

Beyond the Body

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Sarotis and Sovar | Ava Aghakouchak

Our bodies live in their current contexts with their historic, scientific, genetic and social memories. Yet how do these memories take shape today in interactions with machines? Machines that are manufactured by our bodies and machine that simultaneously manufacture our bodies as well? At some point, Lacan and Freud believed in individual psychotherapy, but today the healing of an individual is brought about by healing a larger sociopolitical situation. This is because the contemporary human subject has become a planetary subject global-individual. We are not our bodies but we exist within them. When the human organs become centralized in confrontation with various situations, new political movements arise. The deepest part of humans' bodies is the skin and the furthest part, the geopolitical borders. Contemporary bodies carry the deepest and the furthest at the same time. They socialize with their internal geopolitical borders. How does contemporary thought expand on borders and depths when confronted socially and politically beyond the individual? The dance of two organs is the dance of two political bodies.

Mania Akbari (b. Tehran, 1974) is an internationally acclaimed artist and filmmaker. Her provocative, revolutionary and radical films were recently the subject of retrospectives at the BFI, London (2013), the DFI, Denmark (2014), Oldenburg International Film Festival, Germany (2014), Cyprus Film Festival (2014) and Nottingham Contemporary UK (2018). Her films have screened at festivals around the world and have received numerous awards including German Independence Honorary Award, Oldenberg (2014), Best Film, Digital Section, Venice Film Festival (2004), Nantes Special Public Award Best Film (2007) and Best Director and Best film at Kerala Film Festival (2007), Best Film and Best Actress, Barcelona Film Festival (2007). Akbari was exiled from Iran and currently lives and works in London, a theme addressed in 'Life May Be' (2014), co-directed with Mark Cousins. This film was released at Karlovy Vary Film Festival and was nominated for Best Documentary at Edinburgh International Film Festival (2014) and Asia Pacific Film Festival (2014). Akbari's latest film 'A Moon For My Father', made in collaboration with British artist Douglas White, premiered at CPH:DOX where it won the NEW:VISION Award 2019. The film also received a FIPRESCI International Critics Award at the Flying Broom Festival, Ankara. She is currently working on a new project 'Libido' with her son Amin Maher.



An exercise in crossing thresholds, *Correspondance (Contact)* occurs amongst a constellation of co-protagonists: two bodies move through and are moved by their surroundings on a moment-by-moment basis, triggered through a collective becoming-with ebbs and flows while occurring through a co-constitutive manner. Together in interplay with natural elements and matter such as water, light, shadow, et al., the choreography unfolds as an entangled process of becoming-with one another. Through processes of attunement, correspondence, contagion and contact, the bodies trace qualities of force, breath and flow in vibration - reorganizing, shape-shifting and boundary-probing the patterns of a potential new becoming. Experimenting with variable morphologies of co-presence, *Correspondance (Contact)* attempts to create an encounter of rethinking a mutual field of potential relations in a shared, mutually affective field of resonance.

Murat Adash

The performance-based work of German-Turkish artist Murat Adash operates across expanded fields of choreographic inquiry with an architectural concern. Through the medium of movement, he creates choreographies in a range of media that seek to investigate relations and frictions between corporality and spatiality. Recent exhibitions and performances include: *Le Commun*, Geneva, 2019; *Mumok*, Vienna, 2019; *Het Nieuwe Instituut*, Rotterdam, 2019; *Barbican*, London, 2018; *Delfina Foundation*, London, 2018; *Tanzfabrik - Centre for Contemporary Dance*, Berlin, 2018; *SALT*, Istanbul, 2017; *The Hangar*, Beirut, 2017; *Manifesta 11*, Zurich, 2016; *Alt Art Space*, Istanbul, 2016; *Julius Caesar Gallery*, Chicago, 2015; *EXPO Chicago*, 2014; *Iceberg Projects*, Chicago, 2013; *Grimmuseum*, Berlin, 2013; *Motorenhalle*, Dresden, 2013; *Kriti Gallery*, Varanasi, 2013. He has recently participated in residency programs at *Delfina Foundation (London)*, *Utopiana (Geneva)*, *Mountain School of Arts (Los Angeles)* and conducted research on social choreography during a one-year studio grant in Istanbul supported by the *Hessische Kulturstiftung (Wiesbaden, Germany)*. Adash holds an MFA in Visual Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is a current PhD candidate in Art at Goldsmiths, University of London.

