

EX









namex

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Nazafarin Lotfi, artistx
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notex

Fatima Haider, Nazafarin Lotfi and I have been friends for a while now. We found each other in graduate school making art side by side. I was hesitant but excited when they invited me to write something about their work. I have always thought that there were few words and possibly the absence of language for art. Putting together this small book for them was a challenge in finding the right words and in preserving our conversation. Trying to capture what the three of us have talked about over the years was the idea. Giving space for each other's natural wanderings of thought, our ever-changing inquiries falling along the lines of circles, reading, light, looking and the ground.

The writing contained in the catalogue is a collage, a collaboration of voices. Pieces of Haider, Lotfi and my own writings pace each other forming tangents and estranged leaps. The form is not so much a story, a description or analysis but an attempt to understand their work in a larger context outside of the general process of making artwork. It feels more like a grasping to know what can not be said in words.

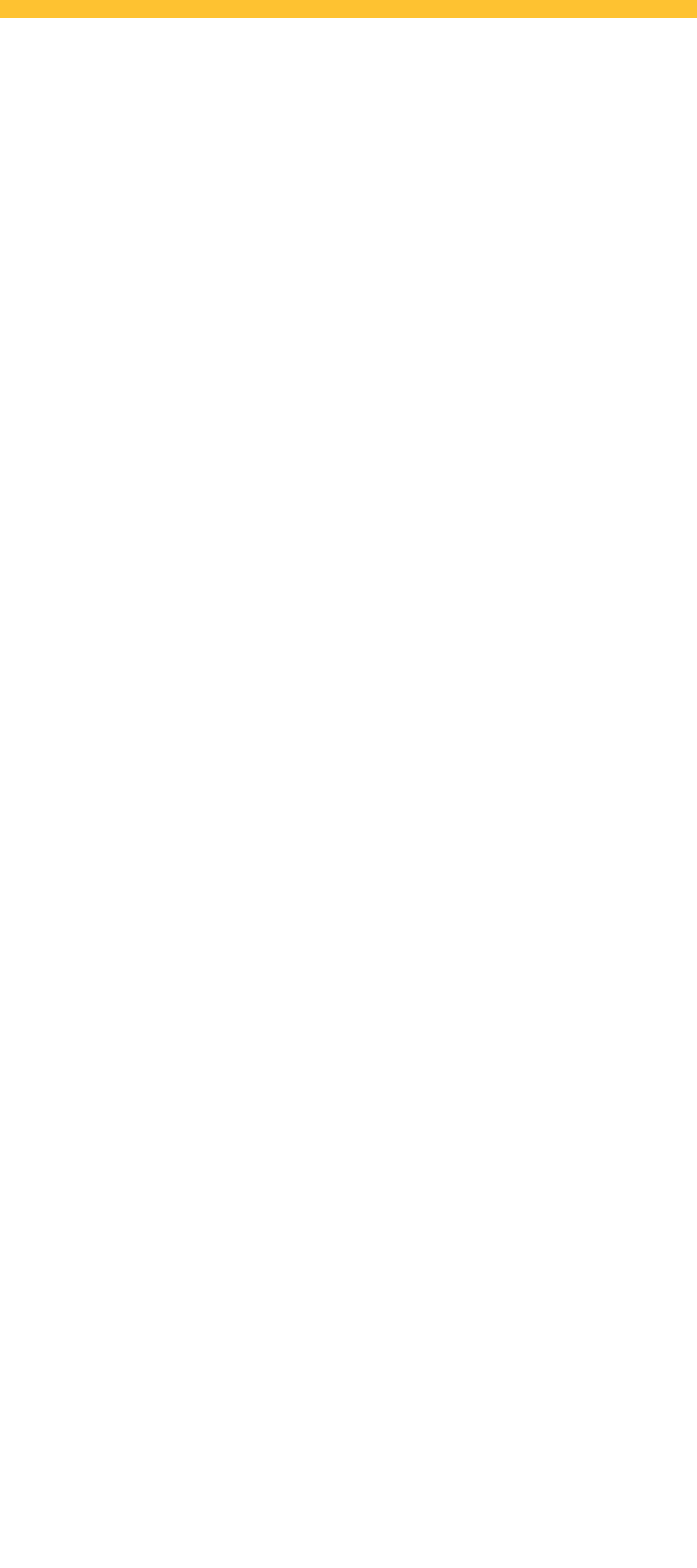
Reflecting on the making of work, material gave me a moment away from the total conversation to focus on each of their processes. I soon found that it was difficult to pin point or narrow down their practice. I had to look to someone out of context, Vasari

