

Behnaz Fatemi, Rhythm of Remembering, 2025

Rhythm of Remembering

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Solo Exhibition In A Public Art Gallery In Canada
Behnaz Fatemi: *Rhythm of Remembering*
Curator(s) – Niku Koochak
Exhibition Designer(s) – Behnaz Fatemi, Niku Koochak
Exhibition Coordinator(s) – Nicole McCabe
Installation Team – Stephen Nilsson, Spencer Montcalm, Kristina Bradt, Grace Taylor, Jeremy Burke
Photo Credit: Justin Elliot

Artist(s) – Behnaz Fatemi
Art Windsor-Essex, 2025

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Foreword

Behnaz Fatemi: Rhythm of Remembering, curated by Niku Koochak, unfolds in the fragile temporal space of departure, the moments immediately before displacement takes place, when the familiar is still present but already beginning to recede. Often quiet and seemingly ordinary, these moments carry profound emotional and material weight, reshaping how one understands memory, the body, and belonging. Departure is not simply a movement from one place to another; it is also a process of deciding what can be carried forward and what must be left behind. These choices, both conscious and involuntary, become embodied, leaving traces that persist within the body as lived memory.

At the core of this inquiry is Behnaz Fatemi's ongoing performance, Stitching Segmented Memories (initiated in 2024), a durational and materially grounded work. Through live embroidery on a handmade, layered dress with an extended train, Fatemi inscribes the names of loved ones and the missing. The garment becomes a surface of memory, while stitching emerges as a method that is both intimate and political. Rather than fixing memory, the act enacts it over time, allowing it to remain open, evolving, and contingent. Can stitching hold grief, and can the body carry memory in ways that remain visible yet unresolved?

From the perspective of artistic research, this work resonates with the inquiry into embodied knowledge, where making is not separate from thinking but constitutes a mode of thinking in itself. Knowledge emerges through material engagement and unfolds through repetition, touch, and duration. In this sense, the garment operates as a living research site, where embroidery functions simultaneously as process and discourse. The convergence of body, textile, and gesture produces a form of knowledge that is affective, situated, and experiential.

What emerges is not resolution but an ongoing negotiation, where memory appears fragmented, carried in segments, and reassembled through the rhythms of making. What persists through repetition, and how is care articulated through such gestures? In what ways might remembering become a collective and ethical act that extends beyond the individual?

Rhythm of Remembering ultimately resists closure, insisting instead on continuity, where memory is held within the body, sustained through material practice, and shaped by the enduring conditions of displacement.

- Faseeh Saleem -

Curation as Collaboration

When I first encountered Behnaz Fatemi's work, I was drawn to the graphite-covered garments. They seemed to suspend time, preserving traces of moments that had already passed. Looking at them, I was thinking about memory as something that could be kept intact. I found myself thinking about the experience of loss itself, the act of losing and the way I continue to revisit it, move through it, and gradually learn its rhythm.

As an immigrant artist and curator, I felt a strong connection to this aspect of the work. Leaving home is often experienced as an action rather than a reflection. In the moment of departure, there is little time to understand what is being left behind. It is only later, after arrival, that the experience begins to unfold. Certain sounds, images, objects, or unexpected encounters can suddenly return us to a place we thought we had already left. Sometimes the memory itself fades, but something remains a small trigger that brings the entire moment back into focus.

For me, *Rhythm of Remembering* became a space for thinking about those returns. The exhibition was about remembering the past and also more about the moments that continue to echo long after they have disappeared.

One of the curatorial questions I grappled with involved the many small figurative sculptures representing individuals who had been killed through acts of violence and injustice. Their collective presence was important, yet I was concerned that presenting them solely as a mass might risk losing the weight of each individual life. I ultimately chose to display a smaller selection of figures on a long red wooden structure positioned near the entrance of the gallery. The installation allowed the works to speak both collectively and individually, acknowledging the scale of loss while maintaining space for each figure to be encountered as a singular presence.

The exhibition also carried a personal dimension through the process of making and installing it. Behnaz and I spent time together applying graphite to elements of the installation, covering surfaces in black while sharing stories and reflections. Looking back, I realize that these conversations became part of the exhibition itself. They revealed how collective experiences of displacement, grief, and survival often exist before language. Sometimes it takes years before we find the words for them. In that sense, the exhibition was less about preserving the past than learning how to live with its echoes.