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Sarotis and Sovar | 5 mins | 2019 | colour - video

Ava Aghakouchak

Ava Aghakouchak is an Iranian designer/creative technologist currently based in London. Her work focuses on the loop between the human body-mind and the spaces which it might inhabit. Ava designs wearables which aim to amplify certain sensorial and perceptual states and she uses performing arts as a method of highlighting and exhibiting the wearer's internal somatic experience.

Her work titled *Sarotis* has been highlighted by Domus as one of the top design projects of 2016 and awarded the Silver medal during the New York Design Awards 2018. Ava's work has appeared in ARS Electronica (Linz), Resonate Media Arts Festival (Belgrade), Museum of Contemporary Arts (Shanghai), Royal College of Arts and King's College (London), BodyHack Con (Texas) and Onassis Cultural Center (Athens).

Ava is currently a PhD candidate at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, where her research on methods of enhancing cross-modal perception promotes more immersive, adaptive and responsive methods of design for the man of the future.

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How will technology change the way we see and interact with the world around us? Both *Sarotis* and *Sovar* projects explore answers to this question beyond the era of the smart phones, towards more intimate wearable technological futures. To express the designer's vision of the future, the two films provoke the audience to consider how fluidic interfaces may dissolve the distinction between our own physiology and that of the softening machines. Where does the machine stop and the body begin? *Sarotis* speculates that soft wearable machines can become a collective identity networking all bodies around the world and eventually awaken a shared consciousness around the earth.

Sovar draws upon a more palpable future, targeting the rise of intangible information as an important part of the human's sensorial inputs. The fact that in the age of mixed realities, some of the sensible events have been and are being replaced with more virtual alternatives, implies that the human body performs beyond the boundaries of its skin. And by getting closer to inhabiting non-places as a species, what will we depend on besides our body-minds?



A Passage | 2019 | 17 min | Video

'A Passage' is a film which tackles the political economy and social ecology of border infrastructures in Southern Armenia. By focusing on two significant events that illustrate the dominant political shifts in the region, 'A Passage' looks at how processes of rapid militarization and neoliberalization have restructured these borders. These two events include the recent erasure of the historic Yerevan-Baku Railway; and the upcoming construction of an industrial Free Economic Zone (FEZ) planned precisely where the removed train infrastructure was housed. The scrapping of the railway symbolizes the socio-political adherence to maintaining strict mobility regimes for citizens, while the introduction of the FEZ signals how capital supersedes these bodily restrictions and borders. The metaphor of 'wind' is a recurring thematic framework for examining complex socio-political dynamics in this project. The film stitches together various contested sites of the region including Meghri's abandoned airport (which is slated to be refurbished as the forward command of Russia's Middle Eastern operations), a functioning Soviet-era Copper and Molybdenum mine, a 16th century church (which is the last remaining building of a village abandoned by the mines expansion) the abandoned Kar-chivan and Meghri train stations and an abandoned rail tunnel that bridges the geopolitical boundary of Nakhchivan and Armenia.

Pejvak (PJVK) is the long-term collaboration between Felix Kalmenson and Rouzbeh Akhbari.

Rouzbeh Akhbari's practice is research-driven and usually exists at the intersections of political economy, critical architecture and planning. Through a delicate examination of the violences and intimacies that occur at the boundaries of lived experience and constructed histories, Akhbari uncovers the minutiae of power that organizes and regiments the world around us.

Felix Kalmenson's work variably narrates the liminal space of a researcher's and artist's encounter with landscape and archive. By bearing witness to everyday life, and hardening the more fragile vestiges of private and collective histories through their work, Kalmenson gives themselves away to the cadence of a poem, always in flux.

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The Secret, The Boy and The Girl | 13 mins | 2017 | colour - video

The Secret, The Boy and The Girl

The Girl and the Boy play in a garden. They are left alone there and they do not have any obligations to behave in a certain way. This gives them the freedom to create their own ways of interaction with the world. During such an interaction, adult social constructs intertwist into weird children folklore and shift into an abstract sphere. There are secrets and various modes of being in the world of the Girl and the Boy.

Oksana kazmina

Oksana Kazmina is a Ukrainian documentary film maker, media artist and performer, who tries to critically approach mainstream discourses by means of her art. Oksana works with the concepts of female and queer sexuality as well as with new gender/power/pleasure politics and types of social interaction they propose. With her films, performances and media works Oksana participated in numerous festivals and shows in Ukraine and abroad, among which: Berlinale Talents at Berlin IFF, 2014, The School of Kyiv Biennial, Kyiv and Vienna, 2015, Oppose Othering Program at Wiesbaden IFF, 2016, Odessa Biennial, 2017/2019, De Liceiras 18 artist-in-residence, Porto, 2019.

