

**“Palimpsest to Palimpsestuous”**

by

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## Table of Contents:

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| I.    | Introduction .....                           | 1  |
| II.   | Palimpsest in relation to Subconscious ..... | 4  |
| III.  | Earlier Work .....                           | 7  |
| IV.   | Transitional Work .....                      | 10 |
| V.    | Thesis Work .....                            | 14 |
|       | a) Urban Palimpsest .....                    | 15 |
|       | b) Process and Intent .....                  | 19 |
|       | c) Video Installations.....                  | 23 |
| VI.   | Conclusion .....                             | 27 |
| VII.  | End Notes .....                              | 29 |
| VIII. | Bibliography .....                           | 31 |

## Introduction

My thesis work, entitled “Palimpsest to Palimpsestuous,” refers to the history, memory and the reconciliation of my internal struggle as a diaspora artist, with a sense of loss as well as a desire to belong. My intention is not to dwell on this sense of loss, but to acknowledge it as a process that human beings can universally relate to. Particular historical events are not alluded to in my paintings and digital images, yet an overarching presence of the past is omnipresent. Through additive and reductive processes, I address the idea of presence and absence that are revealed and concealed in numerous layers. With a lean towards gestural abstraction, my compositions are derived from natural sources indicating departures from reality. My intention is to offer the viewer visual experiences that begin with curiosity and end with multiple readings of my work.

Exploring the theme of the palimpsest <sup>1</sup> assists me in understanding the complexity of the process in which history is made. In the Oxford English Dictionary, a palimpsest is defined as:

A parchment or other writing-material written upon twice, the original writing having been erased or rubbed out to make place for the second; a manuscript in which a later writing is written over an effaced earlier writing.

Due to the imperfect erasure, <sup>2</sup> the first set of writing reappears faintly underneath the second set of writing over the centuries. Although the process that creates palimpsests is one of layering, the result of that process is a surface structure which can be described by a term, “involute,” coined by the English essayist, Thomas De Quincey in his 1845 essay entitled *The Palimpsest of the Human Brain*.

The Cambridge Professor, Sarah Dillon in her article, *Reinscribing De Quincey's palimpsest: the significance of the palimpsest in contemporary literary and cultural studies* states:

It (“involved”) is the relationship between the texts that inhibit the palimpsest as a result of the process of palimpsesting and subsequent textual reappearance. The palimpsest is an involved phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other. Another word that describes this structure is the neologism “palimpsestuous.”<sup>3</sup>

My interests in the world around me as well as my comprehension of its intricacies are similar to the concept of layering and the interwoven texts as well. As a diaspora artist, my state of being present and absent in two distant places as well as integrating myself into two cultures for past twenty years echoes the logic and structure of that interweaving. My bi-cultural status simultaneously permits and forces me to choose one practice over another or blend them on a daily basis regardless of my physical existence in one or the other geographical location. This reminds me how palimpsests, by their very nature, preserve and contaminate through overlapping, creating a unique embodiment of heterogeneity.

The recycling of vellum became a practice from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries<sup>4</sup> due to a combination of factors. Shortage and expense of writing materials and changing political and cultural affairs resulted in some texts becoming outdated either because the language in which they were written were no more in use, or because their contents were obsolete. While the first reason responsible for overwriting manuscripts reminds me of urban walls occupied with overcrowded

posters and writings saturated with natural erosions, the latter reminds me of deliberate efforts in erasing as well as re-writing history throughout the historical timeline.

My body of work particularly focuses on these two phenomena in the process of exploring the “history of history.” Having been raised in the metropolitan capital of Bangladesh at a politically charged time, both wall-writing and the concept of re-writing history have been significant in my practice of making art.

Having crossed intangible geographical and linguistic barriers, I find myself comprehending and translating narratives from an in-between position. The use of asemic writing or a pseudo-language in my work is a reflection of my numerous unformulated thoughts while I translate from my native language, Bangla to English. This constant subconscious process allows me to follow my instinct in creating gestural marks without any definite meanings. This recalls the automatic scribbles and graffiti-like writing on solid fields by Cy Twombly, the “painter of writing.”<sup>5</sup> The impact of his work in my mind is quite powerful for its expressive and poetic qualities at once. More importantly, like Twombly I am interested in the layering of time and history of mark-making.

