

HAROON MIRZA
born 1977 in London
lives and works in London

***Copy of Pavilion for optimisation* 2019**

bespoke media device, LED tape, microphone, pvc bucket, water, water pump, hose, showerhead, amp, horn speaker, mixer, ant farm
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

Haroon Mirza: The Construction of an Act has been conceived as a total experience, or 'grand minimal gesture' as the artist has described. Rather than a display of disparate works, the exhibition selectively brings existing artworks into dialogue with newly-commissioned moving-image, sound and performance pieces as well as 'copies' of early work reconfigured especially for this exhibition.

The two works placed together in this gallery serve as an introduction to Mirza's earlier engagement with sculptural assemblage, for which the artist has combined readily-sourced objects including household items, found YouTube video footage, LED lighting and simple audio-visual equipment to create new aesthetic and acoustic relationships.

Copy of Pavilion for optimisation 2019 is a work that is spread across two unconnected gallery spaces. Here, the sound of water from a showerhead hitting a plastic bucket is heard as a natural sound. Picked up by the microphone and fed via an audio signal cable into another gallery, the sound is elsewhere heard amplified. *Copy of Pavilion for optimisation* introduces audiences to ongoing concerns within Mirza's practice relating to systems of belief in disciplines as far-ranging as science, religion, politics, technology, mysticism and medicine. In this work, optimisation – a methodology used in science, mathematics and technology to maximise efficiency – is represented by the use of water and the movement of ants within a formicarium: two natural systems following optimal pathways, that have inspired new intelligent systems within computer science.

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Stimulate pineal function 2017

modified Marshall amp, LEDs, screen, bespoke media device

video: 6:53 mins

electrical signal: 1,000,000 seconds

Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

In *Stimulate pineal function* 2017, Mirza assembles found footage, LED lighting and a modified Marshall amp to create a composition of electrical signal and video. The electrical signals make reference to pseudoscientific ideas that audio frequencies designed to stimulate the pineal gland may be of benefit to our physical, psychological and spiritual health.

The pineal gland is a small endocrine gland found in the brain of most vertebrates. While its function is not fully understood, it is known to produce melatonin and serotonin – neurotransmitters that aid in the regulation of sleep and moods. It is also hypothesised to produce dimethyltryptamine – a powerful, naturally recurring psychedelic – thus making it a contender for the third eye. Attempts to stimulate the third eye, for spiritual and psychological reasons, have been practiced by many cultures throughout history; including in the use of tools such as Tibetan singing bowls, which feature here in footage found by the artist on the video-sharing platform YouTube.

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***The construction of an act* 2019**

2-channel video and 8-channel electrical signals from the 'Emerging Paradigm' media device, steel, LED tape, carpet, Google Home device

20:16 mins

Soprano: Sarah-Jane Lewis

Courtesy the artist

The construction of an act 2019 is a new work commissioned for this exhibition, spanning two gallery spaces and combining video footage and electrical signal. The video is a collage of several elements, including the artist as a monkey Animoji, speaking with a Google Home device about concepts of sound and healing; captured imagery of Mirza's computer desktop, viewing YouTube videos about the pathological properties of psychedelics; and documentation of a session in the artist's studio with British soprano Sarah-Jane Lewis, to which she sings responses to questions including 'What is your warm up routine?' and 'Is there a sound that you make with your voice that gives you a calming and meditative feeling?'

The construction of an act reflects Mirza's interest in immersive installations – composing light, sound and moving image, and arranging these elements in such a way as to impact physically upon the audience, as well as visually and acoustically. Therapeutic themes are explored through the lens of science, technology, mythology and spirituality, examining the potential of sound – and the voice in particular – to heal and transform, as well as simply to communicate or entertain. Mirza's ongoing interests in notions of truth and belief are further expanded in this work by the artist's use of artificial intelligence technology; provoking questions and concerns more pertinent than ever in our contemporary digital age.

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20:16 mins

Soprano: Sarah-Jane Lewis

Composer: James Rushford

Performers: Jessica Aszodi, Alexander Garsden, James Rushford and

Freya Schack-Arnott

Courtesy the artists

With dimmed lights and loud surround sound, this gallery evokes the sense of modern ritualistic spaces, such as nightclubs, or other places of transgression, transformation or worship. A chandelier of steel and LED lights, positioned in the centre of the room, might refer to forms found in nature, religion or architecture. A section of carpet, removed for acoustic reasons, provides a focal centre in an otherwise minimal, yet expansive, room. These spatial arrangements – while often practical – are nonetheless intentional: creating gathering spaces for audiences and performers to join in the simple ritual of coming together.

The audio signal heard in this eight-channel sound installation relates to the moving-image visible in the adjacent gallery. Originally a piece of just over twenty minutes in duration, the composition will be added to over the course of the exhibition, to include a new track scored by Mirza, composed by James Rushford and performed by Rushford together with Jessica Aszodi (soprano), Alexander Garsden (guitar) and Freya Schack-Arnott (cello). In both his studio practice and exhibition outcomes, Mirza often employs collaborative methodologies that challenge the singular authorial voice of the artist. For this exhibition, Mirza's works become seeds for the creative pursuits of others, with the gallery evolving into a performative space across the course of the exhibition.

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dimensions variable
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Copy of Pavilion for optimisation 2019, seen in the first gallery of the exhibition, continues here, manifest in the amplified movement of water and ants and accompanying LED light installation. For a previous iteration of the work, made in 2013, Mirza created a purpose-built reverberation chamber – typically a large room with hard surfaces and no parallel walls, designed to create a non-directional or diffuse sound field. At ACCA, Mirza has made use of the unique architecture of gallery's large commissioning hall, which displays similar spatial qualities, for a new site-specific 'copy' of the work.

