Motion Within Motion
by Azadeh Emadi

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BIOS
Azadeh Emadi is a video maker and media artist who experiments with alternative approaches to image making process and technologies of perception. In applying and developing aspects of classical Persian Islamic culture and concepts, her work aims to stimulate dialogue between Western and Middle Eastern cultures. Her videos and installations explore the intersection between reality, perception, technology and time, as an investigation for finding new ways of seeing that innovatively address some of the current socio-cultural and environmental issues. She is also a lecturer and researcher at the School of Culture and Creative Arts (Film and Television Studies Department), The University of Glasgow.

Laura U. Marks is a scholar and programmer who works on media art and philosophy. Her most recent book is Hanan al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image (MIT, 2015). She teaches in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

This is a shifting frame and I am shifting with it. It could therefore be said that in this experience I am also a frame that is constantly moving and changing, expanding and contracting.1

Eventually, in the writing of 16th C Iranian process philosopher Sadr al-Dîn al-Shirâzî (1571-1650), Emadi found the language that describes this experience. Process philosophy emphasizes that flow is more real than substance—as Kanye West explained when he tweeted recently, “I don’t wish to be number one anymore, I wish to be water.” A long-standing but minor element of Western philosophy, process philosophy has been the central current of Eastern Islamic thought since the 16th century. Sadr’s writings emphasize that Being is a unified reality graded in degrees of intensity, which encompasses all things in a transformative flow (al-sarayān al-wujûd, the flow of Being). To exist in this reality is to constantly modulate and transform from within. Citing Qur’an 56: 69-61, “We will exchange your likeness and recreate you in what you will not know” Sadr argues that the divine source transforms individuals from within. Sadr argues that God is the most real and most intense being, but every being in the universe is animated by a divine desire to become more real and more intense.2

That is the longing Emadi sees in non-human entities like pixels, as well as us humans: an internal transformation occurring in non-chronological time. To Emadi, the pixel is like a whirling dervish, becoming more deeply connected to the world as it spins. In a way, her works invite human visitors to cultivate this pixel dervish within ourselves.
