

The GEM Collective Newsletter

Issue 1: December 2021



Rear View by Wasi Daniju.

Dear friends,

Thank you for signing up to our mailing list. This is our first official newsletter as the Geographies of Embodiment (GEM) Collective since we launched in the summer with our [opening statement](#) and [podcast](#).

“We are a research community formed with one intention: making our lives more liveable. We write, dream and dwell within the messiness of our lives. We respect boundaries and work through care-full conversations. We reject any world where our lives are treated as a minoritised problem or statistic. As we reimagine the worlds we live in, we centre systems of care that honour our different embodied beings and traumas. GEM is about creating space for us to breathe; and more importantly, space for us to shine.”

The previous year(s) have been heavy for most of us and we pray and hope you have taken as much care as you can. In the midst of a global pandemic caused by capitalist violence, racial terror and systemic neglect, most of what we have been working through in the past months has been the internal processes and realities of trying to build collectively, together. We have asked ourselves what it means to try and move as a collective whilst we experience the violences of the world differently and are dislocated from each other through normalised processes of care-lessness which we often default to. Such questions have opened up new ways of growing together – and some of this we have shared publicly.

Blog



Photograph by Wasi Daniju.

In October, Azeezat Johnson wrote our beautiful first blog post capturing some of the thinking and feeling we have been doing around building the collective, in her own words: [Starry Nights: The Evolution of our Tent](#).

“We are not static beings, bordered into any one corner of the world. In letting go of our one solitary tent/house structure, we’re looking out and tending to the connections that we have to all that flows around us and through us. This is the expansiveness of our collective dreams.”

- Azeezat Johnson



Photograph by Wasi Daniju.

In our latest blog post, [If I could save time in a bottle](#), Wasi Daniju reflected on time, the desire to somehow have more, and the ways in which it exists so differently for various people.

“...Arthur Jafa spoke of Black people as having to move “at the tempo of emergency”. I never actually intended for this post to focus on that often enforced haste. I didn’t intend to dwell, today, on the lack of time and the difficulty of slowing down.”

- Wasi Daniju

Projects

Since the autumn, The GEM Collective have been working on various projects behind the scenes. We are excited to finally be able to share these in ways that you can interact with.

Embodied & Messy: A GEM Journal - Installation 1



Photograph by Wasi Daniju.

“For me, the reasons I do not yet feel I can write like that all the time is because of all the gazes upon us when we write/live. Which boils down the question of Embodiment, for me, into: what would it mean to write and live truthfully/honestly?”

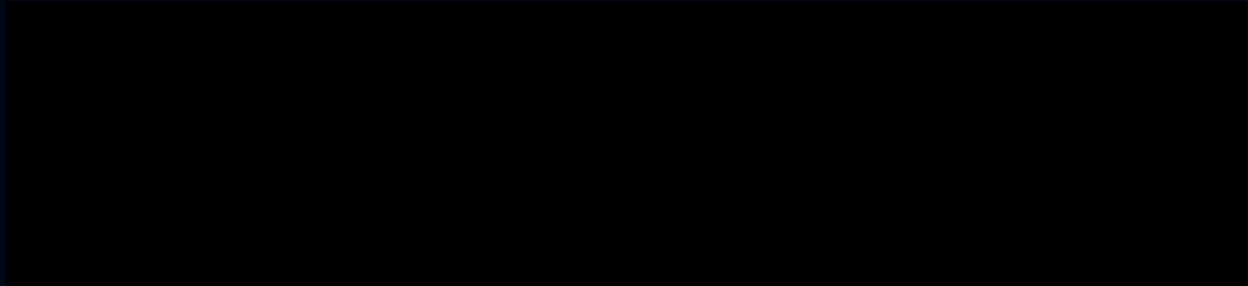
- Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan

This installation began as a sequence of journal entries between Azeezat Johnson, Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, Audrey Sebatindira and Shereen Fernandez feeling through our intentions and hopes in creating GEM as a space, and what Geographies of Embodiment meant to us.

A year later, members have both left and joined us. As a result, the entries in this installation were written by Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan and Azeezat Johnson, though we were always in conversation with others, too. Both of us are thinking through what it means to dream with our bodies, and how we might imagine worlds that tend to our different realities.

Importantly, we see the Embodied and Messy GEM Journal as an open-ended dialogue with future installations: we hope it creates the opportunity for you to journal and share your own in-conversation pieces with us, too. You can find this installation on [our podcast](#) as well as [our website](#).

Hijab On/Webcam Off



Photograph by Wasi Daniju.

Hijab On/Webcam Off is a project reclaiming conversations around hijab from the mainstream where it is often the prerogative of non-Muslim, white supremacist, patriarchal and secular-imperialist narratives; or a topic of discussion amongst men where it becomes a symbolic reference to Muslim women. We are creating space to have the sort of conversations that we, as Muslim women, want to have around hijab.

During the pandemic many of us have experienced the intrusion of workplaces and other meetings and events into our personal spaces be they homes, bedrooms or anywhere else via webcams. With this came the expectation that our cameras should be on. For those of us who wear hijab, this created conditions where we had to put our hijabs on even within our personal or familial spaces because of intrusion from outside. This got us thinking about the line between the public and private, indoors and outdoors, as well as considering questions of performance and performativity.

Our first conversation, recorded between Azeezat Johnson, Sahra-Isha Mohammed-Jones and Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, is available to [listen to here](#). We also welcome your own voicenote responses and replies for inclusion in our second episode. You can send these into the podcast via anchor.fm (website or app).

[Full transcript here.](#)

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The GEM Collective are working on other projects behind the scenes, and whilst we honour the work that we share publicly, we also recognise the importance of the working and thinking that happens under the surface and we hope that in our own time we can share what feels important to us, with you, as it grows.



A community of public scholars demanding and embodying liberation

From all of us at the GEM Collective, we hope that the end of this Gregorian-calendar year provides you with time to tend to yourself and those you love.

In 2022 we will be recruiting a part-time position for a GEM admin coordinator and PA to build the capacity of the collective. Please keep your eyes out and share the role spec with anyone you think it would suit.

We look forward to sharing more with you at the pace that protects our wellbeing. If you would like to be in touch please email us: gemresearchcollective@gmail.com.

Love, The GEM Collective

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