



HAMJA AHSAN

I DON'T BELONG HERE

أنا لا أنتمي الى هنا



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Leta 2019 je umetnik Hamja Ahsan prejel veliko nagrado 33. grafičnega bienala Ljubljana za delo *Aspergistanški referendum*. Obiskovalce bienala je povabil, naj na referendumu glasujejo, ali bi se priključili Aspergistanu, neodvisni državi sramežljivih, introvertiranih in avtistov. Dvainsedemdeset odstotkov volivcev je njegov predlog podprlo. S tem klicem k avtonomiji je Hamja Ahsan svojemu umetniškemu projektu *Shy Radicals* (*Sramežljivi radikalci*) zopet vdihnili tisti uporniški značaj, iz katerega je projekt pred leti tudi vzklil.

Začetki projekta segajo v obdobje nekaj let pred izidom Ahsanove knjige *Shy Radicals: The Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert* (*Sramežljivi radikalci: protisistemska politika militantnega introvertiranca*, 2017), satiričnega dela, v katerem avtor na podlagi protikolonialne teorije osnuje kritiko prevladujoče kulture v kontekstu novega svetovnega reda, ki je nastal po napovedi vojne proti terorizmu kot posledice atentatov 11. septembra 2001 v Združenih državah Amerike. Tisto, kar se je sprva predstavljalo kot mednarodna kampanja za uničenje Al Kaide, je v demokraciji privedlo do hudega nazadovanja pod pretvezo nevzdržne teorije o pravični vojni, ki postavlja varnost pred svobodo in državljske pravice ter privzema obstoj drugorazrednih državljanov, rasizem in islamofobijo kot obrambne strategije pred sovražnikom, ki naj bi se skrival v naši družbeni mreži.

Posledice tudi tako imenovane vojne proti terorju pa niso vidne le v razpršenosti strahu, ki je porodila otopelost, katere najizrazitejša poteza je brezbrzičnost, temveč tudi na psihosocialni ravni, kjer se te posledice kažejo kot porast strahu, nemoči, sovraštva in občutka ranljivosti. Tovrstna čustva se z veliko hitrostjo razširjajo med očitno enakomislečimi in ustvarjajo družbeno polarizacijo, katere agresivni odmev se med zagriženimi privrženci stopnjuje na spletu. Kulturni tribalizem namreč zagotavlja občutek pripadnosti in z njo varnosti ter kaznuje vsakogar, ki si drzne razmišljati drugače, krepki pa se v odmevni komori družbenih omrežij, kjer drugačnost poistoveti s sovražnikom in jo izvrže. Nadvlada globalnega dojemanja je ustvarila zamegljen imaginarij o normalnosti, kar onemogoča artikulacijo kolektivne identitete, ki bi utrjevala družbeno pravičnost.

In 2019, the artist Hamja Ahsan was awarded the Grand Prize of the 33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts for his work *Aspergistan Referendum*. He invited the visitors to the Biennial to vote in a referendum on whether they should join Aspergistan, an independent country of shy, introverted and autistic people. Seventy-two per cent of the voters supported his proposal. With this call for autonomy, Hamja Ahsan breathed back into his art project *Shy Radicals* the rebellious character from which the project had sprung a few years earlier.

The project dates back to a few years before the publication of Ahsan's book *Shy Radicals: The Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert* (2017), a satirical work in which the author bases his critique of the dominant culture on the foundations of anti-colonial theory in the context of a new world order that emerged after the War on Terrorism was declared as a result of the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America. What was originally presented as an international campaign to destroy Al-Qaeda has led to a severe setback in democracy under the pretext of an untenable just war theory that places security above freedom and civil liberties, and presupposes the existence of second-class citizens, racism and Islamophobia as defence strategies against the enemy allegedly hiding in our social network.

The consequences of the so-called War on Terror are evident not only in the decentralisation of fear, which has led to a torpor whose most pronounced feature is indifference, but also at the psychosocial level where these consequences manifest themselves in the form of increased fear, helplessness, hatred and feeling of vulnerability. Such emotions have spread quickly among seemingly like-minded people and have led to social polarisation, the aggressive reverberations of which are amplified on the internet among determined supporters. Cultural tribalism ultimately conveys a sense of belonging and thus security, and punishes anyone who dares to think differently. On the other hand, it is reinforced by the resounding hall of the social networks where it equates differences with the enemy and excludes them. The dominance of global perception has created a blurred imaginarium of normality, making it impossible to articulate a collective identity that would consolidate social justice.

Obiskovalci letošnjega bienala se imajo možnost seznaniti z začetki in razvojem umetnikovega projekta *Shy Radicals*; tako kot v primeru mnogih drugih najbolj zagriženih revolucionarnih gibanj bi bila tudi njegova zgodovina lahko podvržena napačnim interpretacijam, če bi se je lotili prepovršno ali pa bi se omejili le na njegovo prevratništvo in utopičnost. Kot radikalni uporniki zoper nadvlado ekstrovertiranosti, kulturo hiperdružabnosti in nasilno pozitivnost se člani gibanja, ki ga je ustanovil Hamja Ahsan, borijo za prekinitev zdaj že brezčasne dinamike neoliberalizma, ki sistematično izganja drugačnost in s tem poskuša utišati sleherno dejanje, ki bi utegnilo sprožiti nenadno spremembo.

