

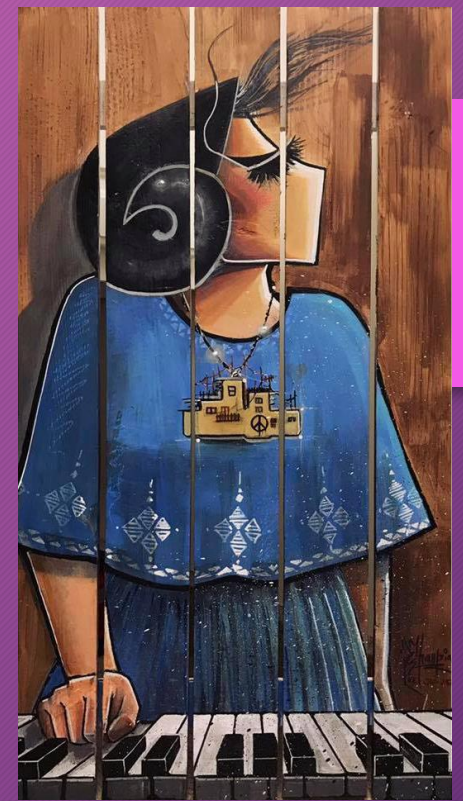


Shamsia Hassani

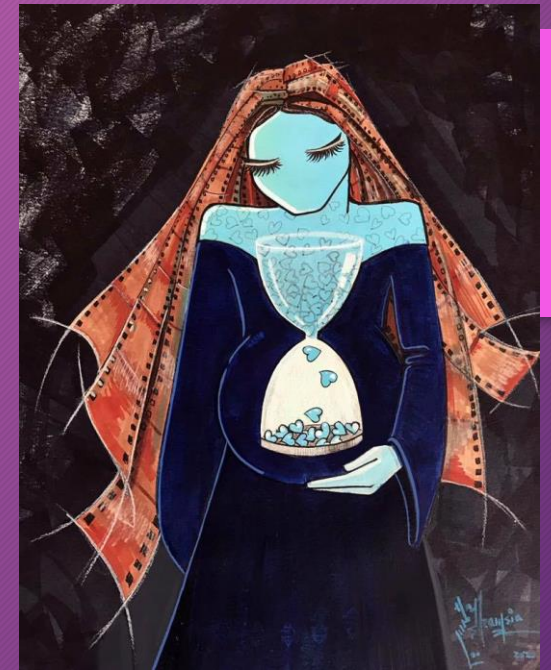
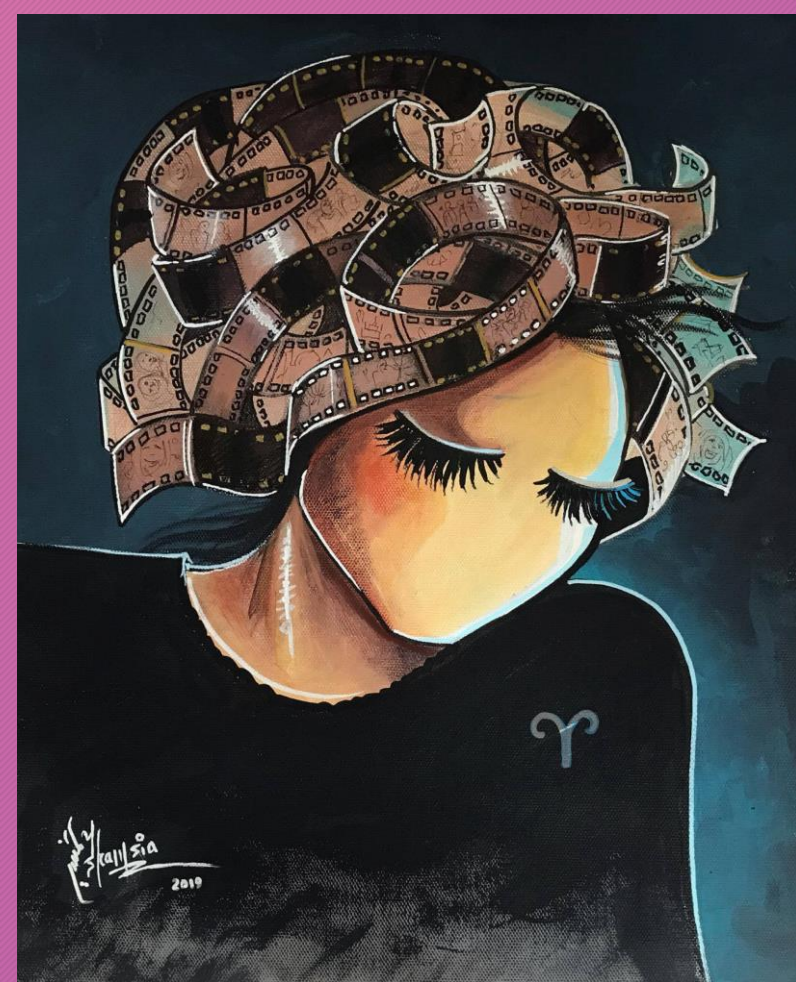
**Contemporary
Street Artist**



