

Pres s u r e d *Fem m e*



Thesis Research
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“yours” belongs to you but your
body belongs to them. A free soul
in a jailed body.

DAM

I promised my mother not to pick a
sensitive topic, oops.

For Gedo.

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The s i s *Statement*

For my thesis I choose to focus on the hyper sexualized context of the female figure within Egyptian culture. And how shame can manipulate Egyptian women's sense of value. With my thesis I hope to build an immersive audio and visual Installation Based from my own experiences, the goal is to create a space of empathy and understanding. Where any user can gain the sense of what it feels like being a female within Egyptian culture.



Introduction

It was the 1st of July when my Instagram feed was suddenly filled up with green squares that read, “who is ABZ? A sexual predator. how do we know this?”. The post stated that in 2018, a girl came forward from the American University in Cairo’s Facebook group claiming that this individual was harassing her and two of her friends. Over 50 other girls came forward and also stated they too had suffered the same experiences with him and were threatened not to speak out about it. As this particular case gained more attention on social media, more women spoke out about their experiences and how they felt harshly judged within their communities.

For once something happened that led to a new and brave shift because of the number of people coming out and asking for justice. For the first time in a long time the mainstream media were discussing these cases and stories as well, asking for justice and doing the right thing for all these women. It was inspiring to see all these people coming together and shifting the narrative for women’s role within Egyptian culture. Witnessing all those who were brave in sharing their stories led me to recall my own personal experiences in similar situations. Asking myself why didn’t I ask for help at the time? What was I afraid of? Why does this keep happening to women? My guts and my mind always yell out to me the same answer, you will be shamed!

So this brings me to my thesis question: Why are Egyptian women instantly gazed at in an eroticized way? And then shamed because of it? To start finding some answers to these questions, my paper will be divided into two sections. First is the background research aimed to establish a small understanding of the cultural context, and second is my personal narrative that will later on feed by final design.

My background research will contain three chapters. Chapter one will look into the female role and social mannerism within the Egyptian culture. Chapter two will explore the Egyptian understandings of desire, sexuality and gaze and then Finally chapter three will take a quick overview of how shame can be used as a weapon of control.

Backg r o u n d
Research

PHAROH
HATSHEPSUT

- After taking the throne, she de-lared herself pharaoh of Egypt.
- She even wore the traditional male pharaoh clothing with a fake beard.
- Under her rule Egypt saw eco-nomic prosperitey from her vital trade routes.
- When her younger bother be-came of age, he had most of her depictions destroyed

1479 BC

NABAWIYYA
MUSA

- At 13 years of age, she sold her gold bracelets for money to pay for her education, due to her bother's threat to disown her.
- She became the first female headmistress, supervisor and manager within the educational system.
- With an equal level of education to her male peers, she was the first female teacher to be able to command the same salary as a man.
- At the end she was imprisoned by the Egyptian government for crit-icizing Egypt's support of British policies in war.

SAFIYA
ZAGHOUL

- "The Mother of Egypt"
- Zaghloul participated in women demonstrations during the 1919 revolution to claim independence from the British Empire.
- Zaghloul continued her politi-cal struggle for 20 years after her husband's death during which she was warned by Egypt's prime minister Ismail Sedqy Pasha to abandon her activity.

"If the brute English force has arrested Saad and his tongue, then his wife and life partner is making God and the homeland witness that she will replace her great husband, and that she considers herself a mother to all those who came out to face bullets for the sake of freedom"

HUDA
SHARAWI

- Founded the Egyptian Feminist Union.
- In 1908 Sharawi helped found the first secular philanthropic organization operated by Egyptian women, a medical dispensary for underprivileged women and children.
- She represented Egypt at women's conferences around the world, advocating for peace and disarmament.

"I'm writing to free myself and free women from this prison. My writing is dedicated to all women over the world...I see myself as a foreigner in my community...They believe that strength is for men and weakness for women."

DORIA
SHAFIK

- "Daughter of the Nile"
- A poet and editor and one of the leaders of the women's liberation movement.
- Due to that movement, women were granted the right to vote.
- She held a hunger strike that lasted 10 days demanding equal political rights for women.

"Daughter of the Nile...I have demanded women's rights...My fight was enlarged t human freedom...And what was the result?I have no more friends...So what? Until the end of the road...will proceed alone."

SAMEERA
MOUSSA

- First female Egyptian nuclear physicist and had a doctorate in atomic radiation.
- Moussa promoted the peaceful use of nuclear technology and organized the Atomic Energy for Peace Conference.
- She died in California on 5 August 1952 in a car accident. In 1953 she was honored posthumously by the Egyptian Army.

"I'll make nuclear treatment as available and cheap as Aspirin"

UMM
KULTHUM

- Egyptian singer who mesmerized Arab audiences from the Persian Gulf to Morocco for half a century. She was one of the most famous Arab singers and public personali-ties of the 20th century.
- Recorded about 300 songs over a 60-year career.
- After the 1967 War, Umm Kulthum composed a series of nationalis-tic songs that fueled nationalism. She also gave many performances in various Arab countries to raise money for the Egyptian army.

"My father was uneasy. The idea that his daughter should sing in front of men he didn't know, was difficult for him to accept, but, my singing helped support the family."

SOAD
HOSNY

- "Cinderella of Egyptian Cinema"
- One of the most influential actresses in the Middle East and the Arab world.
- At the age of three, she began her career when she sang in the pop-ular children's TV program, Papa Sharo. Her work included a wide range of genres – from light com-edies and romances through to political satire.
- Her tragic death was surrounded in controversy, with authorities ini-tially failing to provide details. Her funeral in Cairo was attended by some 10,000 people.

"The convergence between two soulmates, who complete each other, think about each other, and care about each other is the most beautiful and the sweetest thing in the world."

FATEN
HAMAMA

- "The lady of the Arabic Screen"
- She was in more than 100 Egyptian films and television shows over a 60-year career.
- She was publicly vocal about Gamal Abd el Nasser's rule.
- Many of her films influenced changes in Egyptian divorce laws.

"I'm still an artist and I state my opinion through art, I believe that drama picture touches and approaches people more than a political speech."

NAWAL
EL SAADAWI

- Egyptian feminist writer, activist, physician, and psychiatrist.
- Published Women and Sex, a har-rowing critique of female genital mutilation and other misogynist practices in her society. This book was condemned by religious and governmental authorities and caused her to lose her job in the ministry.
- She continued to perform psychi-atric research, especially in neuro-sis in Egyptian women.

"She is free to do what she wants, and free not to do it."

10

11



An anthropological perspective.

There is a level of complexity when trying to pin down women's role within Egyptian culture, because of the class system each social level deals with sexism in different amounts. It is still very much present but as one reaches the top of the pyramid into the upper class society the mannerism differs and so does the sexism: it moves from being direct to indirect. This class system can be best described using a pyramid shape and this goes back all the way to ancient Egyptian times. The pharaoh, described as the morning and evening star, sits on top while the servants and farmers sit at the bottom. This system is still prevalent to this day with a few more levels added--for example, the new money or nouveau riche families that move into other areas where the "wealthy" people live. While others who are old money rich own land and live along the farm life. They are at times considered 'low class' because of how they choose to live and dress, which then creates a hostile environment of judgment from different elite classes.

Ancient Egyptian women.