Zgodovinski artefakti, revolucionarna ikonografija, nikdar poprej videne fotografije, prvoosebne pripovedi sledilcev gibanja, ekstrovertiranih navdušencev ter poznavalcev področja človekovih pravic in sodobne umetnosti kažejo, kako je projektu *Shy Radicals* ob neprestanem prehajanju med resnico in fikcijo uspelo pronicati v podivjani in po večini zamaknjeni normirani svet, ne da bi projekt izgubil svoje spekulativno bistvo. Cilj gibanja *Shy Radicals* je ustanoviti izmišljeno državo Aspergistan, ki bi jo pripadniki upravljali v skladu s svojo ideologijo in lastno zakonodajo. Humorno se zgleduje po tradicionalnih strategijah tipičnega represivnega aparata, pri čemer mu z grenkosladko ironijo uspe izpostaviti potrebo po individualnem aktivizmu, ki ne bo zgolj poza v virtualnem svetu, temveč se bo za dobro skupnosti brezpogojno zavezal sodobni in vseobsegajoči kulturni kritiki.

Naslov razstave *I DON'T BELONG HERE* (JAZ NE SPADAM SEM) ne razkriva le neposrednega upora proti poistovetenju s hegemonijo uniformnosti, temveč tudi utrjuje svojo samoizključevalno umestitev, iz katere veje zahteva po priznanju pomena in edinstvenosti drugačnega, tujega, nenavadnega in celo nasprotujočega. Z vzpostavitvijo distance Hamja Ahsan napravi prostor za razpravo o nasilnosti civiliziranih družbenih pritiskov in razgali utvaro o globalni enakosti. Zavzema se za univerzalne vrednote in odstira pogled na drugost, ki je bila zaradi nerazumevanja in družbenega zavračanja prepogosto potisnjena ob stran. Drugost prikaže takšno, kakršna je bila od vedno: kot disidentstvo; kot skupnost tistih, ki razmišljajo, čutijo ali delujejo drugače. Tistih, ki za razvoj lastne identitete ne potrebujejo nenehnega soočanja. Tistih, ki ustvarjajo druge stvarnosti in v njih razvijajo pripadnost.

Yasmin Martín Vodopivec,
kuratorka razstave

Visitors to the 2021 edition of the Biennale have the opportunity to learn about the beginnings and developments of the *Shy Radicals* project. As with many other zealous revolutionary movements, the history of the project could lead to misinterpretation if treated too superficially or limited to its subversiveness and utopianism. As radical rebels against the dominance of extroversion, a culture of hypersociality and violent positivity, the members of the movement founded by Hamja Ahsan are fighting to break the now timeless dynamic of neoliberalism, which systematically banishes difference and thus seeks to silence any action that might trigger a sudden change.

Historical artefacts, revolutionary iconography, never-before-seen photographs, first-person narratives by followers of the movement, extroverted enthusiasts and experts in the field of human rights and contemporary art show how the *Shy Radicals* project has succeeded in penetrating the crazy and largely dislocated standardised world, constantly bypassing truth and fiction, without losing its speculative core. The *Shy Radicals* movement aims to establish a fictitious state of Aspergistan that would be governed by its members according to their own ideology and legislation. Humorously inspired by the traditional strategies of the typical repressive apparatus, he succeeds in illustrating with bitter-sweet irony the necessity of individual activism that does not function merely as a pose in the virtual world, but unconditionally subscribes to a contemporary and all-encompassing cultural critique.

The title of the exhibition *I DON'T BELONG HERE* not only reveals a direct resistance to identification with the hegemony of uniformity but also consolidates its self-exclusionary position, which radiates a demand for recognition of the significance and uniqueness of the other, the strange, the unusual and even the contradictory. By establishing distance, Hamja Ahsan creates space for a discussion about the violence of civilisational social constraints and exposes the illusion of global equality. He advocates universal values and reveals a view of otherness that has too often been pushed aside due to misunderstanding and social rejection. He portrays otherness as it has always been: as dissent, as a community of those who think, feel or behave differently. Those who do not need constant confrontation to develop their identity. Those who create alternative realities, within which they imagine new ways to belong.

Yasmin Martín Vodopivec,
Curator of the exhibition



SM OUT OF AFRICA! EXTROVERT-SUPREMACISM
THE WORLD IS OUR CORNER...



EXTROVERT-SUPREMACISM ON

**Od Drugistana do Aspergistana:
Zamišljanje domovine od samice
do solidarnosti***

»Že res, da svetu vladajo ekstrovertiranci ...
ampak svetove ustvarjajo introvertiranci.«
– Maureen Marzi Wilson

V samici ameriškega zapora z najvišjo stopnjo varovanja si je moj brat Talha, zaradi »vojne proti terorizmu« brez sojenja priprl že sedmo leto, v eni od svojih proznih pesmi zamislil deželo z imenom Drugistan. V svetu, razdeljenem na »tukajstan in tamkajstan«, si je zamislil način, kako »pripadati tisti deželi ptic, katere geografija je zrak«. V pesmi je raziskoval identiteto onkraj ozemeljskih sporov, skrajnega šovinizma, domoljubja in neskončne vojne, zaradi česar ga je sodnik po dogovoru o krivdi na sodišču razglasil za »miroljubno osebo«. Izpustili so ga na svobodo, da bi se vrnil domov. »Ostajam vdani Drugistanec,« se konča pesem; naša državna himna je minuta molka.

