



Veil: Veiling, Representation, and Contemporary Art

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No single item of clothing has had greater influence on Western images of Middle Eastern and North African women than the veil. The fascination of Western writers, artists, and photographers with the veil reflects the voyeuristic nature of our interest in what is strange and "other." Veil, which accompanies an exhibition organized by the Institute of International Visual Arts in London, explores the representation of the veil in contemporary visual arts. Providing a context for the commissioned essays are a number of classical historical texts crossing religions, cultures, genders, and ages -- from Greek myths to articles published in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Some of the contemporary artists and scholars write autobiographically about the meaning of the veil in their lives. Others take a more political approach, discussing, for example, how the events of September 11 changed the use and reception of veil imagery throughout the world. Still others take a historical approach, examining how nineteenth-century technological developments in travel and photography led to photographic depictions of both the veiled and unveiled body in relation to landscape. A number of essays look at the art historical precedents for the current interest in artwork addressing the veil, while others examine how codes of modesty and gender segregation have affected the making and viewing of films in postrevolutionary Iran. The essays are by Jananne Al-Ani, David A. Bailey, Alison Donnell, Ghazel, Salah Hassan, Reina Lewis, Hamid Naficy, Zineb Sedira, and Gilane Tawadros. The artists represented include Faisal Abdu'Allah, Kourosh Adim, Ghada Amer, Jananne Al-Ani, Farah Bajull, Samta Benyahia, Gaëlle de Clément, Marc Garanger, Shadafarin Ghadirian, Group AES, Emily Jacir, Ramesh Kalkur, Shirin Neshat, Harold Offeh, Gillo Pontecorvo, Zineb Sedira, Mitra Tabrizian, and Elin Strand.

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