

# Reema\_ac

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

reema, project, work, houston, marfa, started, exhibition, artist, university, transmedia, art, practice, continue, writing, curate, story, france, rocks, finishing, designer

## SPEAKERS

Edith Villasenor, Reema

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**E** Edith Villasenor 00:01

Hello, Welcome. Today is April 24, 2020. My name is Edith Villasenor and I am here to interview Reema and her new art exhibit All Roads Lead to Home at the Architecture, Design, & Art Library. Thank you Reema for being here, and thank you UH Libraries for sponsoring this program. Reema is a Master of Fine Arts candidate at the University of Houston in interdisciplinary practice in emerging forms, focusing on transmedia storytelling. Today, Reema will talk about her work, experiences, and future plans. So to get started, would you briefly tell us about your background?

**R** Reema 00:40

Sure. I am a multi disciplinary, multi platform artist. I kind of came into it in an odd way. Very artistic when I was really young, always telling stories, drawing things. And I grew up being encouraged to continue doing those things. In undergrad I went to the Art Institute of Houston, and I focused on interior design. I've been a practicing designer for over 12 years now.

**E** Edith Villasenor 01:13

Wow.

**R** Reema 01:16

Thank you. And from there I not long after I had graduated, a friend of mine and I had met at a writers group because I had started writing pretty early on and wanted to work on that. And he said I want to make a story that's with pictures and words and I was like, I can draw and we started on that path. And we're still continuing on that path. From there, we started our own company, in 2012, folded it two years later, because we didn't have any products. We didn't really know what we wanted to do with the business. But we know we wanted to definitely continue writing stories, and so I did a little soul searching. And realized, you know, I liked

design, but it wasn't the whole story for me. What was it? And I started to think about going back into storytelling and back into art and how can I combine these things and went back to the University of Houston for my Masters. And yeah, here I am.

**E** Edith Villasenor 02:20

Awesome. Thank you for sharing that. And have you ever installed in a public space before?

**R** Reema 02:29

I have, actually. This project All Roads Lead to Home was born from an art residency that took place in France, and then Marfa. And in Marfa, we collectively all there was 10, yeah, 20 people. We showed in a public space, we had to procure this space ourselves and show it and that was the biggest event, at least for me.

**E** Edith Villasenor 03:01

And can you tell us more about the book and how it relates to the whole exhibition All Roads Lead to Home?

**R** Reema 03:09

Sure. I, like I said, I went on this residency. And so it started at the University of Houston. And it was a collaboration between UH and the Beaux-Arts Nantes in France. And students from the University of Houston and students from France, we got to go there and visit them, they got to come here and visit us. And then we all went for two weeks in the summer to Marfa. And I decided I wanted to journal my experience because I didn't know what I was going to do. I knew it was something multi-platform, some sort of story. And so I took my journals from France, I took my journals from Houston when they arrived. And then in Marfa I started putting these together and noticing that a lot of times I was in these different spaces I was seeing home instead of the country or the city that I was in. So I kind of dove into that. There was a lot of pain and just a lot of heartache around that and the things that are happening in my home country. And so as a means of catharsis, I ended up writing the first version of the book back in 2018.

**E** Edith Villasenor 04:28

And would you be continuing adding into the exhibition into the series and the whole exhibit?

**R** Reema 04:37

I am not producing new works for this project. I see it as done. However, the accompanying augmented reality app is not quite complete in my mind. I have some, a vision to finish that off. But it's nothing new. I'm not adding anything new to the project.

E

Edith Villasenor 05:00

Thank you. So tell me about your favorite piece in the exhibition. And why.

R

Reema 05:06

My favorite piece in this exhibition and why... It would really have to be the portrait of my grandmother. It was very heartfelt. And I had done that for myself many years before. And it felt right to include in this project. And she holds a very dear and special place in my heart. And as I was drawing her I was, I felt like I was reconnecting with her in a new way, seeing her through my hands and through my body and through my muscle memories. And to me, that one has a really sweet spot in my heart.

E

Edith Villasenor 05:44

Very touching. So you're really close to your grandma?

R

Reema 05:47

Yeah, yeah I was.

E

Edith Villasenor 05:52

Okay, well, thank you for sharing that. Now, going into your process of you know, in an artist, what techniques do you use? Do you have several, just one?

