



MODJGAN HASHEMIAN


PROJECTS

2009 – 2018



A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian / **2016**

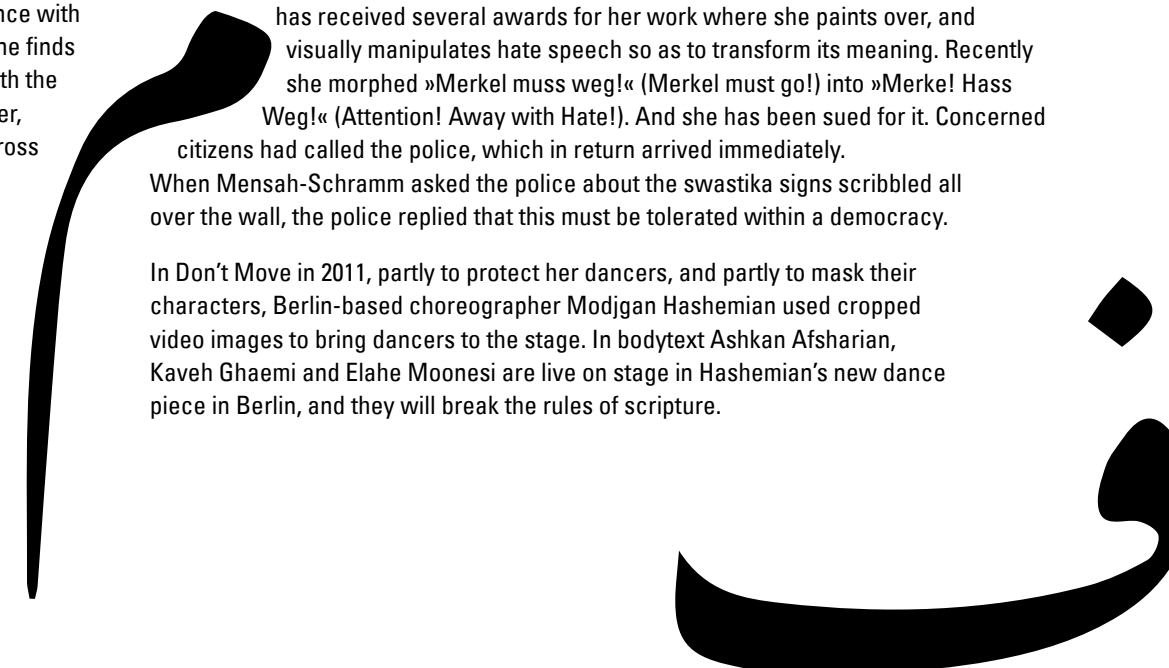
bodytext



With the communications technology under constant surveillance, handwriting and graffiti have come to play an important role in protests worldwide.

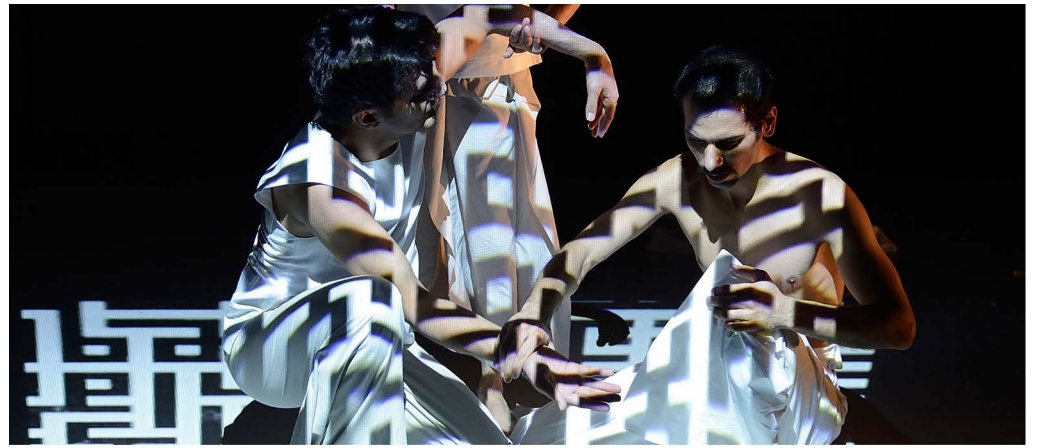
In Iran as well, calligraphy has undergone a renaissance in the last couple of decades, and has inspired numerous graffiti artists. Although the internet has become the new public space, calligraphy schools receive increasing number of students who seek the spirit of writing practiced in calligraphy. When asked why calligraphy, they all responded with a single word: Aramesh – tranquility. Tranquility in a condition that does not allow for tranquility.

