

NAZAFARIN LOTFI

SUBTLE TIME

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Nazafarin Lotfi was born in Mashhad, Iran, and is currently based between Chicago and Tucson, Arizona. She received both her MFA and her Post-Baccalaureate certificate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and her BA from University of Tehran. The artist's work has been exhibited at Brand New Gallery, Milan; Ana Cristea Gallery, New York City; DUVE Berlin, Berlin; soon.tw, Montreal; Everybody Gallery, Tucson, Arizona; and Chicago Artists Coalition, Logan Center at the University of Chicago, Regards, Arts Incubator, The Franklin, Goldfinch, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, and Ralph Arnold Gallery in Chicago. Lotfi has been awarded an artist residency by the Arts + Public Life and Center for the Study of Race, Politics, & Culture at the University of Chicago. She has received grants from the Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona; Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona; and the city of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. Her work is represented by Regards, Chicago.

This exhibition was curated by the Teen Art Group at University Galleries.

structural frame

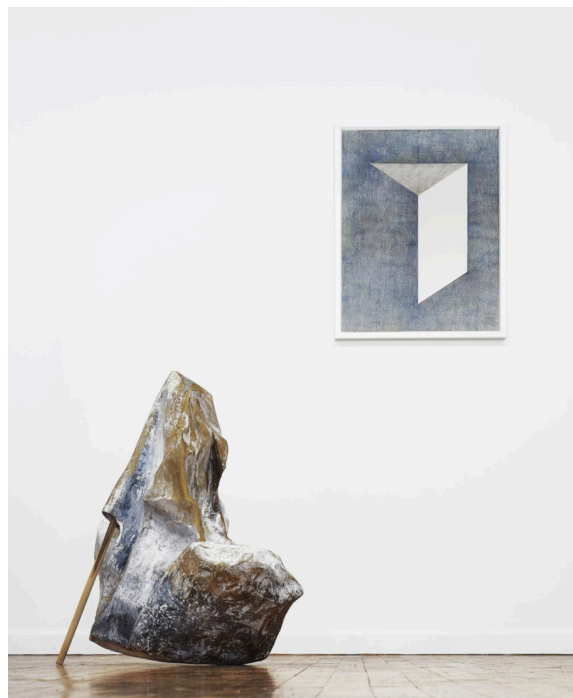
- How does Lotfi's choice of mediums relate to her subject matter?
- Why do you think Lotfi uses Papier-mâché for her sculptures? What benefit does it have over other mediums?
- Examine installation views of *Negative Capabilities*. What formal qualities do you see repeated in Lotfi's work? How do the sculptures and drawings relate to the space around them?

cultural frame

- What relationships are suggested between humans, nature, and the landscape in Lotfi's performance videos *Walk* and *Walk 2*?
- Compare Lotfi's sculptures, drawings, and performances. How do they relate to and differ from one another conceptually?
- How does Lotfi's work reference physical, social, and psychological boundaries?
- In what ways does Lotfi's work suggest architectural shapes and forms? How do these references contextualize her work?
- Read about and analyze Lotfi's work. How does she create ambiguity and contradiction in her work and why do you think it is important that she is doing so?

subjective frame

- Examine Lotfi's drawings, sculptures, and video performances. What is your immediate response to these works? Are you drawn to one medium over another?
- Does Lotfi's work remind you of anything from your life?
- Does any of Lotfi's work remind you of artwork you have seen before?



Installation view of Nazafarin Lotfi: *Negative Capabilities* at Regards, Chicago, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Regards, Chicago. Photo credit: Brian Griffin.

VOCABULARY

AMBIGUOUS

difficult to define; open to interpretation

ARCHITECTURAL

in reference to buildings or structures

BOUNDARY

something that indicates or fixes a limit or extent¹

CONTEMPORARY

something that belongs to the present or current time

CONTEXT

the situation in which something happens

CROCHET

needlework consisting of the interlocking of looped stitches formed with a single thread and a hooked needle²

FORM

suggests three dimensionality: height, width, and depth

FORMAL QUALITIES

refers to elements and principles of design such as line, shape, color, balance, movement, contrast, and unity

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SPACE

positive space is the space objects occupy; negative space is the space around, within, or between objects

SUBJECTIVE

something that is open to interpretation; up to the viewer to decide

SUBJECT MATTER

what is being depicted in an image or artwork

YARN BOMBING

knitted or crocheted graffiti; associated with the do-it-yourself subculture and various activist movements³

¹ boundary (2020). In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved May 15, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/boundary>

² crochet (2020). In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved May 30, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crochet>

³ Hanson, K. M. (2012, February 1). Yarn Bombing. Retrieved May 20, 2020, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yarn-Bombing-1823273>

See nazafarinlotfi.com for additional information about the artist's work

EVENTS

- **Online exhibition opening:** June 1

Links to workshops and artist interviews available on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @universitygalleriesis

ART-MAKING ACTIVITIES

- Consider Lotfi's manipulation of boundaries in her drawings *Subtle Time (Zaman-e-Latif)* and *Fragment*. What are the similarities and differences between these two works? Explore overlapping outlines of physical, social, and psychological boundaries using a variety of mediums and surfaces. How are your relationships with these boundaries and their relationships with one another represented in your work?
- Analyze Lotfi's use of materials and positive and negative space in *Cloud of Unknowing*. Explore manipulating various materials to create sculptures that appear to have forms beneath the surface like Lotfi's. Use a lamp to see how light and shadow can be used to alter the viewer's experience of the work.
- As a class, discuss the relationships between Lotfi's body, her sculptures, and the land in her work *Transit*. How does this work reflect trends in the contemporary art world such as yarn-bombing? Create an artwork that is designed to be placed in, and in communication with, a public outdoor space.
- Read about Lotfi's work and related interviews on her website. Discuss how her experience growing up in post-revolutionary Iran and immigrating to the United States has influenced her work. Create an artwork or series of works inspired by your personal history.
- Watch Lotfi's performance videos *Walk* and *Walk 2*. What references do you see to natural and man-made boundaries? How do the camera view and absence of other travelers in the video influence your interpretation of the work? Consider how social distancing has impacted your life. How has it altered the way information and experiences are shared? Record yourself doing an everyday task or going somewhere familiar. Share your video on an online platform. What details do you notice while watching the video that you overlooked when recording your experience?



Transit, 2020. Digital photographs. Courtesy of the artist and Regards, Chicago.