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Intro by Katrin Faridani

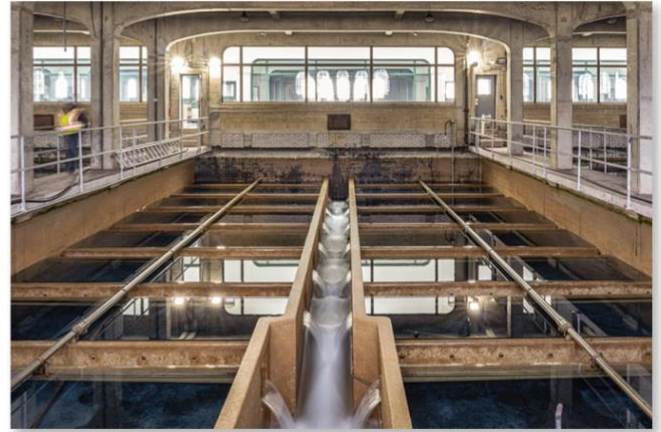


Figure 1: Interconnected: From the Tap to the Lake and Back

My name is Katrin and I have taken on the responsibility of the PHSC newsletter. I have not worked on something like this before and my computer skills are limited to photo editing software, but I am eager to learn and contribute. I thought I would give you some insight into who I am with a little background. I am a first-generation immigrant. My family left Iran after the 1979 revolution for Canada via Greece. Part of the Armenian diaspora, my mother chose Canada because she wanted to live in a country with a lot of nature, clean fresh water and a government that wasn't theocratic.

We landed in Mississauga in 1981, after a yearlong immigration process in Athens. I was placed in grade 7, never having completed grade 6, because I spoke no English and it didn't make sense to hold me back a year. In grade 12, I picked up a camera, a Nikon F2 given to me by my father, a documentary and landscape photographer. I attended the Jostens yearbook camp, photographed school plays, and learned how to process and print in our home darkroom. In 1988, I applied to (then) Ryerson Polytechnic Institute and was accepted into their still photography program. Upon

graduation, I worked as a freelancer until in 2003 SARS forced me to change course and I left Toronto to teach English in South Korea.

I stayed in the field of English Language Teaching and became an examiner and an examiner trainer for Cambridge exams. I taught ESL in Toronto and then became a program director, but I was never happy doing this kind of work, so in 2015 I walked away from it all and returned to photography full time.

Life had other plans for my family and in 2017, my mother's Dementia progressed, and assisted living became necessary. I became my mother's part time carer and advocate, trying to take her out for day trips and meals as often as possible, but this meant my business started to stagnate. When she became non-verbal, I started photographing her. My camera became a barrier



between me and the pain I should have been feeling. I did not know this at the time, but looking back on those images now, I see that her decline was rapid, and our decisions correct. At the time, I could not see that, and was overcome with guilt, but this cruel disease doesn't leave a lot of options. I cannot stress enough the importance of photographing your loved ones at the end of their lives. I was met with disapproving looks and judgement, but had it not been for those images, I would not know that we had made the right choices, and guilt would have eaten away at me.



When my image of our final Mother's Day together was chosen by Canada Covid Portrait for exhibition at Harbourfront, the outpouring of support was overwhelming. I realized there were many people in my and my sister's shoes, navigating this diagnosis and the medical system alone and particularly isolated during the pandemic. I realized my strength lay in documentary work, and giving people insight into a world they had no experience in. I realized then that I needed to return to university for higher education.

I applied and was accepted to Toronto Metropolitan University's (then Ryerson) Documentary Media MFA, and my first book project and short film were entitled *When Silence Fell*. The film

([here](#)) focuses on our immigration story but touches on mom's illness. The book, however, is more about dealing with ambiguous loss. I am currently in the second edit of the book, and plan to find a publisher for wider distribution. It was and remains a very difficult project to work on, which is why I chose to move away from it for my Major Research Project at TMU.

Water and city infrastructure has always interested me so when the opportunity presented itself for me to focus on a project in Toronto for two years, I decided to look at Toronto Water, and explore the systems that carry water to and from my home. I followed the path from my home to the lake and the plants that process the water to and from my home. I gained access to parts of the city few have seen and set out to demystify this system we rely on, but rarely see.