Ob njegovi izročitvi iz britanskega zapora v oddelk ameriškega zapora za čakajoče na izvršitev smrtne kazni sem za brata, ki ni imel več te izkustvene možnosti, postal vir spodbude in izobraževanja. Ko je prestajal zaporno kazen, sem mu podaril zbirko zgodb o delitvi, ki jih je napisal Sadat Hasan Manto.¹ Najbolj znana je *Toba Tek Singh*, zgodba o izmenjavi hindujskih in muslimanskih bolnikov med dvema psihiatričnima oddelkoma po ustanovitvi Indije in Pakistana leta 1947. Mantova eruditska kratka domišljajska zgodba prikazuje senčno stran utopičnih vizij vseislamske domovine, kot sta jo opisala Alama Iqbal² in Džina.³ Vpliv knjige je razviden iz Talhove zaporniške poezije, ki so jo v njegovi odsotnosti brali veliki duhovi, kot sta igralec Riz Azhmed in pesnik Michael Rosen.

Praksa dolgotrajnega bivanja v samici je v ZDA zelo razširjena in izvožena iz domačega kazenskega sistema v zaliv Guantanamo in Abu Graib. To pomeni, da zapornik 23 ur na dan preživi v celici velikosti kopalnice in brez človeškega stika, razen s tistimi, ki ga med pregledi slečejo do golega. Odtegnitev čutnega zaznavanja in skrajna osamitev sta razlog za več kot polovico vseh samomorov v ameriških zaporih, samopoškodovanje pa se poveča za 700 %. Čeprav je poseben

**From Otherstan to Aspergistan:
Imagining a homeland from solitary to
solidarity***

»Extroverts may rule the world ...
but introverts create worlds.«
– Maureen Marzi Wilson

In a solitary confinement cell in an American supermax prison, my brother Talha, already in the seventh year of his detention without trial due to the "war on terror", imagined a land called "Otherstan" in one of his prose poems. In a "world divided into "hereistan and thereistan", he imagined a way to "belong to that country of birds whose geography is air". In his poem, he explored identity beyond territorial conflict, jingoism, patriotism and infinite war, which led the judge to declare him a "peaceful person" in court after a plea deal. He was set free to return home. "I remain truly an Otherstani", the poem ends; our national anthem is a minute's silence.

Throughout his extradition from a British prison to an American death row prison, I became a source of stimulation and education for my brother, who no longer had this exposure. During his imprisonment, I gifted my brother a collection of Saadat Hasan Manto's¹ partition stories – the most iconic being *Toba Tek Singh*, a story about the exchange between two psychiatric wards of Hindu and Muslim patients following the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947. Manto's erudite short fiction shows the flipside of the utopian visions of a Pan-Islamic homeland as described by Allama Iqbal² and Jinnah³. The influence of the book can be seen in Talha's prison poetry which was read in absentia by luminaries such as the actor Riz Ahmed and the poet Michael Rosen.

The practice of long-term solitary confinement is rife in the US, exported from the domestic criminal system to Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. This involves spending 23 hours a day in a cell the size of a bathroom with no human contact apart from the strip searches. The sensory deprivation and extreme isolation result in over 50% of total suicides in US prisons, with a 700% increase in self-harm. It is condemned as a form of torture by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture,

1 Pisatelj in dramatik, ki je živel v britanski Indiji, po delitvi pa v Pakistanu (1912–1955; vse opombe so uredniške).
2 Južnoazijski muslimanski pisatelj, filozof in politik (1877–1938).
3 Mohamed Ali Džina, odvetnik, politik in ustanovitelj Pakistana (1876–1948).

1 Writer and playwright who lived in British India and, after the partition, in Pakistan (1912–1955, all footnotes have been added as editorial references).
2 South Asian Muslim writer, philosopher and politician (1877–1938).
3 Mohammed Ali Jinnah, lawyer, politician and founder of Pakistan (1876–1948).

poročevalec Združenih narodov o mučenju Juan Mendez to prakso obsodil kot obliko mučenja, jo doživlja najmanj 80.000 ameriških zapornikov. Težko je verjeti, da bo v takih razmerah domišljija ostala živa.

V bratovih zadnjih zaporniških letih je kampanja *Angola 3*⁴ veljala za *cause célèbre* množičnih družbenih gibanj proti zadrževanju jetnikov v samicah v ZDA. Posnet je bil film z naslovom *V deželi svobodnih* (*In the Land of Free*, režiser Vadim Jean, 2010), v katerem je osrednji pripovedovalec Samuel L. Jackson. *Angola 3* so bili nezakonito zaprti črni panterji, katerih obsodbe so razveljavili čez več desetletij in po mnogih letih globalnega prizadevanja. Na čelu prizadevanja je bil edini član trojice na svobodi, Robert King, ki je z mano govoril na tematskih srečanjih in pokazal solidarnost s prizadevanjem naše družine.

