

Hosts & Visitors

Your presence feels important.

'Hosts & Visitors' is a specially-commissioned exhibition for the Reid Gallery at The Glasgow School of Art. The exhibition showcases new work by Glasgow-based artists **Birthe Jorgensen** and **Sogol Mabadi**, both GSA alumna. *'Hosts & Visitors'* inspiration is the subject of diaspora and migration, which has taken on added significance in the light of June 2016's vote on the UK's membership of the EU.

Migration has been part of the life experience of both artists who were born out with the UK; Jorgensen was born in Copenhagen, Denmark and Mabadi Tehran, Iran. This exhibition theme also came out of the artists' discussions on language and identity and how their art practices actively engage with it. Support from Creative Scotland allowed the artists to share a studio for two months, in order to continue the conversation through making.

The other themes in this two-person exhibition are binary opposites: public / private; inside/ outside; absence/presence; past /present; moored/unmoored; and light / darkness. The division between the words themselves, and their meanings, begin to shift, when considered in our current times. All things public become privatized. In these times of uncertainty, millions are unmoored and adrift looking for a better or safer ground, but is there such a place? Again in light of the EU Referendum, comes the impossibility of restoring the past or of 'making Britain great again'.

In particular the works are often emotive, such as Mabadi's *'Rest Chairs'* which barely contain their own weight, or Janus and the *'men that weep'*, from Jorgensen's sculpture and text work. Some face out whilst others turn in. Sometimes the objects are a call to action, to become *'mobilised'*.

A number of the works also draw attention to aspects of time or history, such as nearly seventy years of sun burning into the velvet curtains from the Mackintosh Lecture Theatre, or the plant fossils from another place; or the found objects which hold their own histories.

Janus on the floor

Birthe Jorgensen, 2016.

We began the project with a year-long conversation, asking what the two artists wished to do. Jorgensen, with a highly collaborative practice, wished to look inwards, whilst Mabadi, who had a very private practice, wished to look outwards.

The symbol of Janus, made by Jorgensen, represents these two directions. Historically Janus represents January, the gateway or threshold looking to the old year and the new. Whilst making Janus, Jorgensen was thinking about the idea of reflection and change for the sake of restoration or preservation as something now largely impossible. Janus here, representing past/present, now lies on the floor, in a state of collapse. (1)

Good Old Light

Birthe Jorgensen, 2016

The light from the sun that burns and burns over time, produces its own strange images for us to contemplate as we look for meaning. The two large velvet curtains were custom made for "the Mack" lecture theatre in the 1950s' and show the trace of decades of exposure to the light which poured through windows onto their now brittle silk lining invoking the ghost image of a window. Days, weeks, months, years, decades - super-imposed onto each other forms a looming presence. This piece is an archive of light. The past is always with us. (2)

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Anxiety Tool no.1: for individual use

Guide: 6-8 sec between each pop= 1hr
Sogol Mabadi, 2016

The anxiety tools are devices which are made to suck up anxiety. The popper can be popped at given intervals as a possibility is offered to be taken elsewhere. *Anxiety Tool no.2* lies in Room 2, and is a sculptural prototype for communal use. (3)

Hosts and Visitors: Hosts' garments on loan

Sogol Mabadi, 2016

On the night that the exhibition is at its most public - the preview- a series of private performances will take place at four hosts' houses across Glasgow. There will be a further two throughout the duration of the show. The performance asks each household what it means to host a stranger and to be a stranger to themselves. At the invitation of Mabadi, The Hosts have loaned a piece of their own clothing to represent them in the exhibition. Mabadi has carefully turned each item inside out. The inside of the garment is the point that touches the skin. (4)

Mobilised no 1: with Pipe

Sogol Mabadi, 2016. Photo: Alan McAteer

This photograph is part of a diptych with the photograph '*Mobilising: Vulnerable*' which is located in the hallway outside the gallery. By looking at both, we see the artist Sogol Mabadi both as 'veiled' and 'unveiled'. The pipe is normally of male association – Freud, Magritte – when adopted by women it holds a different power. 'Veiled' is the past; 'Unveiled' is the present and mobilised. (6)

Mobilised no.2: Shoulder-pads + Hook and Eye tape

This female army of eight are '*Place Holders*', which are mobilised in their triangular formation. They began life at Mabadi's GSA Degree Show in 2010. For each opportunity that has followed, Mabadi has altered them in a sequence of transitions. For '*Hosts & Visitors*', Mabadi 'unveils' the sculptures, further stripping them back to their integral form. Their previous coverings or 'toy weaponry', lies outside in the vitrine. The female army stand mobilised around a newly born form, made with pink hook and eye tape with needles. (7)

Rest Chair: Hard

Glue (8)

Rest Chair: Soft I with height adjusters

Shoulder-pads (9)

Rest Chair: Soft II with height adjusters

Shoulder-pads (10)

Sogol Mabadi, 2016

These 'rest' chairs by Mabadi only just hold themselves together. They are fragile and ambivalent, and although they want to engender a space for rest, they cannot. With '*Rest Chair: Hard*', the knitting needles are a threat. However, the life of the glue further adds to its inbuilt unreliability. The sticks of glue will shrink and dry up eventually.

