



SEPIDEH TAKSHI

AFTER THE ARCHIVE, THE BODY SPEAKS



2026

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Exhibition Catalogue

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Unstable Archives, Visible Bodies

Every politics of the archive involves a politics of visibility. Nothing that is preserved, classified, or transmitted attains that condition through the simple effect of neutral accumulation; every document and every image reaches the present through historical operations that determine, in advance, what may acquire the status of legitimate memory, recognisable evidence, or transmissible presence. Sepideh Takshi: *After the Archive, the Body Speaks* is situated precisely within this problem, formulating it under the specific conditions of the digital present, in which archives, bodies, and images are continuously traversed by technical systems that reorganise what becomes visible. Bringing together works in a digital environment and algorithmic processes, the exhibition proposes a reading of Sepideh Takshi's practice from within this field of tension, where memory, censorship, technology, and documentary authority no longer appear as separate spheres, but as mutually implicated dimensions.

Its formulation derives directly from the questions I have been developing within the curatorial project *Decolonial Atlas: Mapping Artists that Challenge Digital Colonialism*, whose research is concerned with artistic practices capable of critically confronting the digital infrastructures through which hierarchies of power and unequal regimes of recognition continue to be reproduced. Takshi's work becomes particularly decisive within this horizon because, in it, the problem of digital coloniality does not appear in abstract terms, but takes on precise visual and conceptual form. In her work, technology is not reduced to a contemporary formal repertoire; rather, it appears as a regime of mediation deeply inscribed in the production of visibility and memory. Archive, body, and algorithm thus come to compose a single structure of conflict.

At the centre of this practice lies a rigorous understanding of the archive as a field of dispute. What Takshi interrogates is not merely the content of documents, but the order that grants them legibility and authority. Manuscripts and historical records therefore cease to function as stable supports of an intact truth and instead emerge as surfaces traversed by omissions, asymmetrical classifications, and inherited framings. The critical operation of works such as Decolonization Archive does not consist in restoring a lost origin. What is produced there is the reinscription of the document within a regime of instability capable of exposing the fact that every archival claim to neutrality rests upon prior exclusions and historically interested regimes of reading. The archive thus ceases to be understood as a passive reservoir of the past and comes to be read as an active device for ordering the visible.

This displacement consequently redefines the place of technology itself in the construction of the historical past. Even artificial intelligence, supposedly neutral and rational, no longer appears as an external instrument but becomes part of archival logic itself. In Takshi's work, it becomes clear that algorithmic systems do not operate as transparent means of restitution, since their action directly affects the status of the visible.

The notion of the digital double, recurrent in the artist's research, assumes particular importance here. The digital double does not restore an intact original, nor does it offer neutral access to a truth prior to technical mediation. Every attempt to reconstruct something from the past ends up creating a new object, because we are compelled to adapt the original to the technologies and forms of knowledge available to us today, thereby assigning to it a meaning it never previously possessed. What emerges at the interface, therefore, does not correspond to a past recovered in its supposed fullness, but to a new scene of dispute between memory and power.

One of the strongest contributions of Takshi's work lies precisely in showing that the conflict around the archive extends into the body and becomes particularly acute there. If the archive defines the conditions under which something may be preserved, the body renders visible the conditions under which something may be captured or excluded by contemporary technical systems. In the series *Decolonizing Censorship*, for example, this question acquires singular density. The body is subjected to processes of digital reconstruction that frustrate every expectation of representational transparency. Glitch, gap, and deformation do not appear there as decorative or ornamental devices, but as material signs of a structural insufficiency in visualisation systems when faced with historically vulnerable bodies. The image fails because the regime that produces it already bears within itself an economy of exclusion.

The female body from the Middle East, so central to her research, thus appears in a particularly tense space, situated between direct forms of political control and diffuse modalities of algorithmic misreading. Faced with it, the machine does not merely reproduce an appearance; it classifies, compresses, and reinscribes the very violence that it previously processed only as data. This operation gives Takshi's work an important critical density, because it shifts the discussion of censorship away from a paradigm centred exclusively on explicit prohibition toward a more complex field, in which exclusion comes to occur through devices that select what deserves clarity and circulation.

