Artist: Martha Díaz-Adam

**The Gaze Upon Gendered Islamophobia**

The wearing of the head-coverings in Muslim women have been a topic of controversy: debated, harassed and banned in many parts of the Western hemisphere.

As a visual artist-anthropologist, my body of work has evolved as a response to the perception of the portrayed image of the Muslim Woman in three stages: The modesty ideal in Islam, the objective reality and subjective beliefs, and the intention of an identity erasure.

The veiling bans are written laws that overstep the debating chamber of the different congress walls in many parts of the world, provoking an identity erasure to those women who have chosen to display their devotion with the attire of robes, veils, and headdresses in a place away from home. According to the

Pew Research Center: *there are currently more countries restricting women’s ability to wear religious symbols or attire than requiring women to dress a certain way*.

The veil a symbol of devotion is now a symbol of threat, an enforced or banned object, but when are we going to ask ourselves as societies, ***what does the veiled woman who wears it desires to do with it?***

1. The modesty in Islam: ***24:31*** Different forms of interpretations are born out of one source. 24:31 is inspired in the *Surah 24 An-Nur, Ayat 31*, the verse in which it expresses the views on the *Muslim women modesty* stated in the Quran. The modesty perspective in Muslim women has been a field of controversy, by insiders and outsiders. An interpretation does not only depend on who reads and transmits the message, but also by who receives it. The artwork does not imply any inclination on a specific side of how the subject should be seen, instead, it documents the *Sujud*, the act of prostration to God towards the *Qiblah.*
2. The objective reality and subjective beliefs: ***Inter-subjectivity*** is the meeting point between objective reality and subjective beliefs. It explores the capacity of a concept to be seen and communicated between different individuals. The subject of a Muslim woman, who is experiencing the act of prayer, *Salah*, an act that is shared by more than one conscious mind but the way it is influenced and interpreted is as an individual action of devotion. Prayer rugs, in Islam, are a symbol of their everyday tradition, a bridge between their physical space and intangible divine beliefs.
3. The intention of an identity erasure: Identity\_Corrupted-File.jpg / Devotion\_Corrupted-File.jpg explores the concepts of Identity, Devotion, and Cultural Erasure as a file that has been corrupted/altered by the veiling bans laws enforced in many countries of the world. The concerns over gender equality are used as a form of manipulation and justification to actually perform on the gaze upon gendered Islamophobia. Equality is the freedom of choice, not an enforcement of any kind.

Artist Bio:

**Martha Díaz-Adam** is a visual artist-anthropologist and documentary photographer. Lebanese descendant born and raised in the Dominican Republic. Has a penchant for conducting investigations regarding cultural heritage and seeks to foster understanding among cultures and underrepresented groups of people through her work. Díaz-Adam shifts between documentary-style portraits and her style of fine art photography, in which part of the composition becomes imbued with patterns that she creates and integrates as a tribute to the culture and traditions of the subject. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and has conducted visual-research in North/South-America and Southern-Asia.