

Time Lapsed

Gita Hashemi

Essay by Haleh Niazmand

Roosevelt and Carroll held a prolonged council of war with the heads of their team. General Zahedi and Ardeshir Zahedi, General [redacted], the three Rashidian brothers, and Colonel [redacted]. These teammates were, when required, smuggled in and out of the compound in the bottom of cars and in closed jeeps. A few hundred yards away Ambassador Henderson and General McClure wore a path back and forth to reassure them that no Persians were hidden in the compound, so that they could in all honesty so inform Mossadeg if the question were asked. The council of war went on for about four hours, and in the end it was decided that some action would be taken on Wednesday the 19th. As preparation for this effort, several specific activities were to be undertaken. In the field of political action, it was planned to send the Tehran cleric [redacted] to Qum to try to persuade the supreme cleric Ayatollah Borujerdi, to issue a fatwa (religious decree) calling for a holy war against Communism, and also to build up a great demonstration on Wednesday on the theme that it was time for loyal army officers and soldiers and the people to rally to the support of the throne and religion. In the field of military action, support from outside

Presented by A Space Gallery and sponsored by Charles Street Video

Opening Reception: Friday, March 1st, 7-9 pm

Ouster Remixed Performance starts at 7:30 pm

Livestream at <http://headquarters.opinionware.net>

With Sarah Abu-Sharar, Jennifer Cypher, Niloofar Golkar, Ali Mustafa, Nara Nadesan, Parvin Samadzadeh and others

Healing Colonialism: Embodiments, Interventions, Disruptions

Discussion Circle: Saturday, March 16th, 2-4 pm

Gita Hashemi with Naomi Binder Wall, Monique Mojica and Haleh Niazmand



Gita Hashemi, *Ephemeral Monument*, Performance and Video Installation, 2008

Gita Hashemi's art in *Time Lapsed* details principal historic events in Iran, distilled through a unique web of analysis and channeled into insights that are ultimately as personal as they are historical and political. In this exhibition, the audience engages with the art through mindful strategies presented in an inclusive experience within the gallery space and beyond. Consisting of three significant artworks, *Time Lapsed* puts contemporary Iran in context through the perspective of colonial violence and trauma.

A new artwork that completes during its exhibition, *Headquarters: Pathology of an Ouster* begins with recently declassified CIA documents that chronicle its masterminding the 1953 coup d'état, which overthrew the popular government of Mossadeg and reestablished the Pahlavi regime. At the total scale of 60' x 5', Hashemi painstakingly inscribes CIA text by hand, first debossing, then revealing it with dry media. Thus she embodies the narrative while simultaneously editorializing it through selective use of colours to facilitate a new reading. Additionally, a diverse group of performers whose histories are also marked by traumas of colonialism pieces together fragments from CIA's narrative with eyewitness accounts and critical writing by historians to diminish the authority of CIA's account. The performance is videographed and incorporated into the exhibition, and a live webcast makes the event accessible to remote viewers. The project website (<http://headquarters.opinionware.net>) includes a blog and a forum, granting it an ongoing participatory life.

With its nuanced attention to historical revelations, *Headquarters* reflects on the past and offers an inclusive rendition of the experience that until now has been narrated from the authoritative points of view of the perpetrators and historians. The eyewitness accounts and influence of the performers connect acts of defilement with their traumatic consequences and post-traumatic reflections, and position the audience as witnesses who take part in collective empowerment and healing.

Ephemeral Monument, a performance and video installation, was initially created at Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco in 2008 as a response to the Archives of the Iranian Student Association of Northern California (1964-1984) before its disappearance into the vaults of the Library of Congress and Stanford University. In this piece, for three days Hashemi created a ritual of writing with chalk, erasing and rewriting selections from this archive, capturing her performance on camera and replaying it on a monitor installed on the same wall. In their origins and degrees of influence, Hashemi's selected texts represent a significant part of the movement against the Pahlavi regime. Recording this ritual on video (a medium of documentation and evidence) places these forgotten texts in a new light. Moreover, the embodiment of the selected literature through writing by hand, erasing and rewriting, gives

this piece life in dynamic new contexts and resists becoming a tribute to once influential writings. Instead, *Ephemeral Monument* reflects on the significance of ideals that emerged from and influenced a history of dissent and traumas.

The lowbrow medium of chalk allows the artist not only to cue into weighty philosophical implications casually, it also carries a plethora of universal psychological associations. For those of us old enough to sit in classrooms with blackboards, these associations began during youth, in schools, when chalk became the first medium to designate the authority of the teacher, delivering what was to educate or indoctrinate. Chalk was also the first medium to allow us a public voice, used for self-assertion or mischief. For Hashemi the ritual of writing, erasing and rewriting with chalk is in part paying homage to her personal involvement with the dissident movement and the collective uprising that profoundly influenced her generation.

Ephemeral Monument in its first iteration at Yerba Buena Center opened the chalk wall to the audience, inviting them to contribute the names or information of friends and family who were killed for their acts of dissent. In its full restaging in *Time Lapsed*, participation is expanded beyond the gallery space and the duration of the exhibit. The website (<http://ephemeralmonument.subversivepress.org>) receives contributions worldwide from participants who may also enter their recollections of influential literature, which will then become included in Hashemi's performative writing. In this way, *Ephemeral Monument* collects a living and expanding oral history, and becomes a monument for reflection and revival.

