

Politics of Memory

Documentary
and Archive

Edited by
Marco Scotini and
Elisabetta Galasso



Archive Books

Harun Farocki
in memoriam

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Preface

The *Politics of Memory* provides an unprecedented and exhaustive anthology of contributions from the most significant artists and filmmakers who have investigated archival forms and presented the documentary as an artistic practice, dealing with the subject of memory in relation to controversial themes such as the representation of identity and the narration of migrations, civil war and conflict.

The volume, introduced with a preface by Marco Scotini, concludes with an interview with Harun Farocki, a Czech-born German filmmaker who died in 2014 and to whose memory this edition of the publication is dedicated, in recognition of his fundamental work on the critical analysis of the image.

The artists' contributions have been collected within the context of a cycle of conferences held between 2010 and 2013 and are re-presented here in a format aimed at highlighting their connections and common research perspectives. To this end, the volume is articulated in four sections and does not follow the chronological order of the conferences. The first section is dedicated to archival practices, the second to the memory of conflicts, the third to the documentary dispositive and the last to the representation of migration as a social practice and as the enactment of breaching boundaries.

In order to make the text comprehensible without using moving images, which in some cases were an integral part of the conferences, the authors were invited to review the original transcripts of their speeches, which were almost all in English. They were allowed to integrate the text, add notes and, in some cases, replace the original text, if this was felt to be critical to its understanding. As a consequence, there is a degree of heterogeneity of formats and tones, which, on the other hand, were also present in the originals. On the request of the authors, images, photographs or stills from the films in question or cited in the conferences were included, the latter often being available online. Biographies of the authors integrate the publication and provide information, which is helpful in the appreciation of their artistic and biographical journeys.

The cycle of conferences brought together in this volume was promoted as part of a research project carried out by the Visual Arts Department of NABA – Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti di Milano and, after the interest that the first Italian edition published by *Derive Approdi* received, this English edition aims to reach the different contexts involved in artistic and documentary research and an international audience.

The Government of Time and the Insurrections of Memories

From the State of Memory to State Memory

It is said that, in 1989, capital robbed us of our history. Possibly, it did nothing more than increase the number of ghosts. In reality, it definitively transformed us into archaeologists of the present: in new archivists of accumulated and heterogeneous social temporalities. In effect, we live in nothing more than the dissolving of history. Or, rather, of its hegemonic image: the modern, dualist, progressive hegemony of long periods, unifying and englobing subjects. Our time is that of a dislocated present, always out of time, disaggregated, fragmented into a thousand forms of mobility that are never unified. When faced with the crisis of the great dualisms (capital and labour, economy and politics, East and West) there is both the explosion of a multiplicity of stories that unexpectedly find themselves coexisting and the threat that capital is taking back ownership of all the times that have been freed. On the one hand, by means of migratory processes, life styles considered archaic or exotic reclaim their vitality in global space with an increasing rhythm that would have become overwhelming after 1989. On the other, in accordance with a back-to-front perspective, with 1989, an entire social-political history, such as that of Eastern Europe, turned in on itself up to the point when Communism had taken over. Jürgen Habermas defined this process where Soviet history was forced to retreat until it disappeared, to permit the East to integrate with the Western liberal democratic world, as 'rewinding revolution'. In effect, through as many new synchronic set-ups on a geographic scale as there were diachronic forms of reversibility of the past (more or less ideological), the end of the Cold War revealed an unforeseen plasticity of time, its productive, multiple, constituting reopening.

Nonetheless, as never before, social time appears to be integrally subordinated to that of capital. Not only or as much because production times (therefore those of exploitation) have been extended to the totality of life. It is rather because the workings of capital are, increasingly, those of an integral control over that which is **possible**, on the **virtual** and new forms of **life** that it expresses: it is, in other **words**, the **absolute** government of time. If disciplinary methods are organised prevalently through space, are not the methods of control those that place time at the centre of their interventions? And is not the political action of new subjectivities, precisely a battle against time? Temporary and intermittent workers and occupiers do nothing more than affirm the temporal nature of the conflict.

In a text of 1980, Toni Negri, with considerable foresight, saw that 'real subsumption' (when the value of use is summarised in capital and the hegemony of capitalist production methods is total) would decree the end of the time-measurement of work as an element of equivalency or mediation of value. Time-value, understood in a Marxist sense, as a measure of objectified work, must be based on something outside production, in a temporal exterior that is quantitative and pre-structured, that is not identifiable with the very substance of production. 'However – Negri claims – when all life's time has become production time, who measures whom?'¹ When goods are no longer the crystallisation of the worker's labour times and becomes the crystallisation of events, of experiences, of knowledge; when it is no longer possible to still base the measurement of time on this being outside, the difference between use-value and exchange-value, between reality and appearance falls away. As a consequence, there is no longer any form of social antagonism that is defined by this very difference. Time to be measured is transformed into substance, in the very material of production relationships: it is no longer able, by now, to generate any possible dialectics. All this has led to a new asymmetry, to another antagonism – that between the accentuation of political norms or command units (the dominion of time) and the multiple times of freedom from exploitation. All the analysis of the nature of work in post-Fordism has done nothing more than confirm this foresight. What is clear is that, over and above the possible explanations provided, from the moment in which capitalist dominion no longer relates just to the factories but to the totality of life, it has not remained the same.

