

# canvas

ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD

## A DECADE OF ART DUBAI

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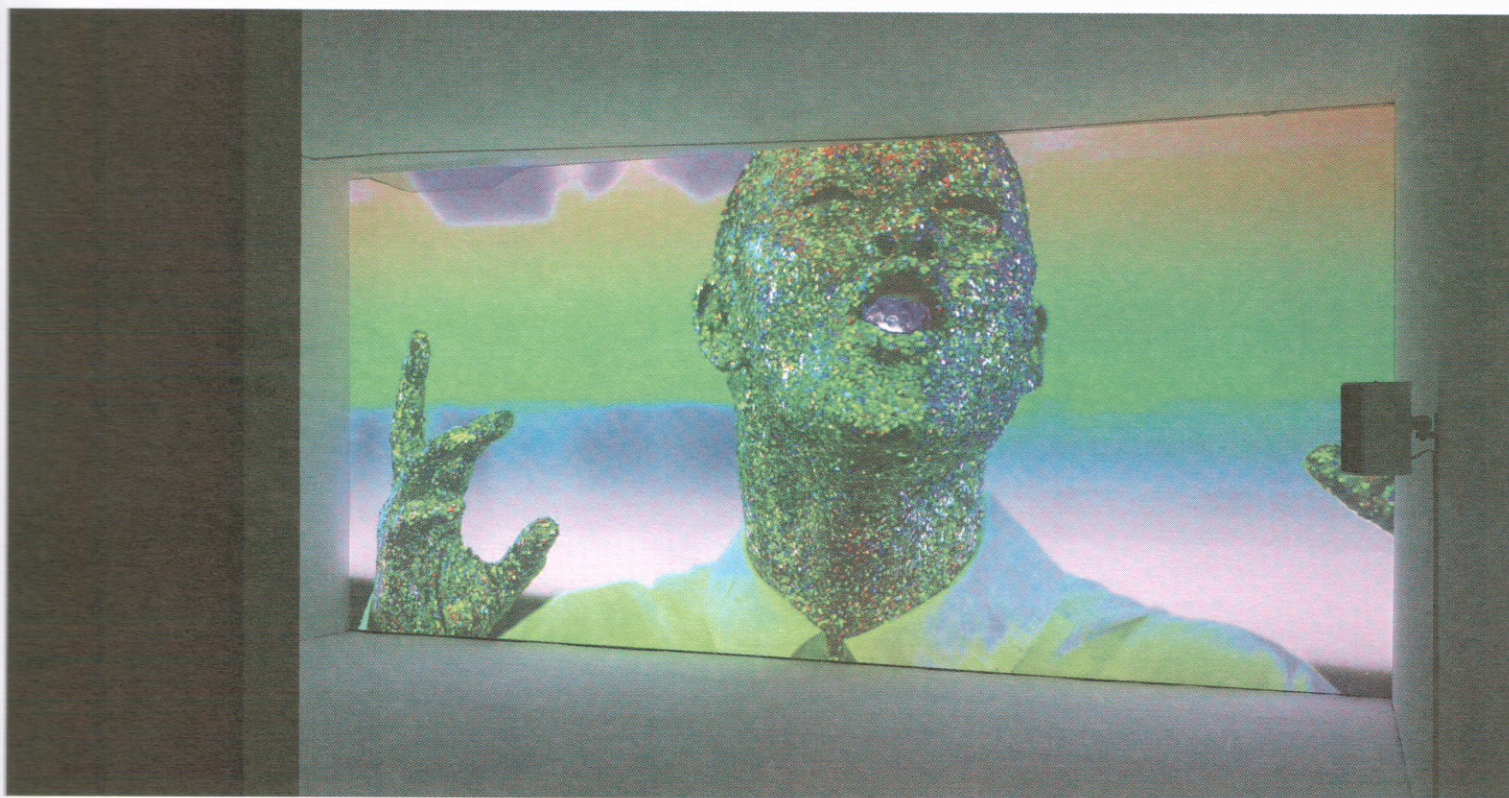
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REVIEW

# THE VIDEO EXPERIENCE

**Young-jun Tak** considers the role of audience experience of video art at *Staging Film: the relation of image and space in video art* at the Busan Museum of Art.



**C**urated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath of Art Reoriented, *Staging Film: the relation of space and image in video art* is on view from 29 January to 17 April 2016 at the Busan Museum of Art in Busan, South Korea. *Staging Film* is an opportunity to examine this curatorial duo's continued exploration of how staging affects an audience's reception of contemporary art.

The exhibition is both timely and propitious in location as it coincides with the 10th anniversary remembrance of video art founder and pioneer, Korean-born artist Nam June Paik (1932-2006). Given that Korea's population is renowned for a visual culture that leans heavily on cinema and that Busan is home to an important film festival, the exhibition's location in this city underlines Bardaouil and Fellrath's strategy in this exploration of staging the medium of video. Art Reoriented additionally brings its trademark curatorial practice with a universalist lens and expertise across different media, which has already been seen in several of their exhibitions from *Tea with Nefertiti* (2013) at Mathaf, Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, to *When Process Becomes Form:*

*Dansaekhwa and Korean Abstraction* (2016) at the Boghossian Foundation in Brussels.

