

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

first the language	a constant tap on the past that fills up the
and then the bodies	present
being erased	giving volume to the absence
the trauma	imprints
that was said	and
quietly,	reverberates
silenced.	through
	generations,
	remembering,
	melancholy

There is an inherent paradox one encounters when trying to speak about Roksana Pirouzmand’s art in words; her work butts up against the limitations of language. It is about histories and nuances that cannot be fully expressed within the confines of the narrow, Western concept of language (especially English). It is an oversimplification to consider the wall in the middle of the gallery in *The Past Seeps Through the Present* a metaphor for the delineation of a physical border between two countries, and between the past and the present, but it is a place to start when delving into this exhibition.

On one side of the wall is a portrait of the artist’s great grandparents who lived in Yazd, Iran, where she was born and lived until 2012. Pirouzmand’s family practiced Zoroastrianism, one of the world’s oldest faiths that originated in Iran but has been supplanted by Islam as the dominant religion. She moved to the US at the age of 21 through a refugee program called *Hias* that facilitates religious minorities’ immigration to countries where they can practice their beliefs freely. In moving to America, Pirouzmand’s ties to her ancestry, past and culture began to be erased. The connection remained through phone calls with immediate family back in Iran made privately from inside her home while outside, in public, she assimilated as immigrants are encouraged to do. She swapped her position in a religious minority to be part of an ethnic one. This is just one unintended consequence of diaspora. (CONTINUED ON BACK)→

Each thread in "Tapping, Rocking, Remembering" is connected to a ceramic cast of the artist's grandmother's finger. Hundreds of fingers cover the image of the previous generation, obscuring it while gently stroking its surface- a constant tap on the past that fills up the present. On the other side of the wall, connected via fine strands of hair, is a rocking chair that belonged to the artist's father. This chair was in his first home in the US, where he spent countless hours, rocking as he ruminated on the pressures facing an immigrant in a new country- joblessness, money worries, the language barrier, family problems. But also memories of home, a whole other life left behind. The chair is an apparatus of remembering, oscillating between marching forward into the future and being pulled back into the past. As Pirouzmand activates the piece by rocking in the chair, the hairs that fall on her shoulder gingerly pull the fingers so they almost lift up to reveal the image underneath, then refuse, dropping down to hide it once more.

"My work delineates our family history without betraying its secrets." All around the gallery hang paintings of Pirouzmand's family photos on tablets made of red clay. The paintings have drops of colored glaze that ooze as if out of pores, hiding key details and rendering the scenes imperfect, like memories. Across from the paintings is the titular work *The Past Seeps Through the Present*, an installation featuring a cast of Pirouzmand's grandmother's prone body suspended by fine threads over a cast of the same portion of her mother's body, in the exact same position. The two bodies could almost be two halves of a whole were it not for the water dripping slowly from the grandmother onto the mother, boring holes where the drops land and causing the unfired clay to melt into the white couch.

In the small gallery, water once again erodes an image inside the sealed box. The viewer is invited to push onto the box, causing the water to rock and the painting of Pirouzmand's family to slowly wash away. Her choice to pair tactile dripping and swishing water with the audible drumming of fingers acts as a jolt into the present. The sounds and sensations fill the room with the moment. Our senses keep us grounded in the quagmire of the past, as sensorial memory comes only with lived experience. Pirouzmand has charted a journey through intertwined layers of history, using only a few materials that are notable in their fragility- gossamer thin strands of hair and brittle clay- presented in precarious arrangements that remind us of the unsettled person who is pulled between two countries, languages, religions. Constantly resisting the erasure of her past while attempting to move forward into her future.◆