

EYES,

COME BACK

A STAGED EXHIBITION

BY Setareh Shahbazi

WITH Mirene Arsanios Haytham el-Wardany Ann-Kristin Hamm Nancy Naser Al Deen Sama Ahmadi
Reihaneh Mehrad Sedami Gracia Elvis Theodor Ophelia Azilinson Malonda + + +

OPENING

12.06.2025 19:00

ON SHOW

13.06.–03.08.2025 THURSDAY – SUNDAY 14:00–19:00

TEAM

CURATION Kelly Krugman Meghna Singh

CURATORIAL ADVISOR Mirjami Schuppert

EXHIBITION SCENOGRAPHY & PRODUCTION Nancy Naser Al Deen Sama Ahmadi

INSTALLATION & ART HANDLING Ayham Allouch Rafał Łazar Mar Mariou

Jessie Omamogho Dušan Rodić Mine Serizawa

PROJECT MANAGEMENT Anna Fasolato

GENERAL MANAGEMENT Lema Sikod

COMMUNICATIONS Anna Jäger

GRAPHIC DESIGN Aziza Ahmad

TRANSLATION Anna Jäger

INTERNSHIP Kyle Colón Angel Fan

FELLOWSHIP Abraham Tettey

LIGHT DESIGN Emilio Cordero

TECH Bert Günther

COLLABORATION AND FUNDING The project is generously supported by AKB Stiftung.

S A V V Y CONTEMPORARY
THE LABORATORY OF FORM-IDEAS


AKB STIFTUNG
Stiftung der Familie Carl-Ernst Büchting

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02	A B O U T T H E E X H I B I T I O N	05
03	A B O U T T H E A R T I S T	08
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ACTIVATIONS

27.06.2025 19:00

TWO - PART - PERFORMANCE

Anti/Inter-Connection

Part 1: *Goat-Heart-ing on Site-Poetics of Coward-ness/*

جول

Part 2: *A Heart Carving After Air*

with Reihaneh Mehrad & Sedami Gracia Elvis Theodor

Ophelia Azilanon

04.07.2025 19:00

CLOSED GATHERING

Memory Shuffle

with Haytham el-Wardany

24.07.2025 19:00

SPOKEN WORD & CONCERT

Black Medusa: Seven Chants On Bodies And Battlefields

with Malonda

TOURS IN SAVVY TONGUES

14.06.2025	15:00	ENGLISH	Setareh Shahbazi
22.06.2025	17:00	ENGLISH	Meghna Singh
26.06.2025	16:00	ENGLISH	Kelly Krugman
03.07.2025	16:00	ENGLISH	Kyle Colón
12.07.2025	17:00	ENGLISH	The production team
25.07.2025	16:00	ENGLISH	Meghna Singh
27.07.2025	16:00	DEUTSCH	Setareh Shahbazi
31.07.2025	17:00	DEUTSCH	Anna Jäger
01.08.2025	16:00	ENGLISH	Kelly Krugman

EYES, COME BACK: STAGINGS OF EMBODIED SIGHT

KELLY KRUGMAN &
MEGHNA SINGH

Setareh Shahbazi is the 2024/2025 recipient of Wi Di Mimba Wi – a commission prize by AKB-Stiftung & SAVVY Contemporary. *EYES, COME BACK* is a solo show that pushes against the contained vision of an artist as a singular body or as a singular creator. Instead, the exhibition unfolds as an evolving collaborative inquiry into memory and its ruptures, forging a collective gaze through which to look upon the world and ourselves. In doing so, *EYES, COME BACK* becomes both a meditation on remembrance and a refusal to forget.

In a historical moment when the facades of democracy crumble across the West, Shahbazi's work holds a critical urgency, channelling the disruptive spirit of the trickster and the power of an interconnected gaze. Speaking and seeing in dream states, with the saturation of lives lived in between peripheries, Shahbazi's practice invites us to squint and stare into the murky depths that connect the struggles of Tehran to Beirut, Beirut to Berlin, and far beyond.

For eyes that ache with the exhaustion of witnessing, remembering, and processing the ongoing brutalities across our world, *EYES, COME BACK* offers openings to look into, to step through, and come together within. The exhibition, which unfurls through a series of stages, constructs a spiralling and disrupted line of sight that weaves the viewer into participation. Frames within frames and an attention to the margins – to the underside of “staging”, to the materiality of the art space – highlight the multi-sensorial texture of collective sight, moving through zones of liminality (*GATE // BACK-GATE*), of rest and gathering (*THE LOOPHOLE*), enmeshment and transformation (*THE PORTAL*), and spaces of superimposition (*RE-MEMORIES*).

Each stage hosts a collective of narratives and actors, whose works and ways of seeing overlap and enjam, presenting a vision of the multiple as experienced through the multitude.

