

LILIBETH CUENCA RASMUSSEN

Born 1970 in Manila, Philippines

Based in Copenhagen, Denmark

Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen works primarily with performance to explore a variety of issues such as gender, identity, socio-cultural relations in different contexts, as well as questions of home and belonging. Her work explores how the self is constructed, pinpointing 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 is a performance that includes four impersonations of voices from Afghanistan. It addresses the complexities of gender in cultures where men and women live segregated, and masculinity rules. When sexuality is

repressed, new constructions of gender develop. These genders, which are impelled by the traditions of a given society and culture, appear and transform in Afghan Hound.

The four stories that unfold in the performance are recounted through a combination of music and song, and the choreography for the piece is contingent upon a costume made out of hair, which is inspired by Afghan Hound dog racing. The transformation of genders and characters happens through the use of this costume, which symbolises different sexualities and kinds of identities. Some of these are hidden or repressed, others function as signs of power or coercion.

The lyrics of the first song, for example, uses quotes by 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 dance at men's parties but is also a sex slave); the third character revolves around powerful male speech and masculine authority, and the last character, is 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 Western discourse on the Arabic World and its often reductive positioning of it.

/ Katerina Gregos, curator Danish pavilion Venice Biennial 2011



Pictures: Hair (cropped) /FAN / dead woman walking