

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

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NOVEMBER 28, 2020 BY ANNA MIKAELA EKSTRAND

The Immigrant Artist Biennial: Bianca Abdi-Boragi



Bianca Abdi-Boragi, Barbary Fig, still, short film, 17 min

The Immigrant Artist Biennial (TIAB) is a volunteer, female-led, artist-run project. TIAB 2020 launched in March in New York City at Brooklyn Museum, and continued in September through December at EFA Project Space, Greenwood Cemetery, and virtually, presenting 60+ artists. This interview series features 10 participating artists.

Bianca Abdi-Boragi is a French-Algerian/American interdisciplinary artist who received her MFA from Yale School of Art, Sculpture, in 2017 and obtained her BFA from ENSAPC. Her solo shows include “The Heel of the Loaf” at Border Project Space and a presentation at CADAFA Art Fair, she has exhibited with the Immigrant Artist Biennial, NARS Foundation, Border Project Space, VCU Arts, NURTUREart Gallery, Chashama Gallery, Field Project Gallery, Galerie Protégé, and The Clemente Soto Velez Center NY, among others.

Do artists have political responsibilities at this moment, if so, what are they?

Art has the power to touch people’s psyche and reform mentalities. I believe that artists have a responsibility to stand up and say something powerful with their own visual vocabulary and in turn, that truthful art stems from personal experience. My work is embedded within ritual and often my works are an exercise in subverting reality. I address universal and timeless questions, such as fulfillment, subsistence, and struggle – relating to both the personal and the collective.

Reflect on an encounter of displacement, becoming, belonging, trauma, healing, or

simply comic relief from your journey of immigration.

I have been in the USA for over ten years with no monetary support from my families, who, as immigrants in France, have their own financial hardships. To become an artist when you are poor is very difficult. After ten years, I am making meaningful steps forward although I invest all the money I make from side-jobs into my artistic practice and am burdened by my student debts. Although I am fulfilled to be an artist and to have found friends who push me in the right direction, it has been, and still is, a risky and anxious path.



Bianca Abdi-Boragi, Barbary Fig, still, short film, 17 min

How has the turn toward the digital and virtual affected your artistic practice?

As a filmmaker and sculptor, I was lucky to participate in CADAFA art fair and present nine video works, all of them online. Having a library of digital works was essential in this case.

Tell us about the work you are exhibiting in The Immigrant Artist Biennial.

Barbary Fig is a short film written by my mother and I. It reflects on how my Berber mother and grandmother survived the Algerian war of independence in a small village in Great Kabylie; the film recounts their journey to France and how Indigenous women were used by the French Military to walk through mine fields to clear their path.



Bianca Abdi-Boragi, The Heel of the Loaf, 2020 discarded bread wood, 4x4x4ft

Do you have an advice for an Immigrant artist?

Go to lots of openings, develop your network, try to get an art studio and be prolific, write about your own work, learn how to document your work well, promote it, and apply to everything.

The Immigrant Artist Biennial's virtual exhibitions are open through December 18th 2020, visit them [here](#), and a list of their ongoing events [here](#).



Anna Mikaela Ekstrand is a New York-based Swedish/Guyanese independent curator and the founding editor-in-chief of Cultbytes, an online art publication focusing on interdisciplinary and non-hierarchical art criticism. Alongside an all-female volunteer team, she currently serves as an advisor and co-curator for the inaugural "The Immigrant Artist Biennial."



📍 **TIAB**

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