

Impressions

Sehrish Hussain

Close up of exhibition print "In Her
Glory" 2023 and accompanying
photographs of my Mom



Problem Statement

In *Impressions*, I use photographs of my parents in early adulthood to explore my desire to learn about them. Repeating the embraces, the faces, the cars, my late grandfather, and colors to create patterns makes me feel a stronger and stronger connection to these objects and people. These patterns create a new visual language and a stronger narrative of my parents. The process involves layering inks, transparencies, colors, matrices, compositions informing what Tina M. Campt calls a "haptic encounter" archival images.

My printmaking practice is largely informed by the Pattern and Decoration movement, which sought inspiration beyond Western male contexts and looked towards global art. Islamic tile works, ceramics from the Ilkhanid period, Pakistani textiles sewn by my Mom, among other sources, serve as contexts for my inspiration. I also look to contemporary artists who explore Muslim sensibilities and hybrid cultural identities. The blend of traditional craft with new technologies like the laser cutter reflects the contemporary context of print media, through which I can speak to cultural tensions and nuances arising from living with hybrid identities, memory, and change.



Front View of Exhibition, 2023



Left-hand view of exhibition, 2023



Right-hand view of Exhibition, 2023



A Father with His Father, 2023
Laser-cut relief prints, 18" x 30"

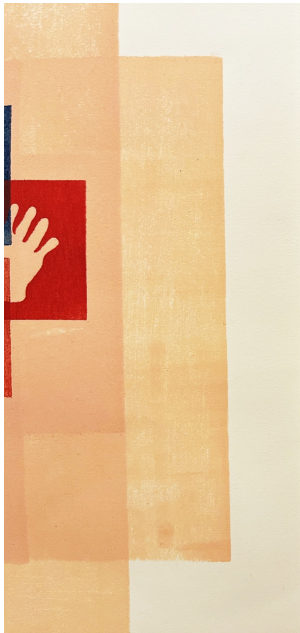


In Her Glory, 2023

Laser-cut relief prints, fabric on collagraph, 18" x 26"



Embraces, 2023
Laser-cut relief prints, 18" x 26"



Close ups of photographs accompanying prints

Research Precedents

***Islam & the Cultural Imperative* by Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah**

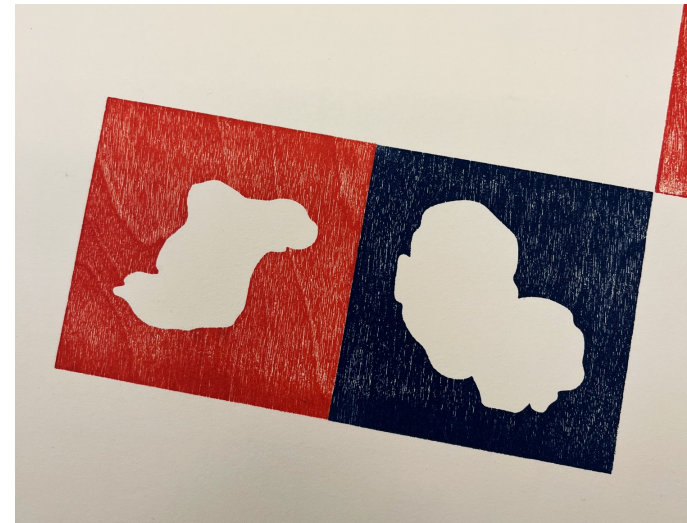
Dr. Abd-Allah gives an example of how Islam is culturally friendly by comparing it to a crystal-clear river with its waters pure and sweet (Islam) but having no color of their own. The color reflects the bedrock (indigenous culture). Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah writes in *Islam & the Cultural Imperative*, gives an example of how Islam is culturally friendly by comparing it to a crystal-clear river with its waters pure and sweet (Islam), but having no color of their own. The color reflects the bedrock (indigenous culture).

This metaphor helped me to first identify the part of my studio inquiry question of what influences have shaped who I am as a Muslim-American woman. Living in a hybrid cultural context has done a lot to inform who I am today. Also, with this reading I started to think of myself as having layers and compared to my practice of printmaking and how I use a lot of layers on top of each other to form new colors and new meanings. Examples include, layering inks and transparencies, how many woodblocks you layer on top of each other, and the combination of different matrices to create something new.