Most of the existing sources about royal women at that time were mostly written from a eurocentric perspective "presenting a scenario where Egyptians are just like us" and much like many historical myths and legends women are reduced into a visual spectacle. The female body seems to be the subject to trigger it all. Even within pharaonic time only 1% of the Egyptian population was literate, thus most found scripts were written by the all male from higher Egyptian society.

Still there are records that tell stories of powerful women at the time and one of them was Pharaoh Hatshepsut, which translates to "Foremost of Noble Ladies", she was the daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose. Before her husband's death she began to take on an active role in running the country which led her to become queen. Hatshepsut became a powerful leader that gained the people's loyalty as well as her surrounding government.

A few years after being regent, she decided to become Pharaoh herself and took charge of the country. She was a cunning leader who ruled for 20 years, rather than going to war she established trade relationships with foreign countries making Egypt at the time a very rich country. Hatshepsut also constructed many buildings and monuments that also had many statues of herself depicted as pharaoh. She wore the headdress with a cobra and even a fake beard with a short kilt that normally men wore at the time. Hatshepsut died after 22 years as the ruler. There are many conspiracies about how she died, but the one that has prevailed is that one of her brothers, who was not very fond of her, had her assassinated and took the throne for himself.

Baladi women

"I celebrate their baladi spirit, their savvy here. It is the latter, their self proclaimed ability to play with an egg and as tone at the same time without breaking the egg"

The word "baladi", roughly translates to "of the country", was historically used to identify the local and indigenous Egyptians apart from the Ottomans, the Arabs, the French and the British that occupied Egypt for many years. As the years went by the term baladi has then become a term to describe residents and their life within rural urban quarters, and even at times a mere film troupe character. So to better explain what are the roles and mannerisms of baladi women, I started off by reading a book and a few articles. The book "Baladi Women of Cairo: Playing With an Egg and a Stone" was written by Evelyn Early, an American anthropologist; she went to live in a neighborhood called "Bulaq" in the 1980s to accurately record the life there. "The baladi women I studied were mainly low income but were by no means trapped in a "culture of poverty" The business women among them worked at the intersection of domestic and the public, of the informal baladi economy and formal foreign economy"

Bulaq women worked as merchants and creditors, if their husband or father dies they take over the family workshop. Some find work in textile, pharmaceutical and other factories but jobs are limited and a woman must often wait for a family member to retire to claim a work slot. Young women with diplomas queue from two to three years for guaranteed government office jobs. Older illiterate women work in the shadow economy selling sweets, fruit, or roasted corn on the street. But it might just be that the woman who sells onions in the city may also own several apartment buildings and acres of land in the city and her home village.

The role of jewelry has always been to show off status and fashion. Baladi women wear golden bracelets worn on their arms, huge gold earrings shaped into hoops, love birds and calligraphic intricacies. This is still very much relevant to current though you can see the gradient to style within each social class and ages\group. The jewelry pieces can sometimes act as a commodity to bring in more income. One case that was brought up was of a woman who wanted to invest into cattle business ,but her husband disagreed. She decided to sell her jewelry anyway (and purchased the cattle herself, not only so that her household always would have dairy products available but she could then sell products and gain a stable income to get gifts for her children and keep them in school. “mine to spend as i like” restoring a sense of value within herself not only in being a mother but also the breadwinner.

