

# **Out-of-Carpet Experience**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Cornell University

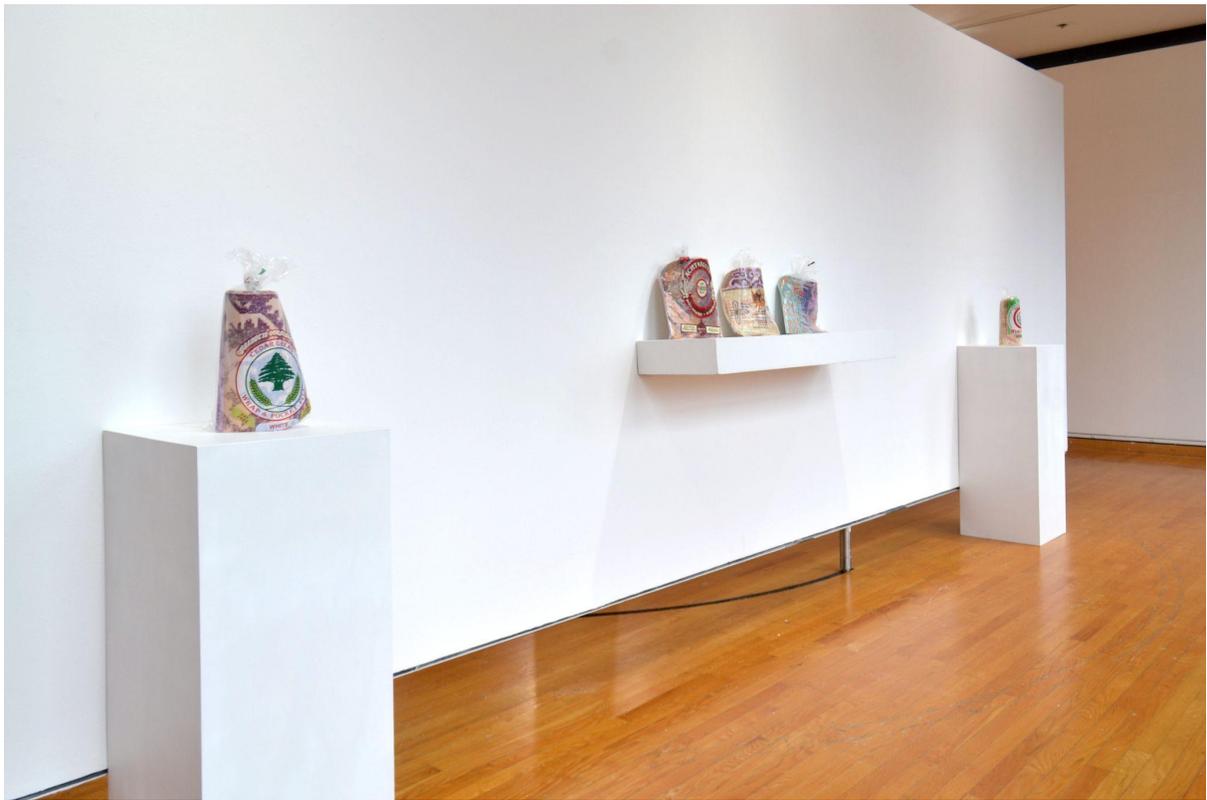
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Fine Arts

Layla Omar Zubi  
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## **Abstract**

*Out-of-Carpet Experience* features painting, sculpture, and screen printing fused together along with carpet installations and labeled material of provisional products. This work interprets the release of Anatolian carpets from the Ottoman-era that are incorporated within Renaissance-era paintings and are associated by their adopted names with specific Renaissance painters. Each image of the carpet displays the transformational, individual appearance of color, scale and shape of patterns, and torn fragments.



***Out-of-Carpet Experience***  
John Hartell Gallery in Sibley Hall, April 11 - 15, 2022

## Artist Statement

They Cannot Represent Themselves; They Must be Represented.

–Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

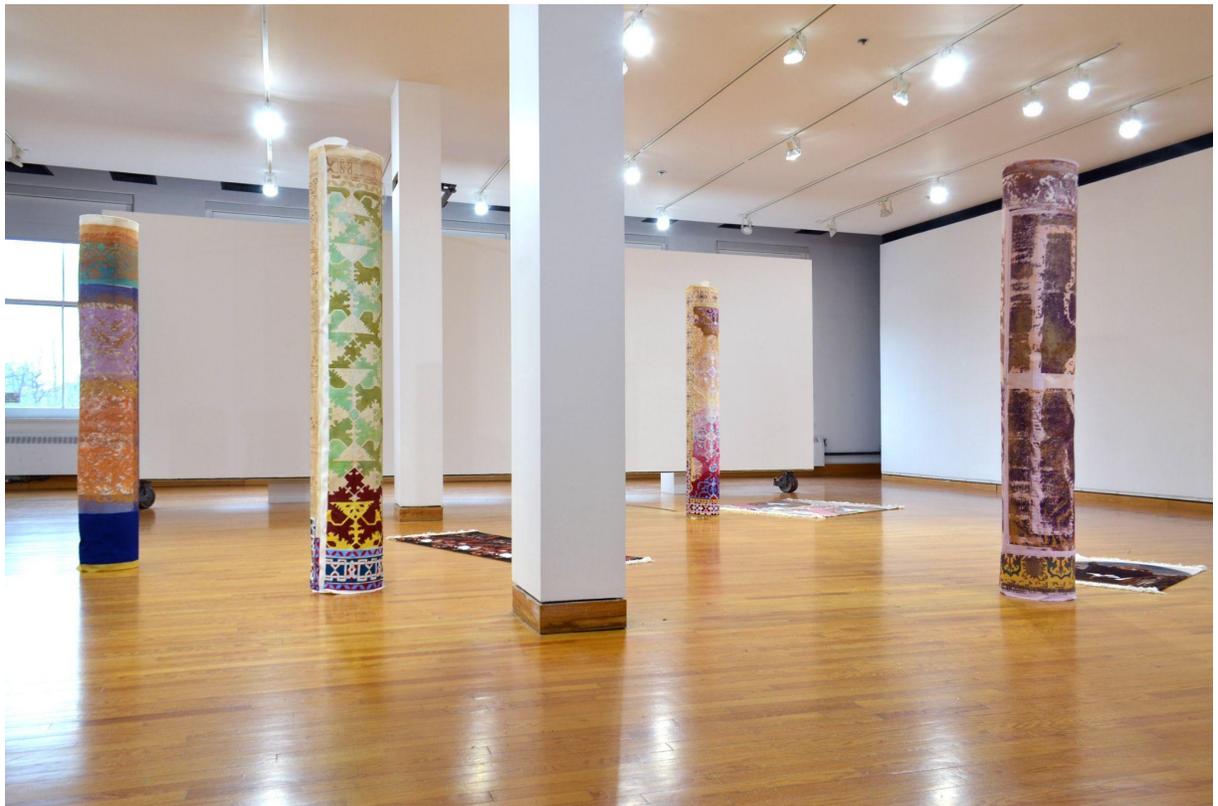
(quote found in *Orientalism* by Edward Said)

My art practice is informed by the multiple environments I was exposed to, the identities I affiliate with, and the knowledge that came from them: being raised Muslim, living in suburbia within a Palestinian-Uzbek household, and being educated in the midwestern region of the United States. I am interested in how I respond to those surroundings that were a dominant part of my development by revealing those spaces of cultural resemblance, historical and global connections, and visibility. In turn, this has led to developing and continuing to think about and make work on the representational image and importance of community and gatherings because identity is most visible and vibrant when gathering together as a collective. At the same time, I want to emphasize resisting cultural reduction of communities that still exist and are projected by an outside majority that tend to create those distorted and false narratives.

I am influenced by the use of architectural design from suburban design houses, worship spaces in mosques, domestic spaces, provisional products, and routine based tasks. These all have compelled me to make objects and images involving the process and recreation of pattern and repetition. The

repetitive process has led to understanding a familiar place of conformity that is strongly connected to the home environment that I was taught, e.g. praying five times a day in a mosque, consistently purchasing the same provisional products, consuming the same meals everyday at the dinner table, and living in a suburban area. The conformity that I witnessed from home as well as other spaces resulted in breaking away from convention and exploring the concept of movement and acts of rebellion and rejection of learned western foundations and perspectives while allowing myself to preserve, claim and reclaim significant areas of my culture, faith, and the places I identify with.