From rage to grief and back again

Birthe Jorgensen, 2016

Thick shards of glass pierce the skin of the gallery wall. Facing the street, this attack further upsets the sombre geometry of the Reid building's exterior surface adding a sense of strange ritual. The sun's rays at particular points of the day, bounce off the mirror shards and create pinpoints of reflected light inside the Mackintosh's

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studios. The shapes the shards are like teardrops. (11)

23 March 2016

Birthe Jorgensen, 2016

This piece of writing draws on some of the objects in the room and also on time spent in the gallery when it was empty, by bringing near the personal memories of others of distant rooms. (12)

Omens and Numens

Birthe Jorgensen, 2016

Both outside at the threshold of the gallery, and around the room, you will find different carvings, named after the months. Taking a u-turn in her practice, Jorgensen recently began the solitary and private action of whittling wood, with her hands making these figurative objects as a diary of sorts. Mixing the mythical with the historical, these figures hold personal memories and current affairs. Whilst an omen is a sign or symbol of portent, a numen is the spirit or divine power presiding over a thing or place. In a nod to ancient casts, the carvings have all been carefully coloured. The omens and numens are made of different kinds of wood: Lime wood, drift wood and Lebanese Cedar Wood. (13 ii, v, vi, vii)

Hard little truths

Birthe Jorgensen, 2016

What at first may look like interior bodily tubes are millennia old fossils from the Northern tip of the Swedish island of Fårö. As fossils they contain deep time. Once Fårö was part of a large landmass located south of the equator before a continental drift moved it high up in the Northern hemisphere. The chain with the fossils makes a fragile and fine line in this large gallery space. (14)

Room 2:

Anxiety Tool no.2: for communal use

Guide: 6-8 sec between each pop

Sogol Mabadi, 2016

The anxiety tools are devices which are made to suck up anxiety. The popper can be popped at given intervals. In time the user becomes settled again. *Anxiety Tool no.1* lies in the first part of the gallery. It is a sculpture for individual use. (15)

100

Birthe Jorgensen, 2016

One hundred pairs of used male and female shoes are confined to a square grid on the gallery floor. On loan from charity shops across Scotland, this anonymous formation conjures up a sense of a group of unknown people from unknown places, temporarily gathered in the gallery on route from one place to another.

We will never know who has worn these shoes, where they have been, who will wear them in the future or where they will go next. 1 person is faced with 100. (16)

Outside Gallery:

Mobilising: Vulnerable

Sogol Mabadi, 2016, Photo: Alan McAteer

This photograph is part of a diptych with the photograph '*Mobilised No 1: with Pipe*'. The artist is seen with her face covered in a veil of her own plaited hair. She is hosted; a stranger in a domestic kitchen. (5)

Acts of Slowing Down + Weaponry Toy Objects

Drawings and objects, Sogol Mabadi, 2016

The act of repeatedly writing a sentence slows one down. The weaponry comes from a previous incarnation of the female army of Place Holders, located in the Reid Gallery. For Mabadi, '*finding ones heart in the desert*', a home where home is not, where things are bare and distractions are few, is a key aspect of this whole process. (17)

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Several of the 'Omens and Numens' by Jorgensen, also spill out into Reid Ground Floor Corridor space. (13i, iii, iv)

Events

Film screening

The Silence ('Sokhout'), 1998, Director Mohsen Makhmalbaf (Iran)

Wednesday 20 July 6pm, Reid Auditorium, Reid Building, GSA

This film has been selected by Sogol Mabadi. The film will be introduced by Dr Jim Harold. Free but ticketed, [book via Eventbrite](#)

GSA Public Lecture

Professor Alison Phipps

Thursday 28 July 6pm
Reid Auditorium, Reid Building, GSA

The artists have invited Prof Phipps who is Convener of Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network and Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies at University of Glasgow to talk on her research on languages and intercultural advocacy with asylum seekers and refugees. Free but ticketed, [book via Eventbrite](#)

& Thanks:

Sogol's thanks: Hosts: Elwira Grossman, Ranjana Thapalyal, Johnny Rodger, Christina McBride, Alison Phipps, Rachel Boyd

Visitors: Corah Ambrose, Georgia Thornton Sparkes, Pamela Atan, Katrina Cobain

Simon Worthington, Susan Brind and Jim Harold, Mahsaneh Poosti, Katy Hassall

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'Hosts & Visitors', Birthe Jorgensen, Sogol Mabadi 9 July – 21 August 2016. Reid Gallery, The Glasgow School of Art.

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