Antonio Negri, *La costituzione del tempo: prolegomeni. Orologi del capitale e liberazione comunista*, Rome: Manifestolibri, 1997.

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It has changed nature, it has adopted new strategies for capturing time (non-linear, reversible, virtual) and subjectivities (perceptions, memory, intellect). These strategies, in effect, relate to the mediatised capitalist regime and not to its tools (traditional audio-visual, web technologies, communication and information machines, interfacing digital YouTube, cell-phones, I pads, social networks, etc.). The effect of the mediatisation of capitalist subjectivities (which cinema began) is, primarily, that of covering the immediate perception of reality with a layer of images-memories, of making strata of the present and the past coexist in a permanent doubling of time so that it becomes increasingly difficult to discern the real from the imaginary, the image of the thing, the copy of the original, the use-value from the exchange-value. De facto, in the time of mediatisation, the production process of subjectivity is organised by technological devices in the same way as material production processes so that there is no longer any separation between flows of signs and flows of materials or forces. This is because, Maurizio Lazzarato claims: 'signs are extended into reality and vice versa'.² This is a condition that is well known to both Félix Guattari (to his concept of capital as a 'semiotic operator') and Guy Debord (his concept of 'spectacular').

Both integrate the Marxist analysis of capitalist exploitation by extending it from the expropriation of productive activity (labour) to the expropriation of language and signs (communication, life). 'The spectacle which inverts the real – writes Debord – is in fact produced. At the same time lived reality is materially invaded by the contemplation of the spectacle, and it takes up the spectacular order within itself'.³ For this reason, the operation of media cover coincides with that of the original operation of mnemonic methods by means of which social subjugation is generated.

² See Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines. Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2014; Maurizio Lazzarato, *Videofilosofia. La percezione del tempo nel Post-fordismo*, Rome: Manifestolibri, 1996; Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution. Psychiatry and Politics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984; Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis. An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995; Duccio Scotini, *La produzione delle soggettività nel tempo della loro mediatizzazione. A partire da Félix Guattari*, Humanist and Philosophical studies thesis, Università Statale di Milano, 2013.

³ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Detroit: Black&Red, 1970, paragraph 8; on this subject see also Marco Scotini, 'Cinéma Politique. Il tempo della "situazione" urbana', in *Millepiani Urban*, n. 4, 2012, pp. 87-101; Giorgio Agamben, 'Il cinema di Guy Debord', in E. Ghezzi and R. Turigliatto (eds.), *Guy Debord (contro) il cinema*, Milan: Il Castoro, 2001, pp. 103-107.

With the control and monopoly of social memory, power can permit itself not only to always **represent itself** and the rest in the most **convenient way** but also to decide **what behaviour** to have, how long an **event can last** and which subjects have the right to exist. From the need to cover topical events with images-memories, derives the **obsession with filming everything that happens, the entire visible field**. The **irony** of the real-time **methods and live filming** is that they make subjects believe that they are living an immediate **reality, that they are having unmediated communication** and that **they have a live interaction with the 'things' of the world**. On the contrary, the **real-time methods** constitute a reality run through with a complicated process of mediations: the flows (which are nothing more than the virtuality and futures of subjects) are subject to a constant montage which fragments, disarticulates and organises them into forms of artificial isolation and fictional identities. Despite this, it takes nothing away from reality as all the media critics have **claimed. The real, in effect, is not impossible but increasingly temporal. The actual-virtual pairing of time-power can provide this temporal foundation: as a circuit of creation and conservation, of perception and remembering**. There is never something that is purely actual, something that is not always and intrinsically surrounded by virtual images. If the present passes and the actual declines, the virtual image of the past conserves and is conserved, not as something that comes after perception but that coexists **with it, is its contemporary. It is in the repetition, in fact, that memory transforms the real into the possible and the possible into the real, returning possibilities to the past. Only repetition, therefore, can open up to the multiple times of what will become.**

Counter-memories

'We don't remember: we rewrite our memories'. This quote from Chris Marker's film *Sans Soleil* and to which Florian Schneider refers in his piece in this publication, is the common assumption of the generation of artists, filmmakers and activists who found themselves working during the collapse of the so-called 'grand narrations'. If 'remembering' is an order ('remember' in Hebrew, was the order, says Eyal Sivan), if remembering is nothing more than the injunction of a politics of belonging, of a narrative of identity (religious, national, racial) that takes us back to the authority of the past, then memory is a continuous reaffirmation of that which has been as something possible, still to come.