The most widely acclaimed artwork in this exhibit, *Of Shifting Shadows* (2000) is a multi-channel narrative in CD-R. This cross-disciplinary art interweaves selections of animated text, video, audio and graphic frames as well as archival and reconstructed stills to narrate the story of the Iranian popular revolution through the voices of four fictional women. The narrative connects the actual events with the characters' subjective, psychological and sensory impressions. *Of Shifting Shadows* creates a unique relationship between its characters and the viewer as an intimate listener and a witness to the characters' traumatic experiences. In this close confidence, the observer is provided the opportunity to understand the Iranian Revolution, a movement for democracy and independence, through the perspective of secular women, whose voices have since been largely silenced. In this artwork, Hashemi also highlights the singularity of her characters' coping choices and the varying lives they have created in exile, illuminating a complex narrative that is contrary to the West's stereotypical and myopic rendition of the Iranian Revolution as a fundamentalist Muslim uprising. As a work of art, *Of Shifting Shadows* emphasizes the subservience of technology to content. It marries intellectual awareness with emotional imprints, and innovates a form of storytelling that defies the masculine linear process dominant in the narration of history and the history of narration.



Gita Hashemi, *Of Shifting Shadows*, CD-R, Composite Screen, 2000.

Each coherent on its own, together the artworks in *Time Lapsed* put the current Iran/US relations in the context of US colonialism, the violence it inflicted upon individual and collective psyche and its lasting and cascading effects through time; and they connect this traumatic history with other lives that were similarly injured around the world. The seminal artworks in this curatorial selection create a venue for collective remembrance, understanding and solidarity, and chart a new territory in (hi)story-telling that is inclusive, mindful and empowering. They highlight the shared humanity that connects us together regardless of individual locality, national identity or geopolitical struggles.

BIOGRAPHIES

Born in Shiraz, Iran, **Gita Hashemi** is an award-winning transmedia artist, curator and writer who practice is concerned with historical and contemporary issues. She routinely engages in direct relation with audiences by creating immersive environments and employing collaborative, performative a participatory approaches. Most recently, she exhibited in a solo show at the Red House Centre in Sofia 2011, at 2012 Electrochoc Festival in Lyon, and at Luggage Store Gallery in San Francisco in 2013. She has taught time-based art, (new) media and cultural studies at York and Ryerson Universities and University Toronto. Since she entered the School of Fine Arts in Tehran University shortly after the 1979 Revolution her motto has been: the personal is poetic, the poetic is political, the political is personal.

Gita Hashemi acknowledges the support of Ontario Arts Council. She is specially grateful to Ous Remixed participants (bios at <http://headquarters.opinionware.net/the-people>) for their creative contribution; Haleh Niazmand, Mansour Bonakdarian, Masih Hashemi, Monique Mojica and Morteza Hashemi for advice and research support; Ali Ammari for web design; and Shahrvand Newspaper and S Fard for outreach.

Artist and curator, **Haleh Niazmand's** work has been exhibited widely in venues such as San Diego Museum of Art, Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Fe, NM, Des Moines Art Center, IA, a reviewed/published in *Art Papers*, *US Art*, *Fuse Magazine*, *Radical History Review*, *Washington Post* and *San Francisco Chronicle*. During a 1998-2000 residency at Des Moines Art Center, Niazmand designed and implemented workshops with marginalized communities, including state mental hospital and children's homes residents. In 2003 she founded Gallery Subversive, and directed Modesto Junior College's art gallery from 2005-2011.

Naomi Binder Wall is a long-time social activist and a widely published writer. She is a member of Women in Solidarity With Palestine.

Monique Mojica (*Guna and Rappahannock*)— is a Toronto-based actor/playwright passionately dedicated to a theatrical practice as acts of healing, cultural reclamation and resistance.

Time Lapsed technology and camera maven, **David Findlay** is a thing-maker, writer, cameraperson and a technical consultant who currently splits his time between Southern Ontario and Southern California.

Front: Gita Hashemi, *Headquarters: Pathology of an Oyster*, Installation Detail (Page 41), 2011.

401 RICHMOND STREET WEST • STE 110 • TORONTO • ONTARIO • M5V 3A8
TEL 416-979-9633 • FAX 416-979-9683

WWW.ASPACEGALLERY.ORG
INFO@ASPACEGALLERY.ORG

GALLERY HOURS
TUESDAY TO FRIDAY 11AM - 6PM
SATURDAY 12PM - 5PM

Board of Directors
Malinda Francis
Rachel Gorman
Neelam Kler
Joyce Lau
Mohammed Mohsen
Christina Rousseau
Jon Short
Ryan Toews
Faten Toubasi

Staff
Vicky Moufawad-Paul - Artistic Director
Rebecca McGowan - Executive Director

ASPACE GALLERY
charles street vide
ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
50 YEARS OF ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS
50 ANS DE SOUTIEN DU GOUVERNEMENT DE L'ONTARIO
TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL
Canada Council for the Arts
Conseil des arts du Canada