

CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS FROM IRAN TO AMERICA

by

Setareh Ghoreishi

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, FL

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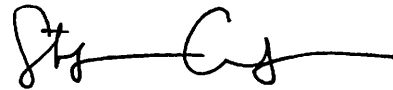
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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Eric Landes, Department of Visual Arts and Art History, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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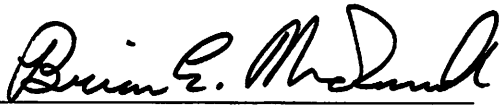
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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis uses graphic design to explore the experience of an individual attempting to bridge two countries' distinctly different cultures: Iran and the United States. Each has a particular political relation to the other in history. I am using graphic design as a tool to compare specific and various aspects of the two cultures and how these aspects impact each other based on my personal experience. I use design to explore my place in between two cultures and as a way to make sense of the exchange or replacement of culture that I perceive. Another aspect of my thesis emphasizes how western influences and technology are altering or eradicating traditions in Iran. This thesis demonstrates collation and confrontation of cultural and social elements through the application of design to a set of culturally symbolic objects. The goal is to utilize graphic design tools to elevate awareness about illustrating the cultural and traditional aspects of the two countries.

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## IDENTITY AND CULTURE

The main aim of this thesis is not to dwell on the political or economic relations between the United States and Iran, but to utilize graphic design to explore my own experiences living in the United States compared with my way of life in Iran. I have attempted to use symbols, elements, objects and images that have traditional connections to express my personal impression, which includes differences and similarities between eating habits, foods, social behaviors, manners, traditional versus contemporary lifestyles and idioms, that are very common in both countries. As I lose old habits and acquire new ones in transitioning to a new life in the US, I gained recognition of the nuances between these two cultures and began to get a better understanding of my own sense of identity.

### WHAT IS PERSONAL IDENTITY?

Character and identity are two categories that can be used to identify any individual or community. Although identity refers to personality, culture and tradition, in some cases it is defined by official documents, such as a picture id or fingerprints. It can be implied that character can be modified in any situation and it depends on location and time; thus people represent themselves distinctly in different circumstances, or sometimes try to keep their basic personality in any condition. A good example that illustrates this concept is the fingerprint. The fingerprint is used for identification and is an impression of the skin of a human finger. The fingerprint of each person is unique to that person. Therefore, fingerprinting is an important method of human identification. As it is explained above, when a person experiences change in their life by moving to a new place or being immersed in a new culture, their character can adapt to the new



environment, though their *identity* is not something that can be so easily changed. In this regard, a person can change his personality and behaviors, but not necessarily change their core identity.

## WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture includes customs, beliefs, values and behaviors as well as the artifacts and objects of a given society.

Culture in human life is a changeable and flexible phenomenon. It can be changed based on the era and any social changes that happen. For example, unacceptable behaviors from previous generations may become acceptable to later generations. Society and culture are integrated, so they cannot be separate from each other. Human interactions establish a society and its respective traditions and behavioral patterns — this enables one culture to be distinguished from another.

Individual societies can also share human skills, behaviors and traditions with other societies. When geographically disparate peoples interact, they automatically represent their culture through behaviors, customs, and traditions; hence, when people from various cultures combine into one community, they interchange their own peculiarities through cultural exchange. The juxtaposition of cultural varieties can even take place within one nation, where people of each city or state have their own specific, differing practices. These differences include language, dialects, accents, cuisine, and attire.

## AMERICAN SOCIETY (MELTING POT AND SALAD BOWL)

Two frequently used metaphors to explain American culture are ‘melting pot’ and ‘salad bowl’. It cannot be said with certainty which is more accurate or which came first.

The salad bowl theory, which relates to America's immigration history, will be discussed first.

Large numbers of immigrants want to live in America while retaining their origins, traditions, customs, and culture. Each culture is identifiable and visible but still distinct from other cultures. It is called a salad bowl because each element, as in each salad ingredient, retains its individual shape, texture, and flavor. The new culture is able to maintain its values within the dominant culture.

In some cases, two cultures gradually assimilate and lose their essential nature. When this happens, they are considered to be culturally melted together. This process of simulation is called the 'melting pot' theory. The melting pot theory states that diverse ethnicities and cultures do not remain separate but instead mix together and share cultural characteristics and practices over time until a uniform whole is created. The United States is a good example of this theory. As it was founded as a nation of immigrants. So, in spite of different ethnicities that come from different immigrant countries, people have a sense that they are American

In general, the different cultures are initially best described by the salad bowl theory. In time however, the salad bowl transforms to a melting pot. The cultures are constantly evolving through interaction and change.

American society has always encompassed the various cultures from different nations. But what specific characteristics are unique to American culture? This project aims to allow my personal experience and observation, coming from the Middle East, to identify the distinction of American and Iranian culture.

## PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Iran, a country full of contrast and beauty with thousands of years of history and civilization. Learning is an important goal in everyone's life and in Iranian culture there is a very popular idiom that says, *seek knowledge from cradle to the grave*. I was motivated to further pursue my education in an American university to enhance my academic knowledge and design skills. I wanted to come to the United States over other countries in the world, because it is a very multicultural country with many international people. Another attraction to study in the United States is the English language, as I wanted to be educated in the universal language of English. I had the impression that the United States was a progressive country, socially and economically and offered better life opportunities than other countries.

