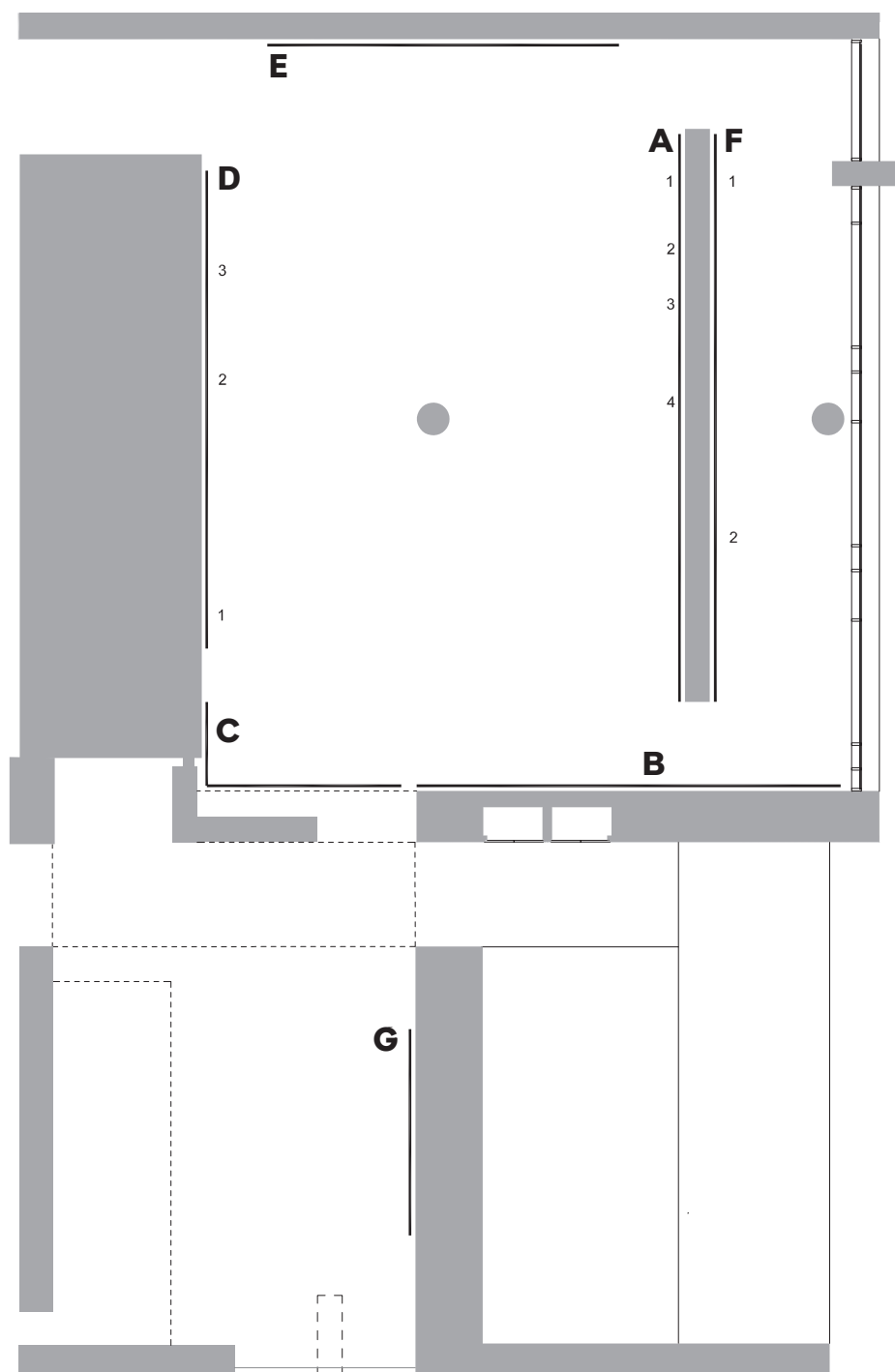


THE MAIDS

2ND HAN NEFKENS FOUNDATION-MACBA AWARD

RAMIN HAERIZADEH ROKNI HAERIZADEH HESAM RAHMANIAN

Exhibition from 28 October 2017 to 7 January 2018



WALL A

1. *To the Left, to the Right and Around*, 2016

Single channel video, 7 min 33 sec, sound

2. Joan Baixas

Manipulació (Manipulation), 2015

Mixed media

3. Joan Baixas

¡Huyeron! (They fled!), 2015

Mixed media

4. *Unfaithful poems*

Vinyl and painting

"Unfaithful poems" is the name of a continuous project that we work on collaboratively with friends. This is not a literary project and it is not about translation.

The aim is to take out the original poetry out of the context of specific time, location and space and using only the theme of the original piece, create a poem more in tune with the events of our time and the personal experience of the people involved in the process. Therefore the result is not a faithful or traditional rewrite or translation of the poem.

The poem is cooked up by people who each act as an ingredient to give it a new life. Though there is no recipe to follow, the ingredients combine in a new complimentary way through an unspoken agreement to create a contemporary taste.

CHAVOSHI*

Like the wayfarers we hear about in tales
A pouch slung over their shoulders
A staff pressed in palm
At times quiet, at times loud
Treading the whimsical road of their
imagination
We also embark on our expedition
Ahead, stretch open three paths
Each marked with a stone, an epigraph
In words the other will not understand,

The first destined to happiness, pleasure and
calm
Shameful but leading to prosperity and fertile
ground
The second, divided between shame and fame
Should you rise there will be mayhem, should
you withdraw, tedium

The third, the never-ending road, interminate
Here, where I am now, with sorrow my heart
aches

And no tune is music to my ears

Let's pick up our possessions
And step in the path that never ends
Let's look for the grass, greener on the other
side of the fence

This journey as we know, is not aiming for the
skies
Towards Mars, this blood-thirsty, eternal god of
wars
