

## Mina Heydari-Waite

همسفر

(*Hamsafar*/ translation: *Companion Traveller*)

First floor - Corner Gallery

In همسفر imagination meets lived experience. Heydari-Waite is an Iranian-British artist who is part of the second generation diaspora created after the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. In *Hamsafar* she creates a stylised environment in which an assembly of props act as visual and audio cues that weave together a semi-fictional narrative set in both the past and future.

Heydari-Waite is interested in the process of how Iranian cultural histories are relayed and how diaspora artists collect and reassemble cultural experiences. She recognises the scattered, multiple, and sometimes contradictory nature of collective historical narrative and, how for Iranians who grew up outside Iran, these narratives are often a mixture of fiction, fantasy, memory and research.

The 1979 Revolution in which the Shah of Iran was overthrown and replaced by an Islamic Republic, was a 'Black Swan event' that created a sudden rent in Iranian culture. Coined by Nassim Taleb, the term describes an event that is unpredictable, has a huge impact and afterwards, has clear explanations despite the fact no 'experts' had seen it coming.

In the 1970s pop music was all the rage in Iran and artists combined pop, rock and jazz instrumentals with Persian poetry. After the Revolution, pop was banned and many artists left the country. One starlet stayed in Tehran, though unable to perform for decades - Googoosh. Googoosh was an icon of the 70s with her miniskirts and trademark haircuts (including the "Googooshy"). In 1975 she starred in the dramatic-romantic film *Hamsafar*, the title song of which features in Heydari-Waite's video work. For many Iranians Googoosh is a symbol of pre-revolutionary Iran. However, while those emigres who grew up outside Iran may find a sense of belonging in her poetic, fantastical lyrics, the music also invokes a version of Iran that no longer exists.

Semi-fictitious recollections and speculations, the artist believes, parallel the ways diaspora artists look for an individual voice in the complex plurality of shared collective histories; creating new settings for themselves and imagining possible counter futures in a time when the present often feels it is sliding into dystopia.

Heydari-Waite lives and works in Scotland. Graduating from Edinburgh College of Art, she has worked in collaboration with artist Gemma Crook as Peel Eezy and commissioned by MAP Magazine for *The Showroom*, Glasgow International (2018).

Other exhibitions include: *Reimagining Ancient Greece*, Belsay Hall, Northumberland, *The Plaza* as Peel Eezy, EMBASSY Gallery, Edinburgh *Wrap-Around*, Scottish Poetry Library and *Annual Exhibition*, Royal Scottish Academy.

***Mount Strange and the Temple of Fame*, Summerhall, 1 Summerhall, Edinburgh EH9 1PL, [www.summerhall.co.uk](http://www.summerhall.co.uk)**

Curator: Wendy Law, [mail@wendylawart.com](mailto:mail@wendylawart.com), Exhibition Manager Kasia Jackowska, [kasia@summerhall.co.uk](mailto:kasia@summerhall.co.uk), Head of

Install: Thomas Anderson. Summerhall Visual Arts team.

Zoë Grüber (costume co-designer with Alix Villanueva on Garden Shroud). Aleksandar Jovanovic (technician). Paul Koutselos (soundscape), The POD, Coventry (film commission *A Garden Phenomenology*) Javier Cuenca (art and design, *Queridas Viejas* Timeline). Pedro Martinez de Albornoz (photography), Bejoy Sanjeev (photography). Captivate Creative. Altered Images Scotland. Jerwood New Work Fund (همسفر (*Hamsafar*))

## *Mount Strange and the Temple of Fame*

Curated by Wendy Law

24 January – 15 March 2020

Summerhall Galleries

Open Wednesday – Sunday

11:00 – 18:00

## Maria Gimeno

*Queridas Viejas*

Ground floor - Sciennes Gallery 1

In *Queridas Viejas* Gimeno takes E.H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art* and restores many women artists to their rightful place. First published in 1950, *The Story of Art* became the essential reference for many arts students and general readers, translated into thirty languages and selling over eight million copies worldwide. Old Master artists are in abundance. However, the women artists worthy of the veneration given by Gombrich and other historians to the 'Old Masters', are completely absent.