### Palimpsest in relation to Subconscious

Twombly's work was a part of the post-World War–II generation of European artists, emerging during the 1950s as Europe was trying to forget the immediate gloomy past and rebuild its future. Surrounded by the ruins of the Greco-Roman glory, originally American artist, Twombly responded to the European history, mythology and ancient walls containing the past and the present. The French philosopher Roland Barthes described Twombly's graffiti-like marks as an addition to the surface. For Barthes, the wall is the object that already lived before the marks were made on it and the surface with past layers of history is what made the marks graffiti. Even if the background is white-washed on which new thoughts can be written over, the background itself is never clean as a “philosopher’s blank sheet of paper.”<sup>6</sup>



Cy Twombly, *Portrait of George D'Almeida*, 1967

This concept may remind one of the famous “Mystic Writing-Pad” that the Austrian neurologist, Sigmund Freud wrote in his brief essay, “A Note upon the Mystic Writing-Pad”. In this 1925 paper, Freud presents a model of how human brain works. The model consists of three layers: a transparent celluloid sheet on top, a sheet of wax paper in the middle and a wax layer or a slab at the bottom.

When something is written on the celluloid sheet (which is compared to human experience), it leaves the trace of that writing on the wax paper (which is compared to memories). Now, if the paper is removed, celluloid sheet is blank. Nonetheless, the writing is always preserved on the wax slab or layer (which is compared with the unconscious part of the mind).

This mystic writing pad was in one way an early thought of today's computer technologies, in terms of how they work and save huge amount of information. Simultaneously, it can be a metaphor for the palimpsest and the process in which human memory functions. They perform the dual functions of accepting new information on the one hand and retaining permanent traces of memory on the other. In comparing the palimpsest with human memory, De Quincey emphasizes its tendency to preserve over its intention to destroy. British artist, Richard Galpin in his article, *Erasure in Art: Destruction, Deconstruction, and Palimpsest*, states the palimpsest is a romantic notion that embodies a "utopian possibility of conservation." He also points out that the difference between the Mystic Pad and the palimpsest is that the former is not able to re-trace memories while the latter possesses that possibility.

Growing up with one set of values and practices, later accepting as well as practicing relatively new sets of the same on a daily basis, my memories are preserved, erased and, most importantly, projected in my artwork from these levels of conscious, subconscious and unconscious, triggered by moments or events. The interchangeable terms of subconscious and unconscious are interweaved rather abstractly in my mind. These are persistent processes that surface in my work, at times in the form of topographical landscapes – a reflection of my longing for home or my desire for belonging somewhere. Writing about the reasons for which I paint, what and how I paint are exercises that bring these personal instinctual thoughts on the surface. These exercises excavate various states of my mind retaining vivid or erased information compatible to the palimpsest.

While comparing the palimpsest with the Freudian Mystic Writing Pad, it is important to point out Dillon's argument about the complex structure of "the palimpsest of the mind" having more in common with the psychoanalytic theory of the crypt by the Hungarian psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Török than it does with Freudian theory of the unconscious, preconscious and conscious systems. Among the several key contemporary psychoanalysis concepts that Abraham and Török introduced, the burial of an inadmissible or traumatic experience or the crypt is most relevant to understand the palimpsest of the mind. We can refer to De Quincey's fantasy of the revival of his dead sister Elizabeth is his refusal to grieve her death in a usual manner. As a result, the fantasies create and consolidate a crypt in his mind that preserves both Elizabeth and the trauma of her death. The palimpsest of the mind may therefore be understood as a structure of cryptic haunting in which Elizabeth is "alive" to the writer.

As a result of my ongoing connections between two geographical locations and cultures, I am not at a state of mourning for my sense of loss of a place. In addition, regardless of my intention of bringing in my past -- which is also my present -- their entangled amalgamation is an unavoidable part of my work. While portraying the topographical landscape of my neighborhood in Bangladesh that I view through Google Earth in my painting, I realize the electronic image is blended with my memory of the neighborhood along with additional happenings in the past. The paintings project how the palimpsests would represent any present moment already containing the past and the possibility of future additions. Dillon breaks down this phenomenon by stating that the present that the palimpsest projects is constructed by the unintended presence of texts from the past and the possibility of the incorporation of additional texts that may resurface in the future.