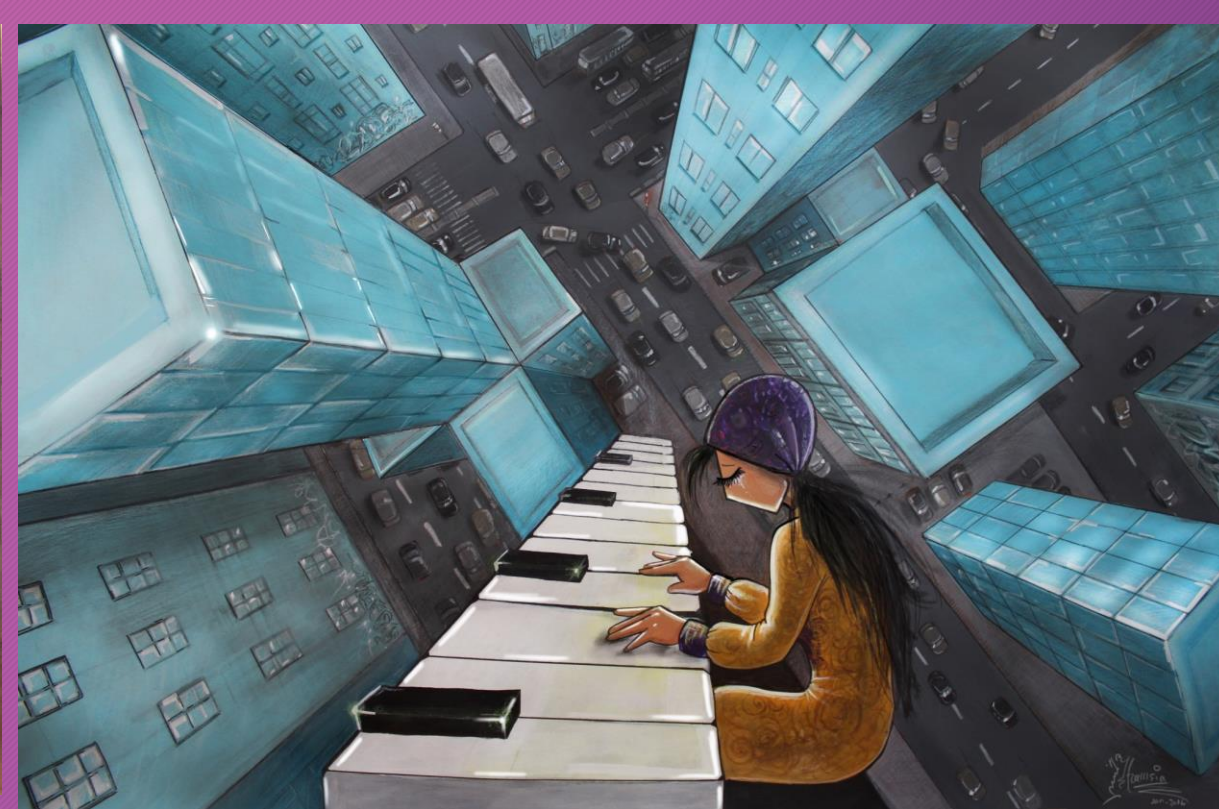
Shamsia Hassani is a graffiti artist and muralist, born in Iran in 1988 to refugee Afghan parents. Hassani returned to Afghanistan in 2005 to study painting and visual arts at Kabul University. She had already completed her degrees when she took up graffiti and street Art in 2010.



