

RYAN LEE

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Mariam Ghani: Like Water from a Stone
February 26 - April 4, 2015
Opening: Thursday, February 26, 6-8PM

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *Like Water from a Stone*, a solo exhibition by **Mariam Ghani**. On view is the video of the same title, originally commissioned for the Rogaland Kunstsenter in Norway, and a series of photographs produced alongside the video, as well as a series of prints based on the artist's book *Afghanistan: A Lexicon*. This is the artist's first show with the gallery, and anticipates her solo exhibition at the St. Louis Art Museum on view April 9 - July 8, 2015.

Ghani's work often plays on the relationships between place, memory, history, language, loss, and reconstruction. *Like Water from a Stone* (2013), a collaboration between Ghani and performer/choreographer Erin Ellen Kelly, was produced during a residency in Stavanger, a coastal city known as the "Oil Capital of Norway." The video's title is a play on the idiomatic expression "like blood from a stone," and refers to the difficulty of both extracting oil from the undersea deposits on the continental shelf in the present and of extracting a living from the rocky Norwegian land and unruly North Sea in the time before the oil boom. *Like Water from a Stone* depicts some histories and myths of this pre-oil period on a roughly geological timeline, ranging from seaside rock formations formed by Ice Age glacier pressure to Viking rock graves to bunkers constructed during the German occupation to finally conclude in an urban playground made from repurposed oil rig equipment. By siting performances in landscapes that are simultaneously sublime and awful, existing on a scale that overpowers most human endeavor, *Like Water from a Stone* echoes the imagery of Norwegian Romantic Nationalist painters and Northern European folk tales. The performers may be playing variants on the draug of those tales, or alternatively can be understood to embody *genius loci*, personifications of the spirit of place who re-enact some aspect of the place's histories or qualities. The choral score by composer Qasim Naqvi (released separately as the album *Fjology*), performed by two choirs and three soloists, combines extended vocal techniques, sonic abstractions, and structured choral writing to reflect the polyphony of natural sounds in the landscapes onscreen.

Afghanistan: A Lexicon (2011) was originally produced as a notebook in the dOCUMENTA (13) series *100 Notes, 100 Thoughts*, published by Hatje Cantz and later excerpted in the New York Review of Books blog. The *Lexicon* is a non-linear, speculative history of the twentieth century in Afghanistan, told through definitions of 77 terms from "Amanullah" to "Zenana," most illustrated with archival or original images. The print series expands selected entries from the book, mimicking the format of a mid-twentieth-century encyclopedia.

Ghani's work has been exhibited internationally, including at dOCUMENTA (13), Sharjah Biennials 9 and 10, the 2005 Liverpool Biennial, Museum of Modern Art New York, Tate Modern London, and the National Gallery in Washington, DC. Current solo and collaborative exhibitions include *Mariam Ghani & Erin Ellen Kelly: It Could Go Either Way* at the Anchorage Museum (Jan 30-Mar 1), *Border Cultures Part 3 (security, surveillance)* at the Art Gallery of Windsor (Jan 30-Mar 11), and *Making Borders* at DNA Berlin (Feb 12-Mar 31). Ghani is a recipient of 2014 Art Matters and 2015 Creative Capital grants. Finishing funds for *Like Water From a Stone* were provided by a grant from the NYSCA Electronic Media & Film program.

Forthcoming exhibitions at the gallery include Martin Gutierrez (April 9-May 9) and Clifford Ross (May 13-June 26). Please contact Courtney Willis Blair at 212-397-0742 or courtney@ryanleegallery.com for further press inquiries.