

# Artist Statement

## Fay Nass

My passion for theatre began when I was five years old in Tehran, Iran, where I found magic in the moment that light disappeared from the room and appeared on the stage.

I am interested in exploring liminal spaces; I believe these spaces hold great potential because even though they are not visible, they actively try to gain visibility. In my work I try to shine light on these spaces in order to shift meanings and de-construct paradigms rooted in our society. Therefore, my artwork often takes a critical view of culture, gender and identity and problematic binaries.

Our present cultural moment seems to be marked by a sense of isolation, and an attempt to find a defined identity amid this alienation. Our desire to classify, stratify and ultimately define every space, subject, concept, object, identity and culture has formed groups that are completely isolated from one another. Looking at this phenomenon from social, cultural and artistic perspectives, we can see that in order for “anything” to be something, that “thing” must become “something else”. Today in Canada, despite the immense diversity of cultures and ethnicities, each group stands separated and demarcated from the others; the same is true for political, economical, sexual, and even educational entities, along with dozens more.

In art theory, we often define an object as “Either/or”. The “either/or” draws a line between what is aesthetically beautiful and what is conceptually and intellectually potent. The notion originated with Søren Kierkegaard, who wrote his influential text *Either/Or* in 1843, and famously argued that there are two fundamental, albeit radically divergent, views on life: the first view deals with aesthetics, a term that Kierkegaard uses to denote personal, sensory experiences; the second perspective deals not with aesthetics, but with ethics, and Kierkegaard discusses the merits of a noble and social life, in which embodied pleasures and hedonistic bliss are relinquished in the name of moral rectitude. In this present moment (let’s still call it post-postmodernism), these high-minded ideals of morality and sociality sometimes seem to be lost to us, but we nevertheless continue to create artificial dichotomies between people, things, and thoughts the way Kierkegaard did in the nineteenth century.

Contrary to the notion of "either/or", we can live lives that combine aesthetic experiences and ethical principles; the same can be said for art, where ethics and aesthetics are not mutually exclusive, and can be both present or absent in the same work. This is a key element in my work when it comes to Queer Theatre and creation. I believe Queer Theatre is existing in a liminal place at the moment; what I mean by liminal is a space of "passing through" to the next phase. This space holds immense potentials as well as dangers: potential to move to a new phase and danger to become ambivalent and stagnant. There are many elements that pose this danger on Queer Theatre such as: lack queer women voices, Queer people of color, queer people from different cultures and queer people with disabilities. All these elements are significantly important to talk about and to be conscious of when it comes to creating queer theatre. Queer theatre to come can not possibly be Either/or, it must hold and portray something much more inclusive in order to not misplace its momentum.

Furthermore, for me, one of the most important aspects of Queer theatre to come and a fundamental aspect of its potential; in passing through the liminal space is based on two major elements: 1. Aesthetic and production quality in combined with intellectual property. 2. Queer stories not as a notion separated from the "norm" but as part of everyday phenomenon of social existence.

My works falls between literal or metaphorical binaries, in undefined and undefinable spaces; these spaces can manifest social, political, conceptual, structural, or formal concerns, or reanimate spaces that may be forgotten. Some seek out spaces that are nostalgic, or completely new and radically transformative. The question remains in my practice: Does existing outside of codes and conventions necessarily mean existing "outside"? And how can a work of art remain active in its intellectual and social elements while holding aesthetic qualities that are perhaps more traditionally rooted in its discipline.