

A large, abstract artwork made of marbled paper. The paper features swirling patterns of dark blue, light blue, and white. The shape is irregular, resembling a stylized wave or a piece of fabric. It has a small circular hole on the right side. The artwork is set against a plain white background.

Alize Zorlutuna

*We Who Have
Known Many Shores*

May 10 – September 1, 2024

Art Gallery of Burlington

agb



"We Who Have Known Many Shores is for all of us who have come from elsewhere—built home and fallen in love with the land, here."

- Alize Zorlutuna

We *Who Have Known Many Shores* brings together material practices rooted in Anatolian textiles, ceramics, and marbling, and contemporary mediums, in order to forge new pathways for considering diasporic relationships to place and belonging. Conjuring earth, air, water, fire, and spirit, transdisciplinary artist Alize Zorlutuna collages mediums, methods, and geographies at the Art Gallery of Burlington (AGB) for their first solo exhibition in a public art gallery.

Exploring ancestral material practices through contemporary means, Zorlutuna reconnects threads that have been severed through displacement, imagining what healing might look like for those who have been separated from their homelands. Their approach emerges from years of research, training, and practice engaging with material and cultural technologies from the SWANA region (Southwest Asia and North Africa) while thinking through relationships to place, settler-colonialism, diaspora, and healing. Following generations of makers, they repeat patterns and actions known to many hands—the marbling of Ebru, the tufting of carpets, the coiling of ceramic vessels, the dying of silks; their hands hold deeply embodied knowledge and wisdom acquired through repeated engagement with traditional craft practices and a collaboration with the elements.

We Who Have Known Many Shores addresses diasporic relationships to land and water by tracing the outlines of waterways that have informed Zorlutuna's sense of home. Using fabric, seeds, and video, they trace the contours of Lake Ontario's shores, bends in the Humber River, and key waterways in Anatolia – the continental boundary of the Bosphorus Strait, and the Marmara, Aegean, and Mediterranean seas. Incorporating healing plants from Anatolia and Turtle Island, as well as inviting the elements of wind and water into the exhibition, Zorlutuna explores the emotional landscape of belonging to place.

The exhibition centers around an ongoing work, *leaving the table*. The piece is a plush communal space with carpets and pillows collected from Zorlutuna's communities and the AGB's publics, as well as hand-tufted carpets that represents important waterways in Ontario alongside motifs and symbols from Anatolian and Egyptian carpets. It is a necessary grounding zone for contemplation, rejuvenation, and rest. Zorlutuna explains that the artwork is "gesturing towards ways of gathering and being with others that are underscored by a sense of mutual responsibility and care, [asking] participants to collectively imagine a space other than the table around which we might gather. A space within the boundaries and in relationship to this place's violent histories. That acknowledges the ongoing legacies of these histories, alongside the reality that this place has also been a refuge for many. *Leaving the table* asks us to contend with how we came to be here on this land, and what our responsibilities are in being here together."¹ It is a space for those who need relief and comfort. It is a space to nourish revolutions.

"A space within the boundaries and in relationship to this place's violent histories. That acknowledges the ongoing legacies of these histories, alongside the reality that this place has also been a refuge for many."

Bracketing the gathering space is *Roses for those who dream of return* (2024), a six-piece fountain and garden structure designed and built in collaboration with artist/architect Nik Reza and Waard Ward collective. It was shown earlier this year at the Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto, Scarborough, in *A rose gives its fragrance even to the hand that crushes it*, curated by Sandy Saad-Smith. Here at the AGB, the fountain has been separated and reconfigured to allow for additional seating in the gathering space and to grant the necessary sunlight for the plants to live and thrive in the lobby space.

It is not the first time we have seen the fountain and planters at the AGB. The structure's hand-painted tiles and basin were created in the AGB pottery studio during Zorlutuna's artist residency in November 2023-April 2024. During this period, Zorlutuna applied their research on Anatolian ceramics to their own pottery practice. With the assistance of studio artists and AGB technicians and educators Heather Kuzyk and Michelle Lynn, Zorlutuna was able to produce the ceramic elements of the piece including the collection of tiles, which are inscribed with the rich abundance of Anatolian fruit including pomegranates, lemons, and figs. The AGB also provided Zorlutuna with the resources to experiment and realize the series of ceramic vessels in the exhibition, each one dedicated to a waterway connected to the artist's experience of building intimacy with water.

