



## HOUSE OF MEMORIES

Queer and Postcolonial Approaches to the Past

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Queer and Postcolonial Approaches to the Past

Workshop/Symposium

January 11 / 12, 2017

Exhibition

January 13 – 21, 2017

Workshop/Symposium p.

JANUARY 11, 2017

5 p.m.

Welcome, Karin Michalski, Anja Michaelsen 2

5:30–7 p.m.

Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky: *Queer Post-Cinema: Yael Bartana's Polish Trilogy*

Book announcement / Talk / Screening

*And Europe Will Be Stunned – The Polish Trilogy* (Yael Bartana, 2007–2011) 5

JANUARY 12, 2017

10–11:30 a.m.

Elahe Haschemi Yekani: *Surface versus Affect: Archives of Slavery* 9

11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

Jane Jin Kaisen: *Translations Crossings Specters* 14

2–3:30 p.m.

Lizza May David: *Holding the Blanks In Place* 21

3:30–5 p.m.

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*Reiterations of Dissent* (Jane Jin Kaisen, 2011/2016, 78 min.) 17

Screening / Artist Talk

Exhibition

JANUARY 13–21, 2017

With works by Yael Bartana, Larissa Sansour/Søren Lind, Jane Jin Kaisen

Screening schedule:

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*And Europe Will Be Stunned – The Polish Trilogy* 6

(Yael Bartana, 2007–2011, 61 min.)

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*In the Future, They Ate From the Finest Porcelain* 33

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*The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger* 16

(Jane Jin Kaisen, 2010, 72 min.)

## HOW DO WE ENTER THE HOUSE OF MEMORIES?

Since the renewed interest in the 1920s concepts of social and collective memory (Aby Warburg, Maurice Halbwachs) in the 1980s (at least in Western academia) there has been an ongoing and ever expanding engagement with the social and material preconditions of memory. The interdependent relation between individual and collective memory, and the distinction between “history and/or/as memory” have been main issues of analysis.

Since the 1990s, growing consideration of what can be called ‘minoritised’ memory – memory which forcefully has been blocked or prohibited – is noticeable. Memory which lacks the dominant culture’s institutional support has to be looked for in spaces beyond official language and monuments. Particularly when engaging with the aftermath of collective trauma the ways of memory have to be reconsidered. Engagements with the German NS-past are changing when memory seems prone to loss of witnesses, but also when considering the transgenerational impact of trauma not experienced by oneself, but possibly generations earlier, tangible in everyday present life. Different kinds of traumatic histories, of the Jewish Holocaust, of slavery, of colonialism, and occupation need to be considered as producing intersectional, co-conditional memories. Concepts such as Postmemory (Marianne Hirsch), Haunting (Avery Gordon), or Multidirectional Memory (Michael Rothberg) aim to do justice to transmissions of the past which are difficult to trace in acknowledged sites of memory.

If, as Halbwachs and Warburg state, individual as well as collective memory is dependent on human interaction, communication and tradition – which concepts can we turn to, in cultural analysis and art, when memory is not passed on intentionally and openly, but resisting attempted or accidental erasure?

Memory hindered in severe ways foremost raises methodological questions – how do we approach memory that is not

sufficiently socially and politically supported, but elusive in its materializations (as bodily traces, affective settings, landscapes devoid of obvious meaning, or lack of authorship and story telling)?

Hito Steyerl alludes to the Greek mnemonic technology in which what is to be remembered is deposited within an imaginary memory palace, growing with the amount of memories one wants to remember. The imaginary house of memories is a rhetorical tool intentionally created and improved. Accordingly, we can ask, how to enter, use, and transform the House of Memories when we find elements and rooms in it which are not clearly discernible, which were possibly put there by others, and which nonetheless precondition the architectural, material conditions of how we remember. How do we enter the house of memories? Which methods do we need to engage with minoritised memory?

In the workshop we will discuss these questions with Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, professor for media studies (Bochum), who will engage with the films by Israeli filmmaker Yael Bartana as queer Post-Cinema; Elahe Haschemi Yekani, junior professor for English literature (Flensburg), who will introduce two different reading strategies of the archive of transatlantic slavery; Jane Jin Kaisen, visual artist (Copenhagen), who will give insight into her own artistic strategies of translation in the context of Korean occupation, separation, and dictatorship; Lizza May David, visual artist (Berlin), who will present her own artistic approach to a politics of representation as the representation of loss in the context of Philippine history; and Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, visual artist (London), who searches for the postcolonial archive, particularly in Uganda. The academic and artistic presentations will offer approaches from the perspectives of Queer Theory, Cinema Studies, Affect Studies, Postcolonialism, Futurism, and Feminism. Additionally, we will refer to a video by Larissa Sansour/Søren Lind (London), which indicates the necessity to re-invent a different – here Palestinian – past, and which will be screened in the accompanying exhibition.

