

LIFT



OPEN CALL FOR
Գիշեր | GISHHER
MARCH 2022

ABOUT THE OPEN CALL



This is an open call for eight artists based in London to develop written responses to Գիշեր | gisher by Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin.

Dealing with narratives of hostility, survival strategies, rest, friction, sensuality and healing, Գիշեր | gisher premiered in July 2020 on the same day that the conflict between Turkey/Azerbaijan and Armenia re-opened.

This open call is to participate in a residency in London and produce a written response to the work that will form part of the piece as it is performed during LIFT 2022.

Anyone who has a deep resonance with the call out is welcome to apply, although we particularly encourage artists of SWANA (South West Asian/North African) descent and QTIBPOC to take part.

Fee: **£1,000**

Time commitment: **approximately 7 days**

Artists **must be available 25th – 29th April** inclusive to attend the residency in London, in person, and again in London in the week starting 6th June in order to record responses in a studio.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin is an artist and independent researcher of Armenian descent, based in Italy. Trained in dance, their work crosses movement, video, text, choreography, sound and gatherings.

giorgianardin.com



ABOUT THE PIECE

Գիշեր | gisher starts with a video projection inside and continues outdoors, ending with words spoken around a fire. This is inspired by practices of oratory sharing and the handing down of wisdom that are fundamental and situated in SWANA (South West Asian/ North African) cultures.

[A trailer for Գիշեր | gisher can be watched here](#)

For the London version of Գիշեր | gisher, Giorgia is inviting eight London-based artists to create a five-minute sound response – spoken or other – to the existing texts they created. These responses will be played to the audience as they sit around the fire during the second part of the performance.

LIFT 2022 will take place from 23rd June to 10th July. Գիշեր | gisher will be performed at the Lillian Baylis Studio at Sadlers Wells on the evenings of 6th, 7th and 8th July 2022.

KEY DATES

25th – 29th April

A week-long residency in London. This must be attended in person. Facilitated sessions throughout the week will take you and the other seven artists through a group process to respond to key themes in the work. The studio will be set with many cushions and there are soft surfaces to sit/lie on, the lights are dimmable and there will be scent. Sessions will be facilitated by Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin via Zoom, and **[Jamila Johnson-Small](#)** in-person in the studio.

The residency will run from 11am to 5pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 11am to 3pm on Thursday at the **[Siobhan Davies Studios](#)**.

Week of 16th May

Throughout May, all participants will individually form their responses to **Գիշեր | gisher**. In the week starting 16th May you will have a one-to-one Zoom meeting with Giorgia to talk about the development of your response and to ask any questions that might have come up. Final responses need to be submitted by 31st May 2022.

Week of 16th June

In early June you need to be present in London to record your response in a studio. It will take no more than half a day and we will provide and facilitate this access.

6th, 7th, 8th July

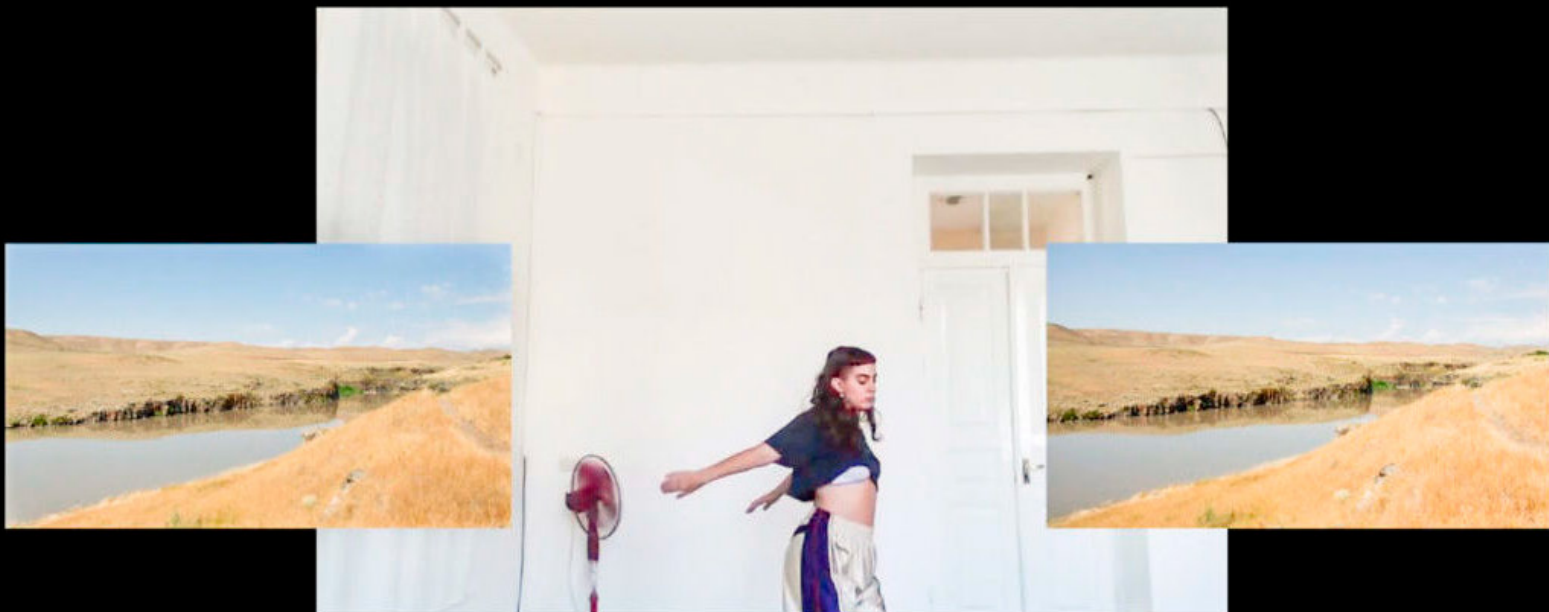
Գիշեր | gisher will take place at the Lillian Baylis Studio at Sadlers Wells. You do not have to be present at the live performances, but you are warmly invited to attend.