Above the gathering space, the word "belong," constructed in handmade lace gathered from women in the artist's life, is scrolled across the gallery wall. The crocheted word covers a significant distance: the looping "oooooooooooo" stretches it out impossibly long, asking us to elongate ourselves psychologically and emotionally. To be long is to stretch ourselves back through and across time,

connecting to embodied knowledges, and ways of being and knowing home that stretch across time and oceans.

We Who Have Known Many Shores is a constellation of gestures; together, they form a portal, inviting us to reach back through the body's memory to another time and place, to begin healing our collective futures.

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Alize Zorlutuna is a queer transdisciplinary artist, writer, and educator whose work explores relationships to land, culture, and the more-than-human, while thinking through history, ancestral wisdom, and healing. Having moved between Tkarón:to and Anatolia (present-day Turkey) both physically and culturally throughout their life has informed Alize's practice—making them attentive to spaces of encounter. Alize enlists poetics and a sensitivity to materials in works that span video, installation, printed matter, performance, and sculpture. The body and its sensorial capacities are central to their work. Alize lives and works in Tkarón:to.

Alize has presented their work in galleries and artist-run centers across Turtle Island, including Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Plug In ICA, InterAccess, VIVO Media Arts Centre, Mercer Union Centre For Contemporary Art, Doris McCarthy Gallery, The Next Contemporary, Gallery TPW, Varley Art Gallery, XPACE, Audain Art Museum, Stride Gallery, and Access Gallery, as well as internationally at The New School: Parsons (NY) and Club Cultural Matienzo (Argentina).

1. <https://alizezorlutuna.com/leaving-the-table-how-to-draw-an-imagined-place/>

To “come and go”: Lineage, land, and labour in the work of Alize Zorlutuna

S F Ho

A glass of water resting on a handmade doily greets us as we enter the exhibition, *We Who Have Known Many Shores*. For artist Alize Zorlutuna, this offering conjures a memory—a glass of water offered to guests who would visit their grandmother’s home in Turkey. This seemingly simple gesture invites us to reflect upon the countless ways in which water serves us as living beings and indeed makes life possible. The theme of water flows through Zorlutuna’s art practice, connecting plants, people, culture, and histories. Water is physically present in these works as well, held by vessels made of clay, flesh, earth, and shore. One could consider the human body to be a vessel of water. Other bodies of water that appear in Zorlutuna’s work bear names like the Bosphorus Strait or the Humber River, Lake Ontario, or the Sea of Marmara. They connect the lands of Zorlutuna’s Anatolian heritage to the colonized lands of Turtle Island where they now live in diaspora. Another invitation lingers in this offering of water, one that asks visitors to the art gallery: what bodies, waters, vessels, containers, or streams have led us to arrive in this room, upon this land? How might we visitors be of service to water, as it unselfishly serves us with the gift of life?

Like water, Zorlutuna connects otherwise distant lands, bodies, and beings to each other, meditating upon how these relationships are affected by power and by history. This attention considers the plants and objects that inhabit these lands as entities imbued with stories, spirit, and lineages. Goldenrod, sumac, madder, rose, and pomegranate all take part in a dialogue that spans cultures and continents. Olives, lemons, and figs carry with them thousands of years of stewardship across the SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) region. A tulip may appear on some tilework—invoking centuries of cultivation in Anatolia, colonial fascination, and obsession within the Dutch Empire, as well as their endemic use in present day garden culture upon stolen lands. Or perhaps a burdock motif

appears in a carpet, the stubborn strength of their deep-running roots and prickly fruits weaving protection into domestic objects. Zorlutuna’s artwork reorients our attention towards the life and migration of plants, centring these humble organisms as active partners and labourers in the creation of cultural work. Tending to them becomes by extension a means to nurture culture and land.

Zorlutuna’s practice continually underscores the hidden labour found in quotidian objects that populate material culture by considering the conditions and experiences that feed into their creation. Unlike the artist, the craftsperson who creates a well-formed jug, a sumptuous carpet, a delicious meal, or an expertly tailored garment often goes unnamed. Following the aesthetic traditions