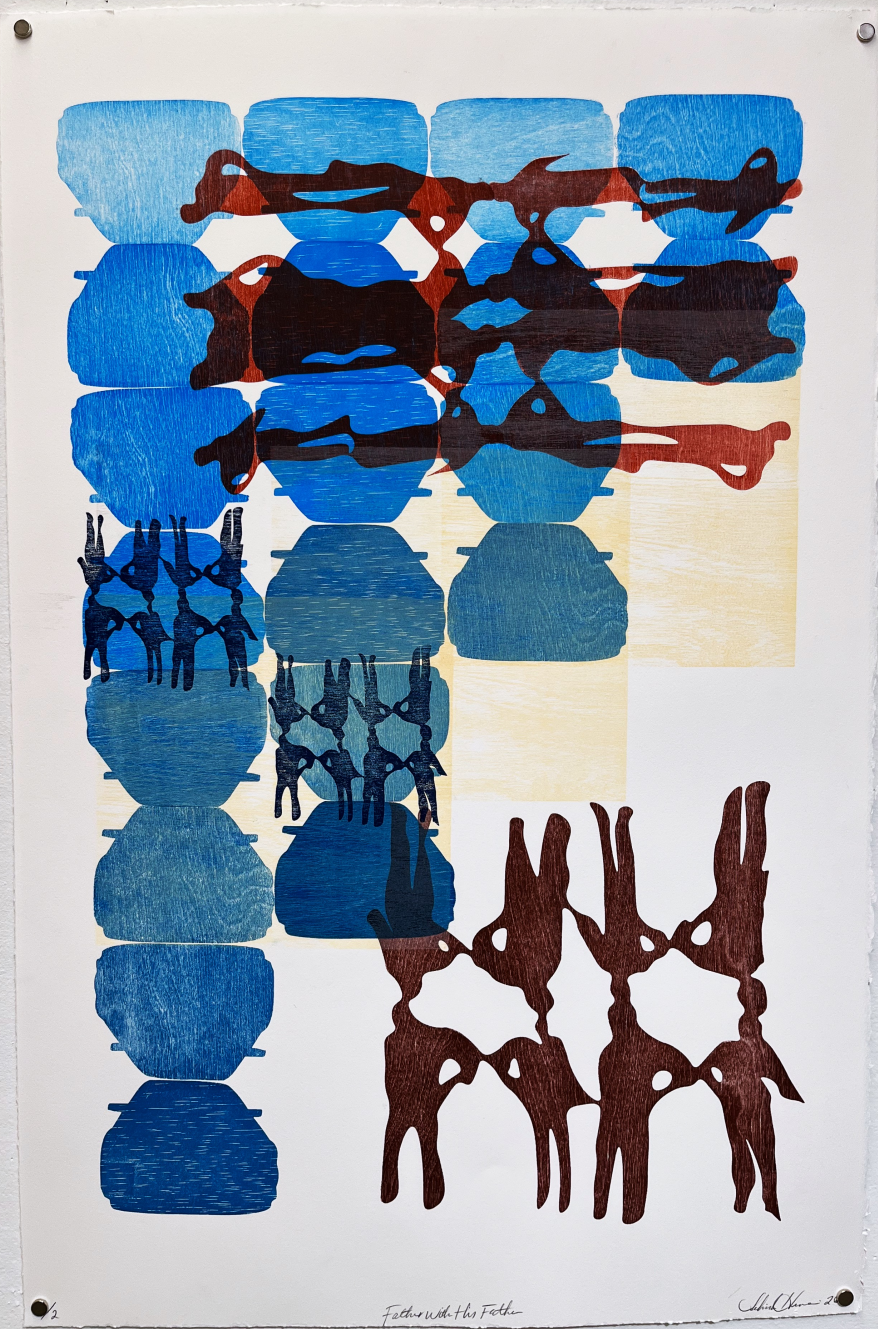
***Image matters: Archive, photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* by Tina M. Campt**

Additionally, I looked at texts from Black feminist theorist of visual culture Tina M. Campt with the first being *Image matters: Archive, photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe*. Layering of inks, choices of matrices, composition, and color will be informed by what Campt calls the “haptic encounter” with archival images: “objects whose effects are structured by a tripartite sense of touch—an indexical touch, a physical touch, and an affective touch” (Campt 2017). In her work about understanding archival images, Campt explains a physical engagement with photographs that creates a form of intimacy for those that hold, share, and pass around the image.

On the other hand, each person can have a different encounter with a photograph too. Each time you go back to an image your perception of it can change as well. From this paper, I learned how to analyze my photographs to see them more than just records, but also as records of intentions, and why a photograph was taken, kept, viewed, etc. It makes me ask questions such as: how can I create a physical experience for my viewers



Close up of process of *Embraces*, 2023



Similarly, Campt speaks about this haptic encounter with images in her paper *Listening to Images*. She explains how haptics is what allows for the connection to a photograph/image to create a memory or connect to each other. It is an intimate unlocking of memories and connection to myself and family members. This unlocking of memories is important in being more expressive in my final prints and how I make connections through the matrixes I choose to combine is important in my decision-making.

