"So far, Untitled"

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CONTENTS

Concept

This project revolves around the issues of identity, love and marriage in the Pakistani immigrant community. Since these issues are destroying the foundations of not only the community, but also intensifying the negativity between the immigrant community and the society in Pakistan, it calls for immediate attention and concern. Scared to face a mirror, this project acts exactly as such – a mirror.

Issues of such nature are not decoratives for gallery walls, therefore the entire process growing towards the final show is part of the practical project. By involving public interaction, I wish to gain insight to the issues at hand, and present them in a manner that proves to be a learning and recovering experience.

Backgroud and Motivation

The concept of this project comes out of the direct frustration that I dealt with, when confronted with the immigrant community of the Subcontinent. The Subcontinent is the unique term used to define the geographical region of Pakistan and India. Being two absolutely separate states, with separate ideologies, majorities, even culture at large, the commonalities are unavoidable. With a distinct historical background that got separated only in 1947, and the tremendous amount of years that the people of this land have lived together, the year only marks the divorce of an eternal marriage. This divorce has divided the two nations, but it hasn't been able to strip the people of their anthropological inheritence. And thus, we carry on living, and sharing, at a not-so-subtle level.

The Pakistani Muslims to-date blame the Hindu culture, in which their ancestors have lived for years, of the non-Islamic traditions and the superstitions that have seeped into forming a large part of our identity. This identity is questionable. The country is divided into the basic war of why it was even created, on what basis? Religion? Secularism? Who are we? Born with an identity crisis, we still haven't come out of the circle, only carved it deeper. Emigrants, obviously, got infected with a two-fold identity crisis – crisis inherited by birth; crisis followed by drastic change of physical location.

Larger issues, those at a national level, are the cause of several low laying,

public and individual level problems. National issues are the problem of the government and organisations, and often times given birth to by them. Public problems are what the majority of the civilians are faced with, and this is what they most care about. One of these *public* problems, as a result of the bigger identity problem, is that of love and marriage.

Faced with religious laws, and alien cultural settings, inter-cultural/racial/religious marriages is the new big issue in Muslim (specifically Pakistani) immigrants communities. The man always has the law, or the physical strength by his side, but these issues largely concern the female gender. According to the Islamic law, a male Muslim can marry a female belonging to the *people of the Book*, but a female Muslim cannot marry a non-Muslim man. In case of such an event, Muslim woman marrying a non-Muslim man, the marriage is considered void in the eyes of fellow Muslims, and an open, shameless act of fornication, punishable by death. Though in several cases the man has been witnessed to have gone through a conversion to Islam, this still isn't satisfactory to many people, who are intently striving for a *pure blooded* community.

This gender bias, unfair handling of information, and growth of another source feeding the larger national issue is my motivation behind striving to raise a voice against such narrow-minded and irrational behavior.

Aims of the Project

With this project I aim to:

1. instill in Pakistani immigrants the strength to respect marital choices regardless of the person and gender in question;
2. to learn how respect given bounces back as respect attained; specifically refering to the younger members of the society – harsh measures provoke retaliation and rebellion;
3. to have a rational understanding of the complexities involved with living in and building a family in a foreign country;
4. to respect and integrate into other cultures and races that surround ones own community, thereby projecting a better and positive image to the host country.

By achieving the above goals, I wish for the community to evolve in a healthy fashion for the current and future generations. With this newborn resistance and acceptance, bond the dispersed community, and apply this strengthened bond to have a healthy relationship with the people back home in Pakistan.

<div align="right">Project Description</div>

"A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."
-Mark Twain

When talking of public issues, it makes no sense to work on a project bound by gallery walls, and presented to art/media community and professionals. Keeping this as the slogan of my project, the practical work will heavily aim towards the real people in question. To achieve this, I have designed my project around the following medium:

1. public advertisement
2. mail-art
3. newspaper announcements
4. public ways of online information sharing
5. public event

Using the fake-news (news satire) methodology, I want to brew up a story of a great wedding. After getting a feel of my audience, the story may evolve into either of the two possibilities:

one

Arrange a wedding of two fake/anonymous/famous people involved in an inter-racial/cultural/regious (maybe one aspect, maybe all three) who are new to the community, or disconnected since a long time, and are planning a return.

two

All Pakistani newspapers have a very common section of "matrimonial" - *zarurat-e-rishta*, literally translated as: relation need, where the relation is specific to a wedding

relation. The adds printed under this classified are never given in by the girl or boy in question, but rather the parents or by the marriage bureau. Example of such an add:
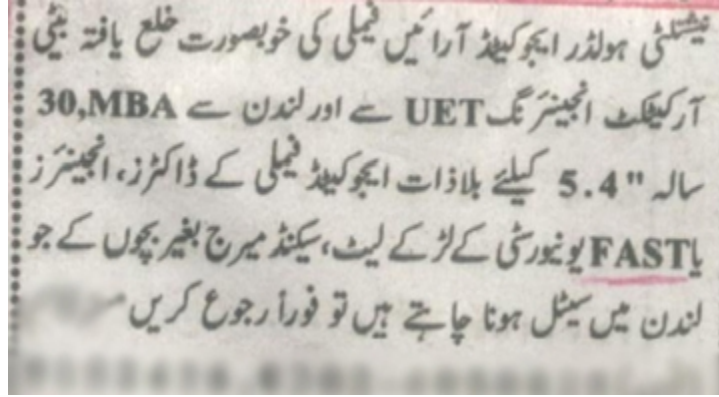
Translation: *Beautiful, divorced daughter of a Nationality-holder, educated, Arayan family. Architecht Engineering from UET and MBA from London. 30 years old, 5 feet, 4 inches. Doctors, Engineers or boys of the FAST University, regardless of caste, widower, divorced-with-no-kids, who wish to settle in London, must immediately contact ...*

Using this strategy, have a fake girl (or real one willing to play along), publicly look for a proposal of a non-pakistani/Muslim man, specifically for a wedding, and not a serious love relationship that *could perhaps* evolve into a wedding.