The idea of copying comes from a point of departure in Mirza's practice, when he began to adopt the Chinese notion of *fuzhipin* – a celebratory idea of copying, of equal value to the original – and ideals associated with Copyleft and open source practices distinct from restrictive intellectual property and copyright laws practiced in the West. Mirza – who has himself had work unwillingly appropriated – is interested in how ideas can be owned, controlled or prevented for use by others. In addition to found objects and online material, Mirza regularly appropriates elements of his own existing work for re-purpose in new formats. In the transition from analogue to digital technologies – both mediums used within Mirza's practice – copying has become increasingly accurate and, seemingly, limitless.

ACCA's largest gallery is here also its sparest: minimal in form but full of layered, sculptural sound. In the opening weeks of the exhibition, it will also become a performative space for others – with a composer, musicians, choreographer and dancer invited to respond to the acoustics, aesthetics and architecture of the exhibition through their own particular interests and skill sets.

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Step siren 2019

crash cymbal, amp, high-fidelity speakers, LED tape, amplifier, stepper motor, fabric cable, compact fluorescent lamp, transistor radio, mixed electronics

133.5 x 43.5 x 43.5 cm

Courtesy the artist

Step siren 2019 revisits earlier works made by Mirza between 2010–13 and reflects the artist's interest in mixed media sculptural assemblage, and an ongoing exploration into the potential of sound as a signal, call or invocation.

Here, a rotating compact fluorescent lamp, passing through a hole drilled into a symbol, interferes with a transistor radio to create a humming sound; making audible the electricity from The National Electricity Market – the electric power transmission network servicing eastern and southern Australian states and territories. This new version of the work includes a digital motor called a stepper motor whose distinct sound is also amplified.

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Stage 2019

modular synthesiser designed and produced by Tom Mclean and Carolin Schnurrer,
carpet tiles, copper, conductive bracelets
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

Since 2004, Mirza has operated a collaborative studio practice under the name hrm199 Ltd. – both as an opportunity to host resident artists, as well to blur the boundaries of authorial control. In the lead up to this exhibition, Mirza invited artist and instrument builder Carolin Schnurrer to undertake a residency with hrm199, to develop and produce her concept for an interactive synthesiser that could create sound through human touch. Working closely with fellow musician and hrm199's technician, Tom Mclean, Schnurrer developed a modular synthesiser that will be used by composer James Rushford and choreographer Julie Cunningham in a one-off live performance in response to the exhibition.

Utilising carpet tiles removed from an accompanying installation, Mirza has designed a mode of display for the synthesiser that functions as scenography for this eventual performance; an interactive platform for the forging of bodies, space and sound.

LIVE PERFORMANCE: *THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ACT*

Tuesday 8 October, 6.30pm

For bookings and more information visit acca.melbourne

**HAROON MIRZA
JESSICA ASZODI, CHESS BOUGHEY, JULIE CUNNINGHAM, ALEXANDER
GARSDEN, JAMES RUSHFORD AND FREYA SCHACK-ARNOTT**

***Green studio* 2019**

residencies and live performance in response to the exhibition *Haroon Mirza: The Construction of an Act*

Script: Haroon Mirza

Score: James Rushford

Performers: Jessica Aszodi, Alexander Garsden, James Rushford and Freya Schack-Arnott

Choreographer: Julie Cunningham

Dancers: Chess Boughey and Julie Cunningham

Courtesy the artists

Presented with Melbourne International Arts Festival and Liquid Architecture, with support from JMC Academy

Conceived as a productive green room, *Green studio* is a new commission central to this exhibition; a space for local and international collaborators to undertake week-long residencies, culminating in a live performance, as well as written, sonic and performative residues. This new work illustrates the turn towards experimental, open-ended and collaborative working methods that have become a hallmark of Mirza's recent practice; blurring the boundaries of artistic authorship and transparently revealing the complex process of art and exhibition making.

Loosely structured on the *Adhan*, the Islamic call to prayer, Mirza has scripted a science fiction narrative – with references to nature, artificial intelligence, psychedelic substances and the healing potential of song – as a provocation for each resident. Through the residencies, this script will be transformed: into a composition by James Rushford; workshopped by Rushford with musicians Jessica Aszodi (soprano), Alexander Garsden (guitar) and Freya Schack-Arnott (cello); and then interpreted into movement by choreographer Julie Cunningham, working with dancer Chess Boughey.

On Tuesday 8 October at 6.30pm, a live public performance will bring together the outcomes of these residencies, for the first and only time. *Haroon Mirza: The Construction of an Act* thus opens as a stage set for action: the nature of which will be revealed in the process of its eventual enacting.

RESIDENCIES

Composer: James Rushford

Tuesday 17 – Friday 20 September inclusive, 11 am–3.30 pm daily

Musicians: Jessica Aszodi, Alexander Garsden, James Rushford and Freya Schack-Arnott

Tuesday 24 – Thursday 26 September inclusive, Saturday 28 September, 11 am–3.30 pm daily

Choreographer and dancer: Julie Cunningham and Chess Boughey

Tuesday 1 – Saturday 5 October inclusive, 11 am–3.30 pm daily

Writers-in-residence: Chi Tran and Arben Dzika

Monday 7 – Friday 11 September inclusive, variable hours

Commissioned by Liquid Architecture for *Disclaimer*

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