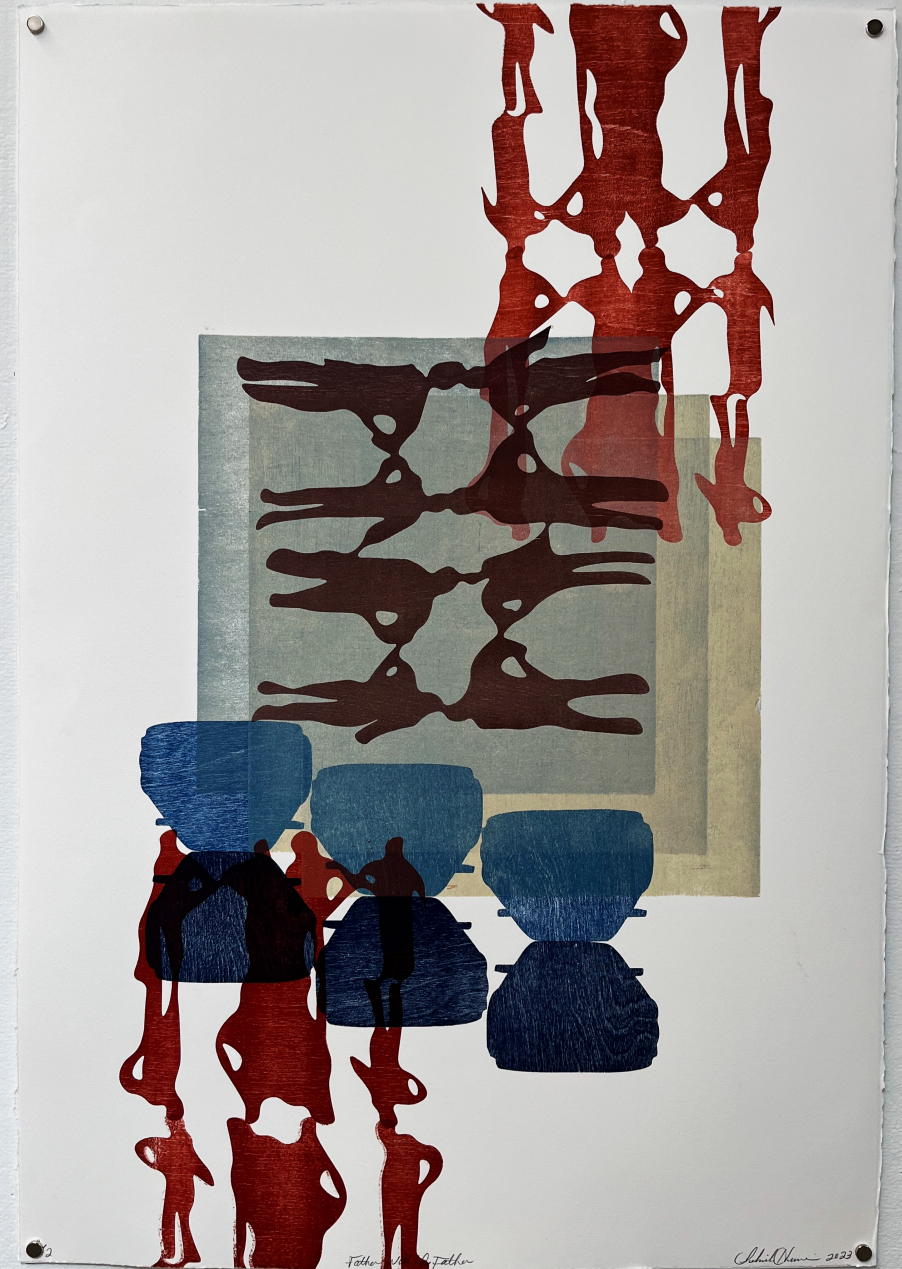
A Father with His Father, 2023
Laser-cut relief print 1 of 2, 18" x 30"

***Art on my mind: Visual politics* by Bell Hooks**

I want to search the images to see if there are “imprints waiting to be seen, recognized, and read.” Concept of remembrance: “evokes the coming together of severed parts, fragment becoming a whole.” She also writes: “Photography calls us back to the past and offers a way to reclaim and renew life-affirming bonds.”

She writes, “Photography calls us back to the past and offers a way to reclaim and renew life-affirming bonds” and I agree with this statement as I have found alternate meanings to my relationship with myself and my family through sitting with some of the childhood photos I have collected. I can use these photos to connect myself to a “redemptive” memory that enables me to construct images of myself and family members that transcend the limits of my memory and constructed categories.

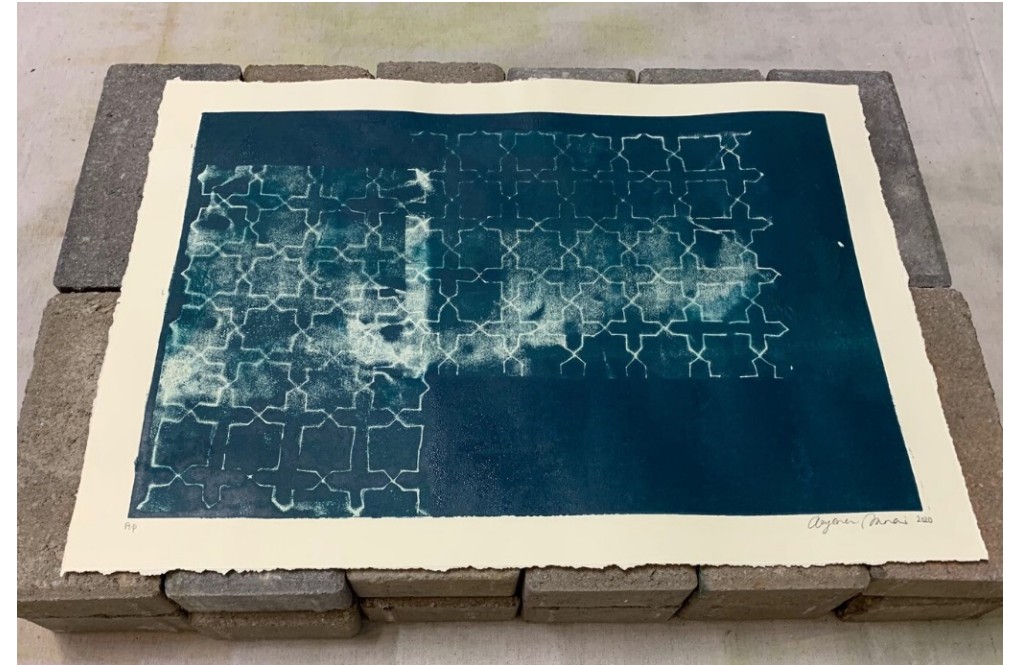
A Father with His Father, 2023
Laser-cut relief print 2 of 2, 18" x 30"



Artist Precedents

Aryana Minai

Minai makes paper based sculptures and focuses her work on the topics of architecture, migration, labor, the body, and the handmade. Her architectural pieces are more of an organic and living idea. I wondered how I could use the woodblock to make something new and organic. Also, her aesthetics were an inspiration for me. For example, the breath and texture in her prints was something I wanted to add to my own