My project *Interconnected: From the Tap to the Lake and Back* was chosen for the Image Centre Gallery, and the PHSC generously awarded me a book grant for the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition. If you would like to see either of these projects in future newsletters, please let me know.

As to why I would like to work on this newsletter, mostly, I would like to be involved in the photographic community of TO, write about exhibitions, books, projects in the works, and photographers working in our city. I freelance, and am continuing my MFA project, so I will aim for a newsletter every 4-6 weeks. We are also going through a refresh of the newsletter and social media pages, so look out for a fresh new look coming soon.

I would like to hear from you about what you are interested in reading about here in the newsletter. If you have any ideas, please feel free to write to me at kfaridani@torontomu.ca.

PHSC Fair and Auction

On September 17th, PHSC held an auction. This was my first time attending and I was surprised to see the variety of items, and the age range of the attendees.



I was delighted to come home with 3 books, some 4x5 film and Polaroids (and a Polaroid back, though I have my own), but there were boxes of gear; from point and shoots all the way to view cameras and lighting.



The October 15th fair was equally successful, though I was unable to attend and document that day. Our next Estate Auction is coming up on November 19th, 2023. See poster on last page.

Exhibitions not to be missed.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year

Through May 26th
Royal Ontario Museum
100 Queens Park,
Toronto, ON M5S 2C6.
Level 3, Third Floor
Centre Block

See press release [here](#)

Stories from the Picture Press: Black Star Publishing Co. & The Canadian Press

Through April 6, 2024
The Image Centre
33 Gould St.
Toronto ON M5B 1W1

Link to exhibition [here](#)

HER SPACE

Through July 17, 2024
Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas St W
Toronto, ON M5T 1G4

Link to exhibition [here](#)

Site Unseen Zteven Laurie and Zeke Moores

February 8 – March 28,
2024

Location: 200 Steelcase
Road East, Unit 6,
Markham

Spotlight on Toronto Photographer Tobi Asmoucha

Interview with Katrin Faridani

I have decided to interview Toronto based photographers for our publication to highlight those I know and admire, and to give them an opportunity to speak about their experiences getting started and working as photographers in our city.

Tobi Asmoucha and I studied together from 1988-1990 at Ryerson, now renamed Toronto Metropolitan University. We were in the Stills program (Photographic Arts).

I dropped out for a year and returned to a different group of classmates, but Tobi and I always kept in touch, and I even worked as her assistant a few times for Toronto Life Magazine projects.



We were shooting on 9-11 and the following day, when we almost got arrested for trespassing, due to miscommunication (but that is a story for another day).

How did you get started off, and what did you do to get to the point where you felt things were “happening”?

I was working part time (at Steichenlab and lifeguarding) just so I could eat. I had my project going on (The Parades Project) so I could have something to focus on before I was getting work. I started applying to get shows, so I was trying to do project-based work, figure out what I wanted to do, where I wanted to live etc. In your 20s, you don't know whether you're coming or going, but I knew I wanted to shoot. And I had more audacity, so I kept putting it out there. I sent out 25 packages to magazines to try to get it published, and I remember, nobody got back to me. I thought maybe I had to think of other things because nobody was seeing what I was seeing. You get to this point where you have to be ok with things not being ok, yet still do it, and then some things shift. That's how it has worked for me. Just as I was about to give up on it, Canadian Geographic got back to me saying they wanted to publish it. But I had to send those packages out and get the rejections that got me the Yes! What I love is shooting, and I still shoot. I have a creative life, and I like it, so perhaps that's enough.

What happened after Canadian Geographic? Did all kinds of doors start flying open?

A few doors started flying open. But I kept pestering people; I had a schedule of people to contact and follow up with. Toronto Life was my bigger break. They started to hire me, asking me if I can *handle this*, and I kept saying yes, while I was thinking “Can I?”. I haven’t really changed; I haven’t matured over the years. I still have the imposter syndrome every time, and I still do it in spite of this narrative going on.

What was the first project with Toronto Life?

It was a job of going around and photographing a neighbourhood. It was a great project. I got “in” with a lot of people through that. You treat the world as a possibility, be open, don’t make any assumptions because people move (on).

I am a curious person; I ask questions and make connections.