On Technique, his chapters on mosaic and reliefs. And to other sources like montage in film and the dual definition of frottage. But these did not necessarily give me an advantage in understanding; more like a guide, marking the way.

Language overall in this text might falter throughout but that seemed to be the point of this brief journey. The challenge of writing has always intrigued me, especially when a piece of visual art is so explicitly involved. Confused definitions, static sentences and incomplete thoughts seem to define what I guess could be called a style. And having such a close relationship with the work and the artists, I was afraid of an intimacy overpowering a reader's crossing. Looking over what has been written feels like a featherweight fight dancing around the ring. Whether the language connects or misses putting these ideas together allowed me to pay a modest tribute to two artists, two people that have had a truly profound affect on how I view artists and their work, and how to understand the many ways of being.

I do not consider myself a writer, but as someone who writes, I do hope that I reached out and revealed a feeling that brings clarity to these two artists and their work. Though I suspect that this book can not exist without seeing Fatima's and Nazy's work. Perhaps the best I could hope for is this to be a companion in looking.

S.W.



cataloguex

By Sean Ward

Voix of Fatima Haider,
Nazafarin Lotfi, and Sean Ward

11

[scanx] [sightx] [headx] [imagex]

15

[eyesx] [otherx]

19

[luminousx] [blackx]
[whitex] [lightx] [voicex]

25

[spacex] [reflectionx] [homex]
[returnx] [otherx] [voicex]

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[restx] [voicex]

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[readx]

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materialx: on Haider

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materialx: on Lotfi



[scanx] [sightx] [headx] [imagex]

The glow of the computer screen in the early morning, hurts the eyes and the mind. Shoots right through them. Brighter than my desk lamp, my MacBook's screen glows with purpose. Maybe not my purpose but purpose. Its own. I love navigating to my .txt files seeing them neatly organized, and highlighted with specific yet random colors. It is fun to imagine these documents having a life beyond this screen, but to tell you the truth these things feel solely meant for me. My spelling is terrible but on the glowing screen, my MacBook corrects me. Oh, how it knows language so much better than me! It was as if I was trying to trick it, telling it what it has forgotten to learn.

The sun in the morning never reaches my room before I turn on my screen.

I used to work at the New York Public Library as a preparator, an art handler, putting together exhibitions. Often I would find myself in the stacks of the library. Rows and rows of research books that could not be borrowed but summoned for a brief time to be used in the Reading Room or respective divisions. I had to travel through what felt like miles of books, vertically and horizontally (a tour of the stacks, <http://www.nypl.org/blog/2010/12/21/stack-tour>).

But the most fascinating thing or the thing I most often enjoyed was seeing this doorway that led to a long sloped hallway below the stacks in the basement. The basement was where we had our office too. Making plexi-glass book stands for rare books and prefab MDF pedestals, we often traveled from this office/workshop through the basement to an elevator that moved us between the floors of the stacks. This allowed us to easily get our equipment into the galleries without interrupting the public.

My co-workers and I would run into others who were also waiting for this particular elevator. These other people were working down that sloped hallway behind closed doors. Their office positioned underground between the library and Bryant Park. We would see them go up in the elevator, go to a specific floor in the stacks, and gather some books on their cart, returning to and through the doorway.

We believed them to be working for Google, in the company's attempt to scan books from libraries across the country. They were young people, interns presumed.