Mono-print, 14.5 x 20.5 inches, 2020

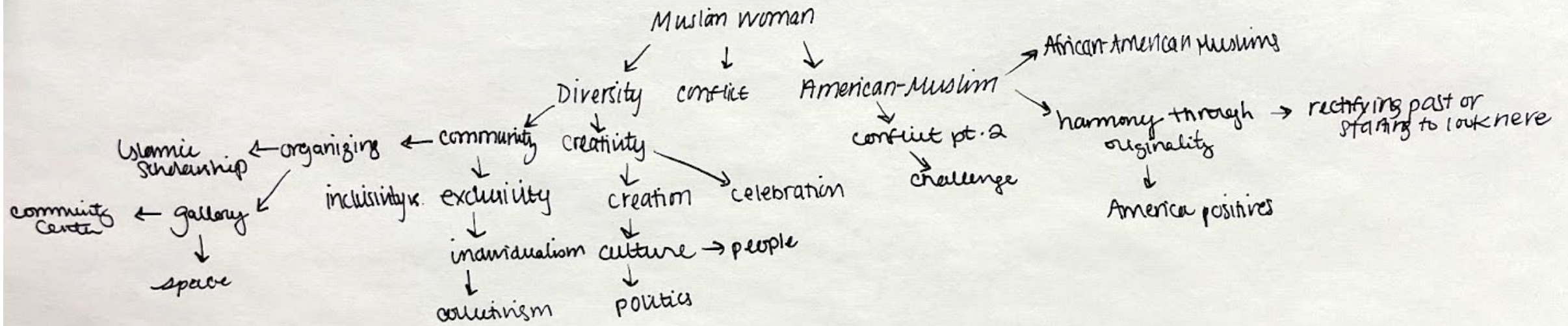
Stephanie Santana

Why were these colors chosen? What parts are chosen to be embroidered and why? These were some questions I asked when I started my prints. Santana also made me ask questions about what photos I wanted to choose.

What I like about printmaking is the choices of color, transparency and texture that can all be achieved based on decisions of the matrix you choose to print with. It makes a sort of collage, which I see here. There is a print with embroidery, weaving, and more. Collages produce complexity and meaning beyond what is pictured.



Living Room Study I, 2020, Screen print, acrylic and hand embroidery, cotton textile, 20.25 x 14.25 in



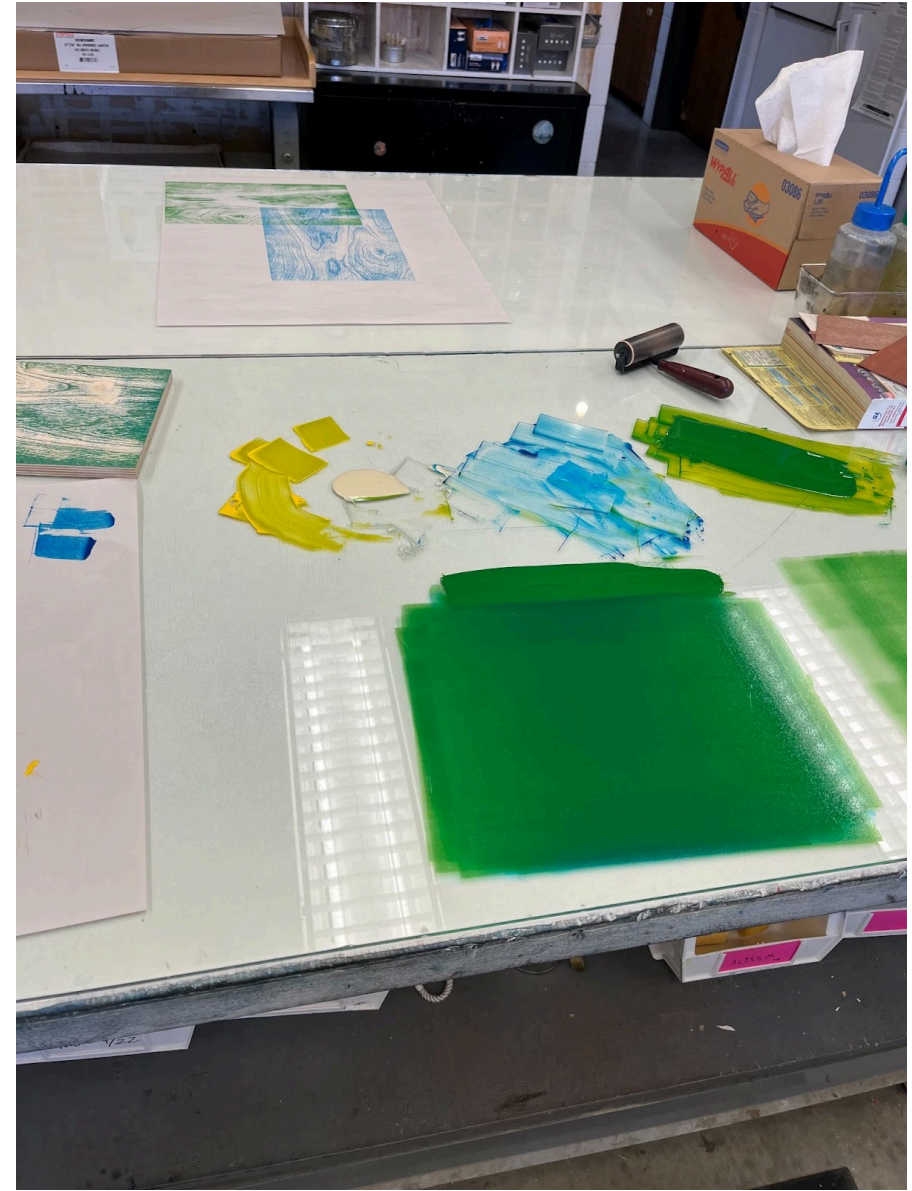
Reflection

I was rereading my work from 2009 and I found some similarities in what I thought then to now, some differences too. I approached a lot of my thoughts through an art historical and curatorial lens. I was still very persistent with community and Muslim culture.

