

# Sunnah

[Pronounced: soon-nah]

Aaliya Dramat

# Contents Page

- Artist statement
- Reading the Quran
- Maankykers
- Niyyat
- Taraweeh
- Eid Ul-Adha
- Tasbih
- Salaah

### Artist statement:

Most people can agree that the Covid-19 pandemic sparked great change, good or bad, over the lives of everyone within the last two years. Some businesses closed; others opened. With everyone going into a worldwide lockdown people were greeted with something that they were not used to, free time. Suddenly there was an infinite amount of time to think, reflect and to even do some soul searching. For me, personally, after months of being depressed something clicked and I found a greater need to connect to my spiritual side and grow closer to my religion, Islam.

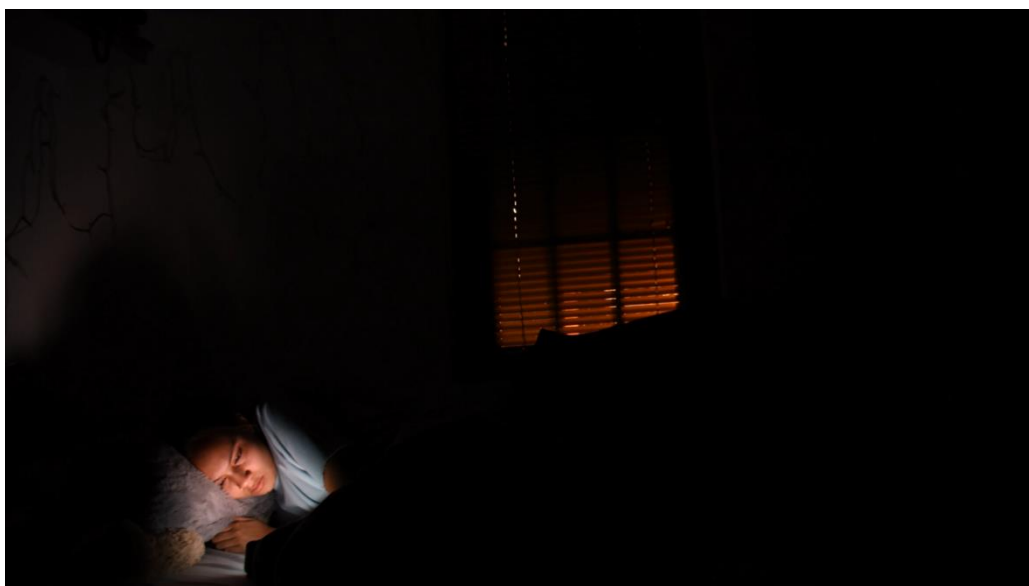
With the opportunity to spend an entire year working on a central project I thought, there would be no better way than using it to express the spiritual journey I decided to undertake. I began to wonder what one could do to become a “better Muslim”. Once one incorporates all the core aspects of their religion into their life what are they left with? The answer is the sunnah (pronounced soon-nah). Before Islam, the word “sunnah” meant ‘manner of acting’. Presently, “sunnah” refers to the way of life of the prophet Muhammed (PBUH), which is the lifestyle Muslims strive to implement in their own lives through traditions and practices. The sunnah is encouraged but is not mandatory.

