

Lawrence Abu Hamdan, born in Lebanon, lives and works in Beirut

Language Gulf in the Shouting Valley

2013

Video, colour, sound (English and Arabic)

Duration: 15 minutes, 48 seconds

Language Gulf In the Shouting Valley is an audio essay and audio-visual installation about the politics of language and the conditions of the voice faced by the Druze community living between Palestine/Israel and Syria.

Recordings of the Druze Soldiers working as interpreters in the Israeli Military Court system in the West Bank and Gaza are contrasted with recordings from the Shouting Valley, Golan Heights, where the Druze population gather on both sides of the Israeli/Syrian border and shout across the jurisdictions to family and friends on the other side. By inhabiting the border between Syria, Israel and Palestine the Druze complicate this solid divide.

If we listen closely to the oral border produced by this transnational community, in one voice we can simultaneously hear the collaborator and the traitor; the translator and the transgressor.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan jointly won the Turner Prize, 2019.

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London

Jun Yang, born in mainland China, based in Vienna, Taipei and Yokohama

Becoming European or How I Grew up with Wiener Schnitzel

2015

Video

Jun Yang made this video in 2015, when refugees from many Syrian and Muslim-majority countries fled to Europe after heinous warfare in Syria. Referred to in the media as the European Migrant Crisis, around one million refugees entered Europe with most of them risking the treacherous crossing by sea, resulting in unbearable tragedy.

Becoming European or How I Grew up with Wiener Schnitzel recounts Yang's own narrative of migration as a Chinese-born Austrian immigrant. Along with his own personal story of migration, his video addresses the global context of the migrant at a time when migration was a vital route to safety for so many people.

Yang's work casts a critical eye over what it means to comprehend a new and unfamiliar culture. In the narrated video, Yang uses Google's image repository to search under key terms such as 'refugees', 'migration' or 'Chinese'. Questioning the labels and judgments placed on people who migrate, at one point in the video he asks "Isn't migration a human right or part of human nature?"

Courtesy of the artist Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna; Vitamin Creative Space, Beijing; ShugoArts, Tokyo.

Jun Yang, born in mainland China, based in Vienna, Taipei and Yokohama

Àokèlán

2019

Wallpaper with Chinese ink painting by Da Shen

Jun Yang has created a new wallpaper for this exhibition. The wallpaper's design and content is a direct response to Auckland and the city's history of Chinese migration.

The stories on the wallpaper have all been gleaned from the internet and include information about Chinese migration, Chinese Restaurants and fun or interesting anecdotes, as selected by the artist. These texts, printed in both English and Chinese, are interspersed with images of Auckland landmarks painted by a traditional Chinese landscape ink painter who has never visited the city.

For Yang, the wallpaper is a metaphor for understanding a foreign culture. Neither Jun Yang nor the Chinese ink painter have visited New Zealand. Therefore, the wallpaper depicts an imagined reality built on internet searches and transferred knowledge. As the wallpaper design repeats, so do the same ideas and assumptions of a place and its people.

Courtesy of the artist Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna; Vitamin Creative Space, Beijing; ShugoArts, Tokyo. Wallpaper commissioned by Gus Fisher Gallery, 2019.

With special thanks to Briana Woolliams, Cindy Huang and the gallery's team of volunteers for their research contributions to this project.

Shahriar Asdollah-Zadeh, born in the Philippines, based in Tāmaki
Makaurau

Fear Performance: The Myth of Sisyphus

2013

Digital video with sound

Duration: 9 minutes, 10 seconds

In this documented performance, Asdollah-Zadeh reinterprets the Greek myth of Sisyphus whose punishment for deceit was to ceaselessly roll an enormous boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down. Standing in for Sisyphus, the artist drags a sled with a sculpture spelling out the word 'fear' up a steep sand dune near Te Henga. As the sculpture physically weighs him down, the uphill haul also emphasises the idea that fear is a burden of contemporary society.