Karin Michalski, Anja Michaelsen



Yael Bartana, *Mur i wieża (Wall and Tower)*, 2009, video still, courtesy of Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam, and Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv

## QUEER POST-CINEMA: Yael BARTANA'S POLISH TRILOGY

Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky

New Queer Cinema was shaped not only by AIDS, ACT UP, and the politics of the Reagan government but also by a new generation of recording devices. Due to questions of aesthetics and content, and not least, economic necessity, artists and activists resorted to technology beyond the classical cinema dispositif: New forms of recording, capturing, and distributing film images were developed. The aesthetically seminal videos by sixteen-year-old Sadie Benning were created in her childhood room with a Fisher-Price PixelVision camera. They were not screened in theaters, but were on display in museums. For *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* Todd Haynes and Cynthia Schneider used Barbie dolls and a Super-8 camera. Without secured music rights the film was banned from theatrical screenings but can still be watched on YouTube.

In short: Considering current discussions on Post-Cinema as transition of the film image, New Queer Cinema has always been post-cinematic. It is situated beyond the cinematic regime, experimenting with new aesthetics and forms of queer subjectification, as well as pushing to dissolve genres and media dispositifs. At its best it succeeds in what Gilles Deleuze, at the end of the 1980s, asked of film in times of digital and electronic imaging: to generate a new form of resistance, and to counter the television system of surveillance and control.

Turning to a more recent example, and engaging with Yael Bartana's *And Europe Will Be Stunned – The Polish Trilogy* (2007–2011), Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky will exemplify how in queer post-cinema, aesthetics, politics and technology come together. Bartana's work revolves around the ambivalent and traumatic history of the state of Israel, of Zionism and diaspora. The artist, as will be explicated in the talk, pursues an aesthetic approach that can be described as *affect political work on the document*.

**Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky** is professor at the Institute for Media Studies, Ruhr-University Bochum. Her latest publication, *Situiertes Wissen und regionale Epistemologie: Zur Aktualität Georges Canguilhems und Donna Haraways* (2013) was co-edited with Christoph Holzhey. She is the author of *Praktiken der Illusion. Kant, Nietzsche, Cohen, Benjamin bis Donna J. Haraway* (2007) and *Lara Croft: Cyber Heroine* (2005).

*And Europe Will Be Stunned – The Polish Trilogy* (Yael Bartana, 2007–2011) will be screened following the talk.

*And Europe Will Be Stunned/Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)*  
(2007, 11 min.)

*Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)* is the first film in the trilogy and explores a complicated set of social and political relationships among Jews, Poles, and other Europeans in the age of globalization. A young activist, played here by Sławomir Sierakowski (founder and chief editor of *Krytyka Polityczna Magazine*), delivers a speech in the abandoned National Stadium in Warsaw. He urges three million Jews to come back to Poland. Using the structure and sensibility of a World War II propaganda film, *Mary Koszmary* addresses contemporary Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Poland, the longing for the Jewish past among liberal Polish intellectuals, and the Zionist dream of return to Israel.

*And Europe Will Be Stunned/Mur i wieża (Wall and Tower)*  
(2009, 15 min.)

The second film of the trilogy *Mur i wieża (Wall and Tower)* was made in the Warsaw district of Muranów, where a new kibbutz was erected at actual scale and in the architectural style of the 1930s. This kibbutz, constructed in the center of Warsaw, was an utterly 'exotic' structure, even despite its perverse reflection of the history of the location, which had been the Jewish residential area before the war, and then a part of Warsaw Ghetto. The film invokes previous heroic images of strong and beautiful men and women who mythically established Israel. They were depicted as determined pioneers who, despite the most unfavourable conditions, kept building houses, cultivating land, studying, bringing up children collectively, sharing their assets

and constantly training to fight off potential enemy attacks. This is the world that Bartana proposes to resurrect in the twenty-first century, in an entirely different political and geographical configuration.

*And Europe Will Be Stunned/Zamach (Assassination)*  
(2011, 35 min.)

In the third film *Zamach (Assassination)*, the final part of the trilogy, Bartana brings the dream about multinational community and the brand new Polish society to the ultimate test. The plot of the film takes place in a not-too-distant future, during the funeral ceremony of the leader of the Jewish Renaissance Movement, who had been killed by an unidentified assassin. It is by means of this symbolic death that the myth of the new political movement is unified – a movement which can become a concrete project to be implemented in Poland, Europe, or the Middle East in the days to come.

**Yael Bartana's** films, installations, and photographs explore the imagery of identity and the politics of memory. Her starting point is the national consciousness propagated by her native country, Israel. Central to the work are meanings implied by terms like 'homeland', 'return' and 'belonging'. Bartana investigates these through the ceremonies, public rituals, and social diversions that are intended to reaffirm the collective identity of the nation state. In her Israeli projects, Bartana dealt with the impact of war, military rituals, and a sense of threat on everyday life. Between 2006 and 2011, she has been working in Poland, creating the trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned*, a project on the history of Polish-Jewish relations and its influence on the contemporary Polish identity. The trilogy represented Poland in the 54th International Art Exhibition in Venice (2011). In recent years Bartana has been experimenting and expanding her work within the cinematic world, presenting projects such as *Inferno* (2013), a 'pre-enactment' of the destruction of the Third Temple, *True Finn* (2014), which came into being within the framework of the IHME Festival in Finland, and *Pardes* (2015), which was shot during a spiritual journey in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. Her latest work, *Simone the Hermetic*, is a site-based sound installation that takes place in future Jerusalem.



Yael Bartana, *Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)*, 2007, video still, courtesy of Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam and Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw

## **SURFACE VERSUS AFFECT: ARCHIVES OF SLAVERY**

Elahe Haschemi Yekani

Can slavery ever become part of a “House of Memories”? In my contribution to the workshop I want to introduce participants to two recent contradictory approaches of how to deal with archival materials in the context of the legacy of transatlantic slavery: affective versus surface reading.