During these years in the United States, I have been faced with different and new life experiences. As an Iranian woman, I saw how my culture is different from the American culture. I saw that I can be independent in my personal and social choices and that I am able to live my life as a single woman apart from family. There are major and significant aspects in how Western society differs from that of Eastern society. Since I have come to the United States, my new home, I started to think over the cultural differences and similarities and found that these common points have been affecting my life. A person's identity, character and personality are tied to where they live and can be formed by social changes.

Since social culture and personal culture play a crucial role in personal identity, assimilation with a different society brings about changes to one's identity. In my opinion, the fact that I am an international student from Iran makes me directly aware of

the clash and combination of two cultures and how one adapts and works in accordance with this new culture. This new phenomenon strongly affects my work. Without intention, I started to use my cellphone to take pictures of everything that was new to me in Florida. I decided to make a documentary from some of my pictures in the form of an online magazine to show what my life was like and the kind of experiences I was having. I wanted to communicate these experiences with my family who were still in Iran and to show them how different things were here, from getting around the city to something as simple as grocery shopping. All of these experiments gave me new insight and expanded my ideas of art installation and how it could be used in my thesis exhibition.

#### PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

Living in the United States has caused a good amount of cultural shock. I have been faced with various things ranging from people's behaviors, social life, appearance, foods, environments, and so on, which is distinct from Iranian lifestyle.

One of the differences observed is people's mannerisms and their social interactions. Based on the close connection between etiquette and culture, comparison of the differences and similarities of two cultures can help identify patterns of etiquette. For example, as I was still acclimating to a new culture here in the United States, I saw that I would have to be more free-spoken in how I communicated with people. This contrasts with my native culture in Iran, where people are less direct and forthright in their communication – Iranian people can be seen to have excessive mutual respect and humility for each other – and as a result, is less direct about their true intentions when speaking with one another.

## BEHAVIORS AND ETIQUETTE

Hospitality, generosity, and consideration for others are the specific Iranian practice of Tarof. Tarof is an Iranian traditional cultural practice. It dictates how interpersonal experiences should be conducted. It is the reflection of the importance of respect that is deeply rooted in Iranian culture. In this tradition, there is no room for direct interaction between people. The intent of this tradition is for people to show humility and friendliness to one another. For example, when people are sitting at the table to eat, even though the guests have eaten enough food, the hosts insist the guests eat more by offering more food. The guests decline the offer even though they sometimes would like to accept the offer. Moreover, sometimes, the actual emotions and needs of the parties are unclear, leading them to have to guess what the other party is feeling.

Another observation the United States is that the typical entrance or exit from one place seems simple or insignificant. People hold the door open for the person who is behind them, even if the approaching person is far from the door. This also occurs when American people arrive near the door simultaneously; one of the people will hold the door for the other in a gesture of friendliness. In this type of situation in Iran people frequently engage in a time-consuming ritual of offering and declining about who will go first. This is an instance in Iranian culture of complicated situations that result from excessive humility and hospitality, which in some circumstances probably is not genuine; rather, it is a polite social act.

Most Iranians who come to foreign countries find it very hard to adapt to new conditions. In some cases, it can be seen that their previous characteristics were wiped out and changed to new habits and behaviors. With regard to respect, although people are

respectful with each other, they are also very comfortable. In schools in the United States, everything is student-centered which differs compared to the Iranian school system. For example, the relationship between U.S. students and professors is totally different from Iranian students with their professors. In Iran, students would never call their teacher by their first name. Since the beginning and even until now, it is very difficult for me to call or email my professors using their first names. This type of communication in western society is the striking epitome of being casual with others. And in my opinion it shows that American people, regardless of gender, dignity, class and status, have close relationships that maintain the appropriate respect, which is very marvelous to me.

#### FOOD AND CUISINE

Another cultural trait I chose to explore is related to the cuisine and method of cooking and food of each country. People in advanced countries spend the majority of their lives at their job; subsequently, their dining habits also change. Where once the family would sit and dine together, Americans rely on fast food, casual restaurants and frozen food to cope with their time-crunched schedules.

One can observe that people in the US are usually in a rush, and as a result they carry their coffee with them. There are lots of small coffee shops around the city because people tend to want coffee on the go. Many Americans seem to avoid preparing food at home to save time. While the origin of fast food goes back centuries in many cultures, many people, including me, have the idea that fast food represents the American lifestyle as represented by well-known fast-food chain restaurants such as McDonalds, Burger King or KFC.

The ubiquity of fast and casual food has not only brought changes to American culture, but it has also been exported to other countries. Although, there is no official branch of American fast food in Iran, there are lots of fast food restaurants in Iran that are similar to American fast food but with different names. There are also a lot of Iranian restaurants, which are designed to be like western restaurants. I have seen in myself how my own food habits have dramatically changed since my arrival. Not only have I been exposed to many new foods that I did not know about in the past, I have been able to try new foods and have liked them.

## SHOPPING SYSTEMS

The typical American shopping system provides mass distribution of large amount of merchandise. The influx of different advertising in all aspects of life causes people to be very motivated to shop. The advertising and availability of an excessive amount of product entices people to buy more merchandise.