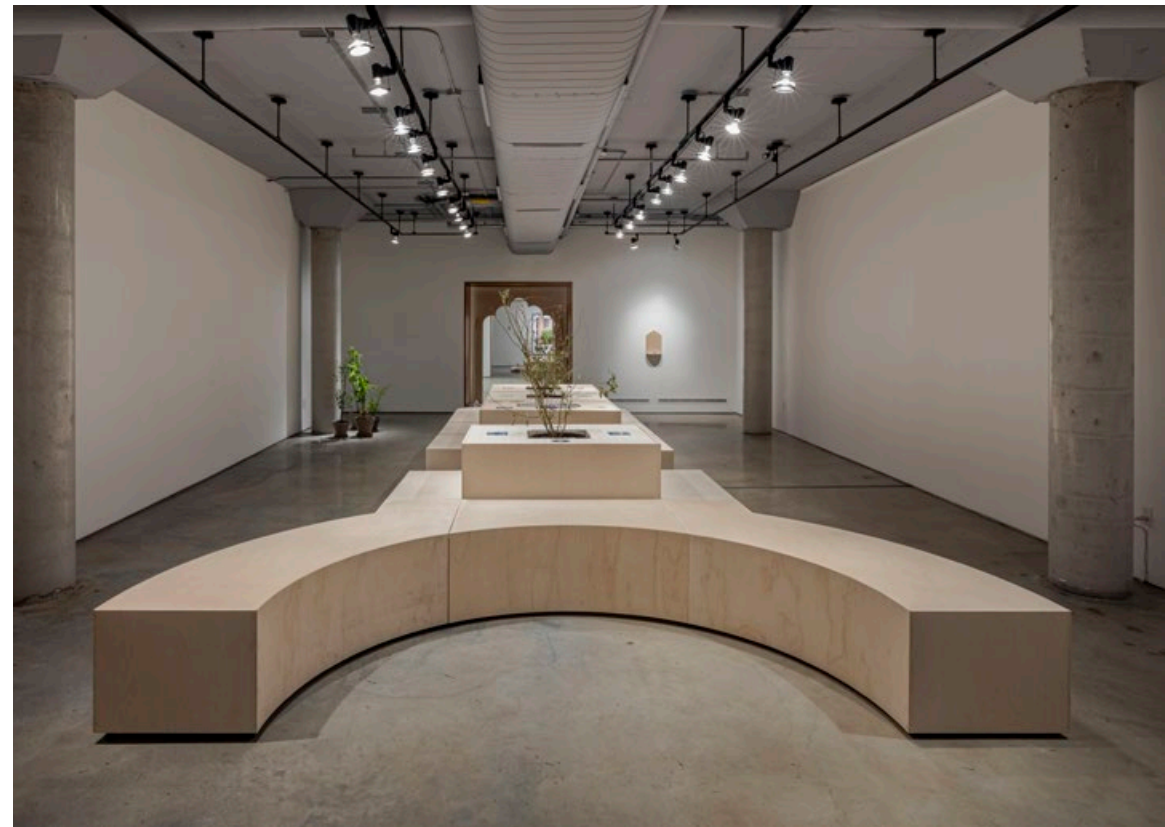


Image credit: Reza Nik and Alize Zorlutuna in collaboration with Waard Ward, *Roses for those who dream of return*, 2024. Site-specific garden installation, dimensions variable. Photo by Toni Hafkenscheid.

connected to their ancestry, Zorlutuna intentionally trained with artisans to study mediums such as weaving, hooked and knitted hand work, and *ebru*—the art of paper marbling—from teachers Somgöl, Dürsiye Doğan, and Yılmaz Eneş. In a culture of fast fashion, globalized supply chains, and industrialized production, younger generations in Turkey have been reluctant to take up these older technologies. Even when there are keen students ready to pick up these skills, the process of learning is never a simple act of reclamation when filtered through layers of time, distance, and displacements. Memories of craft technology, of the past, of the contours of streets and soil, are complicated by the rupture of diaspora.



Carrying Seas (2023) Image credit Alison Postma

The crocheted loops that spell out *belooooooooong* in a colonial tongue materialize the binding, tightening, and unraveling processes of complicated inheritances. Struggle, anxiety, and care are woven into a carpet or kneaded into a lump of dough. The crafted knots that tangle upon the tongue also carry tensions held in bodies that have been historically feminized. To practice these traditions, particularly through a non-conforming or displaced body, one must also resist being strangled by them. At the risk of being labeled inadequate or inauthentic, living bodies continually deviate from or fail to reify national narratives, cultural norms, and gender binaries, even if there is a desire within them to continue these practices and remain true to their spirit. Moving between these desires and failures, Zorlutuna finds resonance in a traditional *ebru* design called *git gel*, in which a marbling comb is sharply drawn back and forth across oily ink and water to form a pattern of peaks and valleys. Translated as “come and go”, the landscape of *git gel* recalls the journey of a Sufi mystic traversing the space between heaven and earth, a borderland that exists in between places and identities.

