



PHOTOS BY RANIA MATAR/COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ROBERT KLEIN GALLERY, BOSTON

With window portraits, a photographer can ‘forget a little the sadness’

Rania Matar traverses Greater Boston for her new series

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Two weeks into being stuck at home, photographer Rania Matar stood at her kitchen sink in Brookline and watched her neighbor reading in the yard. They’d been waving at each other from their kitchens. An idea struck: This distance, this isolation — it’s a photography project.

She went to her Instagram page (@raniamatar) and wrote, “if you live within a 30-minute drive from Brookline and have access to a ground floor door or window at your house or apartment, I would love to come and say hello and make a photograph. Physical distancing but not social distancing.”

Now, she has photographed more than 50 people, with another 25 to 30 lined up.

“I’m humbled by the response,” Matar said. “People have time, and we’re all craving connection.”

The photographer’s nuanced, resonant portraits of women and girls have been exhibited internationally, and garnered her a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2018. She had a mid-career traveling retrospective organized by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth that same year. She has now turned her attention to people peering out from their windows and doors in Greater Boston.

“I get in my car, I have a step stool, my camera, and my mask,” Matar said. “I may not know the person, or the setting, but I make the best of it.” She posts the finished portraits on Instagram.

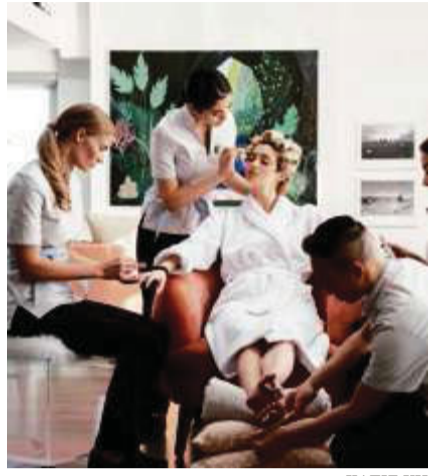
Last week, she drove to Susan Green’s house in Arlington. Green didn’t know Matar,

MATAR, Page G3

From top: Rania Matar’s “Mia and Jun, Allston, Massachusetts”; “Minty, Kayla, Leyah, Layla, Cambridge, Massachusetts”; “Ava, Hingham, Massachusetts.”



TELEVISION



KATIE YU

Allegra Edwards in the Amazon series “Upload.”

In ‘Upload,’ there’s an app for the afterlife

By Matthew Gilbert
GLOBE STAFF

There has been no shortage of TV shows about the boons, the flaws, and the threats of digitizing the human mind, not just “Black Mirror,” the top manufacturer of tech nightmares, but “Westworld,” “Altered Carbon,” “Devs,” “Years and Years,” and many more. But Greg Daniels’s new TV series, “Upload,” is a digital-mind story with a singular identity, one that blends sci-fi with romantic comedy, social satire, and, wedged in there neatly, crime drama. The closest thing I’ve seen to it is “Her,” the bitter-sweet Spike Jonze movie where Joaquin Phoenix falls in love with an operating system; but “Upload” is very much its own thing, and a good thing at that.

“UPLOAD,” Page G5

TELEVISION

No hoorays for ‘Hollywood’

By Matthew Gilbert
GLOBE STAFF

There’s something magical to me about the way Quentin Tarantino ends “Once Upon a Time in . . . Hollywood,” as his story about the dark turns of the late 1960s detours into a fairy tale of sorts. It’s a healing gesture by Tarantino, even as it puts him in the position of a god picking and choosing from among human destinies. At this point, we expect no less from him.

With “Hollywood,” co-creators Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan apply a similarly god-like revisionist twist to the history of Tinseltown in a big — and, ultimately, awkward — way. At first, their seven-part Netflix limited series gives us a portrait of the post-World War II movie biz, ridden with racism, sexism, and the abuses of power that have fueled the #MeToo movement. There are a few real-life characters, including Rock Hudson, and there are a lot of fictional characters, including piggy studio head Ace Amberg (Rob Reiner), who’s misusing a

“HOLLYWOOD,” Page G5

Inside

MUSIC

LOOKING OPTIMISTICALLY TOWARD THE FUTURE

BSO unveils plans for its 2020-21 season in Symphony Hall

G2

MOVIES

SPURRED BY A HUMAN CONNECTION

In quiet indie drama ‘Bull,’ the riders matter more than the rodeo

G4



BOB PACKERT/© 2019 PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM



R. LEOPOLDINA TORRES

that replaced her big trip.

