DELFINA FOUNDATION

EMBASSY OF SWEDEN
London

Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design

Politics of the Domestic

Date: Wednesday 16th of December 2015
Location: Delfina foundation, 29/31 Catherine Place
Victoria, London. SW1E 6DY
Time: 2:00 pm – 7:30 pm

'My Family arrived here in a Marxist tradition
My Mother immediately filled the house with Christmas knick-knacks
Weighed the pros and cons of the plastic Christmas tree
As if it was her problem'.

Athena Farrokhzad, **translated from the Swedish by Jennifer Hayashida.**

The notions of revolution, war and migration are perceived differently by the different generations, and this is reflected in their collective stories. Events like these naturally mean different things to different people, as family members are forced to adjust to new conditions and adapt to new people in the new landscape of migration.

Politics of the Domestic' is inspired by the recent publication of Swedish poet Athena Farrokhzad (born 1983 in Tehran) titled '*Vitsvit*' (*White Blight*), which is centred round a family who migrate to Gothenburg after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. *Vitsvit*' (*White Blight*), expresses a collective vision of grandmother, father/mother, and brother/sister towards the prevailing social concerns in post-revolutionary Iran and the challenges they face in their new adopted city of Gothenburg.

This programme, 'Politics of the Domestic', is part of a research project by Azadeh Fatehrad (Royal College of Art) in collaboration with the Embassy of Sweden and Delfina Foundation, designed to unfold the socio-political issues arising from *Vitsvit*' (*White Blight*). The seminar aims to stimulate further discussion around the topic of migration and its resonance today. Ending the programme is a book launch to celebrate the first English translation of Athena Farrokhzad's work.

The programme has been developed by Azadeh Fatehrad, PhD candidate at the Royal College of Art and Ellen Wettmark, Counsellor for Cultural Affairs at the Embassy of Sweden. The program is been generously supported by the Embassy of Sweden in London and The Royal College of Art.

2:00 Athena Farrokhzad
2:35 Azadeh Fatehrad, Royal College of Art
3:10 Nikolaus Perneczky, University of Goldsmiths
3:45 break
3:55 Dr. Nina Mangalanayagam, University of Westminster
4:30 David Crawforth, Artistic Director at Beaconsfield.
5:05 Panel Discussion
5:30 Book Launch and Reception
7:30 End

Synopsis

- *Poetic and Politic: Re-Reading of Iranian History after 1979 Revolution.*
  Azadeh Fatehrad, Royal College of Art

This paper reflects on Athena Farrokhzad's recent publication 'Vitsvit' to produce a new reading of Iranian history after the 1979 Revolution. Fatehrad would highlight individual and domestic responses to the new socio-political conditions to create a deeper understanding of the registered 'history', whilst emphasising the trans-geographical quality of 'history' contrary to the more typical linear and regional belief.

- *Autumn to Winter: Sohrab Shahid- Sales in Germany.*
  Nikolaus Perneczky, University of Goldsmiths

The first six feature films Iranian director Sohrab Shahid-Saless realised in the years of his German exile trace a gradual escalation of concepts and affects of exile from the particular to the universal. Departing from the concrete experience, mirroring Shahid-Saless's own, of a Turkish "Gastarbeiter" (guest worker) recently arrived in Berlin (Far From Home, 1975), his work from that period systematically proceeds, via the specifically West-German sense of alienation on broad display in the 1980 television production Order, to what could be described (with Hungarian philosopher and literary theorist György Lukács) as the nigh "transcendental homelessness" pervading the empty geometric spaces of the dystopian bordello which serves as the allegorical locale of his masterpiece, Utopia (1983). This talk will explore the German oeuvre of Shahid-Saless with a view to shifts and mutations in its rendering of the experience of exile.

- *The Contradictions of Hybridity*

Dr. Nina Mangalanayagam- University of Westminster

This presentation will focus on We call her Pulle - a three screen video installation on my experience travelling to Jaffna, Sri Lanka, the childhood place of my father. The video concentrates on my relationship to my aunt, Pulle, with whom I don't share a language or culture, but we share some common history as well as a relationship to my father. Our interaction is influenced by the way we perceive each other and ourselves through different lenses shaped by our societies, values and experiences. In the footage, Pulle and I also re-enact parts of ourselves to an imagined viewer – the lens of the camera. These projections sometimes contradict each other. I will discuss some of the questions and issues that arise from this. What impact does migration have on the way we perceive our family members? How does one find belonging within a family when this family has been dispersed globally? And how can the camera be used to examine these relationships?

- *The Migrant Experience*

David Crawforth Artistic Director at Beaconsfield

This presentation is a brief reflection on my recent curatorial project *The Migrant Experience* which discover an alternative narrative to the current debates on migration through individual tales of escape from persecution, or moving in search of love or adventure. *The Migrant Experience* exhibition is taking place at The Foundry from September 23 until December 18, 2015; which presents an inspiring and poignant collection of stories as told by employees of Lebara, the universal brand for the world's migrant community.

Biographies

- Athena Farrokhzad is born in 1983 and lives in Stockholm. She is a poet, literary critic, translator, play wright and teacher of creative writing. After several years of collaborative poetry projects and international projects she published her first volume of poetry in 2013, Vitsvit (White Blight) at Albert Bonniers förlag. The book circles around the topic of revolution, war, migration and racism, and how these experiences condition the lives of different members of a family. Vitsvit has been translated to several languaged and turned into a play. The same year, Farrokhzad first play, Päron (Pear), premiered at Ung scen /öst. She teaches creative writing at Biskops-Arnös författarskola, and has translated writes such as Marguerite Duras, Adrienne Rich, Monique Wittig and Nicole Brossard to Swedish. In 2015, her second volume of poetry, *Trado*, written together with the Romanian poet Svetlana Carstean, will be published.

- Nikolaus Perneczky is a writer, researcher and co-founder of Berlin-based curatorial collective The Canine Condition. He is currently working on a PhD candidate at Goldsmiths, University of London, concerned with the making, sharing and showing of technological moving images in countries newly emergent from colonial rule.

- Azadeh Fatehrad is an artist and researcher currently on the Photography Programme at the Royal College of Art, London. Her research engages with the feminist history of Iran from 1909 to the present. Her projects explore still and moving image archives investigating the ways in which the feminist movement has been expanded among urban middle class women in her home country of Iran. Fatehrad's recent projects include the co-curated exhibitions, Hengameh Golestan: *Witness 1979* at the Showroom London and *The Feminist Movement in Twentieth-Century Iran* at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. She has exhibited her work in London, Vancouver, New York and Tehran. She has lectured widely at conferences and symposia, presenting the likes of 'Aesthetic of Resistance in Post-revolutionary Iran' at the Royal College of Art; 'The Sensuality of Black and White' at the University of Stockholm; and 'Representation of Gender in Silent Cinema of Iran' at the University of York.

- Dr. Nina Mangalanayagam is a Swedish/Tamil visual artist working with still and moving image. She has a Masters in Photography from the Royal College of Art and a PhD by practice from the University of Westminster. In her practice Nina explores themes of belonging and hybridity, often using a semi-autobiographical approach. She explores the fluidity and unfixed nature of identities, how they are influenced by and impact on societies, families and environments. She exhibits widely in the UK and abroad, received the Jerwood Photography Award in 2005 and was short-listed for ArtsAdmin's Decibel Visual Artist Award in 2006.
http://www.ninamanga.com

- David Crawforth. Artistic Director of Beaconsfield and curator of *The Migrant Experience exhibition* in London.

Departure (2015) Azadeh Fatehrad. C-Type Print. Tehran.