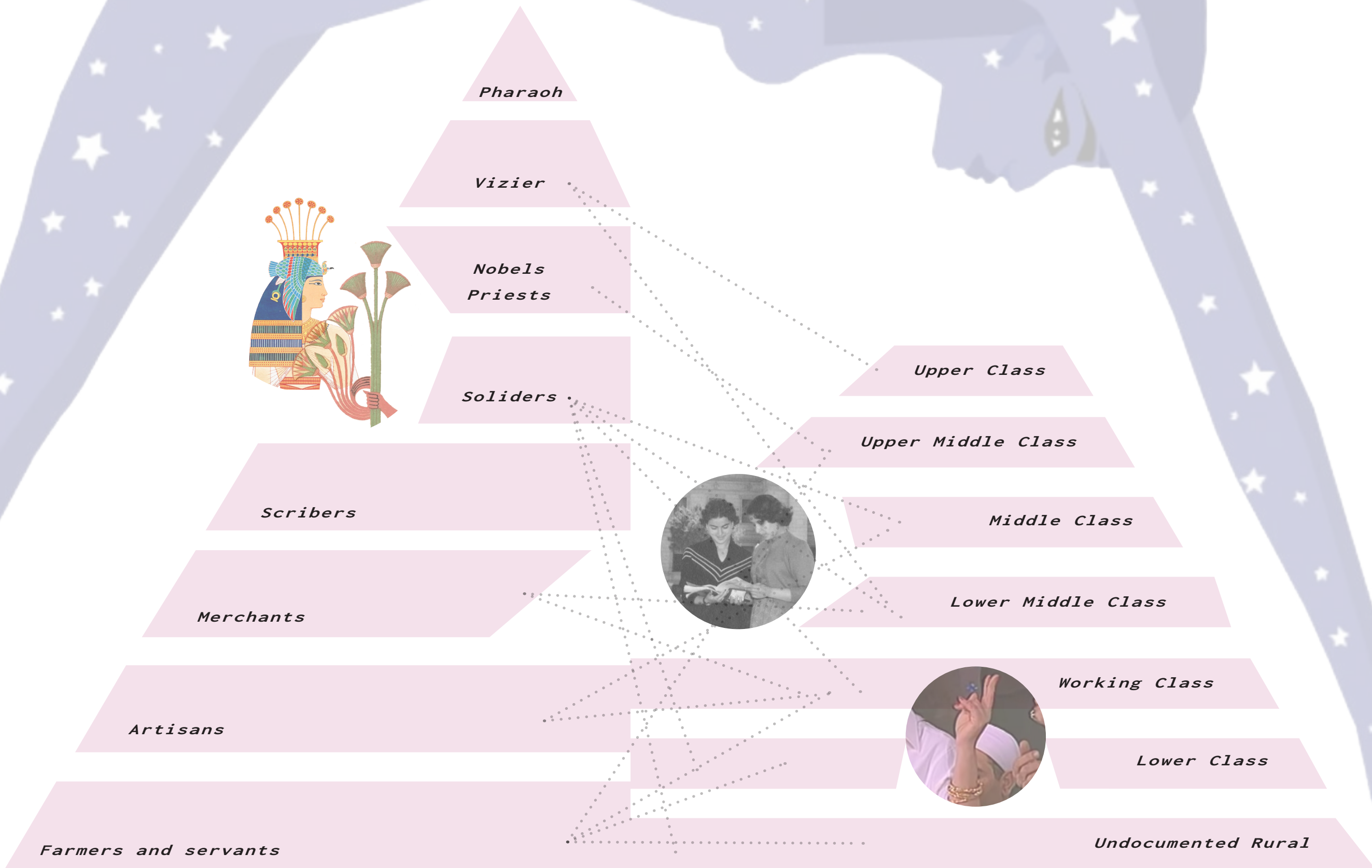
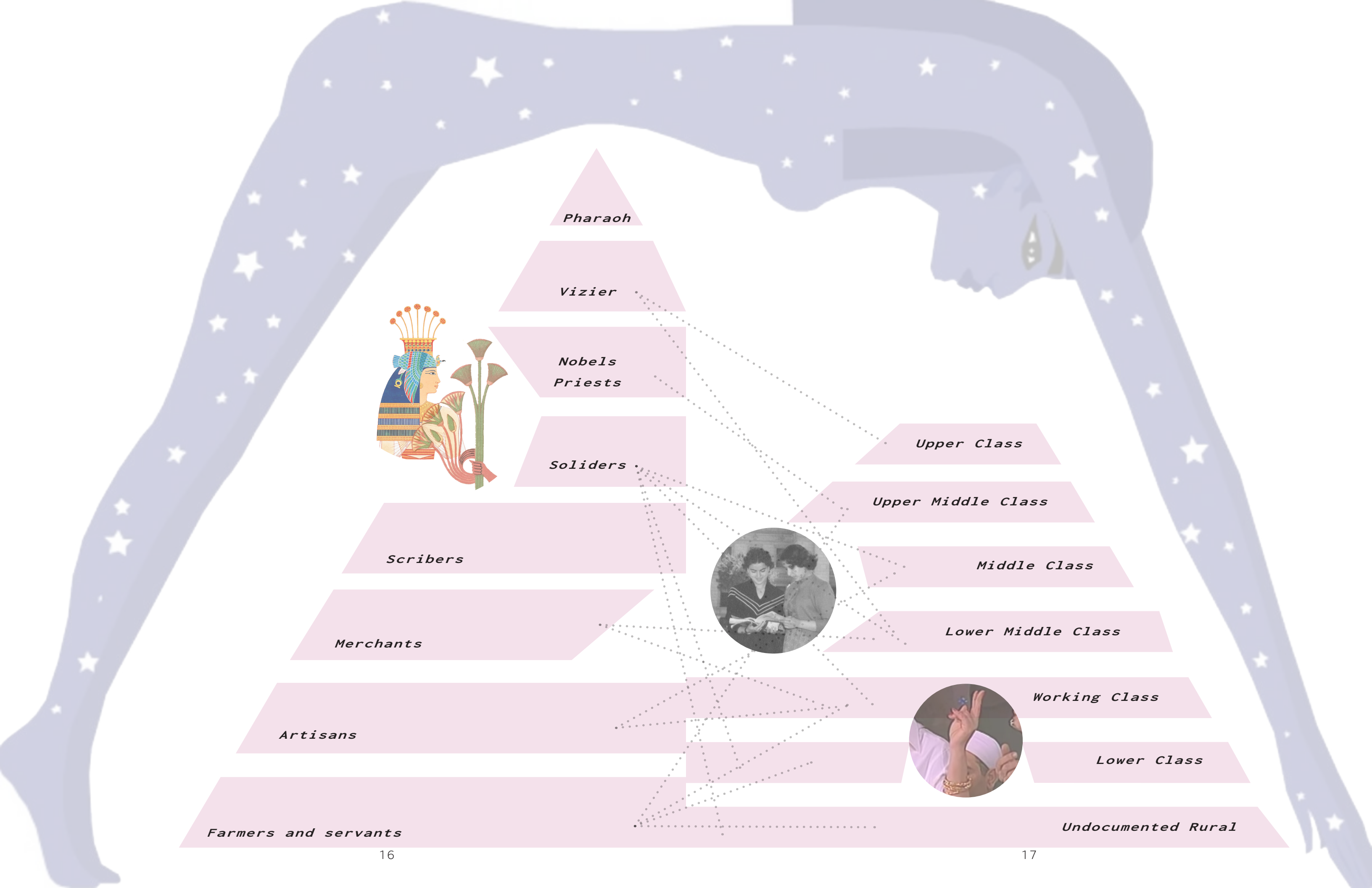
In this certain class a woman's main obligations is to her husband, which means marriage is a very much expected stage, to feed him, meet his sexual demands while also pretending to be “shy”about that, and raise his children. “A wise wife never challenges her husband in public. She consults him about major expenses such as trips, medical treatment or weddings. The man supports the house and the woman keeps her income and maintains order.” Even though this description is overly simplified, nowadays almost most women routines would involve balancing household management and work. There are times if a woman fails to balance both tasks, the husband or the male figure that is present would physically assault and abuse the woman for her failure and her “slut” ways.

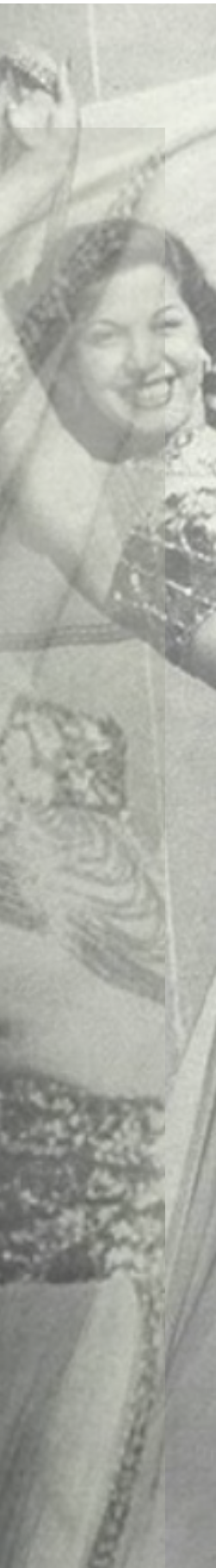
Here is where the hypocrisy and complexity comes in with the same community that might oppress and abuse women: an exception. Baladi women merchants which are known in arabic as mu'allima or masters, are tough women not to be trifled with. In the book Early describes her mannerism as “mannish”, respected and feared by all. She is untouched by innuendo jokes and will make an example of those who dare to do so, as she has the whole street under her thumb. “ A mu'allima talks sternly even roughly with customers and curses as if she were a man.” Though she is her rough persona that is active within the streets, she would then revert back to her “normal” housewife role when needed. One can argue that “mannish” demeanor could be perceived as a front to protect herself from being viewed as an object, but my personal assumption would think this manner comes out due to environmental influences. Where a person grows up leads to many factors that influence behavior.

Currently the mu'allima role no longer exists; it is not quite certain why. I would assume as time went on more women are getting educated and finding other jobs outside their neighborhoods. One study conducted in 1978 showed that within a rural area, the proportion of women who worked for wages in agriculture declined sharply between 1962 and 1978. That decline in agriculture work was due to the increase in girls' education. In 1962 68% of girls aged 6-11 were in school so by 1978 this proportion increased up 78%. So it would be safe to assume that this persona has become outdated, but nevertheless an interesting part of history.

The goal of this chapter was to merely paint a glimpse into the life of one social economical class, to have a sense of women's role in ancient egypt vs their roles in the 1980s within a rural context. I will discuss further on with personal detail about other factors within a different economic class.







The blind cat syndrome

When it comes to sex not much is really said or taught, it just comes down to what is traditionally expected. One should wait until marriage, anything outside these boundaries is considered immoral. Of course there are always exceptions that depend on the level of one's socioeconomic background and the people one surrounds oneself with. Expressing one's self sexually is quite a tricky subject to tackle, though from the outside it seems to be everyone is in agreement on what defines good morals. There seems to be a hidden underworld where sexuality is expressed freely and at times somewhat humorously, but nevertheless a woman's figure is still objectified.