Citing the past, for these authors, does not mean re-memorising dead languages but de-archiving the rebellious signs of official cataloguing, not so much bringing to light the object of remembrance as that which it (with its reappearance) renders invisible and removes. In this sense, it is possible to talk of a politics of memory. In the dominion of time (that is, when it is no longer possible to divide the appearance of time, the image of the thing), differences do not disappear but require new bases in order to be redefined. The level of freedom and choice that they imply, is, de facto, not decreased but increased. By no longer making reference to an objective and natural foundation, they refer to ethics or power.

Each of these so-called archaeologists of the present do not practice an art of ruins: they all act on time, but also 'against' time, in favour of a time that must still happen. If nostalgia relates to the ruins of that which has passed, the memory with which we are dealing – on the contrary – radically questions the principle of the irrevocable nature of the past. There is a video by Deimantas Narkevičius, *Once in the XX Century* (2004), in which – in the centre of a square and on top of the same monumental pedestal – that which is the real dismantling of a colossal statue of Lenin is transformed into its virtual repositioning before an exultant crowd who is applauding, waving flags and photographing the event. The dynamics of the situation are unclear. By a strange irony of fate, that which the Lithuanian State television is broadcasting is transformed into its specular opposite by means of the 'rewind' montage of *Once in the XX Century*. However, intervening with such a gesture on Narkevičius's part implies a change in the order of its sense, it opens a counter-time. Or the action of re-filming archive material for the couple Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi does not mean looking for something in the drawers of the past but re-actualising the virtual in the celluloid that an anonymous eye had already captured. Framing that which happens on the margins of the frame means, for Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi, rendering visible, for the first time, that which was there without being there, something in a state of invisibility. Repetition is always the sign of both having been and being for the first time.

Anthropological memory (John Akomfrah), transcultural memory (Trinh T. Minh-ha), technological memory (Hito Steyerl, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi), performative memory (Lamia Joreige, Wendelien van Oldenborgh), colonial memory (Jean-Marie Teno), geo-political memory (Angela Melitopoulos, Ursula Biemann), traumatic memory (Khaled Jarrar), Soviet memory (Deimantas Narkevičius, Gintaras Makarevičius), revolutionary memory (Mohanad Yaqubi)... Chemical amnesia, State amnesia, etc.

We could go on. That to which these directors and artists refer are two figures that have become central in the contemporary cultural debate: the archive and the documentary. 'One begins to understand that embracing the archival is not so much about finding the past or somebody else's past – claims Akomfrah in his intervention – but instead the beginnings of self or the beginnings of one's own claim on that past'. In the absence of a linear history, the archive also lives on a level of immanence. It acts as a contingent tool that requires being continuously de-archived and re-archived, without ever providing anything that is definitively catalogued. The documentary, in the same way, does not expect to ratify any certainties within the ambit of the real but is called into question in order to raise doubts about that which has been documented, to question certainties. Its revival, at the moment, within the ambit of contemporary art is able to decline its classical format in a multiplicity of possible ways. As Angela Melitopoulos claims in relation to *Passing Drama* (1999): 'I watched these images and interviews that I had recorded on different locations along the migration route and I started to inscribe the process of looking onto the images and sound over and over again. When I saw a detail in the image and remembered or recalled another, I recorded my slowing down or drifting away into the other image'. The project of re-appropriating new subjectivities passes for that of re-appropriating oneself of the violent expropriation of time and of oneself as a historical being. It is no coincidence that human beings identify with the passing of time: 'it's identical to time', recites the *Society of the Spectacle*. As a consequence, the present is studied as a historic problem and history is treated as a problem of the politics of representation, aimed at materialising daily life as bourgeois life and conserving the division of labour. For this reason, present events are always mediated in history, crystallised in the past, 'removed in a representation', subjected to a spectacular deformation. And, therefore, condemned to oblivion: not by the erosion of time or the lack of memory. Thus, a fundamental task is that of revealing the mediatic nature of history and the cinema should be the perfect vehicle for this.

In an extraordinary work of 1967, *The Situationists and the New Forms of Action Against Politics and Art*, René Viénet writes: 'Cinema lends itself particularly well to studying the present as a historical problem, to dismantling the processes of reification. To be sure, historical reality can be apprehended, known and filmed only in the course of a complicated process of mediations enabling consciousness to recognize one moment in another, its goal and its action in destiny, its destiny in its goal and action, and its own essence in this necessity.'