Nonetheless life without internet remains unimaginable. Despite bans on certain websites, people still find a way, with tools such as VPN and »filter breakers«. The internet, which serves as a tool for organizing resistance movements, also serves as a collective memory. On the other hand, writing leaves us in its first instance with physical traces that do not betray its writer. It is therefore no surprise that one finds political slogans on Tehran's façades. Conformist slogans such as »Down with the USA« remain visible. And while slogans critical of the regime are painted over, they are not entirely wiped out. The resulting patchwork of wall surfaces across Tehran reveals traces of the protests.



Similarly in Germany, the case of Irmela Mensah-Schramm demonstrates that public protest is evaluated according to the statements it professes. Mensah-Schramm has received several awards for her work where she paints over, and visually manipulates hate speech so as to transform its meaning. Recently she morphed »Merkel muss weg!« (Merkel must go!) into »Merke! Hass Weg!« (Attention! Away with Hate!). And she has been sued for it. Concerned citizens had called the police, which in return arrived immediately. When Mensah-Schramm asked the police about the swastika signs scribbled all over the wall, the police replied that this must be tolerated within a democracy.

In Don't Move in 2011, partly to protect her dancers, and partly to mask their characters, Berlin-based choreographer Modjgan Hashemian used cropped video images to bring dancers to the stage. In bodytext Ashkan Afsharian, Kaveh Ghaemi and Elahe Moonesi are live on stage in Hashemian's new dance piece in Berlin, and they will break the rules of scripture.





The spectators in the fully occupied Studio 9 of the Maxim Gorki Theater will not have much time to breathe at the beginning of this premiere evening, so intense is the entry into the dance piece "bodytext" by Modjgan Hashemian.

What other levels and struggles can emerge from this use of the signs, was in this piece in an impressive way.

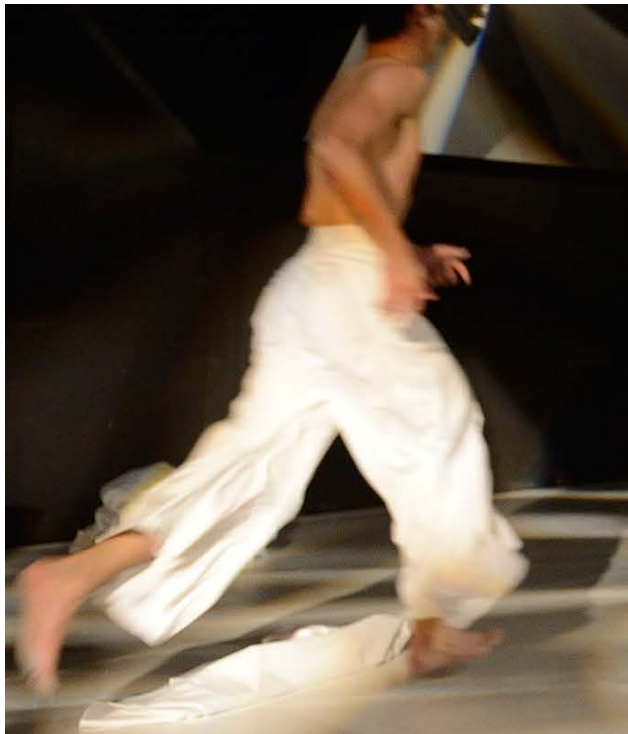
Whole words can not be heard in "bodytext", apart from the graffiti. Only letters and numbers, either spoken or thrown into the room by video projections merging with the bodies. The fragmentary nature of this narrative and performance style leaves exactly those gaps, that space between the lines, open to the different modes of action of the signs.

