrative resolution.

In the still body, Heidari confronts violence with a witnessing gaze, merging surrealist morphology and posthuman hybridity to assert resilience. The headless torso, cracked yet overgrown with vegetal life, becomes a living archive that absorbs the scalpel’s patriarchal cut while persisting through its surfaces—an *écriture féminine* of flesh (Cixous 1976). The planetary eye, tethered by lightning-like lines, does not merely see but exposes, in Blanchot’s sense, implicating viewers in a reciprocal vulnerability. This opening gesture establishes silence as presence, a refusal to be erased amid trauma, resonating with posthumanism’s porous boundaries (Braidotti 2013) and Fanon’s critique of anatomical violence (1963).

The wake body extends this exposure into disintegration, scattering the body into a forensic archive of sensory fragments across a cracked, earth-like plane. Here, perception becomes haunted endurance, as the grossly enlarged eye floats within a field it cannot master, its veins mirroring the fissures below. Sharpe's in-the-wake (2016) illuminates this persistence, where the past reverberates in the unmade flesh, while Blanchot's disaster (1986) and Derrida's hauntology (1994) frame the drawing's refusal of coherence as a disorienting testimony. Silence shifts from resilience to cacophony, a chorus of debris that resists containment, echoing Ahmed's queer disorientation (2006) as survival.

The extant body culminates this arc in sacred disavowal, sealing the eye shut to redefine perception as containment. The swollen lid and radiating tendrils withhold interior life, invoking Cixous's feminine opacity (1976) and Sharpe's wake-work (2016) as a repository of historical sediment. Levinas's ethical face (1969) and Nancy's being-with (2000) deepen this disavowal, demanding a presence beyond sight—a dead-like stillness that suspends rather than resolves. Death here is not an end but a threshold, a radical assertion of agency that honors the unavowable (Blanchot 1988), transforming exposure into refuge.

Together, these works critique ocularcentrism—the privileging of sight as knowledge (Jay 1993), proposing instead an embodied ethics of presence that transcends visual mastery. The eye's journey, from witnessing to haunting to sealing, charts a rejection of narrative teleology, suspending the series in a tension between violence and survival, visibility and refusal. Heidari's multidisciplinary roots in art, science, and activism infuse this silence with a precision and subversiveness that resist categorization, while her Iranian context (marked by censorship's mute force) lends it political urgency. Her mute force counters repression with a language of fragments and opacity, aligning with Haraway's cyborg imaginary (1991) as a resistant amalgam of the violated and the vital.

Philosophically, this progression resonates with the *World in Balance* festival's call for harmony and ancestral wisdom, offering a conception of balance not as resolution but as a dynamic equilibrium of unresolved tensions. Bergson's duration (1988) underscores this temporal layering, where past, present, and future coil within each drawing, while Derrida's hauntology situates the unspoken as a ghostly presence that disrupts linear time. Heidari's silence thus becomes a poetics of multiplicity: resilient, persistent, and contained, synthesizing Blanchot's unavowable, Cixous's bodily language, and Sharpe's wake into a testament to the female body's capacity to endure and defy.

Conclusion

Heidari's art reimagines silence not as a void but as a potent language of resistance, care, and ethical possibility, offering a profound response to the turbulence of our contemporary moment. Her three-part series, moving from the anatomical gaze of the still body through the fractured archive of the wake body to the sacred disavowal of the extant body, suspends narrative mastery in favor of a poetics of the unspoken. This radical stillness, rooted in the female body's fragmented vitality, challenges viewers to witness beyond the visible, engaging with the unavowable as an act of ethical attunement rather than comprehension. In doing so, it answers the *World in Balance* festival's question: 'What is our wish for a world in balance, and how can we contribute to it?', not with prescriptive solutions, but with a call to dwell in the depth of what remains unsaid.

Heidari's Iranian context amplifies this ethical witnessing, embedding her silence with the weight of lived resistance against censorship's silencing grip. Her multidisciplinary approach, merging scientific rigor with artistic subversion, lends this resistance a layered complexity, while her engagement with global discourses on trauma, gender, and postcoloniality situates it within a broader human struggle. The female body, across the series, emerges as a cyborgian archive, a posthuman terrain that absorbs violence yet persists, its fragments and opacity defying the reductive gaze of patriarchal and colonial power. This defiance aligns with queer reorientation, where survival lies in the refusal to align with normative frames.

Ultimately, her work positions the unspoken as an ethical witnessing that transcends the visible, demanding a relational engagement with the other—be it the fragmented body, the artist's silenced voice, or the viewer's implicated gaze. In a world marked by division and upheaval, Heidari's contribution lies in this call to dwell in the unavowable: to honor the scars that persist, the fragments that haunt, and the opacity that protects. It is a poetics of stillness that does not heal but holds—a testament to resilience, a challenge to power, and a quiet insistence on the sacredness of what remains unsaid.

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