

RAMIN HAERIZADEH, ROKNI HAERIZADEH, HESAM RAHMANIAN*We Are Open for Installation*

15 May – 9 November 2019



*To make use of the multilingualism of one's own language,
To make a minor or intensive use of it,
To oppose the oppressed quality of this language to its oppressive quality,
To find points of non-culture or underdevelopment,
Linguistic Third World zones by which a language can escape,
An animal enters into things, an assemblage comes into play.
(Kafka 1986, 26-27)*

In Katrina Kufer's recent review published in *Alserkal Folios*, she aptly explains, "*We Are Open for Installation* is a think-tank in the place of a white cube, where everyone is invited to participate in the unlisted series of activities that accompany the 'exhibition'. But there is no spectacle to be observed – it is full immersion in ideas, emotions, research, and radical gestures, more akin to a physical expression of a cognitive network. In the words of the trio at work, 'When people walk in a white cube space, they come with assumptions of a halo of fetishism for the art and the artists, however, when you encounter a pupating landscape here, it makes visitors more intimately connected with the works.'"¹

Works? Of art? Nothing should be taken for granted; here, the 'Artist' is replaced by a *Dastgah* (they become some kind of machine rising from an assemblage of objects that repeats a set of operations), a sculpture is referred to as *Pond of Language* (multi-handed compositions based on body gesticulations to exchange ideas in a multilingual set of collaborators), a painting is a *Field of Negotiation* (at the core of the practice lies the principle that collaborators contribute to a work without a pre-determined outcome).

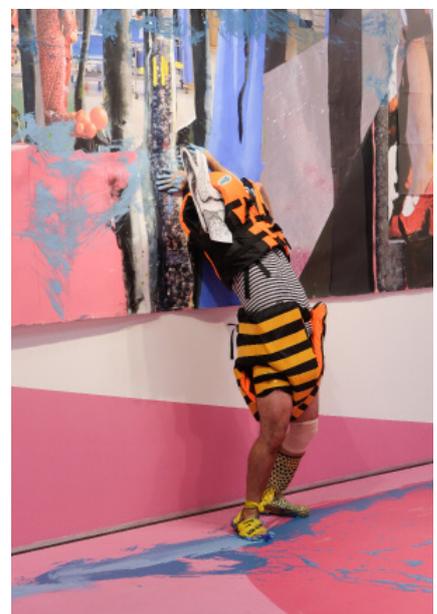
To begin the five months journey, the gallery assumed form as a conceptual think-tank, featuring voids, cavities, tunnels, ... and hollowness or gaps in time and space were ubiquitous. It emphasized a form of vagueness yet steeped with intrigue. A tank, in other words a container, as well as anything hollow, invites an operation of filling; it cannot exist alone; it needs to host.

The tank contained some of the most pressing concerns our humanity is facing today. As evident in the 1 min 39 sec video animation *Macht Shön* (2015), two figures, carrying a plastic bag inscribed with the words *Macht Shön* (a supermarket in Hungary), trip over the intentional foot of a journalist. The artists hand-painted over a thousand frames of the news film, scrambling over the body parts of police, journalists and refugees, morphing faces and bodies into lozenges, warped *Rorschach* diagrams, and a Pac-Man-like figurine within this disorderly scene.

Just like a cow that has three stomachs (actually it has four), the trio continuously ruminate information, passing processed ailments from one stomach to another, to finally regurgitate it into new form(s). Hence, a second phase naturally followed, where the artists zoomed further into themes of exile and refugee, as well as the world of politics and events represented in news reportage.

On the verge of shifting phases, specifically on June 1st, three 'painting machines' *Dastgahs* occupied the gallery floor, taking turns to demonstrate their unique operating systems. Life vests covering heads, floating buoys dragged, painful spongy high heels shoes made of masking tape dictated the movements of these machines. One *Dastgah* was spreading blue paint like turbulent waters. Later in the day, when the time came to take off their apparatus and become themselves again, their eyes discovered with delight the traces of paint on the walls, the floor and other disrupted objects that might have been in the way of the clumsy machines. The remnant traces emerge as new opportunities to interact with an uncontrolled yet generated new backdrop – again a new *Field for Negotiation*!

Surrounded by the random paint traces, a TV screen placed directly amidst the floor plays their 6 min 21 sec video animation *From Sea to Dawn* (2016) charting 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 video acknowledges that not everyone can survive the journey to Europe and the hardships met along the way, while also highlighting the power of determination and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. *From Sea to Dawn* (2016) not only depicts the seemingly endless sea of people and their travels but also highlights small acts of kindness.