What do you think about the concept of that photographer pigeonhole themselves into one type of photography?

If you just do one thing and you do it beautifully, you can have a good business, but my focus hasn’t been *the business*. I like the challenge of not knowing everything. I don’t think there’s a right or wrong, I like some consistency, but I like different project too.

I like it to be a myriad of things; a portrait, then photographing a store, where I have to think on my feet. I find that more exciting.

Do you constantly have to hustle?

I teach more now and have a family, but I still shoot. I don’t shoot for as many magazines, but I am doing some work for U of T, some for hospitals, smaller trade magazines, pharmacies, and grocery stores. You have to take things as they come, and sometimes I can’t take them, and they peter out.

I am teaching now for the Broadcasting and Photography programs at Centennial. I teach Photojournalism, Visual Literacy, it changes from one term to another. I love teaching and I want it to be part of my practice, but I don’t want it to be all of it.



Do you have any exhibitions coming up?

I am part of 2 Julia Margaret awards in Barcelona, but nothing closer to home.



I have started doing a series on ships and ferry boats, the idea of portals, places, and movement. I didn't know that, but I have been photographing ferries for a good 20 years or so without thinking about it. I am such a water person and my history, and possibilities are connected through larger ships, and I have a yearning for water. So, it was a natural project that I didn't know was happening. I have the beginnings of a project. I need to spend some time with it so I am figuring out where I can put it. For me, I have to see things over a long period of time, so I am excited to see where it goes.



What were some the big exhibitions you've had?



I had my Legion Hall work at the War Museum, and it became part of their traveling exhibition, so it got into places I couldn't have gotten on my own.

I also have a piece in Berlin, in the Jewish Museum.

Also, After Refuge at Gallery 44, but I think I can do more with that, and there's also the skating series. That's not done yet. There's so much to do.

Do you ever feel like your projects are “done”?

I think the Parades series is done, though every time I see a procession, I get excited. After Refuge, and the Skating can keep going if global warming doesn't melt my ice. I tried to shoot it last year, but there was no ice. So, it might be done. I need to get it out there. Part of that series is going to be in Alberta, but once something is done, I have to get it out of my mind.

But it's hard to work in a vacuum, I need to show the images to others, talk about it, work it out. I need that.



When I asked Tobi how she balances life and work, she grimaced and said “There's no balance. It's like a triage. What is most important right now? That's what gets my attention.”

All images were taken by ©Tobi Asmoucha. To enquire about purchasing an image please contact the artist.

Tobi's work can be seen on the following sites:

<https://www.tobiphoto.com/>

https://www.instagram.com/tobi_asmoucha/

As a result of this article, Tobi and I have decided to start an artist's group that meets once a month. We would meet to discuss our work, get insight and ideas, and break out of the vacuums we work in. If you are a practicing artist, and this is something that interests you, please email me at kfaridani@torontomu.ca

Toronto Metropolitan University First Edition Photobook Awards

Sponsored by the PHSC



On January 25th, we had the great honour of attending the First Edition Photobook exhibition and presenting the winners with awards.

The winners were:

Sai Bagni for their book entitled Frisson!

Maddison Chow for Works of the Flesh

Max Grueninger for HAUTE COUTURE

Alejandra Harrison for Murder at Monochrome Manor

Joon-Young Lee for Nicrine, Glass & Fabrics

Sophia Markelj for Generational Flavours

Charistie Xu for A Place On Earth



Congratulations to all participants for the great work, and to the winners.





North America's Largest
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Sunday, May 26, 2024

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145 Evans Avenue, Toronto

South of the Gardiner, east of Islington Avenue

→ **Noon to 5pm** ←

(New Hours!)

Admission \$7 / Students Free / Free Parking

Lunch available for purchase at the Hall's UNO Bistro

Mark - Chairman - fair@phsc.ca

Details at www.phsc.ca

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MARCH 20, 2024 at 8 pm EDT

Kjeld Duits introduces the fascinating and barely known history of Japanese hand coloring, starting from the introduction of photography and ending with hand colouring's legacy.

To join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82069539515?pwd=w4bxzfsINa4Srbm52Ny2NXTv6nDaQo.1>

Meeting ID: 820 6953 9515 Passcode: 117695

This event sponsored by the Photographic Historical Society of Canada

