



Fig.1

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made."

This thesis is submitted to the AUT University in partial fulfillment of the degree of master of Art and Design in the year 2009

By: Azadeh Emadi

“Sokout, 1388”

Body in the Space of Border

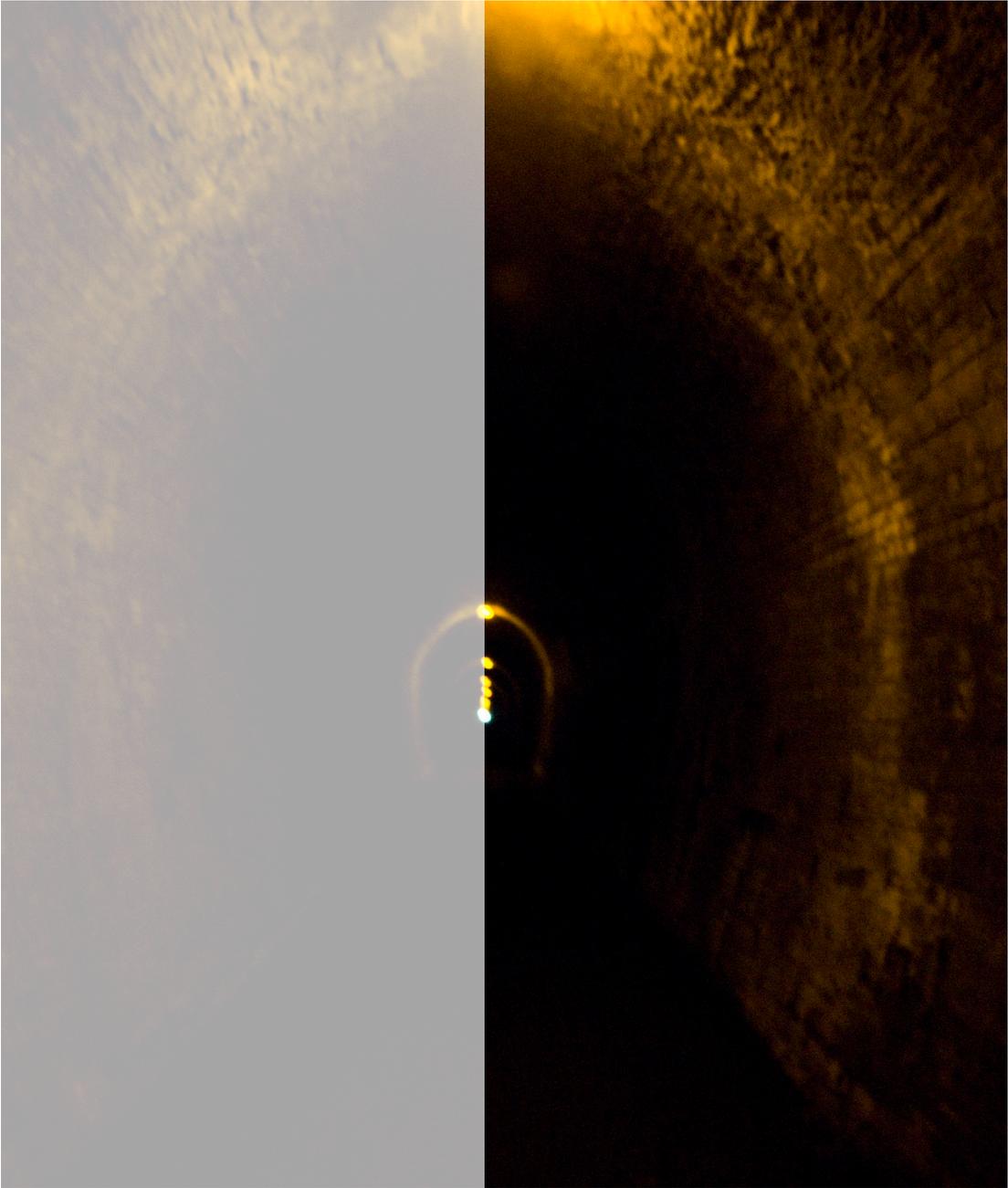


Fig.2

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Introduction

All cultures are located in place and time. Exile culture is located at the intersection and in the interstices of other cultures. Physically placed outside its original homeland, it is mentally and emotionally both here and there, and, as a result, it is both local and global. (Naficy, 1998, p.51)

The quest of this project is to question and better understand the effects of a widening gap between Middle East and West on Middle Easterners' experiences and feelings in exile, in-between. This is to articulate this separation, but also to invent a visual and spatial experience that may enable us to traverse the space of the border. For those not in and of this space, as well as for those in it, a new way of looking may furnish a better understanding of both positions and facilitate communication.

As a transnational researcher, I deploy video and sound installation to operate in the intersections between cultures. In that, I strive to generate immersive conditions by incorporating the space into which video is projected. Video frames and the presence of the audience are combined and the body of the spectator is submerged. In this way, distinctions between observed and observers become less obvious.

A significant research question is whether images of the body can constitute a commonly understood visual language, and if they can communicate to address political statements about conditions of border space and exiled bodies.

Many displaced Middle Eastern artists employ representational or journalistic modes to portray cultural identity, to explore their states of being between two different spaces and cultures. Their use of the body, spaces and objects is often iconic and figurative which, presumably, provides easy access to information. However, representational methods may lead audiences to take on stereotypical interpretations of Middle Eastern cultures. To avoid this, my project engages with a more abstract and intimate form of video installation that does not choose to engage in concrete political polarities in obvious ways. The intention is to leave audiences with questions, engaging them according to their own personality and history, and opening a space of interpretation.

Considering my own as well as others' experiences of space between Middle East and West, I appreciate the pain and problems caused by exile, which lie beyond iconicity and explanation – both modes of symbolisation which normally do not include embodied experience. Over the course of my project, the latter became increasingly important to me. The concern with embodiment and productive ambiguity led me to develop processes of abstraction to

explore the opportunities of using my body in an abstractly mimetic way.¹ This, I anticipated, would help me circumnavigate clichés regarding gender and culture. Subsequently, I found inspiration in Islamic aspects of abstracted art, which provided me with opportunities selectively to incorporate Islamic and Iranian cultural values. As Laura Marks (who would become an important reference in my project) argues in an interview, “[s]ome of the Islamic artworks ... spin out abstract lines of pleasing and baffling complexity, and ... these abstract lines undo subjectivity in the act of contemplation much as haptic images do”. The art forms that developed in Persia after the arrival of Islam shifted naturalistic modes of representation to modes of “mystifying complexity” (Marks in Muller, 2008, n.p). Employing highly abstracted and sensuously mediated imagery, they dispersed the Ego in contemplation. Thus, within this research, the challenge and limitation of using the body as a platform of investigation of exile’s conditions became a point of potential through which to access others’ subjectivity.

Along with the body, I investigated aspects of liminal space – increasingly through notions of haptic and optical perception .² Initially, a concept guided by optical vision provided me with a certain distance from the research matter. Distance from an object or event of investigation provides an overall view and sense of connections, but often at the price of losing important detail. On the other hand, haptic vision seeks to get close to its objects, to capture feelings and experiences of being touched, internally and emotionally (see Marks, 2002). At certain stages of the project, these aspects made approaches informed by the concept of haptic vision more suitable for an exploration and understanding of bodies in exile than the conventional approaches using optical vision. Exploring the advantages and short falling of either approach were important aspects of this research project.

The structure of this thesis is formed around my personal experience, as well as that of other individuals in the same position, to construct tangible theoretical and conceptual responses. It falls into the following parts: “Close to My Chest – Neither Here Nor There” establishes the issues and contexts in which my project is located. It gives an overview of theoretical discourses, insofar as they have contributed to my current stage of thinking. Thus, it explores the notion of exile and ‘in-between’ space, bodily perception, and optic vision. It questions how exiled individuals perceive and embodied the world via their dislocated, exiled body in the space of the in-between, using my own experience of in-between in relation to the world I live

¹Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf explain Benjamin’s notion of mimesis through his term “nonsensuous similarity” ... designates similarities that are not directly legible but must be decoded, which suggests that the whole cosmos is permeated by similarities, the sense of which is always there to be exposed to minds capable of decoding it in an act of reading. Human being and nature, far from being strictly opposed as subject and object, are bound to each other. The sense of the world is revealed to the individual by way of the individual’s adaptation to the world” (1995: p. 270).

²About changes in methods and approaches, see page 25.

in as a starting point. The following section, "The Skin – Being Seen (Review of Knowledge)", considers other artists and film makers whose work responds to similar or related issues. "Shouting – Without Sound (Methodology)" explores the methods through which I developed my project and staged my progress. Through an initial adaptation of Grounded Theory and Heuristics, I eventually invented a suitable approach that could adapt to diverse phases in my practice. This third method used the tension between the notions of haptic and optical perception (see below), providing the freedom of moving between my inner world and the world around me. Having set out context, precedents and methods, several "practice" sections give close-up accounts of my practice and process of making. In the section "Silenced Body (Explorative Practice)", I discuss and explain the process and outcomes in relation to the distinct settings of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Iran and Germany and then Aotearoa/New Zealand again, in a different way. The focus is on an analysis of the information collected and the beginning production of a series of bodily and haptic video images. "Shouting Via Skin (Towards Installation) aims to give an account of the production of the final work which strives to dislocate viewers through embodied experience. The exegesis concludes with "Freeze Frame (In Lieu of Conclusion), summarising matters discussed but also throwing open remaining questions and possibilities for further research.

Close to my chest - Neither here nor there
(The issue and its context)

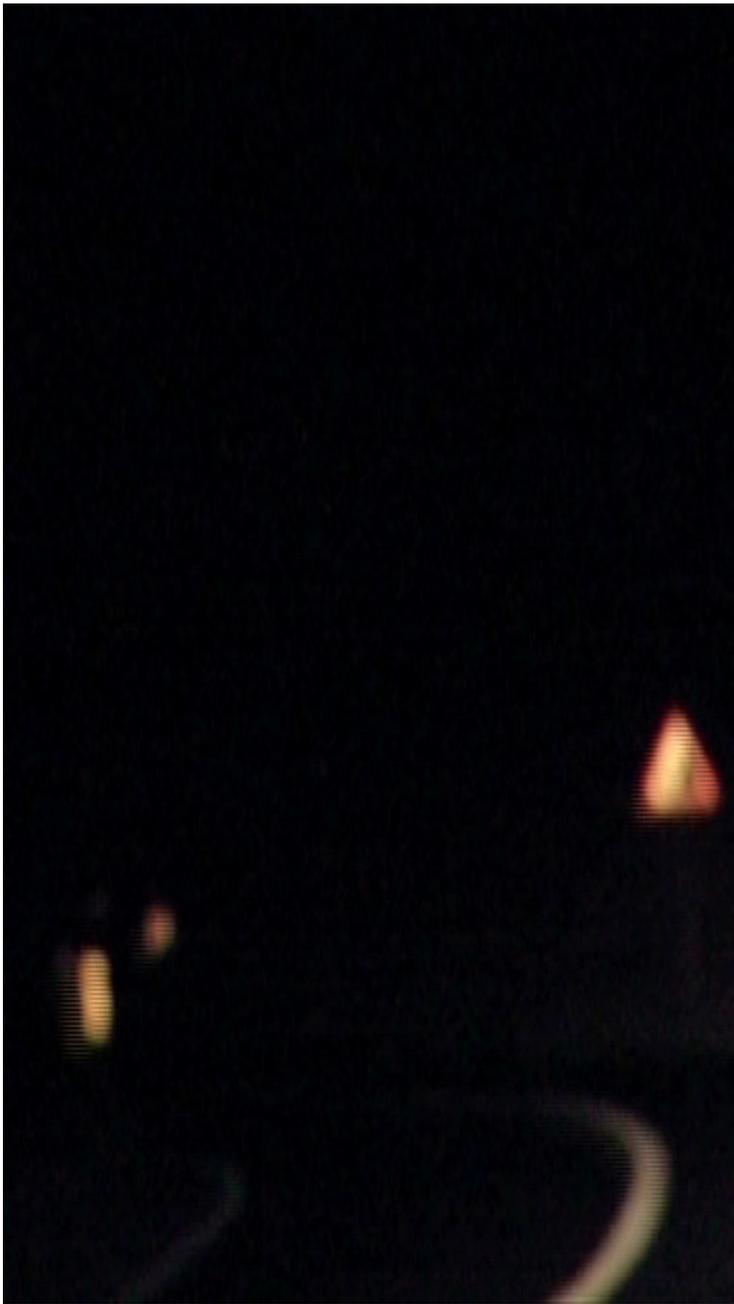


Fig.3

Over the course of this research project, a childhood memory turned into a hinge between personal experience and political circumstance: from the school bus, I used to look out into a valley, which was once full of natural spring water and covered in green, but which I knew only as an empty and dusty stretch of land. At school, horror stories about it were told – it was THE forbidden spot. For me, this changed when, in my curiosity, I decided one day to see for myself. I slowly walked into the valley, with my heart beating and full of fear. When I met a man in the middle of nowhere, I was even more scared and ran as fast as I could. After some time, I realised that nobody was following me and, turning around, I saw the old man slowly disappearing behind a hill. The poor old man must have been equally shocked to see me; and perhaps as scared as I was. As I repeatedly went back, the valley eventually became familiar, and the man began to look like an old strange friend. Nothing to be scared of.