INTERWOVEN SENSING:
FRACTURES, FLASHBACKS,
FLICKERS

The show's title draws from a Native American story Shahbazi has long carried with her: a tale in which a coyote, an archetypal trickster, meets an old man in the desert who throws his eyes into a cottonwood tree to see from above, calling them back with the words, "Eyes, come back." The coyote learns the ritual, excited by its widened vision and repeats it until, through overuse, it loses its eyes to the tree. Struggling without sight, the coyote borrows a mouse's and a bull's eyes, navigating the world through a multiplicitous gaze. Versions of this story are told across Indigenous oral traditions of the Ute, Pueblo, and Warm Springs peoples of North America, each bearing lessons on perception and the perils of self-serving motives over interdependent ways of being.¹

The story offers a conceptualization of sight and vision as deeply layered: spiritual, emotional, relational, and harkening to an interwoven mode of sensing – a gaze weakened when it strays too far from the communal body, a gaze re-made and re-strengthened by the collective. This multi-bodied, interwoven mode of seeing that the story invokes is akin to the one Setareh Shahbazi forges in her work. Playing with polymorphous perception – who sees, what is seen, when, and why – and how it is that we become implicated in the act of looking, Shahbazi creates a direct antithesis to technologies of sight that exist as forms of neocolonial and imperial domination. The oppositional eyes in the trees of our times are the drones supervising the ongoing destruction of Palestine, Kashmir, Sudan, Yemen and further communities made vulnerable by mutating inheritances of empires; the online monitors

¹ Variations of the coyote eye-juggling story are found in several Native American storytelling traditions. See: *The Eye Juggler Coyote*, Ute Indian Tribe, Utah Education Network, accessed April 2025, <https://www.uen.org/americanindian/tribes/Ute-Uintah/books/UOuteEyeJugglerCoyote-scrolling.pdf>; Terry Tafoya, "Eyes in the Sky," as recounted in Heather Annis's blog, March 2005, <https://heatherannis.livejournal.com/2906.html>; and "Coyote and His Eyes," oral tradition transcript, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Coconote App, accessed April 2025, <https://coconote.app/notes/52e709e7-3575-4664-8949-1447bd4baf2/transcript>.

and the cameras aimed at dissenters in the metropole heart of Berlin; the internet censors blacking out and controlling what is visible in Tehran. Within these contexts of visualization as control and erasure, Shahbazi's work intervenes within dominant regimes of seeing: disrupting systems designed to obscure, silence, and suppress through the co-assembling of a gaze that instead reconnects and co-narrates.

Shahbazi's manifold ways of seeing do not immediately offer high-definition coherence or transparency. The artist works instead with the language of the subconscious as it meets with the conscious and the much-mediated nature of memory, blurring the real into the surreal, inciting disorientation so as to move towards re-orientation. Weaving together photography, digital montage, archival materials, drawing, and installation – often through transdisciplinary formations – Shahbazi's practice holds space for what cannot be resolved: the fractured, the flashback, and the flickering. The work often begins with a collection of images composed of private archives, film stills, postcards, snapshots, newspaper clippings, and photographs taken by the artist herself. Yet, these images undergo a transformation, shifting form through layered reconstructions and manipulations. Their colours dissolve into the unreal, those mimicking the otherworldly and hallucinatory, mirroring the fraught workings of memory as it tries to reconcile pain, fragmentation, and hope. In this realm, image, identity, and place emerge not as fixed constructs but as mutable processes where multiplicities – of peoples, places, temporalities – enjoin.

A GAZE RE-ASSEMBLED, CO-ASSEMBLED

EYES, COME BACK offers an alternate vision and entry into Setareh Shahbazi's practice. Older works surface in new forms, fragmentary and re-shaped. They are "re-membered", in the sense that Toni Morrison evoked: by recalling and re-assembling what has been dismembered.² Shahbazi's works are made of layers, patterns, pixels – composed and re-encountered through time, through perspective, and with more eyes than her own. Memory is re-configured and co-configured. We invoke Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali here too, who wrote in his poem "Farewell": "My memory gets in the way of your history."³ Shahbazi expands the poet's statement, inviting us all to create collective memories that get in the way of the oppressor's history. In this way, the exhibition space breathes in light that blinds and blends, resisting a simple separation between then and now, and between individual perceptions and collective recollection.

The centre of EYES, COME BACK is shaped by a photograph Shahbazi has held for many years, one in which three patterned planes collide inside a

shrine of surrealist distortion. Near to curtains, these patterns – separated and printed on carpet, entangled here once more – converge past-present-future onto an axis and invite us to sit with one another, to speak, and to recall. When an inside is constructed, the process of its construction is not hidden or disappeared. Across the exhibition space, the apparatus of the show, its inner gears and cogs, are decidedly made visible with wooden planks, buckets of paint and cardboard backings revealing themselves, to showcase the labour of its building. Shahbazi insists we do not forget the frames of what is constructed behind the scenes of our making, both within the context of exhibitions and the formation of our memory: what is visible is only part of our stories, stories we continuously remake and reconstruct.

These frames do not just show, they also gather. Resting benches and carpets throughout the space echo hearths and Iranian takhts: sites of return, of laying down, of processing in presence. We are welcomed to sit around an envisioned fire, where we are invited not only to view but to take part in shared inquiry and shared feeling with one another. To ask: how do we collectively process? How do our eyes – and multisensory bodies – come together? What do we make possible when we do?

