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Artist Statement:

Behind the Burka II is close to my heart, it reflects my personal experience as an Afghan woman and dogma women endure in Afghanistan. Producing this body of work provides an intimate projection to the issues women face. The problems are not only about the garment “Burka”, it is about women being sold into a marriage, boys getting abducted to become sexual slaves, poverty, self immolation, vitriolage on women who seek education, use of opium to surpass hunger, and more. I set up still life using cultural elements to construct narrative bearing to provide a glimpse into these predicaments.

Each composition is created by collection of items that are symbolic to Afghan culture. For example the Burka is an icon for Afghan women. In the set up for the painting “Chastity”, it composes of traditional cloth given to bride for her first night with her husband. The mirror is used in the wedding ceremony for bride and groom to see one another for the first time. Wine glasses are used in wedding ceremony to exchange their first drink together. The candles are lit in the wedding night for long life. Wedding bands get exchanged between married couple. Pearls are symbolic for purity in Afghan culture. Some of the objects are borrowed, some purchased from Afghanistan, and some are owned. The object’s authenticity creates a personal experience to get a closer look into the culture and provide the existence of problems casting over the women.

Creating interesting compositions requires well thought out process and many setups until the final choice. Lighting is essential part of the narration. For example the cast shadow of the *Burka* provides mystery and darkness. Using oil medium to paint allows creating layers of paint and bringing forth the compositions to life. I used stories from BBC, PBS, documents from RAWA, COF, and other organizations as inspiration to set up narrative still life. The repetition of red Afghani carpet identifies the paintings from Afghanistan.

Art is a way of keeping a journal about my life and thoughts, while creating a voice for those who have become silent by oppression. It is my visual diary and journey.