

# ZARINA MUHAMMAD AMA

Where does the internet end and the real world begin?

this is i think a really subjective question, the line shifts for everyone. for me it ends at screens. the internet at the moment is one of those things that i only come across on screens, and that's where the limit is for me. i know where screens end and trees begin, so it's more clear cut but sometimes these things bleed over into each other.

Your practice is very much on the border of URL and IRL. Do you feel a pull towards one end of the pole versus the other, especially when it comes to representing yourself?

yea, i think it's about balancing. because especially with my bot, i've been using URL as a way of me like... delegating my representation or my speech or agency as an artist. i see ZarinaBot as a kind of fully automated avatar for myself. but then i feel this pull to take all my work offline at the moment, it's complex i think. i've been obsessed with this idea that artistic practice isn't a series of vertically occurring projects, but rather a horizontal (or like, rhizomic) network. and i think although that might have digital connotations, for me that's resulted in a massive shift, away from the online world, to a more introspective, reflective and interior kind of analysis. i've been hesitant in just putting my work on the internet, because i'm thinking now about what that means, not just politically, but like. for the work itself, does the meaning of it change as it goes online? how does that position itself offline, in a gallery space, yknow stuff like that. i think it's less a feeling of pulling and more like a feeling of balancing. i don't think those are the only two (or at least the main 2) concerns in my work at the moment, but only because everything is always always shifting.

How would you describe your overall aesthetic in terms of making and writing about art? How do you think viewers and users will respond to the 'internet-y' feel you're creating from your work/media?

i think an aesthetic that responds to, or engages, and actively uses the stuff that's online at the moment, is really unavoidable. i've stopped looking at emojis as exceptional. Like with how the white pube does a 3 emoji summary, we're not doing that because it's novelty or like gimmicky, but because emojis are now supplements to a URL vernacular. they can be used dialectically to convey something quickly that perhaps allows for interpretation. it celebrates the subjectivity of perception which is central to the white pube's philosophy. i think things like that should be stripped of their novelty so we can truly fixate on what it is that they're doing, so we can like fully get to how they operate, rather than use them just decoratively. because although yea, they're like decorative or aesthetically deployed, that's not the only facet of them. so idk, the internet has always been kind of banal to me and in my work. i'm more interested in the way it sits alongside other things like race and gender and now semiotics.

Do you feel that your appropriation of viral memes is a recontextualisation of those already popularized ideas/ images/ texts? How are you creating something new?

one of my tutors said something i really liked once when i was talking to them about this: that it's enough to just move something into a new discourse, that changes it enough for it to become something different, or shift slightly. i think just recontextualising things sometimes is enough. i think whether it's new or recontextualised or changed with the context, really depends on what i'm doing

with it. because with *Digjihad*, it's one of those works where i've not really made anything new, it's all appropriated imagery, and i'm just shifting the context, and the things around the images, the periphery. but with the bot memes, (*MEMEZ AND FRENZ*) it's different, the shift is more focused on the form than the content.

Your focus on ISIS memes and online identity seems dangerous. How do you feel about trolling terrorists?

hahahahahahaha really quite scared.

i think i'm more worried about white people thinking i'm islamophobic and like, approving of these really quite horrible memes than anything else.

or using me as like a "YEA, MUSLIMS ARE ALL TERRORISTS" justification. ldk. i guess i'm just equally scared of ISIS and white people. i don't know why i made that bloody video. hahahhhahaha  
\*nervous laughter (this is for context bc u can't read tone or body language in emails)\*

Can you explain the relationship between *MEMEZ & FRENZ* and *ZARINABOT 3000*? How has indeterminacy influenced the nature of your practice and the final outcome of your work?

omg for the better for sure, this is a really good question, i've never thought of it as this way round, but it totally could be. i used to really struggle with \*Political\* art, bc it never really escapes the shadow of its own spectacle. u know? it's always like statement jewellery: one toned, single faceted, you get the message, and it's didactic, singular and then u go "k, i get it. i'm moving on now" and it kind of repels prolonged engagement with the art. i've said before that i don't want to make work that is polemic or didactic, or certain of its own voice, i want it to be more unstable than that, and maybe something new, a more autonomous form than polemicism or didacticism. i think the way my bot kind of.. eats meaning, chews it all up, but then spits it right back out and like, tries to arrange that mess into something that looks kind of like what it chewed up in the first place. the way it does that, idk, it kind of solved my problem with singular meaning completely. i think the bot was what came first, and then the images followed. it's a horizontal leap from bot to memes.

How do you feel about exhibitions and artworks based online? Do you think this is the future?

hmmhmmhmmhmmh i wrote that essay on why we should move all exhibitions online for the white pube, really early on, like in october last year. and i'm not too sure if i agree with myself. i think digital exhibition is great, really important and it offers itself up as a solution to loadsa problems, like access, accessibility, afterlife, documentation, etc etc... but if it's online, it's different to how it is in a gallery. i think it should be considered not as a replacement for actually going into a physical space, but rather as a new form, separate to IRL art. the white pube has been hosting a monthly online residency, and loads of our residents have really been pushing and playing around with what you can do in a digital space, that u ca't do in a physical one. it's amazing, really interesting, and i think that's how it should be. an opportunity to extend the limits of the art world, push them wider and expand what art is, and how it an exist, and not just keep it the same shape but in a different place. i think that's when online art becomes really interesting and subversive and worthwhile, otherwise it feels like it's doing the same thing as emoji art, that it's juts upholding novelty value instead of stripping it away and looking underneath that.

To what extent is your media presence a representation of your art and self, and vice versa?

my bot is literally my manager, my PR representative. i use my instagram as a sketchbook i guess. my tumblr is kind of out of use, but twitter is definitely a source for me to like, talk through my concerns

and questions, whether i get a response or not. like my art bleeds over into my 24/7, so it wholly dominates my social media, ya. i wish it didn't but it totally does. my twitter is more representative of my art than it is of myself, it's a hugely unhealthy co-dependent relationship.

Can you represent your work/ self through ONE tweet or Tumblr post?

i can sum up my practice in under 140 characters, technically tweet length: Loosely based on the format of Mariah Carey's episode of MTV Cribs. if i, as a person, were a meme, i guess i would be grumpy cat.