EYES, COME BACK is fastened together by this scenographic intervention – which itself fastens together different arcs of collaborative creation. The exhibition space is, doubly, the coyote's collective gaze as much as it is that gaze's field of vision. Artistic proposals and activations by Shahbazi's collaborators frame and form each stage, superimposing and layering meanings. Nancy Naser Al Deen and Sama Ahmadi translate Shahbazi's scenography into the SAVVY space, building the architecture and framing for these superimpositions. Gatherings and performative interventions invite embodied, collective presence, hosted by Haytham el-Wardany, Malonda, and Reihaneh Mehrad and Sedami Gracia Elvis Theodor Ophelia Azilino – the latter duo sustaining presence within the exhibition through their respective installations in the space. Ann-Kristin Hamm's brushstrokes absorb and blur presence and remembrance; Mirene Arsanios's voice fills the space, interrogating doom as well as what might precede and follow it. Worlds end and are remade, time and again, within the orbit of Shahbazi and her collaborators, who remake with re-memory, with hands and hammers, calls and responses, and by the attempt to carry each other.

² Morrison, Toni. "I wanted to carve out a world both culture specific and race-free... [All of which presented itself to me as a project full of paradox and contradiction]," *The Guardian*, 8 Aug. 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/08/toni-morrison-essay-race-culture>. Reflecting on her novel *Beloved*, Morrison writes: "It was in *Beloved* that all of these matters coalesced for me in new and major ways. History versus memory, and memory versus memorylessness. Rememory as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past. And it was the struggle, the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting, that became the device of the narrative."

³ Ali, Agha Shahid. *The Country Without a Post Office*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1997.

With this show, Shahbazi insists that reclaiming our vision – our ability to see with more eyes and more senses, within and without – is a form of survival, noncompliance, and collective processing through action. E Y E S , C O M E B A C K becomes a fugitive space of resistance where we are asked to question, to come together, to interact, and to collectively seek maps through loopholes, by means of holes in the sky, as Joy Harjo writes:

In the last days of the fourth world I wished to
make a map for
those who would climb through the hole in the sky.

My only tools were the desires of humans as they
emerged
from the killing fields, from the bedrooms and the
kitchens.

For the soul is a wanderer with many hands and
feet.

[...]

An imperfect map will have to do, little one.

— “A Map to the Next World” by Joy Harjo

You find the whole poem at the end of the handout.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

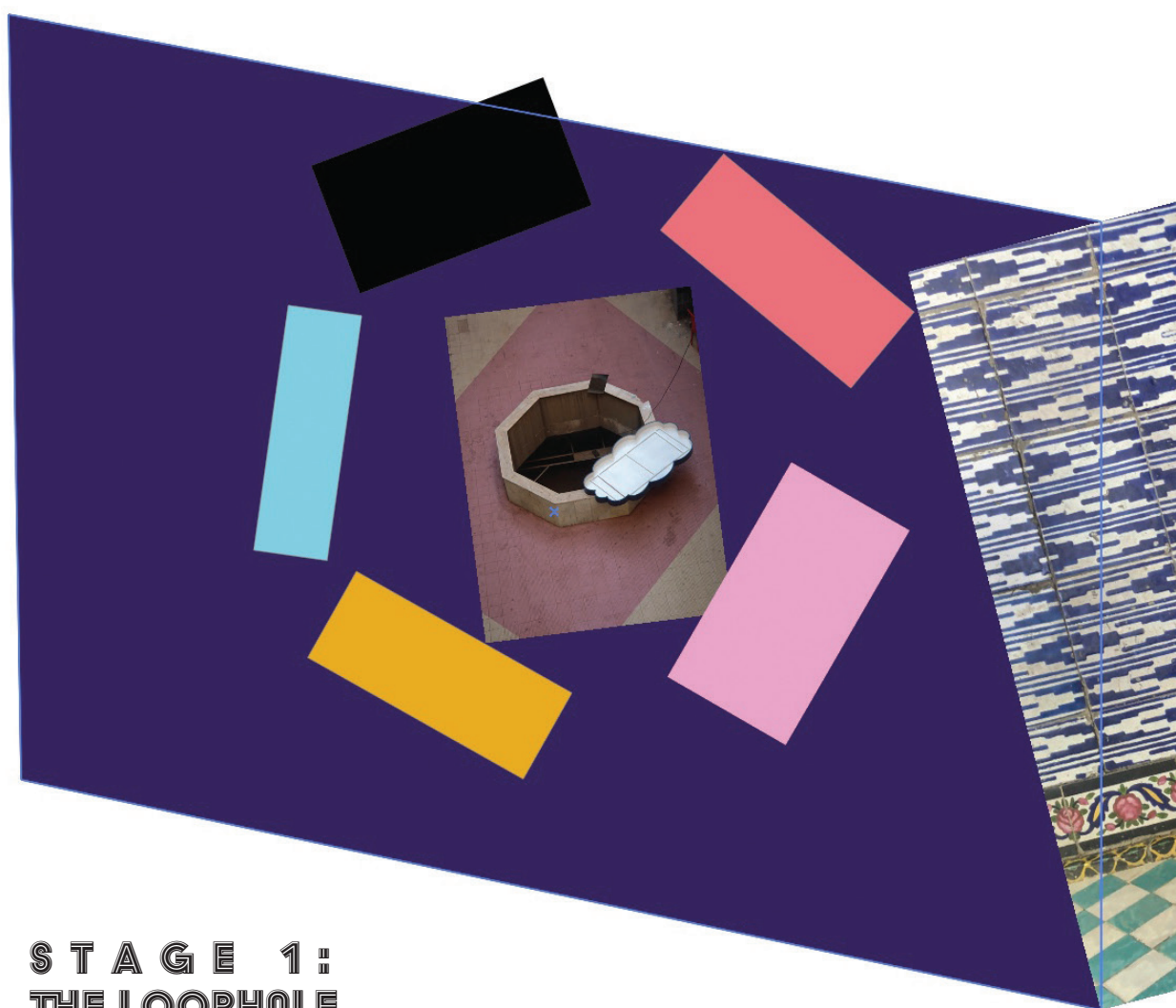
S E T A R E H S H A H B A Z I was born in Tehran, one year and one day before the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Her family moved to the south of Germany in the 1980s as political refugees. She studied Scenography and Media Arts at the State Academy for Art and Design in Karlsruhe and spent the following ten years living and working between Beirut, Tehran and Berlin, where she has been based since 2013. Her work draws inspiration from visual notes that surround her, from old family photographs to newspaper clippings, feeding into her conceptual installations, multi-coloured prints, and digitally manipulated photomontages. Through her artistic practice, Shahbazi offers reconstructed narratives, simultaneously provided by her personal and collected stories. Her works have been displayed in exhibitions in Iran, Lebanon, Egypt, Germany, Italy, and France, among others.