In the United States, goods and services are abundant. The ubiquitous box-stores and theme restaurants create a homogeneous national experience so that no matter where one travels, it will feel familiar. In contrast, Iran is still dominated by small family shops, each with its own set of goods that may vary in both price and quality on a region-by-region basis. There are also other significant differences in the two countries' habits and styles of consumption, particularly when it comes to paying for goods and services. The online payment system is much more common in the United States , and people frequently use credit or debit cards more than Iranian people. As a result, Americans also incur far greater debt. Magazines, e-mail solicitations and the advertisements that pepper online experiences encourage people to buy more and more. Sale options for products,

such as “Buy One Get One” or “40% OFF”, along with gift cards and special sales events motivate people to do more shopping. All of these factors contribute to an excess of consumption in the United States, to the point where some people have actual shopping addictions. This is one example of how capitalism exerts an influence on peoples’ lives and even identities—buying is good for the economy and therefore encouraged.

The other distinction between the two systems is that the interaction between customer and seller. In the United States, people generally do not want to talk with a salesperson very much. They tend to meet entreaties for help with a curt ‘no, thanks’ and will only typically seek help if they are unable to find an item. In the Iranian retail system, customers have more conversations with the sales people to bargain and negotiate. Moreover, there is no return policy in Iran, which may encourage the customer to more carefully consider their purchase. In fact, in some stores the owners have a sign stating: “There is no return for purchased items”.

Consumer culture greatly impacts the way people interact with each other and their lifestyle. In the United States, mass production is part of cultural life and there are many chain stores that are included in this culture where one can find everything. Both mass production and the existence of chain stores, a kind of retail mass production, create a system that encourages people to buy more than they need. The whole of American culture seems to be integrated and unified through this system of chain stores, also called big-box stores. They offer a self-service shopping with an extensive variety of food, household goods and other products. This type of shopping is almost completely self-service—to the point where even a traditional cashier can be bypassed with automated self-checkout registers used by customers to scan and pay for their purchased items.



People usually do not interact with the sellers, and cashiers barely interact with customers. In these stores, the lack of interaction can lead to a feeling of isolation.

These are some of the major cultural differences in the United States that have grabbed my attention and I have been involved with them a lot more than other aspects of my life. At the beginning, I paid attention to the people's behavior and found how their customs and behaviors are related to the habits and lifestyles they learned and adapted from their past, and how it connects to the process of their country's growth. As a result, one can see how the economic systems can play an important role in forming of people's culture as well.

As a graphic designer, I decided to use my talents to display these cultural contradictions between my birth home in Iran, and my new home in the United States. This thesis examines the cultural disparities by imparting my ideas, observations and experiments.

## VISUAL DESIGN AS COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE

Products, advertisements, brands, media, art and design need a common language to be able to communicate with the audience. This can be compared to people speaking different languages across the world who need to communicate with each other. Design focuses on structuring information or motivating people to an action, such as buying a product, finding directions, or going to an event. No matter what culture the design comes from, design uses the same language: visual language.

One of the aims of my thesis projects is to convey to audiences that despite having different influences from nationality, cultural and social identity, graphic design is a visual language that communicates through universal visual forms and symbols. Graphic

design is a tool of communication that uses forms or shapes that are responsible for conveying the meaning.

I see the role of my design work to become a bridge between two distinct cultures. I endeavor to express my personal views and explore ideas as a designer to international audiences for whom the message will resonate. I also strive to utilize different areas of design such as typography, animation, packaging, and logo design to create a collection of forms to display a unified meaning and message. Each element, ranging from shape, form, color and symbolism is representative of a given culture. In fact, design acts as a non-verbal language that speaks for global communication.

#### ANTECEDENTS AND PRECEDEN

Identity is an important factor in cultural interactions. Since the 1978 Iranian Revolution, national identity has been in a state of flux. As a result, many contemporary Iranian artists have chosen to deal with issues of their identity, history, social life, and political issues, history. These artists draw upon tradition and history to create their artworks.

A number of these contemporary Iranian artists' work has influenced the direction of my thesis. First, Sadegh Tirafkan inspired me in the way he used the combination of traditional elements and modern lifestyles. He elegantly indicated the loss of tradition and identity issues in contemporary life that occur as the country becomes modernized and westernized. He communicated his ideas about Iranian contemporary life through digital collage, using traditional elements such as an image of a carpet with a portrait. "The idea of the carpet, as he explained in an exhibition catalog, allowed him to address a rich and

inter-connected set of ideas: The carpet is emblematic of Persian culture. It is a symbol of culture, seasonality, richness, diversity and continuity—in time and in history. As such I have been obsessed by the parallelism and marriage between this symbolic, intricately loomed object and the people to which it belongs.”<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1. The Loss of Our Identity, Sadegh Tirafkan.

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<sup>1</sup> Seed, john. “In Memoriam: Sadegh Tirafkan (1965-2013).” *Huffington Post Arts & culture*.

TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. 26 July 2013.Web. 8 march. 2015

Another artist whose work I respond to is Sara Rahbar, who has lived for many years in the United States. Rahbar designs American flags using elements of Iranian military clothes and Iranian traditional fabrics. She makes the American flag with a variety of materials, particularly with traditional Iranian textiles and many different Persian symbols. She metaphorically juxtaposed textiles that refer to her Iranian heritage with an American icon to show a symbol of connection. Through sewing these objects, Rahbar physically and symbolically joined these two cultures, adding her own meaning and concept. She uses simple objects; each of them has its own symbolism to convey the deep message and content of her creation. Although her artworks give the audience a sense of politics indirectly, she brings out different messages that are connected to her past and present life by using the objects meaningfully and physically. This visual expression allows viewers to interpret these objects and create their own story.

