

# *Carrying Distance*

Abedar Kamgari

September 17-November 5, 2022

*Carrying Distance* is an exhibition of two curtains, a fabric one coloured with natural dyes and a ceramic one composed of thousands of handmade beads. Artist Abedar Kamgari reimagines curtains as symbolic manifestations of sites where multiple distances converge. By engaging embodied, tactile, and labour-intensive making processes, she reflects on contexts and conditions of displacement and diaspora. Her curtains gesture to borders shaped by geographical, cultural, linguistic, temporal, and gendered distances.

This body of work is inspired by the set of a play written by the artist's father, but where the long, white curtain described in the play passively frames the edges of a stage, Kamgari's colourful and intricate reinterpretations come alive as central figures themselves. In addition to the play, she draws from wide-ranging influences in Persian poetry, feminist writings, archeological monuments, and colonial histories to grapple with distances both personal and global. The artworks in *Carrying Distance* ruminate on what it means to inherit diasporic families and colonial ruins.

## List of Works

*Radiant Moments, 2022.*

Unedited cellphone video, Kurdish and Farsi, 6:41 mins.

*Untitled Curtain, 2022.*

Naturally-dyed fabric, 10x33 feet.

*Facing the Fortress of Legend, 2022.*

Beaded ceramic curtain, scaffold, lighting, 10x17 feet.

*A line, a border, a cut, 2022.*

Site-responsive installation in window, 8x25 feet.

## Biography

***Abedar Kamgari*** is an artist, curator, and arts worker based in Hamilton and Toronto. In her practice, Abedar considers contexts and conditions of displacement and diaspora using site-responsive, performative, and relational approaches. Her current projects explore body memory, inheritances, and the idea of distance, inspired by a play written by her father and garments passed down from her grandmothers. Abedar holds a BFA (2016) and an MFA (2022) in interdisciplinary studio and has performed, screened, and exhibited in a range of institutional contexts across Southern Ontario.

Visit: [abedarkamgari.com](http://abedarkamgari.com) or [@kamgara](https://www.instagram.com/kamgara) on Instagram

## Artist Statement

When I was eight years old, my father wrote a play foreseeing my mother and I's imminent emigration. In this play, entitled ماهی با قلاب گریخته / *Runaway Hooked Fish* (2003), an immigrant father goes to visit his young child but the mother is not home, and so father and daughter end up having an exchange from either side of a locked door. My baba's dramatized adaptation of the original short story by Beroj Akeri portrays a door that remains closed to the end.

The father recounts passages from Ahmad Shamlu's poem "Pariya" (1953) to his young daughter, who, despite poor fluency in her mother tongue seems to know the poem by heart. "Pariya" tells the story of three *pari*—beautiful, otherworldly beings with long, blacker-than-black hair. From the outset, the *pariya* are positioned within a liminal space: before them lies a downtrodden city where the people have just won a great victory against their oppressors, while behind them stands the cold and ominous fortress of legends. Yet the mysterious *pariya* seem landlocked; perched unsteadily between city and

fortress, reality and fantasy, they occupy a treacherous borderland between past and future.

The artworks exhibited in *Carrying Distance* draw inspiration from the play and poem as well as their parallels in baba and I's experiences as a father and child living with geographical, cultural, linguistic, generational, and gendered distances. I reimagine objects from the set of the play—a lone door in the foreground and a long curtain in the background—as manifestations of the context and conditions of displacement and diaspora. Through performative and material explorations, I bring these symbolic elements into conversations with a range of poetic, archeological, and linguistic threads reflecting distances both personal and global.

One such example is a castle-fortress located in Shush, Iran constructed by French archeologists in the 1890s to resemble medieval monuments, notably the Bastille prison. This imposing fortress, built using ancient clay bricks harvested from nearby historic sites dating 2600-3300 years, housed French archeologists while keeping local villagers at a distance.

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