ABOUT W I D I M I M B A W I C O M I S S I O N P R I Z E

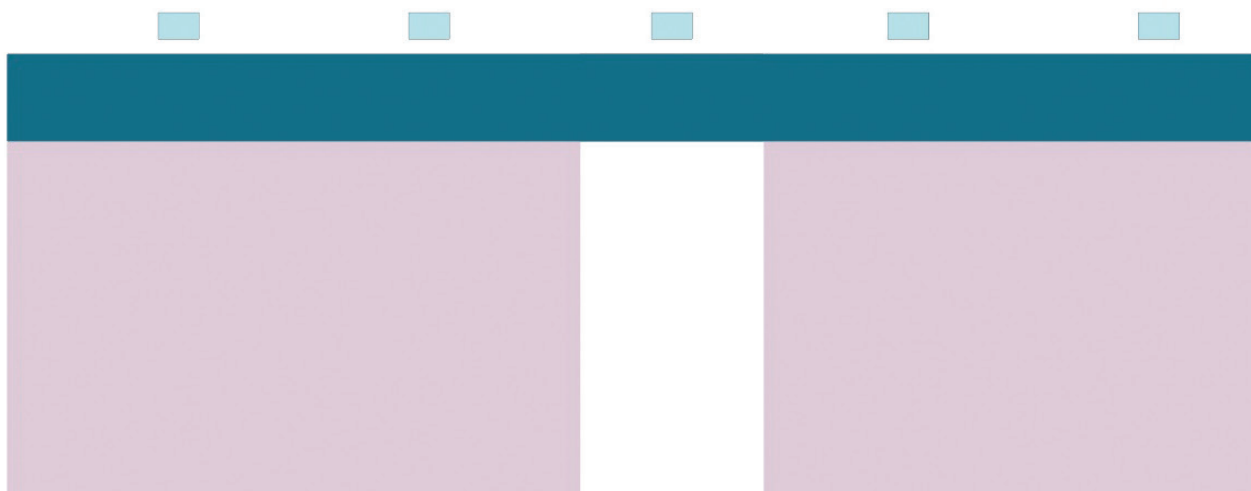
AKB Stiftung and S A V V Y Contemporary have teamed up to provide a long-term commission grant for artists of colour based in Germany. In addition to celebrating and rewarding an artist's outstanding work, this grant is an invitation to relate, to collaborate and to create together – according to the philosophies and practices lived by S A V V Y Contemporary. Our intent with this initiative is to build a strong relationship and support for artists of colour towards a richer and more diverse cultural landscape.

Thanks to the generous support of the AKB Stiftung, the selected artist receives a one year working grant as well as funds to support the creation of a new artwork and curatorial support.

The grant is open to artists of colour based in Germany of all backgrounds, media, ages, stages of career. Candidates were nominated by a board of advisors and selected by a five-member jury. This programme is a long-term engagement to build sustainable support structures in the art world. The grant will be awarded every two years.