Or Venus, this black widow, this seducer of
poetic hearts
Who raised her glass to Hafezs and Khayams
Dancing with arms in the air, tapping foot like
gypsy gals
And now consorting with MacNieces or Nimas
Until tomorrows that she will salute many more
amorous minds
Our journey won't be towards either of those
It's towards a godless paradise
Where with every beat of my pulse
Thousands of its idols fall like shooting stars
As beautiful clear skies
Have been home to Jesus and the likes
Not sinful creatures like me who never realised
Who fathered those holy souls?
Or what their purpose was?

Let's pick up our possessions
And step in the path that never ends
Towards those lands whose sight
Like a fire burning bright
Rushes the living blood through my veins
Unlike the now old, cold and feeble blood that
clammers in there
Like a half-dead worm, headless with no tail
Draggind itself through the poisoned labyrinth
of my veins
Like a drunkard holding on to the walls as he
crawls
towards my heart, this chamber divided with
withered valves
And asks in a whimpering voice:
Is anyone here?
It's you I'm talking to, asking, 'is anyone here?'
Anyone left a note in here?
Anyone to look at me or greet me there?
Anyone with a helping hand?
But there is no sound, nor some light, not even
the fading gaze' a dead man's eye
The only sound, the feable moans' a fading
flame
Lonesome at the rise of dawn, awaiting death

And he moves on from that place
May he find some new breeze, some fresh face
But he finds dope and downers and a forlorn
dervish mumuring
The world is old, all is void, lovers are killed and
we shall cry'

So he treks on, now worn out
Till he once more, pokes in yet a hazy valve
Is anyone here?
And finds but the same candle, the same
muttering
Why are we here?
So like that old and grieved man, we would yell:
Oh god, 'where can run to, this dark night, from
despair'

Let's pick up our possessions
And step in the path that never ends
Where to? Wherever it chances
To a place where our sun going down in dusk
Comes up in their morning with dawn
Where one holds a golden flag in one hand,
calling: Quick
And a dead torch in one hand, whining: Gone

