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About Me:

Fashion blogger, editor and a true metalhead for two reasons: music & jewellery.

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I have been toying around with the idea of seeing Baku for a very long while. After hearing my mum's Azeri escapades my desire to see Azerbaijan only grew stronger. Here's why:

E: I want to go to Baku.

Mother: Child, in Baku's finest restaurants, I was escorted out with security and using only underground exits!

E: You have a pop star past that I am not aware of?

Mother: No, there were lines of admirers outside. Fans of my face and blonde hair, to be exact.

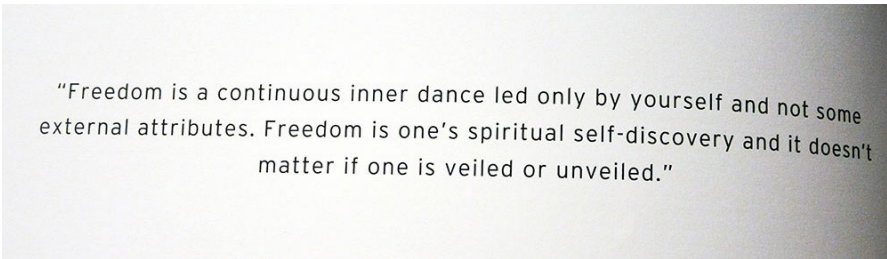
I then facepalmed to the power of blonde hair in what was Soviet Azerbaijan at that time.

We then moved on to deepen my obsession with going to Baku for the arts, food and fashion. It's no secret that I am captivated by traditional Azeri dress and jewellery.

While all of this travel lust was scrambled in my head – trust me I only voiced this compulsion to my mother – I got the most peculiar invitation. What are the odds that I was invited to celebrate Azeri arts by visiting an exhibition of photography by Alexandra Kremer-Khomassouridze?

The exhibition was called Faces of Freedom and displayed a simple concept: Portraits of women, three each, one without any veils, one with a hijab and one with a niqab.

Alexandra admitted that taking these images changed her and it changed her models. Some women came in dreading the fact that they would need to pose in a hijab, others shed tears at the idea of taking the scarf off. While photographed, the women were discussing what freedom meant to them.



"Freedom is a continuous inner dance led only by yourself and not some external attributes. Freedom is one's spiritual self-discovery and it doesn't matter if one is veiled or unveiled."

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content/uploads/2015/02/Faces-of-Freedom.jpg)

Back at the gallery, Alexandra observed me observing her works. I admit, I tend to look at art with the curious eyes of a child. We started talking about the reason why she felt the topic of freedom of expression was important to her. She told me about her personal test, trying to go hijabi for some time. Her findings shocked her. She wasn't expecting to feel safe or secure. But that's what she felt. She felt a different kind of freedom but that's because she could take it off and pop it back on as she pleased.

Initially before going to the exhibition I assumed I had a pretty good idea what freedom meant. But as I write this, in a horribly crowded train barely able to move, I am not so sure anymore. Granted, I can wear a scarf or twenty at a time if I want but does that make me free? This led me to think that fashion or being a master of your appearance isn't freedom – nor should it. I see it as a birthright or entitlement – one of the components of freedom but not freedom itself.

A free person can wake up and do whatever the hell he wants. Or not wake up – he's free, isn't he? A free person can wear whatever he wants or nothing at all. Who's to say he is insane? Freedom is no boundaries, no restrictive opinions. In a sense, being free is living in a personally comfortable chaos.

I kept on picturing myself as Alexandra's model and I was imagining ways to rock all three looks and in my head I did. That's only because it happened in my imagination. In our own alternative universes we all are free. Just not in the real world where we're forced to define what freedom is; that in essence automatically makes us captives.

“Can you imagine yourself in these pictures?”

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