These curators are bracing themselves for the possibility that in-person trips may not resume for many months or even years.

As for the List center's Bell, she already relied mostly on virtual meetings. Instead of speaking from her Cambridge office with artists from Mexico City, Madrid, and PyeongChang, South Korea, she contacts them from home now — sometimes with her baby in the background. "It's pretty easy to maintain virtual studio visits with artists," she said. "Everything feels like a strange new version of itself right now."

Building for the future

With all the uncertainty, institutional survival is of paramount importance. Layoffs and budget cuts have already hit the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts implemented furloughs until July. The reality is that cost-cutting can go only so far until admissions revenue returns.

"What we want first and foremost is for everyone to be able to open their doors and just have something — some kind of programming," Lee said.

Will exhibitions need to be more spread out, allowing visitors to keep 6 feet from one another? None of the curators the Globe spoke with had concrete plans for a physically distanced project (though they entertained the possibility).

Most were making hopeful plans for reopenings in the late summer or early fall. The MIT List Visual Arts Center's summer openings have been rescheduled for October. The Clark Institute's outdoor "Ground/Work" exhibition, with six new works spread across the museum's 140-acre campus, still hopes to see warm weather — Bell said it will be a "wonderful way to celebrate" being together again. Even the MFA pegged July 1 as its opening day. (Harvard Art Museums will abide by the universities' decision.)

One thing is for certain — eventually, institutions will reopen as gathering places ideal for collective healing, spots of beauty and life. When that day comes, curators will be ready.

"Viewing art in person — that in-person experience — is everything," said Bell, from the Clark Institute. "I'm preserving that for us and for everyone."

Diti Kohli can be reached at diti.kohli@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@ditikohli](https://twitter.com/ditikohli).

'We are being tried': How museum curators are adapting for the present and future

By Diti Kohli

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Peabody Essex Museum curator Petra Slinkard was excited about a certain shipment — 60 carefully chosen women's clothing items on loan from the Kunstmuseum Den Haag, in the Netherlands. But when the pandemic spread through the world, closing museums along with it, shipping the clothes became impossible. The boxes never arrived. And the exhibit was put on hold indefinitely.

The novel coronavirus toppled plans for hundreds of projects that were years in the making, including Slinkard's "Made It: The Women Who Revolutionized Fashion" (originally set to open May 16). Museums around the world will likely remain shuttered for another few months, possibly longer. Yet curatorial planning and other behind-the-scenes work continues.

If they've managed to head off furloughs, art curators are still busy piecing together exhibits from home. They're organizing the next few years of projects from their laptops and virtually tending to collections they cannot currently touch.

"We are being tried — tested in a way," Slinkard said. "Usually if you line up a bunch of dominoes and one falls, they all fall. But it's the curators' job to make sure there's some sense of nor-

malcy when the museums reopen."

The Globe spoke with four Massachusetts curators about the issues they face in the coronavirus era and what it all means for the future of art museums and galleries.

Access to galleries and collections

"The biggest challenge is not having access to the actual collection," said Harvard Art Museums chief curator Soyoung Lee, who used to travel from her home in New York City to Cambridge every week to walk the institution's halls. "Whether it's research for something we are writing or an exhibition we are planning, one of the key steps is to see the work and look at it from a new lens."

Lee and her colleagues are currently planning an exhibition that will highlight acquisitions since the museum's 2014 expansion. Circumstances now force them to work from downloadable images.

"We have the images, of course, but it's not the same as looking at the actual work," she said. "You don't get that real life quality, like the textures [and] the materials."

Photos also often fail to capture dimensions, making it impossible to visualize how certain works will look in the gallery, Slinkard said. That poses a special threat to exhibitions slated to



TUCKER BAIR

Top: Peabody Essex Museum curator Petra Slinkard (left) and Harvard Art Museums chief curator Soyoung Lee. Above: Esther Bell, chief curator at the Clark Institute of Art.

open in the coming months, all of which will need finishing touches that require physically handling the art, like wall design and cleaning.

