



**Aziz Hazara:**  
***Bow Echo***

6 May – 22 July 2023

Guest curated by Nasrin Himada





Dear Aziz,

I'm writing to trace the space between us, the story of how we got here together, and the connection we've made since I first saw your film, *Bow Echo*. Do you remember? It was March 10th, 2020, and I had just arrived in Sydney, Australia. I remember being hesitant about making the trip because, well, you know, there was so much confusion at the time about the virus and how it spread. I spoke to Wanda about this over the phone, and she just laughed encouragingly, "make sure to bring toilet paper with you." I was making the trip for the annual Indigenous-led gathering, *aabaakwad*, which Wanda was organizing in Sydney that year. Reflecting on it now, I'm so glad to have gone, and also deeply grateful that this was the moment that our worlds intersected. It was there, at the 22nd Biennale of Sydney, that I first saw *Bow Echo*. And *Bow Echo* has changed everything for me.

There's something about this work, Aziz, that keeps haunting me. I've been using the word 'haunting' a lot lately to mark feelings of grief that I otherwise can't describe. When I first witnessed and experienced *Bow Echo*, it felt as though the work had somehow attached itself to me, and in its aftereffect, my body was remembering something familiar, something that was making itself felt and known. Perhaps these resonances were the same ghosts and spirits that have been calling to me for a long time. Because, as you know, I can never stop thinking about Palestine. And as you know, I can never stop thinking about what happened after 9/11. So I can't ever stop thinking about Afghanistan either, and what has taken place after twenty-plus years of occupation. I think about all that has erupted and transformed since then, and all the other places that have been impacted and continue to be impacted by the violence of invasion and occupation. The magnitude of so much loss, so much death, so much taken away and so many lives disappeared, is overwhelming, disturbing, and at times unutterable. I can't hold all of it here, but I know it is this haunting that moves us, and I've been grappling with it to complicate my understanding of entanglement and diaspora.

In my recent writing and curatorial projects, I've been working with artists and poets whose practices, like yours, unpack an expansive but contextually specific diasporic experience in its entanglement with dispossession and displacement. I think about how all these experiences of loss and grief open up a new space, a site for an emergent intimacy that is unbounded and functions without the need for a shared geographic territory. This collective intimacy builds on itself and connects a lot of us who were forced to leave our lands, and I feel the power of how precisely and generously *Bow Echo* moves us toward this shared experience.

The writer Sisonke Msimang wrote a text during the pandemic called, "Grief is Another Word for Love," which was published in June of 2021. Writing it from lockdown in Perth, Australia while her uncle was dying in Johannesburg, and Palestinians were under attack by Israel, she grapples with the entanglement of private and public grief:

At home, in South Africa, death brings the neighbours and the house overflows and at dusk, we sing until we cry, or we cry until we sing. We pray, even those of us who are godless, and we call out to our ancestors. Here, in Australia, someone could die on our road, and we might never know it. How can mourning be a private affair when grief does not know how to stay inside?

And I find myself returning to this question now, Aziz: "How can mourning be a private affair when grief does not know how to stay inside?"

### *Grief does not know how to stay inside*

I think this is what pulls me toward your work, especially *Bow Echo*. The occupation and invasion of Afghanistan that the film addresses, resonates deeply with me, and I imagine its reverberance across lands and waters, reaching the people of Palestine. The echo resounds there too in a spirit of solidarity and understanding that is embodied, and that conditions a generative and relational compass. "Grief is another word for love," might also be a way to describe what pulls at us, leading us to another place in our search, because what we do is dictated by this love, the love of our people and our land. *Bow Echo* pushes up against the limits of language, against the limits of representation, and against the limits of time to activate this relationship between grief and love. It offers a movement, a rhythm and sound that emulates and transpires in the wind at the top of that mountain. It's a presence that grounds us in a moment that is both expansive and precise. It's a dream that magnifies the unutterable. It's an ode to your friends, family, and all the children that surround you in your community, your neighbourhood, your place. It's an ode to their strength, their hopes, their memories, their dreams, and their life force that is of love, that is liberation, and that is of the land.

