

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
515 WEST 26TH STREET
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Mariam Ghani + Erin Ellen Kelly

When the Spirits Moved Them, They Moved

January 10 – February 16, 2019

Reception: Thursday, January 10, 6-8PM

On Mother Ann's birthday the whole Society met at the Meeting House to celebrate the day. Like all Sabbaths in Shaker villages, a beautiful stillness pervaded. After the body of worshipers gathered into order, we commenced the services by one bow and opened the meeting by singing a hymn. All that were able united into ranks to step for the first song, then formed two circles for the march. At this time in a meeting it was usual to step quick and lively for two songs, sing two songs for the slow march, then two for the round dance with the circle unbroken. On this occasion the house was too crowded to march with convenience, so the dancing commenced in a promiscuous manner by the middle and young classes, and was attended with great power. The seats had to be taken out of the room to give place for the spirits to sing and dance, and the gifts and blessings of heaven were poured forth by the heavenly Orders in great abundance. We received gifts of freedom and simplicity, life and zeal, balls of love and blessing, sparks of holy fire, palms of victory, staves of strength, crowns of love, mantles and robes of wisdom, chains of union, and numerous other gifts of a similar kind, calculated to strengthen our souls and fill us with life, which continued to flow almost incessantly throughout the meeting. Sometimes when an individual would receive a bush or other emblem filled with quickening power or holy fire, we would all unite and shake heartily. A great many were wrought upon by an irresistible power, which caused the assembly to shake and reel and toss like the trees of the forest when shaken with the wind. The involuntary exercise became so violent that we discontinued ranks and all united in the dance, and one was moved upon by the departed spirit of a female of some other Nation, and all her movements and motions seemed to prove she had lived to a very old age. There was some quiet sleepy kind of spirit took possession of Illinois Green, which caused her to sit about on the floor apparently asleep for some time, then all of a sudden she sprang to her feet and whirled and jumped about the room as tho she was affrightened into a fit. About the middle of the meeting, Emma McCormack was possessed by a spirit and lay helpless for some time, continually hollowing, then suddenly sprang to her feet and danced round the room very swiftly for a short spell. After this Emma broke out in the most melodious strains that the human mind could conceive of, singing songs new to us, that appeared to be from the Spiritual world. Much praise was danced and sung that day, and towards the conclusion we received from Holy Mother Wisdom, each one a drop of her pure love... Some of those that were there say it was one of the liveliest meetings they were ever in.

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *When the Spirits Moved Them, They Moved*, a three channel video by Mariam Ghani and Erin Ellen Kelly. This is Ghani and Kelly's third exhibition at the gallery. Shot in 2018 at the Shaker Village in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, *When the Spirits Moved Them, They Moved* condenses a day-long performance by dancers into a 22-minute meditation on Shaker landscaping, architecture, song and dance as ways of organizing being-in-common.

A Christian sect led to America by Mother Ann Lee in 1774, the Shakers were devoted to bringing about a utopian society founded on simplicity, celibacy and equality of race and gender. They once boasted four to five thousand Believers across 19 communities from New England to Kentucky, but only two people in the world maintain the faith today. *When the Spirits Moved*

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Them, They Moved navigates through the historic meeting house and pastures of Pleasant Hill, evoking the Shakers' lost way of life through their enduring physical sites.

When the Spirits Moved Them, They Moved is part of Performed Places, a long-running collaboration between Ghani and Kelly. This series of site-responsive videos draws on landscape archeology to activate the history and memory of place through movement. This is the New York premiere of *When the Spirits Moved Them, They Moved*, which previously screened at Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in the fall of 2018.

Mariam Ghani (b. 1978 New York, NY) is an artist, writer and filmmaker. Her work looks at places and moments where social, political and cultural structures take on visible forms. She has exhibited and screened at dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel and Kabul; 2004 Liverpool Biennial; Sharjah Biennials 9 and 10; CCCB, Barcelona; Brooklyn Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Queens Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; St. Louis Art Museum; and Tate Modern, London.

Erin Ellen Kelly constructs ways of moving, ephemeral collages and performance pieces in gardens, galleries, warehouse spaces, gutted stores, boats, bombed out buildings, theaters and by the side of the road. Her choreographic work is site-specific and often collaborative, exploring the politics of the body and its relationship to the environment and society. Kelly has been an artist in residence at Movement Research, Rogaland Kunstsenter and the Camargo Foundation. She has exhibited at Anchorage Museum of Art; Bass Museum, Miami; Danspace Project, New York; Indianapolis Museum of Art; Knockdown Center, New York; Queens Museum of Art, New York; Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London; and Utopia Teatro, Barcelona.

FULL CREDITS

Directors: Mariam Ghani, Erin Ellen Kelly
Dancers: Lauren Argo, Theresa Bautista, John Brewer, Amanda Carrick, Lauren Frederick, Lizzie Gulick, Erin Ellen Kelly, Faryn Kelly, Rob Morrow, Sanjay Saverimuttu, Ashley Thursby, Philip Velinov, Natalia Velinova; Dancers appear courtesy of Louisville Ballet and Moving Collective
Singer: Twana Patrick
Choreography contributed by: Theresa Bautista, John Brewer, Lauren Frederick, Erin Ellen Kelly, Philip Velinov
Editor: Mariam Ghani
Cinematography, sound design and online edit: Adam Hogan
Production Manager: Robin Burke
AC: Roger Halliday
Sound Recordist: Eric Lutz
Production Assistants: Gwen Burke, Rina Lutz, J. Ryan McCleney, Don Simandl

DIT: Bob Urban
Catering: Wiltshire Pantry, Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill
Transport: Mint Julep
Produced by: Indexical Films, RYAN LEE Gallery
Research support: 21c Museum Hotels
Production support: Jody Howard, Owsley Brown III
Thanks to: Jeff Lee, Alice Gray Stites, Robert Curran, Mikelle Bruzina, Amy Bugg, Emalee Krulish, Jill Malusky, Miranda Lash, Dean Otto, Kim Schmidt, Jen Liu, Chelsea Knight and the Video Group

Introduction adapted from Shaker journals kept in the mid-to-late 1800s, courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Pleasant Hill Archives and Bohon Shaker Collection at Filson Historical Society.

For press inquiries, please contact Daisy Fornengo at daisy@ryanleegallery.com or 212-397-0742.