A consistent reading of the exhibition requires, however, recognising that its critique should not end with the denunciation of the violence inscribed in digital infrastructures. A decisive part of Takshi's work lies in the investigation of modes of reorienting technique, imagining deviant uses and forms of reinscription capable of opening other possibilities of circulation and memory. *One Thousand and One Nights* is a particularly interesting example of this inflection. Inspired by the narrative tradition associated with Scheherazade, the work transforms a long-standing cultural repertoire into a living, participatory, and transnational archive, in which each user becomes part of a continuously rewritten chain of narrative production. In this work, artificial intelligence does not appear as a sovereign instance that substitutes the human voice, but as an ambivalent operator of translation and reconfiguration. The generated narrative does not erase the cultural memory that precedes it; it reinscribes it within an environment in which tradition and technical mediation remain in permanent negotiation.

Sepideh Takshi: *After the Archive, the Body Speaks* is thus organised around a central question: what forms of memory and enunciation may still emerge when the systems that administer the visible are themselves traversed by classificatory violence and technical asymmetry? The force of the exhibition lies precisely in its refusal of simplifying answers. Nothing in its construction suggests a return to an originary authenticity, nor a promise of integral repair through technology. What it offers is a more demanding reading of the present, in which archive, body, and algorithm appear as inseparable zones of dispute. After the archive, the body speaks, yet this speech does not correspond to a pure exteriority in relation to the systems that shape it. Its emergence takes place precisely at the point where documentary authority falters, where the image fails, and where technique, instead of guaranteeing transparency, reveals the limits of its own reason. It is here that Sepideh Takshi's work finds its sharpest proposition: there is no promise of overcoming conflict; instead, it renders conflict visible in a way that unsettles us.

Victor Murari
Curatorship and critical text

Interview

This interview was conducted in writing between 29 and 30 March 2026, on the occasion of the virtual exhibition Sepideh Takshi: After the Archive, the Body Speaks. The exhibition presented a focused selection of Sepideh Takshi's recent work, centred on the relations between archive, body, digital technology, and decolonial critique, bringing together works in which artificial intelligence, glitch, manuscripts, images, and interactive systems are mobilised to reflect on memory, censorship, visibility, and power. Within this framework, the exhibition proposed a reading of the artist's practice through the tension between preservation and rewriting, and between bodily presence and algorithmic mediation.



The Glitch as Decolonial Gesture, 2025. Video, TouchDesigner and AI.

Victor Murari - Your artistic trajectory brings together a background in Fine Art, an exhibition history in Tehran beginning in 2015, and, more recently, a practice focused on the intersections between the body, digital technology, and algorithmic perception. At what point did you realise that technology would cease to be merely a medium and become the critical problem at the heart of your work?

Sepideh Takshi - Technology, for me, has never been a neutral medium. From the beginning, I understood it as an epistemic structure, a system that determines not only what can be seen, but what is already excluded from visibility. This became materially evident in my engagement with 3D scanning. What appeared as a tool for reconstruction was, in fact, a system of rewriting. The body was not simply captured; it was fragmented, distorted, and partially erased. These absences were not accidental; they revealed the internal logic of the system itself. At that moment, technology ceased to function as a tool and emerged instead as a regime of visibility. Decolonization, in this context, is not about correcting the system, but intervening within it, working through its failures, its incomplete data, and the moments where it cannot fully stabilize representation.

VM - Institutional texts indicate that you exhibited extensively in Iran before moving to the United Kingdom, and that this displacement coincided with the consolidation of your practice as a digital artist and researcher. How did the experience of migration reshape your relationship to memory, the archive, and belonging?

ST - My initial engagement with the archive began through a historical painting whose title did not correspond to its visual content. This discrepancy revealed that even naming, what appears fixed, can be subject to distortion and erasure. Migration transformed this inquiry into a lived condition. I became increasingly aware of what I describe as “silent voices”, not as absences, but as presences produced through systematic exclusion. In this context, the archive is no longer a repository of the past, but an active structure of selection, omission, and rewriting. Belonging, likewise, becomes unstable, no longer tied to geography, but to a shifting relationship with memory and history. My practice thus moves toward a counter-archival approach, not to restore an “authentic” past, but to activate suspended narratives that persist within archival gaps.

VM - In your work, glitch appears as a critical strategy for disrupting the image and contesting algorithmic regimes of visibility. What does glitch allow you to articulate, aesthetically and politically, that a stable and technically “correct” image would not?

ST - The “correct” image carries a promise of clarity and completeness, yet this completeness is produced through omission. What remains invisible is precisely what enables the image to appear whole. Glitch disrupts this illusion. It is not an error, but a moment of exposure. In working with 3D scanning, glitch revealed that the body is never fully capturable. This failure is not a limitation; it is a condition of possibility. Glitch operates as resistant data: data that refuses classification and reappears in unexpected forms. It is simultaneously a document of censorship and an act of return, what has been excluded re-emerging at the limits of system control.

