

Status, power, money.

We allow these things to define who we are on this Dunya when in the hereafter our outer identity holds little value in Allah's eyes.

In order to capture Allah's view of us on this dunya, I covered the identities of my subjects with a paper bag allowing the focus to be on the statuses, levels of power, and social class of my subjects. In order to accomplish this, costuming and designing the setting was a huge focus in creating this series.

My subjects range from very different people who lead very different lives: a lowly poor person, a powerful king, a dominant businessman, and a minimum wage employee; of course all with different statuses, levels of power, and amount of wealth.

The masking of my subjects face makes the series look like it was taken straight out of an old horror film which inspired the use of the paper bags and the style of the photos. The photos follow a vintage aesthetic inspired by 35mm photography that I imitated with light editing and use of flash photography.

In the last photo, there are no subjects. Instead, you see the clothes they were wearing left behind in a simple storage closet that appears to be underneath a staircase. The concept behind this was to represent how we leave all our worldly possessions and titles behind when we *ascend* from this world. This is where the symbolism for the staircase comes in; our ascending into the hereafter should be a priority we hold *over* our temporary lives on this dunya- hence the stairs are over the clothes my subjects were wearing.

I came upon this realization when a family friend had a close relative pass away and told me about her experience when having to clean out that relative's belongings. When she was alive these belongings had so much meaning and purpose to her life- the clothes she wore on her back, memorabilia from past ambitions, tokens collected from her time on earth. Now, they are merely items that will have very little impact when she and the rest of us face the day of judgment. It is our character and our deeds that will play the biggest role in what our fate will be.

However, status, power, and money are not inherently evil things and can indeed serve many benefits on our time here on earth. This experience just became a realization that made me understand how we mustn't become so preoccupied with materialistic goals and statuses. Allah sees us for our inner character- not our outer. It is what holds the greatest value on the day of judgment which is why we must find an equal balance and constantly strive to find a **humble beauty** in the way we live.

“...the true servants of Rahman are those who walk on the earth with humility”  
(Quran 25:63)