



Abbas Zahedi, 'Ouranophobia SW3', installation view

Abbas Zahedi: Ouranophobia SW3

General Release, London, 5 December to 17 January

I am late for my slot at the old Chelsea Sorting Office. It is the darkest time of winter in London and although my surroundings are familiar, every attempt to locate the coordinates attached to my e-ticket has led me to another brick wall. After several fruitless trips past the neighbouring Metro Bank, I enter 'Ouranophobia SW3' via an ill-lit car park, through a door with no address. This disorienting process of arrival is consistent with the tactics employed by Abbas Zahedi's site-specific exhibition, which uses sound, light and structure to disrupt the body's conditioned responses to the spaces it inhabits.

Encountering Zahedi's work is like learning to speak a new language, while 'exhibition' feels like a misnomer since the artist rejects any impulse to display, preferring instead to draw attention to an already existing set of conditions. The ground floor - empty for the most part - is laced with clues or trinkets. All but one of the high-set windows lining the walls (originally positioned to provide ample light to work by while restricting vision in and out) have been stripped of their protective plywood sheets. Suspended from the remaining boarded window is a neat assemblage comprising ropes, a rectangular panel of wood and a paper luggage tag bearing a cryptic double zigzag. Eleven of the loose parquet floor tiles opposite have been uprooted and overturned, and now sit neatly rearranged beside the site of their extraction in the shape of an arrow. It points towards the red throat of a stairwell at the room's far end.

These small interventions serve to recalibrate the viewer's positioning within a space originally designed to optimise the workforce's capacity for labour. They reach their most substantial form in a hand-crafted staircase set at the hall's left side, inclined to face a window so as to override the intended prohibition of a street view. Its form references that of the minbar, a pulpit of 11 steps from which the imam delivers sermons in a mosque, but its vernacular is as much utilitarian as spiritual. Constructed from materials sourced on-site - the sides from plywood boards that the artist has stained with a reactive iron sulphate solution, and the steps from shelving found in the basement bar - the structure exemplifies Zahedi's ability to speak through a space, rather than within one, reconstituting its raw materials to initiate a sort of collaboration.

Once a timber mill, then a Royal Mail facility, now a shell and soon a luxury residential development, the

evolution of the old Chelsea Sorting Office follows an established trajectory. The staircase playfully signals an ascent to the celestial hereafter (the show's title, 'Ouranophobia', means a fear of heaven or the sky) only to provide us with a means to return to earth. From the window at its summit, a view of the afterlife: where the old Habitat building once stood, a vast hollowed-out pit is surrounded by construction workers and crowded with scaffolds and machinery, floodlit like a stadium or a surgery. The plot is part of a multi-million-pound redevelopment of the western end of the King's Road, and it glows like a premonition.

Sound from the building-site leaks into the space, where the far wall has begun to grow: it is embedded with a set of transducers. By converting one form of energy into another, the invisible equipment acts as a sonic medium, closing the gap between sound and material and converting the surface into an expanded speaker. It lets out a chorus of hums and clicks, sounding like a shoal of sea creatures in conversation. An 11-minute loop, the piece was made by trailing and tapping the wooden floor tiles around the room's perimeter, composing an architectural testimony.

In the basement, down the red stairs, testimony turns to lament. In what I assume is the old workers' bar, another set of transducers emit a recording of sung prayer layered over lamentation. Vocals emerge and fade as if through a faulty radio transmitter, accompanied by rumbles and scratches. The sound draws the viewer into a pitch-black expanse, which must be braved to reach the dimly lit husk of the bar. After a genuinely unsettling crossing, the enclosed space begins to offer a sense of comfort, despite the lingering impression that there is something pawing at the interior of the walls.

The lack of guidance and interpretation throughout 'Ouranophobia' gives rise to a constant negotiation of boundaries, permissions and security. This instability is of a piece with the show itself, which feels at once loaded with intention and bordering on coincidence. The numerological seam that runs through the 11 steps, rearranged tiles and even minutes of looped sound is picked up, Zahedi tells me, by the interior columns which appear to spell out 11:11 along the length of the space. I notice a tiny silver number three (perhaps a lost charm) which is left on the ground where it materialised, because 'something else will just appear'. The generous open-endedness of the work stays with me beyond the walls of the sorting office. Perhaps by coincidence, I take the 11 bus home.

Chloe Carroll is a writer and curator based in London.

Nick Hornby: Zygotes and Confessions

Mostyn, Llandudno, 14 November to 18 April

In 2008, the artist Nick Hornby hosted an event with the writer Nick Hornby. The apparent humour of turning the Hornby pair into human homonyms, however, concealed deeper connections with the artist's sculptural practice. Bringing together two Nick Hornbys, who in turn often discussed other Nick Hornbys, was a gesture which pluralised and destabilised ideas of authorship and subjectivity. The fixity of those notions is something persistently challenged by Hornby's sculptures, which often accentuate distance