The Middle East is today that forbidden spot of the world. Intensifying political crises in the Middle East cause many to emigrate and we need to understand exilic conditions better, since they are linked to our social judgment about exiled individuals. While “to exile” once meant, “to expel from a country”, the rapid rise of globalization increases global migration, and millions can experience exile when dealing with two or more cultures or geographical spaces. Although the word “expel” implies force, exilic experiences can vary considerably. Hamid Naficy considers exile as a series of relationships with place, resulting from globalization.

It is possible to be in internal exile and yet be at home. It is possible to be forced into external exile and be unable to, or wish not to, return home. It is possible to return and to find that one’s house is not the home that one had hoped for, that it is not the structure that memory built. It is possible to go into exile voluntarily and then return, yet not fully arrive. (1999, p.3)

Like Victor Turner (1969), Homi Bhabha (1994) refers to exile in terms of liminality and to the position of the émigré as a third, “liminal” space, in-between at least two different locations and cultures. Experiences of the in-between are familiar to all émigrés, but constellations can shift considerably. On the one hand, exile causes individuals to dwell in the “in-between space”, on the other, being ‘in-between’ causes exilic conditions. Someone exiled cannot go back, nor arrive anywhere.

From my perspective as a Middle Eastern émigré, I would say that contained in the general ‘in-between space’ is another, specifically experienced by Middle Easterners. This isolated space, ‘in-between-between’ or ‘no man’s land’, is not just simply a borderline condition between different cultures or geographic locations. It is not even shaped only by the loss of one’s homeland, nor fully formed by nostalgia and memory. While all those aspects are involved, too, ‘no man’s land’ is formed around isolation and alienation, around the feeling of not fully being accepted in a new society. Intensity and quality of such émigré experiences depend on how they are judged in their host country. How we regard individuals closely relates to how

we perceive their nation. A nation can be perceived as a body, whose image is shaped by the selves it incorporates.³ An individual's body carries with it the homeland, the nation.

The body, then, is a potentially fertile site of investigation of exile's facets of silence, pain and fatigue. Vivian Sobchack defines embodiment as "a radically material condition of human being that necessarily entails both the body and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, in an irreducible ensemble" (2004, p.4). My own experience of dislocation in a Western society suggests that an exiled body can experience its objectivity and subjectivity more acutely. In this very moment where I sit, here, in my chair and communicate my thoughts to you, having to write to you in a second language makes me more conscious of my subjectivity and thoughts. At the very next moment, outside of my room in the world, I become more aware of my objectivity as it appears in the social context of "difference".

I follow Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) here in my use of "objectivity" and "subjectivity": objectivity has a material and bodily sense of being in the world, subjectivity includes consciousness and the mental connection with the world. Merleau-Ponty investigates intersubjectivity, in which another body is presented not as an object, but rather as another subject, who also experiences the world as it is obtainable to any other. Through experience, one recognises one's self objectively different from another, without, however, excluding the other's subjectivity. Otherwise another body could only be seen as an object rather than as a being. Human objectivity becomes visible through the vision of others. Applied to my context, an émigré may become aware of the visibility of his self via others' gaze and judgment, which define him as a non-Westerner. This effect can raise the émigré's awareness of how objectivity influences his or her experience.

Thus, Naficy, in *Home, Exile and Homeland* (1999),⁴ discusses a black woman's experience of her own body and explores how "the illness and failure of a social body that does not understand intimately that the body is lived" (1999, p.52) can impact on the realization of one's self image from "outside". In the essay, the woman perceives and re-cognises subjectively "what was once the wholeness of her lived body as now split in two – on one side her conscious sense of herself, on the other her body, the latter now at some distance, objective ..." (1999, p. 53). That is to say, my liminal body is a site of constant movement between the grasp of either my objectivity or subjectivity, and in constant interaction with the environment and society.

³Conversely, we often imagine a whole nation as we would imagine an individual, and the treatment of individuals in their host country corresponds to the nation's international relationships and worldviews. In this context, distance makes a crucial difference: "a world "viewed" ... is a world dependent on the gaze of a subject. A subject of the world can not itself be within the world" (Nancy 2007, p.40).

⁴In one of the book's chapters, Naficy explores Sobchack's essay "Is Any Body Home?", which looks at similar condition.

While I am subject-object, my perception constantly shifts, moves and negotiates between subjectivity-objectivity and objectivity-subjectivity.

To activate Middle Easterners' location in the liminal space of the 'in-between-between' as a 'no man's land', I examined the experience of my own body. My body is a site I always inhabit, which significantly affects my encounter of liminality. In other words, my body is not simply an object placed in space, but to a certain extent it is space, and I am dwelling within it. I perceive the world through my body, and my body is perceived by others. Even if each body is unique, it is at the same time, according to Merleau Ponty (1960), "a dimensional this. It is the universal thing" (p.260). In the "flesh of the body", consciousness and world emerge together (1968). The flesh of the body can be a threshold between separation and connection, between subjectivity and objectivity.

The objectivity of liminal space, "no man's land", imposes feelings such as isolation and alienation. The flesh of the body, however, can be also seen as a border (a separation, but also a connecting sphere providing the freedom of moving back and forth), where subjectivity and objectivity meet, where connections are forged between oneself, the world and others. Insofar as "flesh expresses the inscription of differences within the same" (Vasseleu 1998, p.26), it is a threshold that makes its subject dwell visibly in the world. In sum, the live body is a "perceiver and perceived", "every body lives as an object as well as a subject in the world" (Sobchack, 2004, p.188). Ordinarily, its beholder experiences its objectivity and subjectivity at the same time, without distinguishing or noticing these aspects separately. It is in crisis situations, like that of exile, that subjectivity and objectivity come apart.

The Skin - Being Seen
(Review of knowledge)



Fig.4

A number of video/installation artists and film makers have had an influence on my work and it was Marks, in particular, whose ideas as a cultural theory writer I found useful to analyse particular examples. Some of them, mainly those who have explored their own position of 'migrants' are discussed below. Another area of video work that was central to my own research engages with the body and modes of communication and understanding.

Many transnational artists such as Shirin Neshat, Leyla Pazoki and Mona Hatoum explore their condition and experiences of being in between two cultural differences through the iconic and figurative use of body, space and object. For example, Neshat uses different symbolic and performative narratives employing Middle Eastern and other references, to address cultural issues such as power, control and gender. Locations and people in her works are not from Iran, however, except when she is the subject of the work. Mostly, the body appear as a figure on which cultural and social power exercised.

In the video installation "Rapture" (1999), for instance, two screens face each other. One shows women in black Chador, the other shows men in white clothes. This separation of contexts of images, onto opposing screens, refers to the ways in which power and control are traditionally located in Iran. Even though Neshat successfully portrays some social issues in Iranian society, from her perspective, for the Western audiences, her use of bodies and symbols tends to reinforce common stereotypes Westerners hold about Iran. As I see it, the way in which she uses symbols and stereotypes is dominated by an optical vision towards the issue. One effect of this approach is that audiences read the work via the information already provided by the media. The viewer cannot experience the work in relation to him- or herself. Neshat's use of two video screens facing each other dislocates the viewer in-between, leaving him or her to wonder, but also addresses her own condition of exile, and her feelings and disconnections toward both, the Middle East and the West.



Fig.5, 6: "Rapture" (1999), Video Installation. Shirin Neshat.

By contrast, Leyla Pazooki's "Objekt one" (2004, exhibited internationally in a collection called "Iran Inside Out") challenges Western stereotypes about Iran. Pazooki uses video to capture life on Tehran's streets. She approaches people in public and asks them to look at the camera and do nothing. The result is a video collage reflecting a 'neutral' image of parts of society. She explains that the "camera took up the role of a determinant observer ... who approaches people, pulls them out of their tedium and abducts them to a moment of calm, just to document them for a few minutes" (in New Zealand Museums, 2008). When this work is exhibited in another country, each contributing individual is shifted to where they perhaps can never be. Via the camera, they enter a silent conversation with Western viewers, who see aspects of Iranian society they don't normally see. Pazooki's work addresses power issues regarding gender, while sustaining a close inspection of society generally and developing aspects of understanding between Middle East and West. Her work is successful in providing information that differs from what the observer expects – even so, it can fail to envelop the viewer in its space.



Fig.7: "Objekt One", (2004). Video installation.
Leyla Pazooki.

In video installation "Corps Étranger" (1994),⁵ Mona Hatoum addresses her own condition of an exiled Palestinian artist by confronting viewers with footage of her body's interior, taken by an endoscopic video camera. The video questions boundaries between the corporeal inside and outside. Stripped of all symbolic elements, the ambiguous and unfamiliar images become

⁵ Hatoum's early works mainly focused on the use of her own body in a haptic and embodied approach. She later took another approach and moved towards a more direct and optical visual communication. As my own work progressed, I began to suspect that this may have been due to the inherent limitations of the haptic approach with regard to communicating the work's context in a more direct way. This prompted me to look for a way to join haptic and optical perception, for an embodied experience which relates to a context beyond it.