HOW TO APPLY

Please send a short audio response of maximum five minutes to the extract from Qh2tṛ | gisher that you will find at the end of this pack, articulating any thoughts, responses and questions that come up for you.

Deadline: Friday 8th April 2022

Submit to: programme@liftfestival.com



FURTHER CONTEXT

July 2020 marked the reopening of the Armenian-Azeri conflict, which since the '80s has seen the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, inhabited for centuries by the Armenian people, being reclaimed by the state of Azerbaijan as its legitimate owner. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan publicly declared Turkey's allyship with Azerbaijan, stating the following: "we will continue to fulfill the mission, which our grandfathers have carried out for centuries", clearly referring to the Armenian Genocide.

I can't help but think about the violent precision of time today, while we are here presenting Քիշեր | gisher, I can't not recognize and feel how clearly history, denial, violence and invisibilization act as accomplices, pressing down on the present.

The conflict (which was never really closed) is reopening during a pandemic, when people are forced to stay in their homes in a condition of extreme fragility, from many perspectives. It reopens with the financial support of the state of Israel, who has made such practices its signature. It happens now, the West is an accomplice, silent spectator.

Today more than ever I am staying with the inherited sensation of bloodshed, of stolen land, but mostly of words, that someone tried to silence, but couldn't.

Գիշեր | gisher: an extract

A friend told me that there are 50 different words to describe pain in the Armenian language. I forget if it was 50 or less, maybe 100, maybe I completely made this up in my head and they were saying something different. But it made a lot of sense to me.

I am always fascinated by the sounds we choose to describe specific feelings, almost as if we could enclose how that nuance of pain is different from another by changing a vowel or a consonant.

I woke up the other day and wanted to tell you and ask you how many ways of stating pain you know, but then I forgot and felt slightly ashamed of my question, it triggering my Impostor Syndrome, my not-enoughness.

I feel like I have spent so much time explaining myself, trying to justify my worth through theory, like

I am here

and here

and here

and here is where they talk about us

these important people who's words are validated

they talk about us

so we definitely exist

and are of some relevance

and you can see it through this lens and this is the only fucking thing that is left

so yeah I am holding onto that but at the same time it is so infuriating

don't you think?

also us - no need to answer this question but it gives me so many feelings to use this word.

What's the word in Armenian for missing something you've never known?

Following paths of looking and then realizing "it's not there. it's not here." it.

I get the feeling there isn't a word for "it", sometimes I get swallowed by the fear of inarticulation, where accuracy in words/tone/posture is what will make me readable, relatable, likable, approachable, not scary, not intimidating, finally worthy of love.

Questioning my own fragility is my eternal loop. Is this me? Survivor me? Scorpio Sun me?

Angry baby me?

It's so hot in here.

*A pendulum instead of a compass.
In my attempt to shuffle orientations,
oscillations, circular/diagonal/linear patterns become grammar.*

*I am not courageous. I don't want to be.
Courage is a word I want to get rid of.
My body is not courage. My words are not courage. The way I am sitting right now is not
courageous.
Courage implies knowing, pursuing, showing.
I burn.*

*I dreamt my teeth were taken out.
My front teeth, on either side of my biggest ones.
How can I bite like this?
In the dream I was told I wouldn't get my teeth back, or get them replaced.*

*How can I bite like this?
How can I bite you like this?*

*My great grandmother, my yaya, had trauma induced asthma.
Once she needed to get eye surgery and the doctors had to cover her face with a cloth and
her attack was so severe they couldn't operate.
Sometimes, when you touch my face, it feels suffocating.*

How can I tell you that sometimes I mistake love for weight?

*Pendulum oscillates vertically here. To and from me. Backwards and forwards.
Straight lines
Give back to yourself
Signifying a distance
A gap*

*Here I am lost - navigating myself again and again
I'm not trying to find anything and this is in itself a failed attempt
There was a moment a few days ago when the sensation of carrying everything was as
present as ever.*

*I never let go of anything.
I want to feel warmth in my belly, wetness between my legs again.
Here I feel my feet become thicker, harder soles.*

Cher is Armenian you know.