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PRESS INQUIRIES:

Stevie Sokolouski, Communications Coordinator
(415) 863-2141 x102, stephen@soex.org
Valerie Imus, Artistic Director and Co-Director
(415) 863-2141 x105, programs@soex.org



Morehshin Allahyari, *Huma*, 2016.
Courtesy of the artist and Upfor Gallery, Portland, OR.

Where Do You Want Ghosts to Reside?

January 17 – February 28, 2020

Curated by Azin Seraj and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

Artists: Morehshin Allahyari, Heba Y. Amin, Anum Awan, Arshia Haq, Shirin Fahimi and Umber Majeed

December 10, 2019, San Francisco, CA – Southern Exposure is proud to present *Where Do You Want Ghosts to Reside?*, an exhibition, publication, and performance opening January 17, 2020. This group project curated by Artist-Curators Azin Seraj and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto will rearticulate historic narratives of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, examining ways in which nationalistic stories are told in support of oppressive ideologies and biases. Six visual artists from Iran, Pakistan, India, and Egypt utilize the transformative power of telling their own histories to untangle and rework problematic pasts and forgotten Islamic myths.

The title, taken from Etel Adnan's brutal epic poem about the Lebanese Civil War, asks us to consider our position in relation to our pasts and the ways in which narratives are used to create or enforce 'otherness' or belonging. Through the centering of critical voices and perspectives of artists rooted in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, this project humanizes those who have been marginalized by recent political rhetoric. The exhibition will include work by Morehshin Allahyari, Heba Y. Amin, Anum Awan, Arshia Haq, Shirin Fahimi, and UMBER MAJEED.

PTV, A newly commissioned interactive installation by Anum Awan invites viewers to experience fragments of archived PTV (Pakistan Television Network) programming which originated in 1965. Starting as a medium for state propaganda under Pakistan's first military dictatorship, PTV monopolized the broadcast television landscape in Pakistan for the next four decades. Organizing archived PTV videos into categories like news, sports, dramas, and music, Awan's piece uses interactive technologies to explore this little known explosion of creativity in Pakistani popular culture, and gives the viewer agency in accessing this carefully archived footage.

Morehshin Allahyari will contribute both an installation and a collaborative performance with Shirin Fahimi. Allahyari's series *She Who Sees the Unknown* explores "dark goddesses, monstrous, and djinn female figures of Middle-Eastern origin" as feminist tools to explore the symbolic meanings behind traditions and myths. She strategically incorporates poetic-speculative storytelling collaged with a re-appropriation of traditional mythologies and new technologies to draw parallels between these mythological figures and contemporary oppressions.

UMBER MAJEED presents a new chapter of her series *Hypersurface of the Present*. The installation and digital publication uses a pastiche of Pakistani propaganda, feminist language, neon sculpture, campy animation, and familial archives to sardonically critique the patriarchal nationalist rhetoric of the Pakistani state. Majeed's *Hypersurface of the Present* is a piece of speculative fiction and part of a multi-chapter animation series chronicling the recently destroyed state-military monument, Chaghi Monument Hill.

In another form of speculative storytelling, Heba Y. Amin's film *As Birds Flying* points to landscape surveillance technologies as tools of oppressive forces used to shape narratives of the Middle East. *As Birds Flying* is part of a larger research project in which Amin critiques and confronts the corrupt media narratives fabricated by governments to control and censor the truth. Migratory birds are anthropomorphized through the merging of found footage of flying storks and an audio track of Adel Imam's film *Birds of Darkness* (1995). 'The law, as it serves the truth, serves the deceit,' says one character from the reconstructed sound track in Amin's short allegorical film.

Arshia Haq presents a video and sculptural installation exploring new expressions of devotion and preservation. In her performance video *The Ascension*, made in collaboration with LA-based artist Cassils, she used gold leaf to gild a melting ice sculpture of the Buraq, a part woman and part winged horse that serves as an important Islamic symbol of both physical and spiritual journey. Haq's installation titled *The Second Coming of Fatima* comments on the effects of successive waves of imperial conquest in South Asia, and its effects on the collective body. Haq casts and gilds throats of women from both sides of the India/Pakistan border, which are then displayed as museum objects mired in dirt, evoking not only the brutality of centuries of exploitation of women's realms but also the subsequent obfuscation of the history of acquisition and preservation of pillaged South Asian treasures such as the Mughal's gold jewelry.