Through the use of painting, sculpture, installation, and printmaking, I am able to visualize the formation of worlds and cultures to exist together and take back control of the narrative of objects and representational images including displaying a transformation of appearances.



Installation views of *Out-of-Carpet Experience* at John Hartell Gallery.

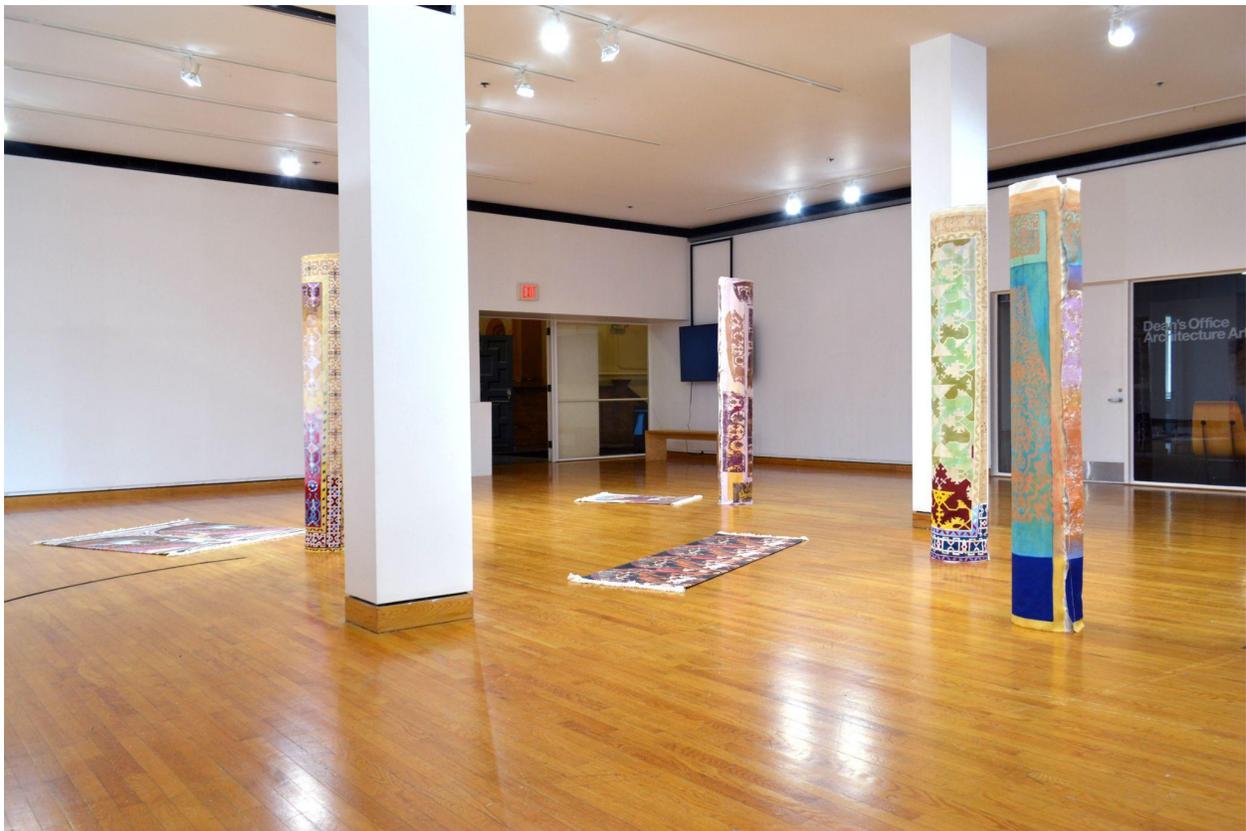
## Thesis Statement

Merging together provisional-consumer materials and western art historical research, *Out-of-Carpet Experience* introduces a body of work that imagines the movement of historically known Ottoman-era Anatolian rugs transforming as its own individual being. The attention to the distinct patterns of these rugs that are selected in this thesis exhibition are crucial because they were known to be incorporated within the works of Renaissance painters and eventually the namings of the rugs were adopted after the surnames of these specific artists: Lorenzo Lotto, Gentile Bellini, and Hans Holbein (the Younger). I view the rugs that are incorporated within the original Renaissance works functioning as a decorative and/or background prop that enhances the work to be viewed as this grandiose representation of Christian iconographic depictions. Acknowledgement alone of mentioning the rugs and where it originated does not justify the historical and narrative gain that the Renaissance-era carries for representing the