Both the literary archive of slave narratives as well as the visual depiction of injured Black bodies in the aftermath of slavery affect contemporary readers of these materials in visceral ways. However, it is specifically the more immediate violence of the visual representation of the wounded body that challenges notions of how to acknowledge Black suffering and agency simultaneously. What could be an ethical way of approaching images, such as the infamous McPherson and Oliver photograph of fugitive slave Gordon’s scarred back? Should readings be guided by emotional reactions, inflected by our different contemporary positionalities in relation to the still rampant daily forms of racisms?

Contrasting the more overtly politicised queer impulse of embracing negative feelings, which critics such as Ann Cvetkovich propose, with what Stephen Best calls a depsychologising form of “surface reading” (see Best 2012; Best and Marcus 2009), I want to engage in a conversation about possible reading strategies that concern us as scholars, artists, archivists, and activists who deal with historical sources that impact contemporary affective identity politics. What kind of temporality does this archive then entail? Is it a signifier of remote violence of the past, or is there a more immediate connection to how bodies are politicised and policed today? The archive of slavery, the result of historical exclusion, wavers between loss and recovery: the problematic absence of subjugated voices, the violence of the sources that did make it into official archives. Methodologically then, the two approaches I want to juxtapose can be described as reading strategies that embrace either “surface” or “affect”.

Emphasising the politics of emotions, Cvetkovich traces what she calls America's "political depression" back to the "absent archive of slavery." She analyses Saidiya Hartman's personal account of the history of the transatlantic slave trade, *Lose Your Mother* (2008), as an attempt "to bring slavery (and its ghosts) to life again, especially affectively, in order to demonstrate its persistent effect on the present" (2012: 136). Cvetkovich compliments Hartman's honesty in including the disappointed affective connections to Africa she seeks and often does not find as a middle-class African American scholar in her account of her travels to Ghana to research the history of slavery. Cvetkovich sees this embrace of feelings of failure and despair in relation to the afterlife of slavery as harbouring the potential of Sedgwickian "reparative feelings" (2012: 141). In contrast, Stephen Best suggests one entirely different way of interpreting the archive of slavery. Best calls for a radical turn away from what he terms "melancholic historicism" (Best 2012: 472) and a disregard of feeling when dealing with slavery. The pivotal point here seems to concern the assumed connection between representations of the past and the present: If we believe that 'slavery' is a cause of contemporary political depression, what reparative work are we asking the text/imagery to perform? Any affect we can have in relation to slavery is "after the fact", after all. How do first-person literary accounts, historical slave narratives, or the contemporary highly reflexive auto-ethnography of Hartman differ from visual materials? Is there a fundamental difference between the 'identity forming' act of writing as opposed to the objectifying process of becoming an image, which Best diagnoses for the visual archive of slavery?

"These questions have everything to do with an emptiness at the heart of the archive: however exhaustive one's catalog of the visual archive of slavery, it will always be lacking in works by slaves themselves. There are no visual equivalents of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. We have yet to discover a Frederick Douglass or Olaudah Equiano of the canvas. When it comes to the representation of the inner life of the enslaved, few of our sources are visual in nature. For slaves are not the subject of the visual imagination, they are its object." (Best 2011: 151)

While I find Best's caution with regard to the unchallenged linearity between violence of the past with negative affects of today highly instructive, the attempt to establish a less ideological form of engagement with cultural objects as a form of "surface reading" can also appear caught up in a hope for a 'cleansing' of the archive from messy emotionality. What methodologies between Best's "surface readings" and those queer approaches that are inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "reparative reading" can we make productive in approaching the archive of slavery today? Can they be reconciled or combined? Taking my cue from queer of colour epistemologies that challenge both identity politics and 'happy archives', I believe the limited access to the subjectivity of the enslaved presents us with the task to find ways of reading that might not only scratch the surface, but in José Muñoz's words, imagine a mode of the reparative that acknowledges the violence of the past, but "is not automatically about the integrity or sense of wholeness a collective or group may long for". (Muñoz 2013: 111)

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**Elahe Haschemi Yekani** is junior professor of English literature at the University of Flensburg. Previously she was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study Konstanz and assistant professor at the Department of English at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. She is the author of *The Privilege of Crisis: Narratives of Masculinities in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Photography and Film* (Campus 2011) and co-editor of *Erlöser. Figurationen männlicher Hegemonie* (transcript 2007, ed. with Sven Glawion and Jana Husmann-Kastein) as well as *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political* (Ashgate 2013, ed. with Eveline Kilian and Beatrice Michaelis). Currently, she works on her second book, in which she traces an entangled literary history of canonical bourgeois novels of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century with the earliest written testimonies of Black British writers. Her research interests include the Anglophone novel, Queer Theory, Postcolonial and Gender/Masculinity Studies.