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Meat Abstracted (belly flesh) | 3 min | 2015 | video

Meat Abstracted (belly flesh) is an exploration of the impossible conditions placed upon women's bodies in today's cultural environment where the fashion and beauty complex enacts and enforces the objectifying patriarchal gaze. The work explores self-objectification leading to bodily self-harm. Raw meat becomes a liminal space operating between female physicality, consuming/being consumed and objectification.

Catherine Long is a visual artist with a background in contemporary dance. She holds a PhD on feminist video art practices awarded by Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London. Her work uses the moving image, dance, painting and sculpture to explore the materiality of the body from a feminist perspective. This interest in corporeality extends to the qualities of materials and how movement and gesture interact with them. She is the co-founder of Practice in Dialogue and has curated and exhibited in *In Whose Eyes?* at Beaconsfield (2018), *We all have a problem with representation* at The Showroom (2016) and *Feminist Practices in Dialogue* at the ICA (2015). Catherine lives and works in London.

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Bahar Noorizadeh

Bahar Noorizadeh is an artist, writer and filmmaker. She works on the re-formulation of hegemonic time narratives as they collapse in the face of speculation: philosophical, financial, legal, futural, etc. Her work has appeared in the Tate Modern Artists' Cinema Program; Berlinale Forum Expanded; Biennale of Moving Images, Geneva; Toronto International Film Festival; Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art; Nanjing International Art Festival, Beirut Art Center, and Mercer Union, Toronto; among others. Noorizadeh is a founding member of BLOCC (Building Leverage over Creative Capitalism), a research and education platform that proposes pedagogy as strategy, to alter the relationship between Contemporary Art and the planetary phenomena of urban renewal and social cleansing. Her current research examines the intersections of finance, Contemporary Art and emerging technology, building on the notion of "Weird Economies" to precipitate a cross-disciplinary approach to economic futurism and post-financialization imaginaries. She is pursuing this work as a PhD candidate in Art Practice+Theory at Goldsmiths, University of London.

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Ultima Ratio Δ Mountain of the Sun

Cinema devolved into the slow-motion industry: spectacles repeat. *Ultima Ratio* speeds up by slowing down the image-fix. Traversing the crime-enriched Bekaa valley, the camera uncovers the age-old industries of hashish, models for altering what we see. So too, the camera follows futures, a flash-forwarded optic that seeks to perceive what can be seen anew, cut, particled into vivid fields of matter. "In hashish there is no likeness," only zero-sites for vision-production then, now as visual senses submitted to the rule of reason. The new reason, as this cinematic skin sees it, is not dead old technology, power and blood, not accelerated nothingness, hype and retro-fascism, but technology, each and every instance, as a talking with the dead--emotions, optics, hashish, radio transmitters, melo-dramas, fiber optic telecommunications, ideologies--and now, hashish as primitive technology, the Now as a science-fiction beyond the double binds, the bad infinities of u-/dys-topia. Instead, a tension-less state, a lack of anxiety over demarcating sapience from sentience, automation from human, intelligence farms from organic machines. They--these name voyagers of the ultimate reason--have no story, it has already happened, spirit became mainframe. Bodies metamorph into databanks. A cinema mixing 3-D objects and documentary footage views this state ahead of the state Δ the future returning as past--Mountain of the Sun.



tenderfluid

Celebrating the hypnotic plasticity of a larger body, tenderfluid is visible softness as protest. A counterpoint to the rigidity of diet culture, cis-heteronormativity and toxic dogmas of weight gain & queerness as failure. Using poetry & intimate self-portraiture, tenderfluid is as an act of reclaiming body autonomy in a society laden with fatphobic rhetoric, allowing fat flesh space on screen to express its internalised shame, unexpressed rage and, ultimately, defiant hopefulness.

Liberty Antonia Sadler

Liberty Antonia Sadler is an artist & filmmaker based in London, working with mediums of drawing, text and moving image to explore issues of body politics, with a focus on the experience of living in a large femme body. Working within a socio-political context, she uses characters, radical softness & raw playfulness to discuss themes of abjection, vulnerability, queerness, femininity, food, the erotic & the psycho-sexual. Liberty Antonia is an Associate Lecturer at Central Saint Martins & her research explores the power of subjectivity within art practice.