I took a venture down that hallway once to gather some old pedestals from previous exhibitions in a storage room underneath Bryant Park. The book scanners

lived in a room of windows looking out onto the hallway of the basement. Interns sitting at computers attached to flatbed scanners, flipping pages with latex gloves. Preserving decades of books in a digital form. Maybe the apt description is translating them into a digital format. Preservation through digital means is a funny thing—to believe that digital is another forever.

Notes, scanning

Scanning a book, an object, is translating the object into another language not just transforming it or replicating it for other purposes or uses.

Authenticity no longer matters—it is the usefulness or the archival quality that becomes important. We understand it as a copy first and foremost—has no resemblance to the original except for perhaps content. Are we asking “some thing” else to remember this for us? What is lost in translating analog to digital? Is that important? Is it like translating a book from French into English? Or translating a language made up of characters into letters? Does the copy of the thing reproduced, placed in a new environment or context, become another original? Is it no longer a reproduction or copy? Does one need to know the original to understand the copy? Can a copy become the original if the original is never seen or experienced again?

A child looking into the air with nothing in sight but begins to describe an amazing structure that is intimately real to that child's imagination. That wonder at that thing materialized or yet to be or never will be. But believing for a moment that we could see it and use language to describe the unknown, the unseen.

Notes, scanning a book

A meditative task—taking a whole book, positioning it on the glass plate of the flatbed scanner, opened to the blank page before the title. Aligning with the corner. Closed cover.

Pressing the button to send the light across the page. The light illuminates the page. The CDD array, a collection of tiny light sensitive diodes; diodes=photosites.

An image of the page scanned reaches the CDD array through a series of mirrors, filters and lenses. This collection is the scan head.

The New York Public Library now offers book scanning of public domain books for a fee. They will burn it onto a CD for you.

[eyesx] [otherx]

In 1981, a film called *Scanners* was released, written and directed by David Cronenberg. It featured persons who could scan minds, controlling others by using telepathic and telekinetic abilities. In the film, scanners, as they are known, are considered freaks or mutants produced perhaps by radiation but no one is sure. The movie's visuals are secondary compared to the dialogue and how the plot sets up a mythic battle. There are two groups of scanners each have their own goals; one led by Darryl Revok who wants to rule the world and the other who want to contribute to society in a peaceful way. Moving forward through clinically delivered lines there are strange allusions and moments of theological tutoring, "He's in indoctrination right now". Scanners are either tormented by the voices they hear coming from other humans' minds or they have to find a way to control them. Divine. The drug 'ephemerol' helps Cameron Vale, an outsider, our main character, to focus and resolve these thoughts; shutting out voices, "the ones without lips."

Dr. Ruth, who helps train Vale, points out that "Telepathy is not mind reading. It is the direct linking of nervous systems separated by space". The importance of how one learns to traverse that distance, that gap, makes a great scanner.

A scanner is best when he or she becomes one with the other they are scanning. In one scene where a group of scanners begin to perform a group scan, their chanting explains, "Scan together and our minds will begin to flow into each other until they become one. One nervous system. One soul. One experience." One nervous system is a crucial concept to the survival of the main characters and to the film as a whole, especially two climactic scenes:

1. Vale links with a computer, Dr. Ruth exclaims, "But you do have a nervous system...and so does a computer. And you can scan the computer as you would another human being."
2. The last scene is a stand off between Vale and Revok. "All right, we're going to do it the scanner way. I'm going to suck your brain dry. Everything you are is going to become me. You're going to be with me Cameron, no matter what." Vale bursts into flames. Vale's body dies but Vale takes over Revok's body killing his mind. A shot of Vale's blue eyes in Revok's body ends the movie, fading into white.

Looking into someone's pupils. Black. A delicate desperation of the look. Not the gaze, which has a laziness implied in its pronunciation. Hinging on black. It is an intensity of a solid fixed looking. Rigid surfaces that move for nothing but

impressions on the veneer. Things do not bubble from their depths, rather bottom is their appearance. We find no image only the unearthed. Sometimes dry, sometimes soaked soil. There is not one hole in the ground but several. Widening our search, control is still a factor of where we will look. Here, not there. Since we are here and digging down, to look far we must build up. Downward and upward, past light, through it. What can there be past light?