Daniel Walter, alsharq blog



There is a dancer in the niche in a scene, it is dark. He opens his mouth, breathes spasmodically, and arabic letters flicker over his naked torso. As if the man had pushed these signs out of his guts. It is a poetic, strong picture.

Michaela Schlagenwerth, Berliner Zeitung



Hashemian has often ventured into forbidden zones. The bodies lean against the order of the Scriptures. The three performers charge the dance with a great intensity.

Sandra Luzina, Tagesspiegel

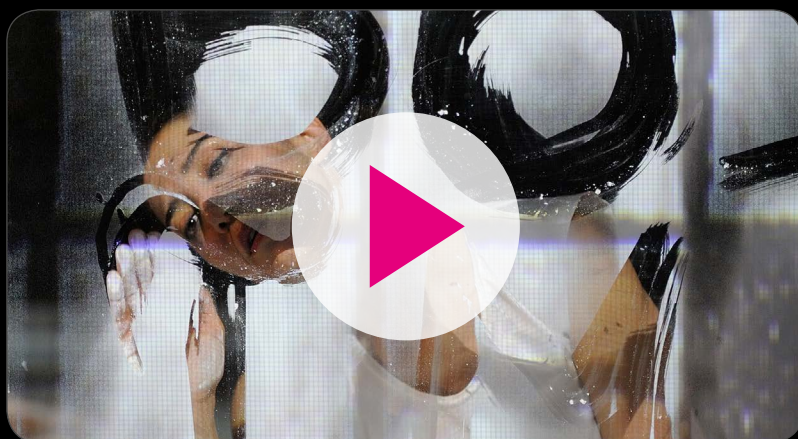


bodytext TRAILER



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyR4qFnAC5M&feature=youtu.be>

bodytext FULL VERSION



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-2bG00mPCg&feature=youtu.be>

bodytext

by Modjgan Hashemian

with Ashkan Afsharian, Kaveh Ghaemi, Modjgan Hashemian

Choreography	Modjgan Hashemian
stage design	Farzad Akhavan
costume design	Nastaran Rabbani
music	Oliver Doerell
lighting design	Asier Solana
video	Aidan Boyle
video, sound	Vicki Schmatolla
dramaturgy	Anke Sauerteig
training	Simone Detig
production management	Monica Ferrari

A production by Modjgan Hashemian in co-production with Akademie der Künste and Studio R, sponsored by Interkulturelle Projektförderung des Landes Berlin and Fonds Darstellende Künste. With friendly support by Theaterhaus Berlin Mitte. The restaging is made possible by foundations of Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa.



editorial Anke Sauerteig
title photo Neda Navaee
stage photos Dieter Hartwig

MODJGAN HASHEMIAN, born in 1975, completed her degree in choreography at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in her hometown Berlin. Having worked in a variety of dance contexts, Hashemian puts her Iranian roots in the centre of her choreographic style, constantly referring to a political context.

Her dance pieces are based on true stories. They combine documentary parts with the search for an interpretation of these stories into an original language of movement. Hashemian focusses strongly on interdisciplinary approaches. By connecting different artistic disciplines, she broadens approaches to her work.

She has presented her works **Move in Patterns, Don't Move, In Motion, Game Over, I love I, Kick it!** and **XX-Riots** in cooperation with Ballhaus Naunynstrasse. In collaboration with Gorki's Studio, she has premiered **7 sin, news 1 + 2** and **Eydi** since 2014. At the Bagdad National Theatre, she choreographed the play **Interview** by Ala'a Hussein (director Akram Assam). In 2016 she worked at Theater Thik-wa and devised the dance piece **deceleration**.



Hashemian has been invited to participate in panels on the ban on dancing in Iran several times. Her works have been discussed in academic contexts at universities in Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg. In addition, she regularly teaches dance workshops in Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah/Kurdistan and Tehran, among others. In 2014 she began to teach workshops on the subject of **Learning German through the Body**. Thus, she developed the pieces **Der Die Das Körper** in cooperation with the Maxim Gorki Theater, Maraméo e.V. and the school at Zille-Park. Recently, she started **Koffer voller Tanz** (A suitcase filled with dance) – an ongoing project in which literature on dance is being collected and brought to Tehran by donations. 2017 the suitcase will be brought to Baghdad and handed over from hand to hand.

2009–2018
PROJECTS

YEKI BUD YEKI NABUD

THERE WAS SOMEONE,
THERE WAS NO ONE

MYTHS OF REALITY #2

A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian / 2017



Photo: Esra Rothhoff

»Yeki bud yeki nabud« – »There was someone, there was no one.«

This is the phrase that begins Iranian fairy tales. Does the passion that many Iranians have for telling stories and fairy tales have something to do with escaping Iranian reality?

Choreographer Modjgan Hashemian collages together motifs from Persian legends with statements from Iranian artists. When polite untruths determine the game, artists are disappearing, and images and memories accumulated in the cellar resurface after years, the question remains:

Who is actually censoring whom? The dance performance Yeki bud yeki nabud is presented within the framework of the series Myths of Reality, in which fairy tales and legends from different language areas are mirrored in today's reality.

YEKI BUD YEKI NABUD 2017

with Kaveh Ghaemi, Modjgan Hashemian,
Roozbeh Mosleh

concept choreography	Modjgan Hashemian
dramaturgy	Anke Sauerteig
assistant	Dina Dooreman
stage / costume design	Sharzad Rahmani
music	Roozbeh Mosleh
video	Afagh Irandust
translation	Ferial Kasmai
translation english	Lyz Pfister



TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/209203267>

XX-RIOTS

A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian / 2015



You experience pain – learn to endure it. If you can't talk to someone about your feelings, show the punching bag.

XX-Riots engages with the images and stereotypes women are subjected to in male dominated martial arts on various levels. The Bolivian female wrestlers "Cholitas" are highly revered and enjoy a special social status in their country, nonetheless, the structures behind the women's success are usually dominated by a patriarchal order. Apart from the Cholitas' story, XX-Riots reflects the –locally researched – stories of Iranian Ninja fighters and the "Berliner Boxgirls".

Unlike in dance a boxer should never completely move with her opponent's rhythm but should dance her own dance, seeking to throw the opponent out of her rhythm, to unnerve her.

Taking the blow comes unusually close to the audience. Circling, taking cover, dodging and striking gain momentous importance due to the interwovenness with the women's realities and stories: the five dancers challenge predominant images such as that of the per se masculine female boxer and the especially feminine dancer. But they also examine what these stereotypes may possibly mean to the women themselves and their motivation for practising martial arts.

In her work so far, Modjgan Hashemian has dealt with boundaries, with processes of exclusion and restriction in political and social contexts. In XX-Riots she applies the rules of martial arts like a choreographic score: are there similarities between these sets of rules and those women have to grapple with in everyday life? Are these sports mirrors and outlets for everyday reprisals? Or is it just about passion for the sport?



XX- RIOTS 2016

with Laura Alonso, Lysandre Coutu- Sauvé, Simone Detig, Filimatou Lim, Judith Nagel, Antonia Zigel (1 Cast)

concept	Modjgan Hashemian
choreography	
dramaturgy	Anke Sauerteig
stage / costume design	Farzad Akhavan
music	Oliver Doerell
video	Zé De Paiva
choreographic assistant	Michele Meloni
lighting design	Asier Solana



TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/163290101>

NEWS

A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian / **2015**



Photo: Neda Navaee

What's going on in the world
and what are we doing with our
speechlessness about it?

The choreographer and dancer Modjgan Hashemian invites the audience to read out articles from newspapers. Oliver Doerell de-familiarizes these recordings and creates a rhythmic composition that serves as a soundtrack for Hashemian's live performance.

NEWS 2105

with Kaveh Ghaemi, Modjgan Hashemian, Michele Meloni

**concept
idea** Modjgan Hashemian

artistic advice and coordination Anke Sauerteig

stage / costume design Sharzad Rahmani

music Oliver Doerell

I LOVE I

A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian / 2013



Photo: Esra Rotthoff

“The holder of this passport is not entitled to travel to the occupied Palestine.” This is reality of Iranian citizens since the Islamic revolution in 1979. And an Iranian name a guarantee to be controlled in a discriminatory way at Israel’s airport. The route from Tel Aviv to Tehran can not be calculated using common route planners. Getting to know each other is almost impossible. Better, the enemy stays the enemy to justify the unforgiving attitude of both countries. But despite those problems Iranians and Israelis search contact via social networks. In groups called “Israel loves Iran” and “Iran loves Israel”. They naively reveal their love and share their fears. In Excesses they party those fears away. But scars remain inside of them – are they the origin of the powerful brokenness in their body language? What moves us in the conflict of those two countries? Which prejudices have become part of ourselves? What do I actually know from the others, and what do they know about me? In I love I the perspectives of the German-Iranian-Israeli ensemble penetrate each other. Caught in their own prejudices, the ensemble turns the clichés ad absurdum and finds out the political entanglements behind the conflict. They turn out to be prisoners in a web, from which there is supposedly no way out.

I LOVE I 2013

with Shiran Eliaserov, Kaveh Ghaemi, Michael Shapira, Maryam Zaree

concept	Modjgan Hashemian
choreography	
dramaturgy	Anke Sauerteig
stage / costume design	Shira Wachsmann
music	Oliver Doerell, Nuri Dehdashti, Nur Ben Shalom
training / assistance	Michele Meloni
lighting design	Asier Solana



TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/66628109>

IN MOTION

A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian / 2012



Photo: Esra Rotthöf

IN MOTION 2012

with Kaveh Ghaemi, Modjgan Hashemian

concept choreography	Modjgan Hashemian
dramaturgy	Susanne Vincenz
stage / costume design	Sabina Moncys
music	Oliver Doerell
lighting design	Asier Solana

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/42026529>



Kaveh and I met in March 2010 in Tehran shortly after the violent suppression of the Green Movement. Here he told me his story and the story of his drama group:

Over thirty times the group had presented their dance performance in the local theatre in Teheran to a marvelled audience, that could not believe what they see: Dance on a central stage of the Islamic Republic? After that came the setback: The choreographer and all dancers had to justify their work in front of court. They had to endure a humiliating trail full of harassment, which ended with the prohibition to dance on stage. Since then, Kaveh was afraid to be under observation. The circumstances made it impossible for him to work with us – an international production rehearsing without permission in Tehran. One day before rehearsals started he called and said: “ I want to take part anyway, can we find a way to make it happen?”

The dance performance DON'T MOVE was created and made an encounter between dancers from Berlin and Iran over a long distance possible. As not wanting to jeopardise his safety Kaveh was part as a shadow dancer who tells about the unbearable situation after all hopes were shattered – about the state of suffocation, hopelessness and paralysation that is noticeable all over the country. DON'T MOVE was first performed at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße. It travelled to Cologne, Zurich and Istanbul and had great success. Kaveh however, did not withstand the pressure in Teheran and left for Berlin. Here he saw DON'T MOVE and himself on stage as a shadow dancer and stayed to be able to dance. With DON'T MOVE and prior with MOVE IN PATTERNS I have choreographed my own story. With In MOTION I want to investigate as a dancer. I want to investigate questions that have risen in me since the migration of my parents in 1979. Since I came here with my family I can see a longing in their eyes that I feel as well. Until my first journey two years ago I could not explain this longing. What would have happend if my family had stayed in Iran? Was it the right decision to leave? What would have happend there to my passion for dancing?

After 27 years I travelled again to Iran and a world opened up in front of me that was both, familiar and foreign, exhilarating and daunting – and a world that makes me want to fight. Against this murderous regime that send so may people fleeing – decades after me Kaveh as well. The movement, dance is our form of resistance....