Film *Hermanova hiša* (*Herman's House*, režiser Angad Bhalla, 2013) dokumentira utopično vizijo Hermana Wallacea (umrl 2013, član skupine *Angola 3*, ki je v času nastanka filma ostal v zaporu) in njegovo sodelovanje z umetnico Jackie Sumell, ki je postavila vprašanje: »O kakšni hiši sanja moški, ki je že več kot 30 let zaprt v celici velikosti 1,8 x 2,8 m?« V tem umetniškem sodelovanju je zamišljena utopična vizija dvorca, ki ga navdihujeta ikonografija in etos Črnih panterjev. Ob opisovanju poslanstva projekta je umetnica izjavila: »Hiša je zasnovana tako, da prekine zaporniški cevovod in s tem zagotovi ustrezen prostor za umetnost, aktivizem, izobraževanje in ideje.« Herman v oblikovanje doma ves čas vključuje prostore za bivanje aktivistov, izobraževalne knjižnice, velikansko kuhinjo in konferenčno sobo. Spalne so bile ustvarjene kot večnamenske, s programom, osredotočenim na prehransko zadostnost, poklicno usposabljanje in samodoločeno izobraževanje. Ali po besedah Hermana Wallacea: »Da tem fantom poleg ulice ponudimo drugo možnost.«

Ker sem vzdrževal starejšega brata, s katerim sem si nekoč delil pograd, sem čutil naklonjenost do tega umetniškega sodelovanja. Herman je pripomnil, da mu »film pomaga ohranjati tisto malo duševnega zdravja, ki mi je še ostalo, ohranjati človečnost in dostojanstvo«. Prizadevanje pa ne ostaja živo le v Hermanovem življenju, ampak tudi v New Orleansu, kjer upajo, da bodo zgradili dom in občinski center. Izgradnja te hiše, ki ponazarja zmago slavje

Juan Mendez, but remains in practice amongst at least 80,000 inmates of the domestic prison population. In such conditions, it is hard to believe the imagination stays alive.

In the final years of my brother's incarceration, *The Angola 3*⁴ campaign was considered the cause celebre of the grassroots social movements against solitary confinement in the USA. A film had been made called *In the Land of the Free* (director: Vadim Jean, 2010) with Samuel L. Jackson as the central voiceover. *The Angola 3* were falsely imprisoned Black Panthers – all of whom eventually had their convictions overturned decades later after many years of global campaigning. The campaign was led by the only free member of the three, Robert King, who has spoken on platforms with me and shown solidarity towards our family-run campaign.

The film *Herman's House* (director: Angad Bhalla, 2013) documents the utopic vision of Herman Wallace (d. 2013, a member of *The Angola 3*, who remained incarcerated at the time of the film) and his collaboration with the artist Jackie Sumell, who posed the question: "What kind of house does a man, who has been imprisoned in a six-foot-by-nine-foot cell for over 30 years, dream of?" In this artistic collaboration, a utopian vision of a mansion inspired by the Black Panthers iconography and ethos is imagined. Describing the mission of the project, the artist stated:

"The house is designed to interrupt the prison pipeline, providing adequate space for "Art, Activism, Education and Ideas". Throughout the design of his home, Herman includes spaces for activists to stay in, educational libraries, a giant kitchen and a conference room. The bedrooms were created as multi-use with programming centred around food sustainability, vocational training and self-determined education. Or, in the words of Herman Wallace, "to give these kids another option besides the street."

As a supporting family member to an older brother that I had previously shared a bunk bed with, I felt an affinity with this artist collaboration. Herman remarked that the film, "helps me to maintain what little sanity I have left, to maintain my humanity and dignity." Beyond the life of Herman, the campaign lives on in New Orleans with the hopes of building a home and community centre. Illustrating the triumph of

4 Trojica, ki je bila desetletja zaprta v samicah državne kaznilnice, poimenovane Angola po mnogih suženjskih delavcih na nekdanjih plantažah v zvezni državi Louisiana.

4 The threesome, incarcerated for decades in solitary confinement in the Louisiana State Penitentiary known as Angola, named after the origin of the many slaves brought to the former plantation.

domišljije, bi pomenila uresničitev sanj, porojenih iz more. V pismu prijatelju v zaporu z najvišjo stopnjo varovanja je Talha zapisal:

»Tukaj je težko, vendar so drugi v še precej slabših okoliščinah. Vsaj med prhanjem mi ni več treba imeti vkleenjenih nog. Vendar pa mi med zapiranjem v celico nadenejo lisice z rokami na hrbtu in vkleene noge v okove. Pravila velevajo, da se mora zapornik vsakič, ko zapusti celico zaradi obiskov, rekreacije ali telefonskega klica, sleči do golega zaradi pregleda (vključno s počepanjem in kašljanjem). Toda spomin in domišljija sta za vsako človeško bitje čudoviti savani, kar ve tudi tvoj prijatelj, gospod Marqusee.⁵«

Za družbeno najbolj odtujene je zamišljanje domovine zelo učinkovit način za povrnitev samobitnosti in prostora ter njuno prilaščanje. Kako si lahko predstavljate kraj, ki vas varuje, vam ponuja upanje, opolnomočenje in zatočišče, ko pa je podrejeno in ogroženo samo jedro vaše identitete? Nekateri sunitiski muslimani se v ta namen zatekajo k nekakšni osmanski naddržavi. Ta spekulativna fikcija doživlja preporod tudi med drugimi brezpravnimi manjšinami z razpravami o afrofuturizmu ali z delom bengalske pionirke znanstvene fantastike Begum Rokeya pa tudi Octavie Butler.

