

**43° 35′ 20.5656″ N79° 38′ 38.8284″ W**

I just landed on Earth! After all the hassle to get here, the logistics, permits, and technical obstacles, it feels unreal to have made it here.

First impressions: there are many spectres here—stories and memories held in the land—I can feel them—they are arriving in pieces but I’m sure they’ll thrive if I continue to tap into them. This land is grey, dusty, just like home, not full of all the colours I’ve seen images of—but I can imagine it, feel the buzz of life here.

The journey wasn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be. I think everyone went on about it being so terrible just to put me off, worried that I’d find myself here and not want to leave.

I still need to master this human language. How will I use it to translate my thoughts, feelings and findings? So limited!

I’m interested in how humans used colours to speak about emotions—from this perspective, I guess I feel blue—a dark blue, like the space I just crossed or like the oceans that I read about but will never get to see.

Apparently seas and skies reflected each other.

In addition to trying the human language, I want to try this human research method

‘field diaries’,

I want to immerse myself in humanity and see if this will bring me any closer to my human side and let me experience things that only humans experienced here on Earth.

My plan for the next few “days” is to explore these primary research questions:

— What can human art from the C21st tell us about life before the disaster?

— What were human art practices and how did they use and think about special resources such as water? Strange to think that it could have been used for art...

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“Today” I’m starting my journey from the University of Toronto’s library, one of the only cultural archives still maintained in a traditional manner to this day. I managed to get a special pass but I’m still waiting for authorization to get access to Rouzbeh Akhbari’s work that’s held in the archives. I know they have information here about an artwork he created with Felix Kalmenson under their duo’s name “Pejvak”.

→ The Observatory for Riparian Repose.

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Getting into the archives took forever, but I finally managed to find the coordinates to the remains of the work I’ve been obsessed with for what humans would consider “years”.

I’ve just arrived, I can see where there used to be a tower, a tulip-like structure held by iron hands, catching the wind and funneling it over a pool of water underneath, creating waves that dance playfully under the sunlight. This kind of tower was apparently inspired by the bādgirs, an old cooling system used in hot desert climates, but installed outside any enclosed architecture here, the tower was void of that function. It only existed for contemplation of the elements—Of course, back then, this land wasn’t like the eroded desert that it is now.

The full structure that I’ve seen in the photos and sketches isn’t here anymore. Everything was covered with sand and dust and just the tip of the six blocks in a circle were left visible. I had to rely on my drones to dust it all off, before I was able to see the residues—traces of those miniatures I saw in the archives—like a fossil, but from that so-called “modern” age; manufactured images turning into organic matter; vivid colors fading away.

There were six of them. I can only see glimpses, but I read about how they told a

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Initially I came to Earth to understand the Observatory and to reflect on the physical and metaphorical relationship that humans had with the Earth’s natural resources...

I thought I would study the work of a poet of time and meteors. But being here, and exploring Akhbari’s work, I’m starting to see that there are so many stories of excess and violence that took place—a history which had terrible consequences on this planet because of human’s need for power and control—colonial power, commercial power, everything for profit—even nature

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I think I need to relocate from here if I’m going to better understand it. I need to go to the geographies that these videos were shot at. It could be risky to change my plans. We are not meant to do that and I’m sure something will be tracking my movements. This must be what humans called “desire”—it’s driving me—I need to see what remains of this oil-rich territory. I wonder about the ghosts and memories I’ll feel in those landscapes. The knots... the conflicts... memories! I can’t not go.

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I’ve just landed in Ahvaz, capital of the Khouzestan province in the Southwest of Iran. It took me 1h to get here, apparently 12h less than it took humans to make the journey in those jet planes—well when they still had petrol to fuel them.

tale of 6 astronomy students from the ancient city of Baku (translating to “pounded by wind” in farsi) who become obsessed with atmospheric winds, and decide to build an edifice together. The story said that they went blind immediately after activating for authorization to get access to Rouzbeh Akhbari’s work that’s held in the archives. I know they have information here about an artwork he created with Felix Kalmenson under their duo’s name “Pejvak”.