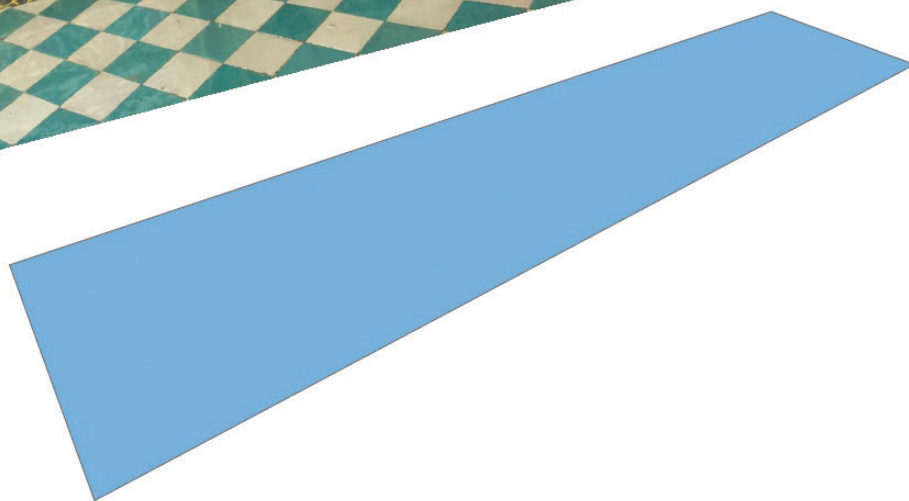
STAGE 1: THE LOOPHOLE



STAGE 2: THE PORTAL



STAGE 3: RE-MEMORIES



GATE // BACK-GATE

COLLABORATORS

MIRENE ARSANIOS is the author of the short story collection, *The City Outside the Sentence*, *Notes on Mother Tongues*, and *The Autobiography of a Language*. She lives in Brooklyn and is currently the program director at the Poetry Project.

HAYTHAM EL-WARDANY is a writer and translator, living and working (still) in Berlin. He spent the last year listening to talking animals, in fables and elsewhere, and learned from them how to speak in moments of danger. His latest book, *Jackals and The Missing Letters* (Al-Karma, 2023), considers forgotten expressions of hope within Arabic fables, where animals speak and humans listen, in a moment of post “Arab Spring” speechlessness. In previous publications, including *The Book of Sleep and How to Disappear*, el-Wardany has examined the potential of passivity, through regimes of listening and the dialectics of sleep and vigilance. He is the recipient of the Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism 2022/2023.

ANN-KRISTIN HAMM was born in Mönchengladbach in 1977 and studied painting at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. She lives and works with her family in Berlin.

NANCY NASER AL DEEN is a multidisciplinary performance artist and scenographer based in Berlin. Nancy’s collaboration-based practice focuses on audiovisual archives and corpo-spatial dynamics. Experimenting with architecture, movement, and image, Nancy investigates politics of space, migration, and transnational solidarities. Nancy is a Dabke dancer trained by Hayakel Baalbek. They have worked with multiple artists, collectives, and institutions in Berlin and internationally including SAVVY Contemporary, documenta fifteen, and Ashkal Alwan Beirut, among others. Nancy joined Fehras Publishing Practices in 2023.

SAMA AHMADI [they/them] is an Iranian multidisciplinary artist and space strategist who has been working since 2019 on Quasi Objects, a collective project embodying communality. Their work, as a queer person growing up in the South, is embedded in collective practices. Sama is currently a board member of Flutgraben e.V. in Berlin and has been part of Fehras Publishing Practices since 2022.

REIHANEH MEHRAD is an interdisciplinary artist, author, and stage designer whose practice operates at the intersection of spatial strategies and artistic research, with a particular focus on the importance of economics of queer commons in resistance and trans-communal processes. They approach scenography as a methodological tool for critically engaging with socio-political events and rendering them tangible. Through spatial and visual design elements, their work explores the complex impacts of systemic, post-colonial, and imperial structures of violence, as well as ethical laundries in theological impositions and mediated forms of proxies of touch.

SEDAMI GRACIA ELVIS THEODOR OPHELIA AZILINON is a multidisciplinary artist based in Berlin working with photography, new media, and sound.

MALONDA is a Berlin-based singer and “electric diva” who writes her own songs and shines on theatre stages. She is passionate about anti-racist and queer-feminist issues. Singing and speaking about gender roles, sexuality, and diversity, Malonda has made a name for herself as a political artist. She toured across Germany with Laing, Großstadtgeflüster, and Moka Efti Orchestra, with her highly acclaimed debut album *Mein Herz ist ein dunkler Kontinent* (My Heart is a Dark Continent), and played at major German showcase festivals such as c/o pop, Pop-Kultur Berlin, and the Reeperbahnfestival. With the grace of Hildegard Knef and the power of Grace Jones, Malonda celebrates on stage, where you can not look away and are brought to listen.