## TRANSLATIONS CROSSINGS SPECTERS

Jane Jin Kaisen

Translation, and attempting to do so otherwise, constitutes a core in my artistic practice. I take translating otherwise to mean a practice at the borders driven by a necessity and an impulse for continuous questioning with the aspiration of carving out spaces for critical reflection and nuanced dialogue. To me, this practice of translating otherwise constitutes a mode of inquiry and an aesthetic approach that unfolds at the intersections of artistic mediums and genres, across disciplines, and at the junctions of dominant and marginal social, cultural, and political realities. When I take up translation, it is propelled both by a sense of necessity and belief in its aesthetic and political potential as a practice at the interstices and margins. It entails confronting the erasure and violence of translation produced by normative representations and official histories, and while recognizing their effects, contouring alternative genealogies through experimental aesthetic forms.

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Transnational adoption epitomizes the process of translation. It refers to the movement and transfer of children and infants, predominantly across continents and along an axis from the Global South to the West, where one nationality, culture, family, name, language, and most often socio-economic and religious context is overwritten and substituted for another in an almost complete translation. What remains, however, is the racialized non-white body, almost the same but not quite/white. As an inassimilable and inerasable trace, the body is an indicator of the untranslatability of the other, of the incompleteness of translation itself. Still, for the translated, reading the text of the body can also become a site of resistance, the beginning of an inquiry into the violence and erasure of translation.

For me, returning to South Korea at the age of twenty-one for the first time since my adoption to Denmark in 1980 during the peak of South Korea's overseas adoption industry was formative on a personal, political, and artistic level. On this trip I found and reunited with my birth family in Jeju Island. I also became involved

in what can be described as a dispersed community of transnational adoptee artists, activists, and academics who had grown up in various countries and who since the late 1990s in increasing numbers began returning to Korea for shorter periods of time or for permanent relocation. These contingencies prompted me to challenge the erasures produced by the translations that I had grown up with in which adoptees were constructed as objects without a history, or as persons without a past. Yet, rather than affirming a sense of origins and roots, return signified the beginning of a collective process of emergence and of translating otherwise by unsettling conventional understandings of identity markers of race, culture, language, kinship, nationality, and history. It was a moment characterized by a fundamental contestation of official translations of transnational adoption as humanitarian and anti-racist in the West and as an unfortunate but necessary effect of war in Korea. It was also a formative moment for me artistically in that I began to see how images and stories structure what is seeable and knowable, and I became acutely aware of the power relations imbedded in normative visual and narrative representations.

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While translation runs as an undercurrent across my art projects, it has taken on distinct meanings and forms within each artwork that comprises its own way of questioning and negotiating aspects of translation, of mapping other possible trajectories and genealogies. I have particularly dealt with contested transnational political histories related to coloniality, war, militarism, gender, and migration within the geopolitical contexts of East Asia, the United States, and Scandinavia by exploring Cold War legacies, ramifications of the Korean War and Division, nation building, colonial amnesia, and notions of white innocence and exceptionalism.

Taken together my research-based art projects can be seen as a cumulative palimpsest that gestures towards alternative genealogies and modes of emergence by destabilizing linear conceptions of history and conventional modes of perception. Through narrative experimental film, video and archive installations, photography, performance, and text, I inquire into

the politics of memory and representation. With my works I explore possibilities for aesthetic languages to contour forgotten, banned, or marginalized histories through multi-perspective and multi-sited inquiries. Working with layered, non-chronological narratives and montages in which archival material is juxtaposed with oral testimonies, poetry, recording of events, and interview fragments, this involves cross-archiving, and the gathering of discrete knowledge from oral histories, ephemeral cultural practices, and bodily memories. I reinterpret historical archives and juxtapose them with found footage, photographs of intimate family situations from my personal archive, and new filmic material of both a documentary and performative character in attempts at giving aesthetic shape to silenced histories, intertwined personal and collective memories, and embodied experiences of difference.

#### The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger

(2010, 72 min.)

*The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger* is a narrative experimental film that I made in collaboration with visual artist and filmmaker Guston Sondin-Kung. The film begins with the sound of women's voices speaking of histories of violence, of things repressed and silenced. Gradually, their voices accumulate into a cacophony of pure sonic intensity against an extreme slow-motioed image of a woman survivor of Japan's military sexual slavery who, in the absence of words to accurately account for her suffering, gets up and walks into the center of a war crimes tribunal court room and gestures wildly before she faints.

*The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger* explores ways in which trauma is passed on from previous generations to the present through a sense of being haunted. Following a group of international adoptees and other women of the Korean diaspora in their twenties and thirties, the film uncovers how the return of the repressed confronts and destabilizes narratives that have been constructed to silence histories of pain and violence inflicted onto the bodies and lives of women and children.

A strategic genealogy is created by relating the stories of three generations of women: the former 'comfort women' who were subjected to military sexual slavery by the Japanese military between World War I and World War II – women who have worked as sex-workers around US military bases in South Korea since the 1950s to the present – and transnational adoptees from South Korea to the West since the Korean War.

Composed of oral testimonies, poetry, public statements and interview fragments, the filmic narrative unfolds in a non-chronologic and layered manner. By reinterpreting and juxtaposing historical archive footage with recorded documentary material and staged performative actions, multiple spaces and times are conjoined to contour how a nexus of militarism, patriarchy, racism, and nationalism served to suppress and marginalize certain parts of the population and how this part of world history continues to reverberate in the present moment.

#### Reiterations of Dissent

(2011/16, 78 min.)