Where to? Wherever it chances
To the place where they say
A bright city has blossomed like a flower from
the sea
And in there, there are springs
From which the delicate crystal flowers grow as
poetry
And of which a man drinks and chants:
Why bother to water a garden
That is planted with paper flowers?'
Let's travel to where they say, there was once a
young girl
That her death (like that of Taras Bulba not like
ours) has been admirable
Where to? Wherever is not here
Where I'm weary of affection as much as
affliction
Of the beater as much as the beaten
And of this wall-decorating depiction
that in its image
What is rocking the boats
Are not just the wild waves
But the blood that flows weeping in our veins
In you the living, in me the dead

Let's set out
To green plains of land no one has sowed, no
one has mowed
To where everything is untouched and untold
And it's been so since time immemorial
So clean, so purified

Let's go towards the beaming desert sun
That doesn't leave out any place from the
spread of its warm blood
And we'll sail on the velvety green of the sea
In our rafts floating lightly like an almond skin
Where we'll teach the bird-like, white sails
To embrace the favourable wind
While we sail at times slow, at times at speed

Oh my dear old jaded friend! like me forlorn
and bleak
Let's set out and make waves far away from
here
Let's pick up our possessions
And step in the road that never ends

*Chavoshi is a form of musical poetry that is read to
people who were about to embark on a pilgrimage, to
encourage them to put aside their worries and start the
journey ahead.

Although mainly used in relation to religious journeys in
the poem that follows, the poet had only borrowed the
feel of the Chavoshi, to tell a rather different story of a
man's adventure.

WALLS B AND C

Unfaithful Poems (ongoing)

WALL D

1. *Ying and Yang, Between Dead and Children*, 2017
Roses and hair

2. *Story by Niyaz Azadikhak*, 2017
Vinyl

Mrs. Mohammadi is a supervisor for workshops at the institution. She is in her 60s, medium height, and has uneven but very large teeth with a bulbous nose. For most days in the studio, Mrs. Mohammadi tears up her old clothes and carelessly sows them back together without proper measuring. She sometimes even mixes up old and new fabrics in the clumsiest way possible to make new outfits. She loves to talk about herself and has a strange logic towards the advancement and “look” of the institution. She often iterates, “This humble shack and its poor features” are an important asset to keep the place up and running. Mrs. Mohammadi is fanatic about her daughter’s relationships and not at all open-minded about her sexual freedom. She is also too conscious about other people’s sexual awareness and activities even though she has no boundaries in her daily vocabulary, and uses the word cunt quite often. In her capacity as a consultant – even though she has no qualifications – she advises everyone and is very opinionated about everything.

Managing the embroidery workshop is Farzaneh’s responsibility. She is a brunette, quiet lady that speaks in a soft manner. Sometimes, you have to ask her to repeat herself as she speaks very softly. Even though she is oversized at 5 feet 6 inches, her facial features are very delicate, especially when she puts on makeup. Farzaneh is 31-year-old and has a 12-year-old son. After her first delivery, she never went back to her gynecologist because she detests showing her body to doctors.

For the last couple of months, I noticed that the working hours gradually reduced to four hours, despite everyone’s need for a fulltime job. Everyday I would hear different excuses from the employees to escape work. Just last week I realised that there is too much tension in the air and everybody is stressed out and murmured in a bizarre way. The doorbell would scare everyone every time it rang and they answered their phones nervously and cautiously. Things were out of order and the humming sound of women had become our soundtrack. The most mindboggling part was that things were not moving forward and our gatherings had become pointless.

Until one day, my phone rang in the middle of the mumble-jumble textile bazaar. The person on the phone informed me that someone threw acid on the main gate

of the institution. The CCTV shows two men wearing helmets; they throw acid at the gate and then run away on a motorcycle that didn’t have a license plate!

