Home Where Home Is Not

Sogol Mabadi and Birthe Jorgensen

Monday 24th June to Saturday 3rd August 2019, **Glasgow Women's Library**
Open: Mon to Wed & Fri: 9.30am – 5pm // Thurs 9.30am – 7.30pm // Sat 12 - 4pm

Friday 28th June to Saturday 3rd August 2019, **Platform**
Open: Mon to Sat: 10am – 5pm

Home Where Home Is Not is an ambitious exhibition by Glasgow-based artists Sogol Mabadi and Birthe Jorgensen, reimagining fixed notions of home and what it means to be from more than one place. After a period of research and discussion with a diverse group of women from Platform and Glasgow Women's Library, this exhibition of sculptures and sound works will stretch across both sites in Glasgow's East End.

The exhibition draws on Mabadi and Jorgensen's own experiences negotiating their identities across geographical, cultural and psychological boundaries. It marks the next phase of an ongoing collaborative practice between the artists that emerged in an exhibition entitled *Host and Visitors* at the Reid Gallery, Glasgow in 2016. The themes of *Hosts* and *Visitors* remain present in this new body of work, continuing the conversations and poignantly asking questions about how to speak of home and belonging. These questions, around how we enter and settle in unknown situations, languages and territories are reflected in the process of making the artworks. The artists are both guests *and* hosts engaged in performative processes that invite others in and find new sculptural languages to speak about how we are lost and found in the process of making and being with each other.

Working closely with Platform and Glasgow Women's Library, Birthe and Sogol initiated a series of workshops with a group of women who all currently call the North East of Glasgow home. Some have lived in the area for many years whilst others are newer residents, moving from different parts of Scotland and beyond. The hosting work underpinning these workshops led to a sense of care for each other, creating a space of trust out of which personal experiences were shared and new friendships emerged.

Crossing the threshold into Glasgow Women's Library visitors can hear the sound of this close group performing breathing exercises together. Projected into the dark space a cut up form displays extracts from group conversations, creating a rambling sensuous poetic texture that embraces dissonance as well as the resonances between speakers. Whilst the words reference a sense of home unmoored from the here and now, the playful sound of their breathing brings us back to our own bodies. Inside Jorgensen has installed *Nocturnal bridge building, skin stretching, flood defences and other stories 5* (2019), a frame that combines rust, salt, and cut-up repurposed bed sheets. From behind

this temporary shelter, it is possible to be both inside the library and in a space apart, just as our experience of new places are often overlaid with memories from elsewhere. Jorgensen speaks about this piece in relation to one participant in the group who uses the practice of sleep to repair her split world. This intervention, alongside other important works in the exhibition, suggests an act of healing and also the recognition that the experience of leaving home can be profoundly disorientating, described by feminist scholar Sara Ahmed as a failure of memory to make sense of the place one comes to inhabit.

In GWL's main event space the exploration of strange encounters (Ahmed) continues. Installed in the nook under the window Mabadi's work *Group encounters and the sound of interdependency* (2019) references the veil as a practice used by the artist to negate eye contact and verbal dialogue in performance work in an effort to explore other areas of communication and contact. As the sunlight streams into the space Mabadi's work evokes alternative ways to share and the different sensations these might open up; if you can't look directly at the sun you can feel its warmth with closed eyes. Accompanying the work are some tactile maple blocks fastened to pieces of flat wood. We invite you to play with these fastenings. Like relational encounters this movement between being together and apart is something which needs to be negotiated carefully, feeling at some points impossible and at others satisfying. Cork used here and elsewhere in Mabadi's practice acts to contain and/or resist different kinds of spilling, including feelings of ambivalence and rejection.

Alongside these under the mezzanine, are *Responses* (2019) made by Ranajana Thapalyal, Liam Walker and Katherine MacBride. Each have been part of Sogol's performative practice, spending time 'being with' her in activities including walking, drinking, eating and drawing. Bringing to light multiple relational modes these responses represent new thinking for Mabadi around how intimate private performances can cross a threshold to be shared in a more public way. Next to these *Doubling* (2019) is one of a series of vessels made with Emma Helen Reid from Pritt stick, Vaseline and pink Himalayan salt. The Vaseline acts here and elsewhere as a protective water barrier to avoid dissolution. In this way *Doubling* signifies remaining intact in uncertain conditions as well as healing.