*Reiterations of Dissent* explores the suppressed history and fragmented memories of the Jeju April Third Uprising and Masacre of 1948, which unfolded shortly before the outbreak of the Korean War on Jeju Island, South Korea. In a brutal crackdown of a local uprising, South Korean police and rightist paramilitary groups, under the auspices of the United States Military Government in Korea, waged a "red hunt" that would unleash genocidal violence upon large parts of the civilian island population. The ideologically charged event was systematically silenced for five decades, and its memory remains contested to the present day.

Composed of multiple distinct narratives, *Reiterations of Dissent* uncovers various underlying political motivations and portrays how the un-reconciled trauma of Jeju 4.3 continues to resonate through multiple forms: the island's present landscape, evocative literary representations, recurring memories of survivors and relatives, shamanic rituals that mediate between the living and the dead, and in protests against the ongoing construction

of the Jeju Naval Base. Each video narrative shows a different aspect and a different attempt at approaching the Jeju April Third Massacre as an unstable episode of modern history.

**Jane Jin Kaisen** is a visual artist and filmmaker. Projects such as *Tracing Trades* (2006), *The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger* (2010), *Light and Shadow* (2011), *Reiterations of Dissent* (2011/16), and *Apertures/Specters/Rifts* (2016) constitute a multi-faceted inquiry into present effects of coloniality, war, and militarism from a gendered, diasporic, and decolonial lens. She is an alumna of the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program and holds an MFA from the University of California Los Angeles in the Interdisciplinary Studio Area. She also holds an MA in art theory from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, where she is currently a PhD candidate. She is co-founder of the artist group *UFO-lab (Unidentified Foreign Object Laboratory)*, co-founder of the artist unit *itinerant\_incisions*, part of the collective *Orientity Exhibition*, and core team member of *In Migratory Times* initiated by the Institute of (Im)Possible Subjects. Her artworks and films have been exhibited in a range of international contexts, most recently as part of *Interrupted Survey: Fractured Modern Mythologies* at Asia Culture Complex, *ArtSpectrum* at the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, *Feminism Video Artist Biennale* (South Korea), *Soil and Stones Soul and Songs* at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (Philippines), *Crossing the Line at Critical Distance* (Canada), *Nordic Delights* at Kalmar Art Museum (Sweden) and *Vulnerability Matters Laboratory* as part of *Rauma Biennale Balticum* (Finland).  
[www.janejinkaisen.com](http://www.janejinkaisen.com)

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Jane Jin Kaisen, *The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger*, 2010



## HOLDING THE BLANKS IN PLACE: ABOUT KNOWLEDGE AND ITS LOSS IN THE WORKS OF LIZZA MAY DAVID

Oona Lochner

It's winter 1977 when, on a promotional tour of a Japanese camera company, a German photographer travels Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines. After his return he presents his pictures of landscapes, palm trees, farmers, and city life in a small exhibition in his home town, bringing the Far East to the German boonies. When shortly afterwards he leaves the family business for a new career in Nigeria he takes with him one of the photographs that portrays a young Filipina and puts it up in his apartment. There, even though that might be only in retrospect, it sparks a conversation and, subsequently, the romance between the photographer and another Philippine woman: Lizza's mother.

Lizza's photographic essay *The Unknown Filipina* (2010) ends with the very personal story of how her parents fell in love. It reminds me of some of my own family tales and at the same time evokes in me the old feminist question of when, in fact, the personal is also political. I recall reading a rather convincing answer once from artist Martha Rosler. It is essential, she argued, that the decisions and narratives of one's personal life are affected by the "consciousness of a larger, collective struggle". When Lizza tells her family stories they are entangled in a broader narrative of the struggle for identity in a globalized world and of the disconcertment of not-quite-knowing (oneself).

Knowledge about oneself and one's world and the trauma of this knowledge's loss are themes vivid in Lizza's work, for one, on the level of personal identity. *The Unknown Filipina* touches on themes like transcultural relationships and patchwork families, on heritage and migration, work and home. But even though figuring out one's identity between career, family, and cultural background concerns everyone, the photo essay shows that it's an issue all the more pressing for those who are not part of the white, male middle class of the Global North – that questions of identity and knowledge are negotiated also on institution levels.

The German photographer travelling the Far East in the 1970s works like a symbol for a time when increasingly flexible production modes, liberalized trade and finance, new container and computer technologies, and a growing air traffic shaped a global economic network with a growing mobility of goods, money, and workers. It was the decade when in the Philippines state programs started to encourage workers to go and work abroad to support their families and, *en passant*, improve the gross national income. Although *The Unknown Filipina* introduces Lizza's mother as an English teacher working in Nigeria, the story of her work migration nevertheless points to the countless Philippine women (it is, in fact, mostly women) who live as care and domestic workers in First World countries – an issue Lizza has worked on more extensively in her film projects *Cycles of Care* (2011, with Claudia Liebelt), *The Model Family Award* (2008) and *Two Years More* (2006).

In contrast, the German photographer leaves his country from the privileged position of a First World citizen. Wooed as customer by a camera company, he travels Asia; striving for a career opportunity, he migrates to Nigeria. This imbalance is manifested also in his photographs. By pointing to the ways the photographer – in creating his exhibition and private photo album – presents and frames the unknown Filipinos, Lizza not only reflects on how the perceptions of self and others interact in forming identity. She also raises the question of who, in fact, has the power to decide what is to be seen and what remains untold and how regimes of knowledge production correlate with economic power relations in a globalized world.

