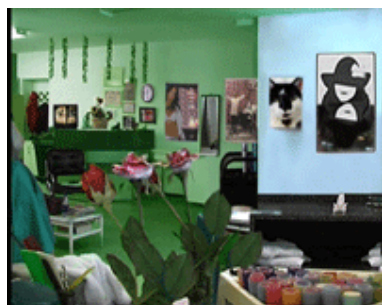


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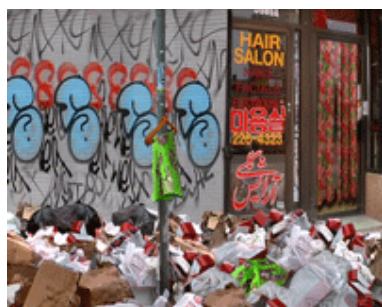


The Impossibility of Communication: Nooshin Farhid by Sara Raza

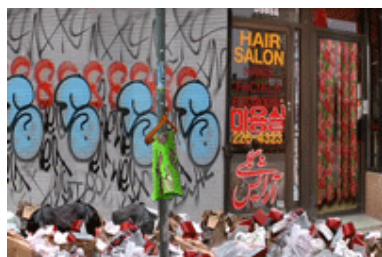
The impossibility of communication is UK based video artist Nooshin Farhid's forte. Born in Iran and residing in London following the country's Islamic Revolution, Farhid fast took to the role of spectator attempting to document and make sense of the absurdities and banality of everyday life, which can often result in frustration and impotence when provoked by non-reciprocal exchange. As an artist Farhid continues to explore the concept of breakdown in daily communication, depicting the inevitable slippages and stutters that can occur in ordinary scenarios when there is an explicit absence of a shared linguistic or cultural mother tongue.



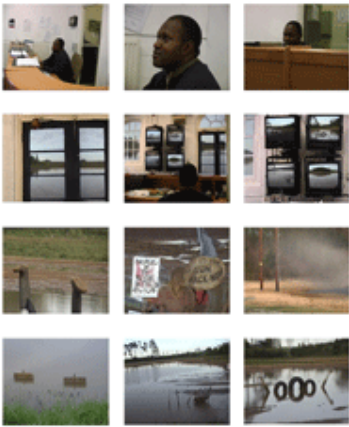
Distinctive in her style Farhid deploys works that present a sense of anti-genealogy, possibly seen to be intentional on her part, resisting any point of origin or focus within any type of real set space or time. Instead she is seen to put forward a series of short-term narratives that function without a beginning or ending but possess an unusually clear middle creating a complex labyrinth of multiplicity, which is at once enticing as it is troublesome to measure and control. As a consequence, more than often Farhid's works force the viewer to face a degree of annoyance, with oneself, having lost control over what appears to be an everyday scene taken from the norm. At the same time these works challenge any pre-determined expectations regarding scenes from the mundane that audiences may bring with them, especially concerning the notion of video art as a two dimensional form of reality entertainment, a moving and talking painting, which is easy on the eye and mind alike. On the contrary, reality television it is not, what may appear to be images that resemble "real" events, recorded in real time, they are in fact really nothing more than resemblances of reality. What is important to understand is that these are in fact highly edited artworks that suggest a surreal mix of fantasy and realism. In her recent work *Hair Salon 2004* and *Blind Spot 2004* which were on display at SPACE Gallery Farhid continues to execute works that trouble the notion of control and surpasses any fixed estimations that may exist.



As the title suggests *Hair Salon* is a highly humorous piece that explores the notion of beauty and bodily fascination. Set in the hubbub of metropolitan Toronto's Iranian district the work appears to have a filmic quality, with its sharp high-resolution colours and immaculate editing. However, unlike the smooth linear narrative that film works offer, Farhid presents a series of disjointed, and deliberately hesitant narratives, which as Farhid herself points out "[...]disturb the smooth flow of continuity." Within this work the viewer follows the journey of beautification within the interior space of the salon contrasted by the architectural make up of the nearby streets that are satiated with rubbish and graffiti. This is seen to create a mesmerising experience shifting the viewer's attention from one image to another equally contradicting one. This series of transfers constantly keeps the viewer in a state of awe with the impulsive desire to measure everything in an epic with the eye. The aural dimension in the work is equally hypnotic with the introduction of a foreign language, Persian, both in the exchange of dialogue between the young woman and her stylist and the sound of the radio, which is playing Iranian pop music. This allows the audience to experience first hand the impossibility of coherence whereby one is denied access to the dominant mode of communication. Farhid is seen to toy with this idea and further introduces another layer of anxiety by strategically drowning the conversation and introducing the maddening sound and image of the television screen showing a break dancing competition, which is then interrupted with the sound of the girl frantically chewing gum. Within the *Hair Salon* there is this deep-seated sense of non-completion, which keeps in trend with Farhid's non-linear trend of constantly keeping her audience on their toes.



In contrast to the filmic form and light-hearted nature of *Hair Salon*, *Blind Spot* offers an extremely dense two-monitor piece of dark humour, introducing the parallel themes of



extremely dense two-monitor piece of dark humour, introducing the parallel themes of surveillance and isolation alongside one another. The coupling of this work alongside Hair Salon is highly interesting, just as it is incongruous, creating a degree of unbalance between two opposing states of humour and anxiety in both the mind and memory of the audience. Within Blind Spot a sense angst is extremely evident, from the very start, as on one monitor a lone security guard sits within his cabin keeping surveillance over four monitors that show different angles of a scenic view of the Suffolk landscape. From time to time Farhid allows the viewer to get a close up vision of each of the monitors, revealing a stream of mundane images taken from the surrounding landscape. On the other monitor positioned slightly behind the first, possibly intentionally to impede a clear vision, or as the title suggests to literally create a blind spot, there is a man, presumably dead, lying in a partially deflated boat in the water. This image remains constantly still, suspended completely in time, as if on a calculated pause causing a rupture in focus and memory. Although, this image is clearly part of the same landscape the guard in the first monitor remains completely oblivious. The audience are the only ones privy to the calamity that technological surveillance has failed to capture. Interestingly, this incident appears to be the first instance where Farhid hands control over to her audience permitting them to have the supremacy of panoptical vision. However, this form of control is an extremely unwanted and disturbing responsibility for the viewer, which predictably results in the loss of control. Complimentary with this sensation is Farhid's manipulative soundtrack of a 1970s pop icon, which is cunningly on loop especially the part where he confesses about feeling insecure and being out of control. High on the absurdity Blind Spot successfully manages to utilise the ordinary and neglected to create such an intense psychological moment, whereby one bypasses control in order to lose it.

Although Farhid's works may well leave her audiences frustrated at the thought of coming in at the middle, having missed the beginning and ending, they do imply that this is quite an interesting space to occupy.