



**DÜSSELDORF**

**HORIZONTAL VERTIGO: FILMS BY MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI**

8 MARCH – 3 MAY 2020



Morehshin Allahyari, *Huma*, 2016, 6'4", color, sound. Video still. Courtesy of the artist.

FILMS BY MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI presents three works by Iranian artist and activist **Morehshin Allahyari** that are part of the ongoing research project *She Who Sees The Unknown*. The project, consisting of video and VR works, lectures, and installations, creates a fictitious archive of feminist narratives by twelve female or queer figures. These figures are based on so-called “jinn,” which are regarded as supernatural creatures in Islamic mythology and theology. Employing processes of animation and 3-D modeling, the artist recreates these beings, whilst simultaneously embedding them in contemporary contexts. Allahyari defines this process – inspired by the theorists Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti – as “re-figuring.” In addition to the feminist appropriation of traditional narratives and myths from the Middle East, the archive deals with notions of cultural heritage, political injustice, environmental destruction, and digital colonialism. As part of *horizontal vertigo*, JSC Düsseldorf will present three of the four figures that have been completed by Allahyari: *Huma* (2016), *Ya'jooj Ma'jooj* (2017), and *Aisha Qandisha* (2018).



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Each video work begins with a spoken mantra-like manifesto about the meaning and purpose of *She Who Sees The Unknown*. Spoken by the artist herself, the introduction describes these mythic figures as monstrous “Others,” dark goddesses, and divided or ambiguous personalities.

In the video work *Huma*, the first eponymous figure in Allahyari’s archive appears as a three-headed seated entity with open arms. According to the narrator, two of her heads witness the destruction of the world, while the third looks forward into the future. In the myth, Huma is said to bear an enormous amount of heat within her, enabling her to make people develop a fever but also bring them salvation. Allahyari metaphorically associates this feverish condition with global warming, and critically addresses the western view of the subject.

In the second video, Allahyari reveals part of the 3D animation process of *Ya’jooj Ma’jooj*, the second re-figured character in the *She Who Sees The Unknown* archive. As the story goes, Ya’jooj Ma’jooj brought mischief and chaos to the world and so Allah consequently granted Zulqarnain (known in other histories as Alexander the Great) with the power to build a steel wall that would separate Ya’jooj Ma’jooj from the rest of humanity. According to the prophecy, the wall will one day crumble, leading to “end of all days.”

The third video introduces the two-faced figure Aisha Qandisha, who is associated with greed, sexual desire, and impotence. Known as a Moroccan jinn, Allahyari’s creature assaults the male body by breaking it open and turning it inside out. The only way of living in peace with her is through complete obedience. In the video work, Aisha Qandisha is presented standing in a fluid substance that in the artist’s narratives represents Fez, one of the largest rivers in Morocco, which is celebrated as the source of life.

Allahyari regards *She Who Sees The Unknown* as a feminist intervention by taking on a field and space that is still principally dominated by white men and Western thinking—the digital realm. The artist also aims to strengthen the role of Women of Color with the help of her female/queer figures, who through their re-contextualization emancipate themselves from the stereotype of the male hero. In addition to the underrepresentation of women in digital professions, the concept of digital colonialism introduced by Allahyari criticizes the prevalent hierarchies that define these infrastructures. *She Who Sees The Unknown* seeks to rethink and transform this new form of colonialism to engender a more just future.

**FILMS BY MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI** is part of *horizontal vertigo*, a year-long program of solo exhibitions, performances, screenings, and events at JSC Düsseldorf and Berlin, curated by Lisa Long.

Supported by the Cultural Office of the City of Düsseldorf.



