

Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen

Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen works primarily with performance to explore a variety of issues such as gender, identity, socio-cultural relations, as well as questions of home and belonging. Her work explores how the self is constructed, examining the differences that are inherent in male-female role-play. Rasmussen's productions often involve scripted texts and songs, composed music, choreography as well as precisely articulated visual elements such as specially designed costumes. *Afghan Hound* (2011) is a performance that includes four impersonations of voices from Afghanistan. The work addresses the complexities of gender in cultures where men and women are segregated, and masculinity rules. It also explores how, when sexuality is repressed, new gender constructions develop beyond the traditions of a given society and culture.

The four stories that unfold in the performance are recounted through a combination of music and song; the choreography is designed around the movements of a costume made out of hair, which was itself inspired by the tradition of Afghan hound racing. The transformation of genders and characters takes place through the use of this costume, which symbolises different sexualities and identities. Some of these are hidden or repressed; others function as signs of power or coercion. The lyrics of the first song, for example, employs quotes from the Afghan activist, writer and politician in exile, Malalai Joya; the second tells the tale of a *Bacha Bazi* (a young boy trained to act as girl, who dances at men's parties but is also a sex slave); the third revolves around powerful male speech and masculine authority; and the fourth features a former *Bacha Posh* (a girl raised as a boy, when there are no sons in the family). *Afghan Hound* brings to the fore repressed voices, but also attempts to communicate stories from within Afghan tradition and culture by challenging the stereotypical, and sometimes reductive, western discourse on the Arab World.

Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen was born in 1970 in Manila, Philippines. She lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark and is a graduate of The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1996-2002). Solo exhibitions include: Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg (2010); Renwick Gallery, New York (2008); *Ego Show*, the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (2006). Group exhibitions include: 2nd Thessaloniki Biennial, Thessaloniki (2009); *U-Turn* Quadriennale, Copenhagen (2008); *Global Feminisms*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2007); Busan Biennale, Busan, *Wake up!* Biennale Balticum, Rauma (2006). Recent performances include: The Picasso Museum, Barcelona, Galeria Vermelho, São Paulo, Hélio Oiticica, Rio de Janeiro, Location1, New York, Art in Public Space, Auckland, Liste, Basel (2010); Performa09, New York, Tate Modern, London, X Initiative, New York, *re.act. feminism*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (2009); *In Transit*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, *Lilith Performance Studio*, Malmö (2008).

www.lilibethcuenca.com