## **Earlier Work**

My training as an artist began at the Institute of Fine Arts at Dhaka University in Bangladesh. In 1989, when Bangladesh was going through significant political turmoil due to a military dictatorship, as a first-year art student I joined artist activists. Under the guidance of senior artists, I created wall paintings as a part of a public art project to peacefully protest against the military regime. My experiences of creating placards, posters and writings on walls from those days stayed with me ever since. Later they became the most significant formal as well as conceptual element in my work.

Before coming to Lamar Dodd and earlier in the program, I had developed a body of work exploring various perceptions surrounding the veil for both what it hides and what little it reveals. To me, this is an interesting piece of clothing which has the ability to generate powerful, contradictory arguments. I began using layers of text-like gestural marks echoing the ambiguity of the veil as a layer of clothing.

Earlier this spontaneous mark-making or asemic writing expressed my aesthetic fascination of Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Arabic scripts that I am familiar with. I tried to achieve the organic fluidity of those scripts with the brush marks consciously modifying them with my artistic freedom (Image-1). I allowed myself to be influenced by shapes, forms, and directions of various written scripts. For example, the aesthetic as well as the auditory movement of my native language allow me to make fluid, organic marks. While visiting Pompeii and Herculaneum, during the summer of 2013 UGA Studies Abroad Program, I had the opportunity of studying ancient artifacts in person. Strick geometry-based old Roman carvings on Etruscan sarcophagi influenced my marks to leave a strong sense of horizontal and vertical (Image-2).



Image-1



Image-2

One of my greatest influences has been the Cuban-American artist José Parlá, most of whose works can be read as visual chants. He uses the rhythm of cursive English writing in layers resulting in highly poetic movements on wall-like surfaces (Image-3). In an interview with Juxtapoz magazine, Parlá mentioned that although many of those wall writings are his personal conversations and commemorations, they are not to be read directly but to be felt gesturally. Instead of replicating urban walls, he tries to capture the “ghost of his memory of a particular city.”<sup>7</sup> The fluidity and rhythm of his mark-making is captivating to me.

José Parlá, *Victory*, 2011

An important work from my earlier phase dealt with images of chairs infused with asemic writing. Once a friend, who was a war veteran referred to himself and people like him as broken-legged chairs. After coming back from conflict zones, they have difficult time fitting back into and functioning in the society. It is often very hard for them to express themselves verbally as conversations bounce around them without having significant meanings for communications. In this 18-panel-painting (each 12" X 12") writings implied thoughts that never formed meanings (Images-3 & 4).



Image-3



Image-4

## **Transitional Work**

During the second year of my research, I submerged myself into experimenting with materials and techniques gaining rewarding experiences alongside numerous unsuccessful attempts. My goal was to create appropriate surfaces to place imagery on as well as to discover various additive and reductive processes suitable for my work. I often worked on small size canvases or boards viewing them as “test plates” for future work in larger scales with developed concepts. In addition to painting, printmaking processes, such as screen-print, mono-print and digital prints offered me results that were valuable for my artistic development moving forward.

This is the time when I also became interested in representing my immigrant experience due to my undeniable relationships with borders and barriers. Net-like gestural marks, implying network, protection and restriction all at the same time, emerged into my work alongside maps and blueprints of lands. They are results of viewing topographical landscapes (of places that I have travelled to) through Google Earth in an effort to expand my visual vocabularies. The power of technology collapsed the geographical distance and the time difference instantaneously offering me surreal experiences.

Repetition of free-flowing organic lines with varied thickness creating larger moving shapes was my initial response of viewing the topographical landscapes. In order to increase the feel of the bird’s-eye view, I pasted thin vellum paper on which the lines were made. Among other materials, masking fluid offered me the potential that I was looking for in terms of creating layers in reductive process (Image-5). Another interesting reductive process came from

engraving on bees-wax. Covering the wax surface with spray paint or thick acrylic paint and having the light reflected from the engraved areas offered me a decent degree of desired results (Image-6). The initial impression of this work may be of asemic writing that eventually opens up windows to look into, perhaps from a top view.



Image-5



Image-6

A number of digital prints that I created around this time, addressing the same concerns, offered me the opportunity to insert transparent as well as opaque layers that became an important addition to my body of work. It had been a time of faster production as I took full advantage of the “delete” and “re-do” commands working in Photoshop. These commands allowed me to view multiple results in a rather short time, leading me to select the best result moving forward. Clean sharper edges (of shapes) in digital prints encouraged me to do the same in my paintings for stronger results that needed to be considered (Image-7). On the other hand, due to the intrinsic methodical process of screen printing, I was forced to slow down and work in a relatively slower pace taking careful aesthetic decisions (Image-8). One result of my print making experience was applying these new process and critical skills to my painting praxis.