- Niku Koochak -

Behnaz Fatemi
Rhythm of Remembering

Curated by Niku Koochak
TD Curatorial Fellow



Mourning Silences
2023
Installation
Handmade cotton dress, graphite, jewelry, custom metal dress hanger
Variable

Note: The dress was worn and marked with graphite during a live performance.



Rubbing and Remembering
2024-2025
Variable
Graphite and objects

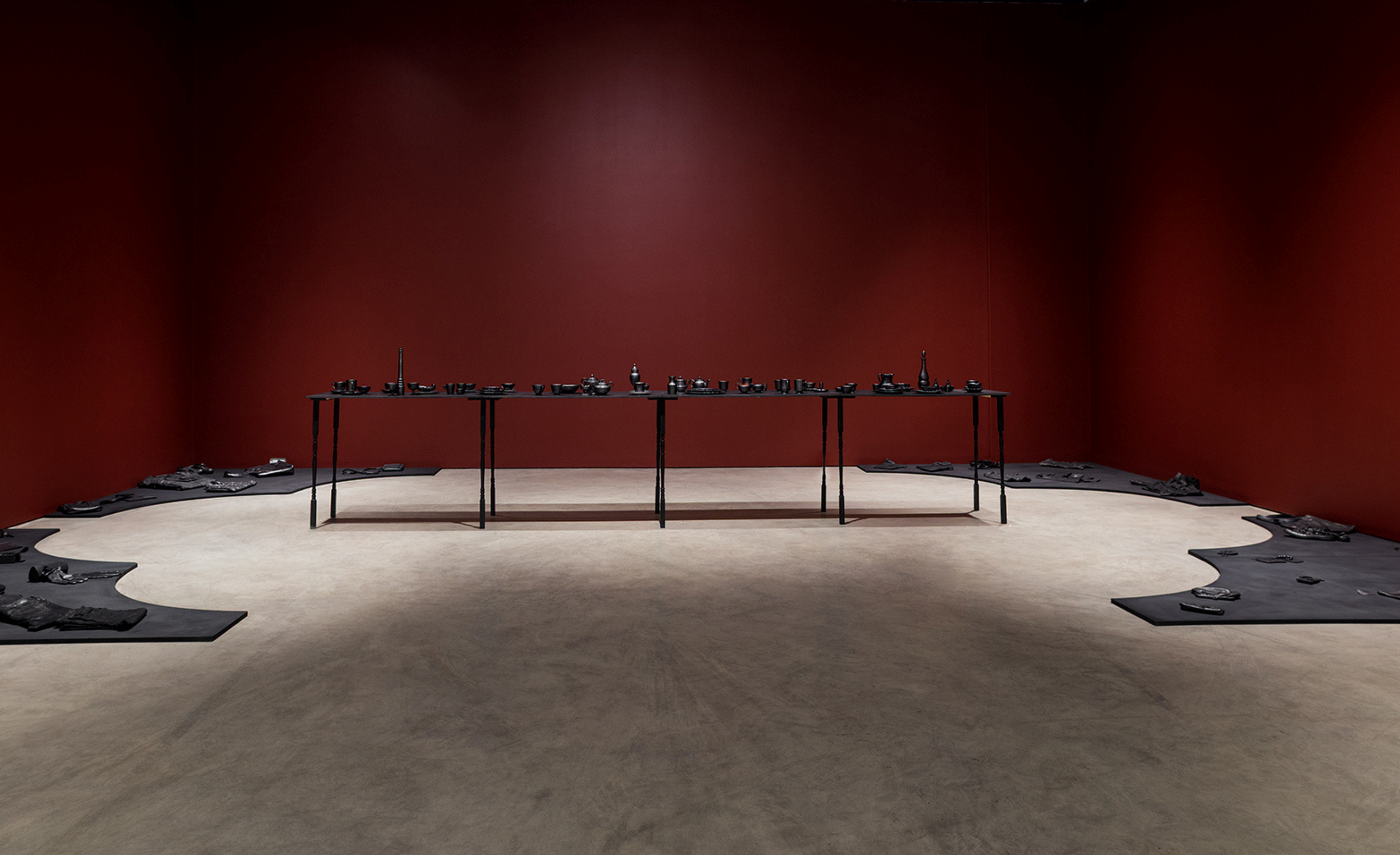














Gloom
2015–2023
Installation
Ceramic
Variable

Stitching Segmented Memories is an ongoing performance project initiated in 2024. Through live embroidery on a handmade, layered dress with an extended train, Fatemi inscribes the names of loved ones and the missing, engaging themes of displacement, grief, resilience, and the politics of care and remembrance.





