

FRAGMENT

(at the) MAJLIS AL-JINN

Morehshin Allahyari

Text by Nima Esmailpour

Aisha Qandisha

Ya'jooj Ma'jooj

The Laughing Snake

Huma

Kabous

Qareen & Qareen

Plotted in five chapters and annexed by a comprehensive archive, *She Who Sees the Unknown* debuted at The Majlis al-Jinn, briefs a half decade retrospective of “re-figuring the *Jinn* figure” by Morehshin Allahyari. The hybrid human/non-human figures often visioned in symmetrical postures and appearances, elude the logic of *either/or* in favour of the *neither/nor* of non-binary beings; whether captured as monstrous or angelic, animal or human, they queer the authoritative worldings of normative imagination. Speculative in their form and fictive in rendition, mirroring and reversion are applied in recasting the *Jinn* figures echoing verses into multiverses. Opening a backdoor to *The Majlis al-Jinn*, *The archive*, for the first time, is made publicly accessible through layered physical mirroring, bypassing the restraints of archival exclusivity and language constraints. Thoroughly researched, carefully annotated, and engagingly illustrated, this curated archive comprises a significant collection of manuscripts and extracted material from various sources of Islamic mythologies and the occult sciences, prioritizing further access to their neglected readers in Farsi and Arabic.

The story is told of a summation held at *The Majlis al-Jinn* (Arabic: مجلس الجن, lit. “meeting/gathering place of the *Jinn*”), a blessing observance where a slant of light dawned on her in the darkened times. She is the sole observer of the vagaries of history, of herstory, for *She Who Sees the Unknown*. The unnarrated pasts are brought to her at the presence of two sculptural companions from the realm of dominion (*Alam Al-Makalut*, Arabic: عالم الملكوت); *Qareen and Qareen* (Arabic/Farsi: قرين, lit. “constant companion”), a double of spiritual stature, raise libation in sacred vase and bowl, offering their observers healing and protection from unending ailments. Their fabulous power blot out everything about the

later course of *re-figuring* the disastrous endings; the unknown order is yet to be passed upon, before the catastrophes of the timeless time strike from the unseeable horizons. The surrounding visitors of this gathering recall a future, alas, hidden to the archeologists of the aftertime.

A story unfolds of the unheard and untold at each corner of the *Majlis*, truthfully fabulated rendering a world in oddity and wonder. *The Queer Withdrawings*, selected from the archival withdrawals circle around *Huma*, who blows out the heat to our feverish universe, curing the ill-tempered bodies, lands, and waters. *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj*, who breach into the confinements of othering and liberate the dislocated from the human-made barriers. *Aisha Qandisha*, who penetrates the bodies intoxicated by masculine malaise; she cracks up their closures to set an irreversible passage releasing stuck feelings towards emotional justice. *The Laughing Snake*, an unforgiving creature whose laughter echoes the voice of those being silenced, those of *her equal*, while her mirrored image counters those silencing her narrative, those of *no equal*. And *Kabous*, who passes down the orature of sisterhood and kinship, motherhood and lineage, traumas bearing two accompanying witnesses throughout generations—of those laid down and yet to rise up.

Also known as a primarily decorative medium of Iran—not far from where the *Jinns* of Perso-Arabian lores originated—mirroring (Farsi: آینه‌کاری *ayeneh-kari* lit. “mirror-work”, or قرینه‌سازی *Qareeneh Sazi* lit. “to reverse”) is used as the aesthetic revetment in shrines. Likewise, mirroring schemas and mirrored-looking sketches furnish *The Majlis al-Jinn* a sanctuary in both the realms of the virtual and the real. Mirroring and symmetry in form correspond to balance in order and power.

The sculptures, *Qareen and Qareen*, companions of two are positioned *Qareeneh* [mirrored] offering blessings. *Huma's* heads face towards both sides with the third head turned into the future seeking to balance the climate injustices. As for *Aisha Qandisha*, she of then and she of now became one to counterbalance the emotional loss. *Kabous* is accompanied by two bearing witnesses of the right and the left, hovering over the dreamer's body. *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj* is a creature of mirrored lands, indistinguishable from the geopolitical traits of the East and the West. *The Laughing Snake* is engrossed by her reflection in the mirror and laughs to death; the amplification of her laughter positions her ultimate power against the men who held the mirror in front of her.