Vizija iz zaporniške samice je navdihnila mojo lastno ustvarjalno prakso. V svoji prvi knjigi *Sramežljivi radikalci: protisistemska politika militantnega introvertiranca* (*Shy Radicals: Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert*) ustvarim vizijo nadnacionalne države, imenovane Aspergistan: za zavezništvo ljudi, ki so sramežljivi, tihi in imajo motnje avtističnega spektra. Spoznal sem, da je bila velika večina ustrahovanja, ki sem ga bil deležen v šoli, posledica nevzdržnega dejstva, da sem bil tih. To se je nadaljevalo v mojem delovnem življenju, kjer sem dobil občutek diskriminiranja in sistemskega omalovaževanja zaradi svoje resnobne in zadržane narave. Včasih sem si zaželel, da bi lahko kak sindikat prepoznal moje stiske, vendar ni bilo nobenih pravnih ali socioloških opredelitev, na katere bi se lahko oprl. Ustrahovanju se je pridružilo preveč

the imagination, building this house would bring into fruition a dream from within a nightmare. In a letter to a friend in Supermax prison Talha wrote:

“It is tough here but there are others in far worse circumstances. At least I no longer have to wear leg irons for showers. During the lockdowns though, I am handcuffed behind my back and tethered to leg shackles. It is policy to undergo a strip-search (including squat and cough) every time an inmate leaves his cell: visits, recreation, phone call. But memory and imagination are great savannahs for the individual human being, as your friend, Mr Marqusee, knows as well.”⁵

For society's most alienated, envisioning a homeland can be a powerful way to reclaim and take ownership of selfhood and space. When the very core of your identity is subordinated and threatened, how can you imagine a place that protects you, offers you hope, empowerment and sanctuary? Amongst some Sunni Muslims, this is done through referencing an Ottoman super state. This speculative fiction has also enjoyed a revival amongst other disenfranchised minorities through discussions on Afrofuturism, or the work of the Bengali sci-fi pioneer Begum Rokeya and also Octavia Butler.

The vision from an isolation cell inspired my own creative practice. In my debut book *Shy Radicals: Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert*, I create a vision for a supranational state called Aspergistan: for an alliance of people who are shy, quiet and on the autistic spectrum. I recognised the vast majority of bullying I had received at school was for the simple intolerable fact of being quiet. This continued into my working life where I felt a sense of discrimination and systemic belittling for my solemn and reserved nature. I sometimes wished a Trade Union could recognise my grievances but there were no legal or sociological terms I could turn to. Beyond the bullying, there were too many social gatherings where I simply wanted to be elsewhere. For example – parties – envisioned by the neurotypical and those with

5 Mike Marqusee (1953–2015) je bil ameriški pisatelj in politični aktivist, ki si je leta 1971 dom ustvaril v Londonu in tam tudi deloval.

5 Mike Marqusee (1953–2015) was an American writer and political activist who settled in London in 1971, where he was also active.



družabnih srečanj, ko sem preprosto želel biti nekje drugje. Na primer zabave, ki so si jih zamislili nevrotični in tisti z ekstrovertnim privilegijem, so bile prostori, ki sem jih lahko doživljal zgolj kot peklenske in hromeče. Poroke, zlasti arabske in pandžabske, z ekstravaganco ter glasbo bobnov dhol in ritmov bhangra, so sprožale napade tesnobe.

Mojemu bratu so diagnosticirali aspergerjev sindrom med priporom in zato sem prebral veliko sorodne literature o stanju, s katerim sem bil povezan. Še zlasti kako tisti z aspergerjevim sindromom trpijo zaradi depresije, samomorilnih misli in občutka, da so »drugorazredni državljani« – besedna zveza, ki se je zasidrala vame in me privedla do nove predstave o državljanstvu in državi. Natančneje, kako bi lahko država zagovarjala

extrovert privilege, were spaces that I could only experience as hellish and numbing. Weddings, particularly Arab and Punjabi, with the extravagance and music of dhol drums and bhangra rhythms, would invoke an anxiety attack.

My brother had been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome whilst detained and so I read a lot of peer literature about the condition which I related to. In particular, how those with Asperger's suffered from depression, suicidal ideation and a feeling that they were "second-class citizens" – a phrase that stuck with me and led me to reimagine citizenship and the state. More specifically, how could a state advocate the protection of a different way of being through its statues and public institutions? I took

zaščito drugačnega načina bivanja s svojimi zakonskimi predpisi in javnimi ustanovami? Navdih sem dobil v militantnosti in retoriki Črnih panterjev ter zaporniških zapisih iz obdobja državne vojne, imenovane COINTELPRO⁶ proti »obarvanim ljudem« in levičarskim disidentskim gibanjem, ki je potekala od šestdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja. Pri oblikovanju novega jezika osvoboditve sem se oprl tudi na utopično ustavo preganjanih in zatiranih ljudstev od Palestine in Kurdistan do Kube in postkolonialnih afriških nacionalnih držav.

Ko sem na turneji po Združenem kraljestvu predstavljal knjigo, so se ljudje povezali z izmišljenim svetom in državljani Aspergistan s svojimi lastnimi resničnostnimi bitkami v vsakdanjem življenju in v pomanjkanju institucionalnega priznavanja njihovih razlik. Nekateri so si res želeli živeti v državi Aspergistan.

Predstavljajte si, da bi obstajala številka za klic v sili, kot je 999, ki bi jo lahko poklical vsakič, ko sem želel pobegniti z zabave? Si predstavljate, da bi institucija parlamenta in razpravni senati dejanje poslušanja prednostno uvrstili nad dejanje govorjenja, nad svoje državljane? Predstavljajte si, da bi bila državna himna preprosto dejanje poslušanja školjke, brez vsakega farsičnega slepomišljenja ali javne predstave. Bi bil tak svet mogoč? To je bilo osrednje vprašanje moje knjižne turneje in projekta, ki traja še danes.