A good example is looking at the visual representation of Egyptian figures in the notions of entertainment--not from from the western perspective of fetishizing an "oriental" label of female figures. The case I will focus on is the interactive relation between the gazer and the belly dancer. How many Egyptians were moved by the beauty and lyricism of the dance, while always referring to the subject of sexuality.

Traditionally speaking a belly dancer provides alternative constructions of sexuality in the context of weddings. "A metaphoric journey into the role of sexual persona in the dance both confirms to and subverts the norms about female sexuality." writes Cassandra Lorus, a British anthropologist. According to her perspective on the subject "the role of the belly dancer is designated the repository of sexuality in the dance just as the bride's body is in the wedding."

Meaning the transition of the bride from virgin to sexually responsive mate for her husband, which to be frank seems like such a strange interpretation to reach. Personally what I have witnessed, the only meaning the belly dancer has at a wedding now is just a source of entertainment much like watching a music video but live.

Although there are many forms of belly dancing that is much ingrained within the Egyptian culture, there is a stigma that is attached "a degraded cabaret form designed to titillate nightclub audiences" Egyptian dancers at times are regarded as immoral for displaying their bodies in public, it's the movement of the dance that might provoke such reaction. The fluid motion of isolated parts of the hips, rib cage and arms combine to create the whole pleasing image. He who displays her body so publicly must mean she is asking for the attention or that she has loose "morals" that don't align with the "family values". Opposite to the persona of the "cat with shut eyes", a phrase that describes a "good" girl from a "nice family" who knows nothing about sex and acts shy just by the mention of it. But is expected to shed that innocence on her wedding night and perform sexuality at an experienced level. So as a female one should play up the innocence of "oh my I have never done this before" and within the same breath dominate in the bedroom, no wonder women such as myself grow up emotionally confused and ashamed. As Fatima Mernissi, an Islamic women's rights activist, argues sexual pleasure is considered the right of both women and men.

"By putting the spotlight on the female child and framing her as the ideal of beauty, he condemns the mature woman to invisibility. In fact, the modern Western man enforces Immanuel Kant's nineteenth-century theories: To be beautiful, women have to appear childish and brainless. When a woman looks mature and self-assertive, or allows her hips to expand, she is condemned ugly. Thus, the walls of the European harem separate youthful beauty from ugly maturity."

-Fatima Mernissi

Fifi Abdo, a famous belly dancer and now actress, uses her dancing as a way to deconstruct the class dimension by asserting sexuality and handles her spectators with apparent ease and confidence, joking, and teasing. She plays with the motion of pleasure and provocation, her assertive charm can hold people's gaze, her sharp wit keeps everyone in line and self aware. She even at times remarks that the bride isn't shy at all and there is nothing to feel shameful about. In stage performances Fifi Abdo at times dresses herself in a baladi style robe that's mostly worn by men "signifies appropriation of masculinity" emitting the role of the me'allema persona within the provocative dance. Thus shifting the gaze of her body as the subject rather than an object.

The relationship between gaze and shame according to Lorus's anthropological explanation, creates a connection between looking and then acting upon "the sin of the eye" how to look and be looked at. Somehow along the years this guideline on how to avert one's eyes turned into less about reverting and more about teaching a woman how to dress and act so as to not entice the men.





Sorry Uncle, but screw your family values.

Shame, a psycho social cultural construct that affects victims emotions, thoughts, and behavior in relation to cultural expectations and needs. It is a tool that governs female sexuality and their public behavior. Sexual violence becomes the trigger for women to withdraw from public spaces. Using that as a political weapon to discipline women's bodies to become subservient far beyond politics. This turns into a rooted structure that normalizes power over women. "Violation of women's bodies is taken as a dishonour of the entire family or community for which women and not their aggressors are held responsible, a girl and the family will live in shame."

The first public recorded protest within the modern age dated back to the 1919 revolution against British occupation. Huda Shaarwai and Safiyaa Zaghoul, two of the most well known Egyptian activists, faced harsh criticism and police violence, but despite that remained immobile for almost three hours in the hot sun to lend their voices to the cause, Shaarawi went on to then integrate women within government.

President Gamal Abdel El Nasser used women as an effective media tool for propagating his socialist regime based on equality, social justice, and progressive culture. He offered women access to employment, education and health care, but then denied them any actual political participation and personal freedom. Women were controlled by outdated and sexist laws. Women who then came to criticize such laws and authorities were then targeted by the security systems. For example, religious women activists such as Zainab al Chazli and Safinaz Kazim, and radical activists Nawal el Sadaawi and Sanaa Al Masry were imprisoned, tortured, sexually violated and defamed as "criminal deviants". These basic abuses of human rights have become a normalized way to control people who criticize the law to this present day.

Though with Hosni Mubarak's semi democracy policies, sexual harassment and violence were still on the rise. As the 90s came rolling in the veil and conservative clothes started to rise as well to fend off the unwelcomed male gaze and verbal assaults. Women would still get blamed for being "immoral prostitutes who arouse the offenders sexually" blaming women for making themselves vulnerable by going out late at night. "They are to bear the shame of their own rape". Even under the current president Sisi's rule he defends virginity tests against female protesters, urging "honorable Egyptians" to reject these outburst "that might lead to negative consequences"

During the 2011 Tahrir Square protest, an image of an unconscious young female body near Cairo's Tahrir Square stripped down to her jeans and bra and being dragged by her limp arm and viciously kicked in the abdomen by a soldier's heavy boot. The girl in the blue bra incident sparked national outrage. The young woman was dressed with a hijab and long black abaya covering her body, she was then later on accused in the state media of being a calculated femme fatale who tore her own clothes to expose her body and implicate the security focus. The video, which is currently online, clearly shows nothing of the sort. It shows the woman trying to escape and avoid being caught in the crossfire of the protests; she was grabbed by soldiers and beaten down while a nearby man tried to help her. He got beaten up as well. It caused such outrage that people began to chant

"Egypt's daughters are a red line".

As people chant those lines, the media starts to feed into all sorts of theories and propaganda. Statements like "what was she wearing?" "Well that clearly was a bikini not a bra" "why my dear were you there even to begin with" Even other women would comment along with anchormen "I don't believe this girl was veiled. You don't dress that way if you are. She is not one of us" that is a strong statement used from another woman, instead of sympathizing and viewing herself as that girl it seems to be easier to disassociate and refuse this ugly scene.



As the late president Morsi famously once stated “women activists that are going to Tahrir Square not to protest but to be sexually abused because they had wanted to be raped” There were over 250 documented cases of group rape of women in tahrir square and these are just the reported ones.

The military played a fluid role as an arbiter of gender and morality and disciplinary force in society. Women studies scholars point out how militarism constructs aggression as a masculine ideal and makes violence against another the norm. The other who is constructed as a dehumanized enemy. These scholars also show that the global prevalence of military violence is generally connected to increasing prevalence of violence against women. It’s only acceptable when women take on the role as mother of the nation if and when protesting something that does not step beyond the Egyptian family values invisible guidelines. They say, indirectly, all women have the right to express themselves and protest freely about their rights and conditions, as long as it sticks by the military’s narrative of what constitutes being honorable, pure, and loyal. Anything out of these bounds will not result in a favorable outcome. There is an obvious contradiction in terms in that construction.