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This mediation would be difficult if the empirical existence of the facts themselves was not already a mediated existence, which only takes on an appearance of immediateness because and to the extent that consciousness of the mediation is lacking and that the facts have been uprooted from the network of their determining circumstances, placed in an artificial isolation, and poorly strung together again in the montage of classical cinema.⁴ The anthology of works in *Politics of Memory*⁵ tries to rethink the relationship between contemporary art and documentary practices as one of the cultural trends most politically engaged of the past decades. At the centre of the investigation is the subject of the image as document: the discursive regimes that it informs, the identification processes which it legitimises and the temporal dialectic that it creates. After 1989, the perception that the future has been stolen by capital has energised a plurality of visual rewritings of history in contrast to the media monopoly. Some of the greatest contemporary artists and film-makers tackle subjects such as post-Socialism, post-colonialism, the post-war period of Libya, the Middle-Eastern conflict and migratory processes on a global scale. Time is re-proposed as a collection of virtualities in which there is no longer any alternative between reality and fiction but only between force and current affairs. *Politics of Memory* aims to interrogate the document as such, as an objective trace left by events, as material proof or production of reality. However, it wants to interrogate, above all, the regime of truth as a regulatory principle and the authority of history in which this principle exists. That which it investigates are not only facts and dates as such, but the knowledge that defines them, the influence they have. The methods, in substance, by which data is recorded, accumulated and archived – the strategies by means of which they transform a state of memory into State memory and a historical removal is enacted. Those, ultimately, in which there is an attempt to defy permanent or temporary amnesia and opening up to the possible, to the future.

⁴ René Viénet, 'The Situationists and New Forms of Action Against Politics and Art', in *Internationale Situationniste*, n. 11, October 1967. Furthermore, Viénet writes: 'I propose that we pursue: [...] *The promotion of guerrilla tactics in the mass media* – an important form of contestation, not only at the urban guerrilla stage, but even before it. [...] *The production of situationist films*'.

⁵ I would like to thank Andris Brinkmanis and Duccio Scotini for their considerable work over the five years of the conference cycle of *Politiche della memoria (Politics of Memory)*. Without their precious collaboration, this very publication would not have been possible.

The Political Force of Images

It was Debord's cinema that first demonstrated the perfect equivalence between *war images* and a *war of images*, within the spectacular society. It would appear to be a typical inversion of the situationist genitive but, on the contrary, it is the way in which, beginning with the first Gulf War, we have begun to define the contemporary visual regime. It is no coincidence that we have started to concern ourselves with the regime of visibility and the invisibility of images starting with the 'two Pyrrhic victories' of global television information, as Serge Daney defined them, broadcast the day following the fall of the Berlin wall. In one case there was the hyper-circulation of an image (the corpse of Nicolae Ceaușescu), and in the other, its complete absence (the first Gulf War without corpses). It was precisely Daney who asked himself: 'Is there really any difference between this macabre Romanian event and the Iraqi surgery that followed it? It is rather the two extreme confines of the world of images: on the one hand the gory insistence on the bodies and, on the other, the video elimination of the same bodies – two ways of finishing off whatever resists.' It is now necessary to extend the debate to the management and regulation of all the flows of images just as, furthermore, the same Daney had started to do. Because, the politicisation of the image does not correspond to its political content – they do not coincide – it goes beyond it. This seems to me to be the starting point for an investigation of the visual as a controlled space and as a dispositive of the neo-liberal information economy. On the one hand, we are assisting in the proliferation of explicitly disciplinary images in which security establishes itself as the underlying principle of State activities **and whose most ordinary figures, notoriously, are the militarisation of the police, armoured cars, speed cameras, CCTV, increasingly perfected biometric control devices – to name just a few.** Therefore, as Eric Hobsbawm recently stated, we are faced with a world in which the economy, rather than being the provision of reciprocal services, is increasingly becoming a system of reciprocal control. Ursula Biemann claims in this publication: 'The news media [...] direct their spotlight on the failure of the stranded migrants (the "Naufragés") and, by the same token, celebrate police efforts in which transgressors are successfully apprehended; victorious passages go undocumented.' If, on the one hand, this is true, on the other, however, we are dealing with an unholy market of semiotic merchandise that exploits different digital distribution channels and different television networks that produce images of war or refugee camps just as they produce advertising campaigns, live sports and entertainment.

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The amount of images of terror and fear that bombard us, just as the definition of a new aesthetics of violence, beginning with September 11th 2001 and past the so-called financial crisis, repeatedly show the dominant discourse which functions for the military-visual apparatus. However, in this market regime is it still possible to isolate the privileged iconographic field of the transmission of power, its specific visual model, from all the other visual events that surround us daily? Can it provide a particular type of connection, from the point of view of dominance and subjugation, between the production and circulation of the images of disasters and a football match? Far from any moral judgement on the abolition of the conventional frontiers between that which may or may not be shown, is it possible to direct an epistemological type of reading to the relationship between images and power? If, in effect, we think that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the various categories of image (despite the birth of 'class images') in their capacity to capture, direct and model social aspects, this is because the information economy, as a totalitarian form of current capitalism, places language, attitudinal relationships, cognitive activities and communications at the centre of work, inserting them within the post-Fordist production process. In substance, it is the totality of life that is captured within the sphere of capitalist production, creating a radical form of congruency between work and life.