VM - In *Decolonizing Censorship*, you begin with a digitisation of your own face, subjected to a continuous process of expansion, contraction, and mechanical breathing, as if machinic perception deformed the body rather than clarified it. What does the choice of your own face, as both data and a field of error, reveal about violence, censorship, and vulnerability in contemporary visual culture?

ST - My body, prior to entering digital space, has already been shaped by structures of censorship, structures that are not only imposed externally, but internalized over time. When I introduced my face into the system, I encountered not representation, but re-inscription. Glitch, in this context, became a form of disclosure: algorithmic systems do not simply render images, they reproduce regimes of omission. Each attempt to “stabilize” the image resulted in further distortion. Each effort to bring clarity exposed another layer of erasure. The body thus becomes a site of negotiation, between what has been lived, what is recorded, and what is systematically excluded.

VM - On your website, the idea of “real-time interaction” appears as a central axis, bringing together human presence and computational response in installations and digital experiences. How do you distinguish interactivity understood as a technical resource from interactivity conceived as a critical form of relation between artwork, machine, and viewer?

ST - Interactivity, for me, is not a feature, it is a condition. Where language fails to articulate certain experiences, particularly those tied to violence, displacement, or erasure, interactivity produces an alternative mode of engagement. It does not explain; it situates. The viewer is no longer an observer, but enters into a relational field. A field in which experience is not communicated, but generated. In this sense, interactivity functions as a decolonial strategy, not by representing knowledge, but by redistributing it through embodied engagement.

VM - In Decolonisation Archive, an old manuscript featuring butterflies is translated into a digital double and brought into tension with real-time scientific data, without this operation resolving the archive’s ambiguity. What interests you in this friction between archival opacity and algorithmic transparency?

ST - The archive and the algorithm operate as two conflicting regimes of knowledge. One is defined by opacity, fragmentation, and historical layering. The other claims clarity, structure, and accessibility. Yet this clarity is itself a form of violence, the violence of categorization. Algorithms do not resolve archival ambiguity; they reconfigure it within new systems of exclusion. For me, the significance lies not in resolving this tension, but in sustaining it. Because the moment ambiguity is eliminated, multiplicity collapses into a singular narrative, one that risks reproducing hegemonic structures of knowledge. My practice insists on maintaining this conflict as a condition for polyphony.

Vm - In Echoes of a Decolonized Archive, Kamāl al-Dīn Behzād's miniature of war is reprogrammed so that instruments of warfare are recoded into sound, rhythm, and animation, shifting the scene into a field of memory, healing, and resistance. How can one work with historical images of violence without reducing their political density to a visual or sonic effect?

ST - I do not represent violence; I construct the conditions through which it can be experienced. Direct representation risks transforming violence into an object, something consumable, legible, and potentially aestheticized. Instead, in works such as Decolonizing Censorship, Declare Silence, E'lam, and Khodanour Lajai, violence operates through absence, fragmentation, and silence. The body appears, but incompletely. The image exists, but destabilizes. The voice is expected, but withheld. This incompleteness is not a lack, it is the site of violence itself. There is a crucial distinction between seeing violence and sensing it. What is seen can be consumed. What is felt resists closure. Decolonizing violence, for me, means removing it from representation and returning it to a state of unresolved tension.

VM - In One Thousand and One Nights, each participant selects emojis and a theme in order to generate narratives and images in dialogue with Persian miniature painting and the figure of Scheherazade. How do you conceive the passage from a historically sedimented narrative tradition into a participatory environment mediated by AI?

ST - Tradition is often framed as stable and immutable. My approach is to reactivate it. In One Thousand and One Nights, narrative shifts from a singular voice to a distributed field. There is no longer one Scheherazade, there are many. Through minimal inputs emojis, prompts, the user enters the narrative system. AI functions here as a mediating structure: it multiplies and diversifies narrative rather than stabilizing it. Tradition, in this context, is not preserved, it is expanded, fractured, and continuously rewritten. Narrative becomes a living system, not a fixed inheritance.

VM - Compost was presented in the context of the Wrong Biennale as an investigation into glitches arising when digital entities merge, while Digital Double was included in a pavilion devoted to the ambiguity of control between humans and artificial intelligences. What have these works taught you about identity when it comes to exist through duplication, mixture, residue, and instability?