Stitching Segmented Memories
2024 - till date
Durational performance, handmade cotton dress, custom metal dress hanger, threads and needles

Traces and Erasures is a two-part performance-drawing carrying the unending weight of tension, trauma, and anxiety I hold as an Iranian living outside of Iran. In the first performance, I turn the entire paper black, marking with graphite; in the second, I attempt to erase every mark, returning the paper to its original state. Together, making and erasing become an unmaking and remaking of trauma, memory, and healing.



Traces
2024
1 hour
Performance drawing, graphite on paper
Video performance



Erasures
2024
1 hour
Performance drawing, graphite on paper
Video performance

Behnaz Fatemi is an Iranian-Canadian interdisciplinary artist, educator, and PhD student in Visual Arts at Western University. Her current research-creation spans drawing-based performance, installation, durational performance, and sound, exploring diaspora, cultural translation, embodied knowledge, and archival silencing. Her work has been presented at the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Idea Exchange, the CAFKA biennial, and Art Windsor-Essex, where Rhythm of Remembering received the 2025 GOG (Galeries Ontario Galleries) Award. She was selected for the International Residency at The Art House, Wakefield, in partnership with the Royal Over-Seas League, London. This research was later invited by global dis:connect at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre, Munich. Fatemi's practice has been supported by the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund, the International Master's Award of Excellence (IMAE) from the University of Waterloo, and grants from Pat the Dog Theatre Creation.

Niku Koochak is an Iranian interdisciplinary artist and award-winning curator based in Canada. Her practice spans performance, painting, site-responsive installation, and curatorial research, exploring instability, adaptation, and the ways identity and meaning are negotiated in response to changing social and spatial conditions. Across her artistic and curatorial work, she is interested in how bodies, materials, spaces, and ways of understanding respond and adjust to changing conditions. Koochak holds an MFA in Visual Arts from the University of Windsor and a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Tehran. Her interdisciplinary background also includes research in urban ecology. Her curatorial practice is grounded in research, listening, lived experience, and sustained dialogue, with a particular interest in how different ways of knowing can encounter one another and be translated into the spatial and material language of an exhibition. She was the TD Curatorial Fellow at Art Windsor-Essex 2024-2025, and her curatorial work has been recognized with a Galeries Ontario / Ontario Galleries Curatorial Award. She was also guest curator of Shifting Borders at the University of Windsor, bringing contemporary art, archival material, and student research into dialogue around borders and lived experience. Her recent projects include From Within, an independent curatorial initiative supporting artists affected by conflict and displacement; Creatives at Work, an ACWR artist residency culminating in a solo exhibition at ArtSpeak Gallery; and the 2026 New Voices billboard project. She is also a recipient of the 2023 Warner-Lambert Award in Printmaking. Koochak currently serves as Gallery Coordinator in the Department of Visual Arts at Brock University while continuing her independent artistic, curatorial, and research practice.

Soheila Esfahani is a visual artist and Assistant Professor at Western University. Her research and art practice navigates the terrains of cultural translation in order to explore the processes involved in cultural transfer and transformation and questions displacement, dissemination, and reinsertion of culture. She is a recipient of grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and internationally including at the Aga Khan Museum, Canadian Cultural Centre Paris, Doris McCarthy Gallery, Cambridge Art Galleries among others, and collected by various public and private institutions, including the Canada Council's Art Bank. Her coin design for the Royal Canadian Mint's Celebrating Canada's Diversity Collection was released in January 2024.

Art Windsor-Essex is a community-driven, person-centered cultural hub that opens minds and hearts to different ideas, perspectives, and ways of thinking through the transformative power of art. It is one of the most boldly welcoming art institution in Canada where audiences and artists reimagine what a public art gallery can be. It is a vibrant place where art is made, presented, and shared through exhibitions, programs, and events that inspire.

Behnaz Fatemi, Rhythm of Remembering, 2025.

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