[luminoux] [blackx] [whitex]
[lightx] [voicex]

Charles Olson in *Call me Ishmael* speaks about Melville's fascination and turning towards men who have suffered like Job. Specifically looking at the character Gloucester in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, the man who loses his sight who has only learned to see after he poignantly states, "I stumbled when I saw". It is his character that marks the eye; its natural ability to see and ultimate loss to that organ, blindness, as a symbol of spiritual sight. A disturbing fact to understand, to see beyond. Luminous moments without the very thing to see them with.

I have looked at these photos many many times. The landscape is very familiar, it could be anywhere in any desert that we know, but this place is the ultimate unknown of human's knowledge. Curiosity circles around itself, finds its own footprints and moves on. There is nothing specific that Curiosity is looking for except the general term of Life, but the mission is the search with no stop. In some of the photos taken by Curiosity you see its shadow casted on the ground. Reminds me of the ancient cave paintings—imagining the cave men standing in front of the walls inside the caves with the flickery fire behind them, dreaming of their dreams. I wonder what they thought when they first saw their

shadows on the walls. Was that the first self-portrait of man?

Each clicking of the camera is a heartbeat, announcing that it is still going on, it still exists. It captures the time in a different dimension of life or a lifeless dimension of the universe by exploding the light of what is right in front of it to the lens. It looks up and looks down, zooms in and zooms out. Giving us a vision of where it is located. I like that some of the photos have irregular borders. Maybe the images are not fully sent to us yet or maybe the camera is moving and documenting so it creates the ragged edges.

I wonder how would these photos be seen differently if there was a man behind the camera— there and then. I wonder what this distance does. To some extent the machine taken photos gives me the freedom to feel that I have discovered these images, some sort of ownership and space for me to be there or to imagine being there as if I am the camera man.

Notes, seeing

1. deterioration of the eyes, decay
2. the creation of machines with eyes
3. trouble seeing - using machines to help one navigate, help
4. to see in the dark, where to point?
5. to traverse a landscape

6. to feel through - an intuition?
7. to survey for information,
begin always at the start
8. luminosity, to find the way
9. Curiosity, Mars rover

In a scanner the scan head attached to a stabilizer bar (to ensure no deviation in the pass) moves slowly across the document. Pass means that the scan head has completed a single complete scan.

We use our eyes to scan over, looking at all the parts in order to find a feature or focus. *Scanners*, the film, shows us scanners staring intensely blank at one another, focusing but not seeing through the eyes. We can not imagine what probing another human's mind is like; for information, for control. The movement of the eyes are gestures through which we can witness the mind's burden when it is used to touch another's nervous system. Scanners are unnerved and experience flashes of pain when connecting with another—wincing, grimacing. Blind with pain. Olson found in Melville's own copy of *King Lear* an important emphasis made by Melville in Gloucester's voice:

Here, take this purse, thou
whom the heavens' plagues
Have humbled to all strokes. That
I am wretched
Makes thee the happier. Heavens,

deal so still.

Let the superfluous and lust-
dieted man,

That slaves your ordinance, **that
will not see.**

Because he does not feel, feel
your pow'r quickly;

So distribution should undo
excess,

And each man have enough.

Notes, scan in white light

In scanner technology, CCD arrays can be replaced by another technology called CIS (contact image sensor). A collection of LEDs, rows of red, green and blue spanning the width of the scan area. Placed closely to the glass plate. When your desired object is scanned they combine to provide white light, illuminating the image. A sheet of light, an image of light.

The Object

The Image

The Thing

Paint

A few weeks ago I was lying down on my bed— after hours of painting in the studio. I was capturing the imprints of my brushes on a few canvases. I had no idea what else to do or how else to do what I was doing all day - marking time. Filled with thoughts about how bizarre and dumb my studio day was and at the same time how important it was to do what I was doing. In the paintings each layer blends the previous ones. The figure becomes

the background and again it merges with the new layer and again with the new layer. It is similar to pressing down the space to flatten it into one solid surface.

