

Defining 3aib

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3aib: an Arabic word that is an adjective and a verb.

When used as a verb, it means to sully, spoil, desecrate, disfigure, make faulty. When used as an adjective, it means defect, imperfection, blemish, flaw, deficiency, failing, shortcoming, drawback, disadvantage.

It is also a synonym for the word 3ar: shame, disgrace.

In some Arab families, the word 3aib is used as a label and a warning to women and girls and other family members who may not fit the cishetero-normative binaries of patriarchal structures.

In such structures, the head of the state is a man, and the head of the place of worship is a man, and the head of the family is a man. The women's and girls' daily job is to uphold and safeguard the virtue of the state, the religion, and the family. Virtue in this particular example would mean safeguarding their virginity, their affection, and their love for a future husband, who would then be the new safeguard of these in exchange for protection and financial support.

Artist Yasmine Nasser Diaz's piece exposes the ways that the practice of shaming, disgracing, and criticizing young girls is especially harmful. This piece reclaims the word 3aib, by turning the statement outwards, to the viewer.

It is a shameful failing and shortcoming of patriarchal structures and those who uphold them to sexualize young girls.

In this domestic space, young girls and women photograph each other without worrying about shame. It is an 3aib-free zone where they feel safe. In this safety lies their power.