R

Reema 06:05

There are several different techniques. I have been a designer for quite a number of years; that's sort of baked into my DNA at this point. And so I typically approach things with a designer's eye and mindset, you know, What is what is the project? What am I trying to say? How am I going to program it? Okay, I want to get here. So how do I get from A to Z? What are the steps I want to take? I sort of work backwards and do the project management and the planning. However, I have started to add new techniques and being more intuitive about things. I feel this is essential. I don't know why, but I need to do this and figure it out later. So allowing for that space as well. I use different tools and technologies based on the projects themselves. Being a multi platform artist, I will use a number of different technologies and methodologies surrounding that. So it's not the same every time.

E

Edith Villasenor 07:05

Very interesting. Thank you. And when do you know your work is done?

R

Reema 07:14

When do I know when my work is done? Sometimes I don't. I just get overwhelmed. And I feel like this is done now. And I just abandon the project, not abandon it midway through but get it close enough to where I'm like, You know what? If I add anything more, I think I'm gonna break this. Let's stop here.

E

Edith Villasenor 07:36

Yeah, I'm sure. Artists have the same process. Yeah. Um, tell me about your influences. Do you have any, like artists influences, music influences?

R

Reema 07:52

Yeah, I'm a big fan of metal and rock and roll. And music is a very, very ritualistic place for me. So I find a lot of inspiration there. One of my favorite artists in the music scene, Marilyn Manson, very inspired by people like Alexander McQueen, Betty Dodson, and even BelÃ©n Santa-Olalla and her work in the transmedia realm that touches in the, she's more focused on transmedia but in the performance and theater aspect of it. So not any one person or any one thing but rather a conglomeration of different things that speak to me.

E

Edith Villasenor 08:41

Wonderful, thank you. And are you working any other series at the moment?

R

Reema 08:48

I am, I always have my hands in a whole bunch of projects. I am finishing off my thesis work. So I've already submitted that and that's done at least from the university side. But there are a few things I want to wrap up with it myself. And then there is Allyson Darke, the one I started with my writing partner way back in the day. It's, that's still ongoing. We haven't quite published it yet. It's taken some really big shifts that are very important and takes some time to get that right. As well as a project I've been working on in the background and during my time at U of H it's called Cause to Wonder, about identity.

E

Edith Villasenor 09:35

Thank you. What's your favorite place to see art?

R

Reema 09:40

One of my favorite places to see art... I don't think there's again, any one place. I do like the

Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Both sides, the contemporary and the other. I love the Contemporary Arts Museum. My favorite thing, though, is to see what's happening live and in person. Are there events to go to, and sort of touching on those and getting out and about and experiencing things that I would have never thought of before. Sometimes it's poetry, sometimes it's experimental performance. Sometimes it's something that I've never heard of before. Those are the things that really get me.

E

Edith Villasenor 10:25

Great, thank you. So what's next for Reema in the future, after graduation?

R

Reema 10:31

After graduation? Yeah, that's right on my mind, I'm about to graduate here. I've actually really enjoyed teaching at the university and I want to continue teaching. I want to teach and continue to build my practice at the same time. And I see teaching as a way to build my practice in certain aspects. And as I teach, I actually learn a lot more than I would just learning on my own. So teaching, and then continuing my art practice, finishing Allyson Darke for sure. Getting back into Cause to Wonder and finishing off that project. There's another one mingling in the back of my mind, it's a literary piece that I want to curate other people's works together. Yeah.

E

Edith Villasenor 11:25

Thank you. And is there a social media page that people can follow you and your work, that you can share with us?

R

Reema 11:33

Yeah, so I have curated projects on my website, W W W dot Reema, R E E M A, dot rocks, R O C K S. And I will put my events on there as well. So you can see upcoming shows that I might have. And then I have a Instagram at Reema Rocks Lab. And it's sort of my lab of experiments of things I'm dabbling in, things that are still a passion, hobbies, things that might not have a home on my website. When, so I treat it as a lab of experiments.

E

Edith Villasenor 12:14

Well, thank you so much for Reema for your time. I know we're at like in a crisis situation, but you were able to make it here too. So thank you.

R

Reema 12:22

Yeah, thank you.



Edith Villasenor 12:26

Bye bye.