It is true, therefore, that within the current capitalist, audio-visual regime every discourse on power cannot avoid an analysis of the semiotic and linguistic flow (independently of specific classes of belonging). Has not Giorgio Agamben written that contemporary politics is a devastating *experimentum linguae*? On the other hand, as Walter Benjamin acknowledged, responding to the merchandising of images and the disciplining of perception with the reaffirmation of art, as a moment of liberated time and – as such – removed from the market, would only be reactionary. It is much more important to focus attention on production, on distribution, on the speed and intensity of the circulation of images, just as on the context of specifically local reception and on the constitution of the spectator or consumer, rather than on the image as a place of mediation or on the power of the image as such (on its semantic innocence or guilt). The space occupied by the image corresponds, today, to a sort of defence of capital, it is the space of the interdiction on other images, it is a strategic space that distracts attention from the rest, that allows it time. Independently from that which it shows or censures, the image that, nonetheless, allows itself to be seen is also and, above all, that which hides all the others.

Far from the militant cinema of the past, these new images commit and remove themselves at one and the same time, denying themselves to habits, imitations and the definitions that codify and reify the political space. They **work as dispositive of profanation and claim experimental potential with regard to political direction or to command. The task of these new video, film and digital images is that of revealing the mediatised nature of history.** On the one hand, they show that which the corporate media, as the central agents of political authoritarianism, hides or removes from view. On the other, they re-appropriate themselves of the violent expropriation of experience: producing History, therefore, and making it visible. The politics of memory respond to the monopoly of neo-liberal appearances.

Memory and Archive

Memory and the Morphologies of Difference

I'm very happy to speak about the politics of memory because, in many ways, everything that I have done touches upon the subject. And it touches upon it via the complex routes of the aesthetic, the ethical, the ideological, and – of course – the political. Now, precisely because of these manifold detours and tangents, the idea of a politics of memory has a number of implications for how my work is conceived and proceeds. So, I want to try to unpick some of the reasons why the double inscription implied by the title remains central to its reception.

Today, I would like to broadly approach the question of ghosting, or what Jacques Derrida calls the hauntology or spectropoetics, in terms of memory. However, in order to do so, I will need to take you on a brief detour. Firstly, some qualifications, starting with an old ghost that haunts and stalks my work: a lot of the commentary on what I do tends to place it in a mysterious category called 'Identity politics'. I have never recognised the term and when I do it is always to highlight its descriptive inaccuracy.

The reasons for that will become apparent later, but let me first say this: it seems to me that the concept of identity politics as a descriptive category makes what I would call both *a priori* as well as *a posteriori* assumptions about the location of identities that my work absolutely refutes and negates. Generally, I would say it makes assumptions about where people are, where they start out, and where they might be going that I find erroneous. And this 'misreading' or 'misattribution' of a given 'identity trajectory' in the work ends up ascribing it to a 'teleology', which, in fact, the work is always attempting to deconstruct.

For that reason alone, I always rather provocatively say that the work I do is anti-identity politics. And why? Because it's always about the journey towards something and never a confirmation of that 'thing'. In fact, this journey towards identity is always an attempt at an opening, always an attempt to avoid the perils and pitfalls of closure, to sidestep the 'teleological arc' implied by the category.

Secondly, I want to say something that might seem paradoxical given my first point, namely that my work to date has always been infused with a politics of identity, by a desire to investigate what one could call 'the etiologies of identity'. Now, whilst that might appear to be the same thing, it comes from a radically different premise. To say that a work is inscribed in a politics of identity is to say that it is built around trying to highlight and pinpoint the implications of identity; it is to say that the work is almost always 'mired' in an attempt to foreground the theoretical, cultural, and psychoanalytic implications that any invocation of the term identity implies. And it is also to say that it is precisely this attempt at 'foregrounding' that always presupposes a question mark at the end of the term 'Identity'. It is this linguistic excess, this questioning, that brings with it notions of 'Ghosting', the 'Uncanny', the 'Trace', and the 'Phantom'. In other words, this more precise and more nuanced invocation of identity, this attempt to separate out the meanings of identity as fact and identity as a process is what leads me to the politics of memory.

Between 1982 and 1997, I worked as part of an art collective in London: the Black Audio Film Collective. Most of the work we did in that period was as preoccupied with generating new material as it was with combining that material (usually 16mm and analogue video tape) with a range of existing things: old home movies; moving image archives from cinema and television; photographs from the nineteenth and early twentieth century; textual fragments from a range of literary, ethnographic and historical writings; and so on. Most of the work was therefore characterised by an obsession with pairings; with ghosts; and with the complex ways in which the phantom haunts narrative, haunts theory, and haunts aesthetic production. The work was also always Janus-faced. We were concerned with saying something new but, because of our interest in the old, it had a necessarily 'historical' reach and feel to it. And to that extent, the work was much more of a hybrid project: not drama or documentary, film or artwork, story or essay – neither fact nor fiction. It was a practice always located somewhere between history and a series of counter-myths. It was a work that wore its hybrid motivations very proudly on its sleeve. And the reasons for that hybridity, the reasons why such a hybrid project was a necessity, is also something I would like to discuss with you today. So, how do we start?