I can start to see how humans saw their environment and resources. Contradictorily, they liked to observe it, experience its beauty, but they also poisoned the very elements that gave them life, all of this, so they can continue to produce objects of their own desire.

Done as if stuck in an imaginary infinite loop.

It explains a lot. But here Akhbari reminded everyone how their ancestors used to catch the wind—perhaps humans’ most intelligent idea since it was simply impossible for them to use it up as they did with water and oil.

I’m still trying to understand how they used water as art—just to be observed? Images are coming to me of a land of abundance, this was what humans envisioned. So much abundance that something so precious could be art and in the open like that.

Maybe it really was beautiful, water and wind meeting over the sun (even if the sun was just a bowl used to make a simple water clock).

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I actually found two photographs of this important moment, or better put, this important gesture in postcolonial history. There are two versions of them.

In these lenticular prints men are shown changing the name of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company to British Petroleum, in London and to National Iranian Oil Company in Avahz.

The lenticular print gives the animates the images with more depth and motion, giving them a spectral feeling. Within the shadows of the spaces revealed by the photograph, one sees human characters that fall in and out of darkness, ghosts that are rendered invisible momentarily, only to re-emerge again. It is as if I always saw them in my dreams, haunting me, waiting to show me something, to reveal something unknown that would change the official narrative of History.

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In 2011, the World Health Organization ranked Ahvaz as the world’s most air-polluted city because of its aging and highly worn-out oil industry.

No wonder Akhbari chose to portray the moment of post-colonial oil nationalisation in Iran in such a trippy way—I wonder how that polluted air affected him and his team here. Like in the Observatory’s miniatures, people here were probably getting poisoned from all the particles, either forced to the edge of sanity or blind.

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I’ve already lost count of how long I’ve been here on Earth. This human time has been harder to get a hold of than I thought. It feels like “days” fold into other “days” and in no time at all, I lost count of how many I had passed through.

More memories from this land are flooding me, I still can’t quite make sense of them, but they are all pulling me back to those miniatures. The textures and elements remind me of the mythological genesis stories of Earth, yet their meaning is still distorted for me.

Humans were obsessed with their notion of borders, of separation into “countries” and “nation states.” Maybe the answer lies within the context of these Iranian miniatures in Canada? I have come to understand that borders here are near-physical entities. But I wonder what defined them? I know that contexts on Earth don’t travel through time and space the way I am used to. This means that my perception of these concepts is largely altered. There are layers and folds that don’t cross, but rather lay flat. Maybe all of this is an old conundrum centered around the notion of perspective?

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Today I’m back at the library. As I spend more time here, I’ve come to realise that the library is the best preserved place—and nearly the only functioning place that feels “authentically” human. The building is an archive in and of itself; part of the memory of these lands that I keep feeling.

I’ve found another piece of work by Akhbari, a book: ‘Prizes of Fairyland.’ I’ve been submerged in it, reading non-stop all day. At first I didn’t realise it was a fiction. The book tells of a story of a student hired by a mysterious archeologist, Sabzeghabaei, to explore connections between ancient

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Time and space are distorted from the reality that I know. The layers of existence here are so mono-dimensional.

Memories keep coming to me, but they are like puzzles: fragmented. It’s starting to feel like a well coordinated game of landscapes, rivers, suns and sand. There is so much to this place that I have to explore but for the moment, I’m just happy I got here in one piece and without any interference.

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Being where ‘Prizes from Fairyland’ was filmed I’ve gotten a better sense of the performance and of its improvised stage.

The land looks similar to the video, yellow and grey and rocky—but I don’t see the structures that were in it. The giant drilling equipment and chimneys shining like small suns from the excessive burning of hydro-carbon by-products are gone. I can still feel the suffering of the Earth and see its scars: an ocean of cement filled this holey landscape.

A sublime beauty survived though—not because of the absence of violence, but despite the abundance of it and what it left behind. I see colors I never saw before. And yet, a stilled silence embraces me. It is heavy. Some things you just can’t speak about.

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chimeric forces and contemporary petro-violence in Iran.