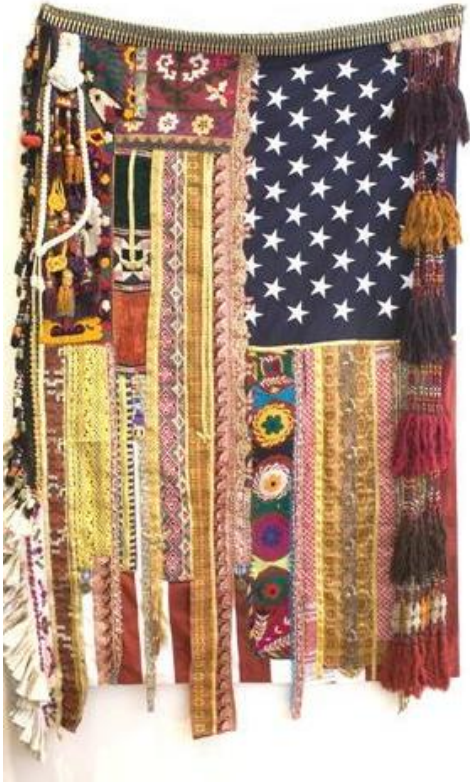


Figure 2. Memories without Recollection, Flag #19, Sara Rahbar



Figure 3. Barriers of Separation and Distance, Flag#29,Sara Rahbar

Shadi Ghadirian is a contemporary female photographer who focuses on the how changes in Iranian society impact the role of women. She created a collection of pictures that showed women dressed in the traditional style of the Qajar Dynasty (19<sup>th</sup> Century), juxtaposed with modern technology of the west. The backgrounds behind the models in the series also attempt to create the same atmosphere one would see in a Qajar-era photo studio. In these images Ghadirian uses modern objects—a Pepsi can, a bicycle, a vacuum cleaner and mountain bicycle—to show the dichotomy of contemporary life for Iranian women. She says “When I was working on this series of photographs, I had just graduated and the duality and contradiction of life at that time provided the motive for me to display this contrast: a woman who one cannot say to what time she belongs; a photograph from two eras; a woman who is dazed; a woman who is not connected to the objects in her possession.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Elkins, Amy and Cara Phillips, “Shadi Ghadirian.” *Women in Photography, Wipnyc*. n.d. Web 19 Jun 2015



Figure 4. Qajar Series, Shadi Ghadirian



The final example of influence of Iranian artists is that of the work of the couple, Farhad Moshiri and Shirin Aliabadi, who made a series of images titled “Operation Supermarket” in 2006 (figures 6-8). “The title ‘Supermarket’ suggests an allusion to global consumerism and products as the vehicles of its manifestation as the new figure of Empire.”<sup>3</sup> Moshiri and Aliabadi create products and use slogans in place of the product names to show how these American consumer goods have the ability to impact not only our lives but also global capitalism. Their artworks are inspiring because, most of them come from the simple objects of daily life and illustrate pop culture and how it influences people in their lives, culture, and society. The artists’ ideas about capitalism are conveyed through their use of irony in branding these American commodities. They apply advertisement and slogans in a way that alters the original form of these commodities. By changing ordinary things, they are given a special value and significance. With this new value and significance, the audience can experience the intention of the artists and how they use design to convey their message.

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<sup>3</sup> Mohebbi, Sohrab. “Operation supermarket.” *universes-in-universe*, *Nafas*. Universes-in-universe September 2008. Web. 8. March. 2015





Figure 5. We are all American, Farhad Moshiri and Shirin Aliabadi



Figure 6. Shoot First. Make Friends Later, Farhad Moshiri and Shirin Aliabadi



Figure 7. Families Ask Why, Farhad Moshiri and Shirin Aliabadi

I also investigated how ordinary objects can be modified as a topic for visual culture. This is similar to the way Andy Warhol, a big influence on my artwork, used popular and ordinary objects such as series of Campbell's soup can to express his views on American pop culture. His work, seen metaphorically, shows how simple, everyday things presented as art can reflect public culture with specific meaning and purpose.



Figure 8. Campbell Soup Cans, Andy Warhol

In this thesis, I used popular topics ingrained in public life and society as my canvas, applying my graphic design experience to create tangible objects from concepts like fast food and traditional idioms to express my views on Iranian and American culture. Leveraging materials that are common to everyday life and applying graphic design to them, my exhibit intended to show how banal and ordinary topics in life can express distinct meanings between two different cultures.

## THESIS WORKS

My thesis exhibition is divided into four different works: *McTradition*, *Shopping Spree*, *Birds of a Feather* and *Tarof*. Each work addresses an observation about the two cultures using the language of graphic design.



Figure 9. Entrance wall title, Cultural Conversations from Iran to America.

## MCTRADITION

*McTradition* focuses on food topics, because food and eating are fundamental to culture and bring the commonalities and distinctions of people across the world to light. A new set of American fast food packaging represents a mash-up of cultures, based on contemporary Iranian culture's extreme interest in westernization and my own personal

life in the United States. Four sets of fast food packages are placed on a large Persian rug. The set is designed for four people to symbolize a family sitting together for a meal. I wanted to show that being with family is one of the cornerstones of Iranian culture. I created in the gallery a traditional Iranian dining room where meals are often taken sitting on the floor. Hamburger and French fry packaging and a drink cup are placed on a plastic fast food tray with a paper liner and then placed on a tablecloth on the floor (Figure 11-12).