The 'becoming' of anything is unusually difficult to track. And the 'arrival' of categories is even more so. Still, I want to attempt to do so by talking to you about what I call the 'coming of the hyphen'.

I remember very early on, during my school years in England in the seventies, that one would commonly hear the phrase: 'the British way of doing things', or, in the answer to an enquiry, someone might say: 'this is not our way of doing things, the British way is this' and so on. Now, this mode of address became routine enough for it to move beyond the merely coincidental and into the realm of a compulsion, an obsessive trait. It very quickly dawned on me – almost before I understood the full implications of it – I was being taught and alerted of a certain narrative of belonging. I was being inducted into what Foucault once called a regime of truth about national identity. This regime had very clear prescriptions about 'them' and 'us'. And as I became routinely exposed to it, I realised that I was also being initiated into an awareness of an 'inside' and, crucially, an 'outside' of national belonging. The older I grew, the more I understood that this regime of normalisation had certain qualities, certain default settings by which it invoked and offered to you an 'essence' of a national character. I also started to learn that this 'essence' being 'gifted' to me as 'national characteristics' was not historical or theological, and also not always biological. Of course, it could also be one or even a combination of all three. However, in its being offered to me as pedagogy, as a manual on being civilised, I felt and understood its presence principally as a set of narratives.

Initially, I also understood the injunctions of these narratives in almost wholly existential terms, as catechisms meant exclusively for me, for John Akomfrah. I understood them as 'stories' about how I am or can become something better, something more. And I also understood that, rather like a communion with God, this was a one-way street in which all fault lay with the devotee. This was one's own private dialogue with a Greater Being in which only displays of faith and subservience were the acceptable responses. All failure was entirely one's own. Yet, as one grew up, gaps began to appear, there were fractures within the tissue of the narrative that suggested that all was not well. There were always these loose ends, these untidy bits that seemed interminable and unresolvable within the bounds of that communion, of the narrative. Questions then began to emerge in a space one sensed was 'outside' of that private dialogue. With these questions came the eerie feeling of living in a place populated by 'unseen guests'. I started to wonder: Why was there this sense of ghosting in one's daily existence? Why this sense of a phantom, a doppelganger called John Akomfrah occupying the 'outside' to my 'inside' of these national narratives? Why, for instance, despite the manifold efforts on my part to belong, does the spectre of difference stalk my every move? Why, despite all the mounting evidence to the contrary, was I endlessly told,

'don't be so sensitive; we're all the same. There's nothing wrong'. And then why, on my part, was there this sense that there was 'something wrong?' At some point, you realise that they are not just random or outlaw musings on your part. And the sense of a 'larger narrative' in which this game of denial and confirmation is being played out, the sense that you are implicated in something beyond you, becomes clearer as you begin to talk to other post-migrant children: children whose parents – like yours – are from an 'elsewhere', but who, again, like you, are wholly formed in the 'here'.

These conversations became my first encounter with the Uncanny. I quickly began to realise that all of these new friends had been going through the same rites of passage: they too have had the same encounters with the *doppelgänger*; they too have been held in awe by the same injunctions, stalked by the same phantom. And they too have had those premonitions that told them they were in the throes of something more than a mere 'accidental obsession'. This is what I call 'the moment of the hyphen': the moment a group comes to self-realisation; when it senses that its concept of self is emerging as a result of strategies of exclusion and differentiation that it had initially understood as 'normative injunctions'; that these regulatory mechanisms that it sensed were 'framing' and giving shape to that life, were in fact the same mechanisms conferring an identity upon it; that its identity was emerging out of something far too generalised to be 'personal' – out of something far too amorphous and yet so regular in its appearance and outline that it could only be understood as a 'morphology of difference'.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon wrote, 'Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it'. My encounter with the 'generation' was in the late seventies when I met some of the people who would go on to form Black Audio Film Collective with me in the early eighties. It was primarily within that art collective that I would come to understand the tasks we were facing.

It was in that group that the complexity of the 'hyphen' became clearer. And with that clarity came a sense of purpose, a desire to investigate the possibility of counter-narratives. Together we would teach ourselves a very important lesson, namely that to be a hyphenated identity, one first had to come to terms with the nature and force of the hyphen. We learnt that when you are a product of a post-migrant milieu, there are elements you comprise that are not wholly or completely 'narrated' by the prevailing legitimatising narratives. We became aware that the reasons for that had to do with what W.E.B. Du Bois called the 'double consciousness' in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

Ghosts made sense because our very existence was organised around this doubling. Ghosts were the only indication we had that we inhabited both the deep interior as well as the farthest marginalia of the available national narratives. So, part of our project became one of articulating this 'cognitive dissonance', this unusual perceptual positioning that allowed you to be both 'foreigner' and 'citizen' at the same time.