S T A G E S

Written by KELLY KRUGMAN [°°°] and
MEGHNA SINGH [***]

G A T E // B A C K - G A T E

At the threshold, impossible light. Binaries of entry/exit or inside/outside collapse as you near G A T E // B A C K - G A T E, where an encounter with luminescence collapses the line between stage/offstage as well. You're invited to participate, your body called to full attention via the punctum of the eyes; iris, pupil, retina, all respond together to the impossibility of situating with precision the present. Past this initial opening are Tehran and Beirut, distilled from moments between departure and arrival: on buses en route to protests, at shrines where respite and rest are on offer, while waiting at a car mechanic's garage. Friends and collaborators, strangers and kin wait just beyond the margins of what is visible. We are many, they remind you, we are here. The eyes – in Berlin now, distant and separate(d) – process and flicker as what flashes back flashes forwards and sideways as well. You have to squint to see the details of the faraway flowers against the light, but that's no matter: the specifics of each, the exact shade or number of petals, matter only as much as other flowers that might bloom within your iris alongside. * * *

W O R K S I N C L U D E D

Yazd, Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, pigment print, framed, 35 x 26 cm

Belovd, Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, pigment print, framed, 30 x 40 cm

Ma Hastim, Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, pigment print, framed, 30 x 40 cm

S T A G E O N E : T H E L O O P H O L E

The hours circle, they curl and coil around a flattened plane. How do you distinguish rest from the inertia of precarity? What comes before movement, what is it that propels you to move towards another, inwards, or homewards? Proximity aches – but distance does too. If you stand too close, you risk the heavy-handed splash of what “Kills And Keeps On Killing”; too far away, you will have none of the protection it promises. Measure the distance from this hearth and choose your vantage point to make not a line but a spiral. What we promise each other is the tender possibility of heat and water, bread and wine, warm cookies and a crisp, cold Apfelschorle. The promise at times may be false and will arrive soured: smiles and frowns abstract us into the pixel realm; a shadow audience scrutinises and surveils us, commands intelligibility. Let your eyes soften instead. Should you some day pause at the heart of an abandoned shopping mall in Beirut, look on with blurred vision so that it is instead a cool hollow on a warm day, a shaded centre, a circular well, sunstruck at the edges – even if what is seen is looped and pooled shadow. You must imagine it, will it into being; the stories we inherit say it is already within you, that the way out is the inversion and ricochet of the way through. Where there is a bed, let your body flicker and flutter between memory and dream. We agree that to linger is to participate and wait for those who will remember us as we remember them. They are just beyond the lines of our sights, constellating with us into shapes recognisable through cloud, fog, mist and heat-shimmer. * * *

C O L L A B O R A T O R S

Ann-Kristin Hamm

W O R K S I N C L U D E D

The Cloud, Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, printed carpet, 267 x 200 cm

Kills And Keeps On Killing, Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, pigment print, framed, 35 x 26 cm

Cookies (Sad and Happy), Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, pigment print, framed, 35 x 26 cm

Untitled, site-specific painting, Ann-Kristin Hamm, 2025, ink and pigmented wax colour on cardboard, 250 x 540 cm

This stage has been conceived and shaped with site-specific paintings by Ann-Kristin Hamm. In this work, Ann-Kristin engages in a reciprocal dialogue with Setareh – not as an act of one-to-one reflection but one of porous refraction. What emerges has been translated through brushstroke and spatial intuition: a visual echo shaped by memory and movement, channelled through a body standing still in the eye of a storm. Ann-Kristin's palette – with colours conjured from the ringed reach of what surrounds her – holds Setareh's journeys and family photo albums, shared rooms and the arc of deep, long friendship. These resurface, through the distorted ripples of remembrance, not as fixed references but as textures, tremors, patterns, mimicking the organic lines of the natural and the rectilinear framing of the structural. The cardboard canvases, mobile and tangible, are sensitive, responsive bodies that are shaped in turn by surrounding bodies. Not monumental and framed, not elevated by being affixed to the wall, these paintings stake no claim on permanence but are holy nonetheless in the intent, active listening they offer to Setareh's imagery. Ann-Kristin's part-sketch, part-calligraphic work – different here from her usual practice of the filled and full canvases made in the quiet of the studio space – is a secret reply audible to those within the radius of the body, within the circle of arm's length that spirals both in and out. * * *

A C T I V A T I O N

04.07.2025 19.00

C L O S E D G A T H E R I N G

Memory Shuffle

with Haytham el-Wardany

S T A G E T W O : T H E P O R T A L

How to arrive? We land in hands reaching for one another – skin unravelling to bone, to flesh turned purple and blue. A shared anatomy, a sacred refusal. We see through masks, we move toward. A black-out, a flashback. Gaps in memory, in faces, in mouths. She peers alone, the group becomes unseen: the family re-framed, re-formed. Where do our distanced gazes fall, and what fades when they leave? The blue pill is swallowed. The processing is delayed. What alternative world does it conjure and promise? We are forced to eat – by hand, by thorn, by blade – with hunger and hesitation. Our bodies are shaped by how we consume and what we resist. The gut recalling what the mind aimed to discard. Through this channel, a portal opens. Maharloo in Southern Iran, Shiraz, a lake pink with salt and ancient algae, liable to vanish in the summer. A mineral crust where water once was. Change will cycle. We are passing through the threshold. Nearby, there is an eye in the pistil, the female reproductive element, of a flower. A swollen base, containing seeds. Some flowers and their seeds hold both a poison and a cure. An ancient principle in toxicology is that, "the dose makes the poison." This flower, yellow-white and shrouded in midnight purple, primel/primrose, has been used as a salve for wounds and was formerly considered excellent against nervous hysterical disorders. We are passing through the threshold. Change will cycle. Will you follow? ° ° °

