

ABBAS ZAHEDI HOW TO MAKE A HOW FROM A WHY?

**6 MAR - 26 APR 2020
GALLERY 1, FIRE STATION
FREE**

EXHIBITION GUIDE

ABBAS ZAHEDI HOW TO MAKE A HOW FROM A WHY?

The SLG's Postgraduate Artist in Residence, **Abbas Zahedi**, presents *How to Make a How from a Why?*, a newly commissioned installation and sound work in the ground floor gallery of the Fire Station.

In his ongoing practice, London-born Zahedi creates social projects with collaborators and audiences, often involving spiritual rituals. He has worked with migrant and marginalised communities in the UK to explore the concept of neo-diaspora, and the ways in which personal and collective histories interweave.

During his residency Zahedi has focused on lamentation rites and other moments of literal and metaphysical exit. Reflecting on the history of the building as a former fire station as well as the emotional and physical implications of 'Resistant Exits', Zahedi questions who can leave and who can enter, both politically and socially.¹

At the centre of the installation is a bespoke fire sprinkler system made from food-grade steel, which dispenses rose-infused water. Drawing on his family's heritage of ceremonial drink making in Iran, Zahedi references rose water's use as a beverage and commemorative libation in Iranian culture.

Visitors are invited to pump the cistern by hand, with a view to consciously contribute to its flow, making an offering to the space. The drips from this process are collected by domestic objects, which include hand-washing bowls fired with glass from shandy bottles that Zahedi previously produced in 2017 for the Diaspora Pavilion in Venice.

Zahedi's reflections on historical fires and exits are directly referenced through the presence of adapted fire exit signs installed in the gallery space, and throughout the building. Photographs of a bodybuilder replace the typically static running icon. The use of these images stems from the artist's exploration of bio-hacking, a movement that seeks to 'optimise' the body and mind with different technologies. Zahedi reads this movement as a mode of exit or resistance, where an increase in bodily strength serves to compensate for a lack of structural support from ones' environment, shining a critical light on the role of self-help in an age of networked solitude. The installation calls into question the effects of making exits, enforced or otherwise, on the mental, social and financial security of an individual while simultaneously considering who has the privilege to exit at all.

An accompanying soundscape, *In This Space We Leave* (60 mins), produced in collaboration with New York based musicians **Saint Abdullah**, is played via a series of surface transducers – devices that turn any object into a speaker. In this instance the Fire Station doors and shutters are activated, highlighting the material threshold of the gallery's architecture. The work was created over a number of months, with the artists exchanging found sounds from Iranian field recordings, eulogies, poems and the wider media.

A version of this work will feature on a cassette mixtape, available to buy from the SLG bookshop from April.

1. The use of the term 'Resistant Exits' draws on Jennet Kirkpatrick's paper *Resistant Exits*, (2018) which explores the potential political impact of different definitions of exit. Her article outlined three key three political behaviours and beliefs that she uses to identify resistant exits:

- **Making a Spectacle** activists create a public exhibition of the exit itself that is intended to draw public attention.
- **Constructing Unorthodox Alternatives** groups or individuals construct alternative political organizations or modes of being in exit or exile that emphasize the failures of the political structures that were left.
- **Maintaining Bonds with the Exited Group** those who exit preserve solidarity with those who remain behind, and they make public-minded efforts to resist from the outside.

– Jennet Kirkpatrick, 'Resistant Exit', published in *Contemporary Political Theory*, volume 18, 2018

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Abbas Zahedi (b. 1984, London) studied at Central Saint Martins and University College London. Recent exhibitions and performances include Whitechapel Gallery, London; Wolverhampton Art Gallery, UK; and 57th Venice Biennale, Italy. Recent workshops, lectures and residency projects include Raven Row, London; South London Gallery; Wysing Arts Centre, UK; Tate Britain and Tate Exchange, UK. Zahedi was awarded a School for Social Entrepreneurs (PwC) Fellowship in 2017 for his work with migrant communities in the UK.

Saint Abdullah is the project of Mohammad and Mehdi, New York based Iranian-Canadian brothers, creating sounds largely inspired by the religious, political, and cultural history of the Middle East.