It was fascinating to watch the strong afternoon fall light changing so fast and altering the atmosphere of the room. I took many photos of the fleeting shadows. Each clicking of the camera was a mark. Passively I held the camera, just looked straight and pressed the button.

Reading with your eyes—an image, a page, a landscape. Traversing with your body—an image, a page, a landscape. Light rises at the seam and is most clearly defined at the horizon, appearing and disappearing. Beginning again and again. Looking for a luminous moment. Searching for a luminous moment. We can only see if light is present. Otherwise we can feel the rest of the way.

Does darkness threaten with a lack of clarity? Does darkness make our steps unsteady? Is it the fading of something once luminous? Or finding that darkness is really a black mirror. Reflecting you and only you to you. Leaving you no longer hidden but deep, cavernous. Resting in front of a still black pool.

[space] [reflection] [home]
[return] [other] [voice]

The necessity of a reflection to give pause. Our vertical orientation can be overpowering if endured for too long. We are presented with fabric woven from mirror, wood, metal. Circular in form, waving like the softest linen it shines in bursts like the ocean. Reflecting fragments of the sky, birthing rays that connect the constellations. The many mirrors that dot the fabric align to reflect the clearest and ornate you. Standing in front of our fragments moving in cresting formations, we see what we are. If the circle of fabric stilled we would not accept the whole presented. Without emotion, the boundaries are given so harmony is foregrounded and the diluted stillness is given. The glimmering is a way out of the mist, but it is quick like a darting bird. It sends us on a path burdened with duty.

Good morning, doing a massive spring cleaning to the apartment of all items. To do:

1. adding more time to day dreaming, must turn off the computer more often, maybe just have the morning and then an hour in the evening for computer work.
2. go through collections: shells, rocks, fabric—

During the winter I often find myself on the beach. Bundled up

with my camera in tow. It is wonderful not to be interrupted by another person. You are left with yourself, the water, the sand, the shells and the debris found. The shells that are washed ashore are not perfect in completeness but in their variety of missing pieces and collapse. They are pieces of math and intuition formed into a home. A traveling home whether carrying it on one's back or a structure of protection while being tossed around in the ocean. Specifically the one's I try to collect in their completeness are the circular, spiral ones. Sometimes they are ball-like or cone-like. It is a challenge to find them not destroyed by a foot, a seagull, or a story. But once found, they are placed in my pocket and brought home with me.

From this collection of shells, I like to create patterns or arrangements of them on a flatbed scanner. While placing them, sand still escapes from their tunnels, sprinkling the clarity of the scanned image with grainy clouds. When the scan head is done, the image generated produces a disorientation on the computer screen. The backgrounds are typically black because I leave the scanner's hood open. The shells seem to be stultified by the blackness - holding them in place, floating but not moving. Out of context but living in another world.

Today I went for a walk. Same place as everyday - the Point. It is a circular land at the edge of the water. Today for the first time I saw all these nests in the same place that I walk everyday. Fall has hit hard. Most of the leaves are gone. All these squirrel nests are up there and they were up there all these months and I did not notice them before. They were hidden.

Nests and especially empty nests are usually attractive concepts to everyone. The narratives of longing and belonging, home and homelessness, being away from home and yet to feel everywhere at home, to be at the center of the world and to see the world and yet to remain hidden from the world and etc are all there but simply I was more attracted to these nests because they were almost on all the trees and there were so many of them. They were just there where I walk every day and I had not seen them before! The repetitive black mess on each tree drew a map for me to drift from a tree to the next and through the neighborhood. I am going back this weekend to find more.

Note, newspaper clipping—hand-written copy by my grandfather:

“what does the artist do? the artist watches the outer life. he discovers the inner life. he liberates the human life. he manifests the divine.

he fulfills the supreme life." CKG
 CKG is the pen-name of Indian
 Philosopher Sri Chinmoy. He calls his
 paintings Jhorma-Kala, which is
 Bengali for Fountain Art; flowing
 from the fountain of creator, the
 source. To date Sri Chinmoy
 has painted over 140,000 works.