Upam, da zapuščina mojega družinskega prizadevanja – leta žrtvovanja, boja in travm – spodbudi druge, da pljunejo v roke in poskušajo kaj spremeniti: tako, da v temni luknji samice lahko odpremo okno solidarnosti.

Arhiv kampanje *Free Talha Ahsan* lahko najdete na: freetalha.org in na strani projekta *Deport, Deprive, Extradite* dde.org.uk. Umetniški projekt *Herman's House* lahko najdete na: <http://hermanshouse.org>. Knjiga *Shy Radicals: Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert* je izšla pri založbi Bookworks.

Hamja Ahsan, umetnik,
prejemnik velike nagrade
33. grafičnega bienala Ljubljana

inspiration from the militancy and rhetoric of the Black Panthers and prison writings from the COINTELPRO⁶ era of state war against people of colour and leftist dissident movements that run through from the 1960s. I also drew upon the utopic constitution of the persecuted and oppressed people from Palestine and Kurdistan, Cuba and the post-colonial African nation-states, in building a new language of liberation.

As I toured the book across the UK, people connected with the fictional world and the citizens of Aspergistan through their own real-life struggles with day-to-day living and the lack of institutional recognition of their differences. Some people really wanted to live in the state of Aspergistan.

Imagine there could be emergency public services like 999 that I could dial up every time I wanted to escape from a party? Imagine if the institution of Parliament and the debating chambers prioritised the act of listening above the act of speaking, above or over its citizens? Imagine the national anthem was simply the act of listening to a seashell that involved no charade or public performance. Could such a world be possible? That was the central question of my book tour and project which continues to this day.

I hope the legacy of my family campaign – the years of sacrifice, struggle and surviving trauma – encourages others to step up to try and change things: so that within the dark hole of the solitary, we can open a window of solidarity.

The archives of the *Free Talha Ahsan* campaign can be found at: freetalha.org and on the website of the *Deport, Deprive, Extradite* project at dde.org.uk. *Herman's House* art project can be found here: <http://hermanshouse.org>. *Shy Radicals: Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert* is published by Bookworks and is out now.

Hamja Ahsan, artist,
Grand Prize recipient of the
33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts

6 Zlogovna okrajšava za Counter Intelligence Program – protiobveščevalni program ameriškega FBI v letih 1956–1971, katerega namen je bil nadzorovati, diskreditirati in razvozlati ameriške politične organizacije ter se infiltrirati vanje.
* Besedilo je bilo objavljeno v *Khidr Collective Zine*, Issue 3: Frontiers, avtorji: Dhelia Snoussi, Farzana Khan, Hamja Ahsan, Javaad Alipoor, Haris A Durrani, Salma Ibrahim, Salwa Tareen, Akeim Toussaint Buck, Dania Quadri, Mia Rose, Talha Ahsan, urednik: Raeesah Akhtar, samozaložba, 2018, Združeno kraljestvo.

6 Syllabic abbreviation of Counter Intelligence Program – an American counterintelligence programme conducted from 1956 to 1971 by the FBI aimed at monitoring, infiltrating, discrediting and disrupting American political organisations.
* The text was published in *Khidr Collective Zine*, Issue 3: Frontiers, Authors: Dhelia Snoussi, Farzana Khan, Hamja Ahsan, Javaad Alipoor, Haris A Durrani, Salma Ibrahim, Salwa Tareen, Akeim Toussaint Buck, Dania Quadri, Mia Rose, Talha Ahsan, editor: Raeesah Akhtar, Self-publishing, 2018, UK.

Seznam skladb Shy Radical ob razstavi I DON'T BELONG HERE

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Hamja Ahsan je pripravil seznam skladb, ki
zaobjamejo njegove razpoložljive
svetove, povezane z nastajanjem projekta.

Arlo Parks: *Creep*
Art School Girlfriend: *Outside*
Yo La Tengo: *My Little Corner of the World*
Genocide: *Made in Bosnia*
Lowkey: *Islamophobic Lullabies*
The Handsome Family: *My Ghost*
Easy-E Real: *Muthaphuckkin'G's*
Radiohead: *Street Spirit*
Public Enemy: *B Side Wins Again*
Arlo Parks: *Black Dog*
Kelsey Lu: *Empathy*
Nirvana: *Lithium*
Peter Hook and the Light, Rowetta: *Atmosphere*
Asian Dub Foundation: *Free Satpal Ram*
Lowkey: *Long Live Palestine*
Low: *Like a Forest*
The Last Poets: *When The Revolution Comes*
The Cure: *A Forest*
Iggy Pop: *Social Life*
Manic Street Preachers: *Faster*
Bik McFarlane: *Song for Marcella*
Patti Smith: *Radio Baghdad*
Amira Medunjanin, Hakan Guno: *Emina*
Mogwai: *Hunted by a Freak*
Philip Glass, Maki Namekawa: *Mishima/Closing*
Radiohead: *Creep*
Danny Elfman: *Beautiful New World*

Shy Radical exhibition playlist I DON'T BELONG HERE

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Hamja Ahsan made a compilation of songs for the
exhibition which encompasses the range of his
dispositions tied to the making of the project.