Ultimately, this became a project of enunciation, which in part involved formulating what one could call an 'index of alterity'. A starting point to this included recognising the complicated ways in which our hyphenated identities – these products of 'bricolage' – were both constituted by and responses to what Du Bois also called the veil, the demarcating psychic line of 'double consciousness'. Then the key question became: how does the hyphen – e.g., black-British or Asian-British – come about? What is the 'process of subjectification' that makes the hyphen possible?

There were a number of theorists and thinkers – too numerous to mention – who proved indispensable in the beginnings of this project. For a time, Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* was practically our bible, especially the short section entitled 'The Formation of Enunciative Modalities'. If medicine, biology, and political economy could be understood first and foremost as discursive regimes – as Foucault suggested – then so could race, we concluded. And if race was a discourse, it had to have an historicity – something opposed to a biology or a genetics – and then the rules that governed its 'enunciative modalities' could also be grasped.

Orlando Patterson is also a figure worth pointing out, especially in reference to the title of his second novel *An Absence Of Ruins* (1967), which was about colonial Jamaica. This absence of ruins became entirely central to how we began to work. It suggested that all diasporas can be seen as being marked by this absence, especially if we understand 'the ruin' as the incomplete fragment and the marker of civilisation. It suggested that if we think geopolitically of the ruin as the 'civilisational trace', as the evidential confirmation of an 'unbroken line' of European civilisation, it could be commandeered to speak about the African and Asian diasporas in Europe. Now, when you put it that way, the concept of 'the ruin' sounds quite complicated, but the essential implications of the phrase – its 'use value' – slowly became very clear to us. I would like to give you an idea of what it could mean.

When one walks around most advanced industrial cities, there are certain monuments that attest to the passing of former, glorious lives: commemorative effigies in city centres, for instance, to mark the beginning of the

First World War, or one on the edge of the city to mark the passing of some insignificant ruling monarch. Most landscapes in the post-industrial world are pockmarked by these spectral embodiments and they are an indication, if you will, of how cultures that are settled and fixed symbolically function. As memorial incarnations, these monuments say that there are connections between the city's current subjects and the past, and that this connection is a mediated one – mediated by these ghosts.

Public monuments as an exemplar of the ruin articulate this relation: they mediate the demarcation between past and present by serving both as the marker of a 'past-ness', as well as the confirmation or evidence of a continuity beyond the demarcation. Among us, we began to think of the ruin as a vestige of what Robert Young called 'white mythologies' in his book *White Mythologies. Writing History and the West* (1990): the tangible but spectral embodiment of that blurred demarcation, the denouement of an architectural rhetoric which sees an argument and a metaphor about lineage and descent in the **unbroken line that these monuments celebrate**. The **ruin announces** the space **for ghosts** in the **everyday** because they **speak** for **civility's great** undead.

Until very recently, very few of these monuments were about Asian or African lives and when they were, their primary purpose was to throw the scope and grandeur of European achievement into even sharper relief. However, you could almost always sense their presence *in absentia*, since, of course, much of the achievement many of these effigies celebrate is based on encounters with this absent 'other'. Thus, we also began to understand that **diasporic** existences are, in contrast, presences **hailed into being** by this 'structuring absence', the absence of the ruin. In the **absence of the** monument, in the absence of tangible fragments, diasporic artists face a monumental task: **they are forced to connect with the question of memory, with the question of the ghost, with the question of the intangible – it is through these that the artist discovers the monumental, discovers the ways in which** they are located in their culture and in their present.

There was a moment when a range of artists and filmmakers in Britain were all obsessed with the question of history. We came from very different backgrounds: children of families from the Asian subcontinent, the Caribbean, and Africa. It was almost as if we all became aware of the need to turn to history as a **way of legitimising our present, as a way of legitimising our practice**. However, **there was** a paradox in **this** turn to **history**, since **planes** of historicity were not entirely neutral: we found an ally in history as a deconstructive gesture against white mythologies, as a way of insinuating ourselves

into the present by challenging the essential wholeness of the unbroken line of national genealogy. But, of course, the historical archive and the places of history were no more ours than those of the ruin. For instance, most of the film material shot in colonial Africa or Asia was by European companies or colonial institutions like Colonial Film Unit. So, in a manner of speaking, the turn to history was an agnostic one. One of the things we tried to do – and you see it in the work of most of the artists who came of age in the eighties that I mentioned earlier – was to strongly highlight the presence of ambiguity in the archive of official memory itself, an ambiguity to the way in which the past can exist in the present. It was done in such a way that, even if the BBC had made a television documentary in Lagos in the fifties in which it presented that space in Manichean terms, in terms that suggested that Lagos was on the other side of the civilisational coin and that people from the colonies were somehow simpletons or ignoramuses, our use of that documentary would involve investigating the rules of that assumption. Whatever the authorial intentions, we saw our task as offering a counter memory to the official one. The task was always to embrace that material, to observe it forensically, to work with it in order to be able to use it in different ways. In doing so, our starting point was at the heart of the archive – the ambiguity in ambitions and intentions, in outcome and effect that lies at the heart of what archival memory embodies and emboldens.