As Ruth Erickson further explains, "...a relatively set daily ritual structures the radical horizontality of their process: they wake at sunrise to converse – the first light and murmuring of the day unfurl together and they end most days by watching a film together."² Indeed, it is only 5 am when the routine starts, soon the National local newspaper will be delivered at their doorstep. Their new series of paintings on weathered tarpaulin, assuming exemplar titles such *National December-March* (2019), are heavily collaged and over-painted images taken from the pages of newspapers while it is lying on their breakfast table and combined with their hands and various objects such as fruit, cups and plates equally present on its surface. A collection of still life compositions arise from their early debates, and they will become new *Fields of Negotiation*. Combined with home décor wallpapers, the images are mounted on tarpaulins which will be affixed for several months on the outside walls surrounding their garden. The artists explain that the large scale images are "...affected by the sun and the heat of Dubai, which also give the wallpaper the dampness that allows for it to collect sand, dust, and dead leaves falling from the trees, while attracting various

insects that crawl on them, laying eggs and make a home. Sometimes lizards hide inside the folds of the tarpaulins and one of our cats tears the tarpaulin trying to catch them, causing deformation. We consider all these aspects collaborators in the process."

Questioning our daily consumption of news reportage and their corresponding images, the collective eats away these two dimensional boundaries, referring to a quote by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, "The present is not one block of anxiety or excitement, it is not one thing, it is a thousand plateaus of temporal complexities, in fact the present is both the record of what we are ceasing to be and the seed of what we are in the process of becoming simultaneously."³

As ideas matured around notions of temporality and the disposable, the gallery started a new phase and premise which took place on 17th August. On that day, the trio adapted *The Courtesan and The Crone*, (1999), a work Anna Halprin developed to address her own aging body in relation to traditional Western concepts of beauty. Simple gestures of performative femininity, flirtation, and fear transgress stereotypical gender lines. Along with the artists, visitors became participants in the dance, and were offered to create their own mask by selecting cut-outs of facial features, eyes, noses, lips in all shapes, tones and sizes, much akin a photo-montage – asserting that plastic surgery works like a mask. Dealing with the idea of 'unwantedness', as if dancing were a symbol of peace and liberation, as if gyrating arms and fluctuating feet, were the true protest signs, of an anti-system movement.

The trio's *Pond of Language* objects are themselves the fruit of a sort of contemporary dance, infinite gesticulations to overcome words and language attempting to reach a comprehension between Rokni, Ramin or Hesam and their collaborative makers; carpenters, tailors, electricians, ceramists and other skilled and unskilled people. Props from past performances and found objects from construction sites are incorporated within the moving metallic frames formed by a blacksmith, supporting a plumber's copper tubes to activate a fountain further ornamented with romaine lettuce shape ceramics. The overall result is somewhat indescribable; only the process can explain the production of these alternative and surrealist compositions where a multitude of sensibilities beyond the ideologies of language amalgamate in resonance.



Such as these unwanted objects receive new interpretations, existing texts are appropriated and re-written in their *Unfaithful Poetry*. With Mandana Mohit, Minnie McIntyre and Nargess Hashemi, they re-wrote a poem entitled *Isaac/Ishmael*, which was initially written by one man to another man housed in the Mehregan mental hospital at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq over 30 years ago. The artists account that, "We all had a certain memory of that time, as we read and re-wrote the poem. In these re-writes, the shared sensibilities are the most important factor rather than an accurate translation." Re-titled *Boys and Animals*, the group shifted the focus to the young children sent to war and the impact of war on the environment, animals and natural habitat.

Images:

1. *Dance Class, Oh My Acquaintance In The Viola Gardens Of Insanity And Kisses*, 17 August 2019 with Mireille Boyadjian and Naz G at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde
2. *Dastgah Operation Day* at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, 1 June 2019
3. *Learned all the words and broke them up, To make a single word: Homeland.....*, 2017–19, Acrylic, oil, paper collage, heavy mold, canvas and wallpaper on tarp, 200 x 239 cm
4. *Passing the Wooden Finger Along the Curves of the Saplings*, 2017–19, Louis Durot fiberglass chair, glass, concrete, plastic, glazed clay, porcelain, iron, Participation of Nazrul Islam Shaikh Asgar Ali and Raees Mulla nahim Mulla, 187 x 162 x 81 cm

¹ Katrina Kufer, *Chapters in Defense of Making and in Homage to the Other*, Alserkal Folio, August 2019

² Ruth Erickson, *Night of Another Spring*, In Situ fabienne Leclerc, 2018

³ Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, 1987