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**MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI** has been part of numerous exhibitions, festivals, and workshops around the world including: Venice Architecture Biennale; New Museum, New York City; Whitney Museum, New York City; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal; Tate Modern, London; Queens Museum, New York; Pori Museum, Eteläranta; Powerhouse Museum, Sydney; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; and Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Cologne. She has been an artist in residence at BANFF Centre, Banff; Carnegie Mellon University's STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, Pittsburgh; Autodesk Pier9 Workshop, San Francisco; Vilém Flusser Residency Program for Artistic Research in association with Transmediale, Berlin; Eyebeam's one-year Research Residency, New York City; Pioneer Works, New York City; and Harvest Works, New York City. Her work has been featured in The New York Times, BBC, Huffington Post, Wired, National Public Radio, Parkett Art Magazine, Frieze, Rhizome, Hyperallergic, and Al Jazeera, among others. She is the recipient of the leading global thinkers of 2016 award by Foreign Policy magazine. Her *3D Additivist Manifesto* video is in the collection of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and recently she has been awarded major commissions by Rhizome, New York City; New Museum, New York City; Whitney Museum, New York City; Liverpool Biennale; and FACT, Liverpool to work on developing different components of her current project *She Who Sees The Unknown*. Allahyari is the co-author of *The 3D Additivist Cookbook* (2016) in collaboration with writer/artist Daniel Rourke.

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### HORIZONTAL VERTIGO

31 March 2019 – 19 July 2020

horizontal vertigo is an ensemble of solo exhibitions, performances, screenings, and talks at the JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION in Düsseldorf and Berlin, striving to amplify the multiplicity of narratives and narrators at hand while acknowledging their difference.

Over the course of one year, horizontal vertigo brings together a diverse group of international and interdisciplinary artists who use film, video, installation, performance, poetry, virtual reality, and sound in inquiries and ruminations that embrace various modes storytelling and presentation to address marginalized histories and cultural hybrids, fractured identities, and the entanglement of the self in a world of systems and networks.

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### ABOUT THE JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION

The JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION is one of the world's most comprehensive private collections of time-based art, dedicated to the public presentation, advancement, conservation, and scholarship of media and performance practices. With over 850 artworks by 255 artists from around the world, the collection's contemporary focus is rooted in artists' moving image experiments from the 1960s and '70s. Works in the collection span video, film, single- and multi-channel moving image installation, multimedia environments, performance, sound, and virtual reality. Photography, sculpture, and painting supplement its time-based emphasis. Artworks



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from the collection have been presented in large-scale solo and group exhibitions at the JULIA STOSCHEK COLLECTION in Düsseldorf, Germany (JSC Düsseldorf) since 2007. In 2016, a second exhibition space opened in Berlin (JSC Berlin). A wide range of public programs, comprised of tours, performances, screenings, lectures, artist talks, and workshops invite visitors and scholars to engage with time-based art on multiple levels and from various perspectives.

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### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### PRESS PREVIEW

5 March 2020, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

A press preview will take place at JSC Düsseldorf, Schanzenstraße 54, 40549 Düsseldorf.

Please register in advance by e-mail at [press@jsc.art](mailto:press@jsc.art)

#### OPENING

6 March 2020, 6:00 p.m., JSC Düsseldorf

#### EXHIBITION DURATION

8 March – 3 May 2020

#### OPENING HOURS

Sundays, 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

#### ADMISSION

free

#### BARRIER-FREE ACCESS

JSC Düsseldorf is accessible for those with wheelchairs or prams. If you would like to use the lift to travel between the floors of the exhibition space, just ask our service staff and they will be happy to assist you.

#### PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS IN GERMAN

Public guided tours in German through the current exhibitions take place twice a month on Sundays, noon (duration: 90 minutes).

Cost: EUR 10.00 per person (entitles to admission to all exhibitions on the same day).

Free of charge for children and people under 18 years of age, as well as school children, students and trainees. Registration online through our [calendar](#).



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### **SPECIAL GUIDED TOURS**

Tours are also available outside opening hours.

Cost: EUR 20.00 per person for groups of 10–25 persons (entitles to admission to all exhibitions on the same day).

For enquiries and to register, please send an e-mail to [visit.duesseldorf@jsc.art](mailto:visit.duesseldorf@jsc.art)

Free of charge for groups of students from universities, colleges, schools and art academies

**FACEBOOK** /juliastoschekcollection

**INSTAGRAM** @juliastoschekcollection

#juliastoschekcollection #jsc #horizontalvertigo #morehshinallahyari

### **PRESSE- UND ÖFFENTLICHKEITSARBEIT**

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