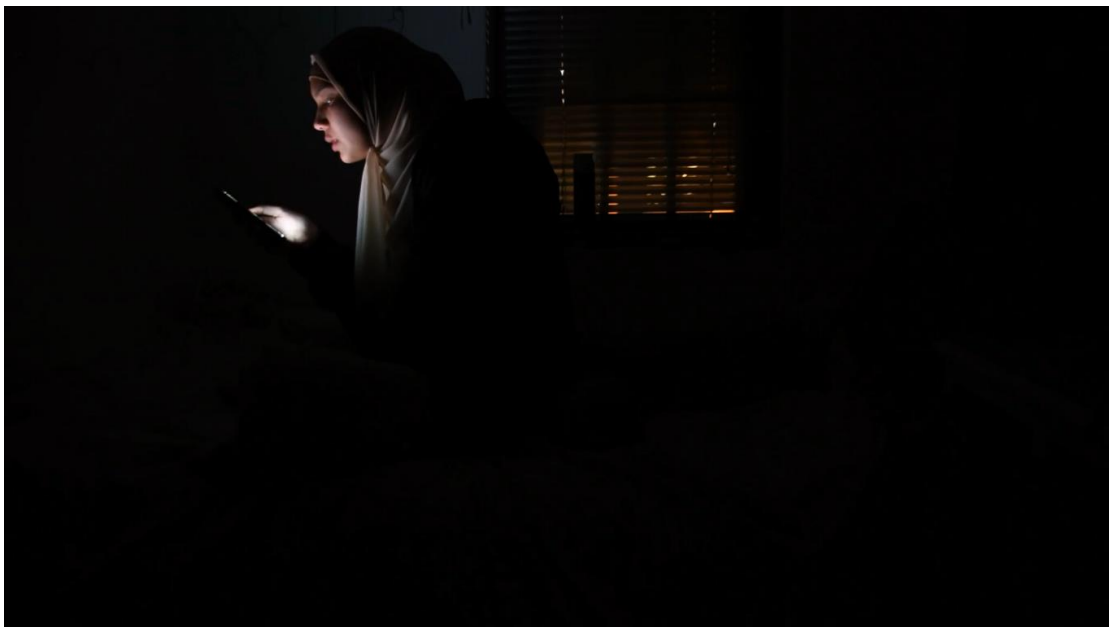
The body of work I produced this year expresses and records some of the different ways in which I have connected with my religion throughout my journey. My art also depicts the challenges, and sometimes failure, which accompany the task of striving to reach a higher level of spirituality. My body of work explores themes of Sabr (patience) and meditation. Most of my works that form part of this exhibition have taken the entire year to complete and have quite long and strenuous processes. This speaks to the nature of religion and how it can be seen as long and strenuous but that is the beauty of religion. To have faith and persevere

## Reading the Quran:

The first part of my project that I wanted to focus on was reading the Quran. I had never read the Quran before, but rather had it taught to me. I could not read Arabic and understand it. On the search for an English transliteration of the Quran, I came across an app called “Muslim Pro” (Muslim Pro- <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bitsmedia.android.muslimpro> ). While this app had a multitude of different features the most important feature to me was the fact that it had the Quran in Arabic, Arabic with English characters and in fully English. I decided to make a timelapse video on a Digital DSLR camera recording myself reading the Quran off my phone. The video is recorded in my bedroom with lowlight. The only source of light being from my cell phone and the streetlight shining in through the blinds of the window. The purpose of this video is to show the hours dedicated to reading the Quran and realigning oneself to their religion. The video is recorded throughout the year each time the Quran is read.

Stills from video:





Link to video:

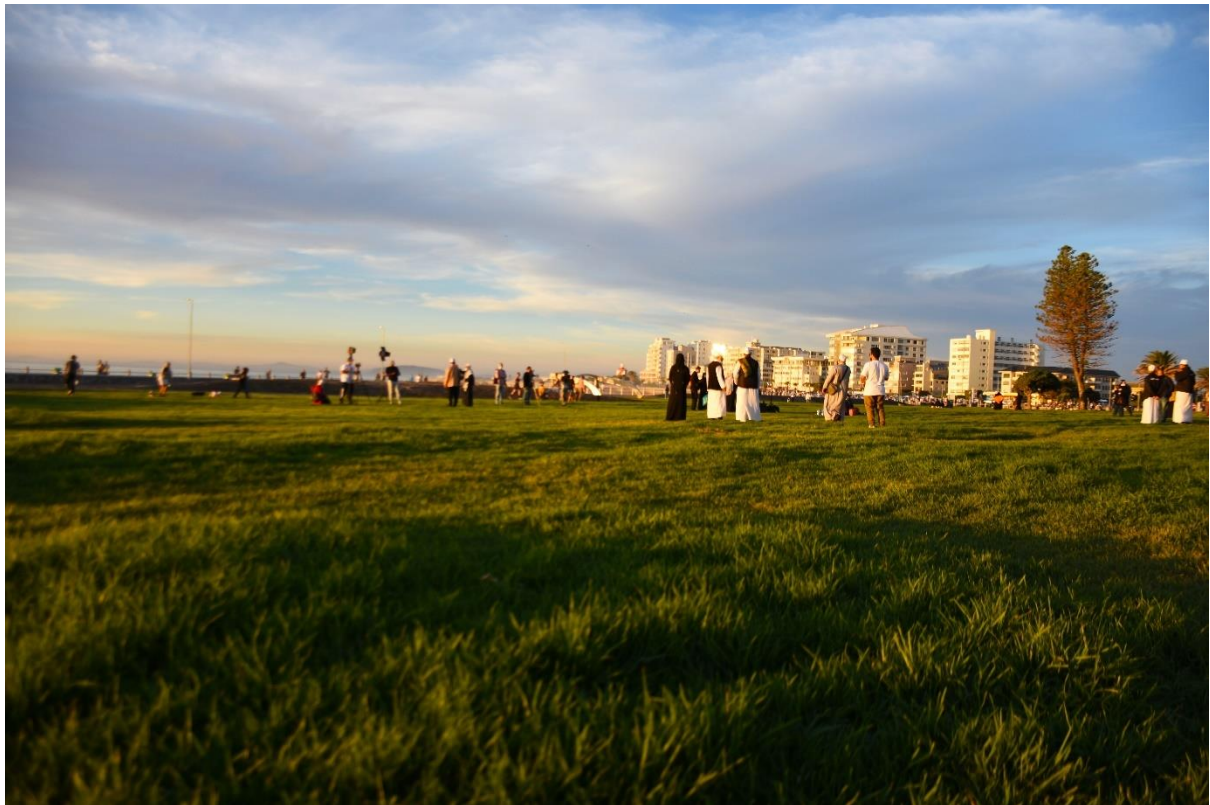
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j-wCxY\\_cf-q5xOpmJnvOIluNMkvzu\\_IL/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j-wCxY_cf-q5xOpmJnvOIluNMkvzu_IL/view?usp=sharing)

This video will be projected onto one of the walls in the exhibition space.

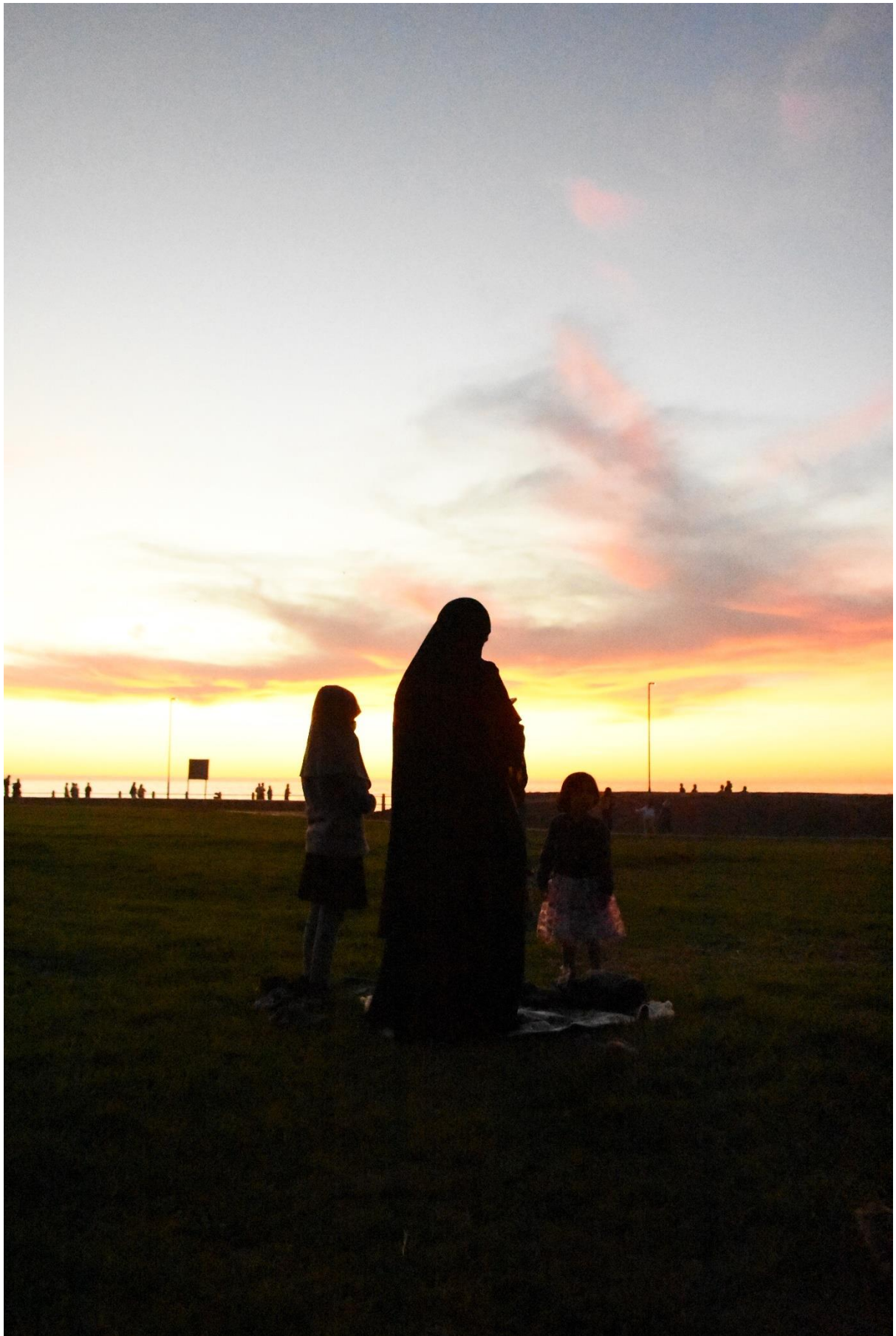
### Maankykers:

Ramadan came shortly after, and I went to the sighting of the moon which takes place in Sea Point. The Islamic calendar runs according to the moon and the sighting of the new moon marks the start of a new month. The month of Ramadan can only start once the moon has been sighted. The people who are qualified to sight the moon are known as the 'Maankykers'. The Muslim community comes together for the sighting of the moon and there is a mass prayer in Sea Point Park where it takes place. This event happens twice during Ramadan, once at the beginning and once at the end. it is common for people to have a picnic after the mass prayer to break their fast. This event is Televised on ITV (Islamic Television- the Muslim channel on DSTV). in order to let the rest of the Muslim community know whether Ramadan has started and ended.

Final images:







## Niyyat:

As a means of meditation and documentation of my hunger throughout the days of Ramadan I wrote out the niyyat (prayer/intention) that we say every morning before we begin our fast. Growing up my stepmother told me that if I ever got hungry while I fasted, saying the niyyat would help ease my hunger. Because of this, during the day I would write the niyyat out expressively in order to visually represent my hunger and as many times as I felt necessary. This was my way of controlling my Nafs while I fasted. Nafs in Islam correlates to one's personal struggle with their self and their desires. I created dyes out of food such as beetroot, cabbage, turmeric, coffee, and different teas etc. and used them as my ink. I wrote these on paper plates. Each plate represented one day of fasting. My manner of expressing my hunger would change. I viewed it differently each day. Some days I felt that thicker strokes expressed hunger, other days it represented the lack of hunger. The same with thin strokes, the intensity of the colour used and how many times I would write the niyyat out. It is an interesting concept to work with food and things we associate food with (such as paper plates) and not consume it. Once I had completed this process, I photographed each plate, printed it and created a circular book which was cut with the laser cutter and then bound. There is a sense of impossibility with creating a circular book, similarly to the impossibility of ones attaining to become their most righteous self. The book will be opened back to front as the Quran is opened from the right side.

Images:

































سنة ۱۰۵۰  
شعبان

در جمعه

قد

الحمد لله

و الصلوة

و السلام









بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا  
ما كنا لنهتدي لولا أن هدانا الله  
والحمد لله رب العالمين  
تاريخ ١٥/٥/١٤٢٥  
محمد بن عبد الله







## Taraweeh:

A type of prayer that is unique to Ramadan itself is Taraweeh prayer which happens every night throughout Ramadan. This prayer can last for a few hours. On the 8th of May I went to a Taraweeh prayer at my local mosque and recorded the sound. This prayer was almost an hour long.