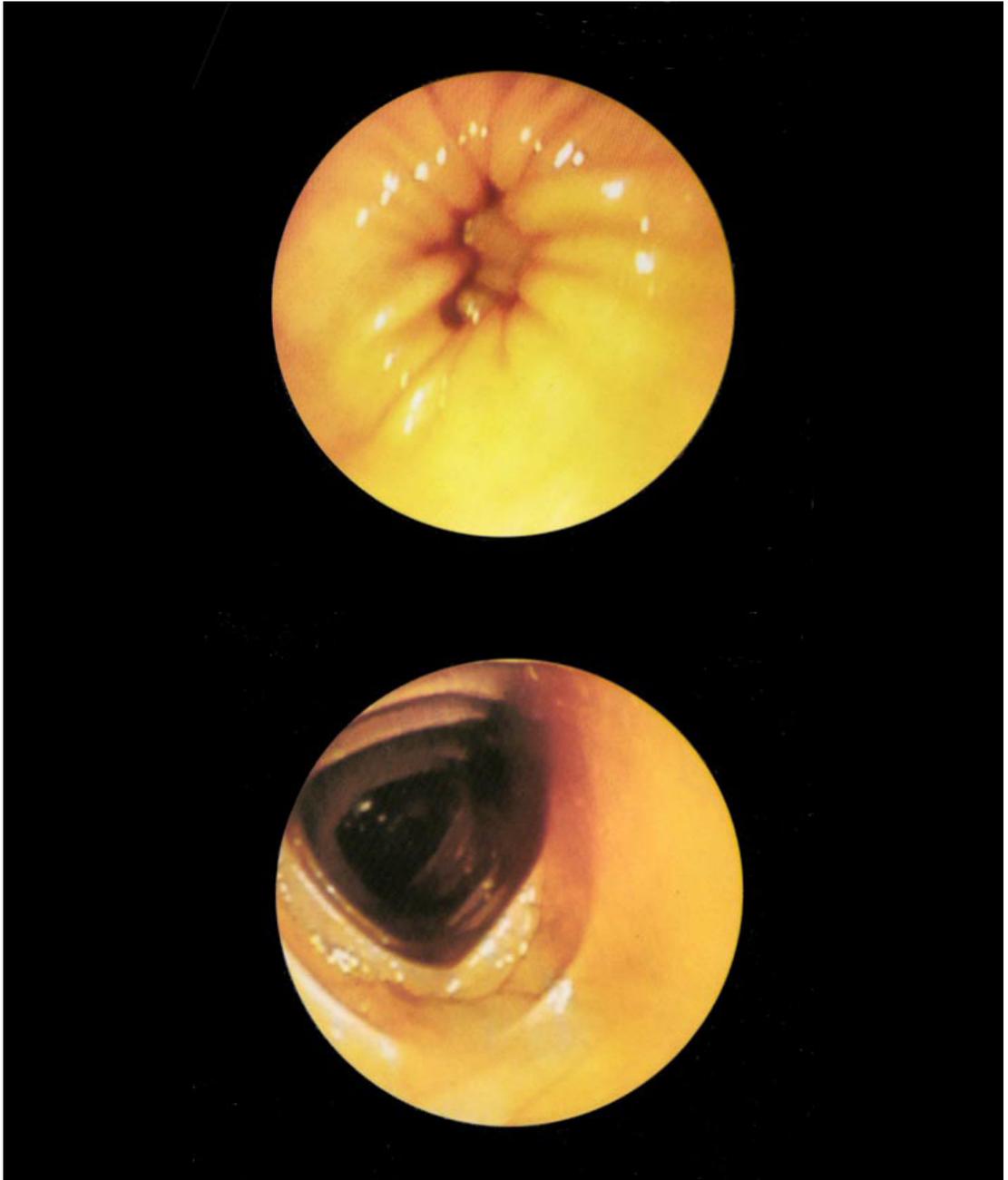


Fig.8 , 9:"Corps Étranger", (1994) Moving image. Mona Hatoum,.

only slowly comprehensible. Amelia Jones writes that "Corps Étranger" reveals the idea that while, socially, "identity is knowable through apparently visible cuts of racial background or origin" (2006, p.157), Hatoum's "otherness" is visually indistinguishable in the piece, as her flesh is no different from anyone else's flesh. It is only in retrospect labelled as "other". Meanwhile, the installation arrests the spectator in an uneasy position, caught in a space with two openings on either side, with the images of the body's interior projected onto the floor, surrounded by speakers that play sounds of flesh and veins, drawing the spectator into 'Hatoum's body'. This method of limiting vision, positioning the viewer's body in an intimate constellation, and surrounding the space with internal body sounds, results in a haptic and embodied experience. It engages the spectators' memories by activating their senses. In Hatoum's strategy, the camera is a crucial means that makes it possible to explore the body within a haptic mode, rather than through conventional optic vision.



Fig.10: "Corps Étranger", (1994). Video Installation.
Mona Hatoum, .

To allow others into the experience of exile, it is in my project equally important to provide an embodied discovery of the work and its central issue of exile. Unless this mimetic closeness occurs, an installation cannot touch an audience in a personal mode beyond that of an observer. Discovery can be facilitated through haptic vision, which involves sensually close looking and engagement of a viewer's body. To convey embodied knowledge, such an approach could build on aspects of Neshat's poetic response and Pazooki's method of intersubjectivity. But the question is: how to produce an embodied experience.

In exploring predominantly bodily experiences in my research, I gradually became aware of the different effects of what Marks (1963) calls optical and haptic vision. She defines optical vision as the perceiving of an object from a distance, which separates viewer and viewed, and places the observer at a safe distance from the observed. "Optical viscosity requires distance and a centre, the viewer acting like a pinhole camera" (Marks, 2002, p. xvi). It does not usually facilitate an appreciation of one's experience and, in that sense, fails to do justice to experiences and feelings beyond iconicity.⁶

Marks writes that "knowledge arises from experience, which is necessarily embodied" (Marks in Muller, 2008, n.p). Twice, when I was struggling to communicate aspects of being in a 'no-man's land' (once in Germany, when I saw other people in their struggle in exile, and once here, in June 2009, during the media coverage of the election of the Iranian President), I realised that the pain is beyond any demonstration. In the second phase, it occurred to me that Mark's concept of haptic vision can be deployed in my project, to go beyond an optical, distanced mode of understanding and to approach an embodied experience.

While optical perception privileges the representational power of the image, haptic perception privileges the material presence of the image. Drawing from other forms of sense experience, primarily touch and kinaesthetics, haptic viscosity involves the body more ... (2000, p.163).

In Marks' haptic perception, a lack of distinction in the image makes "the eyes themselves function like organs of touch" (2002, p.2). Rather than just being observed from a distance,

⁶ In optical vision, the body image can play a significant part in determining one's social and political encounters, and physical appearance partially determines one's emotional, cultural, geographical and political position. In this mode of knowing, we categorise the world and its people as far as our limited knowledge of 'differences' and world allow us. If one is unlucky enough to be categorised as not desirable in one's host country, these experiences can lead to a profound experience of dislocation where, in extreme cases, the body can be split off. During my research in Germany, I met Rana, an Iranian Kurdish woman who has been living there in exile for 15 years. The regulations in Iran and in Germany combined make it impossible for her to travel to Iran for visits, which causes her the greatest suffering; "It has been 15 years since I came to Germany, but not even once I slept in Germany. I walk in streets in Germany during day, but at night, I live in my homeland Kurdistan and in my father's home, with my mother, my sister and where I used to live." Although she is trapped in her physical body in Germany, her mind continues to dwell with her family in her homeland.

the image is experienced concurrently with other senses. For me, an important notion is that we know our body through haptic experience: we are not in front of our body, we are in it, or rather we are it (see Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.150). In haptic perception, we come close enough to the object that we "become it". Importantly, "to become it," is not akin to representing or symbolising it. Rather, it means being aware of and experiencing the "thing". Implied in this concept is a claim that there is physical way of seeing as knowing, which directly engages a viewer's body into an embodied experience (Marks, 2002).

Marks observes that the video as "haptic medium" (2002, p.9) has generated a visual language, mainly used in intercultural cinema, which limits access to the context of images and sound but focuses on haptic and embodied viewing. When exiled filmmakers communicate diasporic experiences by this visual language, instead of privileging the eye's perspective which usually happens when it is assumed that a culture is known by everyone,, they embrace the body's senses through haptic vision and embodied memory. Haptic film invites

a look that moves over the surface plane of the screen for some time before the viewer realizes what she or he is beholding. Such images resolve into figuration only gradually, if at all ... [Haptic vision] evades a distanced view, instead pulling the viewer in close. Such images offer such a proliferation of figures that the viewer perceives the texture as much as the objects imaged. (2000, p.163)

Similarly, in a close-up discussion on exilic films, Naficy highlights common elements in the language exilic filmmakers share. Sadness, isolation and estrangement are their preferred themes, which they convey through the camera's long shots, slow speed and their choice of location (for instance border lines, train stations, airports) or of objects of mobility (such as suitcases). According to Naficy, exiled filmmakers, functioning as "the other", shape a transnational identity that is presented in the form "of fragmented narratives, consisting of ellipses, ruptures, and generic juxtapositions" (2001, p. 271). The particular choice of locations, the filmmakers' personal histories of isolation and alienation, as well as their curious methods of employing media, result in films that are in touch with their spectators' body senses and their own memories of home and belonging.

In the realm of moving image, I consider Iranian film maker Abbas Kiarostami particularly relevant to my work. His method of indirect and open-ended narrative, choice of location and long shot addresses another dimension of human being in a poetic cinematic response. I am intrigued by how Kiarostami, in "A Taste of Cherry" (1997), renders the viewers as outsiders, while engaging them simultaneously in central, cinematic experiences. He approaches haptic visuality by a complex method of providing viewers with ambiguous information. Tending toward anti-narrative, Kiarostami employs everyday people as actors. He only explains scenes but does not provide a screenplay. This allows the actors to integrate their own personal history and interpretation. In his film, the viewer never really leaves the main character, not even in a

shot showing him driving a car from a great distance: the conversation in the car sounds as if located in the foreground. This contrast of what is seen and what is heard leaves viewers with conflicting feelings – of being distanced visually but otherwise closely involved and placed in the event. The resulting paradox of simultaneous closeness and distance invites and prevents identification at the same time. Exile cinema's attempts, to evoke unrepresentable experience (by methodically employing ambivalence), generally, and particularly Kiarostami's methods of pushing and pulling viewers; allowing them to complete the film in their own imagination; and his method of using a-synchronous audio to provoke conflicting feelings, have yielded important and inspiring insights for my research project. They surfaced in my process at a fortunate time where I was able to perceive the resonance they have with my own techniques to date.

Artists operating outside of exile cinema's scope, but employing similar means, are Gary Hill



Fig.11: "A Taste of Cherry", (1997). Still from moving image.
Abbas Kiarostami.

and Bruce Nauman, who generate philosophical and conceptual insights of human physicality via audio/video installation and sculpture. Their conscious use of silence in their work offered new insight into the thinking of silence as a means of communication to stir particular kinds of feelings in my own project. In Hill's "HanD HearD" (1996), five video projections show five individuals staring at their hand in front of their face. However, the camera frame separates the hand from the whole body. "A hand whose resonance is a state of listening, a listening hand in a silent state" (Morgan, 2000, p.125). This work creates ambivalence and spatial dissociation in viewers, as they start to question their own body in relation to the images. Whose hand is it? If, as Morgan states, "to listen to the hand ... is to be inside the hand itself" (p.125), then the hand can be part of the listening viewer. Bruce Nauman, in "Pinch Neck" (1968), uses his own body: his fingers squeeze his neck and lips, "as if [they] were clay" (Lewallen, 2007, p.152). The close-up frames vulnerable parts of the body, main tools for speech and breathing, placing the spectator into a powerless position, in which he experiences what he observes in his own body. Although both Hill and Nauman work with some aspects of haptic images, the resulting embodied experience is also a result of a particular engagement with concepts of communication and sound. Silent images of the body continuously prompt discursive elements

(text, language and speech): the absence of audio evokes increased physical awareness of silence as a presence. To me, their work comes close to making “‘meaning’ out of bodily ‘sense’” (Sobchack, 2004, p. 1) by emphasizing the sensations of hearing and viewing. In these works, haptic experience occurs through the consideration of sound and silence as means of communication.



Fig.12: "Hand HearD", (1996). Video Installation. Gary Hill.



Fig.13: "Pinch Neck" (1998), Moving image. Bruce Nauman.

Shouting – Without Sound
(Methodology)



Fig.14

This research is about the space of the border and experiences of the body in a dislocated life. It was apt that, during its first part,⁷ I lived a dislocated life, constantly dislocating myself between different places and cultures. Constant dislocation triggered different experiences of isolation in different locations and within diverse traditions. This life, a series of moments of threshold crossing, was productive but challenging. As a result of limited access to equipment and facilities, for instance, working with scarce resources became part of my research method. In this process, I had to develop an understanding of how my work functioned and I had to discover suitable methods for working within the existing constraints. Communicating ideas and keeping the research process going, with as little freedom and equipment as was available, depended increasingly on utilising the potential of chance and discovery. And in this, I had to use my personal experience to invent provisional solutions. This practice within an unpredictable framework allowed me to discover new ideas and concepts and to find different aspects for the project. I regularly ask myself 'why' and 'how' I am making my decisions. Alongside 'objective' reasons, important factors were my personal experience and my own position as a researcher, which was bound to reflect back into research.

