

## **Statement for Bazaar (2020)**

For the textile installation *Bazaar* (2020), Amiri re-wove her childhood memories of the bazaar, transforming and deforming it to offer the viewers a sense of place and time alongside an awareness of the politicized present. During her childhood, the artist was used to wander through Kabul's commercial activities with her female family members. Amiri recalls today that, although services and products were mainly dedicated to women, businesses were managed predominately by men. From 2001, after the fall of the Taliban regime, the country witnessed a significant social and cultural shift. In fact, a more meaningful feminine presence within commercial enterprises arose and women became owners of their jewelry stores, beauty shops, fashion and textile boutiques. Interested in a growing Afghan hybrid visual culture, and by evoking her personal diaspora, the artist re-lives this historical moment and her experience through her artistic project: *Bazaar, A Recollection of Home*. Amiri rebuilds those commercial environments in the shape of monumental textile installations. By deliberately choosing to figure forefront women-dominated spaces, Amiri elegantly embroiders a poetic of social-political narratives. The viewer is invited to experience this re-constructed reality as flaneur. Moreover, Amiri inserts depictions of Taliban-banned items, such as red lipstick, shiny fabrics and nail polish, to affirm the sense of freedom and power that Afghan women have reached by expressing their own sensuality, sexuality and pleasure.

## **Statement for Bazaar: A Recollection of Home Series**

*Bazaar, A Recollection of Home*, is a textile project reminiscing on the bazaar environment in fabric. My interest in bazaars as sites of social and economic exchange comes from my childhood experiences in my birthplace Kabul, Afghanistan from 1994-1996, just before the Taliban regime came to power. As a young girl growing up in an Afghan family, my mother would often take me along shopping with my four aunts and cousins. I loved wandering freely within the open-air bazaars and watching a variety of jewelry stores and tailor shops with colorful central-Asian and south-Asian fabrics. Women not only shopped within these clothing stores but also got their hair and nails done at beauty parlors and adorned themselves for weddings, Nawruz, Afghan New Year's or the Islamic celebrations such as Eid days. Afghan women were mostly drawn to custom made dresses by male tailors whose influences came from magazines and Bollywood movies. However, I noticed the absence of businesswomen in Bazaar spaces even in pre-Taliban Afghan society. Women were the consumers in male-dominated bazaars due to traditions and a lack of women's rights and presence in the workplaces.

After the Taliban regime fell in 2001, beauty parlors once again began to flourish in the Afghan capital – colorful feminine spaces in stark contrast to the dusty, dangerous, male-dominated streets outside. Not only have beauty parlors increased in the city, women also began to own small businesses such as fashion boutiques, restaurants, and as sales associates inside the city center within a modern shopping mall located in downtown Kabul. It was wonderful to see the shift being driven by Afghan women in a post-Taliban society. Once

again, exploring the bazaar as a consumerist space for families, I became interested in a growing Afghan hybrid visual culture in relation to gender norms in these public spaces. My textile project *Bazaar, A Recollection of Home* builds off of a cultural location that celebrates women's representation and their presence in the workplace within an urban society.

In *Bazaar, A Recollection of Home* I use fabric that is draped, folded, hung, stretched, sewn, and wrapped around the space to pose questions about the interplay between economic exchanges, subjectivity, representation, and othering. The exhibition explores politics of globalization, consumer exchanges between the east and west, and the social and gender norms within the Afghan bazaars. In this project, I am re-weaving my childhood memories of the bazaar, transforming, and deforming it to offer my viewers a sense of place and time alongside an awareness of the politicized present.