Throughout the entirety of this prayer I felt a weird sensation. A few hours prior to me attending this Taraweeh I heard the news of the Muslims in Palestine who attended Taraweeh in Masjid Al-Aqsa. They had been attacked by Israeli forces during their prayer. While I was at the mosque during this prayer, I couldn't stop wondering how it would be if the very mosque I was in was attacked at that second. It was a surreal feeling. We were doing the same thing, but our circumstances were completely different. I combined the sound recording I took of my Taraweeh with video footage posted online of the attack in Al-Aqsa Mosque during their Taraweeh. The video is edited and slowed down, with some parts remaining at the original pace.

Stills from video:







Link to the video:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RLjbLtlDgYs-5u8C\\_wwKYOBqjbbmPYIB/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RLjbLtlDgYs-5u8C_wwKYOBqjbbmPYIB/view?usp=sharing)

I plan to present this video either on a tablet or phone screen as that is the means that most people receive news in today's time.

## Eid Ul-Adha:

During Ramadan, working with paper plates I started to think a lot about plates and the significance behind them. In Islam we are very much encouraged to give and share because we don't know the struggles of the people around us. During Ramadan before people break their fast, it is a tradition that everyone goes around to their neighbours and exchange food as a means of contributing to their supper for the night. This happens every night. By doing this we exchange plates. We often find different plates in our homes that belong to a different family. This idea of giving and sharing reminded me of how we have the same concept during Eid Ul-Adha. Eid Ul-Adha is the holiday where Muslims can sacrifice a sheep as commemoration to our Prophet Ibrahim for his willingness to sacrifice his son. Once a family slaughters a sheep, they are supposed to divide it into thirds, one third for the immediate family, another for the extended family and the last third is for the less fortunate or needy. I made six clay plates, one for each member of my immediate family. The plates were made from Whitestone Clay. I rolled the clay out, placed them on a small plate mould and let it dry until it became leather hard. Once the plate was fully dry it was placed in the kiln. The plates were painted with underglaze paint to form traditional Islamic patterning. They were then glazed and placed back in the kiln. My family members ate a small portion of meat on these plates on Eid Ul-Adha. These plates will be presented on a dining table installation. There are farms and organisations that do the slaughtering of the sheep on behalf of families and the meat can either be sent to the family or donated to a charity. I photographed one of these farms located in Philippi on a Nikon D7200 camera. These photographs will be presented in conjunction with the dining table set up.

Images of plates:



Example of dinner table set-up:



## Tasbih:

While on this journey one of the practices of my religion that I picked up on is the use of the Tasbih (prayer beads). The Tasbih is a tool used to praise Allah (God). There are three types of Tasbih's. One with 11 beads, one with 33 beads and one with 99 beads. The number three is seen as a holy number in Islam. There are three words we say when using the Tasbih, Allahu Akbar (God is great); Subhanallah (praise be to God); and Alhamdulillah (praise be to God). Each word is repeated 33 times, one bead representing one word. The Tasbih with 11 beads is repeated three times to make up 33 and to say all three words it is repeated 9 times. The Tasbih with 33 beads is used once for each word and the Tasbih with 99 beads uses one third for each word. I am making clay beads, each bead representing one time I have said these phrases. The beads will be hung up and falling off string. The quantity of the beads represents my attaining to be a better Muslim and the fallen beads represents the failure of the mistakes made along the way.

Images of the beads:



## Salaah:

Following a similar

concept of trying to attain the piety of being a better Muslim and having failure and challenges along the way, I scanned my prayer mats. While they were being scanned, I moved them slightly to create glitches. These glitches being representative of the failure and mistakes. We connect with God through prayer and with prayer we can become closer to him. Which is why I decided to use the prayer mats. There are three people actively praying in my house, me included. Which is why there are three prayer mats scanned. In Islam the number three is considered as sunnah. it is encouraged to do things in groups of threes. A concept which is quite prevalent while using the Tasbeih. These scans will be printed out the size of an actual prayer mat and hung on the wall.

Images of scans:





