

Example 2. Nooshin Farhid. Reconstruction, Point of Recognition.

Nooshin Farhid's videos are dystopian hallucinations. Resisting narrative, they take the viewer immediately into a world which is simultaneously familiar and uncanny. They are fragmentary, dreamlike, beyond easy interpretation. They have the incomprehensible logic of an unknown language. Like the great modernist photo-collagists Kurt Schwitters, John Heartfield but above all Hannah Hoch, Farhid uses found film footage which she combines with her own material to construct, or 'reconstruct', as the artist puts it, cinematic space. She edits out the normal boundaries of narrative, to create new dimensions, levels of meaning, connections and combinations, with (sometimes dark) humour and calm, detached decorum. Farhid has developed a finely tuned awareness of the inherent strangeness of the medium of film itself, when it is released from the support of narrative and meaning.

Farhid arrived in London as a political refugee from Iran, a violent transition in which she lost and then had to rebuild language, identity and culture in alien surroundings. The sense of marginalisation and strangeness, a lack of a specific social position, a highly sensitive political awareness, so strongly felt in her work, is based directly on her own experience.

Farhid's work as a collagist – using her own film as well as found material – stays close to the directly human element in film, the element of the human 'trace' that film shares with photography.. She blends the various languages of film, such as cartoons, the documentary, the interview, cinema vérité, reality TV, to produce non-sense that has lost its usual infrastructure of meaning. Found footage blends invisibly with her own film. Sound and colour are central: layers of sound, carefully edited, claim our attention or throb unconsciously in the background; colour, sharply defining mood, sometimes abstract, lush and lyrical, sometimes as bland as a tired surveillance video in a grocery shop.

In *Criss Cross*, 2009, several thematic strands are simultaneously developed and subverted through the 7 minute 30 second film, a relatively short work for the artist. They are woven together in a way that subtly seduces the viewer - there must be a narrative here for me, even if it is based on my own projections onto this material - while at the same time, claiming the ultimate meaning for the artist alone.

Criss Cross begins with a shot of a parked car at night, filmed through a strong red filter, reverberating with the sound of crickets singing (under which you can just hear heavy breathing). With a few quick cinematic tropes we are pulled instantly into a dizzying sequence of material. Who is the person quickly leaving the car, who are the men moving round the room to the sound of a tolling bell? An interior space, a car space, seems to be opened up in the narrative, possibly, but never explicitly, as a male 'frame' for the giggling, sexualized, girlish female voice/presence. Prostitution, sex industry? Farhid throws us into a powerfully emotional, closed, night time world.

The dry red heat of the opening sequence is quickly threatened by thunder and then heavy rain. Quickly the rain becomes a torrential flood, cars sink below the water surface, people drown, or cling to safety in the deluge. The helicopter, present throughout the film, transforms from

surveillance to rescue vehicle. We have moved from paranoia to panic. A final moment reveals the female presence dissolving, sinking, somehow, also into blackness. End. Criss Cross is 'reconstructed' from BBC News, Paramedics, Sky Cops, Tornados, Maciityre's Big Sting, Volcano, Red Light Lounge.

Farhid is a restless collector in an age of information excess. But to 'collect' suggests power, previous knowledge, expertise. Instead the artist's eye is informed by marginalization rather than any system of knowledge based on control or order. She induces, rather than deduces, knowledge. Her practice is to work towards, to quote Maria Fusco, creating or tracing a broader, possibly more fertile environment through close looking, rather than tracking a logical conclusion from the clues given(2).

Farhid's marginality as an active spectator in another culture informs everything she does. A highly sensitive political sensibility informs her new work, Conic Trilogy, 2010. Surveillance, policing and subversion are also integrated into earlier pieces. Freed of the usual constraints of class and social identification, she moves freely across British society in a way that could be much more problematic for a national. Her work is set on the margins of that society: in abandoned military installations, in subcultures, groups and communities that are outside the mainstream, at night, in areas outside the boundaries of bourgeois social order.

The liminal space, for Farhid, is one where the material she finds and the filming she does herself, are saturated with an intense, but non-specific atmosphere. The finished work, transformed by the editing process, is never overtly critical. The artist makes a new non narrative with a powerful but latent message, where the behaviorist 'triggers' of emotion generate a new kind of experience for the viewer. Each piece, and all her work taken as a whole, consists of rhizomatic (3) fragments connecting dynamically, meshing, transforming and overlaying each other.

A new space, and therefore a new political possibility. The culture itself, she feels, is on the point of some fundamental change. She is an astute witness, an active spectator.

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