WITH THEATRE PECKHAM'S ARCHIVE

a multi-disciplinary exhibition inspired by over 40 years of archival material

Tara Fatehi

6 Oct – 17 Nov 2024

Working with an archive takes time—navigating the many elements, deciphering order (if any), and piecing together memories, relevance, melodies, and meaning.

In this space, material selected by the artist from Theatre Peckham's Archive surrounds you, inviting you to take time. Images hang in your path, asking you to either touch them or move around them—bending or turning to avoid them. Can you imagine moving through these suspended memories as though in a dance? The artist has added annotations, marks, embroideries, and micro-poems to both guide and misguide your attention, adding new layers to the visual narrative. Some images let you see through them, while others invite interaction—turning a page, opening a window.

This exhibition arrives at a poignant time. Less than a year ago, Israeli soldiers raided *Freedom Theatre*, a cultural hub dedicated to empowering young Palestinians through theatre at Jenin refugee camp. What a privilege it is to have a theatre. What a privilege it is to have an archive. To work with a theatre's archive, to get lost in it, not knowing which image or tape is from which year or show. What a privilege it is to have a 'random photos box' documenting over 40 years of work. The parallels between the founding of Freedom Theatre and Theatre Peckham in the 1980s, along with their shared missions, highlight the global importance of spaces where young people can heal, create, and express themselves

Through videos, photographs, writings and sound, this exhibition examines the transformation of histories as they are copied, retold, and remembered. Tara Fatehi invites viewers to immerse themselves in the history and potential futures of this archive, navigating the many fragments and allowing themselves to embrace the confusion and gaps in the narratives. This exploration also serves as a reflection on how political and social issues—such as housing, cost of living crisis, peace protests—and community resilience continue to resonate in London today.

The soundscape, created by composer Pouya Ehsaei, uses audio material from Theatre Peckham's archive, including sounds of shows, soundtracks, and oral histories from long-time theatre associates to amplify the voices that are still vibrating in the theatre.

Get Involved

The ***Memory Wall*** invites you to share your memories of Theatre Peckham and its past incarnations. The ***Collage Boxes*** on each table offer you materials from the archive to create your own artwork—display it on the memory wall or take it with you.

About Theatre Peckham and the Archive

Theatre Peckham has undergone many transformations over the decades. Initially known as Peckham Varieties, it operated at the Peckham Settlement from 1979 to 1985. It then became New Peckham Varieties, first at St Luke's Centre on the North Peckham Estate from 1985 to 1992, and later at Havil Hall from 1992 to 1999. In 2000, it was renamed Magic Eye Theatre, continuing until 2007 when it rebranded as Theatre Peckham. During building works at Havil Street from 2014 to 2016, it was temporarily located at Harris Academy and Peckham Library. Since 2016, it has resided in its current purpose-built theatre.

The archive spans the history of Theatre Peckham and its previous incarnations, with one of the oldest items being a copy of a 1956 flyer for entertainment events, including the Caged Birds Exhibitions and Children's Competition at Havil Street Hall. Names such as former director Teresa Early and her co-founders Michael Hamilton, composer Roger Goslyn, and set designer Ali MacLaurin frequently appear. Between 1979 and 2019, the theatre produced 74 productions. The archive includes photos and promotional materials for shows, events, and workshops, as well as video footage of performances, 'making-of' documentaries, press clippings, soundtracks from shows, casting sheets, and sketches for costumes and set designs, particularly from the mid-80s onward.

Tara Fatehi is a multi-disciplinary artist, performer and writer. Tara's work engages ambiguity, mistranslation, playfulness, disjunction, and unfinishedness. Her project *Mishandled Archive* involves 365 days of micro-installations and site-specific dances, a performance, and a book (LADA, 2020). She is half of *From the Lips to the Moon* music and poetry nights. She has performed at V&A Museum, Southbank Centre, Sophiensaele, Royal Academy of Arts and Nottdance among others. She was the first ever resident artist at the United Nations Archives at Geneva (2021).
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Artist – **Tara Fatehi**
Sound Design – **Pouya Ehsaei**

Producer – **Vanessa Bunn**
Assistant Producer – **Alex Nijhoff**
Technical Lead – **Jack Goodwin**
Heritage Lead – **John Whelan**
Archivists – **Alan Crookham, Victoria Lane**
Theatre Peckham Heritage Champions – **Joe, Emilija, Emmanuel, Rawlene**
Thank you to the staff at Theatre Peckham and to everyone whose voices, images, and work are part of this exhibition.