W O R K S I N C L U D E D

Happy End (With A Certain Sensatio n), 2023, room installation with lacquered wood wall, print on carpet, golden curtain and a series of digital images

With A Certain Sensatio n, Setareh Shahbazi, 2023, pigment print, framed, 130 x 100 cm

Spectral Days (Image #24), Setareh Shahbazi, 2013, pigment print, framed, 36 x 27 cm

Blue Pill, Setareh Shahbazi, 2023, pigment print, framed, 100 x 75 cm

Spoon And Roses, Setareh Shahbazi, 2023, pigment print, framed, 100 x 75 cm

Pink Lake, Setareh Shahbazi, 2023, pigment print, framed, 36 x 27 cm

Spectral Days (Image #22), pigment print, framed, 36 x 25 cm

A C T I V A T I O N

24.07.2025 19:00

S P O K E N W O R D & C O N C E R T

Black Medusa: Seven Chants On Bodies And Battlefields with Malonda

STAGE THREE: RE-MEMORIES

Recollections gather not in displays, but the curtain in between. The decorative overtakes the scene itself: the mothers, grandmothers, and daughters took for the Caspian Sea, to the beds set by the water. A place demanding you eat, sit, rest. Exhaustion is consensus, to loosen the weight of country, of alleys, of worlds. This bed – this takht – like every bed, a geography of falling. A pin on a map, of where we wish to melt and stay. Here, the bed appears as a bare frame, its cushioned comfort removed. A skeletal base draped with crimson forms that gleam and gyre as red birds perched on a black square, their beginning and end unknown. This interrupted resting place becomes a site of absence, evoking a waiting for a rest that is yet to come. We then teleport to Germany landing on a vitrine, somewhere in a now-absent museum. A mouth sewn shut, the silence before exile. George Grosz's drawing from his notebook with scrawled worlds breathes through the glass. "The poor & the rich..reverse..Weeping stones.. straightjacket". Even when silenced, the mouth remembers how to open. The surgical precision of unstitching your clamped lips. Look closer. Do you see whose eyes flicker there? ° ° °

COLLABORATORS

Mirene Arsanios, Reihaneh Mehrad, Sama Ahmadi

WORKS INCLUDED

Takht (Bed), Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, pigment print, framed, 21,5 x 25 cm

Sedami's Bed, Sama Ahmadi with paintings by Ann-Kristin Hamm, 2025, 2 x 2 m

George Grosz, Zugenähtes Maul (Sewn-Shut Mouth), Setareh Shahbazi, 2025, pigment print, framed, 21,5 x 25 cm

Antedoom, (excerpt), soundpiece based on a text by Mirene Arsanios with sound design by Nicki Neeke in collaboration with Setareh Shahbazi, 2017

A sound emits, folds itself into your ears. You wait: ears open, body still, silent, and yet full of inner motion and injury. A room holds you in suspension. Is this the edge of diagnosis or the beginning of interrogation? A white coat becomes uniform, becomes authority, becomes an architecture of naming what cannot be contained. You are asked to recall the trembling in your body. Your pulse syncs with the flares of distant apartheid. The stethoscope pressed to chest becomes the ear pressed to wall, becomes the surveillance that sorts the sick from the well, the mad from the supposedly sane, the compliant from the dangerous. You begin to wonder what gaze watches you now. Whose categories slice through your wholeness? What logics diagnose your

difference as deficiency? The voices outside whirl, merge, sink into your own. The questions return: Who is seeing? Who is speaking? A reflection shattered into many screens. The room tightens. Your diagnosis lingers. In this anteroom, overflowing is pathologized – the too-much of feeling becomes disorder, the completeness of a response to an impossible world becomes symptom. What violence will this scan reveal? Breaking open as breaking through. In this anteroom of collapse, we are asked if we want to move. The fragments insist on rising. They rise not as symptoms but as witnesses, as prophecy. ° ° °

Goat-Heart-ing On Site-Poetics Of Coward-Ness/ جزل, Reihaneh Mehrad, 2025, metal curtain of cutlery, sky curtain, bricks

Metal spoons, forks, and knives cascade without their sustenance, echoing the "Spoons and Roses" photograph on the exhibition's far side. The remnants of a kitchen are turned to a splitting waterfall, metal morphing to sky and sea, contorting shape. The cutlery warps into small beings marching, sitting, laying, embracing: frozen in time. Between inside and outside, the inside spills outward, the sky seeps inward, and the boundaries that once held home collapse into cavities placed in suspension. Adjacent to this installation, the exhibition team was invited alongside the artist to invoke their inner child selves, letting their hands scrawl upon the wall – gestures returning to first languages of messing with mark-making, where emotional language seeps through. The brick wall blocks the entrance to the other side. We stand in in-between waiting, as the scattered cutlery holds its breath, in a ballet of what home might be. Reihaneh Mehrdad writes on their installation and their activation forthcoming, "In the theology of rupture and the absoluteness of brokenness, I want to reach through the panic to get to you. In this shattered order, I found makom – מוקמה –, the place where my hand becomes the table, and absence sits down like a guest. All I wish... I wish I could hold the roofs up, those walls bearing their own sliver of sky: a burnt-offering-site." ° ° °

ACTIVATION

27.06.2025 19:00

TWO - PART - PERFORMANCE

Anti/Inter-Connection

Part 1: *Goat-Heart-ing on Site-Poetics of Coward-ness/ جزل*

Part 2: *A Heart Carving After Air*

with Reihaneh Mehrad & Sedami Gracia Elvis Theodor Ophelia Azilnon

All stages include scenographic elements and constructions designed and produced by Nancy Naser Al Deen and Sama Ahmadi, who have contributed as well to the spatial conceptualization of the exhibition space as a whole.