Asdollah-Zadeh's work relates to the existentialist philosopher Albert Camus' influential text *The Myth of Sisyphus* where he interprets the myth as an allegory for the absurdity of the human condition.

In the context of this exhibition, the sculpture and documented performance is a reminder of the pervasiveness of human struggle and how present the experience of fear is in so many people's lives.

Courtesy of the artist

Shahriar Asdollah-Zadeh, born in the Philippines, based in Tāmaki
Makaurau

Pale Blue Dot

2019

Acrylic, pen and ink on paper

Printed hand outs (interview transcript)

Pale Blue Dot explores the fragility of borders as seen from afar. The paintings relate to the overview effect, a cognitive shift in awareness that has been reported by some astronauts during spaceflight while viewing the Earth from outer space. Perhaps seeing the Earth as a pale blue dot hanging in a void, prompts us to think of it as something that needs protecting.

Asdollah-Zadeh's polygonal paintings take inspiration from the eleventh to sixteenth century patterns found in the Topkapi Scroll. These patterns are the basis of dome tile designs found in the architecture of mosques from that period. The scroll's repeated patterns are generated by three types of grid systems: squared, triangulated and composite radial (polygonal). In the *Pale Blue Dot* series, these blurred and overlapping geometric patterns symbolise the borders and boundaries that separate people on Earth.

By addressing the subject of migration from the perspective of a much greater distance, Asdollah-Zadeh's paintings ask whether this physical and conceptual distance may help us to understand human issues and actions in a more holistic way.

Courtesy of the artist

Manus Recording Project Collective

Michael Green, André Dao, Jon Tjhia, Abdul Aziz Muhamat, Farhad Bandesh, Behrouz Boochani, Samad Abdul, Shamindan Kanapathi and Kazem Kazemi

how are you today

2018

Stereo sound

13 hours / 10 minutes daily for 13 weeks

Courtesy of the artists

Since 2013, nearly 2,000 men have been indefinitely detained on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island by the Australian Government, after arriving in Australia seeking asylum. When Manus Regional Processing Centre was closed in 2017, after the Papua New Guinea Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional, the men were ordered to relocate to smaller detention centres in Manus's major town of Lorengau. The authorities eliminated provisions and removed the diesel generators powering the facility, but the men refused to leave. Eventually, they were forcefully evicted.

How are you today is a collaboration between some of these men on Manus (Farhad Bandesh, Behrouz Boochani, Samad Abdul, Shamindan Kanapathi, Kazem Kazemi and Abdul Aziz Muhamat) and Michael Green, Andre Dao and Jon Tjhia in Melbourne.

The audio was originally commissioned for an exhibition called *Eavedropping* in 2018, a collaboration between Liquid Architecture and Melbourne Law School. When initially presented at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the audio uploads ran at the same time as the exhibition. Every day, each of the men on Manus Island made a sound recording of anything they liked and sent it 'onshore' for upload to the gallery. By the end of the exhibition there were eighty-four recordings in total, each ten minutes long.

The result is an archive too large to synthesise, yet only a tiny fraction of the men's ongoing imprisonment. These are not just field recordings, they are also evidence at a time when more direct forms of testimony seem exhausted.

Out of the men recorded on Manus Island, only Aziz has been able to escape Australia's off-shore detention regime. Aziz was allowed to fly to Switzerland to accept a major human rights award and was subsequently granted asylum there.

Courtesy of the artists

Hoda Afshar, born in Iran, based in Melbourne

Portrait of Behrouz Boochani, Manus Island

2018

Photographic print

Behrouz Boochani is a Kurdish-Iranian journalist, scholar, cultural advocate, writer and filmmaker. Boochani was Afshar's main point of contact on Manus Island and liaised with her for months before she travelled there.

In order to uphold his identity whilst in detention Boochani imagined himself as "a novelist in a remote prison." Boochani's writing has become a crucial window into the reality of what he and other detainees face by the system that incarcerates them. He has won two major Australian prizes for literature for his book *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* (2018) which he wrote via thousands of text messages on a smuggled phone inside his detention centre.

