

Review in the doctoral degree conferring procedure of Niga Sayyeda Shahryar in the field of
arts in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation Prepared

by Professor Katarzyna Kosmala

PhD project title Unfamiliar Folds of Expression

Niga Sayyed creative practice research PhD project entitled Unfamiliar Folds of Expression is cross-disciplinary in nature, combining visual arts and social sciences disciplines to explore challenges migrants face today in the context of globalisation while paying tribute to their contribution worldwide. The PhD thesis explores a migration phenomenon in a global context, addressing predominantly macro socio-economic structural issues as well as highlighting political challenges, including human rights infringements, discrimination, marginalisation, prejudice based on race and ethnicity.

The body of work produced under Niga Sayyed's 3-year PhD programme combines a series of performances that has been documented on camera with contemporary printmaking that resulted in 3D engravings on acrylic - a series of abstractions, reinterpreting graphic design heritage with contemporary signage and symbols and combining Polish and Urdu languagebased semiotics. The work produced in its totality makes up an art installation that is certainly thought provoking and politically relevant in the context of the current migrant emergency and refugee crisis worldwide, including most recent mass evacuations from Afghanistan with social media representation of desperation and drama at Kabul's airport in particular, as well as precarious condition of refugees crossing seas to get to Europe from across the African continent. Aesthetically, the print works produced combine geometrical figures, lettering, script and are heavily embedded in yellow and black, sampled directly from hazard warning or safety barrier tape. Yellow and black of hazard warning features as well in all video-documented performances realised by the artist herself; the safety barrier tape was introduced in the video documented performances, corresponding directly with the print works.

The project overall is performative in nature, combining a strategy of enactment with the artist's own autobiographical undertones, reflecting on her migratory status, her own history and living across several countries while adapting to various degrees with different cultures and linguistic realms overtime.

The main themes addressed in all the performance work are boundaries and borders, as well as otherness - so relevant to the status of a migrant or a refugee.

The work produced is underpinned by the research inquiry and evidence of the artist's maturity in pursuing here creative approach. The dissertation contents itself has performative undertones through the exploration of introductory sociology texts addressing social structures and migration as well as way it is presented. The dissertation itself could be 'packaged' as an art book or as an art object to accompany the exhibition, especially if it could be bounded or wrapped in a yellow/black tape. I am certain, following completion of her PhD studies, the artist will showcase her work as an art installation internationally as it examines global themes and speaks to the international audience.

I would like to recommend the work produced for the doctoral award. However, in order to strengthen the overall outcome of the PhD project, I would like to suggest three key recommendations for amendments. These corrections are classed as minor.

Firstly, I would like to suggest the engagement with the relevant examples of the contemporary artists' works whose artistic approach in addressing advanced theme can find parallels in Niga's creative practice and who influenced the candidate's work. Especially, I would like to suggest examination of the examples of works that address the notion of migration in the contemporary context through interdisciplinary visual practice, combining performance and abstraction in the installation work. For example, Adrian Paci's works appear particularly relevant here, especially those commenting on individual fates and emphasizing tension between the ordinary and exceptional as well as the real and the fictional. John Akomfrah's artwork including his video installation on precarious migratory journeys across the seas in the history and now will be relevant as well as Tanja Ostojic's body of work concerning the economy of migration through her performance and video works. These are just few suggested examples.

Secondly, I recommend to include a reflexive analysis concerning the series of performances produced by Niga, drawing on critical feminist readings and or postcolonial critique (the suggested text to include e.g. Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Ed) *Feminism and Migration*; Chandra Talpade Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Sarah Ahmed's *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* etc.), The reflexive analysis of the series of performances should cover the following themes:

a. border and boundaries; b precarity of a migrant; c. otherness and the other.

And finally, I would like to advise a thorough proofreading of the English version of the dissertation as there are several typos and structural errors that need to be addressed.

To conclude, I am VOTING positively for Niga's PhD defence and these above mentioned suggestions I want her to address while defending her work through recommended angle.



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