Using these “guidelines” as a tool some women appropriate them to their own causes, breaking that barrier of fear and transforming the public space to be safe for women to protest and tell their stories. The variety of sociopolitical factors aside, factors that repress and discipline women’s bodies became woven within the so-called “family values” ‘ controlled at times by the state and military. Clearly setting boundaries of what deems to be acceptable to what crosses the line. Over the years prominent female activists figures always faced backlash from the government and even at times other local women. Claiming that these females are “sexually promiscuous” and “threatening the Egyptian identity and peace in the country” Doing anything outside that might endanger their honour and expose their sexuality in public spaces and hence according to that logic they deserve violence.

Personally *Speaking*

In this section I describe in a more personal approach, of incidents that occurred to me as well as a few others that prefer to remain anonymous. Along with my own perceptual takes that illustrate, how it feels like being a female within the Egyptian culture. How shaming women can be used as an oppressive tool by the culture as well as government propaganda.



I couldn't have been any older than 7 years old at the time, I remember a shift happening from pure bliss of not knowing to something dark and the sense of something not being right with the world. I remember I was not much older than 7.

I still remember bits and pieces yet I recoil from the fact that I am laying out my dirty secret for others to read. Will I be labeled as that girl? Will I be looked at with pity? I don't want pity, just a moment of changed perspective. It was night and I was sleeping. I felt a hand that was unfamiliar to me, I felt a heavy presence on top of me. I was not much older than 7 yet I knew this wasn't supposed to happen. I was paralyzed and confused, what was happening? What should I do? In one swift motion. I got up and ran out the room and shut the door. After that I don't recall much.

I was not much older than 7, yet somehow in my mind I knew there is no way I can ever tell anyone about this. They will think something is wrong with me.

I was about 15 or 16, surrounded by family and friends. We were outside and it was dark. It's always dark. I remember standing on the dark wet grass at night while my cousins are screaming along with the loud music that is playing, their faces lit up with excitement and pure joy. I am laughing along and jabbing on their awful musical taste, as I start to walk over to join in. I felt that unfamiliar hand once more grabbing me trying to pull me, as I looked to see what body was attached to the hand so I could show him my own hands. The body disappeared like fog within the swaying spaced out onlookers. My 16 year old self was ashamed, humiliated and once more paralyzed in place.

I hate being a woman. I hate this body. I hate everything that has to do with sex and sexuality. I hate where I am from. I hate this culture's mind set. This hypocritical culture, you took away what is mine and left me alone to ache. If I speak up, you will call me immoral and loose. Ask me questions about what I was wearing? Or am I still a virgin though?

I was 16 hurt and angry.

I was about 22 and in love. It's that first love, it's always intense and cliché. I found him annoying at first, I thought he was egotistical. That might have been my 16 year old self speaking. I was wrong, I was happy that I was wrong. I was 22 and very much in love and careless. We felt safe even though everything about our situation was not. I felt safe with him, his presence was the sense of home and I wanted to stay there for a while longer. We both knew that cannot be, that this has to end. I remember the feminine judgmental eyes weighing on my skin, like that unfamiliar presence. Whenever I would be with him. "Wait, is she with him?". We had to think seriously now about our situation, we had to face the facts. This isn't a fairy tale



Me: What thoughts were going through your head when we tried to keep our relationship a secret?

Him: I was younger then so I didn't really care about keeping it a secret, it was more for you. I remember that time when you were living in Berlin and I came to see you, I bumped into my cousin there. I didn't even know she would be there, but she gave me that look of 'oh yeah so you're to see your girlfriend huh?' but I didn't give a ****.

Me: Wait she knew? that 's funny and here I was trying to play it off cool and keep it hidden. I always had this sense of if anyone knew then it's it for my reputation or whatever. I would get shamed.

Him: Yeah, now that I am older. I understand that things are different. I get worried and concerned too. My family were okay with us, until we hit the 2 year mark and it was a shift of like okay what's next.

Me: Speaking of safety, Do you remember that time

Him: When the police stopped us, yes! That not something to forget

Laughter----

Me: Tell me how it went from your perspective.

Him: Well I remember we were in my car, dropping you off at your training place. I went to give you a hug goodbye which you were your normal awkward self about. A cop came up, knocked on the window and asked for our IDs. Once he put two and two together, I went out of my car and told him that it's not what he thinks it is, he didn't believe at first and I knew if I just gave him money he would go away. Then he leaned in and talked to you through the car window, but I have no idea what he asked you.

Me: He asked him, if I thought what I was doing was right. I told him that I thought it was none of his business what I do. Then threatened me by saying he can lock me up, I remember i was so terrified and said sure.

Him: oh my god, no wonder he was angry after that. But yeah I just gave him all the cash I had on me and he went away.

Me: yeah I guess he had nothing to do that day.



As years passed and that story began to seem humorous to me, I decided to tell my mother. Laughing at the absurdity of it all. My mother turned to me with a confused look on her face saying "How come you didn't tell me at the time?" I replied with a shrug and gesturing that it didn't matter, I was just terrified at the time. My mother looked at me with a loving assertiveness,

" You never ever ever let anymore make you feel terrified for doing what you want and loving who you want, as long as you are not hurting anyone you do whatever the hell you want. And next time you better call me and I'll show that ***** and anyone like him how to mind their own *** damn business"

What's Happening Now

Within each layer of the classist cake hypocrisy, sexism finds its home, going up one social class will not make it disappear. It just gets more psychological and indirect. It's the same monster but a different face. Women judging another woman's actions. Before anything, it starts with us women first making their own rules of what is shameful and what is not. Raising the next generation on how to sympathize with each other.

The existence of the Assault police page on instagram founded by Nadeen Ashraf, who was recently selected by the BBC as one 100 Influential Women of 2020, has resulted in a massive change--a boom!--within many cultural mindsets. New laws have been passed, new voices speaking up, new artists rising, and most importantly men and women standing together asking for justice.

Was there ever a point you felt pressured to change any aspect of your life due to the fear to ruining your reputation?

I've never felt different because I was a girl

But I was veiled for 9 years

And I felt the difference

Like

It was horrible in Egypt

I really felt like a second class citizen

For a country that is like 99 percent veiled

My sociology economical class did not support it very much

I lost groups to friends a boyfriend of 8 years

I was cut out of pictures after being like one of the most popular people in school

I didn't think it would get to me

Did most of these judgment came from women or men would you say?

Women

Men kinda look at u like u are less Attractive or are afraid of h

U

Women make it horrible for u

I feel more valued in egypt in closed circles 10:37 AM

I feel less valued in egypt as a citizen though 10:37 AM

I guess as an Egyptian expat in i always wanted to blend in so that made me act less egyptian-y if that makes sense? 6:51 PM

Because of our movies .. egyptian women are seen as sluts basically without us doing anything 6:51 PM

So me being less egyptian-y would mean i used to treat guys very seriously and i never joke around and basically NOT appear as the you guys see haha 6:53 PM

I hate being a woman in this country 12:53 PM

As a girl 1:26 PM

I have seen how they don't respect me 1:26 PM

It feels oppressive. I felt like I always had to be a "nice lady". And yes I had to change many things one of the biggest is that I had to hide my relationship to my boyfriend (now husband) because he grew up in a Christian family and I grew up in a Muslim family. (Neither of us are religious now)



Male allies: Discussion with Shady Noor.

