

Embodied Narratives: Tracing Sensation and Memory in Deena Qabazard's Work

“These loops of yarn have since become both medium and muse for Qabazard, as she immerses herself in her own material creations, exploring their depths and potentialities through ongoing personal and formal research.”

by Vanessa Perez Winder



Photograph of Deena Qabazard
by Noëlle Gaberman

Courtesy of the artist

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A connective web of multi-colored, chain-like crochet loops in various shapes, illuminated with soft, colored light, *Beginnings* was first shown in its towering entirety in *Between Friends* at CCA's PLAYSPACE gallery in September 2023. In November, it was adapted into a smaller iteration for the ceiling corner of one of the single-stall bathrooms at the Institute of Contemporary Art San Francisco as part of *Mutability Stalls*. Both exhibitions were notably curated by fellow student Sam Hiura (MA Curatorial Practice / MA Visual & Critical Studies 2025). Described by Qabazard as a "living document that keeps evolving," each time the work is rooted somewhere new, it springs to life to produce a new sensory experience through its transformation of space. At times enveloping and entrancing viewers, it appears almost as a portal to an alternate dimension. Eliciting the quiet sense of comfort and introspective tranquility associated with the meditative act of stitching, the work asks us to pause, move closer, and consider our own feelings and relationships to our surroundings.



Deena Qabazard, *Beginnings* (2023). Installed in the bathroom stall at the Institute of Contemporary Art San Francisco.
Photo by Nicholas Lea Bruno, courtesy of the artist.



Deena Qabazard, *Soft Tissue* (2023). Silver gelatin print.
Image courtesy of the artist.

Exploring the connection between materiality and embodiment is central to Qabazard's broader artistic practice and lived reality, partially informed by her early upbringing and cultural experiences. For one, she's always been a mover and performer, enticed by dance and theater well before turning to visual arts in college. She's also been a dedicated yoga practitioner and instructor for over a decade now. However, she cites her multi-cultural heritage and experience spent going back and forth between Kuwait and California throughout her entire life as primary reasons for her interest in the sensations, limits, and possibilities of body and spirit. Having had a sense of simultaneous belonging to multiple worlds instilled in her by her parents, Qabazard critically explores