Image-7



Image-8

My next attempt was to use large sheets of burlap cloth on which I pasted velum and then painted on it. Watercolor on top of oil pastel marks created interesting unpredictable textures on velum. The raw nature of the work was amplified by the moments of tiny windows exposing the original material itself (Image-9). The image was abstract organic linear movements that may remind one of traveled paths.

I decided to make a bundle out of this and a few other pieces as such (Image-10). Initially it was very exciting, however the result was not something concrete that I could consider as a future direction. In hindsight, I think it would have produced a stronger result as an installation piece with a huge number of bundles amassed one on top of another, something I may pursue in the future with a refined concept and execution with better craftsmanship.



Image-9



Image-10

My dissatisfaction with burlap or even canvas was primarily due to their insubstantial material nature inadequate for enduring the application of certain materials and techniques on them. For example, burlap absorbs enormous amount of paint or ink while the surface still appears barely painted. I began searching for new materials as my conceptual direction moved from the surface depth of my experiences as a diaspora artist to their deeper connections with memories and their comparison to the structure of the palimpsest. This shift required stronger and more durable surfaces representing walls that appealed to me as receptacles of mark-making withstanding history and time.

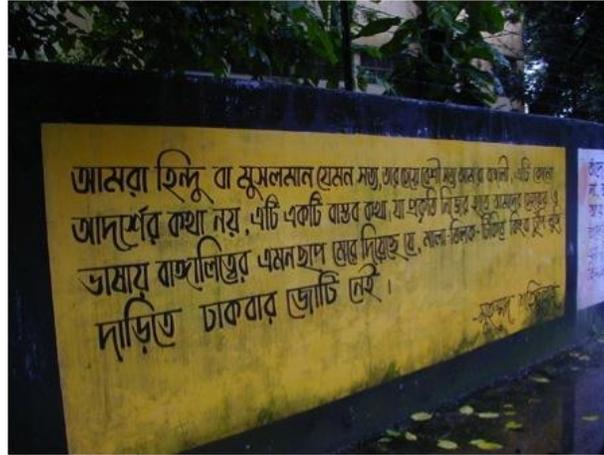
## Thesis Work

As the first step of my thesis work, I had been brainstorming for an object that would represent the idea of “home” while leaving room for multiple interpretations. My initial resources were numerous photographs from Bangladesh and from my international travel experiences. What caught my attention were photos of layers upon layers of old and new writings and images on urban walls in Dhaka. Seasoned by monsoon rain and humidity, those visual messages have the capacity of offering the glimpse of history as it is in its making process. It became a personification of human beings to me with stories of the past and present. Additionally, photographs that I took of graffiti in New York subways, old Roman walls, or engraved mark-making on moss-covered ancient Indian temple-walls have become inspirations for me moving towards the direction of the urban palimpsest.



Wall writing representing a call for a political protest

by the Dhaka University Students, Bangladesh



Wall writing for a cultural celebration

(a quote by a Bangladeshi linguist and an author, Dr. Muhammad Shaidullah)

### Urban Palimpsest

Each layer of an old wall retains history, a certain mode of expression created by a combination of mark-making by human beings and natural erosions. Very often words are written, images are drawn/painted, posters are pasted on walls for personal, commercial or political purposes as a social space offers an inherent access to free speech. The accretion of human-data occurs through the process of building and re-building the walls, plastering and re-plastering of them, painting and re-painting, pasting and re-pasting on them.

These layers are also scraped-off at times offering accidental glimpses of previous layers – a memento or hidden window of moments through piled-up materials. They indicate history that is constantly in flux. Over time these weathered flat surfaces become containers of human history in a given time and space. They become the embodiment of palimpsest in which written texts or marks are partially or completely erased to make room for more.

In the first painting (Image-11) of this kind, I initially thought about using plywood surfaces to build upon. The thought was abandoned quickly due to my impulse, at the time, to break away from the strong rectangles, choosing irregular edges that may resemble a part of the whole. I began building sturdy surfaces that are consisted of mainly cardboard and joint compound, on which I could add, deduct and again add any number of materials.