Shady Noor is a filmmaker and musician who helped in raising awareness for the ABZ case along with Assault police, and also as well as managing the Fairmont incident case. Shady grew up in a politically active family, his father tried to run a presidential campaign during Hon-si Mubarak's regime but faced injustice and was forced to leave the country.

Me: What incident do you recall that lead you to start speaking out about women's experiences specify about the recent events surrounding sexual assault?

Shady: I grew up not really understanding the whole locker room talk and as I got older most of my friends who were women, most of whom experienced sexual assault. So some of them always came to me for help, it drove me crazy how often this happened. So I became active publicly until it became impossible for me to do. It took me a bit to notice some huge gaps within the feminist movement in Egypt; men took no stance and were not vocal about it. The movement isn't getting anywhere with the current narrative. It's necessary for men to be a part of this because they have a privilege. Ever since the ABZ case happened, on June 28th a girl Nadeen el Hamed shared a post on facebook about a sexual predator, someone forwarded to me. At the time the post had around a 100 comments or shares. So I shared it as well, I just wanted to help. Social media can be great but sometimes the misogyny surfaces. Women would speak out and then get slut shamed to a level that is unreal. It kept happening over and over (maze and mina case example) That was my last thread. This really is enough. A woman made a video of herself crying with bruises.

Me: What kinds of backlash did you experience and witnessed?

Shady: Before the ABZ case, I wouldn't get that much backlash. Everyone sort of knew my views, people knew so I didn't get much resistance. Every now and then I would get "oh he just doing this to get girls or laid". After the case the family of abz tried to sue me and then the media started going at me after the Fairmount case came in. When I started managing the Fairmount case and taking it, It was like a suicide mission and I knew it. The resistance was unreal the rapists are extremely rich, powerful and popular. We had mutual friends together with people in our social circle. I remember very clearly a video of the incident being shared along with threats and blackmail. The video was quickly buried. They went on and assaulted another girl. As I managed the case more, I started getting calls from people threatening me and then calls to my mother threatened her. They broke into my car and I got sued by someone that works with the rapist. When the Egyptian media picked up the story they called "forgiven conspiracy" right away that led to witnesses that would have helped with the case, to get arrested. I had to quickly leave my home because I heard they knew where I lived. They accused me of throwing orgy parties and then went on to accuse me to be part of the rape case that I was managing. So I had to stay quiet to protect the people I know who are in jail right now as we speak.

Me: What is your biggest focus within the movement towards gender equality?

Shady: Well we try not to drag politics into the equation as much as we can, but when the media picks up the stories it always gets labeled into a political narrative. The main goal is to educate people and especially men about what is happening, and hopefully someday we see a decrease in cases like these. And also protecting those who speak out against injustice, because those who come forward to help even get caught in the crossfire. I mean take me as an example or a warning tale.

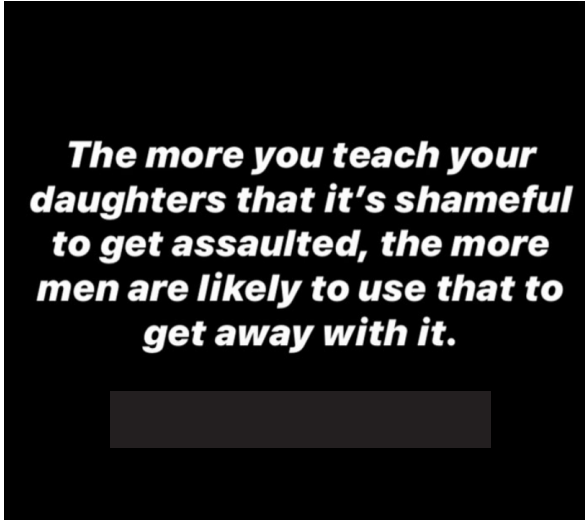
Existing platforms/activists/ artists.



