







Az Zaban-e Modari:
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SASA
GALLERY

Chaos and Dance

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In the beginning there is Chaos. The closest aesthetic representation to Chaos is music. In the Greek creation myth life comes from the dance that is formed out of whirling forces of Chaos. The dancer is always inside the chaos of music. In the dance there is also the beginning of the glimmer of freedom.

I imagine that Siamak Fallah is a flirtatious and serious person. Maybe he has a very infectious laugh, and would weep during sad films. If there are people from all over the world sitting around a sumptuous feast I am sure that he would be delighted to be among the invited guests. Foreign languages would definitely sound like birdcalls in the forest to him and he would probably struggle to resist the sirens. He follows his hunches, trusts people at their word, is charming to strangers and loves to laugh at silly things. However, I would bet that he never cringes when someone lurches into a complex idea. I can imagine all these traits in him because these are the kinds of people he interviews.

He ran from Iran. He is an exile. He searches for home. He never leaves home. He lives in one tongue, but every time he speaks he eats shit. He mumbles, hums and slowly the crackling of notes makes a beat. He makes gold every time he speaks.

What could be more precious than to find another person when they did not exist? This is the true Midas touch – Gold! Gold! Gold! It is on your lips. When you speak in exile you must first invent the listener. There is, as Derrida said, no mother tongue and only a mother tongue. This is a destiny that has befallen almost everyone in this world. It has cast a new twist to the ancient duty of hospitality: one that requires a new house to be built every time you speak to a stranger. And yet, we must, because we are all strangers in exile. So this tough act of repeating the same words, slowly and carefully, sounding out the curls and crosses of each letter, giving rhythm to something

mute, and making music out of raw symbols, all the time the sheer point of this exercise, which can be demonstrated by either the slow act of writing on the wall, or the copying of manuscripts on a beloved paper, this vain and hopeless gesture which is motivated by the most noble aim of finding something hidden in each word, and driven by the need to make something sound itself out so that it makes sense to you and to this stranger who knows nothing of the history from which each utterance comes, but who is willing to lean into the wind that will push you both closer together. Yes, language is a dance that requires at least two people.

Translation begins in the imagination of something that never existed until the instance it arrived. In what language does translation live? Perhaps it exists in neither the language of origin, nor the language of reception. Of course, it begins in both, but translation is both chaos and dance. It is the whirling force that compels something new to come into the world. It is the desire to reach out and touch and hold the stranger. When this dance commences something new always bobs to the surface. We delight in its miraculous appearance, smile at its impudent display, and like a child, we marvel at the enormity of our tiny steps. However, no sooner than it flickers into being, and its effervescence begins to lose its luster, but you also start to wonder if something else is also vanishing from sight. At first, you cannot see this lack, because you are already enthralled, committed to the fullness of the now, but in each little gesture there is the death of another. Each word wants to find the house in which it was born, but also the road where it will meet the other. There is of course that dreaded ambivalence at the impossibility of not having both. Yet, this ambivalence does not have brakes. It lets you see that things were previously different and that they can be different once again. Ambivalence can sit on your shoulders like an old vulture, or else it can be the energy that makes you want to search again and again, as if for the first time. A blank page and an empty canvas is already always full when you start with this crazy ambition.

An older artist once advised his friend about the challenge of starting work each day. He said: "When you arrive in your studio every morning, you will find that is already full of people. The news will have been declared. Critics will be snapping away at the edges. Your friends will be giggling in the background and goading you on. Slowly you will go about the process of getting them out of the room. Once they have left, and if you are lucky even your self has gone, then you can get on with work."

Being alone is not solitude. The absence of chatter is not silence. There is still the vortex – the crossroads of the labyrinth, the creaking edges from which the gesture of sight and sound commence. How do you surrender to this void and, as Kurt Wolf said, still catch the wave that brings you up? I don't mean simply being loyal to your influences, holding the faith that crusted into a tradition, speaking the language of your fathers. There is something even more compelling about the past. It comes from the paradoxical capacity to convey its own kind of nothingness.

What do you miss about your homeland? It is the light. But how can one miss this quality when we are all under one sun? Because it is different there!

We can talk about the sky, the horizon, the play of color on the land, and finally even speculate on how the air tastes. But let's take a step deeper into the light. Let us move close until it dazzles so much that all the boundaries crash and crumble. This is where art begins, and even more definitive is my claim that the function of an open blue space is not a sign that points to the end, but the echo of what lies within. "I am Nobody. Who are you?" Emily Dickenson's probing declaration is where we can start to begin the dance with the elements in Siamak Fallah's quest. He does not boast when, like Diogenes, he summons the light of myths to search for that which is hidden from sight. He is neither heroic nor naïve. It is habitual duty of everyone who lives in a city. There is no mother tongue here. Everyday we must create a mother tongue. In this city we are surrounded by other people, but what are the traces of our common humanity?

There is a secret in art. It is rarely mentioned at events and I cannot find any record of it in the libraries. It is called friendship. Art is one way of releasing ourselves from the prisonhouse of blood. You don't have to love the ones around, and of course, you will still love the ones around you. But, there is also the dream of an alternative, the spontaneous interest in the other who has nothing in common with you. Art frees us from self-interest. In the coming of art there is always the stranger. There is fire in this energy and a crystal clear sightedness. It drives the mystics and philosophers to protest that thought is a kind of homesickness and a community without boundaries.

How far did you go when you ran from Iran? The other side of the world is only way half way back. And Emily Dickenson follows her declaration with another question: "Are you nobody, too?" So let us feast together with our humble certitudes and ridiculous jokes. Each time we look across the table we remember that the listener only starts to listen when you begin to speak. However, who can speak without the listener's poise? The inclination to give and receive is the moment in which creativity is born. This inclination, which is manifestation of attraction, generosity and curiosity, is the basis of friendship. And so, with art, the artist must invent their audience, just like in friendship, the act of giving is in anticipation that the other will be there.

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