But I'm a creep,
I'm a weirdo.
What the hell am I doin' here?
I don't belong here.
I don't belong here.

Ampak jaz sem odvraten,
jaz sem čudak.
Kaj, hudiča, delam tukaj?
Ne spadam sem.
Ne spadam sem.

Creep (Odvraten), Radiohead





Osební arhiv umetnika./Personal archive of the artist.

Hamja Ahsan je umetnik, pisatelj, aktivist in kurator, ki živi in dela v Londonu in Maastrichtu. Napisal je knjigo *Shy Radicals: Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert* (*Sramežljivi radikalci: Protisistemska politika militantnega introvertiranca*) in leta 2019 na 33. grafičnem bienalu Ljubljana osvojil veliko nagrado za umetniški projekt *Aspergistanški referendum*. Leta 2013 je ustanovil festival ustvarjalnega aktivizma, zinov in neodvisnega založništva DIY Cultures in je od vsega začetka tudi njegov sokurator. Prišel je v ožji izbor za nagrado za človekove pravice liberty za kampanjo Osvobodite Talho Ahsana, ki se je borila proti njegovi izročitvi ZDA in podaljšanemu priporu brez sojenja v okviru boja proti terorizmu. Hamjeva novejša besedila so objavljena v antologiji *No Colour Bar: Black Art in Action 1960–1990* (*Brez rasnih omejitev: Črna umetnost v akciji 1960–1990*). Svoje umetniške projekte je predstavljal v MoMA PS1 v New Yorku, galeriji Tate Modern v Londonu, na bienalu v Gwangjuju, v galeriji Guild Art v New Yorku, na festivalu Šanakht v Pakistanu in na bangladeški akademiji Šilpakala, na festivalu Glasgow International 2020 in v galeriji CCA v Varšavi. V študijskem letu 2020–2021 se je udeležil rezidenčnega programa za umetnike na Akademiji Jan Van Eyck na Nizozemskem. Ukvarja se s konceptualnim pisanjem, ustvarjanjem arhivov, performansi, videom, zvokom in izdelovanjem zinov. Je član uredniškega odbora radikalne revije za duševno zdravje Asylum.

Hamja Ahsan is an artist, writer, activist and curator based in London and Maastricht. He is the author of the book *Shy Radicals: Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert* and was awarded the Grand Prize at the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts in 2019 for the artwork *Aspergistan Referendum*. He is the founder and co-curator of the DIY Cultures festival of creative activism, zines and independent publishing since 2013, and was shortlisted for the Liberty Human Rights Award for the Free Talha Ahsan campaign against extradition and detention without trial under the War on Terror. His recent writing has been published in the anthology *No Colour Bar: Black Art in Action 1960–1990*. He has presented art projects at PS1 MOMA New York, Tate Modern, Gwangju Biennale, Guild Gallery New York, Shanakht Festival Pakistan and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Glasgow International 2020 and CCA Warsaw Poland. He recently completed the 2020–2021 artist residency at the Jan Van Eyck Academy in the Netherlands. His practice includes conceptual writing, archive building, performance, video, sound and zine making. He is a member of the editorial board of Asylum, the radical mental health magazine.

Instagram/twitter
@shyradicals@hamjaahsan

Spremljevalni program

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10. 9.–21. 11. 2021

Galerija ZVKDS
Trg francoske revolucije 3

OTVORITVENI DNEVI

→ nedelja, 12. 9., 11.00–13.00

Druženje Sramežljivih radikalcev, nedeljski brunch s pogovorom

Zini o duševnem zdravju kot orodje preživetja so izhodišče pogovora, pri katerem sodelujeta umetnika Hamja Ahsan in Ana Čavić, povezuje Tea Hvala. Galerija ZVKDS.

PROJEKCIJA FILMA IN POGOVOR

→ četrtek, 18. 11., 19.00

Projekcija filma na velikem platnu:
Sramežljivi radikalci (Shy radicals)
Portret umetnika in aktivista Hamja Ahsana.
Režija: Tom Dream, VB, 2020, barvni, 23', slovenski podnapisi.

Sledi pogovor: sodelujeta Hamja Ahsan in Tom Dream, povezuje Matic Majcen. Dvorana Akademije za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo (AGRFT) Univerze v Ljubljani, Aškerčeva 5. Vstop prost.

VODSTVI S KURATORKO

→ torek, 5. 10., 17.00, Galerija ZVKDS
→ nedelja, 14. 11., 11.00, Galerija ZVKDS

Vodi Yasmín Martín Vodopivec.

Accompanying programme

I DON'T BELONG HERE

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10. 9.–21. 11. 2021

Gallery ZVKDS
Trg francoske revolucije 3

OPENING DAYS

→ Sunday, 12. 9., 11.00–13.00

Shy Radicals Get-together, Sunday brunch with conversation

Mental health zines as a survival tool is the starting point of the conversation between the artists Hamja Ahsan and Ana Čavić, hosted by the art critic Tea Hvala. ZVKDS Gallery.

FILM SCREENING AND CONVERSATION

→ Thursday, 18. 11., 19.00

Film on the big screen: *Shy Radicals*
Portrait of the artist and activist Hamja Ahsan. Director: Tom Dream, UK, 2020, colour, 23', Slovenian subtitles.

After the screening: Hamja Ahsan and Tom Dream in conversation with Matic Majcen. Auditorium of the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT), University of Ljubljana, Aškerčeva 5. Admission free.