ST - Identity is not an essence, it is a process. Within algorithmic environments, identity is produced through systems of classification, recognition, and representation. However, what escapes these systems, glitches, residues, distortions, becomes equally significant. These are not failures; they are generative moments. Identity emerges not in stability, but in its constant reconfiguration. It is a speculative construct, continuously produced, read, and rewritten. In this sense, breakdown becomes a site of possibility: a space where identity exceeds its assigned categories.

VM - There is a recurring multisensory and pedagogical dimension in your practice, something that also appears in the workshops of the Making Home programme, where you worked with “digital waste” and glitch as material for collective creation. How does your experience with community-based processes return to the studio and transform your formal and conceptual decisions?

ST - Collectivity is not a method in my work, it is a structural necessity. I resist singular authorship because it inherently stabilizes meaning. Collective work introduces multiple narratives that coexist without resolving into a unified voice. The studio becomes a site of negotiation rather than production. Meaning is not imposed, it is continuously reconfigured. Polyphony is not an aesthetic choice; it is the condition of the work itself.

VM - Across your projects, AI, the digital archive, and interactive systems appear as dispositifs capable of producing visibility, erasure, and authority, rather than as neutral tools. What kind of ethics of practice do you think is necessary for artists and researchers working with technologies trained by historical asymmetries and already biased classificatory systems?

ST - Any ethical engagement with AI must begin by rejecting the notion of neutrality. AI systems are built upon historically uneven datasets and embedded power structures. To use them uncritically is to reproduce those structures. For me, ethics is not about correct usage, but critical exposure, revealing bias, failure, and omission. It involves working with breakdowns, not efficiencies. Ethics, in this sense, is an intervention, not a guideline.

VM - In your work, the idea of a decolonial archive seems to displace the archive from its traditional function of preservation and authority, treating it instead as a site of contestation over memory, legibility, and power. When you speak of decolonising the archive, are you thinking primarily about revising historical narratives, critiquing the technological infrastructures that organise memory, or the need to imagine other ways of relating to the past?

ST - The archive is not a neutral repository, it is a constructed space shaped by power. Decolonizing it involves re-reading narratives, exposing its structures, and reconfiguring its relationship to the past. It is not about restoring an original truth, but about activating suppressed voices and reopening historical narratives. The archive must shift from singular authority to a contested field of multiple voices.

VM - In several of your projects, digital systems, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic visualities appear shaped by historical asymmetries that determine what can be seen, classified, and recognised. How does a decolonial perspective guide your artistic choices when you work with technologies that already carry, in their very structure, sedimented forms of hierarchy and exclusion?

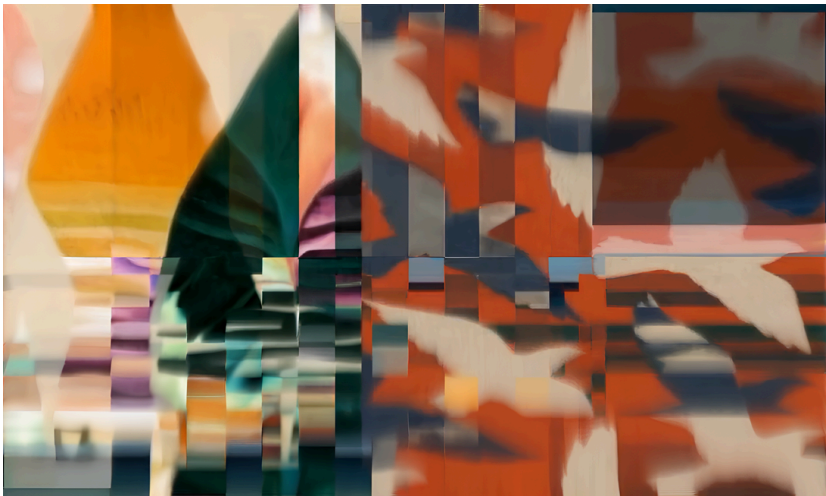
ST - A decolonial perspective requires a critical distance from technological systems. Rather than working with what functions smoothly, I work with breakdowns—because it is in failure that structures become visible. Resistance emerges where representation collapses. This perspective shapes both my methods and my subjects, focusing on what is excluded, silenced, or unclassifiable.

VM - Your work frequently reactivates images, manuscripts, and visual traditions of Persian origin in dialogue with contemporary digital devices, producing a friction between cultural inheritance and technical mediation. How do you think about the decolonial dimension of this gesture of reinscribing historically non-Western repertoires within technological environments generally organised by hegemonic epistemologies?