This piece has been inspired by the BBC article, *World's Barriers*, stating that more than two decades have passed by since the Berlin Wall came down, still there are walls (of separation) around the world that are still standing or have been built since 1989. The concept of a wall telling stories of the past and present as well as presence and absence is rather poetic to me, though sometimes each side of a wall tells different stories. They can be representatives of a collective view with an energetic visual mood offering a sense of urgency.



Image-11



Detail of Image-11

In the next painting (Image-12), I decided to add more layers, in various sizes, on top of the first base surface layer. My intention of treating each surface differently was not quite fulfilled though it allowed me to explore this idea in its infant stage. A large portion of the composition is activated with ripped-off papers creating interesting shapes, at times random map-like images. Sanded-off fuzzy areas contrasting with sharper edges opened up windows into previous layers offering a decent degree of aesthetic complexity.

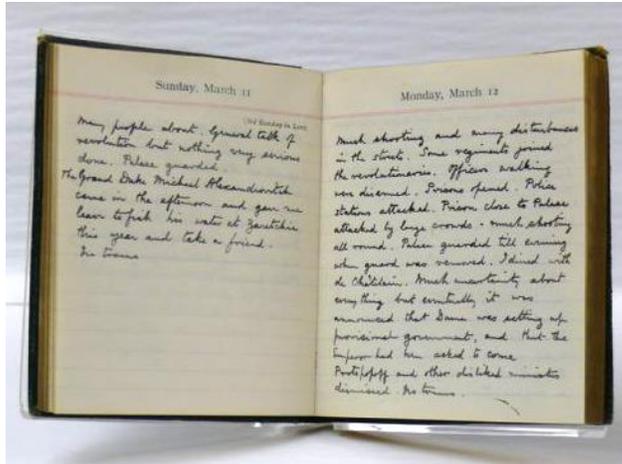
This piece had been inspired by a digital image of a diary page of the Russian journalist and writer, Anna Politkovskaya.<sup>8</sup> The private handwritten diary page recording her experience of an event enters the public sphere when it was published online. The ripped off diary page, serving as the “specific,” echoes with the erasure of history at a particular time and location as her work indicates.



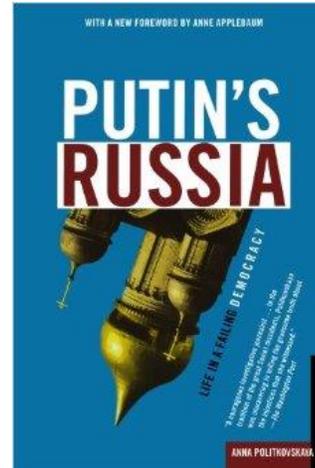
Image-12



Detail of Image-12



Diary pages of Anna Politkovskaya

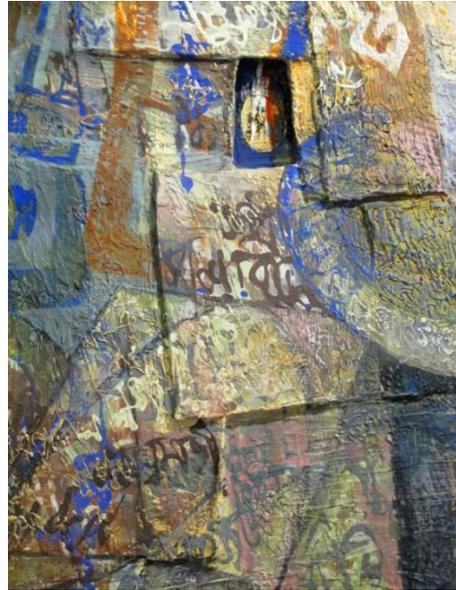


One of Politkovskaya's books

Further along my thesis work, I decided to take more aesthetic risks adding concaved “pockets” in addition to layered physical surfaces. This piece (Image-13) has been inspired by a video, *Archimedes Palimpsest*, demonstrating the scientific analysis of a famous third-century manuscript by Archimedes that had been written over, possibly inadvertently, by a Christian monk in the later centuries due to the scarcity of parchments. I found it interesting not only how the writings had been done in opposite directions in two different languages (Greek and Latin) but also how religious scripts overlap scientific knowledge (Archimedes's mathematical theorems and diagrams). My idea of adding “pockets” to this piece was inspired by scientists' recent discovery of a circle measured by Archimedes that according to these scientists was the first diagram in written history. It was found inside the binding spine of the manuscript that the scientists overlooked for a long time and now call the hidden pocket of wonder.