Several of Lizza's works address this in the context of the art world, exploring aesthetic judgment, processes of selection, and canon building against the backdrop of gender and cultural difference. For her exhibition *Artist Unknown* (2014) at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila she went through the inventory lists of its Visual Arts Collection. Forty-three artworks were listed with an "unknown" artist, title, or year of production and, together with a group of art students, she went into the archives to find them. Lizza's own education as an artist, having

been a student of late Rolf-Gunter Dienst at the Academy of Fine Arts in Nuremberg, was intimately linked to the Western narrative of modernist painting. She must have been exposed to a lot of hard-edge abstraction. When she went into the archives in Manila she was surprised to find paintings that very much resembled the color fields, geometric abstractions, and shaped canvases she had come to know as Post-War American painting. This prompted questions about an imagined Philippine modernity, its relationship to the Western narrative, and about Lizza's (and the art students') position in the middle of it. The "unknown artists" and the circumstances of their perceived absence had to be discussed not only with regard to this specific museum collection but to the tales of modernist painting.

In her exhibition, however, Lizza didn't present the rediscovered paintings but a photographic documentation of them being handled by the art students. The display even enhanced the ambiguity of the artworks' presence. Where usually spotlights draw the spectators' attention to the exhibits Lizza installed curtains of threads that disturbed the lines of sight and added a diffuse filter to the aesthetic experience. She didn't research the identities of the undocumented artists (or of the *The Unknown Filipina*). Instead of including them into her own reconciling narration, as "textualized subjects, (...) kind of brought from the archives", she holds the blanks in place and thus makes visible not the artists but their invisibility. A critique of art history's narratives and omissions – be it from a feminist or decolonial perspective – can hardly aim for only a new, corrected canon. Rather, it has to question and redefine its methodologies, starting by shedding light on its underlying power relations. A "politics of representation", that secures neglected artists their deserved places in the narrative, then gives way to a "politics of knowledge" that challenges the ways knowledge is produced<sup>2</sup>.

For the past few years, Lizza has addressed the conditions of knowledge and its loss also directly in painting. Her jungle paintings evoke images of art and nature that lead either to her Philippine origin or her Western European art education, often leaving me undecided between both. In my mind, modernist

abstraction that followed her from Nuremberg to the archives in Manila collides with tales of exotic forests and the accompanying painterly fantasies in the fashion of Henri Rousseau. At the same time, Lizza activates local views on the forest when she interviews the Philippine botanist Ulysses Ferreras, who describes how he speedily records plants and their ecological contexts, always afraid they could soon have vanished. By juxtaposing his taxonomic photographs and descriptions with her paintings, Lizza connects two levels of not-knowing. The art world perspective – getting lost in the cracks of art historical writing – meets the global outlook: the collective trauma of species extinction and feeling estranged from our world.

For her exhibition *Umwelt* (2015) at the Philippine Galleria Duemila Lizza carried one of her paintings into the jungle, making explicit that nature is not simply the root of its visual representations and conceptualizations but interacts with and is shaped by them. She confronts her *Urbild* with its ‘real’ counterpart and captures her canvas, surrounded by undergrowth, palm trees, and running monkeys, in yet another, this time photographic picture. Superimposing one jungle image on the next. Reportedly for the transport, she had removed the stretcher frame from the canvas. Spreading it on the leaves or suspending it from a horizontal stick, as if hung out to dry, she emphasized its textile character. Lizza has frequently played with the idea of fabric: In *Artist Unknown* it was the display made of thread curtains, for her exhibition *Tabula Rasa* (2014) at the 1335mabini Studios in Manila she fastened the unframed canvas across a corner of the room or suspended it from a single hook in the wall. The fabric then fell in symmetrical folds, creating a Rorschach-like pattern, but also evoked the anthropomorphic shape of a robe with sleeves and legs. Bringing back to mind (post)modernist discussions on high and low art, these works intertwine gender aspects – textile’s female connotations – with cultural dimensions of endangered local traditions versus a globalized textile and art industry, respectively.

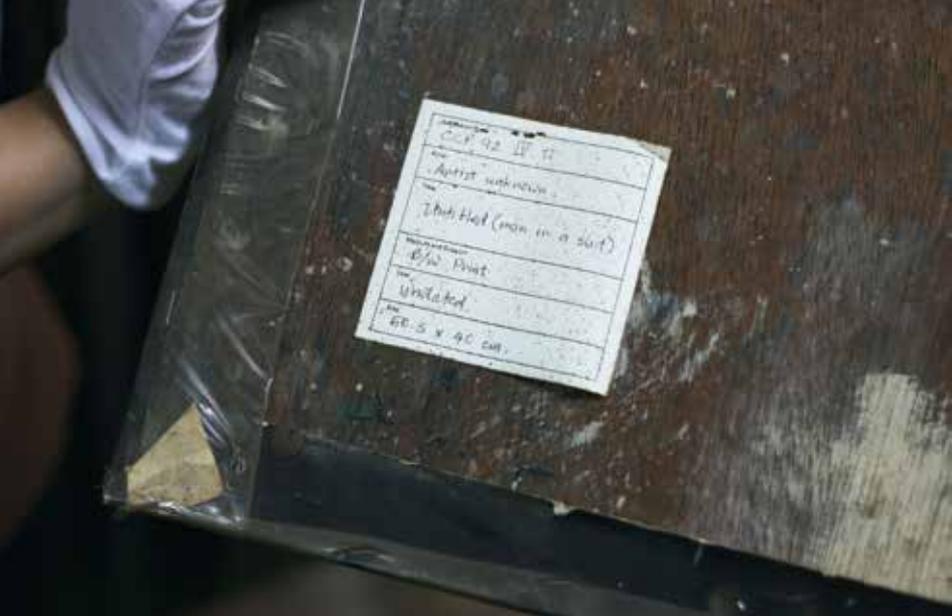
On the stretched canvas Lizza has recently entered into a rather physical involvement with her themes. Starting from not-quite