GUIDED TOURS WITH THE CURATOR

→ Tuesday, 5. 10., 17.00, ZVKDS Gallery
→ Sunday, 14. 11., 11.00, ZVKDS Gallery

Conducted by Yasmín Martín Vodopivec.

Producent/Producer:
Mednarodni grafični likovni
center/International Centre
of Graphic Arts – MGLC

Direktorica/Director: Nevenka Šivavec

Koproducent/Co-producer: Zavod za
varstvo kulturne dediščine Slovenije/
Institute for the Protection of Cultural
Heritage of Slovenia – ZVKDS

Umetnik/Artist: Hamja Ahsan

Kuratorka/Curator:
Yasmin Martin Vodopivec

Asistentka kuratorke/Assistant
curator: Simona Jerala

Industrijsko oblikovanje/
Product design: Dan Adlešič

Grafično oblikovanje/Graphic
design: Ivian Kan Mujezinović – Ee

Ilustracije/Illustrations: Rose Nordin

Izbor zinov/Zine selection:
Hamja Ahsan

Zemljevid/Map

*The World is our Corner (Svet je
naš kotiček)*: Hamja Ahsan, Ivian Kan
Mujezinović – Ee, Arven Šakti Kralj
Szomi, Yasmin Martin Vodopivec,
novo delo za 34. grafični bienale
Ljubljana/a new work for the 34th
Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts

Video

*The World is our Corner (Svet je naš
kotiček)*: Hamja Ahsan, Dan Adlešič,
novo delo za 34. grafični bienale
Ljubljana/a new work for the 34th
Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts

Video

I, Otherstani (Jaz, Drugistanec):
pesnik/poet Talha Ahsan,
producent/producer Zain Daha,
animacije/animations Malika
Holder, glasba/music DA

Film

Shy Radicals: avtor knjige/author
of the book Hamja Ahsan, režiser/
director Tom Dream, produkcija/
production Holly Wolfers, Black
Dog Films; prevod/translation:
Maja Lovrenov, podnapisi/
subtitles: Marko Makuc

Knjiga/Book

*Shy Radicals: The Antisystemic
Politics of the Militant Introvert
(Sramežljivi radikalc: protisistemska
politika militantnega introvertiranca),
2017, četrta izdaja/Fourth Edition,
2020*, Hamja Ahsan; Naročilo/
Commission: Common Objectives,
Urednik/Editor: Nina Power,
Založnik/Publisher: Book Works

Spremljevalni program/
Accompanying programme: Yasmin
Martin Vodopivec, Lili Šturm

Fotografije postavitve razstave/
Photographs of installation
view: Klemen Ilovar

Prevodi/Translations: Arven Šakti
Kralj Szomi, Polona Glavan, Nace
Fock, Katarina Jerin, Emad Mirah

Lektura slovenskega jezika/Slovene
language editing: Postulat

Lektura angleškega jezika/
English language editing:
Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi

Koordinator bienala/Biennale
coordinator: Božidar Zrinski

Odnosi z javnostmi/Public relations:
Sanja Kejžar Kladnik, Karla Železnik

Trženje/Marketing:
Petra Klučar, Jasna Zabel

Informacijska podpora/Information
technology support: Milan Jankovski

Grafična oprema/Graphic
implementation: Studio Fabrika

Tehnična ekipa/Technical team:
Borut Wenzel, Blaž Janko, Andrej
Črepinšek, Boštjan Vidmar, Miha
Rošker, Alenka Mikuž, Eva Štiglic

Čistilni servis/Cleaning service:
Nada Angelova, Goldy

Zahvale/Acknowledgements:

E. A. Alderdice, Zain Dada, Steven
Fraser, Darja Klemenčič, Ingrid
Merlak, George Oxyb, Rachel Rowan
Olive, Gemma Santiago Alonso,
Helen Spandler, Miran Zupanič

Izdal in založil: Mednarodni grafični
likovni center/Published by:
International Centre of
Graphic Arts – MGLC

Zanj/On its behalf: Nevenka Šivavec

Uredili/Edited by: Yasmin Martin
Vodopivec, Karla Železnik

Besedila/Texts: Yasmin Martin
Vodopivec, Hamja Ahsan

Fotografije/Photographs:
Klemen Ilovar

Prevod v angleščino/
Slovene-to-English translation:
Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi

Prevod v slovenščino/English-
to-Slovene translation: Polona
Glavan, Katarina Jerin

Lektura slovenskega jezika/Slovene
language editing: Postulat

Lektura angleškega jezika/
English language editing:
Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi

Oblikovanje/Graphic design:
Ivian Kan Mujezinović – Ee

Tisk/Print: Matformat

Naklada/Edition: 1000

Ljubljana, september/
September 2021

CIP – Kataložni zapis o publikaciji

Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica,
Ljubljana

7(410):929Ahsan H.

AHSAN, Hamja

I don't belong here / Hamja
Ahsan ; [besedila Yasmin Martin
Vodopivec, Hamja Ahsan ; fotografije
Klemen Ilovar ; prevod v angleščino
Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi, prevod v
slovenščino Polona Glavan, Katarina
Jerin]. – Ljubljana : Mednarodni
grafični likovni center = The
International Centre of Graphic Arts,
2021

ISBN 978-961-6229-89-0

COBISS.SI-ID 75248387



ISKRA
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10. 9. – 21. 11. 2021

34.
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Mestna občina
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