For the initial, explorative period of the research context, I adapted Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "Grounded Theory". A key position of Grounded Theory (GT), compared to other qualitative methods, is that the researcher does not adhere to an existing framework or theory but remains purposefully open for the values and potential of data garnered in the research process. The core of Grounded Theory is data collection: everything can be data, including informal conversations, notes, a topic in a newspaper, a photo in a catalogue ... anything, in short, that can help the researcher to generate concepts. Further, while in other research methods theory often develops separately, theory emerges in GT from the data. It is the role of the researcher to understand data in their relationship with an emerging theory. For my project, this was of significant help to generate a visual theory and concepts concerning the issue I am researching.⁸ GT gave me a compatible framework to start my research as I became the observer of my own world, and that of others, regarding the complex phenomena produced by transition processes, globalisation, transnationalisation, and other political and cultural forces. I adapted some of GT's elements to my practice, which helped me pull focus

⁷ My research project progressed, overall, in two parts. The first part took place from March 2008, with travels in Aotearoa/New Zealand, to Iran and Germany. It was completed in February 2009, after an exhibition in Germany and another visit to Tehran. The second step commenced upon my return to New Zealand in March 2009.

⁸ There are few main elements in Grounded Theory that I adapted to first part of my practice. Firstly, a matter is identified which requires investigation. In my research, it is the issue of political exile and communicating its experience. Secondly, GT intends to construct a theory, concerned with describing and clarifying the matter under investigation. In my context, I am seeking to construct, describe and clarify concepts, themes and designs for a performative installation. Thirdly, GT requires analysing and processing of the data from the beginning of a research project. Testing and discovering theory took place at the same time, during the research process. This was affinity with the working style I had in first step most productive. Within this method I was located in the centre of matter while observing it from a distance.

and analyse distinct pieces of work or notes of that period, the iterative steps taken, together with readings, reflections and discussions.⁹

Shortly after my return to New Zealand in March 2009, I entered into a period of more focused production, which increasingly involved my own body. At this point, GT began to prove less suitable and I switched to another method, heuristics, in which the "initial 'data' is [considered to be] within me" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13). From this perspective, I am the main subject of the research, the archive of the experiences and information collected in the first part and even before.¹⁰ My camera, primary tool for research and data collection, now became an extension of my body to produce further insights. At this time, I looked at Nauman's early video works, which gave me some grounds for reflection on where my work was, and was not, headed (see above). The exploration of chance and discovery, now extended to include my self-experience, became a core method, locating my experience in the centre of the investigation.¹¹ My subjectivity and objectivity as an exiled individual were placed under the microscope for analysis: "self-observation", "self-search" and "self-dialogue" helped develop awareness of self in relation to exile. By reflecting back on notions and aspects of decision making, chance, discovery, and personal experience became fused with conceptual and unpredictable technical concerns. For instance, my aim to keep the camera's vision angle within the perimeter of my body led to positions which I could only maintain under physical strain, when the body is taken to its limits. Similarly, in one of the videos, I had to hold my breath for as long as possible. Thus, the taking of footage itself became a way for me to understand my project in a new way. The accumulating understanding paired up with my stored body-memories and current emotions to make my body a unique and eminently suitable site of crossroads where the embodied experience I was after could emerge/form. The relationship between my body and the camera also set up shifting relationships between subject(ivity) and object(ivity). The small space from which the camera could operate to capture these images resulted in technical restrictions and eventually ruled out the use of the larger HD cameras for most videos. This will be discussed in more detail in the section "Silenced Body (Exploratory Practice)".

Marks comments on the necessity of observing with both haptic and optical vision: "In most processes of seeing, both are involved, it is hard to look closely at a lover's skin with optical

⁹ An account of this part of the process is contained in my Project Analysis, "Silence – The Power of Isolation", February 2009.

¹⁰ According to Ings, heuristics "begins with a process of immersion where the researcher questions the self in relation to the theme, question or problem" (2008, p.6).

¹¹ Chance and accident provide opportunities to transform direction and experiences, and can even open up new possibilities for my experience of self. In heuristic, investigator requires a direct experience of matter "an unshakable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me..."(Moustakas, 1990, p.12). In this process I fully enter myself in the issue, or rather "become one with it"(p.15).

vision; it is hard to drive a car with haptic vision" (2000, p.163). In my method of working, it has been essential to open up understanding via both distance and embodiment.¹² Over time, a third method, more specific to my research and video installation, emerged. In this method, I am subjectively and objectively engaged in process and matter. The investigation concerns a personal issue, but one that is related to a wider theme. My own experience of the matter helps me to understand it within its context. The constant movement between the personal, subjective and the social, objective is an essential aspect of this process, where I am located in a relation to the world and others who share similar issues and feelings. This relation is essential for finding answers and inspirations; not only from self or others, but rather from anything in the world. In this context, the potential of a body, my body, to be the threshold where consciousness and world emerge together becomes pertinent.

This requires both embodied experience and detachment, which I attempted to achieve in two ways. On the one hand, to be able to be present with, and observer of, world, I am engaged with matters via optical perception. Video and still camera, note taking or recordings, are there to collect events, ideas and other matter of the world. What is recorded in this way may be representational, but not only as hard fact. Rather, emotions, colours, lights, sounds, a particular atmosphere, really, any thing that seems related need to be recognised and gathered. On the other hand, what I am researching has personal meaning with respect to my own situation in relation to the world, and the process of investigation and observation gives rise to moments of intense feelings and inspiration. I realise those moments as significant times of creativity, producing video work as well as concepts. In those moments, it is important to produce without delay, with whatever tools are at hand. As the researcher, I become a transformer, who observes the world, including others' experiences and feelings, and transforms them into a simple message to pass back to world. Thus, personal experience may pass on to the observer. But often only after several attempts at transforming – this method requires an extended period of time. After each time repetition, I needed to step back again and look at the result, analyse it and relate the images to what that happens in the outside which produced the content. In the end, there will be a cluster within which these production moments and related themes are strongly connected. The direction thus only evolves slowly from a cyclical process of production: in order to know where I am going, I need to see where I have just been.

¹² GT's methodological flexibility, together with the opportunities provided by heuristics, allow for sufficient freedom to explore matters in detail and to relate them to my own experience, making adjustments as I go. GT, in my experience in this project, is aligned with optical perception, while heuristics has more kinship with haptic vision and embodied, subjective experiences. Whereas for GT reality is outside and requires a researcher to stay detached, heuristics searches for answers within the researcher's self.

Silenced Body (Exploratory Practice)

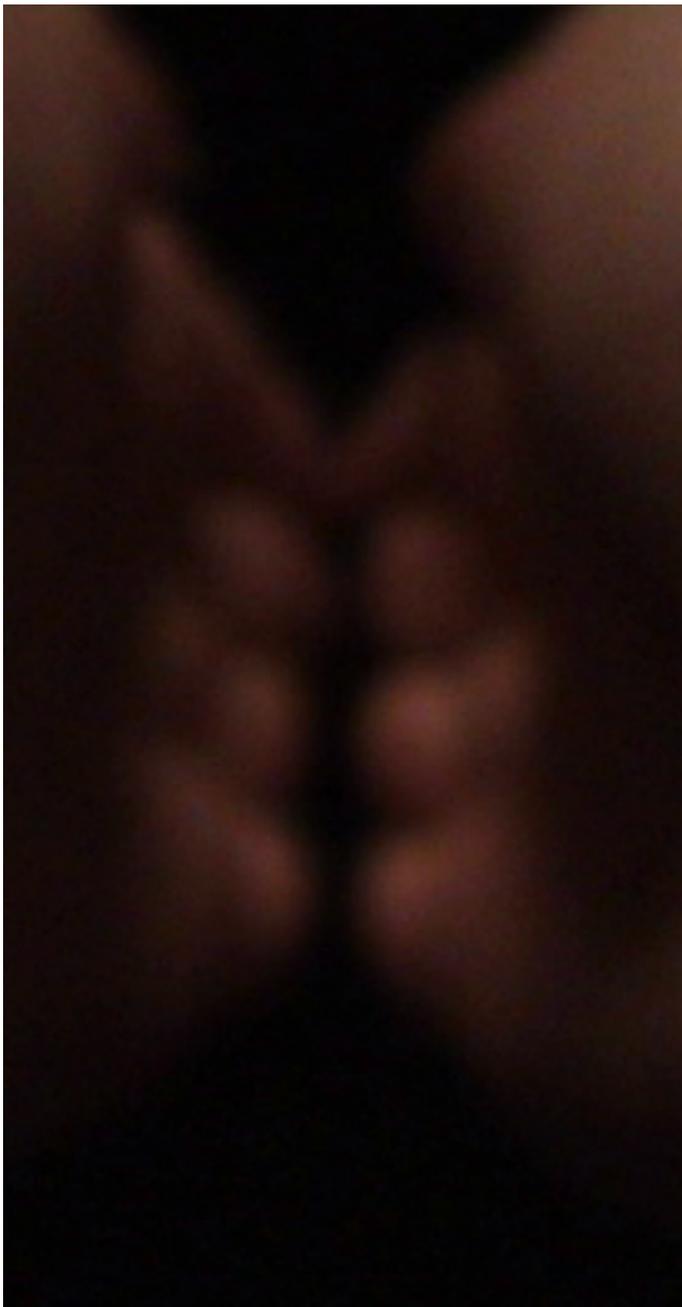


Fig.15

The camera plays an important role in this process: it draws out ideas from the world itself. In this case, the world is a bounty of ideas and creativity, which already contains within itself our needs and the answers to them. The camera, then, allows me to see and recognise them. Through the camera, things and ideas already there are reframed, reduced, added to or changed, within the context of all existing elements. My research practice involves the camera as an extension of my body into the world, to touch it and to support a process of thinking and making. It enables me to study a thing or concept through haptic and/or optical vision. This method helps in pulling out, and pulling close, thoughts and emotions and in creating an experience that connects us and our creativity back into the embodied knowledge of the world, by first drawing out and then being drawn in.

Prior to my main production phase for the exhibition, starting in March 2009, I experimented with 'optical vision' type approaches (without at the time being aware of Marks' distinction), in different cultural and geographical settings of New Zealand, Iran and Germany, involving still and video camera to collect material and produce work. The use of the camera allowed me to immerse myself in a surrounding, recording and responding to an environment, cultures, people and diverse situations.¹³ Later, analysing and studying these led me to three categories of isolated spaces, space-body relationships, and silenced bodies.

In the critical evaluation of several of my major video experimentations, I discovered visual and conceptual aspects, which I considered and developed for my exhibition. As in Collection 1 (a series selected from a body of collected visual material), the analysis of isolated spaces provided me with ideas about visual aspects, such as ambiguity and juxtaposition that could develop into a body of work for the exhibition. I was particularly interested in some features, which reoccurred almost independent of their context and locations. Returning to Iran in June 2008, after an extended time away, I re-located myself in my native country, to observe, but also to experience isolation and exile in a different manner and to transform this experience into still images and video work. The series of work produced at that time (Collection 2) was based on detecting, capturing and analyzing my personal experience of an emigrant who has returned to her original home. I considered this work as research into a culture that has been isolated from the rest of the world, and from which, to an extent, I was isolated myself. This produced a motivation to find a method by which to communicate liminal experience. To support my research, my family took me to culturally, historically and religiously rich locations – small, isolated towns and villages, which are almost forgotten or have been treated without regard for their significance. The experience of people in their own environment and cultural

¹³ Whereas the still camera captures a single moment of an event, the video camera allowed me to collect movements and time sequences. However, the use of either video or still camera was often dictated by pragmatic considerations: the use of a video camera in public spaces attracts more attention than that of a still camera. Where such attention would be distracting for work, the use of a still camera allowed me to consider and plan aspects of the video production well in advance (e.g., the time of day, how busy the place might be, and the ways in which people might react).

setting was important and fruitful. It provided me with temporary access to their mode of being, which, I realized, partially revolves around feelings and reactions to life events (such as funerals), which are shared by people all over the world.

The video installation "Transition", which took place in Germany in February 2009, was the result of a heightened sensitivity of other people's experiences, as well as the hope to find themes to share with outsiders (such as death). In addition, my state of being in Germany contributed to a widening perspective on the experience of isolation and border crossing, when my experience of isolation and alienation on different levels and settings forced me to



Fig.16: Untitled, 08.2008. Still image, Ashtian.