In his portrait, Boochani is shown with fire ablaze behind him. He agrees with Afshar that this portrait symbolises his resistance and passion, but also admits that he doesn't recognise himself in this image. He says: "I only see a refugee, someone whose identity has been taken from him. A bare life, standing there beyond the borders of Australia, waiting and staring... This portrait scares me."

During the display of these portraits at The University of Auckland's Gus Fisher Gallery in late 2019, Behrouz Boochani arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand to participate in Word Festival Christchurch after six years of incarceration on Manus Island. He spoke at Gus Fisher Gallery with friend and photographer Hoda Afshar in November 2019. Boochani has now been granted asylum in Aotearoa New Zealand and is Senior Adjunct Research Fellow at the Ngāi Tahu Research Centre at the University of Canterbury.

Hoda Afshar, born in Iran, based in Melbourne

Remain Portrait Series

2018

Photographic print

Hoda Afshar created this series of portraits in collaboration with men who remained on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, following the closure of the Australian immigration offshore detention facility they had been held in on October 31st 2017.

Afshar's process for producing these stylised portraits was collaborative, and many conversations took place with the men featured before the photographs were created. For the portraits, Afshar asked the men to choose something natural that would help them express their emotions. For example, in Emad's portrait, he chose to be represented with sand, in reference to the preciousness of the land in Kurdish culture and the land from which he had been torn from.

Through her portraits, Afshar wants to remind people of their social obligation to one another; "so that when you stand face to face with those images, all you're seeing is another individual who has the same intelligence, the same desire, the same passion for life as you."

The University of Auckland Art Collection

Cushla Donaldson, lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau

501s V.02

2019

3D rendered video image, the internet

This work displays messages received in real time from people currently in detention and those deported under section 501 of the Australian Migration Act 1958 (amendment 2014). It may also display messages from the families, friends and communities affected. The messages are not vetted or viewed before they are displayed.

501s is the name people detained under this act call themselves. In recent years the Australian Government has implemented a wave of visa cancellations which looks set to increase with a proposed extension of this legislation. The majority of the people who have had their visas cancelled hold New Zealand citizenship although may have spent little or no time in New Zealand. It is estimated that sixty percent of those detained and deported are of Māori and Pasifica descent but, remarkably, this number has also included people of Aboriginal descent.

Section 501 of the Australian immigration act is an amendment that allows for detention and deportation of migrants to proceed from a deeply classed and racialised ethos euphemised as 'good character.' Those deemed lacking in good character according arbitrary bureaucratic state calculus are subsequently incarcerated indefinitely alongside asylum seekers in the quasi-legal, quasi-territorial and privately run detention centres.

This work uses newly developed technology so that 501 detainees can interrupt or 'hack' the 'official' work, allowing for their expression of doubly fugitive messages to escape from the detention centre and into a life outside from which they have been excluded.

501s also foregrounds the historical instrumentalisation of glamour and soft power by fusing imagery of a lavish Venetian event with the messages. The video content features a large glass slipper that fills with champagne. This act of exorbitance refers to a legendary event at the Carnival of Venice in the 1600s where a giant glass slipper was put in a public square and filled with champagne. By disrupting the obscenely spinning crystal shoe, the messages and their senders speak back to present and prevailing power structures.

Throughout the development of the work, Donaldson has worked with 501s advocates Filipa Payne and Erina Morunga at 'Iwi n Aus'. Dr. David Hall also worked on this project as research advisor.

Many thanks to The Physics Room, Jamie Hanton, The Jan Warburton Charitable Trust, Dr. Simon Barber, Erica Wilson, Ayesha Green, Jerome Ngan-Kee and all those who participate with their messages.

The work that welcomes above the entrance way was kindly contributed by artist Huriana Kopeke- Te Aho.