EXHIBITION COLLABORATORS

Mohammad and Mehdi – Saint Abdullah
Ed Taylor – Square Root Soda Works
Iris Lin – The Kiln Rooms, Peckham

THE ARTIST WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

May Abdalla, Larry Achiampong, Imad Ahmed, Mania Akbari, Rouzbeh Akhbari, John Antony, Mohsen Azagh, Reza Baig, David A. Bailey, William Barylo, Sahar Beyad, Annie Blaber, Sonia Boyce, Jason Codrington, Peter Clayton, Paul, Louise and Clemmie Cooke, Othello De'Souza-Hartley, Amrita Dhallu, Derkan Dogan, Bushra Dunne, Abdullah Elias, Mohammed Elshimi, Ehsan Fathi, Cedriq Fauq, Layla Gatens, Matthew Greenburgh, Paul Goodwin, Amir Hossein Hanjani, International Curators Forum, Arsalan Isa, Sarry Jouzy, Emre Kazim, Annie Jael Kwan, Joshua Leon, Dave Lewis, Hew Locke, Umar Mohammed, Nicollo Moronato, Aya Mousawi, Julia Muggenberg, Kemal & Sami Okan, Charlotte Maeve Perrett, Imran Peretta, Paul Purgas, Kazim Rashid, Samiya Rashid, Abdul Rehman-Malik, Ti-Jean Roberts, Amir Rizwan, Rumi's Cave, Mohammad Saied, Maeve Sarah, Khadija Saye, Fatemeh Sharbatdaar, Jessica Taylor, The Aziz Foundation, The Grove Fish Bar, The Mandem, Nizam Uddin, Toby Upson, Barbara Walker, Julia Warr, Lois Weaver, Fariborz Zahedi, Yasiin Ali Zephyr Zahedi and everyone at the SLG.

RESIDENCY

Since 2011, a six-month residency at the SLG has been available to postgraduate artists. This opportunity is open to artists in the final year of an accredited or non-accredited postgraduate programme of study from an institution, collective or art school in the UK. Application details are advertised on SLG website every summer.

The Postgraduate Residency is supported by the Paul and Louise Cooke Endowment

ACCOMPANYING EVENTS

**LONG TABLE DISCUSSION WITH
ABBAS ZAHEDI: LAMENT
WED 11 MAR, 7–9PM**

CLORE STUDIO, MAIN BUILDING, £5/£3

Abbas Zahedi hosts a Long Table, a format of discussion devised by artist Lois Weaver. During the evening, participants can choose to join a conversation that considers approaches and attitudes towards expressions of grief, and grieving through the process of lamentation. Participants who leave the table can continuously re-join as desired.

Collaborators: Joshua Leon, Julia Warr and Toby Upson.

**ABBAS ZAHEDI IN CONVERSATION WITH
MAY ABDALLA
WED 15 APR, 7PM**

CLORE STUDIO, MAIN BUILDING, £5/£3

Abbas Zahedi discusses his practice and influences with artist and documentary filmmaker May Abdalla.

**LIVE PERFORMANCE:
ABBAS ZAHEDI & KEMAL OKAN
SAT 25 APR, 8PM**

CLORE STUDIO, MAIN BUILDING, £5/£3

Join us for an evening of performance from Abbas Zahedi and pioneering drum and bass DJ Kemal Okan. Zahedi will perform *In This Space We Leave*, a live interpretation of the soundscape in his current exhibition. The evening will close with an experimental music set by Kemal Okan.

There will also be screenings of two short films on the night: *Nothing Looks The Same at Night* by Kazim Rashid and *A Passage* by Rouzbeh Akhbari and Felix Kalmenson.

Visit the SLG website to book tickets:
southlondongallery.org/whats-on

Lamentation is, in its deepest sense, mythical. In it, myth itself seeks exit to a world to which there is no access, in which one can and cannot be, but into which, since eternity, no one can reach from another world. In lamentation, mythical enchantment (with which it was perhaps originally enmeshed) is shattered by the unheard-of linguistic phenomenon of the border.

On Lament and Lamentation, Gershon Scholem, 1917–18

ALSO ON AT THE SLG

Sophie Cundale: The Near Room

6 Mar – 19 Apr 2020

Main Gallery, Main Building

Free

Working Progress

1 Mar – 26 Apr 2020

Gallery 2, 3 & 4, Fire Station

Free

The Rita Keegan Archive (Project)

25 Feb – 26 Apr 2020

Archive, Fire Station

Free

FORTHCOMING

Christina Quarles: In Likeness

29 Apr – 6 Jun 2020

Main Gallery, Main Building

Free

Entanglements

6 May – 28 June 2020

Gallery 1, Fire Station

Free

Rita Keegan

6 May – 28 June 2020

Galleries 2, 3 & 4, Fire Station

Free

This exhibition guide was printed by the Big Family Press, the SLG's community printing press.

South London Gallery

65–67 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UH

Fire Station

82 Peckham Road, London SE15 5LQ

mail@southlondongallery.org

southlondongallery.org

SLG

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