The works of art on display in the Sciennes Gallery reference Gimeno's performance *Queridas Viejas* in which Gimeno, wearing jacket, a waistcoat and tie, and wielding a kitchen knife, physically splices into a copy of *The Story of Art* new pages naming the many missing women artists. A total of 95 women artists to-date have been researched by Gimeno and added to the transformed volume displayed in the centre of the room. These women artists are again made visible by Gimeno on her *Queridas Viejas* Timeline.

In the writing of the history of art an artist's reputation has been predicated on validation by experts – historians and peer groups, usually male. Validation attracts yet further validation and an artist's reputation and place in history is assured. In this process many women artists have been overlooked or erased from historical record.

In her embroidered self-portrait to women artists throughout history *La Caballera de la mano en el pecho* Gimeno references the famous 16th century painting by El Greco *El caballero de la mano en el pecho* (The Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest). By portraying herself as the nobleman, Gimeno is challenging the assumption that this iconic Spanish painting stands for the universal Spaniard. In referencing the Spanish expression *a pecho descubierto*, which means speaking the truth, being honest and having nothing to hide, and portraying herself with her hand touching her breast, Gimeno is also promoting women as brave and independent beings.

Gimeno's work has progressed from art understood as an introspective tool to an open defence of the rights of women in the 21st century. A performance of *Queridas Viejas* is planned at Summerhall in March 2020, as part of International Women's Day. Details will be made available on Summerhall's website.

Maria Gimeno is based in Madrid, Spain.

This is the first showing of Gimeno's work in the UK. She has recently exhibited and performed *Queridas Viejas* at the Prado Museum, Madrid. She has had solo shows in galleries and museums in Spain, Switzerland, Mexico, Germany, Serbia, Cuba and Yemen and has participated in group exhibitions in several European, American and North African cities.

## *Mount Strange and the Temple of Fame*

### Victoria Clare Bernie

#### First floor - Meadows 1

Bernie is interested in landscape and politics; in patterns of human and non-human occupation over time, in stories of wealth and power, war and empire, and industry and improvement. Through a process of intense observation she seeks out strange details, the histories of places and people that are lost under the weight of the official version.

In her film *Mount Strange and the Temple of Fame* Bernie conveys the exchange between the forces of artifice and entropy. This “wilderness garden” commissioned by the Duke of Atholl in 1735 with classical sculptures, and new species of trees brought from the farthest reaches of the empire, has now become both relic and biome, a testament to ambition (artifice) and fate (entropy). Bernie’s immersive soundscape underscores the brooding atmosphere of the scene.

In her black and white film *Daedalus* (in Greek mythology a skilled craftsman and the father of Icarus) we see an anonymous model maker. The model under construction is a 1:72 rendition of the Messerschmitt Bf110, the plane used by Rudolf Hess in his flight from Augsburg-Haunstetten in Bavaria to Eaglesham in the west of Scotland. On the evening of May 10th 1941 Hess, running low on fuel, had to eject 12 miles from his destination, Dungavel House, the summer residence of the Duke of Hamilton. He was captured, questioned, and imprisoned. Hess’s mission has never been fully explained and it continues to give rise to conspiracy theories since his death in Spandau Prison in 1987.

In the photocollage *Icarus* (right), Bernie references the Scottish landscape in wartime as a military training ground. In Cithaeron Forest (in Greek mythology the hunting ground of the gods) a small wooden structure stands in a choir of trees, at once bucolic and disconcerting. Special Operations Executive Workshop No. 6, a former hunting lodge, was where, anecdotally, Rudolf Hess was held for a period of his imprisonment.

In her diptych drawing *Narcissus & Echo* Glenfinlas Bernie recalls the landscapes of art history. Glenfinlas is depicted by J.E. Millais in the infamous portrait of John Ruskin.