3. *Collected stories by Niyaz Azadikhak*, with the participation of Hoda Keshavarz, Farzaneh Zahravi, Mahbube Ramezani, Azam Zoghi, Afsane Norouzi, Fardina Norouzi, Zahra Bagheri, Maryam Abasspour, Mobina Khanzadeh, Fariba Tajik Parastou Tajik, Sara Tousi, Mehrdokht Jamali, 2017
Vinyl

[from top to bottom and from left to right]

In Afghanistan, getting married is a trade. Buying a wife or selling daughters are common words used instead of getting married or weddings. Sometimes, a man can afford to buy multiple wives. The fear of puberty is very common to all young girls because it means preparing for a trade off. And the fear of who they are going to spend their lives with. Fariba brought her sister’s wedding dress to show the rest of us how the embroidery is done on the dress. The wedding dress was a very loose blouse with white loose trousers that were embroidered with white silk and only fit the body using an elasticated waist band. Fariba’s sister was recently sold.

Mojgan is in her mid 40s with an average height, a big bony nose that goes well with her beautiful hazel eyes and thin lips. She dyes her hair blonde and always looks very neat and clean. She often whispers while working with her especially coarse voice. I can say with all confidence that she is one of the fastest and best tailors I have ever worked with. She used to live a comfortable life in a decent neighbourhood. However, one day, she decided to start all over again with a rougher lifestyle in a poor neighborhood and gave up on her abusive husband and all the comforts she had. She was forced to leave her younger son and hasn’t seen him for six years now. He should be twelve by now. As revenge, her husband moved him to Finland. Mojgan always talks about the day she got separated from her son and one of her biggest fear is that she will never see him again.

Mobina is a 14-year-old girl who is going through puberty. Her eyes are becoming smaller, her uni brow is getting thicker, and her nose is becoming more round as her limbs are growing and changing shapes. She is usually covered and doesn’t wear clothes that fit her age. This makes her clothes look more like a 40-year-old’s. Like some other teenagers in Iran, she thinks signing her name in English is very cool. While Mobina talks about her life, we could guess that she has a sick mother, who is suffering from earache and arthritis. Her parents are always in tense arguments and Mobina’s biggest fear is that one day they will separate.

Fear of the future for my children is a huge shaded patch in front of my eyes. This fear makes me want to stay still in one position and not move. Sara is a 42-year-old woman with curves and big, strong arms. Her colourful red, purple, and phosphorus green bras always shines through her clothes. She keeps her hair short because of the countless number of white hair. But, wears colourful pigments on her head. The anatomy of her face is very fine and delicate. She has a small but visible gap between her two front teeth. She seems to be in a hurry when she talks. That is why she takes deep breaths between her unfinished words. All she has in mind are her children.

Mahboubeh is 49 and has a charming face with a delightful accent from Isfahan. Her son and daughter are both married, and she always likes to include her daughter in her conversations. She says her husband is very handsome and they got married when she was only 14. On the wedding night, she was so scared that she got her period, which covered the back of her dress in blood. Therefore, she had to hear a lot of swearing from her and her husband's family. This is why she is happy that her daughter got married only a couple of years after reaching her puberty. She feels distressed every time she is reminded of her wedding night.

Farzaneh is 38 year old and has a beautiful and very tanned face. Though it seems that she adheres to the old tradition of marriage, which is why she doesn't believe in trimming her facial hair or eyebrows until after getting married. She speaks very little, and is very focused and calm when working. However, we can see the sadness on her face and feel the depth of her sorrows. During lunchtime, which coincides with the afternoon prayer time, she would wear her Chador to pray and give lunch to her dad. Farzaneh had always feared losing her mom, until she passed away a few months ago. It was a miracle for her to join this project as she could get away from a toxic household and a dominant father.

Roya is a tall skinny woman. The unhappy impression on her face is perhaps due to her facial features; her eyes, eyebrows and lips all look down. She frequently gets pregnant, but always loses her child. Now, she is pregnant again, but she has a fear of losing this one as well as this will be her last chance of living with her husband.

Azam is a quite solid lady with big breasts. She has a beautiful face with delicate features. She has got a mole on top of her right eyelid, which has affected her vision. Her legs are small compared to her body, so she often has pain in her joints. She says people's negative thinking and talking affects her to a degree that she is afraid of losing her own faith.