The last words of this text still resonate with me:

*I wasn't too bewildered when I opened my eyes this time. In the last few moments of that vision, I'd already begun to doubt my senses. By then, I'd decided that they were all just that: an unfolding vision.*

There’s something here that reminds me of the Observatory for Riparian Repose—both tell stories, and both mix them with research. But where is the line between story/fiction and reality?

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Something crazy happened yesterday, again another “day” in a row at the library, I was thinking about Akhbari’s novel, and something pushed me, it was like an exceptional force—possibly what humans called “intuition”—took me towards a messy shelf full of documents from the C20th.

There was a package wrapped in colourful cotton fabric (a memory of how colourful humans could be came to me as soon as I saw it). I immediately caught sight of it and couldn’t stop staring at it. As I was unravelling it, I noticed that the fabric looked like an old flag with a depiction of a lion printed on it. At first I thought it was a reference to the ancient flag of Iran but looking through other files I managed to identify it as the flag on British Petroleum ocean-going oil tankers.

To my surprise the package contained more archives collected by Akhbari and a USB key. I know I shouldn’t have, but I took it—the USB, the archives and the flag wrapping them all together! I couldn’t resist it, I didn’t expect to find these relics—a USB storage unit!—what a feeling to have such an object of ancient technology in my possession for the first time!

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Akhbari’s performance was quite different compared to all the other human performances I’ve seen in books and archival video clips and photos.

Performing out here makes a big change from those stuffy buildings called ‘theaters’ where people all sat side by side, immobile, watching people move on “stage”.

I imagine people watching or catching a glimpse of Akhbari’s performance as they went to do that human activity of “wage labour”—where humans would exchange their time for a set amount of financial resources... Did they know they were working to end their way of life burning up all their oil? Were humans really that self-destructive, or just short sighted?

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All along, there was a magnetic string pulling towards this place but I have learned that what I see in front of me is not only the pebbles of what once was a society of great power, but also of great fear. Freedom comes at a price. I am seeing that the narratives I believed to be true might only be a reflection of my own other-worldly projections. These abrupt landscapes leave me wondering...

I see parallels... Were there clues I didn’t see before? I believe our societies might be a lot less different than I earlier thought.

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I’m seeing things differently. I know unearthing all of this is dangerous. I can feel it. But I need to remember, at least to try and save those memories. I need to resist the fear I’m feeling.

Keep going! I have to! No matter the costs! This needs to be told!

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Within the package, one of the images grabbed my attention—it’s a close-up of plants titled “Green Lion Devouring Sun”.

I found images and mentions in ancient books of alchemy from the C16th, such as the Rosary of the Philosophers, of a green lion devouring the sun as a metaphor of vitriol purifying matter in order to access gold. But then I found out that the photograph depicted an English Buxus Wood, a plant often erected around Petroleum Enclaves in Southern Iran, Iraq and Kuwait to hide fences or other structures of defense, but also to beautify the surroundings.

Insidious gold diggers, compulsive owners. This could best describe humans of this era, always thinking of how to transform their resources into profit, to turn them into commodities, to use them up all in pursuit of continued economic growth—growth by destruction. Coming across such a profusion of plants, leaves folded over each other, multiple, seemingly never ending, I’m made to imagine what a dream that would be to see this in the real.

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I managed to pick up one of those old USB readers by asking around, but I had to be discreet, I don’t know if I went too far asking, I sensed fear and resistance but I managed to get one, I won’t mention who from just in case.

The USB contained a video titled, just like the book, ‘Prizes from Fairyland’ (How do they fit together?).

It was shot at the Atisha oil well on the outskirts of Ahvaz in Iran in the summer of 2018.

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There is hostility here. Things take longer to change than just a century—things aren’t as different here now as they were before.

I see the signs everywhere. They keep coming. I have to try and leave.

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It seems like my time has now run out and I’ve got lost in this labyrinth of the human Earth. Something is enveloping me, this planet is folding in on me as my mind is unfolding with so many visions. From each vision more develops.

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I only have two drops of energy left but my generator has also disappeared—there’s little chance of me finding a way out of here now. But two drops could get me to 2020, at least for a couple of seconds to share the file of what I’ve found with someone. After that, I’m not sure what will happen to me.

I’ve come to care for this land—I can’t bear to see this vision unfold.

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