IMMART · 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

UNDER CONSTRAINT

EXHIBITION

12 NOVEMBER 2026

UN City Copenhagen · Marmorvej 51, 2100 Copenhagen

Part of Day 2 of the HUM:Global Conference 2026

Deaddie Mercury · Behnaz Larsen · Eli Trier · Angélique Sanossian

Introduction

Brought to you by the IMMART Network, this exhibition marks the 10-year anniversary of **IMMART — International Migration Meets the Arts**, a non-profit arts organisation that works for the activation and inclusion of linguistically and culturally differentiated artists in order to achieve social equity in Denmark and abroad. IMMART believes access to social networks, employment opportunities, and knowledge are key.

The exhibition **UNDER CONSTRAINT** is part of a broader programme of events in the HUM:Global Conference 2026, **Pluralism in Practice. Global Humanities at the Intersection of Geopolitics, Culture and Public Dialogue**.

We are grateful for the generous funding from HUM:Global and support from the Centre for Digital and Computational Humanities, both at the University of Copenhagen; and for the smooth collaboration with UN City Copenhagen, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

DATE	12 November 2026
VENUE	UN City Copenhagen, Marmorvej 51, 2100 Copenhagen
CONFERENCE	eventsignup.ku.dk/humglobalconference2026

Curatorial Statement

BY MELANIE DAWN SMITH AND NICOL SAVINETTI

For many artists of foreign origin who live and work in Denmark, constraint is not an abstract concept but a daily condition. It may take the form of political pressure, censorship, or surveillance; displacement, migration, or precarious residency status; barriers to mobility, funding, or institutional access; linguistic exclusion and gatekeeping; limited visibility within dominant art landscapes; the emotional and material consequences of conflict, war, or exile.

These constraints do not silence artistic practice — they shape it. They sharpen its urgency, redirect its methods, and expand its imaginative reach. The conference frames pluralism not as passive acceptance but as “understanding and critically engaging” across perspectives and experiences.

The exhibition UNDER CONSTRAINT brings together artists whose practices examine how creativity develops within conditions of limitation. Through experiences of migration, political upheaval, social expectations, identity formation, and cultural norms, the artists explore how constraint shapes both personal experience and artistic expression. Together, their works reveal that constraint is not solely restrictive but can also become a catalyst for resilience.

> *We ask: What does artistic pluralism look like when living under constraint? How do artists create, resist, adapt, or reimagine when the conditions of their practice are restricted? What forms of knowledge, expression, or solidarity emerge from constraint?*

Deaddie Mercury

WWW.DEADDIEMERCURY.COM

ARTIST STATEMENT

People are often hiding a side of themselves. It's easy to see with immigrants. Their language, cuisine, clothing and customs are often blunted if not outright hidden. This is often done to secure a job, but more broadly to blend into their new homeland. This narrative is an extreme version of something many people practice every day regardless of their citizenship, nationality or external sense of belonging when it comes to their own desires.

Each society has its own constraints regarding expressions of desire. This can be as extreme as restricting one's ability to exist as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, the shaming of BDSM practices, or simply having a body that falls outside the realm of conventional beauty standards. I am often delighted to learn the stories of people who have escaped the confines of conventional expectations and constraints. This artwork is based on interviews with people who have found ways to express themselves, experience pain and pleasure, and be okay with themselves because of it.



Sessions. A love story by Deaddie Mercury

COMIC ART (CHARCOAL AND DIGITAL)

> *Deaddie Mercury's work explores the hidden constraints that shape human identity and self-expression. Drawing from interviews with individuals whose desires, bodies, or identities fall outside social norms, the work examines the ways people conceal aspects of themselves in order to navigate societal expectations. From immigration and cultural assimilation to sexuality, body image, and alternative lifestyles, the project highlights both the pressures of conformity and the courage required to live authentically.*

Behnaz Larsen

BEHNAZ.CARBONMADE.COM

ARTIST STATEMENT

We Iranians in the diaspora experience the quiet tension of living in freedom while carrying the weight of a homeland that is not free. We move through the world with a double pulse: one shaped by possibility, and another shaped by guilt and remorse. My liberty is never unaccompanied; it is shadowed by the knowledge that artists, thinkers, and ordinary citizens in Iran continue to live under tyranny, censorship, and the constant threat of erasure.

