

# **GLUB (Hearts)**

by Shahram Entekhabi in collaboration with Mieke Bal

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### Film data

**Year:**

2003-2004

Mixed media & video + photo installation

**Duration:**

29:00 min

### The project

This installation (video) aims to give a positive image of migration as an aesthetic phenomenon with economical and political undertones. It is set in contemporary Berlin and integrates academic and artistic work. Conceived as primarily performative, the installation integrates media and sense experiences.

Glub is the Arabic word for hearts, a word used for edible roasted and salted seeds, a low-cost appetizer. We mobilize these two meanings together, to create something like "eating with the heart." Taking as a starting point the many meanings of the seeds – sunflower, pumpkin, and all kinds of other seeds – traditionally eaten in many non-European societies but mostly associated with the Arabic world, the installation uses video to not only offer such a positive image, but encourage and enable visitors to construct such an image for themselves and immerse themselves in it. Literally, that is: visitors are offered the choice of different activities. They can begin watching a film on the new Berlin cityscape accompanied by the sound of people who, on video monitors, also watch the film. Or they may prefer watching and interacting with the friendly faces of people eating and enjoying seeds, while listening to audio tapes each of which develop one of the many meanings and connotations of seeds, and the implementation of "migratory aesthetics" in the Berlin urban landscape and attendant art scene. These audio narratives and statements enable each visitor to shape his or her own, interiorised "film."

The mixed societies that have emerged as the result of migration have benefited enormously from the arrival of people from many different cultures. Cities have become more heterogeneous ("colourful"), music and cinema have been spectacularly enriched, and philosophy gratefully uses the potential offered by thinking along the lines of – and through metaphors relating to – migrancy. Cinema

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### // The project

has finally ceased to be predominantly either Hollywood or elitist avant-garde, and a “third” cinema” or “accented” cinema is now reaching levels of popularity few could have expected ten years ago. On the streets of certain neighborhoods of Berlin, most noticeably Kreuzberg, the shells of sunflower seeds testify to the presence of migrant culture in contemporary European urban centers. Those shells, traces of passing gestures that are now so common they are no longer even perceived as “accented”, are the “low” icons of an “look” or everyday-life aesthetic that we can call a “migratory aesthetics”. “Low”, because inexpensive, modest, and thrown away as rubbish; “low” as unspectacular, democratic because available to all, and lying around on the once immaculate pavements. Aesthetic, though, because they mark the look of the city that, as this installation proposes, has donned, through these shells and the sociability of the people who left them after eating outside, in the open, and together, a visible aspect of diversity.

Accompanied by the sound of cracking and eating seeds, people in the film discuss issues of migration and internationalization, from the phenomenon of seeds to speaking a foreign language, to changes in the look of the city and the thriving art scene. Funny and poignant stories are interwoven in the film with images that together depict the new Berlin. The videos present series of portraits with a stylized image of seed eaters, thus integrating them into the beauty we expect from art, while “behind” each portrait longer stories are being told by the figures of merchants, students, artists and passers-by who appear in the film. And while one is in the gallery, one cannot escape, nor place with precision, the sound of cracking seeds.



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### Review by T. K. Beal

“Glub”, a multimedia exhibit exploring aesthetics of human migration, to be displayed at Case Significant element examined as migrants’ art, culture, traditions blend with those of their new home.

The effects of human migration, both on migrants themselves and the societies receiving them, has long been a subject of fascination to academics and authors. But there is also a significant aesthetic element to migration as the art, culture and traditions of migrants blend with those of their new home.

The aesthetics of migration is the subject of “Glub,” an exhibit by Dutch art historian and cultural theorist Mieke Bal and Shahram Entekhabi, an Iranian-born artist and architect living in Berlin. The exhibit, sponsored by Case’s Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities.

“Glub” is the Arabic word for “hearts” and is used to describe the roasted, salted seeds which are a popular food among Arabs who have migrated to European cities. The sight of unemployed Arab men gathered on street corners in Berlin eating roasted seeds is now so common, the artists write, that it can be considered a case of migratory aesthetics.

Bal and Entekhabi use Glub as a starting point to provide a positive image of migration as an aesthetic phenomenon, with economic and political overtones. Conceived as primarily performative, the installation integrates media and sense experiences through the use of film, video, and audio tapes to provide both a celebration and a comprehensive picture of the aesthetics of migration.

Bal and Entekhabi are also visiting fellows in the Baker-Nord Center’s fall seminar program, an annual fall faculty seminar focused on a broad theme. This year’s theme is “Homelands and Security.”

Timothy K. Beal  
Florence Harkness Professor of Religion  
Director, Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities  
Case Western Reserve University  
Cleveland, OH

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## Credits

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**project assistant** noa roei

**camera** shahram entekhabi

**photography by** mieke bal, shahram entekhabi

**sound** noa roei

**equipment lent** Werkleitz Gesellschaft e.V.

### written, directed and edited by

shahram entekhabi, in collaboration with mieke bal

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NEXT interkulturelle Projekte  
PLAY\_ gallery for still and motion pictures

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### and

arne hector, lena Michaels, gary ward

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### additional images contributed by

arne hector, lena Michaels, gary ward

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### Artists' info - Shahram Entekhabi

Born in Beroujerd (Iran) in 1957

1976 -1979 studied graphic-design at the University of Teheran, Iran; studied architecture, urbanism, and Italian language in Perugia and Reggio Calabria, Italy

Since 1983 lives and works in Berlin

1983 - 2000 works as independent architect: Architecture projects and competitions