Eastman Kodak Co.
 343 State Street
 Rochester, NY 14650

To traverse space is a basic
 exterior fact. An experience, an
 expedition. Prying an object from
 its shell to send it on a journey
 of self discovery can destroy and
 renew its aura again and again.
 Feeling space and time in an
 object is a talent - how can time
 be drawn when traveling through
 space? The density of objects over
 time filling space. Moving around
 them, turning around them. To take
 up an object in memory invents
 a true time where forward sense
 no longer exists - and time is no
 longer equaled to the distance
 achieved. Time returns to itself,
 and space is seen in its immensity
 escaping natural vision, protruding
 into a conceived vision. An
 imagination.

Only in returning, the turning of the
 mind, does one search. To
 go out and find. The center is
 known but never found, it allows
 for this turning round. The potential
 of the seeker to move without
 moving. The center, like home,

is considered safe - a place to come close to, to return to, but never to stay at. It is to go out, fail, err from. The center appears to drift but the one seeking, turns and returns to this seemingly immobile anchor through a vision that does not progress nor stops. An exhausting return with sacks filled. Bringing elsewhere home; after laying bare the contents of a packed sack, picking, choosing, distributing particulars elsewhere. Bringing them back to the unseen. With each journey, with each pass, space opens up to infinity.



[restx] [voicex]

Recognizing the difficulty in finding a way through the mist, an adventure into the void and bodyless requires knowing when to rest. Putting a pause, or giving pause, allowing for silence to reimagine the self with no words. Forgetting your voice and rediscovering another's; focusing on an elected voice with nothing to say, keeps the possibility that the things worth saying are left. It is returning from this other dimension, another reality, that I hope the trace of one's voice is enough to return with.

I went to my ancestral land today. It is three and a half hours by road, from the city I grew up in.

The canal is in the center of two roads in main Gulberg, Lahore. It is familiar to me in its presence and its stench. I went with a friend to walk. I took images of plants and trees that have grown along the banks of the canal. Being back in Lahore for the past four weeks, what struck me most was how plants grow and survive in almost invisible areas of the city; empty plots of land or along the banks of the canals that run across the city. The density of the color green. Jungle like, dense, humid, beautiful growth. The earth, the mud, the sky. I look at the photographs that I have taken and think of sound and movement as well as the

relationship of smell them. I say this
and then look again. It really is
the light that I am thinking of.
A summer day or a winter morning
and between.

I am here. Time. Round, circular
motion and that of an image. Stilled,
stopped, framed. I took an image
of a new grave the other day. It is
built with the earth and I adorned
it with a row of crimson petals. It
is the grave of someone I was
very close to. I feel little emotion.
She is gone. This grave I can
photograph, take an image of, sit
with. It allows me that or perhaps
I allow myself. I keep thinking
of spaces of rest, that which there
is no reason for. The future
and the past hold none. The
horizontal mound of mud is. We
make and we break. We make.
Blue. Pale. And calm.
Birds circling the sky

[readx]

A Line Made by Walking, a book
 about Richard Long's piece
 with the same title by
 Dieter Roelstraete
 Anything by Bachelard (one
 paragraph a day)
 Anything by Susan Sontag (*Styles
 of Radical Will* is one close
 to me)
 Agnes Martin's Writings
 Arthur Rimbaud's poetry
Call Me Ishmael by Charles Olson
Circles and the Poet by Emerson
Day Books by George Oppen
Elegy for an Unclaimed Beloved
 by Geeta Kapoor
Event Architecture by
 Bernard Tschumi (maybe)
 Herman Melville
Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino
La Jetée by Chris Marker
Log of the S.S. The Mrs. Unguentine
 by Stanley Crawford
Long Life Cool White by Moyra Davey
New Exercises by
 Franck André Jamme
On Death and Dying by
 Elisabeth Kubler Ross
 Roni Horn's writings
Scanners (movie, Cronenberg)
*Sorting Facts; or, Nineteen Ways
 of Looking at Marker* by
 Susan Howe
Street Haunting by Virginia Woolf
THAT THIS by Susan Howe
The Body Without Organs
 by Deleuze and Guattari
The Infinite Conversation
 by Maurice Blanchot