The precarious situation of women and girls in the male-dominated Afghan society has been at the forefront of her work since she started spraying. As Afghanistan's first female graffiti and street artist, Hassani is known for her bold promotion of women's voices. Hassani publicly highlights the challenges that Afghan women face but also their strength and resolution. She believes there are many who forget all the tragedy that women face in Afghanistan and she uses her work to remind people, highlighting the problem with society, reflecting women in Burqas everywhere. She wanted to change how people perceive Afghan women, including those who wear the burqa, a full-body covering, she said: "I try to show them bigger than what they are in reality, and in modern forms, in shaped in happiness, movement, maybe stronger. I try to make people look at them differently."



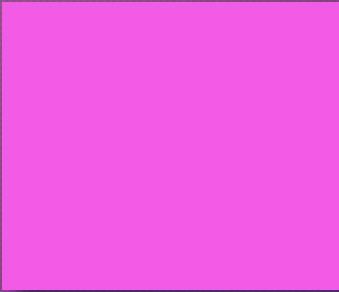
The depictions of women across Hassani's body of work express a broad spectrum of emotions: longing and defiance, hope and heartbreak, freedom and fear. They tend to be boldly outlined geometric figures with lustrous colors whose many shades meld together seamlessly. Long, thick eyelashes fall over closed eyes as hair flows from under headscarves or freely like film rolls or medusa tentacles. They have no mouths, but often have elements of nature or instruments incorporated into their figures.



"I use them [music instruments] as a symbol for women to play her voice with it. She can use musical instruments to talk with people, to speak louder and [get] more attention, as she has no mouth. But this musical instrument gives her power to speak in society," Hassani told DW in 2018. "Her eyes are closed, because usually she has nothing good around herself to see ... and sometimes she cannot see her future. And that's why her eyes are closed, but it doesn't mean she cannot see," the artist added.



Hassani has also used her art to directly respond to attacks by the Taliban and other extremist groups, creating searing images of pain and loss. The left image is a response to an attack of a maternity unit in Kabul, by the Taliban, where mothers and newborn babies were killed. The bottom image is a photograph of Kabul University (where Hassani worked as a lecturer) after an extremist attack. Hassani has worked on top of a photograph to produce an emotional response to the events.



Hassan takes photographs of buildings and directly working on top to create her Dreaming Graffiti collection.



Hassani works in various scales from graffiti on buildings to taking photographs of buildings and then working directly onto the snapshots to a miniature series onto American dollar bills, a commentary on US foreign policy.



Hassani showing here the affects of Covid 19 within her work.

Examples of Hassani's street art in situ

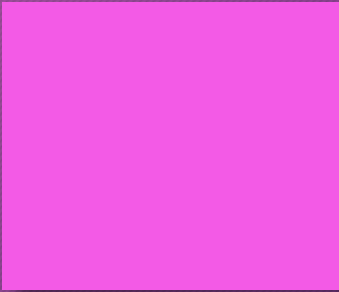


Hassani believes she makes art that can be accessible by everyone, as Afghan people have very little, if any, chance to visit galleries and museums. She believes that if her work is outside, on buildings, that people will slowly memorise it and it will be part of their everyday life.





Examples of Hassani's street art in situ....cont'd...



Hassani created Afghanistan's first ever 3D piece of art.



For more work by Shamsia Hassani, please visit <https://www.shamsiahassani.net/>



Hassani landed on *Foreign Policy's* 2014 top 100 global thinker and has been included in the second volume of *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls*.

In the current alarming situation in Afghanistan, women have largely avoided the capital Kabul's public spaces and many artists have deleted chat messages and social media accounts, fearful of violent, potentially fatal repercussions by the Taliban. Hassani, after being on quiet on social media has released some work responding to the current climate, confirming that she is safe and well, and is now believed to be safe in an undisclosed location.