

Shilpa Gupta: *For, in your tongue, I cannot hide*

Shilpa Gupta's new multi-channel sound installation gives voice to 100 poets who have been jailed through time for their writing or their beliefs. On entering the dimly-lit space of the Fire Station, visitors will encounter 100 microphones suspended over 100 metal rods, each piercing a verse of poetry. Over the course of an hour, each microphone in turn recites a fragment of the poets' words, spoken first by a single voice then echoed by a chorus which shifts across the space.

The poets' words emerge from microphones, fitted with speakers – a device Gupta has adopted in earlier works to remind us that the microphone is not simply something to speak into, but a means to broadcast at large scale. Here the microphone literally and symbolically gives a voice to those whom regimes from around the world have sought to silence.

The idea of creating an archive of 100 emblematic instances is an approach the artist has adopted in previous works. *Someone else: a library of 100 books published anonymously or under pseudonyms* (2011), for example, brings together 100 books published by an author under another name, each one etched in metal with the reason the author desired to remain anonymous.

For, in your tongue, I cannot hide has similarly depended on an intensive period of careful research to identify 100 poets, and the resulting soundscape includes poetry composed in regions from around the world, in languages such as English, Arabic, Azeri, Spanish, Russian, Hindi, Urdu, Chinese and Turkish.

The title of the work is inspired by a poem by the 14th century poet known as Nesimi, born in what is now modern-day Azerbaijan and executed for the religious beliefs expressed in his poetry which ran counter to dominant contemporary doctrines. This is one of a number of historic poems included in the work (with the earliest dating to the 8th century).

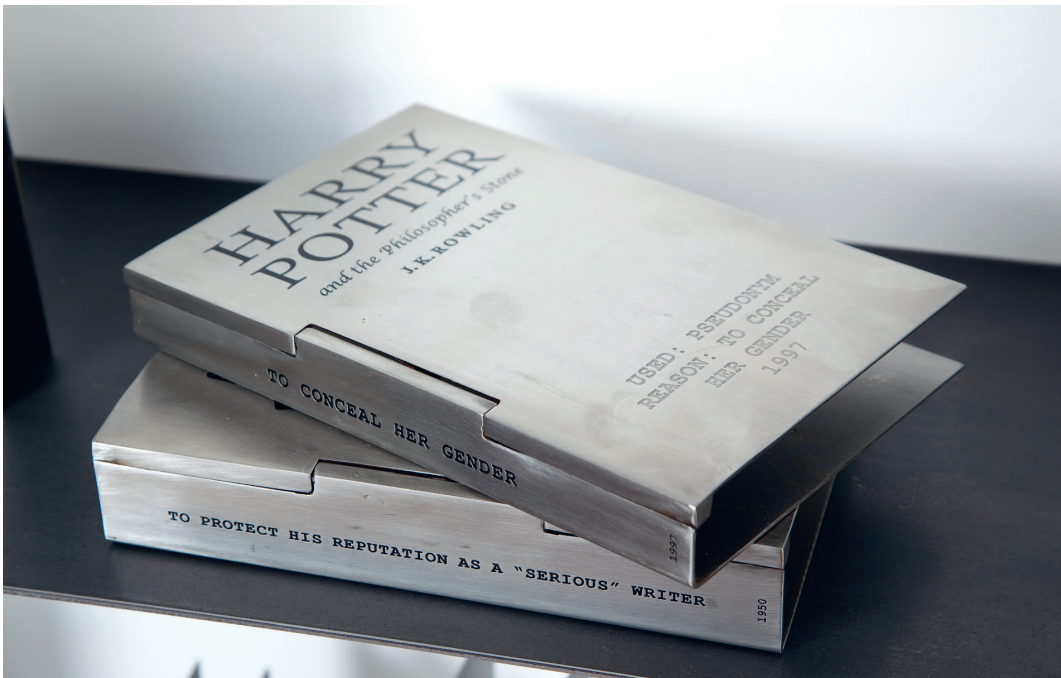
The vast majority of the poems, however, stem from the 20th century up to the present day, reflecting the artist's particular engagement with the rise of the nation state, and the related social and political struggles for self determination and access to democracy and human rights.

Each individual poem, poet and their experience reveals a fragment of the wider stories and experiences of a particular nation or region. Together, they reflect the very different histories and relationships between the individual and the state in countries around the world.

For, in your tongue I cannot hide incorporates a strong spatial dimension, unfolding a soundscape which cannot be experienced from a single standpoint, but which requires the visitor to move through the space, to actively listen. At points during the sound installation, the individual voice of a poet is repeated by a chorus – in a symbolic collective expression of what the individual has at other times been forbidden to express. The viewer, too, is implicitly invited to participate in this bearing witness, to hear the voices that have been silenced.

The haunting work highlights the fragility and vulnerability of our right to freedom of expression today – and the bravery of those who struggle to resist.

Co-commissioned with Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku.



Shilpa Gupta

Shilpa Gupta (b. 1976, India) lives and works in Mumbai. She has had solo shows at the Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; OK Center for Contemporary Art, Linz; Kiosk in Ghent and Arnolfini, Bristol; Lalitkala, New Delhi; Galleria Continua, San Gimignano; Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai; and Galerie Yvon Lambert.

Gupta has participated in biennales and triennales around the world, including in Berlin, Lyon, Gwangju, Yokohama, Auckland, Liverpool, Moscow, Seoul, Havana, Sydney and Venice (with the exhibition *My East is Your West*, organised by the Gujral Foundation in 2015). Her work has been shown in Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Devi Art Foundation, Daimler Chrysler Contemporary, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Mori Museum amongst others.

Above: Shilpa Gupta, *In our times*, 2008. Courtesy of the Artist and Yokohama Triennale 2008. Photo: Ueno Norihiro.

Below: Shilpa Gupta, *Someone Else – A library of 100 books written anonymously or under pseudonyms*, 2011.

Courtesy of the Artist & Galleria Continua San Gimignano | Beijing | Les Moulins | Habana. Photo: Anil Rane.

Edinburgh Art Festival Commissions Programme 2018

Alongside a rich programme of exhibitions and events curated by partners across the city, each year we invite Scottish and international artists to make new projects specifically for the Festival.

With a focus on bringing art out of formal gallery settings and into conversation with the city, our Commissions Programme invites artists to develop new work for public spaces and historic buildings, often providing access to spaces that are not generally open to the public.

Our 2018 Commissions Programme presents new work by 4 artists at sites across the city, ranging from the street performance sites of the Royal Mile, to a 15th century kirk, a Victorian Fire Station, and Scotland’s smallest wildlife reserve.

Touching on current political and social concerns, several of the 2018 commissions have been developed in dialogue with other artforms – including poetry, music and magic. Strategies of orchestration and the act of close listening inform a number of the works, while freedom of expression and a questioning of economic models feature prominently as themes within the programme.

The 2018 Commissions Programme also includes:

Ross Birrell & David Harding: *Triptych*
Trinity Apse, Chalmers Close, 42 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1SS

Ruth Ewan: *Sympathetic Magick*
Various venues

Adam Lewis Jacob: *No Easy Answers*
Institut Français d’Écosse, West Parliament Square, Edinburgh, EH1 1RF

26 July – 26 August | Monday – Sunday, 10am-6pm

Core Funders
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Cover: Shilpa Gupta, *For, in your tongue, I cannot hide*, 2018 (detail).
Co-commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival and Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku. Photo: Fakhriyya Mammadova.

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