#### Meadows 2

Another immersive landscape is seen in Bernie’s film *The Office of Woods* and the accompanying drawing (right). Founded in 1919 at Inverleiver, The Office of Woods was a forest experiment where exotic trees were brought from the Pacific North West of America, the Appalachians, Chile and the Far East. Slow growing or ill-suited, they were replaced by the Sitka Spruce, now a familiar sight across the Scottish landscape.

In *Chronograph Drawing 50 years 0.05 seconds* Bernie has drawn a single spruce tree, old and stunted. From its furthest branch a single cone falls, landing, at a speed of 0.05 seconds, to repeat the (50 years) growth cycle.

Victoria Clare Bernie lives and works in Edinburgh.

Exhibitions include: *That Which Remains*, Mount Stuart Visual Arts Programme, Isle of Bute, *Slow Water*, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow, *Can art save us?* Millennium Gallery Sheffield, *Zoo Art Fair*, Royal Academy, London, *Northern City: Between Light and Dark*, Lighthouse Gallery Glasgow.

MA Fine Art Edinburgh University and Edinburgh College of Art  
Postgraduate Diploma in Printmaking from Edinburgh College of Art  
Masters in Architecture History and Theory from McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada.

## *Whilst sage grows in her garden*

### Alix Villanueva

#### Meadows 3 & 4

The term ‘cosmoecology’ is adopted by Villanueva as a way of making space for the unknowns arising from our age of great political and environmental uncertainty. Villanueva’s art embodies the co-existence of her personal experience of the world with the larger landscape and notions of the cosmos such as mythology, gods, folklore, ghosts, death, and after-death.

A muslin shroud-like garment hangs from a domestic clotheshorse. A collection of ceremonial brushes is created from the artist’s own hair and objects gleaned from the Scottish shoreline. The accompanying soundscape by *Koutselos* internalises the liminal space between mind, body, interior and garden.

In her film *Bonnard, the Hand and the Maggot*, the protagonist, of whom we only ever see the hand, leads artist Pierre Bonnard in a dance around a garden, looking for Bonnard’s wife, Marthe. The film uses collage techniques to touch upon themes such as the creative and fruitful relationship between death and life, the fragmentation of the self and the body, and the relationship between interior and exterior spaces. Villanueva believes that Marthe Bonnard is given little agency as a woman and artist in the writings about her and that Marthe tends to be portrayed as a negative influence on Bonnard as an early modernist painter, confining him to interior scenes, and in his photography Marthe resembles a lifeless corpse, decapitated, or is lain, insentient and Ophelia-like in a bathtub.

For Villanueva, the garden is a zone of simultaneous enclosure and porosity, of decay and fruitfulness. In her film *A Garden Phenomenology*, Villanueva considers ways in which our bodies are the primary point of contact with the world around us, by going through each of the five senses. This work, informed by the medieval tapestries “La Dame à la Licorne”, also investigates a possible sixth sense through the poetry of the garden, the insistence of ritual, and a different way of letting things grow.

#### Cabinets on Stairway

Ritual and ceremony have an important role in Villanueva’s work. In her ritual ‘*Gleaning Ghosts*,’ Villanueva walked along the banks of the River Almond to Cramond Island wearing her hand-crafted ‘landscapes skirt’ to which she tied the rocks she had gathered along the way. The too long skirt became heavier, a test of resilience, dragging the artist along while the material, like a canvas, charted each interaction between her body and the environment.

In *A Healing at Cramond*, Villanueva entered the cold sea wearing her hand-crafted ritual gown, both hospital robe and folkloric costume. Through this ritual Villanueva attempted to understand the lasting aches of chronic pain through holisticity, calling to folklore for answers. It is Cailleach Bhéara, the hag, the healer, the witch figure, who points out the disharmonies between this world and the Otherworld, the sacred natural, which are held to be the root cause of ill-health in our realm.

Alix Villanueva lives and works in Edinburgh.

Exhibitions include: Syn Festival, Leith, Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Tent Gallery, University Edinburgh, An Lantair Art Centre, Stornoway, The POD, Coventry, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh.

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