Salt and water also mingle differently in our upstairs gallery space in the form of tears referenced on Jorgensen's wooden carved bust *…your tears* (2019) which is also a double, carved from the same tree as a second bust hosted by Platform. *…your tears* (2019) appears slightly off centre, the empty space suggesting its sister work. Both ancient and contemporary the carvings hint at Persian and Indian miniature painting, the gaze familiar from historical painting looks straight at you and beyond, accompanied by the unsettling ambivalence of the slight female smile.

These works start as thoughts on grief and rage. As Judith Butler says, being unbearable, rage is often the lived form of grief. In an age dominated by so much loss and rapid brutal change, it is a challenge to stay with the pain and allow rage to collapse into grief.

In her beautiful essay *Moths drink the tears of sleeping birds* Rebecca Solnit speaks of tears as nurturing, delicious, transformative… a potential sharing across species. If we conceive of this moment as an *Interregnum*, a time where the old is dying but the new is yet to be born, the exhibition asks how do we approach grief? Do we look it in the eye or see it through a veil? How do we come into relationship with each other through these emotions? Perhaps the challenge is to tend to grieving over one's losses as one would tend to the roses in a garden.

Mabadi's work '*Odd-Kin'* (2019) also makes reference to Donna Haraway's interspecies thinking on cyborgian extensions to the body. The piece, involving multiple tech devices, is a first attempt at welcoming and imagining computer technology as part of her practice, which through Vaseline is brought back to an ongoing exploration of the body. With a sense of critique but openness and urgency this trajectory brings new material into the practice softened by Vaseline but equally made difficult. It suggests the slippery nature of technology, which gets away from us and yet attaches, becoming an extension of our physical selves.

The last framed work takes its title *Secondhand Time* (2019) from Svetlana Alexievich's book on memories of the Soviet shift from communism to consumerism in the 1980s. Gathered on the other side, in the project workshops participants reflect on the Western worlds 'nuclear family regime'. The resulting poetic response stretches between both exhibition sites, fragmented by this dual location inviting us in to a struggle to understand when only half the story is present. Whilst 'sorrow accumulates like fists' in the poem we also feel the power and potential of gathering as strangers, sharing experiences and grievances. Having listened and been listened to we are left stronger and, being accountable for more than one self, mobilised.

Artists' Bios

Birthe Jorgensen is a visual artist, educator and cross-disciplinary researcher. Trained in sculpture at Central Saint Martins and Glasgow School of Art. Jorgensen has exhibited in Scotland, Europe, South America and the USA, and lectured at Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire Scotland, and Iceland Academy of The Arts.

Sogol Mabadi is an artist and art therapist based in Glasgow. Through her work and with participants, she explores moments of interdependency, of being-there and being-with. She is working on a new body of work titled *The Conference of the Birds* (Farid ud-Din Attar) that will explore the possibility of 'coming into being in parallel´ while moving through troubled and liminal spaces.

Public Programme

Languages of Belonging: Sogol Mabadi and Birthe Jorgensen in conversation with Amanda Thomson// Thursday 18th July, 6pm to 7.30pm, GWL

Amanda Thomson is a visual artist who has a longstanding interest in the Scottish Highland landscapes, how places come to be made, and how we are located (and locate ourselves) in the world. In her explorations of home, migration and mapping there are many intersections with the themes in *Home Where Home Is Not*. All three artists share responses to this exhibition and the questions raised by Amanda Thomson's rich creative practice.

Performative tour with Julia Lee Barclay-Morton// Sunday 21st July, 2pm to 4pm, the tour will meet at Platform and travel to GWL (bus provided).

Julia Lee Barclay-Morton is an award-winning writer and director, whose prose and plays have been produced and published internationally. Her most recent stage-text *On the edge of/a cure* was produced by Rogue Players as a staged reading at The Playroom in NYC.

Closing Event// Saturday 3rd August, 2pm to 4pm, Platform

Join Birthe Jorgensen and Sogol Mabadi on the final day of the exhibition where participants who took part in the project host a closing event. Julia will be sharing her expertise to reveal the ways in which performance unfolds in the exhibition spaces.

*All events are free. For more info or to book please visit womenslibrary.org.uk / call 0141 550 2267 or www.platform-online.co.uk / call 0141 276 9696 (option 1).

Home Where Home is Not is presented by Glasgow Women's Library in partnership

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plat—form

with Platform.

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