rugs as their own. Focusing on the identity of the rugs had led me to believe that they objectively are both praised yet be seen as inferior in where they originate culturally and religiously. The display of the rugs are also significant in being seen as physically present. Displayed in the manner of standing columns, the rugs give the impression of a rolled up rug with the patterns seen from the outside.

According to Ken Lum's *The Other in the Carpet*, the rolled up rug within a western perspective was associated with a (dead) human figure wrapped inside that is presented in literary novels. While this reference and projection is something I refuse to accept for the rugs to be known for, the rolled up carpet patterns are to be seen as personified beings, transforming its original color and patterns and shifting to pastel colors and twisting and turning of the patterns in a literal uplift – a form of communicating their own narrative.



Detail view of *Out-of-Carpet Experience* at John Hartell Gallery.



Installation views of *Out-of-Carpet Experience* at John Hartell Gallery.



Detail view of *Out-of-Carpet Experience* at John Hartell Gallery.



*Standing Rug I.* Acrylic, pencil, coffee, turmeric, silkscreen print on canvas. 39" diameter, 78" height. 2022.



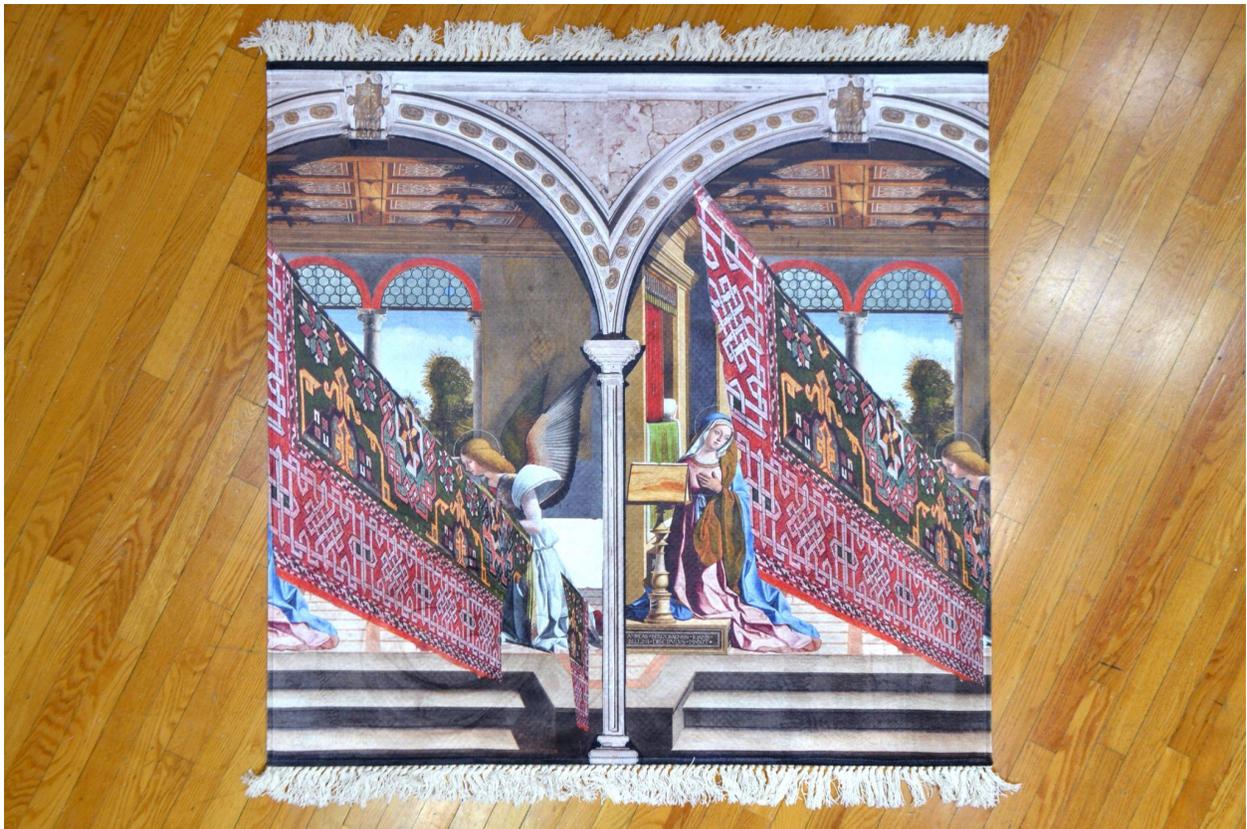
*Standing Rug II*. Oil, acrylic, pencil, henna, coffee, turmeric on canvas.  
35" diameter, 76" height. 2022.