The events leading up to either of the above-mentioned possibilities will be in the form of public advertisements, newspaper announcements, perhaps an article, flyers, posts, email, etc. The idea is to create a love story very commonly found in media and literature, but is in contradiction with real life values for cultural or religious reasons. A love in fiction, begins with a wedding.

Critical Issues

The project's key protagonist is the public and its involvement, therefore it is of absolute importance that their attention and trust is acquired and maintained. For this reason it is essential that the mediums used to interact with them are designed realistically, with no hint of desperation in the wrong sense.

A betrayed audience, is a nasty audience. If I am successful in acquiring the trust of the public, the next difficult step to overcome is the final unveiling of the non-existence of the advertised female/couple.

Since the audience will be allowed to interact, and send feedback, it is possible to receive well wishes out of this project, but there may be unhappy people as well. This needs to be taken care of. A p.o box number, and a new online e-mail identity is important.

Another critical issue is that this project demands a "design follows content" workflow. All advancements into the project, design or plot related, are dependent on how far the story has gone, and what emotional state it is experiencing. So this asks for constant activity and involvement, and quick, solid decision-making frame of mind..

Final Show

The final show, as mentioned earlier, is the unveiling of the *great* idea behind all the public interactivity. The project will be handled as either a wedding reception (coupled with wedding songs), declaring a happy ending, or as an unmarked grave (coupled with sounds of agony), declaring an unhappy ending. The deciding factor of this ending will be the analysis of the response from the audience, and the difficulty faced by the fake couple.

Besides the general theme of the project, the preceding *happenings* will be presented in a proper online format as an archive for the audience (especially those who missed it) to have a comprehensive look at the project. This will include images, interviews, videos, notes, comments, experiences (a running blog), etc. related to the subject.

Project Plan and Schedule

Month	Date/Week	Work Process
December	17-0-12-09	- Post introductory wedding invites, feel the audience - Create online wedding guest book
	20-12-10	- Go home, Finally!
January	uptil 29-01-10	- Finish managing and expereincing a real, first hand inter-racial/cultural wedding
February	uptil 12-02-10	- Meet cultural anthropologists - Take interviews - Find relevant couples living in Pakistan, and use data to create information circle - Find appropriate literature, articles, etc.
	uptil 28-02-10	- Manage all data at hand - Create web-design for information archive - Keep a blog - Devise an advertisement plan - Read things, grow the information pool
March	uptil 15-03-10	- Start writing thesis - Devise an advertisement plan - Get in touch with a column writer, and see what can be done regarding having an entry related to my project
	uptil 31-03-10	- Meet artists/activist/writers involved in a similar subject - Start building website - Keep writing thesis - Keep writing blog - Implement advertisement
April	uptil 15-04-10	- Analyse emotional state of public response - Have a basic website running (from local host) till the mock-

		show
	20-23/04-10	- Build up open house, mock show
	uptil 30-04-10	- Keep writing thesis - Keep updating blog - Work on the website - Advertise
May	uptil 07-05-10	- Finish and hand in Master thesis
	uptil 31-05-10	- Finalize website - Work on final project presentation - Prepare invites for the public to the final event
June	11-13/06-10	- Build up graduation project installation at Karel Doormanhof
	uptil 16-06-10	- Send out invites
	28-06-10	- Build up graduation show project installation

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Requirements

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Skills

- Developing the required style of website

Technical Facilities and Hardware

- A computer for displaying website
- A computer for installation-related video projection (or if one can do both tasks simultaneously)
- Audio output hardware (speakers)
- Internet connection

- projector/beamer

Relevant Projects

http://www.lynnhershman.com/investigations/privatei/roberta_breitmore/roberta_breitmore.html

Roberta Breitmore (1971-1978), virtual identity ante-litteram

A successful project revolving around the theme of an invented identity. Roberta succeeded in creating a fake trustworthy identity before the advent of online communication.

http://www.imagineic.nl

Imagine Identity and Culture

Imagine Identity and Culture is the first cultural organization in the Netherlands to highlight the culture and identity of migrants as seen from their own perspective. It invites people to describe their history and culture by means of various activities. It then uses these stories to create exhibitions, audio-visual programs and digital productions for both newcomers and residents.

http://laughingsquid.com/the-yes-men-distribute-fake-new-york-times-iraq-war-ends/

Yes Men, Fake NewYork Times

The Yes Men claimed partial responsibility for a prank on November 12, 2008 where approximately 80,000 copies of a fake edition of the July 4, 2009 edition of The New York Times were handed out on the streets of New York and Los Angeles. The fake edition shows their ideas for a better future with headlines such as Iraq War Ends and Nation Sets Its Sights On Building A Sane Economy. The front page contained a spoofed motto, "All the news we hope to print" from the famous phrase "All the news that's fit to print". Articles in the paper announce dozens of new initiatives, including an establishment of national health care, a maximum wage for C.E.O.s and an article wherein George W. Bush accuses himself of treason for his actions during his years as president. There is also a Reuters photo of the fake cover page and a fake website, http://www.nytimes-se.com/.