Figure 10. McTradition, Dining room.





Figure 11. McTradition. Four set fast food packages.

Each item conveys its own message and information. Each is designed like real fast food packages, but the information that is used on them is editorialized. The burger package uses information derived the changes that have occurred in my life as a result of living in the United States (See figure 18). The French fry and drink packages show information about changes to social culture result from the habit of eating fast food. The motif of a Persian carpet and a logo that is derived from the image of Nasser al-Din Shah of the Qajar Dynasty is used to create a visual brand. The king's image is well known in Iran and is often used in traditional teacups, teapots, glasses, vases, and hookahs.

I utilize these specific elements as traditional symbols combined with western items to show a fusion of disparate cultures. The paper liner of the tray diagrams my personal food habits, experiences with new foods, and the amount of cooking and dining out that I have experienced in the United States. This composition shows the values of both cultures and their juxtaposition.



Figure 12. Teapot with Nasser al-Din Shah of the Qajar Image.



Figure 13. Nasser al-Din Shah of the Qajar Logo Designed



Figure 14. McTradition Fast food package





Figure15. McTradition Fast food package.



Figure 16. Tray liner design.

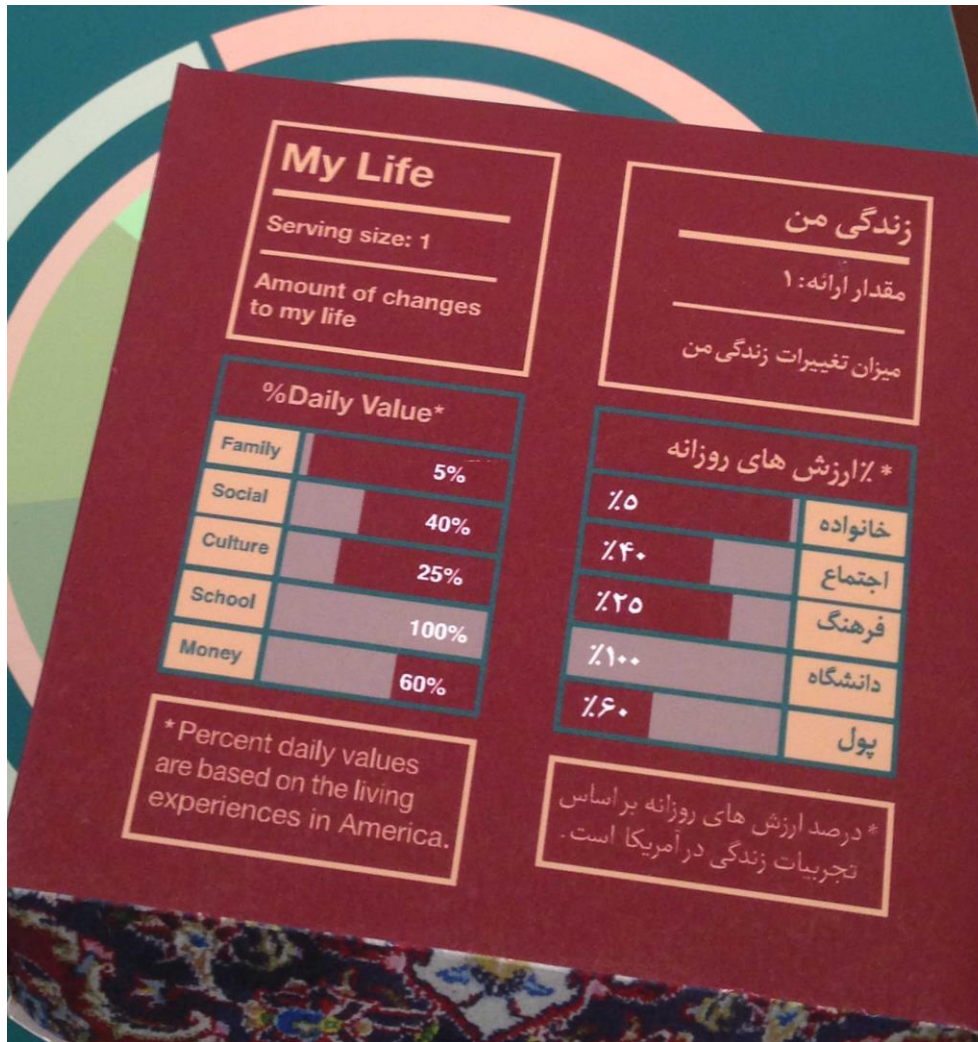


Figure17. My life information on Burger package.