Fig.17: Untitled, 05.2008. Still image, Mining tunnel, Thames.

Collection 1

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

Fig. 24



Fig.18: Untitled, 08.2008. Still image, Abyaneh



Fig.19: Untitled, 08.2008. Still image, Abyaneh



Fig.20 , 21: 1.Silence day in Bazar, 09-2008. Still image,Tehran.



Fig.22: Untitled, 05,2008,Still image. Underground mining tunnel, Thames



Fig.23:Untitled, 05.2008, Still image. Victoria battery, Waihi

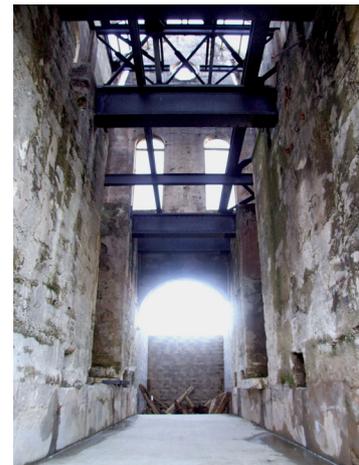


Fig.24: Untitled, 05.2008, Still image. Waihi

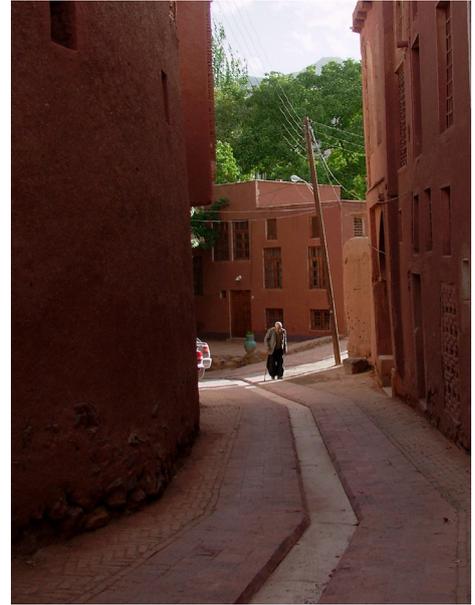


Fig.25, 26: Untitled, 10.2008. Still image,Abyaneh village,Iran.

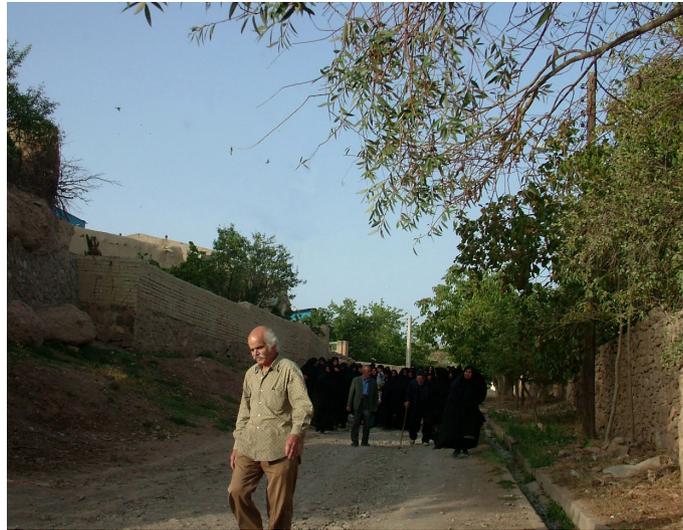


Fig.27, 28: Funeral, 08.2008. Still image,Ahoo village,Iran.



Collection 2
Fig. 25
Fig. 26
Fig. 27
Fig. 28
Fig. 29

From Top , Fig.27, 28, 29: "Silenced" , 09.2008. Video,main historical bazar,Tehran.

practice seclusion and silence myself. Further, circumstances forced me to narrow the scope of my work down to what was really needed, which led to greater abstraction. "Transition" took into account the notion of isolation in relation to death as a transitional moment. The head is considered in most cultures as the location of intellect, memory and imagination, but also as an important organ for life, which is a familiar and essential part for each individual. By slowly burying this part of body, and installing the video in a vehicle of transition (a railway car) the work aimed to involve the spectator in a personal and profound level.¹⁴ I aimed to confront spectators with the process of death, as a way to refer to radical isolation, and with long-term effects of Middle Eastern isolation as well as that of those in exile from Middle Eastern countries. The gaze cast upon the audience by the person whose head was buried, and changes in audios levels helped impose a feeling of uneasiness on spectators. Analysing this video installation within the setting of Germany gave me some profound and essential aspects to work with. Although the work indirectly referred to political aspects of Middle East, German spectators could relate to it in terms of their own cultural and political experiences, such as World War 2 and their country's relation to recent struggles in the Middle East during this time. Nevertheless, issues of identification and narrativity seemed capable of preventing empathy with those experiences of pain and frustration of exile that are beyond narrativity and symbolisation. The process convinced me that overtly representational modes fail to provoke embodied engagement with a work.

These critical evaluations made me see the potential for development of some of my earlier work, like [*Halg/Throat*],¹⁵ which was about exploring the notion of silencing via focusing on the throat. The throat, a vulnerable part of the body containing the voice box, is crucial to our vocalisation. Its importance is often marginalized or unrecognised. I also see the throat as an in-between space, which connects the brain and the heart, or the head and the body. After reconsidering [*Halg/Throat*], it became important material for me to further explore. Later, when I began to study Marks' concepts, I realised that "haptic" was what I was looking for. Marks gave me terms for what I was intuitively moving toward.

To produce embodied work, I drew on my experience as an Iranian immigrant of an 'in-between-between' (see page 11). My own body became the site from which to bring to voice the experience of exile from a Middle Easterner's perspective. To make this bodily experience accessible for spectators' identification, the work had to be sufficiently abstract to prevent overly quick identification. Haptically engaging observers into my encounter, the viewers are anticipated to assimilate or embody my experience (so that it become theirs), while they make their own experiences, according to who they are as individuals and how they perceive

¹⁴ What added to the pertinence of the installation space is that many local spectators would have been aware that, in Nazi Germany, deportation into concentration and death camps was conducted in railway cars.

¹⁵ These titles are only descriptive titles for the purpose of the exegesis, not titles in the exhibition.



Fig.30: "Transition". 01.2009. Video,Germany.

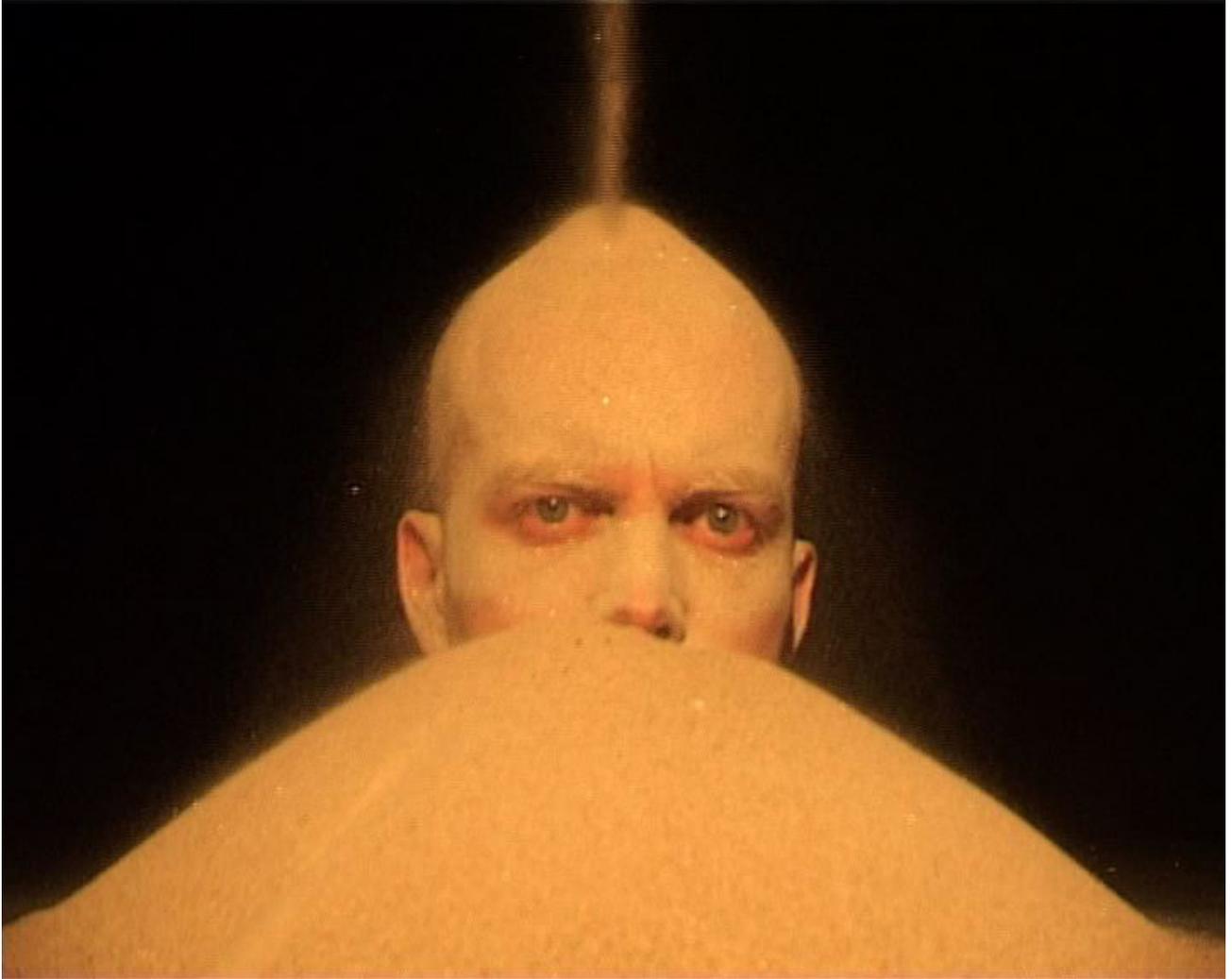


Fig.31: "Transition". 01.2009. Video,Germany.



Fig.32: "Transition". 01.2009. Video installation,Germany.



Fig.33: [Halg/Throat], 05.2009. Moving image, New Zealand.

their world. Whereas iconic and figurative methods tend to deal with specific facts, more abstract approaches allow for mimetic closeness: one reports while the other embodies; one signifies while the other transforms. The challenge therefore is to explore how semi-abstracted representations of the body can convey a sense of political exile. It was always a matter of a fine line: images had to contain sufficient reference to the body, without undermining a force beyond what Marks describes as haptic modes of contemplation.

Consideration of gender issues and personal values prompted me to position my work with regards to its limitations,¹⁶ and to invent new approaches that can function within existing values and limits. In Islamic art, for instance, unnecessary elements and symbolisation had to be removed, incidentally making it more generally applicable. Examining and studying Miniature paintings in "*Shahname*" (a historic national Persian epic) influenced my visual thinking: this style of painting is characterised by the lack of perspective and shadows, spiral flow and composition, flattened colour, abstraction, and figures in space. By analogy, I concluded that it should be possible to use my body in an abstract way, to take into account my concerns regarding gender and cultural clichés. More specifically pertaining to performance, the idea of using the body in this research project had originally been inspired by a disregarded ancient Persian art form of story telling and solo performance, *Naqqali*.¹⁷ *Naqqali* changed my understanding of transformation via limitation as this folk drama has continued to transform itself over centuries. ¹⁸ Consideration of these changes led me to think of the body as a site of potentiality that could be explored in creative and flexible ways.

Also, in my observation, repetition of movement or action can produce wondrous and meditative effects, through which to gradually draw the observer into the moment of trauma within the image. Repetitive images or sounds can create patterns that intrigue observers and draw them out of their own selves. In my work, for instance, [*Arenj/Flex*] attempts to

¹⁶ At all times, I wanted the work to be able, in principle – if not at this moment and in this form, to be shown in Iran. Neshat's work, for me, always had the feeling of voluntary permanent exile – unavailable to those to whom the work belongs. The latter, to me, live in Iran and Neshat's work is not likely to be acceptable (and thereby accessible) to the majority of Iranians.