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Re: Site (after R.M.) | 10 min | 2018 | video

Re: Site (after R.M.) is an adaptation of the performance *Site* by Robert Morris. In the original, a masked Robert Morris 'dances' with an 8 x4 sheet of plywood, while Carolee Schneemann sits naked on the bench (in the pose of Edouard Manet's *Olympia*). The soundtrack of the work is an audio recording of a jack hammer.

In my adaptation of this script by Robert Morris the roles of the performers are swapped: here, 'Robert' sits on the bench- with clothes on and upright - while 'Carolee' takes on Robert Morris role and follows the choreography of the original piece, handling the plywood sheet. She is still naked, as Carolee Schneemann had been in the original performance. The soundtrack for the live performance is a composition of different sounds from work environments. This video documentation of the performance shows a part of the rehearsal process, without additional soundtrack.

Martina Schmuecker trained as a cabinet-maker and woodcarver before studying at the University of the Arts Berlin and the Royal College of Art, London. Exhibitions and performances include: *In Whose Eyes*, Beaconsfield, 2018, *Colour Block Party*, Now Gallery London 2016; *Parts and Labour*, Osan Museum of Art, Korea, 2014; *Duration*, APT Gallery London 2012; *IMMA Dublin Artist Residency* 2010; *Studio Voltaire Members Exhibition* 2012; *Malta Contemporary* 2009.

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Immobile objects | 3 min | 2019 | video

Immobile objects is a stop motion based on a manipulated photos I took from some objects I put in the waste ground near my former house. Waste grounds are like some gaps within the territory of others and I decided to make my own temporary territory within gaps. Making objects then putting them there, is a short-term physical territorial marking. But which places can be identified as a territory by physical marking? The territory I'm seeking out is an intangible space and it can be extended into the mind and physical marking is the point where this mental extension starts and this mental extension is continued in the manipulated photos then in this 2:49 minute video which does not reveal what was experienced behind it and what the objects looked like? Only a formal effort to play with the objects that were immobile! I decided to distort that process of presence and being which had a direct correlation between I and the condition I am in, to make the new process of presence and being in which what is revealed are some crucial actions in the context or condition that is either economic, political or social: Going/Coming/Stopping/Moving/Adding/Removing/Changing/Darkening/Lightening

Shiva Yourdkhani is an artist based in Tehran. The core of her interdisciplinary practise is the concept of “environment” which revolves around its socio-economic and political dimensions. She focuses, in particular, on the condition in which an artistic practise can be affected by these crucial dimensions in very first steps and how an personal artistic experience of environment can be extended into the common lived experience. Shiva uses such mediums as video, sculpture and installation to actualize her own comprehension of environment through tangible and intangible objects she makes or imagines. She has recently worked on her temporary installations in specific places she called them “gaps”. Shiva holds an MFA in painting from Tehran University of Arts, Iran.

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The video work *Me, Myself & A.I.I.I.* was first screened at the Diaspora Pavilion closing programme in Venice in November 2017. The film features streams of machine consciousness, trying to influence and decipher Zahedi's behaviour. This includes an imaginal link between hipsters - the ceremonial drinks makers of the UK - and the historic practices of his maternal family, who were ceremonial drinks makers in Iran. This archival work documents the imaginal feedback loops that exist between online algorithms and the artist's own neo-diasporic state of mind. The notion of neo-diaspora refers to Zahedi's position as a second generation migrant in a hyper-connected world.

Abbas Zahedi Abbas Zahedi lives and works in London. He holds an MA in Contemporary Art and Philosophy from Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London) and studied a Bachelors of Medicine and Surgery at University College London.

Zahedi is known for his interdisciplinary blend of social practice, performance, installation, moving-image, institution-building and writing. His practice emerged out of working 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.

Zahedi's practice is instinctively dialogic, collaborative and socially-aware. It is from this position that he seeks to express a multiplicity of notions, whilst still maintaining a potential for taking art seriously; as a field of individuation, playfulness and otherness; an arena of research and possibilities that avoids the analytic and categorical biases, which are traditionally used to make humans and ideas 'scientific' and thus intelligible by markets, machines and machine-like logics.

Recent exhibitions and performances include Whitechapel Gallery (UK), Wolverhampton Art Gallery (UK) and ICF's Diaspora Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale (Italy). Recent workshops, lectures and residency projects include Outset Grant Ceremony, Royal Academy of Arts (UK), Raven Row (UK), South London Gallery (UK), New Art Exchange (UK), 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. Zahedi is the ninth and current South London Gallery postgraduate artist in residence (2019-2020).

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Beyond the Body