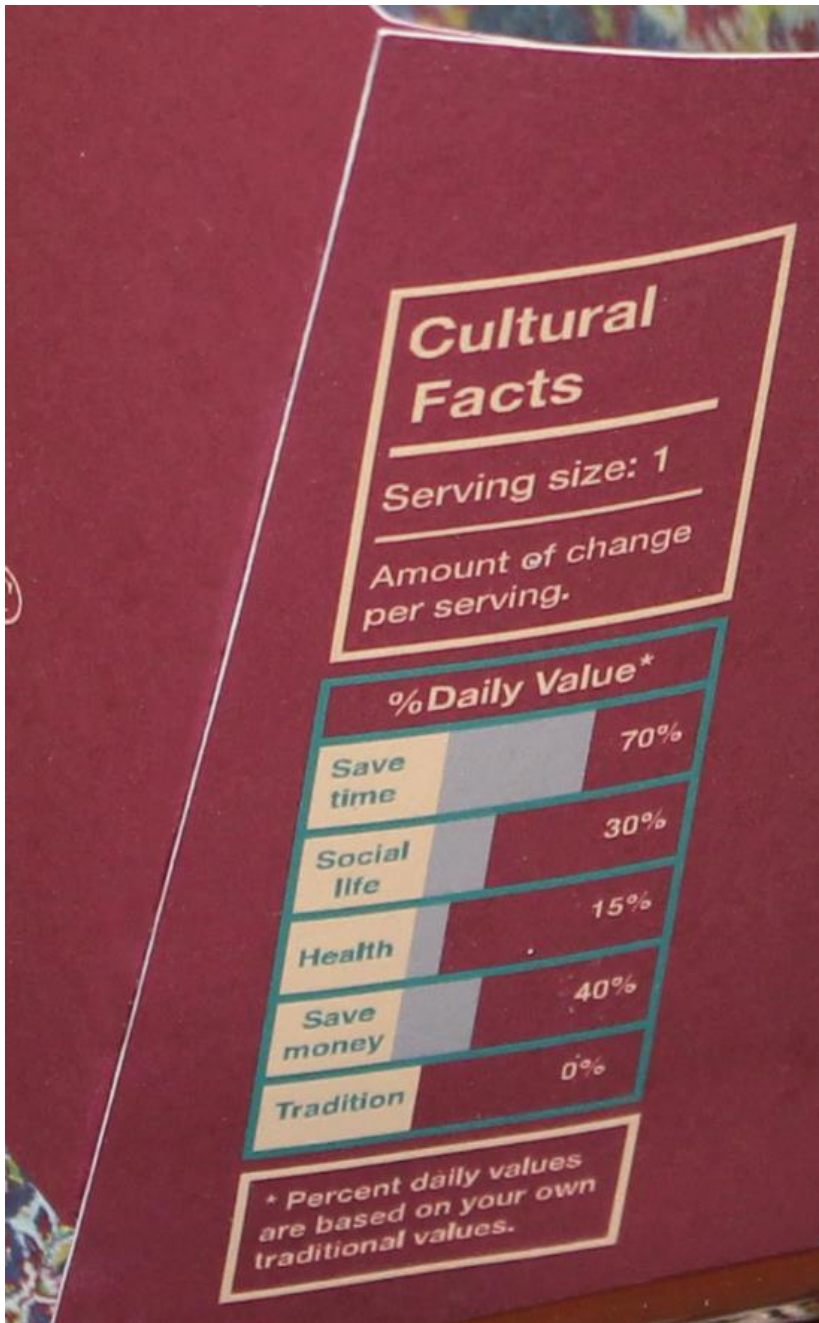


Figure 18. Cultural Facts Information on French Fries package.



In this part of the exhibition people can interact with artwork. It is common to sit on the floor to eat in Iran, and accordingly my exhibit has four cushions placed around the dining area to ensure American audiences can sit down and experience this practice. As in Iran, people remove their shoes before entering the area. They sit and handle the packages and read the information.



Figure 19. People interacting in McTradion dining room.

## SHOPPING SPREE

The second part of the exhibition is about my personal experience with the shopping system in the United States. As a person new to this country, who was fascinated by this issue and tends to go shopping a lot, I see how one can be absorbed by capitalism and become caught up in the materialism of society. I endeavored to display my challenges with spending money through the creation of a work entitled *Shopping Spree*. *Shopping Spree* is a large (36x55 inches) facsimile of a credit card printed on rigid plastic and hung on the wall. It is designed with the same Persian branded motif as the fast food packages. Text of common phrases used to promote spending more money, create the visual background of card. My face is used as a logo in the middle of credit card along with my personal information including name, date of birth, the date of my entrance to the U.S., and the valid date that I can stay in America during my studies. This project is an attempt to convey the message of multiple cultural influences in terms of my personal experience.