¹⁷ *Naqqali* is a performance of mythic and epical stories or events, with poetic rhythm, a particular tone of voice, and the embodied expression of feelings. The storyteller, as a solo performer, plays the role of several different characters, he is at once the director, designer and narrator. This performance is not dependent on any stage or particular space and could take place anywhere, for instance in a café or a street, as the performer is the only thing needed for the performance. A contemporary woman *Naqqali* performer, in particular, was a great inspiration, since she demonstrated, as the first *Naqqali* woman performer around 2000, that great performances are possible within strict limitations.

¹⁸ Out of the tradition of narrating drama *Naqqali* has, for instance, mutated into a different form of performance: "Iran produced the only form of Islamic religious epic drama (ta`ziyeh-khvani)" (Floor, 2005, p.13). One element of those transformations caused by Islamic limitations with respect to performing art resulted in narrating the religious epical stories in form of performance, instead of *Shahname* (see above).

create an ambiguous and non-articulated sense of pain that make viewers aware of their own body feelings. The desired delay of identification serve a purpose, namely a greater accessibility resulting in an exchange between the spectator's body and the exiled body. This exchange is facilitated across a liminal space, which is defined by the images' relationship with the surrounding space, the frame's severing of references, and the involvement of the audience. Ideally, this would create a third space, a liminal space that belongs neither to host nor to guest. The speed at which patterns unfold plays a significant role here: whereas slow patterns create meditating effects, the more rapid patterns become, the greater the observers' agitation. I was interested to see how a combination of these two contrasting elements can create feelings of unease.

For the same reason, I explored different positions or perspectives through controlling the camera in different ways. When it was hand-held within the perimeters of my body, it could follow my vision's trajectory (as in [*Badane Larzan/Unrested Body*]).¹⁹ When it was independently focused (mounted on a tripod in [*Dastha/Hands*], or freestanding on the ground [*Paha/Feet*])²⁰ it is still perceivably located within my body's perimeters, but maintains its own position, independent from my eye's shifting position. In either case, the camera is forced and engaged to trace and observe from a specific point, which is my body's standpoint. By choosing this particular perspective, angles and movements, I intended to locate viewers to a point into my body's perimeters and experience. During this series of experiments, I progressively dissected my body, using the camera's frame to present parts for the whole. The view is no longer of a whole from a distance, but rather haptic, while the identity of the body dissolves – making it seem familiar for the viewer, yet alienated and ambiguous at the same time.

This method requires an intimate knowledge of both my body's limitations and of the available technology. For instance, the size of the camera in relation to the size of my body parts, as well as the quality of the lens, depended on the technology available to me for production: technology often demanded distance from the object of vision, so that body length became a limiting aspect. Always bearing in mind that the concept required close-up, haptic images, the technical limitations became determining aspects that sometimes resulted in irregular angles and limited visual quality.²¹

¹⁹ The camera in a fast and repetitive motion constantly moving forth and back, following the movement of my body and my view towards the thighs. The anxious movement and slow revealing was an attempt to trigger viewers' empathy and curiosity.

²⁰ The empty space in-between hands triggered the viewer's curiosity, taking them into the unknown space, as the gap slowly become less and hands, left and right, east and west meet and touch each others.

²¹ I was aware of the possibility of attaching a very small subsidiary camera to an HD camera and explored this option for while. However, while I was exploring this alternative, I decide that in most cases low definition video was actually more appropriate, see below.



Fig.34, 35, 36: [Arenj/Flex], 07.2009. Moving image, New Zealand.



Fig.37, 38, 39: [Badane Larzan/ Unrested Body], 06.2009. Moving image, New Zealand.

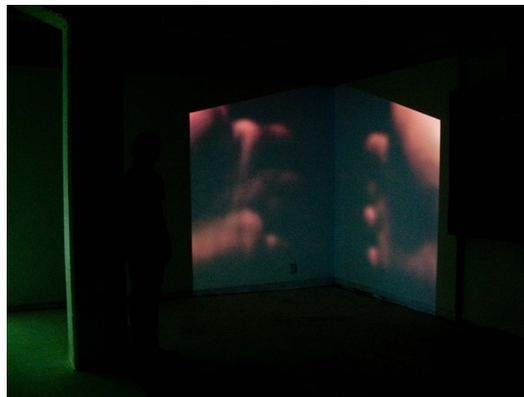


Fig.40: [Dastha/Hands], video installation, 05.2009. New Zealand.

While this was often frustrating, the nature and quality of the images corresponded, on reflection, to Marks' theory that poor resolution and lack of highly controlled aesthetic can become a device to produce haptic visuality. Challenging the physical senses of spectators, such imagery has the potential to turn our mind from the image of the body to an embodiment of image. Distorted or grainy images emphasise in viewers an awareness of their disability to see. When the "universal thing" becomes unidentifiable, it can also distort viewers' ways of looking at the surface of the image, and prompt them to engage with this surface in a deeper and more corporeal way. Therefore, I worked with the available technology and limitations to produce an embodied and haptic experience of 'exile'. I experimented with body or camera angles and, because I had to, made up new ways of image production, such as filming arms separately and joining them in postproduction as if they came from the same disjointed body.

Thus, my body became a solo performer of its condition of dwelling in no-man's land. In [*Paha/Feet*] and [*Bazooaha/Arms*], for example, I attempted to frame my body as any body. The video's experience should become the experience of spectators and their own imagination. My body becomes a place to explore exile's moments of silence, pain and fatigue. Audio can signify encounter and experience of in between-between, throw itself on the spectator, reminding him or her of the presence of another body opposing their subjectivity.²² Loud audio, disjointed from the images, is to challenge the viewers' sense of limits and interrupt their sense of continuity.



Fig.41: [*Paha/Feets*], 07.2009. Moving Image, New Zealand.

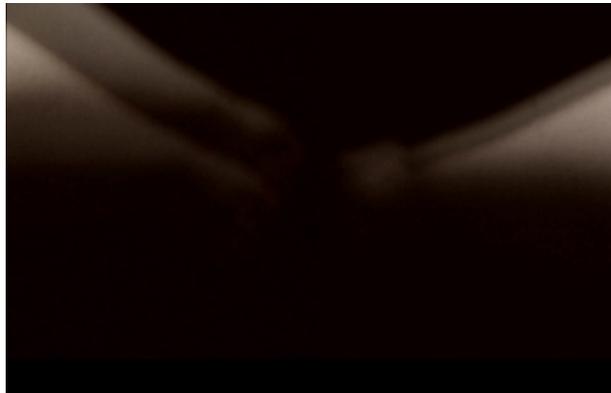


²² I began to experiment with the use of audio in early 2009, in the context of [*Zamine Zende/ Breathing Earth*], in which the sound of choked breathing contrasts with the image of a smooth and relaxed shape of a reclining torso. The conflict between what is heard and what is seen became a matter for further exploration.

Fig.42: [*Zamine Zende/ Breathing Earth*], 03.2009. Video sound installation, New Zealand.



Fig.43,44: [Bazoha/Arms], 04.2009. Moving image, New Zealand.



Shouting Via Skin (Towards Installation)

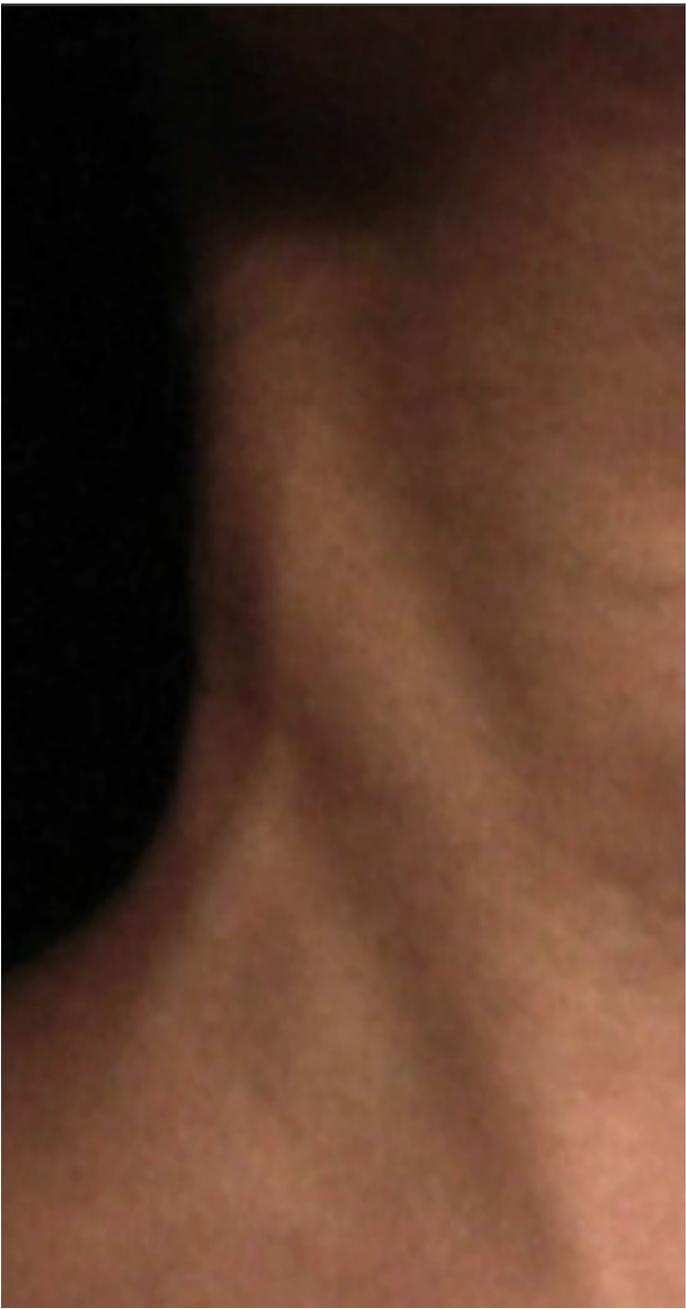


Fig.45

The final installation disperses body parts into different locations of the exhibition space.²³ O'Doherty (1999) suggests that a gallery is a space into which "the outside world should not come in" (p.15). What I appreciate about this notion of a gallery is the amount of control it offers. Its potential of emptiness, neutrality and quietness brings a meditative effect to my work, detaching and isolating the audience from the urgencies of an outside world. However, as the work is not complete without an audience, the latter plays a critical role by bringing their own history, circumstances, knowledge and sensitivities with them into the space left open for their interpretations. This installation particularly endeavours to reach audiences who are not experiencing exilic conditions. The installation space includes elements of exile and dislocation, which spectators cannot avoid facing. Confronting the audience in this way will hopefully leave them with questions, open up space for different thoughts, and challenge their subjectivity.

Hill (1993), in his video installations, has for some time endeavoured to "decentralise the focus on the TV object itself and its never ending image" (p. 68). Similarly, [*Halg/Throath*] experiments with ways of entwining video with space, spreading the theme across the site's environment, to create an immersive ambience affecting the audience. While I considered the use of TV screens as part of an installation, I ultimately found projected images more successful in blending with the overall surrounding atmosphere. Due to their particular quality of light, projected images also add an illusive quality to the space. I approached the use of projected images by considering their potential for changing scale, effecting dematerialization and enhancing the fluidity of projected images in space. I considered ideas such as 'hiding' the image, or part of image, by specifically locating and using screens and walls to incite the spectators' curiosity; or to locate them between images, such as [*Paha/Feet*] and [*Bazooaha/Arms*]. This, I hope, will cause audiences to negotiate their position between screens and to invent their own editing sequences – through turning toward and watching one screen, simultaneously losing sight of the other. This strategy intends to impact on what Sobchack calls "a radically material condition of human being that necessarily entails both the body and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, in an irreducible ensemble" (2004, p.4).