The echo that resounds here, Aziz, is that the work you make connects us. You're not Palestinian and I am not from Afghanistan, but we're entangled in a place of solidarity with so many others who are also building a diasporic world that is as intimate as it is vast,

and as certain as it is undisclosed. A world that is of our dreams and unseen futures, that is of our own language in many a poet's tongue, and of the images that reside in us and are waiting to be seen. These images are of us and all that is bigger than us, the images of our people yet to be born, and the lands that will be free.

with love,  
xNasrin

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1. Sisonke Msimang, "Grief is another word for Love," *Guernica*, 21 June 2021, [www.guernicamag.com/grief-is-another-word-for-love/](http://www.guernicamag.com/grief-is-another-word-for-love/).



Cover image: Aziz Hazara, video still from *Bow Echo*, 2019. Courtesy the artist.  
Interior images: Aziz Hazara, production stills "Bow Echo in the making," 2019. Courtesy the artist.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Aziz Hazara** (b. 1992, Wardak) lives and works in Kabul and Berlin. He works across different mediums, including video, installation, photography, sound, and sculpture, addressing dichotomies such as proximity and distance, migration and memory, life and death, reality and fiction, war and peace. His works have been exhibited nationally and internationally in venues including Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2022); Netwerk Aalst (2021); Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York (2020); 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020); Museum of Contemporary Art, Eupen (2020); Kunsthal Aarhus (2020); the Busan Biennale (2020); the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (MuCEM), Marseille (2019); and Asia Culture Center, Kwangju (2017). He is currently an artist in residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, and a grantee of KfW Stiftung. He is the winner of the 6th edition of the Future Generation Art Prize 2021.

**Nasrin Himada** is a Palestinian writer and curator who currently holds the position of Associate Curator at Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston (ON).



Image: Aziz Hazara, video still from *Monument*, 2019. Courtesy the artist.

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**SPACE: Lotus Laurie Kang | *Mother Always Has a Mother: Brick***  
6 May – 7 September 2023

Mercer Union's SPACE billboard commission has invited artist Lotus Laurie Kang for its 2022–23 season for a yearlong series titled, *Mother Always Has a Mother*. Working for the first time with textiles, a deconstructed industrial grain bag suggests the pattern from which Kang assembles the three sculptural works in this series that translate ideas of inheritance, loss, and lineage through the vernacular of seams, frayed edges, and folds. Read the artist's note on the third and final edition: *Brick* (2023), along with the accompanying text written by Katie Lawson at [mercercunion.org](http://mercercunion.org)

**Lotus Laurie Kang** is an artist working with photography, sculpture, and site-responsive installation, whose work takes up the body as an ongoing process and environment. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include Helena Anrather, New York (2021); Franz Kaka, Toronto (2020); and Oakville Galleries (2019). She has participated in group exhibitions at Cooper Cole, Toronto (2022); Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver (2022); The New Museum, New York (2021); SculptureCenter, New York (2020); Remail Modern, Saskatoon (2019); and Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Montréal (2019). Artist residencies include Triangle Arts Association, Brooklyn (2022); Horizon Art Foundation, Los Angeles (2022); and Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (2020). She holds a Master of Fine Arts from the Milton Avery School of the Arts at Bard College, New York.

**SPACE** invites one artist to produce a yearlong series of images for a public-facing billboard located on the east façade of Mercer Union.

Image: Lotus Laurie Kang, detail from *Mother Always Has a Mother: Brick*, 2023. Courtesy the artist.

**Aziz Hazara: *Bow Echo*** is the first solo exhibition in Canada by Berlin-based artist Aziz Hazara. Guest curated by Nasrin Himada, the exhibition presents the immersive video installation, *Bow Echo* (2019). Filmed in the high hills of Kabul Province, the work is a reflection on the enduring destabilization of Afghanistan and the spirit of generations impacted by occupation, invasion, and war.

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