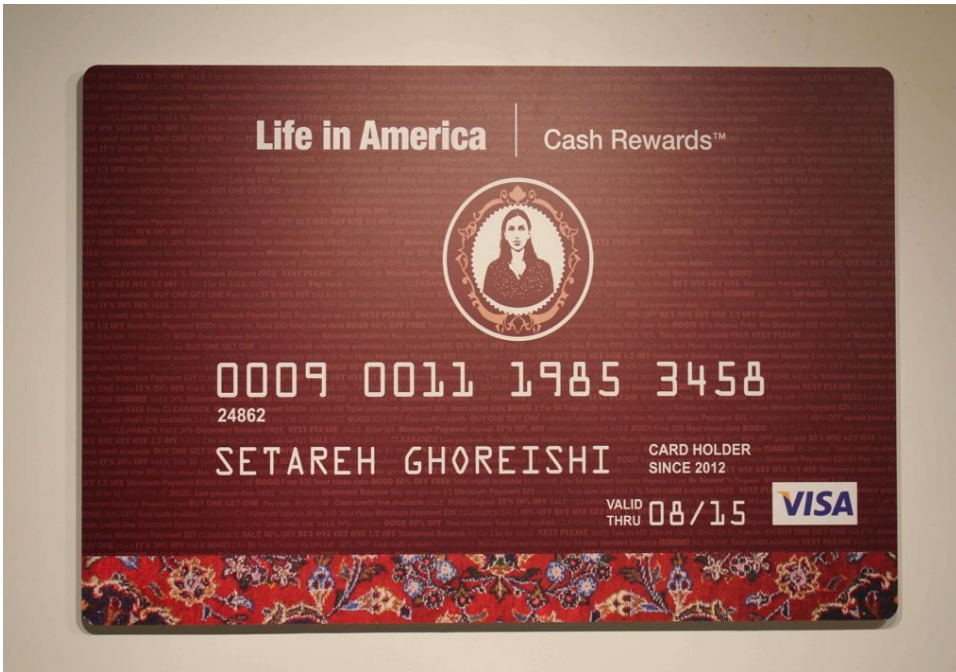


Figure 20. Shopping Spree Credit Card



Figure 21. Shopping Spree: Detail of Background of Credit Card

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

*Birds of a Feather* investigates the similarities and differences in proverbs and idioms in Iranian and American culture especially in folk language. This piece has variable dimensions, but is intended to be displayed on facing walls. Each wall has twelve idioms, made from cut vinyl in a process typical of commercial signage. I have placed western (largely American) idioms on one wall with the dominant type reading in English and its Farsi translation immediately below. On the opposite wall I have reversed the process by displaying Iranian idioms in Farsi along with their English translations. In this configuration the viewer can see and compare American idioms with the Persian equivalents. My intention is to show the similarities of tradition and thought expressed in all of its sameness and subtle difference so that audiences of both languages might see themselves reflected in the other. Using the letterforms of the two languages employs graphic design to convey messages that can be a bridge between the two cultures.