The installation draws on the possibilities of encounter between the bodies of spectators and projected images and positions the latter between a combination of large and smaller projections, alternating between experiences of sense saturation and more active bodily projection. Viewing some images close to body size, located at the level of their own bodies in a far-away corner, brings spectators into close contact with an image. I conceive of the corners of a room as hidden and forgotten parts, but also as joining points. Elements of space can thus work as breaking and folding points, or as joining and arrival points for two or more images. By projecting an image on the corner or next to corner I aim to reactivate this part of space. Space thus becomes a crucial factor.

²³ At this stage, I consider video installation as the main site of publication for my project.

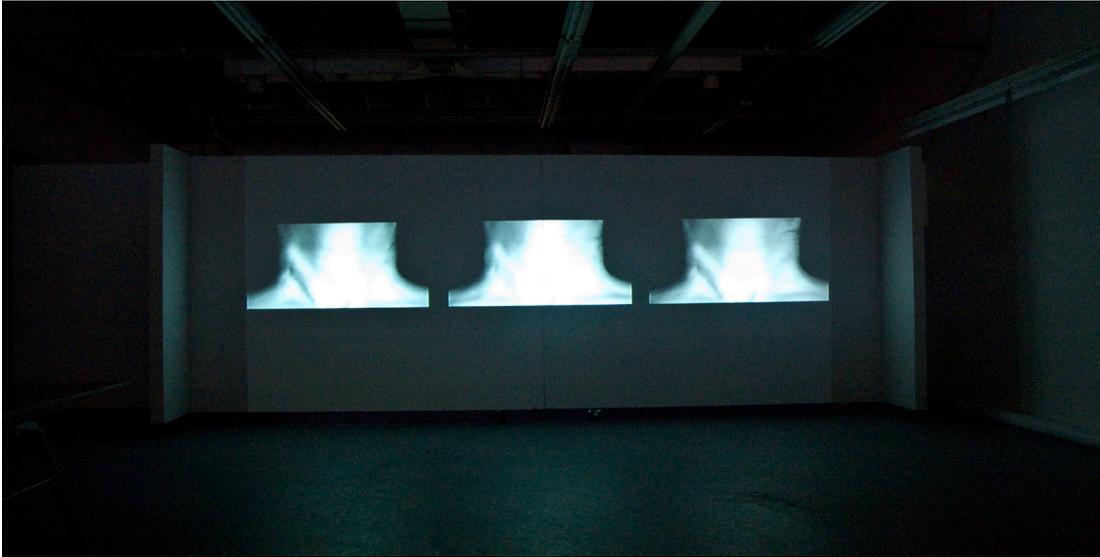


Fig.46: [Halg/Throat], 04.2008. Video Installation, New Zealand.

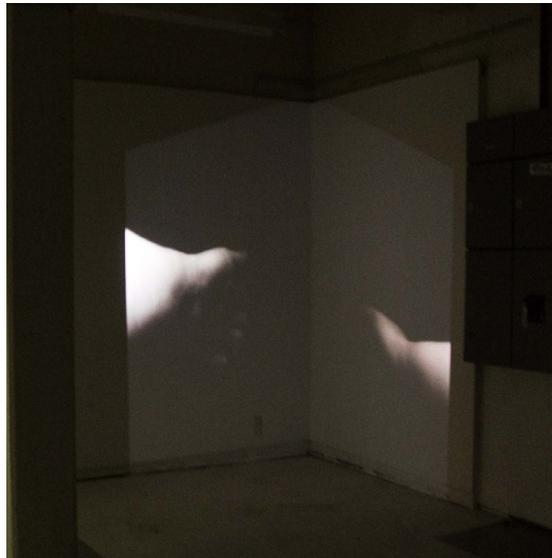


Fig.47: [Bazoha/Arms], 05.2009. Video installation, New Zealand.

Freeze Frame (In Lieu of Conclusion)

Right now, as particular political, social and cultural factors are forced upon non-Western countries, an increasing number of émigrés from those regions move or are moved into Western countries. They face not only the usual problems typical of emigration but, in addition, may encounter isolation in their host country, resulting from misinterpretation and misrecognition. A better understanding of how the “other” is perceived by, but also perceives, this new environment and condition may enable both émigré and host to positively deal with their difference.

To produce an embodiment of uneasiness, in analogy to the experience of exile, through a shared language of haptic visuality, this project’s goal was to consider Middle Easterners’ experiences in ways that are accessible to other audiences via their bodies. My hope is that this research can also benefit other minority groups and cultures living in this multicultural society of Aoteroa/New Zealand, whose experiences, even if different, are shaped by similar social and political factors.

The biggest challenge at the time of writing the final draft of this exegesis is how, without overt references, I can convey a sense of a specifically political isolation. For viewers to realise the connection between a shared, ‘universal’ condition, portrayed in the installation and a specifically political concern, and to be able to formulate questions, the references need to be just sufficient to indicate that there is a force in excess of the current experience – without disturbing the overall effect of the work. Sound (in combination with predominant silence in the space) plays a significant role as a reference. The language of the audio is identifiably non-local, even though it is not understandable for non-Iranian viewers. Three words in Farsi related to physical, as well as mental states, were whispered or shouted into the gallery space – while a throat was projected on a large scale, from which the sound could not have been generated. This produced a conflict between what is heard and what is seen. I expected the absence of sound and obscure images to leave viewers in their own space of mind. However, when the sound rose up, it would urge them out of their ease. These conditions alternated constantly and unpredictably. Dispersed video images (located in reference to the viewer’s bodies), lighting conditions and reflections in the floor, the bodies of other viewers as they move through the space, as well as sound from different sources (loudspeakers) – these factors all created an immersive environment which enfolded the audience.

Just as, if successful, this concept transformed viewers’ experiences, the research process transformed my own initial positioning of self: there is now for me a greater acceptance of differences and deeper understanding of issues of exile, not just on a personal level, but also as a more inclusive experience. If the installation, as a visual and spatial experience traversing a liminal space, could have a similar effect on the audiences, then I am hopeful that it might further the understanding of the effects of the widening gap between Middle East and West

on a global political level.

Analysing this process, I realized my constant movement between different layers and stages of exile (e.g., personal, global, political and universal). In this constant movement between boundaries, my perception objectively and subjectively changed. As my research progressed, my awareness of this difficult and painful condition grew. It began to provide a wider worldview, and the possibility of a better understanding of the "other". While every one apart from me is "other", I am, at the very same time, a part of the very same world, in which knowledge and understanding already exist.