Image-13



Detail of Image-13

### **Materials/Process and Intent**

In the process of making sturdy surfaces with cardboard boxes and joint compound, I have had to learn patience in allowing the materials to dry in their natural pace to avoid cracking of the surface. Upon the dried surface, I use durable house paint both in front and at the back to seal the surfaces from deterioration. It has been a rewarding experience evoking my viewers' curiosity about the materials that I use for creating my painting surfaces. Often they are mistaken for found plaster pieces or even wall pieces.

Apart from the joint compound surface, my paintings are built-up with layers of newspapers, old drawings/ paintings, matt and glossy paints, at times bees-wax. Opaque marks made with loaded large rollers contrast the transparent marks made through diluted paints. The reductive layers are created by actually ripping off, scraping off, rubbing off, washing off or sanding off materials,

mimicking human activities on actual walls – the acts that I have embraced as my painting techniques for they help establish conceptual connections.

The ripping-off technique may remind one of the works by the Italian artist Mimmo Rotella, who is known for his ripped-off cinema posters. John G. Hanhard in his article, *De-Collage/Collage: Notes Towards a Re-examination of Video Art* mentions the Nouveau Réalisme movement (of which Rotella was a prominent figure) as these artists incorporated the “real”<sup>9</sup> in their work. This “real” is an aesthetic technique that Wolf Vostell (German video artist and one of the founders) called “dé-collage,” which is the opposite of collage or an addition.



Mimmo Rotella, *Casablanca* series, 1963-83

In order to address my concerns about cultural integration, very recently I have begun using a newspaper called Thikana (defined as “address” in Bangla), published by the Bangladeshi community in New York. Besides focusing on American or Bangladeshi news headlines, this paper addresses the issues, such as the immigrants’ responsibilities as U.S. citizens as well as ethnic responsibilities to maintain their cultural traditions: for example, raising their children in

two cultural values, responsibilities of teaching them their native language alongside English. In addition, it talks about how immigration rules and treaties affect immigrant lives, have advertisements of doctors who can speak in both languages and so on.

I chose to use collage materials from this newspaper that serves as “specifics” in my work. This is particularly because the texts in the paper do not necessarily concern any Bangladeshi living in Bangladesh or any Americans living in the U.S. – these are concerns of Bangladeshi immigrants living in an in-between position – a state that all human beings can relate to one or the other way, in different stages of their lives.

Using Bangla text is certainly an ambiguity to the foreign viewers as they are simply text-like gestural movements in their eyes while a Bangla-speaking viewer may enjoy sporadic moments of Bangla words or even sentences that capture attention without making them illustrative texts crippling the images with messages or descriptions. Although I had been reluctant about using collage at the beginning, I have realized that this technique works conceptually emphasizing my “collaged” cultural experiences (Image 14). New York Times or even local papers are also a part of my work as there is no relevance in avoiding my daily reality. Sometimes all of these newspapers are there to simply solve my formal aesthetic concerns of color, shape, form or creating windows of hidden moments that are rewards for coming closer to my paintings.



Image-14



Detail of Image-14

Lately I have been revisiting my typography training experiences, challenging myself to incorporate parts of Bangla letters into my paintings as major shapes occupying a large area of the picture planes. Due to my suppressed urge of expressing myself in my native language, Bangla letters surface subconsciously. It is also my conscious aesthetic decision of not being heavily dependent on asemic writing. The bold presence of the letters themselves is “specifics” for representing the sense of loss due to my diaspora status. Drawing of henna design with craft paint or engraved drawing on bees-wax of topographical view add to my visual vocabulary while defying the idea of only typographic manipulations of letters (Image 15). The engraved drawings may be compared with the archeological quarrying or excavation of one’s self revealing deep and permanent psychological wounds.



Image-15

Detail of Image-15

### **Video Installation at the Britto Space in Bangladesh**

In the summer of 2014, I had an installation exhibition, entitled “Laundering of History,” as a result of my acceptance at the international research residency arranged by the Britto Arts Trust in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

In this installation (Images – 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21), I have combined local materials, such as newspaper, fabric, and tin trunks with two digital pieces. Bangladeshi newspapers published both in Bengali and English languages were pasted on long thin fabrics in multiple layers. The top layers were painted and ripped-off in order to reveal the layers underneath – an embodiment of presence and absence of news itself when the first-person account is absent.