Since 2001 active in the fields of video art, photography, drawings, installation, and community art

2004 fellowship at the Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland/OH

**2005** "Walled Souls" on the occasion of the exhibition "Circa Berlin", Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen, Danmark / "Bologna Flash Art Show", Hotel Sofitel, Bologna, Italy / "GLUB (Hearts)" (with Mieke Bal), Hopkins Hall Gallery, OSU College of the Arts, The Ohio State University, Columbus/OH, USA / "I LOVE ART VIDÉO - 6ème édition", Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, France

**2004** Solo exhibition "GLUB (Hearts)" (with Mieke Bal), Case Art Studio Gallery, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland/OH (GLUB, catalogue) / Participation in the exhibition "Labyrinth X - zu Rassismus und Ausgrenzung", Stadthalle Ludwigslust (i?, newspaper) / Participation in the exhibition "Entfernte Nähe. Neue Positionen Iranischer Kunst", Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (Kilid, catalogue) / exhibition architecture and exhibition designer of "Entfernte Nähe. Neue Positionen Iranischer Kunst", Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (Pasheband, catalogue) / Participation in the exhibition "Not in the sky and not on the earth", Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje/Macedonia (How to perform prayers, catalogue) / Solo exhibition, PLAY\_gallery for still and motion pictures, Berlin (i?, Happy Meal, Herr Karl aus Nemsas and me?) / Participation in the exhibition "Schizorama", National Center for Contemporary Art/NCCA, Moscow, (Happy

meal) / Participation in the film program on the occasion of the solo exhibition of Louise Bourgeois, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (Eye Contact, directed by Mieke Bal & Shahram Entekhabi) / Participation in the exhibition "La Sage-femme y Spiral Woman", Sala Municipal de Exposiciones del Museo de Pasió (Eye Contact, catalogue) / Participation in the exhibition "just pLAY", Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles (Happy Meal and GLUB)

**2003** Participation in the screening program "Different views in and out of Berlin" on the occasion of the project "In-between countries", Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte, Berlin (The Crow) / Participation in the screening program "Einige Bemerkungen über den Nutzen wissenschaftlicher und methodologischer Filme" by Olga Egorova (St. Petersburg), Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (Fresh Azan) / Permanent installation of the sculpture seat in the lounge of the Video-Forum at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin / Participation in "The 2nd International Kansk Video Festival", Kansk/Russia (Fresh Azan) / Participation in "Fair Play. Video contest", PLAY\_gallery for still and motion pictures, Berlin (Klaatu Barada Nikto) / Participation in the exhibition "models + frames 8: Überlebensstrategien für Untrainierte - The Winner Takes It All...", Kunst- und Medienzentrum Adlershof/KMZA, Berlin (RE-CY-CLE)

**2002** Participation in "The 1st International Kansk Video Festival", Kansk/Russia (Express Malevich) / Participation in the project "Stardust Deluxe. Kunstaktionen zur Popkultur", Lisa Lounge/Villa Elisabeth, Berlin (Playback) / Participation in the project "Evolutionäre Zellen" of the group "finger", Neue Gesellschaft für Bildene Kunst (Staatrundfahrt) / Participation in the screening program "Pop-Sound-Video", Städtisches Museum Zwickau (Playback) / Participation in the Bush Videonight, open space, Berlin-Kreuzberg (Klaatu Barada Nikto)

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### Artists' info - Mieke Bal

A cultural critic and theorist, is Professor of Theory of Literature and a Founding Director of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, Theory and Interpretation (ASCA) at the University of Amsterdam, as well as A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University.

Her most recent publications are *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (University of Toronto Press, 2002) and *Mieke Bal Kulturanalyse* (Suhrkamp, 2002). Among her many other books are: *Louise Bourgeois' Spider: The Architecture of Artwriting* (University of Chicago Press, 2001); *Looking In: The Art of Viewing* (G&B Arts International, 2001); *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (University of Chicago Press, 1999 [2001]); *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd, thoroughly revised and expanded edition, University of Toronto Press, 1997); *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* (Stanford University Press, 1997); *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (Routledge, 1996); and *Reading 'Rembrandt': Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1994]). She also edited a programmatic volume *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation* (Stanford University Press, 1999). Her areas of interest include literary theory, semiotics, visual art, cultural studies, transcultural theory, feminist theory, French, the Hebrew Bible, the seventeenth century and contemporary culture. Her current research centres around four themes: "narratology between the disciplines", which may lead to a replacement of her revised and expanded *Narratology* (1997) and focus on fully integrating the interdisciplinary perspective she has developed over the past decade; "travelling concepts", now a book, as a result of her intense involvement with the ASCA Theory Seminar and her conviction that reflection on and deployment of concepts can make an indispensable contribution to interdisciplinary cultural analysis; "in time: between

performance and performativity": a project based on the cluster of aspects of the two terms, to be developed into a book with a theoretical grounding and involving literary texts as well as contemporary art; "preposterous history", to further exploit the idea broached in her book *Quoting Caravaggio*. She is interested in linking theory and practice in the domain of art presentation.

In this context, she recently made a series of nine 61/2-minute video clips, *Art Clips*, on audience interaction with single art works. With Shahram Entekhabi she made *Eye Contact* in 2003, a 10 minutes film on an exhibition of works by Louise Bourgeois. Also in 2003 she made a film on migrancy in France, with a collective of five video artists called *Cinema Suitcase*. This film, *Mille et un jours*, has been shown in a number of European universities, most recently at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam and the *Lichthaus Kino* in Weimar. She works with Shahram Entekhabi on a number of projects on migratory aesthetics.

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