*Staging Film* presents 12 video works and a diverse group of international artists are featured, including Anri Sala, Bill Viola, Hans Op de Beeck, Hassan Khan, Mikhail Karikis, Moon Kyungwon & Jeon Joonho, Paul Pfeiffer, Sarah Choo Jing, Shirin Neshat, Siren Eun Young Jung, Steve McQueen and Wu Tsang. Dating from the early 1990s to the present, diverse formats are included in the exhibition ranging from a 45-second loop to an 85-minute narrative and including both single- and multi-channel videos. Each work in the show is installed in such a manner that is "staged" in its own space, allowing viewers to experience individual artworks individually and in a manner that disrupts the Korean audience's expectations from passively viewing cinema. The viewer's experience becomes more subjective by the fact that the exhibition does not frame or categorise the works chronologically or by technical classification. Instead, each work's individual characteristics are allowed to come to the fore, so that the viewer can discover the analogous and/



Facing page: Wu Tsang, installation view of *The Looks* at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany, 2015. Image courtesy Achim Kukulies.

This page: Hassan Khan, Still from *Muslimgauze R.I.P.*, 2010. Image courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.



or disparate correlations between the works and draw his or her own conclusions about the medium without any specific prerequisite knowledge, engaging the universality in the curatorial approach.

In contemporary visual culture, everyday life is constantly penetrated by a multitude of image, both still and moving. This condition forces the viewer's perception to process content in layers of meaning, sometimes separating the visual from the verbal. In contrast, video works require that everything is processed in one go, as a cohesive whole, which renders it hard to sufficiently consider the purpose or effect of each. Through its installation, *Staging Film* tries to deconstruct and expose the aesthetic and political strategies in video art, allowing visitors to recognise as well as reflect on how they experience video art.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Hassan Khan, *Muslimgauze R.I.P.***

Egyptian artist Khan's single-channel video *Muslimgauze R.I.P.* (2010) begins by situating the viewer in Manchester in 1982, when British ex-

perimental musician Bryn Jones (1961–99), known as *Muslimgauze*, started making music. The video follows a young boy alone in an apartment as he moves through the house, alternately pushing open a wardrobe, moving objects in a cabinet and spinning a coin on a glass table top. While Bryn Jones never visited the Middle East and had no connection to the region, the political views expressed in his music are accessible to Khan. As a musician absorbed in Arab underground music movements that emerged during the Egyptian uprisings of 2011, the artist discovered a link to Jones in his video art responding to the uprisings, *Blind Ambition* (2012), which was presented at DOCUMENTA(13).

**Mikhail Karikis, *SeaWomen***

Karikis's *SeaWomen* (2012–13) captures the daily life of *haenyeo*, female divers in the Korean province of Jeju who harvest from the sea without underwater equipment. The two-channel video composed of 12 sound channels create the sensation of being underwater for the viewer through shifting visual effects on each of the two screens and



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This page: Shirin Neshat. Still from *Rapture*. 1999. Image courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York.



sounds of the sea, the chattering and laughing women and ambient noise are emitted by speakers scattered throughout the space. The viewer is invited to experience the notion of *mulsum*, or “water breath”. (a taboo word for the community) which refers to the potentially fatal act of inhaling underwater which the divers must be vigilant of.

### Siren Eun Young Jung, *Act of Affect* & Wu Tsang, *The Looks*

Siren Eun Young Jung's *Act of Affect* (2013) and Wu Tsang's *The Looks* (2015) are linked in that they both explore the stories of stage performers and delve into complex social issues ranging from gender to the division between private and public spheres. Jung's single-channel video sheds light on *yeosung gukgeuk*, a Korean musical theatre form that died out after reaching the height of its popularity in the 1960s. *Yeosung gukgeuk* was known for its all-female casts who performed both gender roles and the film depicts the process through which a young performer transforms into her role as a man before coming onstage. This representation of masculinity as masquerade addresses gender identity in personal, social and cultural contexts. Wu Tsang's two-channel video expands to a wider consideration of the same topic by addressing genderfluidity and genderlessness. A smaller screen in the middle of a room shows an androgynous performer preparing and rehearsing in his or her flat and after the conclusion of that video, a larger second screen on the back wall

invites us to see the onstage character who is similarly ambiguous in terms of gender. This installation further reinforces the video's topic of genderfluidity through audio channels where the performer's personified cyborg-like voice posing questions about gender identity confusion both inside and outside of the videos.

### Shirin Neshat, *Rapture*

Neshat's early two-channel black-and-white video work *Rapture* (1999) is the oldest in the exhibition but still notable for its outstanding aesthetic and experimental qualities. This installation includes two videos projected on opposite walls, forcing the viewer to stand in the middle and only being able to see one screen at a time. In one of the parallel narratives, several men with white shirts move around in a castle, and on the other, a group of women wearing black chadors head from the desert towards the sea. By separating the genders in this manner, Neshat's feminist sensibility comes to the surface and addresses pre-conceived notions of gendered societies and their social, political and psychological effects. 📺

*Staging Film: the relation of space and image in video art* runs from 29 January–17 April 2016. For more information visit [www.gagallery.com](http://www.gagallery.com)