Our present day in-between, this before and after that separates place and past, and mitigates presence and distance, is inexorably tied to the story of the modern imperial project. The multitudinous cultures and ways of being that exist upon

“The multitudinous cultures and ways of being that exist upon stolen native lands are woven into this story—one that irrevocably altered the places that we came from as well as where we live today. Zorlutuna's intimate work brings a compassionate and embodied awareness to this migratory network of connections and catastrophes.”

stolen native lands are woven into this story—one that irrevocably altered the places that we came from as well as where we live today. Zorlutuna's intimate work brings a compassionate and embodied awareness to this migratory network of connections and catastrophes. For we who have known many shores, attending to these connections while imagining forms of interdependence that exist outside of capital is fundamental to the process of understanding our arrival to so-called Canada. This process and attention, reflected in the works displayed here, is also one small step towards recognizing our position here, which is wrapped up in Canada's position as an un/settler state. Through this double-edged process of nation-building and unsettlement, so many of us are fundamentally unsettled. This includes people descended from dominant European cultures who might not consider themselves to be from another place. To honestly address why our experience of home or belonging feels unresolved is synonymous with the work of rectifying the displacement of Indigenous beings and peoples from their homes on these lands. Undertaking this labour, which is truly one of love, serves not only the lands and waters that hold us but also our own healing and well-being.

—

S F Ho is an artist, writer, and organizer living on the unceded territories of the *xməkəyəm*, *Swxwú7mesh*, and *səlílwəta* peoples. Their practice operates somewhere between words and whatever words can't be. They have presented work through SFU Galleries, Hangar (Lisbon), Art Metropole (Toronto), Agnes Etherington Art Centre (Kingston ON), Galerie oqbo (Berlin), RAM Galleri (Oslo), the University of Toronto's Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Their creative and critical writing has been published through *Modern Painters*, *c magazine*, *West Coast Line*, *INTER: art actuel*, *Dysfction*, *The Capilano Review*, and *The Ex-Puritan*. They founded and co-organized a land-based gathering called Slow Wave Small Projects and serve on the BC Art Council's Equity Advisory Network. They wrote a book about love and aliens called *George, the Parasite*. sssffho.com

Public Programming

At the AGB, learning is in the making. Through hands-on workshops and courses, clay artists can build a greater personal connection to their craft and experience professional growth by learning new techniques, discovering other artists' practices, and understanding contemporary art in greater depth.

The Handmade Tile: Pattern and Potential with Nikola Wojewoda

Sundays, 1–4 PM, 8 Weeks

Start/End: May 12 – June 30, 2024

Cost: M: \$390 NM: \$420 (includes material and firing fee)

Handmade ceramic tiles are one of the oldest forms of decorative arts. Repeating patterns with geometric fruit and floral motifs have embellished architecture across the globe. In this 8-week class we will explore the potential of repeating patterns. Using stencils, *cuerda seca* wax resist and glaze trailing, you will create a beautiful 8-piece 'tile quilt' to display on your wall.

Go to www.agb.life/learn to read more about the programs and to register.

Workshops

All workshop fees include material and equipment; registration required.



Alize Zorlutuna
in the AGB
studios, 2024.
Photo credit:
Tom Stephens

Paper Marbling with Alize Zorlutuna

Saturday May 18, 1 – 4 PM

Cost: M \$40 and NM \$45

Drawing upon the Anatolian marbling tradition of Ebru, artist Alize Zorlutuna will guide workshop participants in the basics of marbling. Participants will learn foundational techniques and patterns of traditional marbling using contemporary, accessible materials for paper and fabric.

Radical Darkroom: Lumen Prints with Sonya De Laat

Wednesday June 26, 6:30 – 9:30 PM

Cost: M \$50 and NM \$55

This workshop in the AGB darkroom invites you to make unique, hand-printed images that reflect family, childhood, personal or collective memory by using objects with recognizable silhouettes, or materials that bend light or create suggestive shadows.

Turkish Carpet Weaving with Selin Kahramanoğlu

Date: Sunday July, 2, 1 – 3 PM

Cost: \$20 Parents/Guardians and \$5 per child

In this family-friendly intergenerational workshop, artist, and educator Selin Kahramanoğlu will discuss the significance of carpets in Middle Eastern cultures before leading instruction in kilim weaving techniques using mini looms, yarn, and simple tools to create miniature carpet designs. Taught with materials and volunteer support graciously provided by the Turkish Society of Canada, this session provides a hands-on introduction to a time-honoured weaving technique designed for children and their caregivers to explore together.

Natural Dyes with Alize Zorlutuna

Saturday August 17, 1 – 4 PM

Cost: M \$40 and NM \$45

This workshop will introduce participants to the basics of dyeing natural fibres with plants and flowers. Artist Alize Zorlutuna will address the ethics for growing and harvesting plants, the importance and variety of mordants (this is what makes the colour stick!) and how to approach different fibres (cotton, wool, and silk). The workshop will introduce the basics of eco-printing flowers and leaves, as well as creating a dye bath with plants.

