

Pi Artworks Istanbul: Parastou Forouhar

Written Room

18 March - 10 May 2017

Pi Artworks Istanbul is pleased to announce that Parastou Forouhar's site specific installation *Written Room* (1999–) will be on view at the gallery. Previous iterations of the work have been exhibited around the world at venues such as Pi Artworks London (UK), the 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (Australia), Fondazione Merz Turin (Italy), Jewish Museum of Australia, Kunsthalle Saarbruecken (Germany), 4th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (Greece), and Villa Massimo Rome (Italy). Besides Forouhar Pi Artworks Istanbul, *Written Room* is on view at Museum of Fine Arts Ghent (Belgium) on the occasion of the exhibition *Eyewitness*.

Parastou Forouhar left her native Iran to study in Offenbach, Germany due to the withdrawal of freedoms she was subjected to after the Iranian revolution. She has remained a vocal critic of the regime ever since. Forouhar's practice examines the power structures within certain authoritarian political systems, paying attention to how they block oppositional discourse from entering the public sphere.

Yet Forouhar remains acutely aware of herself as an Iranian artist in the West and the assumptions made about her and her practice. Therefore, she works to actively undermine Orientalist clichés. In this sense, Forouhar's practice is not restricted to simply observing the realities of life in Iran but is also about holding a mirror up to the Western gaze and reflecting critically on the Western construct of the *Other*.

Written Room is one such work that makes the Western gaze on the Oriental its central theme. Over the course of a couple of days, the artist will ink the gallery's white walls and floor with what appears to be sprawling Persian script. The disjointed text meanders around the space's uneven surfaces with no stable vertical or horizontal axis. Its legibility is further undermined by a collection of Ping-Pong balls, also inscribed with Persian script, that have been released onto the floor.

Written Room mirrors the look of Persian script, yet it is almost as incomprehensible to those who can read the language as those who can't. By defying visitors' attempts to assign it meaning, the script remains locked into its irreducible pictorial graphicness in which meaning cannot be grasped.

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Parastou Forouhar, b. 1962. Major exhibitions include *Written Room* (solo), Museum of Fine Arts Ghents, Belgium (2017); *Reimagining The Illusion*, Pi Artworks London, UK (2016); *Common Grounds*, Villa Stuck Museum, Munich, Germany (2015); *Recalling the Future*, Brunei Gallery SOAS, London, UK (2014); *Kiss Me*, Rose Issa Projects, London, UK (2014); 5th Moscow Biennale, Russia (2013); 4th Thessaloniki Biennale, Greece (2013); *Gothenburg International Biennial* for Contemporary Art, Gothenburg, Sweden (2013); *He Kills Me, He Kills Me Not II* (solo) Stadtgalerie, Neunkirchen, Germany (2013); *Feminist and...*, Matrass Factory Museum, Pittsburgh, U.S.A (2012); *Ornamental Structures*, Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Saarbrücken, Germany (2011); *Written Room* (solo) Fondazione Merz, Turin, Italy (2011); and *Parastou Forouhar*, (solo) Leighton House Museum, London, UK. (2010). **The British Museum acquired Forouhar's two works for its permanent collection earlier this year.**

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Pi Artworks Istanbul / London:

The Armory Show, 2-5 March 2017

Art Basel Hong Kong, 23-25 March 2017

Art Cologne, 26-29 April 2017

Photo London, 19-22 May 2017

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