ST - This is not a translation, it is a tension. Persian illustration traditions are not concerned with representation, but with narration and spatial multiplicity. Digital systems, by contrast, are structured around realism and simulation. When these two meet, they disrupt one another. I do not aim to reconcile them, but to sustain this friction, because it is within this disruption that new forms of meaning emerge.

VM - Your work brings together archive, body, image, artificial intelligence, and decolonial critique as fields of contestation over memory, visibility, and power. When you think about the future developments of your research, what forms of image, archive, or relation to technology still seem necessary to interrupt colonial structures that persist in the digital environment?

ST- The future of the archive lies in instability. It must be able to hold contradiction, silence, and multiplicity without collapsing them into coherence. Technology should not resolve these tensions, but sustain them. It should remain a site of conflict, not consensus. The archive must shift from a closed system to an open process, one that remains in a constant state of becoming.



Compost, 2025. Video, TouchDesigner and AI.

Biography

1991: Born in Iran.

2010–2014: Completed a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art at Soore University, Tehran.

2013: Participated in an exhibition at PROArt Gallery, Dubai.

2015: Held a solo exhibition at Zhiwarhre Gallery, Tehran.

2017: Published the texts “The Fourth Biennial of Mural Painting in Tehran” and “TADAEX (Tehran Annual Digital Art Exhibition)” in Honaragah Journal.

2017: Participated in exhibitions at Artem Gallery, Los Angeles; Milad Tower Gallery, Tehran; White Line Gallery, Tehran; and the Tehran Annual Digital Art Exhibition (TADAEX), presenting an interactive audiovisual installation on memory, media, and fragmented identity.

2017–2020: Completed an MA in Painting at the University of Tehran. Her dissertation was titled “The Use of New Media in the Art Works of Krzysztof Wodiczko, James Turrell, and Ryoji Ikeda.”

2018: Participated in an exhibition at the Saba Museum, Tehran.

2019: Published the text “The Effect of Contemporary Features on Samira Eskandarfar's Exhibition” in Honaragah Journal. In the same year, she produced the work Caution.

2020: Produced the work Mask.

2021: Published, with M. Hassanvand, the article “The Effect of New Media on Contemporaneity in the Works of Krzysztof Wodiczko” in PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology.

2022: Produced the work Paper: A Field of Revelation and participated in a group exhibition at Sabnem Bahar Art and Design Gallery, Antalya, Turkey.

2022: From the Fifth Floor Balcony, group exhibition, Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran.

2023–2024: Completed a Master of Fine Art in Fine Art at Arts University Plymouth, United Kingdom.

2024: Presented, with Dr Tom Milnes, the research project “Exploring Real-Time Interaction in Installations to Rediscover Contemporary Human Identity through Phenomenology” at the Rolodex Propaganda symposium in Plymouth. In the same year, she participated in the exhibitions Data and Identity at Union Corner and Eclectic Exchange at Arts University Plymouth. She also developed works such as AI’s Eye and Your Motion and My Existence.

2024 onward: Began the research project Digital Twin: Reanimating Islamic Manuscripts through AI and XR, centred on the reanimation of Islamic manuscripts through AI, XR, and algorithmic design.

2025: Founder and developer of the interactive web application One Thousand and One Nights, which she defines as a digital reimagining of the classical Persian text. The project brings together participants from different countries and functions as a participatory digital archive.

2025: Produced and presented key works from her recent practice, including Decolonizing Censorship, The Glitch as Decolonial Gesture, Compost, Decolonization Archive, Echoes of a Decolonized Archive, and Echoes of a Broken Algorithm.

2025: Participated in the exhibition Love Letter at KARST Studio, Plymouth.

2025: Participated in The Wrong Biennale 2025–2026 across different pavilions, including Digital Double, AutoObscura, Compost.

2025: Artist and Workshop Leader, “Making Home” programme, The Box Museum, Plymouth, United Kingdom.

2025: Was selected for an international artist residency in Mexico connected to the project Decolonization Archive, although she was unable to attend for financial and scheduling reasons.

2025: Studio Kind, Summer Open 2025, Barnstaple, UK (2025).

2026: Participated in the digital festival COMPUTALA 2026 – Robots for a Safer World at LCB Depot, Leicester, presenting the video installation Decolonising Censorship.

2026: Developed new works in the Decolonizing Censorship series, including Declare Silence, Ilam, 2026, Khodanour, and Azadi (Freedom) as a Mirage.

Exhibition Credits

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Acknowledgments: Cansu Waldron

Access: <http://victormurari.art>