So, when my guilt becomes my reality and my reality becomes too unbearable, imagination becomes a shelter. I turn to **magic realism** — a space we know very well in our art and literature in Iran and where the impossible can speak truths that reality cannot bear. In this realm, constraint transforms into metaphor, and metaphors become a way to stay sane, connected, and responsible.



Recent Works

OIL ON CANVAS

> *Created during the Iranian uprising and the violent suppression of protesters, Behnaz Larsen's recent works emerge from the tension between personal grief, political responsibility, and artistic freedom. Living outside Iran, Larsen struggled with the expectation to respond artistically to unfolding events while confronting feelings of distance and survivor's guilt. Her work reflects the emotional and creative constraints imposed by conflict, highlighting how political violence can shape not only what artists create but also their ability to create freely.*

Eli Trier

WWW.ZUZUSHAUSOFCATS.COM

ARTIST STATEMENT

Working under constraint — whether that constraint is gendered, neurological, social, or structural — has never felt separate from my practice. As a queer, neurodivergent, disabled person in a female body who also happens to live in a foreign country, working under constraint *is* my practice. My work is a direct result of my own experience of being simultaneously too much and not enough, of navigating a world built for a different kind of mind and body. Within my practice, however, I have the power to transcend constraint. To make the invisible visible, to refuse to translate myself into something more palatable, to choose art as the place where I do not have to pretend.

Constraint operates through the mundane. Through the thousand small adjustments and accommodations that need to be made in order to move through the world. And in the case of these pieces from *Things Men Have Said to Me Instead of Hello*, it's the internal calculus that women are forced to make every day that is being made visible. By taking moments of casual, gendered entitlement and transforming them into artwork, I am refusing the social contract that says we tolerate and accept this behaviour in silence and move on.

I'm not interested in polite tolerance of difference or a sanitised gesture of equality. I'm interested in making space for the full, complicated, sometimes uncomfortable reality of human experience, including the parts we've been trained not to notice. *Things Men Have Said to Me Instead of Hello* is my contribution to that: a reckoning with the ordinary, presented without apology.



Things Men Have Said to Me Instead of Hello

MULTIMEDIA

> *Eli Trier's collection presents a series of works based on real messages received during her experiences with online dating. By bringing private interactions into public view, the project exposes the normalisation of sexism, objectification, and gendered power dynamics. The work invites reflection on the social constraints imposed by patriarchal systems while encouraging dialogue about consent, representation, and the cultural assumptions that shape everyday interaction.*

Angélique Sanossian

WWW.ANGELIQUESANOSSIAN.DK

ARTIST STATEMENT

Nearly Danish reflects on my lived experience of navigating the Danish citizenship process, where belonging is shaped by clear conditions, assessments, and expectations. For more than a decade, integration has been a structured path defined by language tests, employment requirements, cultural knowledge, and the demand to continuously demonstrate "readiness" for inclusion. Working under these constraints has shaped both my personal and artistic understanding of identity.

The project transforms official citizenship study materials into photographic and sculptural works. Everyday Danish symbols — such as bicycles, rye bread, and hot dog onions — are reconstructed using the very documents that once defined the conditions for my acceptance. In doing so, bureaucratic material becomes artistic language, revealing how systems of evaluation can shape not only access to citizenship but also the perception of self.

Presented in the visual style of advertising, the works reflect another layer of constraint: the expectation of perfection throughout the integration process. The polished surfaces and staged compositions echo the pressure to appear flawless, productive, and fully aligned until the final confirmation of belonging. Photography becomes a metaphor for this controlled visibility.

At the same time, *Nearly Danish* explores how constraint can generate transformation. The same documents that represent restriction become material for creation, folding and reassembling into new forms. This shift opens a space where limitation is not only imposed but also reimagined.

In relation to pluralism and the multiplicity of human experience, the work highlights the complexity of identity beyond fixed categories. My own position — shaped by Syrian, Armenian, and Danish cultural influences — exists in an in-between space that resists simplification. *Nearly Danish* reflects this layered reality, where belonging is not singular or final, but evolving.