In partnership with Counterpulse and in conjunction with *Where Do You Want Ghosts to Reside?*, Southern Exposure presents *Breaching Towards Other Futures*, a performance by Morehshin Allahyari and Shirin Fahimi on February 7, 2020. Allahyari and Fahimi channel the revelation of a jinn figure Aisha Qandisha and Ilm al-raml (Geomancy – science of the sand) as their methods for telling and opening doors towards other futures. Aisha Qandisha is one of the most honored and fearsome jinn in Islam. She is known as 'the

opener'. When she possesses humans, she does not take over the host but rather opens them to the outside; to a storm of incoming jinn and demons, making them a traffic zone of cosmodromic data. Ilm al-raml refers to the foresight that the Earth holds with itself. Through its practice, this foresight is revealed and future is seen, known, and breached.

These artists layer a poetics of their own personal histories with nationalist narratives, to humanize and bring nuance into the conversation, as a counterpoint to reductively framing their stories as those of violence and victimhood.

EVENT LISTING INFORMATION

What: *Where Do You Want Ghosts to Reside?*
A group exhibition curated by Azin Seraj and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto that showcases six female-identifying visual artists from Iran, Pakistan, India, and Egypt who utilize the transformative power of telling their own histories to untangle and rework problematic pasts and forgotten Islamic myths.

When: January 17 – February 28, 2020

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 12:00 – 6:00 PM

Location: Southern Exposure, 3030 20th Street, San Francisco

Cost: FREE

What: *Where Do You Want Ghosts to Reside?* Opening Reception

When: Friday, January 17, 2020, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Location: Southern Exposure, 3030 20th Street, San Francisco

Cost: FREE

What: *Breaching Towards Other Futures*
Performance by Morehshin Allahyari and Shirin Fahimi to open paths towards the unknown and the 'other' futures

When: Friday, February 7, 2020, 7:00 – 7:45 PM

Location: Counterpulse, 80 Turk Street, San Francisco

Cost: \$20 – \$35, sliding scale

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Morehshin Allahyari is an artist, activist, writer, and educator. She was born and raised in Iran and moved to the United States in 2007. Her work deals with the political, social, and cultural contradictions we face every day. She thinks about technology as a philosophical toolset to reflect on objects and as a poetic means to document our personal and collective lives and struggles in the 21st century. Morehshin is the co-author of *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* in collaboration with writer/artist Daniel Rourke. Morehshin has been part of numerous exhibitions, festivals, and workshops around the world including Venice Biennale di Architettura, New Museum, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Pompidou Center, Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal, Queens Museum. Her work has been featured in *The New York Times*, BBC, Huffington Post, Wired, National Public Radio, Parkett Art Magazine, Frieze, Rhizome, Hyperallergic, and Al Jazeera, among others. She is the recipient of the leading global thinkers of 2016 award by Foreign Policy magazine.

Heba Y. Amin grounds her work in extensive research that looks at the convergence of politics, technology, and architecture. Techno-utopian ideas, as manifest in characteristic machines of colonial soft power, are at the heart of Amin's work. Starting from the idea that landscape is an expression of dominant political power – Heba Y. Amin looks for tactics of subversion and other techniques to undermine consolidated systems and flip historical narratives through a critical spatial practice. Amin currently teaches at Bard College Berlin, is a doctorate fellow in art history at Freie Universität, and a current Field of Vision fellow in NYC. She is also the co-founder of the Black Athena Collective, the curator of visual art for the MIZNA journal (US), and co-curator for the biennial residency program DEFAULT with Ramdom Association (IT). She also has an extensive repertoire in public speaking. Furthermore, Amin is also one of the artists behind the subversive graffiti action on the set of the television series "Homeland" which received worldwide media attention. Recent exhibitions include the Kunsthalle Bremen Böttcherstrasse Prize Exhibition, MAXXI Museum, 10th Berlin Biennale, 15th Istanbul Biennale, Kunsthalle Wien, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 12th Dak'Art Biennale, Berlin Berlinale, and the IV Moscow International Biennale for Young Art. Amin lives in Berlin.