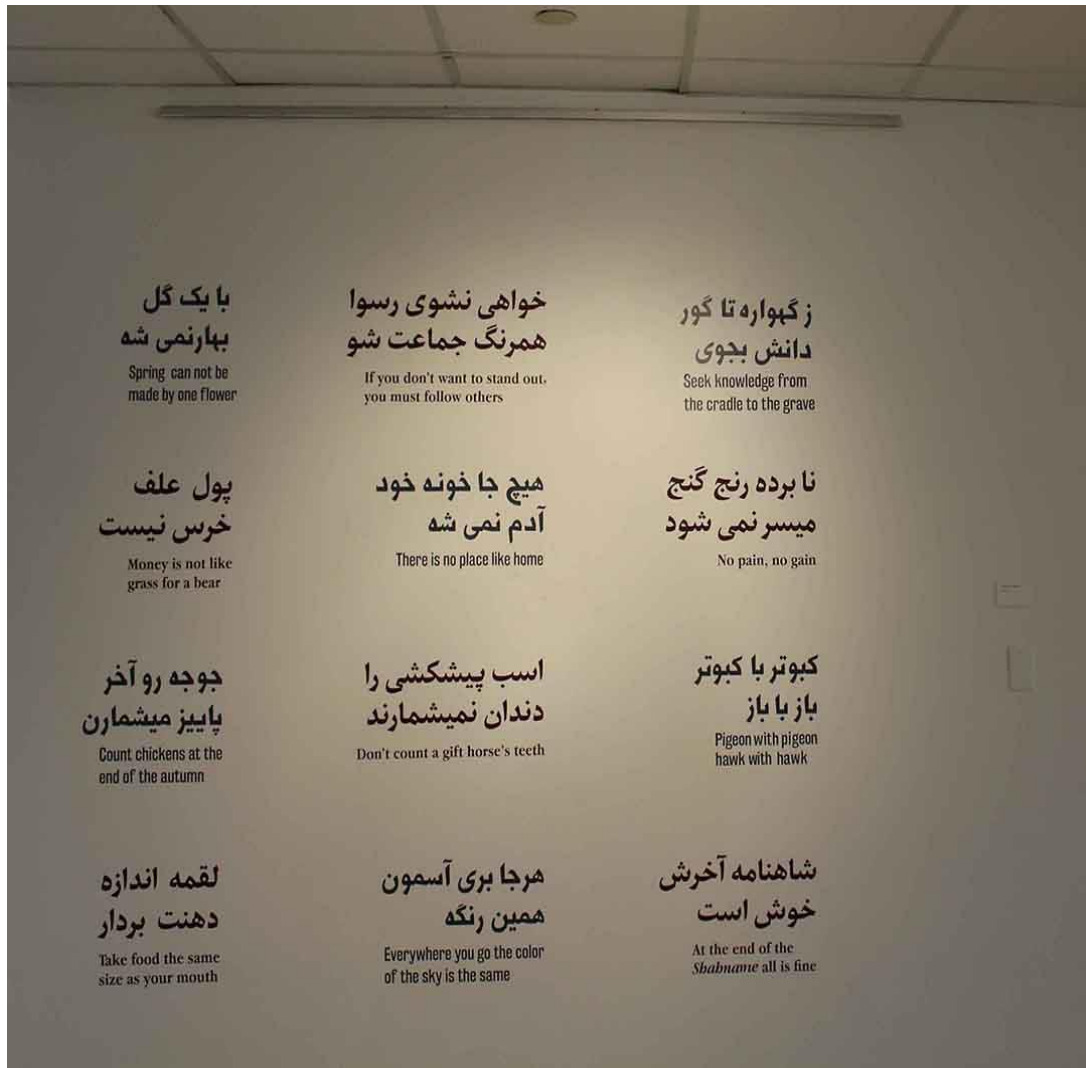


Figure 22. Birds of a Feather: Farsi Wall Detail



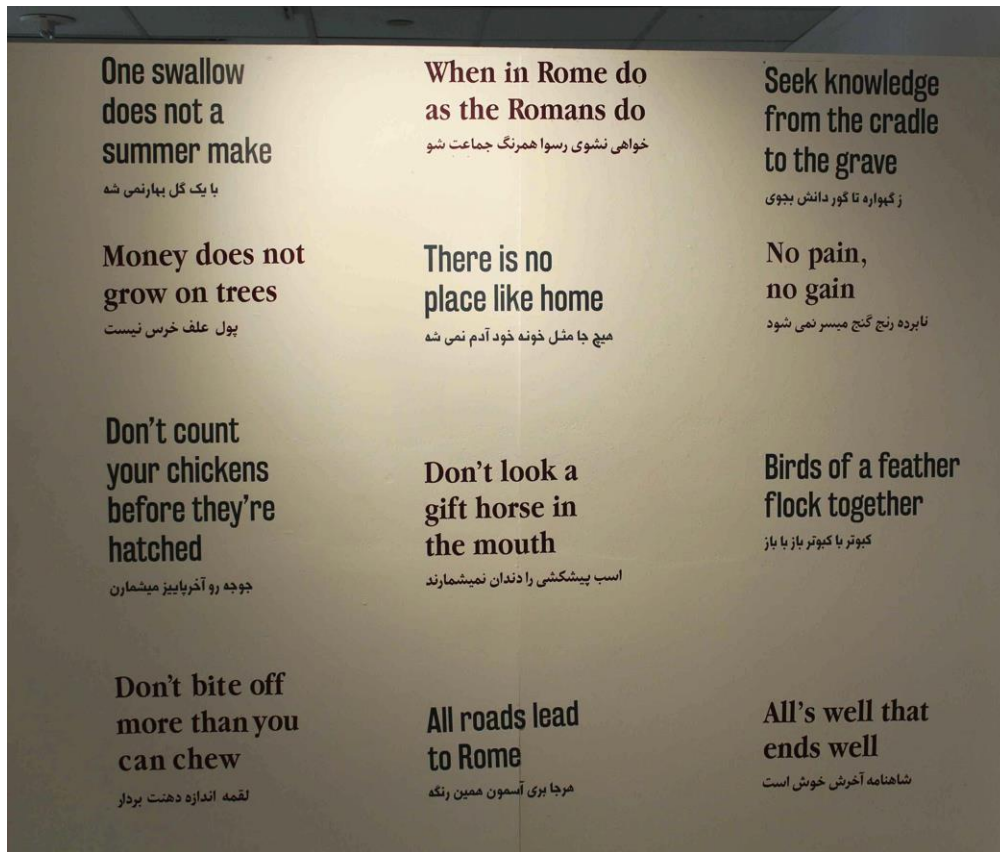


Figure 23. Birds of a Feather: English Wall Detail

## TAROF

The fourth piece in the exhibition is a short 2-minute video entitled *Tarof*, which plays from a ceiling-mounted projector. This is a kinetic typography, animation video that tries to provide a basis for understanding this particular Iranian custom, which is subtle, and unclear to the outsider. Tarof is a traditional Iranian practice of etiquette. It governs the way people act when offering food or consideration to others, buying or selling things and negotiations between people in conversation.

At the beginning of the animation I introduced some Iranian foods to American audiences. The animation shows the dialog between two people who are guest and host. The conversation is shown through type set using two different fonts and colors to represent each person. The musical score was composed by Reza Filsoofi and was created specifically for the video. It is minimalistic in nature as it is a recording of his solo playing of the “Tombak”, a very traditional Iranian drum instrument. The music further serves to impart upon the audience another cultural aspect of Iran. The dialog begins with a host offering a guest some food. The conversation starts slow and gradually changes to an insistent and annoying feeling; the guest seems to want to leave. I believe this short video animation method was the most effective way to convey the concept of Tarof. The video is an exaggerated illustration of an Iranian tradition that comes from a place of respect but does not translate to American culture. This cultural tradition involves acting and pretending while conveying a message. This important back and forth is absent in American culture and may appear to be a waste of time and effort to an unfamiliar audience.



Figure 24. Tarof: Video Projection



Figure 25. Tarof: Video Projection with Food image



Figure 26. Tarof Video Animation: Conversation Between Host and Guest

## CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis is to display two cultures; Iranian culture and American culture alongside each other. I intend to show differences, similarities, combinations and juxtapositions. It is my intention that the demonstration of these contrasts may help to open new windows for other people. I introduce other aspects of each culture, which are not related to politics. By using the language of graphic design to illustrate different cultural values, I convey that design is spoken as a vocabulary of visual language to explain concept and message with nonverbal language; communication occurs through visual symbols. The meaning is translated through a variety of medias. Hence, various mediums can provide different content and experience to two distinct audience categories.

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