Ultimately, the project considers how lives are shaped under constraint, and how creativity can reveal the tensions, negotiations, and possibilities within systems that define belonging.



Nearly Danish

PHOTOGRAPHY

> *Nearly Danish transforms the study materials used to pass the Danish citizenship test into photographs and paper art of everyday Danish "essentials", staged in the polished visual language of advertising.*

Programme

HUM:GLOBAL CONFERENCE · DAY 2
12 NOVEMBER 2026 · UN CITY COPENHAGEN

12:45 – 13:45	**Arrival and Registration at UN City**
13:45 – 14:00	**Opening**
14:00 – 15:15	**Panel Discussion**
15:15 – 15:45	*Break*
15:45 – 16:15	**Exhibition — UNDER CONSTRAINT**
16:15 – 16:30	*Break*
16:30 – 19:15	**docUNight — A Fox Under a Pink Moon**

12:45 – 13:45 — **Arrival and Registration at UN City**

13:45 – 14:00 — **Opening**

- Welcome and introduction to Pluralism Conference Day 2 by **Dorthe Gert Simonsen**, Associate Dean for Research at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen
- Opening speech by IOM and UNHCR representatives

14:00 – 15:15

Panel Discussion

Shaping Public Dialogue Under Constraint: Culture, Rights, and Creative Practice

In collaboration with HUM:Global, IOM, UNHCR, UN City Copenhagen

The panel contributes to a broader exploration of how pluralism is practised across sectors and societies. It highlights the role of cultural institutions, universities, artists, and civil society actors in supporting dialogue, strengthening participation, and responding to the challenges that shape public discourse today.

- Introduction and moderation by **Francesco Pisano**, *Visiting Lecturer at the Geneva Graduate Institute and Former Director of the UN Library and Archives*
- Panel debate with:

  Nani Jansen Reventlow, *Author and award-winning Human Rights Lawyer*

  Anni Syrjäläinen, *Senior Advisor & Deputy Director, Nordic Culture Fund*

  Monica Ifejilika, *Senior Advisor, Arts and Culture Norway (Kulturdirektorat)*

  Eli Trier, *Punk Feminist Multimedia Artist*

  Professor Anne Ring Petersen, *Department of Art and Culture, University of Copenhagen*
- Audience Q&A

15:15 – 15:45

Break

Complimentary beverages and snacks for purchase

15:45 – 16:15

Exhibition — UNDER CONSTRAINT

In collaboration with HUM:Global, Centre for Digital and Computational Humanities (UCPH), IOM, UNHCR and UN City Copenhagen

UNDER CONSTRAINT brings together artists whose practices examine how creativity develops within conditions of limitation. Through experiences of migration, political upheaval, social expectations, identity formation, and cultural norms, the artists explore how constraint shapes both personal experience and artistic expression. Together, their works reveal that constraint is not solely restrictive but can also become a catalyst for resilience. The exhibition features work by Angélique Sanossian, Behnaz Larsen, Deaddie Mercury, and Eli Trier.

- Introduction by Melanie Dawn Smith
- Artists' introduction to the works of art
- Unaccompanied viewing of the exhibition

16:15 – 16:30

Break

Complimentary beverages and snacks for purchase

Arrival of additional docUNight guests

16:30 – 19:15

docUNight — A Fox Under a Pink Moon

A collaboration between HUM:Global, International Media Support, IOM, UNHCR and UN City Copenhagen

Full docUNight programme to be confirmed. The evening will consist of an expert panel discussion on the themes of the film, the film screening and an interview with the main protagonist.

A Fox Under a Pink Moon is an award-winning documentary film that follows a young Afghan artist navigating conflict, violence, and migration while continuing to create her art. The film brings an intimate, personal perspective to the themes explored throughout the day, foregrounding the lived realities behind broader discussions of cultural freedom, constraint, and agency.

16:30 Opening

16:40 Discussion and Q&A

17:10 Film Screening

18:25 Interview and Q&A

18:55 Networking

19:15 End

IN COLLABORATION WITH

IMMART – International Migration Meets the Arts

HUM:Global – University of Copenhagen

Centre for Digital and Computational Humanities – University of Copenhagen

University of Copenhagen

UN City Copenhagen

UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

immart.dk/under-constraint

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