These long paper pieces resembled the traditional outfit, “shari” worn by women in Bangladesh and the Indian subcontinent. While growing up, seeing my mother’s laundered sharies in hangers coming back from laundry was the core idea of this installation. Installing hundreds of fabric-papers in hangers from the ceiling, in different heights offered a traditional laundry environment.

Some of the longer pieces were hung from the ceiling to divide the large space, accommodating the main video piece in a larger relatively dark area. A number of locally-made matt-silver tin trunks were piled-up on the floor, mostly closed while some were partially open. Long pieces of fabric-papers came out of the trunks ended up on the floor in curved folds creating eye-movements throughout the three main divided spaces that needed to be considered. Hidden behind a cluster of trunks, the shorter of the two video pieces was projected on a pasted paper surface echoing the concept of the mediated media that can be compared to the main theme, laundering of history.



Image-16



Image-17



Image-18



Image-19



Image-20



Image-21

### **Video Installation at the P& D Studio Space**

My next video installation was the second part of my earlier digital work in Bangladesh. I used three main components: a painting, newspapers and two video projections. Immersing my viewers into an environment engaging the corporeal field rather than having each element examined separately was one of my goals. The painting (Image-22) has layers of ripped-off newspapers and digital images of Anna Politkovskaya's diary pages, juxtaposed with the diary pages of my father, who died during the independence war of Bangladesh. I came across both of their diaries around the same time and realized how "personal" can be read as "political" in the contexts that they had written their personal experiences in two very different geographical locations, decades apart.

The smaller projection was on the painting and the larger projection occupied the entire adjacent vertical wall made by newspaper strips torn by hand. They ran across the floor paralleling horizontal strips coming down from the painting to the floor as well as the horizontal ripped-off

marks in the painting. Piles of crumpled papers on the floor aesthetically contributed in breaking the rigidity of the strong sense of horizontal-vertical, offering a sense of fluidity. (Image-23)

The video clip projected on the painting represented horizontal motions by tearing of surfaces filled with digitally manipulated texts that turned into abstract shapes in varied sizes and values. The speed in which the illegible texts or shapes were being revealed offered an essence of slow-motion cinematic view or memory, where time slows down (Image-24). The aggression of tearing is suddenly transformed into a heightened poetic moment. The manipulated sound of simply tearing-off newspapers reminded viewers of a humming airplane. The video clip projected on the “wall” of newspaper strips represented vertical motions created by throwing crumpled papers from a top of the ladder to the floor. The manipulated and abstracted version of that clip reminded viewers of fallen birds (Image-25).

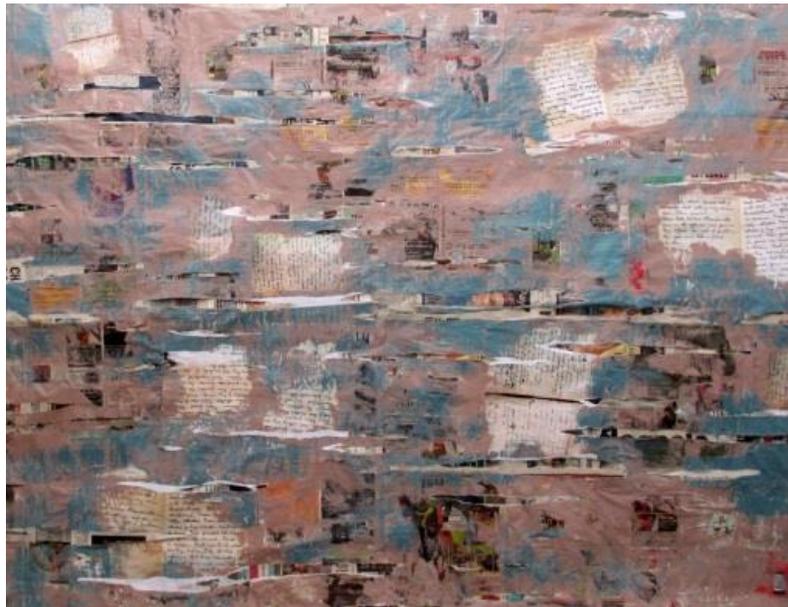


Image-22



Image-23



Image-24



Image-25

## Conclusion

Gestural marks dominate my compositions offering energetic visual experiences with textural details that are to be enjoyed from a closer proximity. I tend to pursue visual clarity by strong eye movements within an almost deliberately created chaos. Creating numerous layers that I compare to the palimpsest is the most significant part of my work that emerged through serendipity and partly due to my understanding of its conceptual importance.