DON'T MOVE

A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian and Susanne Vincenz / **2011**



Photo: Isabel Robson

DON'T MOVE (2011)

with Ashkan Afsharian, Derrick Amanatidis, Michele Meloni, Elahe Moonesi, Banafsheh Nejadi, Verena Wilhelm

concept choreography	Modjgan Hashemian
dramaturgy	Susanne Vincenz
video stage / costume design	Isabel Robson, Heike Schuppelius
music	Oliver Doerell, Behruz Tavakol
lighting design	Benjamin Schälke



TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/23807750>

Imagine that dance did not exist. At least not in public. No clubs and, at least legally, no parties. No dance training and no opportunity to present dance on stage without risking a punishment. This has been the reality in Iran since the revolution in 1979. *Don't Move* examines the consequences of this for people whose passion and purpose in life is dance. How can they still manage to dance despite all of the obstacles?

Modjgan Hashemian creates a connection between dancers from Tehran and Berlin in order to investigate how societal norms and limitations manifest in the body. Does the body in motion have an emancipating potential which can influence social and societal nexuses?

How can they still manage to dance despite all of the obstacles? What strategies do they develop in order to evade the restrictions imposed by the censors? Like so many other things in the Islamic Republic, dance exists even though it is forbidden. "That's life in Tehran. You don't walk in the city, you don't move, you don't need your legs. In the end, you become a person without legs. At best, you walk from one door to another, never more than 10 meters. There is a rumor that the ground in the city has a stronger force of gravity than anywhere else, we call it "heavy ground". We always sit, we don't move anymore – that's why I want to dance." S.R.

Modjgan Hashemian, dancer and choreographer, grew up in Tehran and Berlin. The piece *MOVE IN PATTERNS*, which was presented at the Ballhaus to great success in 2009, is based upon childhood memories from the time of the beginning of the Islamic revolution. For her work on *DON'T MOVE*, she met dancers from various disciplines in Iran (folklore, classical Iranian dance, dance theater), whose living and working situations, experiences and stories have been incorporated into this new piece.

The point of departure for the piece was the encounter with dancers from Tehran who actually cannot be referred to as that. Even the word "dance" itself may not be used. Instead, the term used is "rhythmic movement" if a piece actually makes it to performance under the strict regulations. Rehearsals usually take place in living rooms emptied of furniture, in empty apartments or on the rooftops above the city. Despite these difficult conditions, the desire arose to jointly develop a dance piece across the geographic, cultural and political distance – in exchange with dancers who work in Berlin.

MOVE IN PATTERNS

A dance performance by Modjgan Hashemian / 2009



Photo: Isabel Robson

Iran, 1979: The toppling of the Shah's authoritarian regime was supposed to liberate the Persian people. But now, celebration and loud music were frowned upon, dancing was banned, people were veiled in grey and black. They withdrew into their houses and sought freedom in their own four walls. The project is based on a childhood experience from this time. While the outside world became more and more closed and inaccessible to women, another world opened up to the girl Modjgan: She began dancing the patterns of the carpets in her grandparents house, reading them playfully as choreographic instructions, discovering the freedom that resides in dance.

For *MOVE IN PATTERNS*, Modjgan Hashemian draws on the history of these carpets, the techniques used to weave them, their colours and shapes, but above all she works with the patterns, with their fabulous abstraction and their symbolic meaning.

There is so much movement behind, under and on such a carpet, and she explores it on various levels. Sometimes it follows the earnest game everyone knows from their own childhood: not walking on the lines between the floor tiles, paving stones, or rugs. The patterns are a restriction, a limitation, and at the same time they provide almost magical protection against fear. The other side of this is compulsive repetition and entrapment in a system.



MOVE IN PATTERNS 2009

with Kristian Breitenbach, Parwanhe Tomiko Frei, Michele Meloni, Maryam Nikandish, Niloufar Shahisavandi

concept	Modjgan Hashemian
choreography	
dramaturgy	Susanne Vincenz
video	Isabel Robson
stage / costume design	
music	Oliver Doerell, Mohammad Reza Mortazavi
lighting design	Benjamin Schälke



TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/12483784>



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