Anum Awan is a Bay Area based interaction designer and new media artist who crafts mixed-reality experiences by blending physical and digital media centering queer, immigrant and non-western narratives. Their work manifests as installations, projections, videos, live visuals, and programmed electronics. They are a member of the Oakland based experience design collective, MACROWAVES. Anum grew up in Lahore, Pakistan and moved to the United States in 2008 to pursue a practice in art & design. They received a Masters in Interaction Design from California College of the Arts and a BFA in Graphic Design from Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Iranian-born Canadian artist **Shirin Fahimi** works at the intersection of performance and video installation. Her recent narrative-based project refigures the performative aspect of Islamic occult sciences as a source of transformation, empowerment and identification. Her current project challenges the invisibility of a female prophecy within Islamic narrations through incarnation of a fictional persona of Um-al-Raml (mother of sand), as a feminine prophecy who sees the future through Islamic sand divination (Ilm-al Raml) in which she narrates her stories. Fahimi received her MFA at Concordia University and earned her BA from Slade School of Fine Arts (UCL). She is the co-founder of Taklif: تكليف collective, an artist-run initiative based in Montreal and Toronto. She has been an artist-in-residence at the Banff Centre (Alberta), Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art, Import Projects (Berlin) and New Media Society (Tehran). Her work has been performed and exhibited at Knockdown Centre (2019), Fofa Gallery (2018), The Rubin Museum of Art (2018), Vidéographe with Dazibao (2017), Middlesbrough Art Weekender (2017), SAVVY Contemporary (2016), Kunstverein am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz (2016) and IGNITION 11, Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery (2015).

Arshia Fatima Haq (born in Hyderabad, India, based in Los Angeles, CA) works across film, visual art, performance and sound. She is interested in counter-archives, speculative documentaries, and the intersections of fact and fiction, and is currently exploring themes of embodiment and mysticism, particularly within the Islamic Sufi context. Her work emerges from the complexities of inhabiting multiple personas – woman, Muslim, immigrant, citizen – and is conceptualized in feminist modes outside of the Western model. Narrative threads include migration, celebration, warfare, nostalgia, homeland, and borders, often within realms of Islamic influence, through both traditional forms and kaleidoscopic reinventions via pop culture. She is the founder of Discostan, a collaborative decolonial project working with cultural production from the SWANA (South and West Asia and North Africa) region. Haq's work has been featured at Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson, the Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Broad Museum, LACE, Toronto International Film Festival, MOMA New York, Hammer Museum, LAXArt, Centre

Georges Pompidou, and the Pacific Film Archive. Currently, she hosts and produces monthly radio shows on Dublab and NTS, and recently released an album of field recordings from Pakistan on the Sublime Frequencies label. She received her MFA in Film and Video from California Institute of the Arts in 2005, and is a recipient of the California Community Foundation Visual Artist Fellowship, the Rema Hort Mann Emerging Artist Grant, and the Onassis AIR Fellowship.