SAVVY PILLARS

SAVVY.DOC display

We invite you to sit down and read through this constellation of books from our library that dialogue with the exhibition, selected by the exhibition team. The space is scenographically conceived by Kyle Colón and Angel Fan with Meghna Singh and Kelly Krugman.

COLONIAL NEIGHBOURS display

Colonial Neighbours is a participatory archive and research project investigating the colonial history of Germany, including its ongoing impacts upon the present. The project aims to address gaps in Germany's politics in order to question dominant knowledge structures and historical narratives. The objects and the stories carrying them are connected to the history of racism, and that racism haunts us until today.

A MAP TO THE NEXT WORLD

By JOY HARJO
for DESIRAY KIERA CHEE

In the last days of the fourth world I wished to make a map for
those who would climb through the hole in the sky.

My only tools were the desires of humans as they emerged
from the killing fields, from the bedrooms and the kitchens.

For the soul is a wanderer with many hands and feet.

The map must be of sand and can't be read by ordinary light. It
must carry fire to the next tribal town, for renewal of spirit.

In the legend are instructions on the language of the land, how it
was we forgot to acknowledge the gift, as if we were not in it or of it.

Take note of the proliferation of supermarkets and malls, the
altars of money. They best describe the detour from grace.

Keep track of the errors of our forgetfulness; the fog steals our
children while we sleep.

Flowers of rage spring up in the depression. Monsters are born
there of nuclear anger.

Trees of ashes wave good-bye to good-bye and the map appears to
disappear.

We no longer know the names of the birds here, how to speak to
them by their personal names.

Once we knew everything in this lush promise.

What I am telling you is real and is printed in a warning on the
map. Our forgetfulness stalks us, walks the earth behind us, leav-
ing a trail of paper diapers, needles, and wasted blood.

An imperfect map will have to do, little one.

The place of entry is the sea of your mother's blood, your father's
small death as he longs to know himself in another.

There is no exit.

The map can be interpreted through the wall of the intestine—a
spiral on the road of knowledge.

You will travel through the membrane of death, smell cooking
from the encampment where our relatives make a feast of fresh
deer meat and corn soup, in the Milky Way.

They have never left us; we abandoned them for science.

And when you take your next breath as we enter the fifth world
there will be no X, no guidebook with words you can carry.

You will have to navigate by your mother's voice, renew the song
she is singing.

Fresh courage glimmers from planets.

And lights the map printed with the blood of history, a map you
will have to know by your intention, by the language of suns.

When you emerge note the tracks of the monster slayers where they
entered the cities of artificial light and killed what was killing us.

You will see red cliffs. They are the heart, contain the ladder.

A white deer will greet you when the last human climbs from the
destruction.

Remember the hole of shame marking the act of abandoning our
tribal grounds.

We were never perfect.

Yet, the journey we make together is perfect on this earth who was
once a star and made the same mistakes as humans.

We might make them again, she said.

Crucial to finding the way is this: there is no beginning or end.

You must make your own map.

Joy Harjo. *How We Became Human:*
New and Selected Poems: 1975-2001
(W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 2002)

MORE INFORMATION

savvy-contemporary.com

S A V V Y Contemporary – The Laboratory of form-ideas is an artistic organisation, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks – a space for conviviality and cultural plurilog. S A V V Y Contemporary is a public and independent organism in perpetual becoming, animated by around 25 members and a network of collaborators, co-creating community and communities it breathes with. Founded in 2009, S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of the West and the non-West to understand their conceptualisations, ethical systems, achievements, and ruins. It develops tools, proposes perspectives and nourishes practices towards imagining a world inhabited together.

The space was founded in 2009 in Berlin-Neukölln by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, SAVVY's artistic director until 2022. From 2023 to 2025, the space – located in Berlin-Wedding since 2016 – was under artistic direction by Renan Laru-an. Currently, SAVVY is under executive direction by Lema Sikod and Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock.

S A V V Y Contemporary is Grace Baggott Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Bona Bell Sagal Farah Anna Fasolato Billy Fowo Raisa Galofre Manuela Garcia Aldana Hajra Haider Karrar Daniellis Hernandez Calderon Anna Jäger Laura Klöckner Kelly Krugman Mokia Dinnyuy Manjoh Matthew Hansen Rafal Lazar Nancy Naser Al Deen Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung Abhishek Nilamber Matthias Rademacher Lema Sikod Meghna Singh Lili Somogyi Ola Zielińska

D E S I G N Elsa Westreicher

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