For some small galleries, like the MIT List Visual Arts Center, working from the exhibition space is less vital. The center does not own an expansive collection, relying instead on rotating

exhibitions. Curator Natalie Bell was responsible for digitally scouting nearly every piece and artist before the pandemic. "A lot of the experience now is the same as before," she said.

Across the board, curators have shifted their focus to tasks that can be carried out remotely, like writing catalog books and ramping up digital content. But they're still counting down the days before they can see the art in person again.

"Works of art take on roles as familiar characters for me," said Esther Bell, chief curator at the Clark Institute of Art. "I'm missing them like I miss my family."

Searching the world for great art

A key part of the curator's job involves hunting down great art, often flying to far corners of the world to visit artist studios in pursuit of the perfect piece. "The traditional curatorial method of working is that we visit places to see the art," said Lee, who supervises nearly 30 curators and fellows. "Shelter-in-place has completely obviously stopped that."

For now, video conferencing and photos have replaced the in-person experience. Slinkard was due in India this month for a visit with renowned designer Manish Arora, but has grown accustomed to the 9 p.m. video calls



PHOTOS BY RANIA MATAR/COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND ROBERT KLEIN GALLERY, BOSTON; JUN KURIBAYASHI (TOP RIGHT)

Top: "Sally, Ella, Tori, Hingham, Massachusetts." Above: "Susan, Arlington, Massachusetts" (left) and "Ann, Dorchester, Massachusetts."

Her window portraits reflect on a new reality

▶ MATAR

Continued from Page G1

but as a photography aficionado follows her on Instagram. Green lives alone.

"I've been starved for conversation, so I was really happy. She had to ask me to not smile, and it was difficult," said Green, who works at the Boston Society for Architecture.

Matar posed Green in a window with an empty flowerbox outside. "At first, Rania said it's too bad you don't have flowers planted," Green said. So she fetched a flower for her windowsill inside.

"We both felt that spoke to the situation now, where everything is inside out and upside down and backwards," Green said.

Matar usually works with a film camera. For this project, she's going digital. "This is something happening now," she said. "It's important to make the work and not wait to look at it."

Window reflections are intrinsic to her portraits. "The notion of inside and outside is important right now," she said. "Reflection is blurring that."

Matar photographed Mia Dalglish and her husband, Jun Kuribayashi, through their backdoor in Brighton. Dalglish is a curator at Pictura Gallery in Indiana, with which Matar is affiliated, and also a dancer. Kuribayashi is a choreographer. Pictura will host an online studio visit with Matar about this project at 6 p.m. on May 8 at www.facebook.com/gallerypictura.

"She's the perfect person to do this," Dalglish said. "Rania has a way of getting very concisely into the emotional moment of whomever she is photographing."

This, despite a bit of chaos in getting the photograph shot.

"There was a lot of gesticulating. She was standing on a chair in our backyard. It was a windy day, and the wind was whipping her red scarf around," Dalglish said. "She was trying to yell loud enough so we could hear what she was saying."

Kuribayashi has three autoimmune diseases, Dalglish said, so the couple has taken particular care with social isolation. Matar was the first person they'd encountered in weeks.

"Having someone come to see you was a little piece of joy I hadn't had for



'She's the perfect person to do this. Rania has a way of getting very concisely into the emotional moment of whomever she is photographing.'

MIA DALGLISH (right), on being photographed by Rania Matar (left)

a long time," Dalglish said.

In Matar's portrait, Dalglish and Kuribayashi peer longingly through the door.

"Our hands are on the glass," Dalglish said. "Someone said it looks like when a train is leaving the station. I feel the world outside is a train leaving the station, and we're stuck."

The photo shoot, she said, "helped me process some of the things I'm feeling."

Matar lives at home with her husband and, in quarantine, five young adults — three of their four children, and a niece and nephew. Even so, she is excited to be out connecting with new people.

"There's so much enthusiasm," Matar said. "It makes me forget a little the sadness of what we're living through."

Cate McQuaid can be reached at catecmquaid@gmail.com. Follow her on Twitter @cmcq.