When I'm looking at my new branding map, I am seeing more of myself as an artist. My purpose as an artist is still to create an impact in Muslim communities. But, it is focused on printmaking, painting, fabric, and where I am. I'm re-seeing myself.



Woodblock grained, November 2022

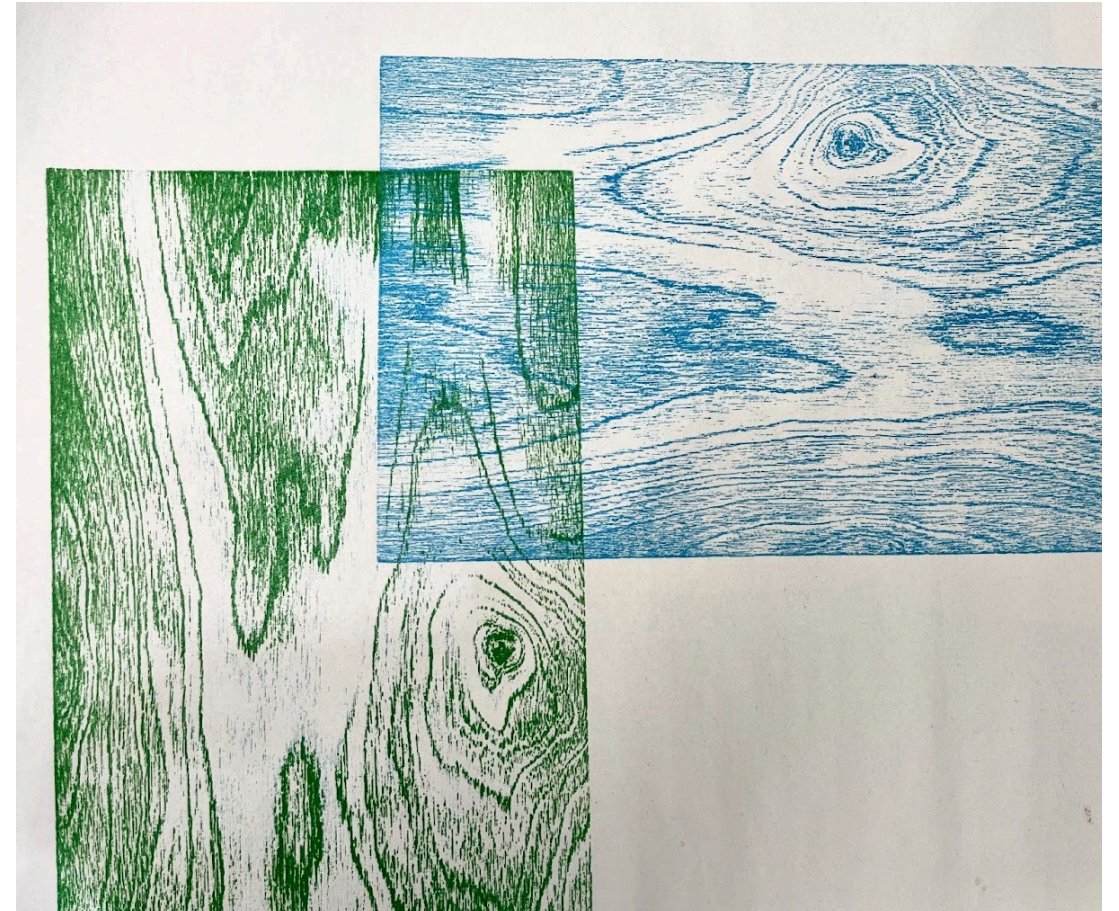


Print shop process photo, November 2022

Initial Process Works

During my first semester working on my thesis, I experimented a lot printing matrixes and creating images that spoke to me. Woodgrain specifically interested me, as well as repeating patterns. In the following slides, you will see how I experimented a lot with these patterns, but still had a loose idea of what my final prints would look like.

During this stage of development, I was frustrated with the lack of foresight into what my final prints would be, however, after reflection I saw a lot of what I started with in my final prints, such as the color choices and the layering of motifs.



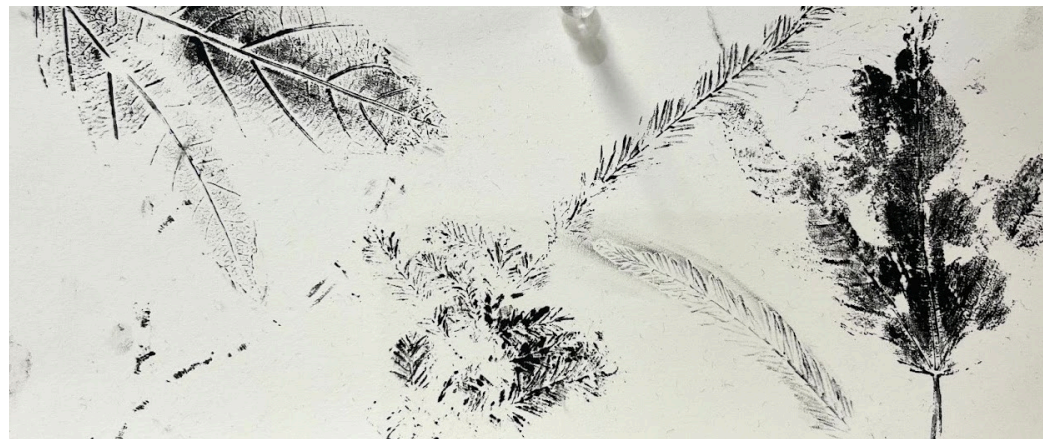
Experimentation with Woodgrain Prints



Print from multiple collagraphs, November 2022



Print from multiple collagraphs, November 2022



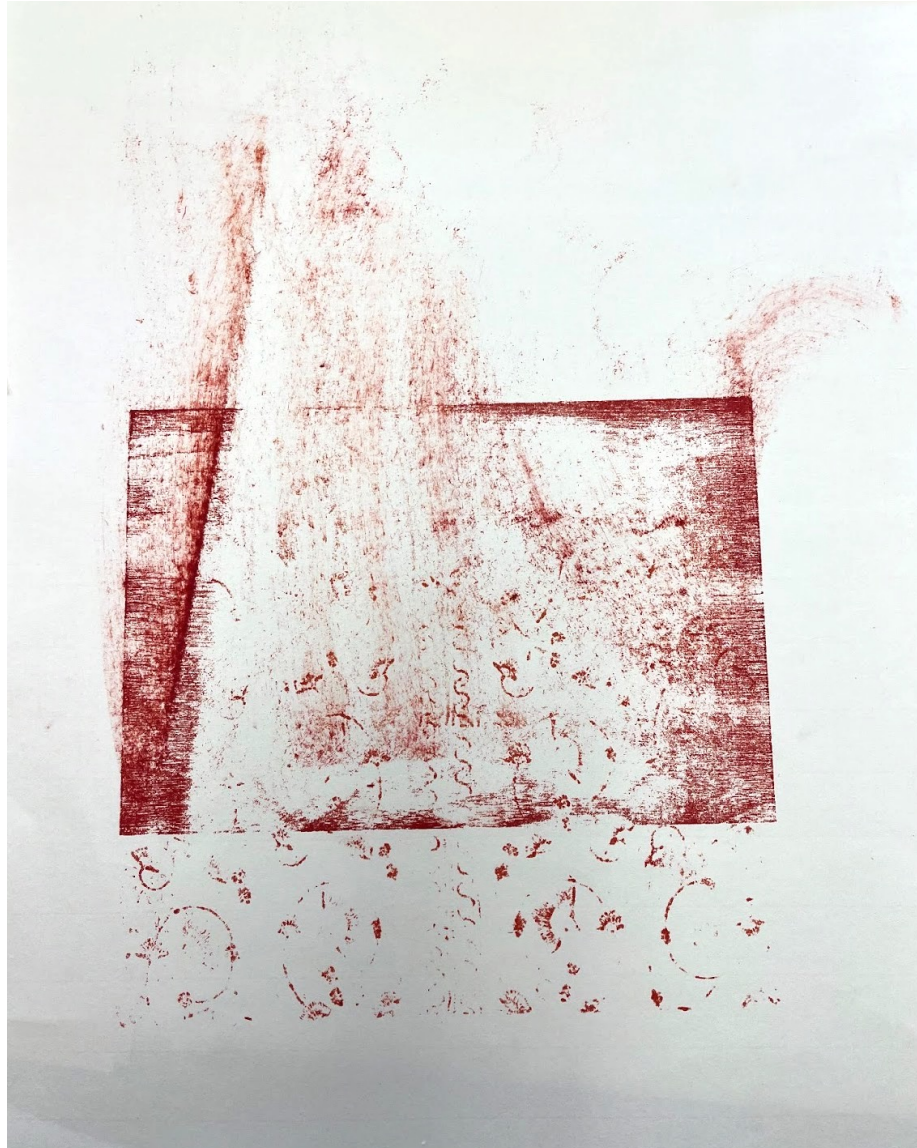
Print from multiple collagraphs with real leaves, November 2022



Collagraph with Pasted Fabric, 2022



Experimentation with Pasted Fabric and Woodblock, 2022



Experimentation, Collagraph and Woodblock, 2022



Close up of Experimentation 4

Laser-cut Process

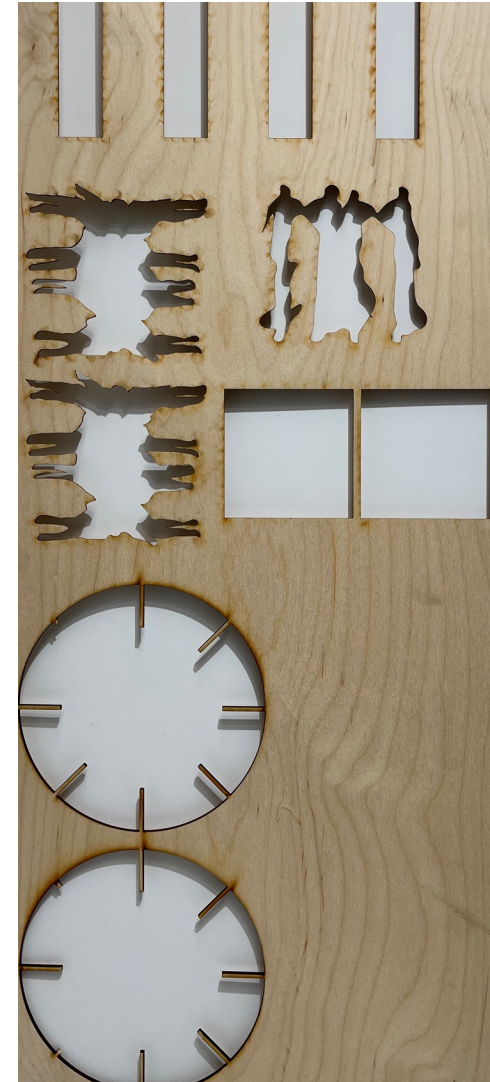
While I thought more about how I wanted my final prints to be like, I hinged on the fact that I wanted to draw from certain elements from the photographs that attracted me, like a hand, or car, or garage door pattern. I translated these elements into illustrator files that would later be laser cut from wood. I brought in the element of my hand by tracing some of these object, then taking them to illustrator. This brought more of my natural hand into the final prints.



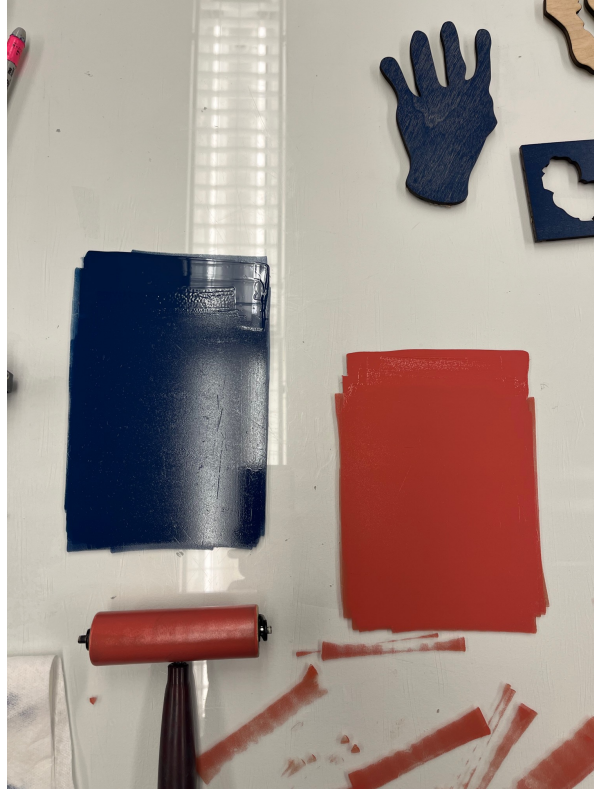
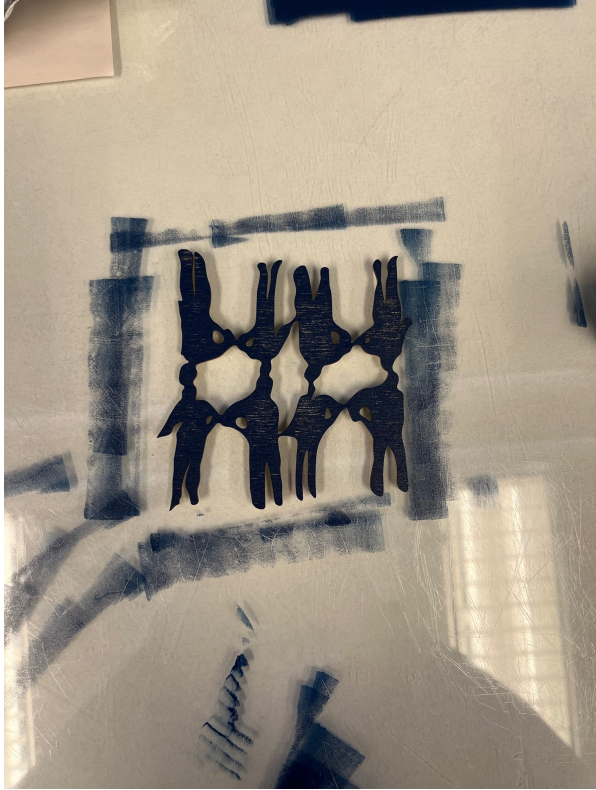
Figures from *A Father with His Father*
Laser Cut Negatives, 2023



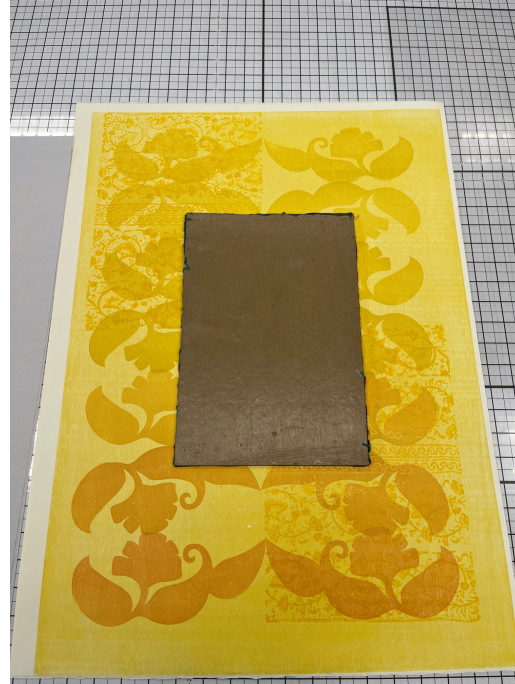
Laser Cut figures from *Embraces negatives*, 2023



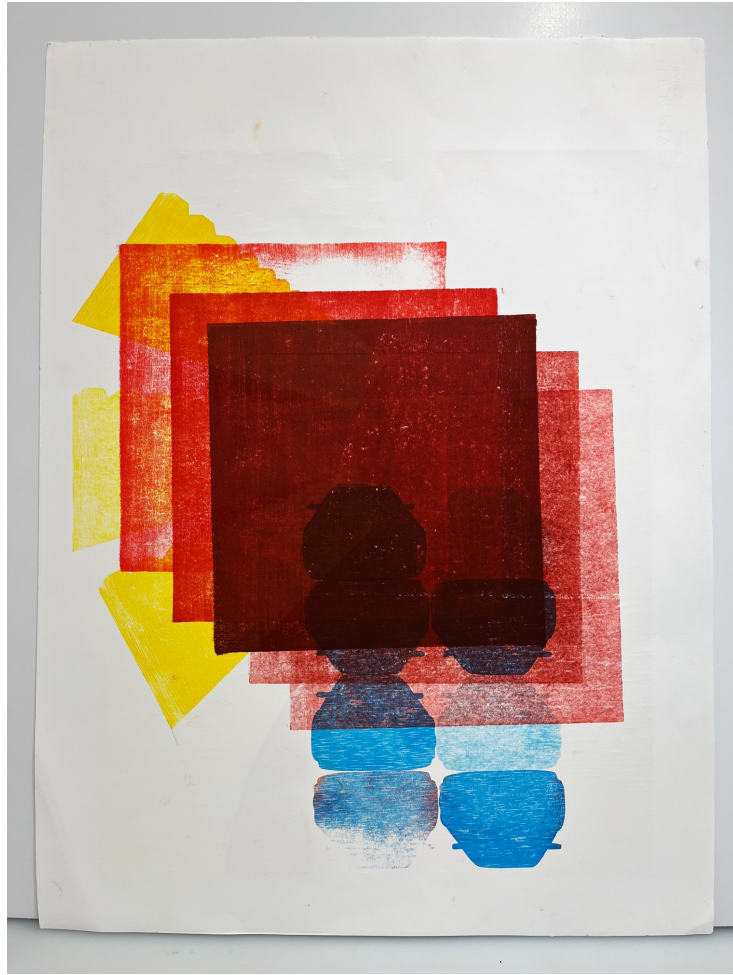
Laser Cut figures from *Embraces negatives*, 2023



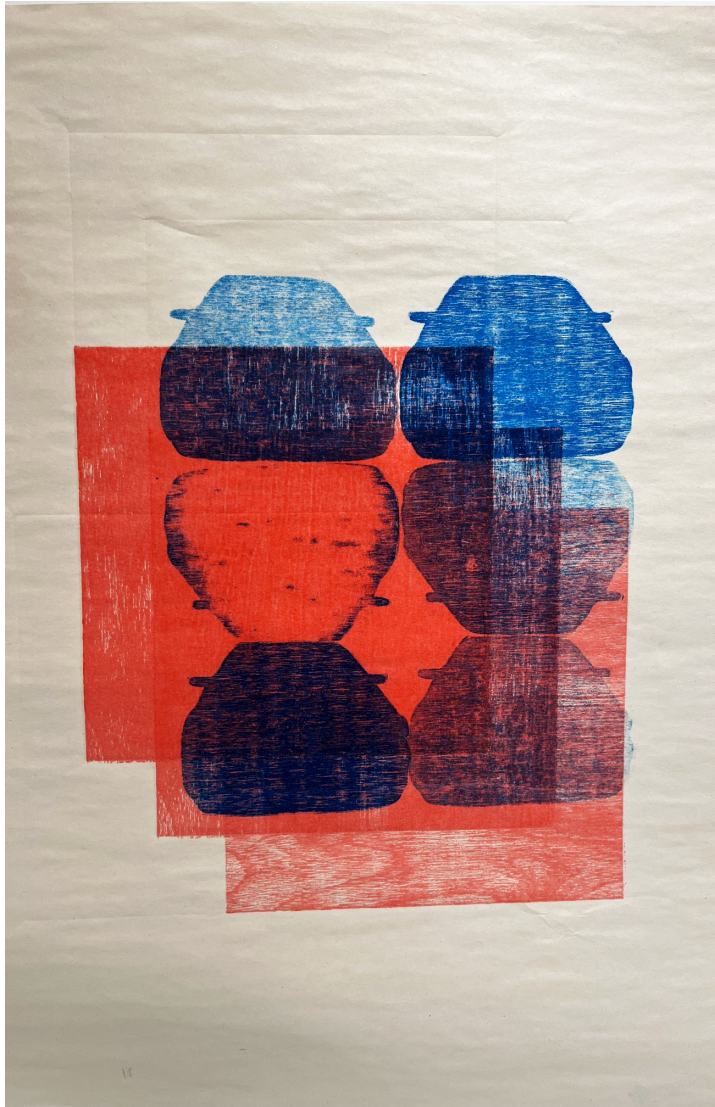
Process photos in the print shop, 2023



Process photos in the print shop, 2023



Process prints, 2023



More process prints, 2023

Reflection

The overall experience of the integrative project prepared me for my future graduate career. I learned what it meant to take on a self-led project and be okay with the process of rediscovery and change. During my creative process I learned how difficult it could be to shift from idea to idea and iteration to iteration. And most of all I learned how a part of thinking is making. I thought the research process and the making process were mutually exclusive, however, that couldn't be farther from the truth.

In the future I know I will focus my work on family history, and memory. I also plan to develop more patterns and meaningful motifs that are inspired from Islamic tile work and Pakistani textiles.

The significance of this work for my audience is the experience that comes from seeing patterns and layering of work. What is the different between seeking detail versus looking at a composition. As the artist, I learned the importance of adding detail and balancing it with the whole composition. I also learned how to not tell a whole story, rather, let the audience try to piece together some context to reflect and ponder more deeply.