Assualt police



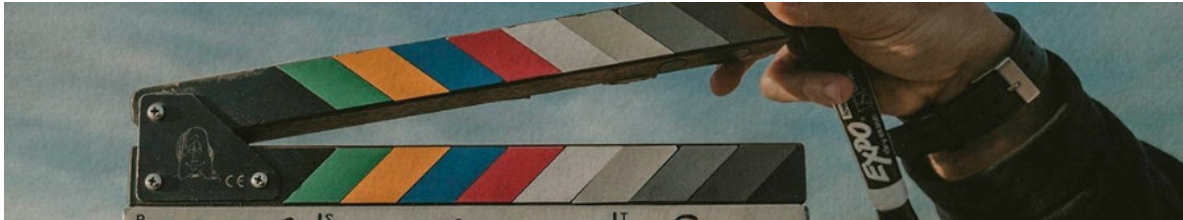
Catcalls of cairo



Sabah Khodeir



Sarah Ayman



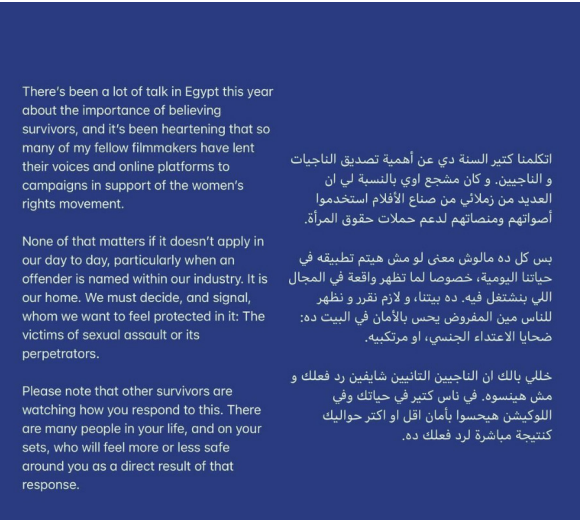
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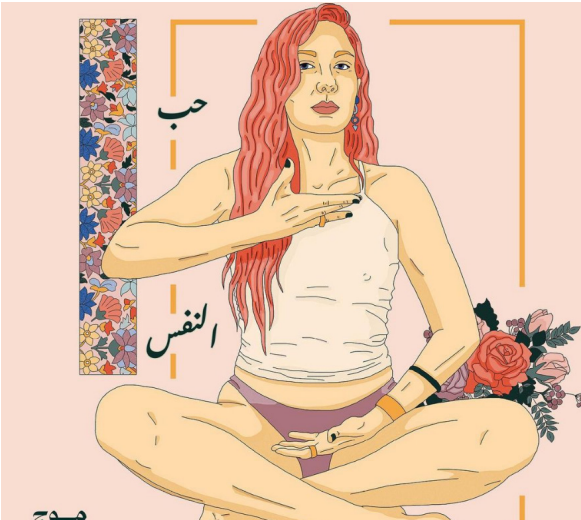
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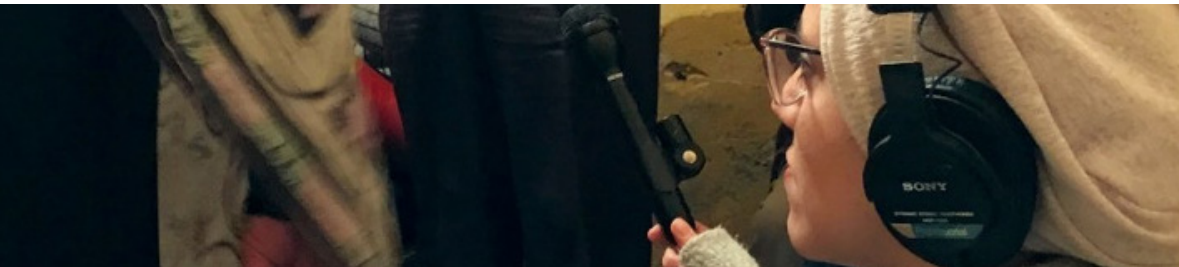
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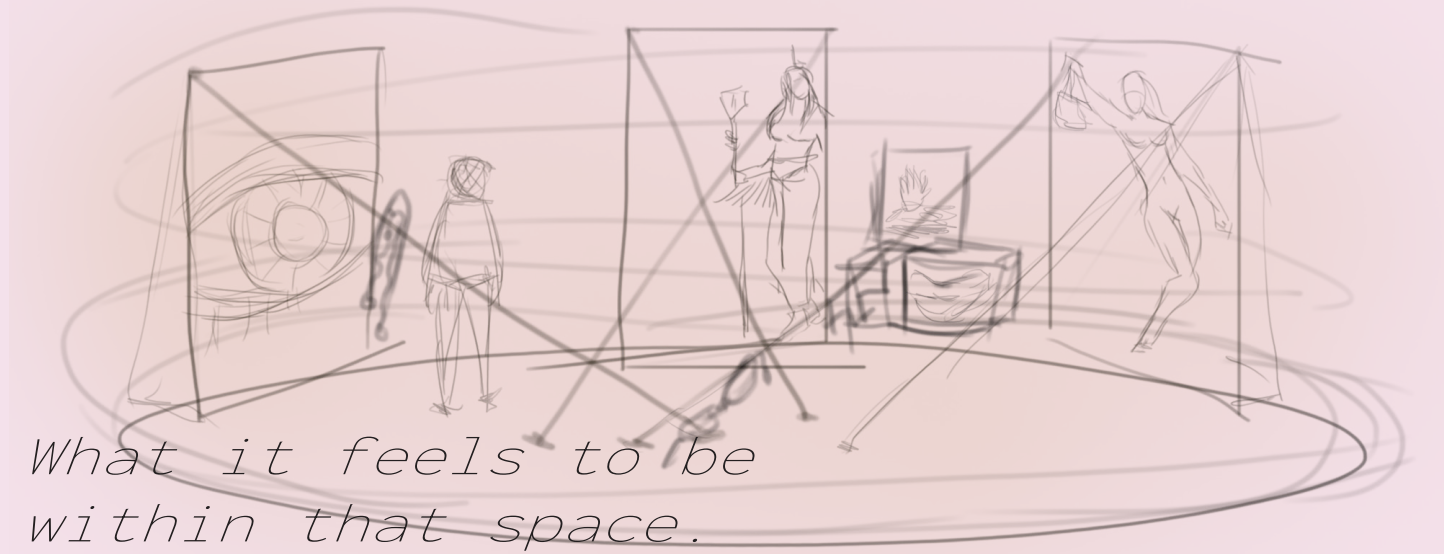
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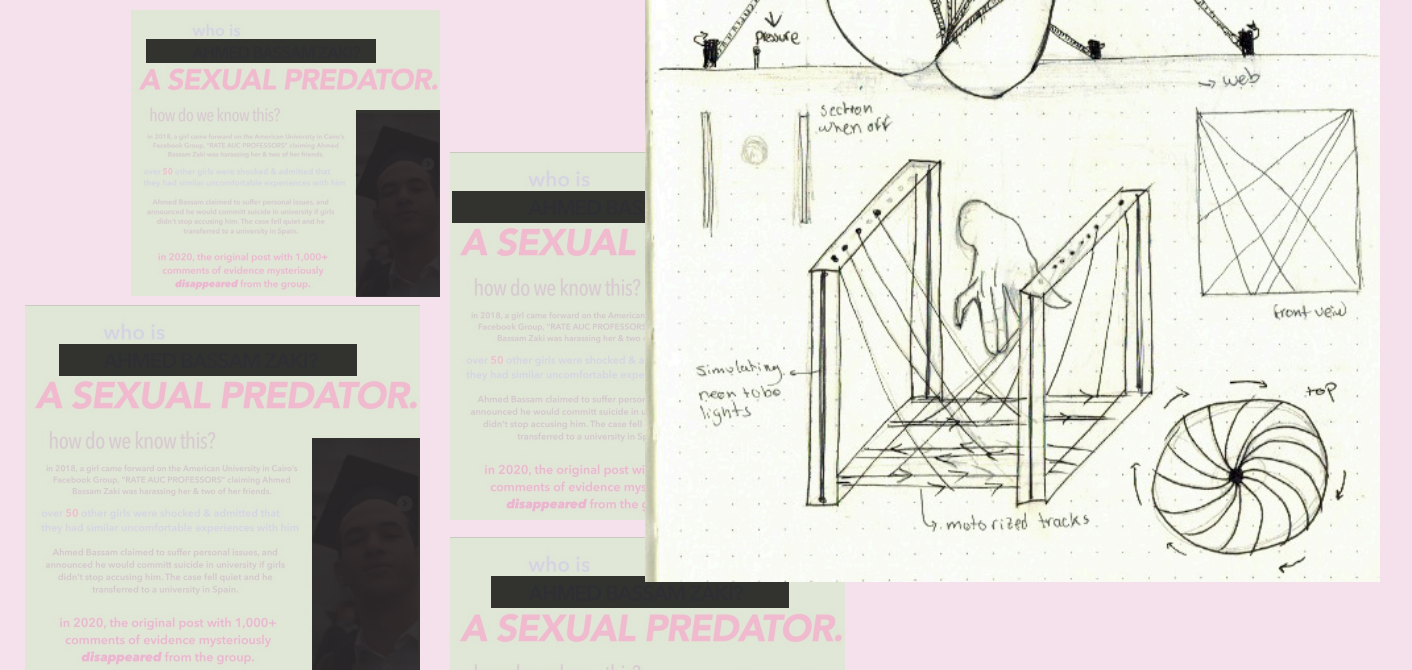
Nadeen Shaker kerningculture

Next Step

For the next phase I will focus on crafting the audio experience first and then begin to sketch out what visuals that would best illustrate my intentions. Doing so will further solidify the final concept and which medium is best to use.