knowing where it will take her, she works the canvas, its dimensions and shape. She circles the missing, the absent, the unknown, and reproduces margins until a center emerges. Her painting becomes “evidence of localized, embodied thought”<sup>3</sup>: the roll-your-sleeves-up engagement with knowledge and identity in a globalized world but from an individual, transnational perspective. The political, the critical assessment of the centers and margins, turns into a physical and, as such, personal matter.

Oona Lochner is an art historian living in Berlin. She is a research assistant at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg, currently working on her PhD project on Feminist Art Criticism since the 1960s.

**Lizza May David** (\*1975, Quezon City, Philippines) is a visual artist based in Berlin. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg (Germany), École des Beaux Arts de Lyon (France) and the University of Arts Berlin. In her previous works she has considered the reappropriation of Philippine modern painting (particularly those found in institutional collections in the Philippines). She confronts questions of abstraction and historiography relating to simultaneities and transnational aesthetic interactions. She is interested in how social and cultural capital is represented and how to highlight its marginal aspects. Within an architectural framework she works with dichotomies of display and issues of visibility/invisibilities. Much of her previous work is autobiographical and investigates issues of identity, labor/migration, and memory.

- 1 Sarat Maharaj in: *The Surplus of the Global: A Conversation between Marion von Osten and Sarat Maharaj. Texte zur Kunst* 91 (Globalismus/Globalism), September 2013, 132–150, here 136.
- 2 See Angela Dimitrakaki. *Gendering the Multitude: Feminist Politics, Globalization and Art History*, in *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience*, edited by Masha Meskimmon and Dorothy Rowe. Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2013, 15–43, here 36. See also Victoria Horne and Amy Tobin. *Open Space: An Unfinished Revolution in Art Historiography, or How to Write a Feminist Art History. Feminist Review* 107, 2014, 75–83.
- 3 Avigail Moss and Kerstin Stakemeier. *Implicit Horizon*, in *Painting: The Implicit Horizon*. Maastricht: The Jan van Eyck Academie, 2012, 9–21, here 18.



## PARADISE

(2012)

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa

The fact that when I get to Kojja there is almost nothing to see is by design, for when the camp was finally closed in 1952, it was systematically dismantled. Every brick, every bench, every lamp, every tool was either sold for profit or given away to locals.

The inmates themselves were forcibly resettled abroad. Sixty years later old people weep openly in Warsaw as they describe the trauma of being made to leave this home.

But it's sex that the old men seem most keen to talk about today. Specifically, the sex that was had in secret by Polish women and local men. (Of intimacies between Polish men and local women, I note, they make no comment.)

The camp commandant maintained, they say, that there were never any illegitimate children.

But it was common knowledge, they tell me, that whenever a Polish woman fell pregnant by a local man, their baby was killed at birth, its body discarded as medical waste.

"Those women, they were prostitutes." Kasule smiles, his sightless eyes twinkling, his grandchildren crowding round, staring and eavesdropping with all their might.

"Prostitutes." Also how these women were described by the regional director of refugees, and the camp commandant – he who remanded two women from Kojja on this very charge of the penitentiary at Makindu.

I think about this story as I take Kasule's picture, a picture he will most likely never see. And I think about it again later as I stand looking at the anthills. And the lake.

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*Paradise* is the first work to emerge from my research into the story of the 30,000 Polish refugees who were sent to live in refugee camps in British East Africa during the Second World War. This work is a meditation on erasure of this history.

In November 2012 a small group of Polish former refugees, their children, and their grandchildren returned to Uganda for a reunion at the sites of the former refugee camps. I was fortunate enough to accompany the group.

My initial intention had been to make a documentary about this reunion of East Africa's forgotten European refugees, but the series of events was much stranger and more complex than I had envisaged.

Looking back at the images and thinking through the experience since, I no longer think that this piece can be resolved in a documentary form. This is partly to do with the nature of the story itself, and the way it challenges key aspects of the contemporary world order. But it also has to do with the complexity of the reunion itself, during which, through a series of acute oscillations, that world order was both reasserted and undermined, and the history of East Africa's European refugees was both present and absent.

I have come to the conclusion that the only way to give form to this historical material, to its impact, its ramifications and its meanings is through fiction. Principally, science fiction, and I have started to develop a fictional narrative to frame my footage of this strange series of events.