*Standing Rug III*. Oil, acrylic, pencil, henna, coffee, turmeric on canvas.  
41" diameter, 81.5" height. 2022.



The installation carpets are printed manipulated images of Italian Renaissance paintings with the Anatolian rugs that were originally part of the background, taking over the foreground of the works. The rugs within the carpets have stretched out and expanded their presence, depicting the impression of its exit, leaving the Biblical scene of the image. What will the appearance of the rug and its pattern's transform into when making its entrance as a three-dimensional being?



*Untitled (A Rug Named Holbein Leaves From Painting in a Rug)*. Digitally manipulated image of painting printed on rug. 50.5" x 55". 2022.

Image of painting source: *Annunciation* by Andrea Previtali, 1505 - 1510.



*Untitled (A Rug Named Lotto Leaves From Painting in a Rug)*. Digitally manipulated image of painting printed on rug. 76" x 25.5". 2022.

Image of painting source: *The Alms of Saint Antoninus* by Lorenzo Lotto, 1540 - 1542.



*Untitled (A Rug Named Bellini Leaves From Painting in a Rug)*. Digitally manipulated image of painting printed on rug. 25.5" x 40". 2022.

Image of painting source: *Virgin and Child with Saints* by Giralamo da Santacroce, 1537.



*Transportable Life of Rug Pattern Fragments I.* Mixed media on canvas fragments and pita bread bag. 9" x 15". 2022.



*Transportable Life of Rug Pattern Fragments II. Mixed media on canvas fragments and pita bread bag. 10.5" x 11.5". 2022.*



In relation to movement and even removal, the fragments of the rug patterns are now transported inside individually labeled pita bread bags. They exist as:

An old consumption.

A present consumption.

A future consumption.

A cultivation.

A preservation.

A practice

Of generations.

Timeless.



*Transportable Life of Rug Pattern Fragments III*. Mixed media on canvas fragments and pita bread bag. 13" x 14". 2022.



*Transportable Life of Rug Pattern Fragments IV. Mixed media on canvas fragments and pita bread bag. 12.5" x 13.5". 2022.*



*Transportable Life of Rug Pattern Fragments V. Mixed media on canvas fragments and pita bread bag. 12.5" x 14". 2022.*

## Works Cited

Lum, Ken. "The Other in the Carpet, 2016", *Everything is Relevant: Writings on Art and Life, 1991 - 2018*. Concordia University Press, 258-259.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Random House, Inc. 1978, xiii.

## **Biography**

Layla Zubi (b. Saint Louis, MO, USA, 1991) (she/her/they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist from the greater Saint Louis area and is based in Ithaca, NY. She received a BA in studio art at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville in 2014 and will graduate with an MFA from Cornell University in the spring of 2022. Zubi has presented work in solo and group exhibitions including the Granite City Art and Design District in Granite City, IL, The Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca, NY, Experimental/Tjaden and John Hartell Galleries at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, String Room Gallery at Wells College in Aurora, NY, and the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts in Amman, Jordan.

## **Acknowledgements**

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