Empathy



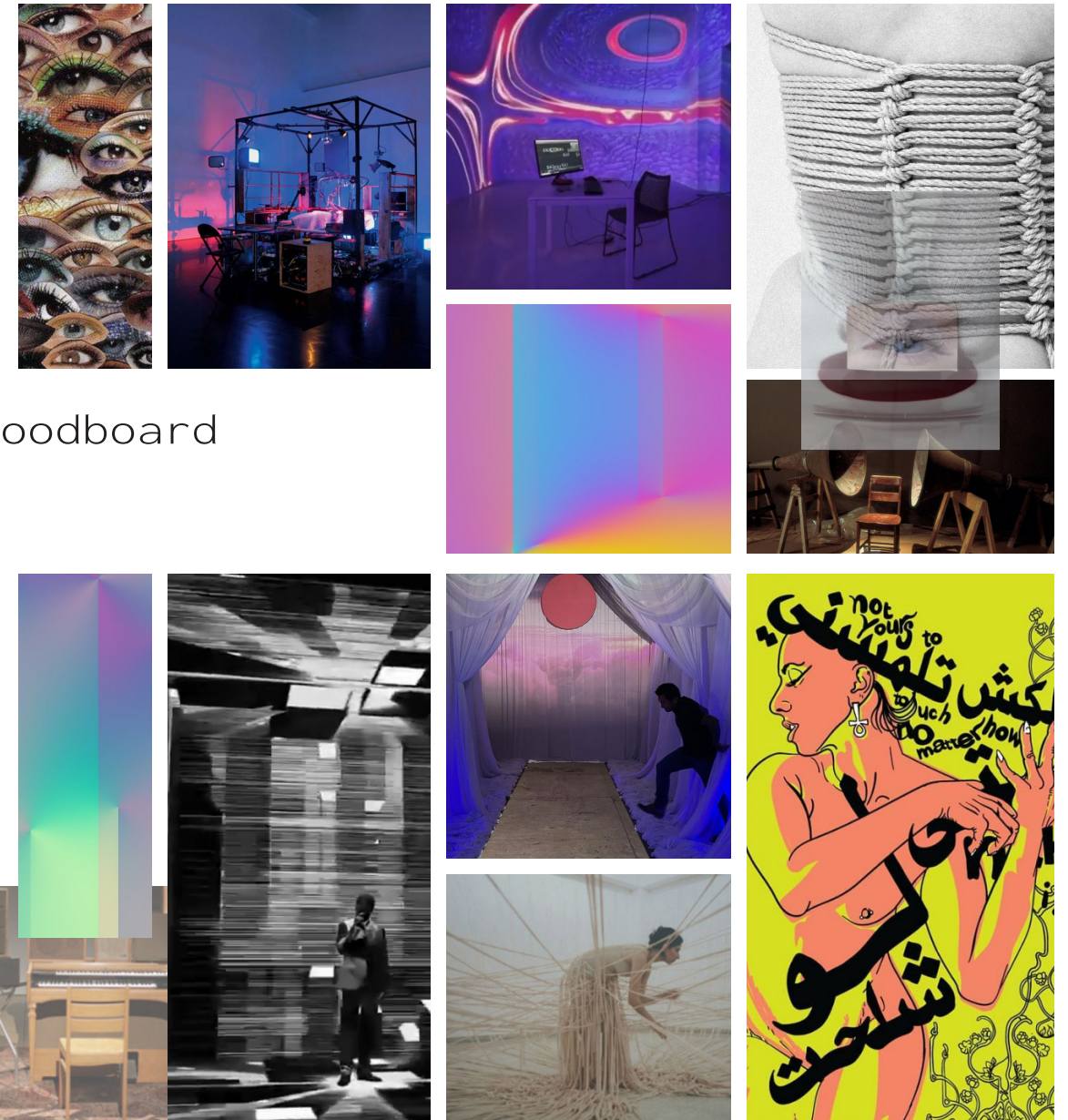
Concept

An interactive relationship between performer and listener. All experience is mediated through aesthetic appreciation, sensory perception of sound, space and bodily knowledge.

Mediums

- Rope (shibari)
- Audio
- Projection
- Controls that would trigger different audios
- Light

Moodboard



Works by:Janet Cardiff,Alex Ramos,Jason Ting, Visan Stefan,Hajime Kinoko, Nelly Agassi, and Ganzer.

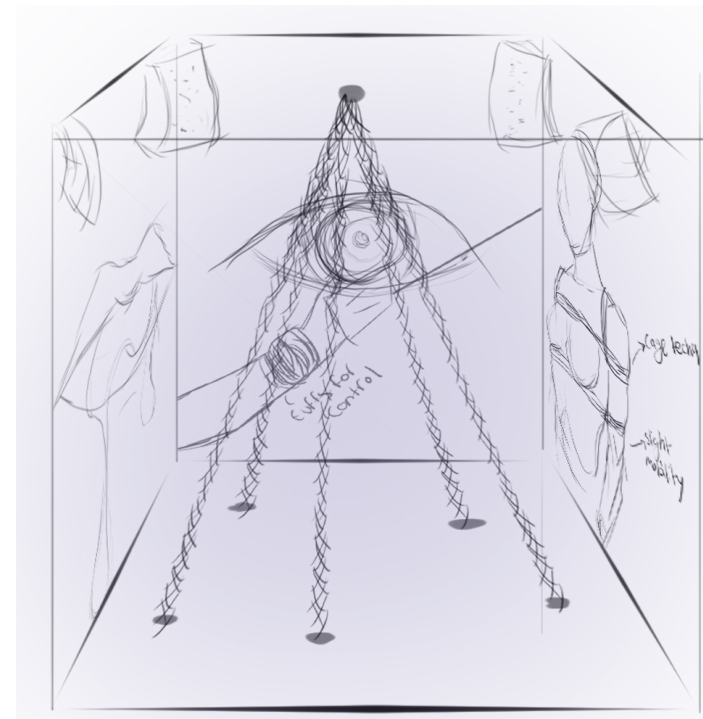
Space

- Room
- Corner within a room
- VR

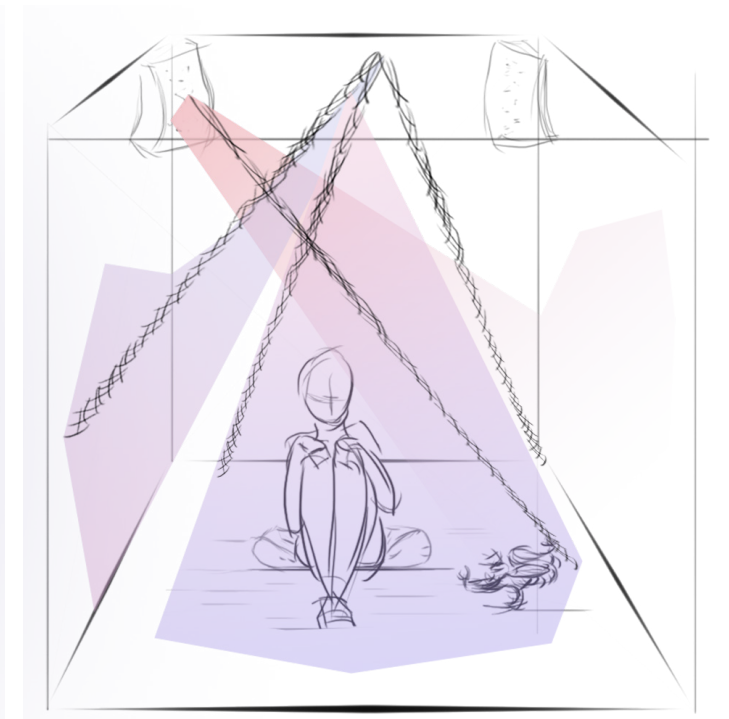
Tools

- Abelton
- Wekinator
- Touchdesinger
- Dmx Light
- Adobe Premiere

Brainstorming Sketches



Visuals can start showing from right to left and triggering audios of womens voices. The voices of crying, laughing, arguing with a loved one and talking to ones self.



In this version when the user plucks the rope or stands within the light. Audio is then triggered, panning with in the room. The room will contain objects that hold metaphorical meaning (blue bra).

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