Umber Majeed is a multidisciplinary visual artist. Her writing, performance, and animation work engage with familial archives to explore Pakistani state, urban, and digital infrastructure through a feminist lens. Majeed has shown in venues across Pakistan, North America, and Europe. Recent group exhibitions include, Promises to Keep, apexart, New York (2017), Witness- Karachi Biennale, Karachi, Pakistan (2017), and Volumes – Queens International, Queens Museum, New York (2018). She is the recipient of fellowships including the HWP Fellowship, Ashkal Alwan, Beirut, Lebanon (2017), Refiguring Feminist Futures – Web Residency, Akademie Schloss Solitude & ZKM, Germany (2018), and The Digital Earth, Hivos, the Netherlands (2018-19). Majeed lives in New York, USA and Lahore, Pakistan and is an upcoming Pioneer Works Technology Resident for Fall 2020.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Azin Seraj is an Iranian native, Canadian citizen, and currently lives in the United States. Her video, photography, and multimedia installations reflect the varied textures of her transnational experience of displacement and alienation but also of unexpected connections. She uses sounds and images to create visually and socially lush experiences, layered spaces and multiple time frames. With an interdisciplinary approach to marginalized experiences, Seraj explores connections between colonial histories, contemporary politics in the Middle East, citizen journalism and activist networks. Her work has been featured internationally in exhibitions and festivals including SFMOMA, Open Space Arts Society, Tate Liverpool, (S8) Monstra De Cinema Periférico in Spain, Berkeley Art Museum, Chicago Underground Film Festival, and Croatian Association of Artists. Most recently, she has been the recipient of the 2019 Kala Media Artist Award.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (b. Damascus, 1990) is a visual artist, performer and curator. Bhutto's practice merges storytelling, traditional textile crafts, language and video to explore complex histories of colonialism that are further exacerbated by contemporary international politics. In the process he unpacks the intersections of queerness and Islam through a multi-media practice rooted in Queers Muslim Futurism. Bhutto has performed and shown work at galleries and festivals globally including, The Queens Museum New York City, The deYoung Museum San Francisco, Twelve Gates Art, Philadelphia and Rossi and Rossi in London. He has spoken at Columbia University, UC Berkeley, Stanford University and New York University. Bhutto is currently based in San Francisco, California where he received an MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2016.

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ABOUT SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Southern Exposure (SoEx) is an artist-centered non-profit organization committed to supporting visual artists. Through our extensive and innovative programming, SoEx strives to experiment, collaborate and

further educate while providing an extraordinary resource center and forum for Bay Area and national artists in our Mission District space and off-site, in the public realm.

An active presence in the Bay Area since 1974, SoEx is continually evolving in response to the needs of artists and the community while engaging the public in artists' work. Central to our mission is to remain the most accessible space for visual artists to produce and present new work, learn, and connect. SoEx provides visual artists with the tools and resources they need to experiment in an open and supportive environment. We also work to advocate to new, diverse audiences and build an ever-growing community of enthusiasts and supporters of the visual arts.

For more information and images, contact Stevie Sokolouski at (415) 863-2141 or stephen@soex.org. Southern Exposure is located at 3030 20th Street (at Alabama), San Francisco, CA 94110. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM and gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 12:00 – 6:00 PM. Website: www.soex.org.

Generous support for Southern Exposure is provided by Art4Moore, the Arthur & Charlotte Zitrin Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Crescent Porter Hale Foundation, the David Cunningham Memorial Bequest, Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, the L.E.A.W. Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the San Francisco Arts Commission Grant Program, the Violet World Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Westridge Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and Southern Exposure's members and donors.

ABOUT COUNTERPULSE

CounterPulse represents a 25 year legacy of experimental and interdisciplinary dance and performance in San Francisco—no other single space has supported a comparable breadth of performance. Known as 848 Performance Space 1991-2005, the organization premiered many of San Francisco's most daring dancers and choreographers and was a pioneering venue for experimentation. In 2005, the organization moved into a 95-seat theater in the SoMa neighborhood and re-branded as CounterPulse, as a result of a merger with Bay Area Center for Art and Technology.

CounterPulse thrived for ten years at their SoMa location, launching their flagship Artist Residency and Commissioning (ARC) program as a springboard for emerging and/or experimental artists and exploring creative placemaking activities in senior and family housing complexes on their SoMa block to increase social engagement among residents through the arts. In 2012, CounterPulse reaffirmed its commitment to supporting art and community, and charted a course toward greater impact through partnerships with social service organizations, critical community engagement, and much-needed facilities development.

Most recently, CounterPulse was approached with a pilot partnership opportunity by the Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST). Through this partnership, CounterPulse leased to purchase the 80 Turk Street facility, enabling the organization to build capacity and contribute to the neighborhood's vibrancy without the threat of displacement. After a 17 month renovation period, and \$3.8 million dollars raised, CounterPulse opened to the public at the new facility Spring 2016.