History itself is layered; its' making process is as well, regardless of the natural or man-made process. Each event or whisper from the past leaves a mark in time. If they happen during our life-time, they become memories. We connect to and translate those memories from our own perspectives, sometimes from an in-between position. In the process of creating a home away from home, I speak from this very position -- from an in-between position.

Asemic writing or gestural marks in my work may be a result of my subconscious urge of creating bridges to eliminate differences. They can be read as a democratic visual tool for minimizing linguistic differences in order to create visual communications on a formal level. On the other hand, opposing universal elements such as: past/present, public/private, secular/spiritual, fleeting/everlasting coexist in my work simultaneously. This subconscious tendency of embracing the opposites springs from my personal experiences of leaving all things familiar to embrace everything new -- an uphill journey with an inevitable sense of loss leading to hard earned rewards as well.

Due to my experiences and interests, the resources of my research have been varied. However, connecting my intent to my work process has been the most important goal of each piece that I have created. My determination has been to create art from personal and collective experiences. Through sharpening my visual vocabularies, I strive to be at the stage, where my art will be described as poetic, evoking empathy. Currently, three themes characterize my investigations: palimpsest, asemic writing and a sense of chaos. Balanced concoctions of these three are instances, where the most interesting results tend to unfold.

## Endnotes/ Explanatory Notes

**1** In reference to Thomas De Quincey's essay, *The Palimpsest of the Human Brain...* Although he was not the first writer to use palimpsests in a non-specific or figurative sense, De Quincey's essay inaugurated the substantive concept of the palimpsest in diverse disciplines – beyond the concerns only related to the research on ancient manuscripts. (Dillon 243)

**2** Although the first writing on the vellum seemed to have been eradicated after treatment, it was often imperfectly erased. Its ghostly trace then reappeared in the following centuries as the iron in the remaining ink reacted with the oxygen in the air, producing a reddish-brown oxide. (Dillon 244)

**3** My understanding of the term palimpsesting is the simple overlapping of two or more different sets of texts from different directions. Palimpsestuous is the third form that is created by the overlapping overtime. I chose to characterize my “in-between” position through the term palimpsestuous, because culturally I embody that third form. A lengthy timeline and the interaction among the layered elements are main factors in the creation of “palimpsestous.”

**4** Palimpsests were created from the seventh to fifteenth centuries primarily in the scriptoriums of the great monastic institutions such as Bobbio, Luxeuil, Fleury, Corbie and St Gall. (Dillon 244)

**5** Roland Barthes, writing in relation to Cy Twombly, who he describes as a “painter of writing” discusses the application of marks onto a dirtied surface in terms of graffiti... (Galpin 20)

**6** What constitutes graffiti is in fact neither the inscription nor its message but the wall, the background, the surface (the desktop); it is because the background exists fully as an object that has already lived... the background is not clean that it is unsuitable to thought (contrary to the philosopher's blank sheet of paper) (Barthes, 1985, p.165, Galpin 20)

7 “Ghost of his memory of a particular city” → From a video on his following website clip  
[http://www.joseparla.com/#!/portfolio/videos/nature\\_of\\_language/](http://www.joseparla.com/#!/portfolio/videos/nature_of_language/)

8 Anna Politkovskaya was a Russian journalist, writer, and human rights activist known for her opposition to the Second Chechen War and Vladimir Putin, the Russian President. Politkovskaya made her reputation by reporting from Chechnya. Her post-1999 articles about conditions in Chechnya were turned into several books. Russian readers’ main access to her investigations and publications was through *Novaya Gazeta*, a Russian newspaper known for its often-critical investigative coverage of Russian political and social affairs. In 2004, she published a personal account, *Putin's Russia*, the cover image of which is a part of this painting. Politkovskaya was born in New York City in 1958, the daughter of or a Ukrainian diplomat to the United Nations. In 2006, her assassination attracted international attention.

9 The focus of my attention is on Fluxus and the nouveaux realistes, two groups that incorporated the “real” into their work, an aesthetic technique that the Fluxus artist Wolf Vostell called “dé-collage”... I will further propose that the techniques of collage and dé-collage overlap media technologies and strategies as they share in a turn to social and political issues through the manipulation of the material world. (Hanhard 73)

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