Public Talks

Free programming, registration required.

Artist Talk (online)

Thursday May 16, 6 – 7 pm

Curator Noor Alé joins Alize Zorlutuna for a conversation about the artworks, ideas, and activations featured in the *We Who Have Known Many Shores* exhibition.

Noor Alé is an independent curator, writer, and art historian. Previously, she was the Associate Curator at the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto. Her curatorial practice examines the intersections of contemporary art with geopolitics, migration, and land relations as it pertains to the global majority. In her work, she adopts a transcultural lens to unearth convergences that generate solidarities, which in turn challenge ideological and geographical lines of division. She has worked at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Art Dubai; and the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington.

Guided Tours

Free programming, no registration required.

Gallery Guide Tours

Second Sundays at 1:00pm
May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11

Stroller Tours

Third Thursday of every month, 10–10:30am
Guided tours, stories, songs and activities for preschoolers and caregivers with AGB’s Education Coordinator, Annie Webber.

Contemporary Art Bus Tour

Toronto – Hamilton – Burlington – and Back
Saturday, June 22, 2024, 11am – 6pm
This free tour starts at 11am at Tangled Art + Disability (401 Richmond St W S-124, Toronto) then departs for Hamilton Artists Inc, Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, and the AGB, returning to Tangled Art + Disability. Travel and admission is free. Seating is limited. Register online to reserve your spot.

Family Days

Free programming, registration appreciated but not required.



Open Family Studio. Photo credit: Natalia Parraga

Family Open Studios

Sundays May 12 – June 9, Drop-In 1 – 4pm
These are family-friendly drop-in activities that encourage building, learning, and creating art together, inspired our exhibitions. This intergenerational play allows families to investigate the themes and media that inform or make up the featured artists’ work, to explore all the AGB spaces, and to leave feeling empowered to continue creating artwork at home as a family.

Family Holiday Studio

Monday May 20, 1–4pm
Drop by the AGB on Victoria Day to learn a fun and accessible way to create your own paper marbling artworks in our Family Studio using materials readily available at home.

All-Ages Guide

Grab a copy of Selin Kahramanoğlu’s journal reflections on *We Who Have Known Many Shores* to learn more about Turkish culture, language, traditions, and art. It is a workbook for all learners wishing to seek adventure and solace in the spaces Alize Zorlutuna has created in the AGB.

Selin Kahramanoğlu (she/her) is a Turkish–Canadian museum and archives professional, an independent researcher, artist, and writer. Selin’s areas of interest are world history, languages, archaeology, interpretation, and material culture studies. Completing the Combined Degree Program from the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information in 2020, Selin earned a Master of Museum Studies and a Master of Information. The faculty and OMA recognized Selin with the Excellence in Emerging Museum Practice Award in 2020, and she was the first recipient with this achievement. She is currently completing her final term as Co-Chair of the Group of Ontario Emerging Museums Professionals (GOEMP). During her free time, Selin is often working on creative writing projects, or spending time with her family in Istanbul.

School and Group Programs

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 9:30–11:30am, 12:30–2:30 pm, or 6–8:00 pm
Sessions are \$18/person with a minimum of 15 people
Contact Annie Webber annie@agb.life to register.

AGB is the ideal place to experience art outside of the classroom. Through the gallery’s school programs, students can access artists and ideas as a vehicle for dialogue and become active thinkers in the creation of their own works of art. Students connect to professional arts studios, thought-provoking contemporary exhibitions, and a talented team of artist-educators. Our planned visits this season connect students with themes from our current exhibitions – like the idea of “Leaving the Table” from Alize Zorlutuna’s work, which points to ways we can gather to show others we care. School visits can always be tailored to your group’s learning needs and goals.

Acknowledgements

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Alize Zorlutuna would like to, "express my gratitude to the land and waters where I live and work, to the visible and invisible networks of solidarity that together make life possible. I am grateful to live and practice on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Huron Wendat, Petun, Neutral, Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Mississaugas of the Credit."

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The AGB is grateful to the volunteer Gallery Guides for their exemplary dedication to bringing the exhibition to life and our members for their ongoing support to all the AGB's programming.

The Art Gallery of Burlington is located on the ancestral territory of many Indigenous Nations including the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Métis peoples. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy, the Ojibway, and other allied Nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We acknowledge that the land upon which we gather, to create and learn, is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

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