The Invention of Morel
by Adolfo Bioy Casares

The Letter by Oscar Wilde about
"art is useless"

The Painted Veil by Somerset
Maugham

The place of beginning and end
by Gunter Gebauer (essay)

The reveries of the solitary walker
by Jean Jacques Rousseau
(haven't read it yet)

The Sufis by Idris Shah

*The temporality of the world view
and self images*
by Christoph Wolf

Being and Time by Martin Heidegger

Thinking Architecture
by Peter Zumthor

*What I Talk About When I Talk
About Running*
by Haruki Murakami

Why I Write by Jean Didion

Winter Journal by Paul Auster

materialx: on Haider

It is not about exemplifying an imagination but picking up a space and giving it the opportunity to be a space for the imagination. To embody or to live within it. Water filling a hole has changed its purpose, it's quality, now reflecting its surroundings but cautioning our step into it not knowing its depth. It refers to a space which is not seen turning our attention there. An enlightening revelation in our hesitant step, spawning newly unseen spaces. We can now look elsewhere differently. But there is still the hole filled with water at our feet, the here. Can we attempt to join the here and the elsewhere? Does that happen through the body? The movement of the body between parallel places? These pools at our feet still our movement. Maybe it is not the movement of the body, but of a portable ground. An open ground. Standing ground. Constructed ground. When ground can move, we begin to flatten perspective, those bodies most distant are now close as any other. We eliminate the violence of foreshortening, no distortion, all in its entirety. Letting the natural happen. The constructed and the natural can rejoin the here and the elsewhere.

We often think of the things at our feet to be diminutive. Our ego threatened by the bending of our

body. But when we place those foot-lings on the wall, we become properly proportioned. They are cameos in rectangular form, through inventions of outlines pressed firmly into the raw material, clearness is sought and generously given.

materialx: on Lotfi

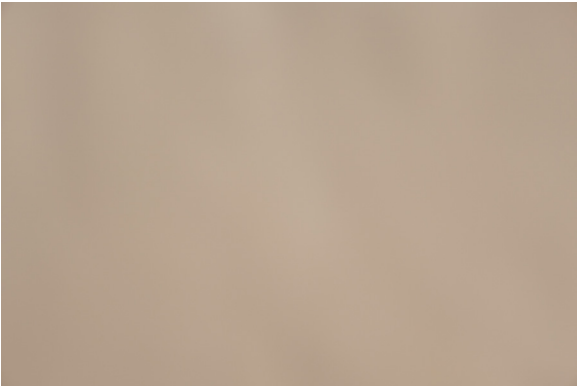
Those tiny squares alternate between size and shape. Individuals only when framed by others. When they are close we see the difference. When they are close, closing the gap is only through accepting their difference; they begin to lose themselves. Bridging our two eyes. Together they form something larger than any of the individual pieces. Humming together, generating a rhythm. A rhythm of alternation and acceleration forming solids of action. Stranger is the narrative of repetition dancing across the lost gaps. In this tessellation ornamenting the surface, refreshment is brought to the eyes. We can begin again, counting. What can we call these... mosaics? grids? minimal? But the quality of color tells us more, it forms a space where the surface serves as both fore and background. It is simply grounded, we can walk in imagination—through—taking footsteps.

It is dry, concrete, made with stillness, diligence and care. Order is implied, industry is implied. But there is little control given to the maker or user. It is up to this imitation of painting to resist, to write a rule. Buried under dirt or drowned in water it will persevere. Perhaps those tiny squares are made of glass. Opaque glass? translucent? a quality hard to distinguish.

They are diced spaces that
adorn malleable corners refracting
place in glass cubes of light and
shade, structured and designed as
a home to time. A glass of time.









gude