Afsane ties her hair with a clip, ornamented with net and ribbon in a shape of a flower, and adorns herself with long earrings. She doesn't talk too much. She wears a tight shirt, despite her round belly that layers in along with the shirt. Purple is the most common colour found in her shirts. She says she is not fearful of anything. She says I am not afraid of the things that I know. I may be scared of things that I don't know.

Fardina is a 16-year-old Afghani Immigrant. Blossoming in her puberty with small and big pimples on her face, hair growing on top of her upper lip and under her puffy nose. She is skinny and has long beautiful black hair that flows everywhere. She smiles with every word from the corner of her lips. She is scared of going to the bathroom because one time, someone pulled her hair from the back.

I am so scared of going to places for the first time. What frightens me the most is my own behavior of being in new places. Sadighe, 46, lost her husband long time ago and has raised her kids all alone. She is a clerk at an institution and is learning embroidery to help with her income.

I can never talk about things that make me or are about me. The fear of being judged by my words keeps me quiet. Afsaneh is a 40-year-old woman with reddish-brown tattooed eyebrows and two semi big eyes that are always staring at you. And yes, she is always quiet.

I am fearful of what people say behind my back. That is why I don't socialise. Afsane is a 40-year-old woman.

WALL E

Joan Baixas, John Cole, Niyaz Azadikhah, Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Hesam Rahmanian

L'ombra de la por (The Shadow of Fear), 2017

Mixed media

Robot-driven puppet (designed by Baixas and Cole) that opens in response to the behavior of gallery visitors to reveal a patchwork of embroideries by Tehrani women and Afghan women refugees on the theme of everyday fears (collected in Niyaz Azadikhah's stories).

WALL F

1. *The Maids*, 2012-2015

Single channel video slide show, 18 min 33 sec, sound

The Maids was written by French writer Jean Genet in 1947, and was inspired by the story of the Pappin Sisters - two maids who brutally murdered their employer and, after the event, behaved as if nothing had happened and continued their daily chores.

The text is set in the claustrophobic bedroom of a wealthy, bourgeois madame. The play opens with the house's two maids, Solange and Claire, ritualistically dressing up in their employer's finery and makeup while acting out a grotesque version of madame.

Intending to poison the madame, they wait for her to return and to give her tea laced with poison. But when madame returns, benevolently giving a fur coat and a red dress to Solange and Claire, she rushes out without drinking the poisoned tea.

With madame gone, Solange and Claire resume their debauched roleplay of power, only to act out the final stage of their grudge against the woman by staging the poisoning.

2. *Macht Schön/Macht Schon*, 2017

Neon

The German word *Macht* has two meanings: "Do it!" and "Power". "Schon" (without diaeresis) means something similar to "now". "Macht Schon" therefore means "Power Now!" or "Come on!". "Schön" (with diaeresis) means "beautiful" or "nice". So "Macht Schön" means "Make it nice!".

WALL G

From Sea to Dawn, 2016-2017

Single channel video (moving painting), 6 min 21 sec, no sound

In this work, the artists focus on some of the most urgent issues of today, which echo a long and recurring history of Iconoclasm and migration issues. The artists use the term 'moving paintings' when referring to works made by combining a series of single works on A4 paper composed from stills culled from the media and painted and drawn upon into video animations.

From Sea to Dawn charts the perilous journey of the thousands of people leaving their homelands in West Asia and North Africa for Europe by sea and on foot. The artists employ Brecht's technique of representing contemporary conditions while creating a sense of alienation or estrangement from reality by transforming and rendering unrecognisable the majority of the people in the news footage by drawing abstract forms over their faces. In this way, they aim to 'exorcise the sentimentalism', and create an emotional distance, and elicit 'astonishment rather than empathy' from the viewer, allowing for critical analysis of the scene depicted. By depersonalising the individual subjects and emphasising collective experience, the artists seek to encourage the viewer to recognise the reality of interdependency and the value of solidarity with others.