The planned film will also reference two unsuccessful/unrealised utopian projects of European Settlement in 'empty' East Africa: one was the Freeland Colony, founded by the Austrian Theodor Hertzka and the British Alfred Wallace in the 1890s in what is present-day Kenya. The other was the British proposal, in 1903, to create the State of Israel on the banks of Lake Victoria.

*Paradise* is part of *Uganda in Black and White* (working title), a body of work that I have been developing since 2010.

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It began as research for a film that I hoped would explore, through the prisms of public and private memory, the changing relationship between the land, the building, and the body in the contemporary Republic of Uganda. But it has since evolved into a study of representations of late colonialism.

My focus has become the period after 1945 when, in the wake of the Second World War, anti-colonial movements across the globe began to gather substantial momentum. I am interested in the ways in which the British government sought not only to suppress liberation movements but at the same time also to advance arguments in favour of colonialism and its perpetuation – in the face of mounting political opposition and despite the erosion of their policies' moral and ethical legitimacy.

Taking the Uganda Protectorate as a starting point, I have been making work with and from extant examples of official (and officially sanctioned) representations of the colony that were produced and disseminated both locally and internationally, primarily in the 1950s. (To put this in perspective: India became an independent nation in 1947. Ghana became the first independent African nation in 1957. Uganda gained its independence in 1962.)

Source material has so far included official photography, official films, and official publications, but also newspapers, topographical and autobiographical literature, and the visual arts. Questions are formulated, hypotheses tested, and findings shared in a series of artworks, videos, texts, publications, and performances.

My aim has been to examine not only that which is made to 'appear' in these representations, but also to investigate the omissions, elisions, and effacements that structure and produce them. One such narrative that has emerged concerns the 'disappeared history' of the refugee camps that housed around 30,000 European refugees in East Africa in the 1940s and '50s. Another is 'Operation Legacy' – the code name given to the systematic destruction of potentially incriminating documents by British officials in the run-up to the declaration of Ugandan independence in 1962.

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**Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa** studied literature at Cambridge University and art at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. She is Director of Research at the Nagenda International Academy of Art & Design (NIAAD) in Namulanda, Uganda, and Research Fellow in Fine Art at the National Academy of Art & Design in Bergen, Norway. She is also Convener of the Another Roadmap for Arts Education network's Africa Cluster. Emma works in a wide range of media, formats, and contexts. Recent and upcoming exhibitions and events include: *You Must Make Your Death Public* (De Appel, Amsterdam, NL), *Kabbo Ka Muwala* (National Gallery of Zimbabwe, ZW, Makerere University Art Gallery, UG & Kunsthalle Bremen, DE), *The Society of Exclusion* (tranzitsk Gallery, Bratislava, SK), *Greetings to Those Who Asked About Me* (Contemporary Image Collective, Cairo, EG), *Boundary Objects* (Kunsthau Dresden, Dresden, DE & CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, ES) and *Giving Contours to Shadows* (Savvy Contemporary/Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, DE).



Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa: *Paradise* (2012-),  
A film in progress



## IN THE FUTURE, THEY ATE FROM THE FINEST PORCELAIN

(2015, 29 min.)

Larissa Sansour/Søren Lind

*In the Future, They Ate From the Finest Porcelain* resides in the cross-section between sci-fi, archaeology, and politics. Combining live motion and CGI, the film explores the role of myth for history, fact, and national identity.

A narrative resistance group makes underground deposits of elaborate porcelain – suggested to belong to an entirely fictional civilisation. Their aim is to influence history and support future claims to their vanishing lands. Once unearthed, this tableware will prove the existence of this counterfeit people. By implementing a myth of its own, their work becomes a historical intervention – de facto creating a nation.

The film takes the form of a fictional video essay. A voice-over based on an interview between a psychiatrist and the female leader of the narrative resistance group reveals the philosophy and ideas behind the group's actions. The leader's thoughts on myth and fiction as constitutive for fact, history, and documentary translate into poetic and science fiction-based visuals.

As the film progresses, the narrative and visuals alternate between the theoretical and the personal. The resistance leader's deceased twin sister makes a crucial appearance as the story takes the viewer deeper and deeper into the resistance leader's subconscious.

**Larissa Sansour** was born in 1973 in East Jerusalem, Palestine, and studied fine arts in London, New York, and Copenhagen. Her work is immersed in the current political dialogue and utilises video, photography, installation, and sculpture. Central to her work is the tug and pull between fiction and reality. Recent solo exhibitions include New Art Exchange in Nottingham, Mosaic Rooms in London, Nikolaj Kunsthal in Copenhagen, Turku Art Museum in Finland, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Kulturhuset



Larissa Sansour/Søren Lind, *In the Future, They Ate From the Finest Porcelain*, 2015

in Stockholm, Lawrie Shabibi in Dubai, Sabrina Amrani in Madrid, and DEPO in Istanbul. Sansour lives in London.

**Søren Lind** (\*1970) is a Danish author. With a background in philosophy, Lind wrote books on mind, language, and understanding before turning to fiction. He has published a novel, two short story collections, and several children's books inspired by the philosophical concepts of mind, matter, ethics, and nothingness. In addition to his literary production, Lind is also a visual artist, director and scriptwriter. He lives and works in London.

## HOUSE OF MEMORIES

Queer and Postcolonial Approaches to the Past

January 11/12, 2017: Workshop, Symposium

January 13–21, 2017: Exhibition

### Concept + Organisation

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