Final Exhibition



Fig.48

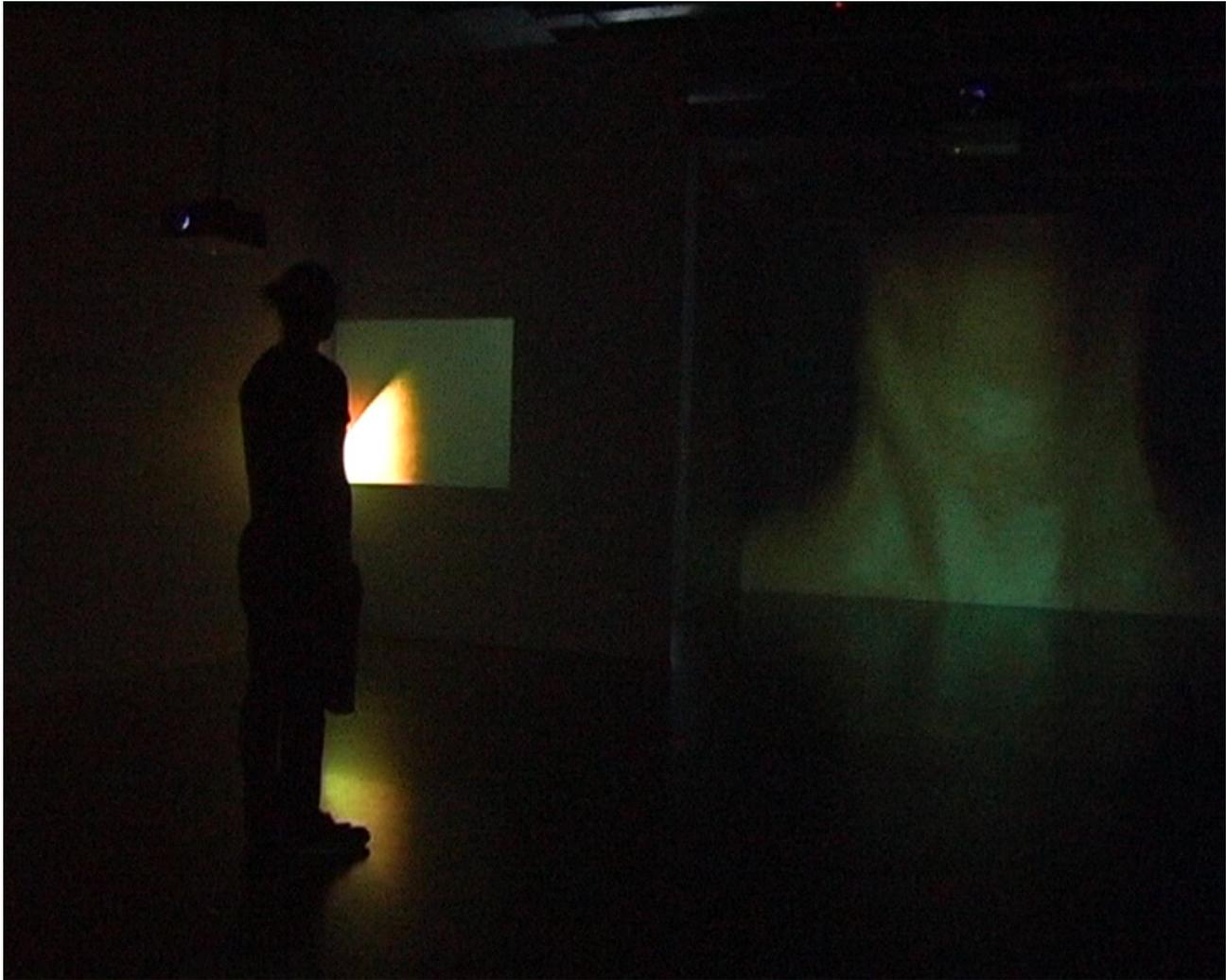


Fig.49

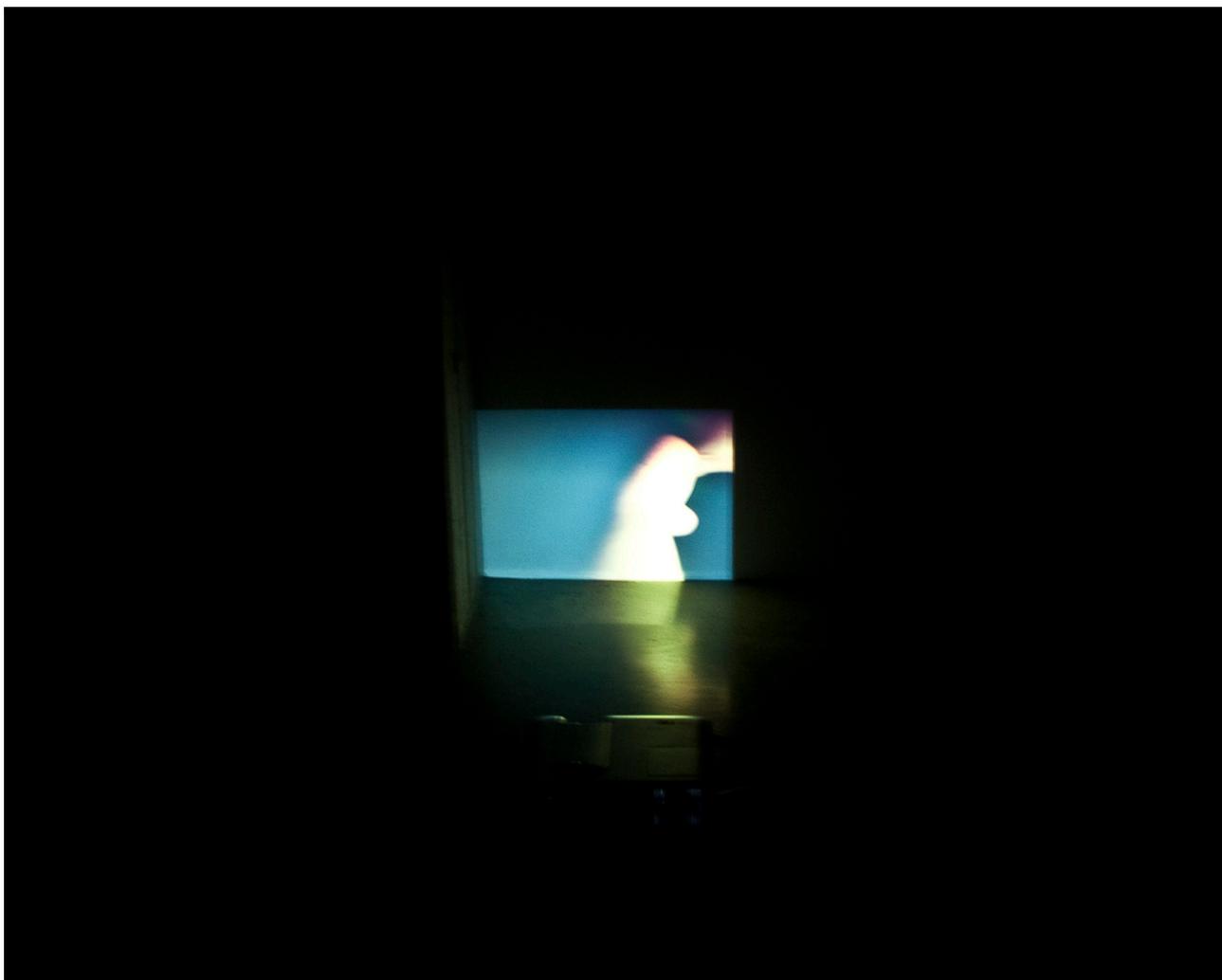


Fig.50



Fig.51



Fig.52

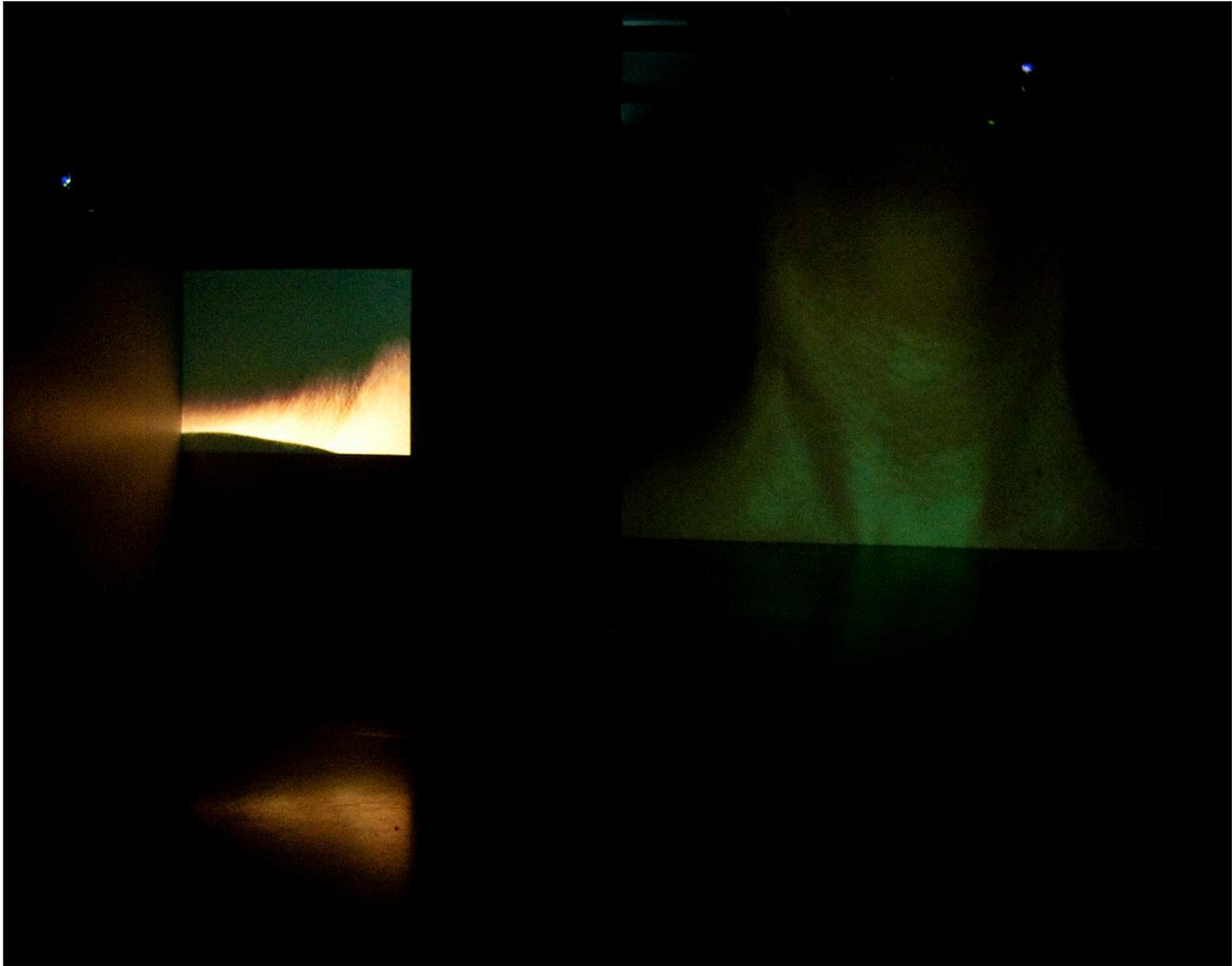


Fig.53

Appendix I- For Azadeh (Reflections on Viewing the Exhibit

By ; Moata McNamara

For Azadeh,

Body parts in exile, separated from a trunk and from each other. Voice and language interjecting in separation, carrying across to the ears, to the body of a spectator already implicated in a disjointed reading of video-sound works, in a reading of disjointed sound-video works.

Exile; Separated from and yet still holding its etymological ties with banishment, with prohibition.

The images in this exhibition move, revealing and concealing body/bodies, parts... of body? Sometimes looming into focus, at others appearing and disappearing into landscapes and skyscapes, the projected images speak through their silences, and then are muted by a voice that interrupts, slicing through the silence of a gallery. Positive and negative spaces interchange in a relay of moving images and I am moved. These works draw, inside a gallery space, a constellation of the intimately known as unknowable alien spaces. That which is most familiar – the body – is set adrift from itself.

This/these body/bodies plead with a spectator to make sense, to thread together disjointed parts. And yet, and in the same space, through sites of difference, each asks for the stillness of an individual reading, of time spent in quiet contemplation, a contemplation which will only be continually interrupted by the vocal repetition of single and singular words.

Any attempt to recognize the word is prohibited. I try to locate each word within the repertoire of sounds with which I am familiar...in vain. The word seduces and assaults, builds and breaks down. Language, the space of exile,²⁴ rules through repetition, through a voice held in front of me in violent separation from itself, from a body and from a spectator, from any unifying features or any place of rest.

The artist draws presence and absence in and through each other, insinuating the notion of exile through being there and not there, straddling two worlds, two soils. Hélène Cixous has written "To be the inhabitant of two worlds brings a feeling of betrayal. Every exile cannot but think this way since one cannot change countries without being from two countries."²⁵ The artist reminds us, through this work, that 'countries' can translate as any two spaces of difference and that the state of exile is both familiar and foreign, as is the discomfort of negotiating spaces of translation and betrayal between any two sites, between any two languages, between any two...

²⁴ See McDonald, C. (Ed.). (1988). *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

²⁵ Cixous, H. (1991). *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector and Tsvetayeva* (V. A. Conley, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

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List of Visual Documentation

Fig 1. Azadeh Emadi, (05.2008). *Untitled* (still image). School of Mines Museum, Thames/New Zealand.

Fig 2. Azadeh Emadi, (05.2008). *Untitled* (still image). Mining tunnel, Thames/New Zealand.

Fig 3. Azadeh Emadi, (07.2008). *Lost Road* (still from video). Iran.

Fig 4. Azadeh Emadi, (03.2009). *Skin* (still image). New Zealand.

Fig 5,6. Shirin Neshat, (1999). *Rapture*. Video still. Retrieved September 20, 2008 from <http://www.picsearch.com/pictures/celebrities/artists%20and%20painters/artists%203/shirin%20neshat.html>

Fig 7. Leyla Pazooki, (2004). *Objekt One*. Video installation. Retrieved July 30, 2009 from http://www.nzmuseums.co.nz/index.php?option=com_nstp&task=showDetail&recordIdSet=398&Itemid=28

Fig 8,9. Mona Hatoum, (1994). *Corps Étranger*. Moving image/ installation. Retrieved Jun 12, 2009 from http://bydavidgibson.blogspot.com/1998_01_01_archive.html

Fig 10. Mona Hatoum, (1994). *Corps Étranger*. Installation. Retrieved Jun 12, 2009 from http://bydavidgibson.blogspot.com/1998_01_01_archive.html

Fig 11. Abbas Kiarostami, (1997). *A Taste of Cherry*, still from film.

Fig 12. Gary Hill (1996). *Hand Heard*. Video Installation, St Paul Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand.

Fig 13. Bruce Nauman (1998). *Pinch Neck*. Still from moving image. Retrieved April 18, 2009 from http://www.ubu.com/film/nauman_pinch.html

Fig 14. Azadeh Emadi, (06.2008). *Untitled* (still image). Kashan, Iran.

Fig 15. Azadeh Emadi, (04.2009). *[Dastha/Hands]* (Moving image). New Zealand.

Fig 16. Azadeh Emadi, (08.2008). *Untitled* (still image). Ashtian, Iran.

Fig 17. Azadeh Emadi, (05.2008). *Untitled* (still image). Mining tunnel; Thames, New Zealand.

- Fig 18. Azadeh Emadi,(08.2008). *Untitled* (still image).Abyaneh village, Iran.
- Fig 19. Azadeh Emadi,(08.2008). *Untitled* (still image).Abyaneh village, Iran.
- Fig 20 , 21. Azadeh Emadi,(09.2008). *Silence day in Bazaar* (still image).Main historical bazar in Tehran, Iran.
- Fig 22. Azadeh Emadi,(08.2008). *Untitled* (still image).Underground mining tunnel, Thames, New Zealand.
- Fig 23. Azadeh Emadi,(05.2008). *Untitled* (still image). Victoria battery, Waihi, New Zealand.
- Fig 24. Azadeh Emadi,(05.2008). *Untitled* (still image). Waihi, New Zealand.
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- Fig 30, 31. Azadeh Emadi,(04.2009). *Transition* (Moving image),Germany.
- Fig 32. Azadeh Emadi,(01.2009). *Transition* (Installation),Germany.
- Fig 33. Azadeh Emadi,(04.2009). [*Halg/Throat*] (Moving image), New Zealand.
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- Fig 37, 38, 39. Azadeh Emadi,(06.2009) [*Badane Larzan/ Unrested Body*] (Moving image), New Zealand.
- Fig 40. Azadeh Emadi,(05.2009). [*Dastha/Hands*], (Moving image Installation), New Zealand.
- Fig 41. Azadeh Emadi,(07.2009). [*Paha/Feets*], (Moving image), New Zealand.
- Fig 41. Azadeh Emadi,(03.2009). [*Zamine Zende/ Breathing Earth*] (Video sound installation),New Zealand.
- Fig 42,43. Azadeh Emadi,(04.2009). [*Bazoha/Arms*] (Moving image), New Zealand.

Fig 44. Azadeh Emadi,(05.2009). [*Halg/Throat*] (Moving image), New Zealand.

Fig 45. Azadeh Emadi,(04.2008). [*Halg/Throat*] (Video installation),New Zealand.

Fig 46. Azadeh Emadi,(05.2009). [*Bazoha/Arms*] (Video sound installation),
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Fig 47. Azadeh Emadi,(04.2009). [*Dastha/Hands*] (Moving image). New Zealand.

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