What do I mean by this ambiguity? On many occasions, people have said to me: 'Why do you work with archives so much? Wouldn't you rather be making your own stuff?' For me, this question rests on a misunderstanding of the paradox that lies at the heart of one's engagement with the archival, which is essentially as follows: far from taking you away from questions of agency, autonomy, and authorship, the archive returns you to the question of self-representation. With the recognition that your figured past is the archival, is the memorial, comes also the realisation that in that encounter, one is necessarily inscribed into a dialogue of representation. The key question in that dialogue has to do with the issue of self-representation. One begins to understand that embracing the archival is not so much about finding the past or somebody else's past, but instead the beginnings of self or the beginnings of one's own claim on that past – claims on place come via the detour of self-representation, via the detour of memory.

Self-representation always suggests a particular relationship between the ethics of being and the politics of becoming. Self-representation always clearly suggests a narcissistic relation to the body.

Simultaneously, that narcissism is also about the ways in which the body is tied to questions of belonging, existence, and authority. Thus, as you can see, I am very slowly moving away from the ruin, the archival, and the memorial. However, in doing so, I wish to suggest that the memorial and the archival ease the openings, ease the spaces and passages through which we enter into that dialogue with the culture as a way of finding ourselves.

Okay, enough talking. I want to show you a piece that I did two years ago that has quite a surreal history. One of my closest friends in the Black Art Movement was the artist Donald Rodney, who died in 1998. Three years ago, his wife came to me and said: 'I have 30 rolls of Super 8 films that Donald shot about his life in hospital and I want you to see what you can do with them'. It just so happens that she gave them to me on the tenth anniversary of both Donald's and my mother's death. At the time of my mother's death, I was making a film about genetic inheritance with her as the central figure. That film, *The Call Of Mist*, never quite materialised as intended at the time: it was far too short and I never found a way to use enough material on my mother in that film, even though I had an excess of material to work with. So, I made a new plan to use both sets of archival material and have them talk to each other. I wanted the implication of memory that was alluded to by the existence of this twin set of archival material to say something about the two deaths. The film that I made was finally called *The Genome Chronicles* (2008). One noteworthy fact is that Donald died of a hereditary blood disorder called sickle cell anaemia. It is a disease that occurs much more frequently among people whose ancestors lived in tropical, sub-tropical, and sub-Saharan regions where malaria was common. In other words, it's a disease almost wholly specific to Asian and African gene pools. The second noteworthy fact is that a person might not suffer personally from sickle cell anaemia, but can still be a carrier. If they then have a child with someone who carries it, then the child's genetic inheritance will be sickle cell anaemia. Donald was truly extraordinary, a great artist, probably the best of my generation. However, the film was not a biography because what interested me in his archive and his life was how precariously balanced it was on a precipice of memory. On the one hand he was very free, as great artists often are, but on the other, he was the very definition of un-freedom, the prisoner of a debilitating genetic inheritance. In that sense, his life was almost emblematic of memory and the complicated ways in which memory works on all of us. He knew when he was ten that he was going to die and that he could be dead by his forties.

He also knew that he was going to die from this disorder and that it was part of the genetic inheritance, if you will, that brought him into the world. I cannot think of a life that better represents the point I want make to you about the complex hold of memory than his.

As I said earlier, I belonged to an art collective in the eighties and nineties. One of the things that brought us together was the subject of the film I am going to discuss next. We were part of a generation that really came of age in the seventies and early eighties and I think we became aware (certainly those of us in the black art movement of the late seventies and early eighties) that nothing quite like to us had ever existed in England. There had been people of colour in Britain since the Roman invasions thousands of years ago, but there had never been a generation like us, born between 1955 and 1965, there were thousands of us and we came of age at around roughly the same time in the seventies. We were aware of that.

The moment, the symbolic moment of our becoming, is a date in 1948, I think in September, when three hundred forty-eight men – only men – came on a boat from the Caribbean. The boat was called the Empire Windrush and it was the beginning of a certain symbolic rupture in British memory. Up until then, Britain had been marked by a particular narrative definition of its identity. The Empire Windrush marked a break in that narrative. Basically, the narrative went something like this: Britain is an empire and all of its subjects are British – if you are African or Asian, you live in the colonies, in the periphery; if you are white, you live in the metropolitan centre. We are all children of the Empire, loved equally by our dear King.

The arrival of that boat broke the connection between the body and the narrative. It shattered the symbolism of that narrative by dislocating body from location, by displacing the connection between space and identity, and in doing so started the process of multiculturalism as a demographic fact. My generation will become the permanent reminder of that rupture; we will be the sign, the trace, the emblem of that profound cultural, political, and psychic transformation of the British tableaux and its increasingly post-colonial *mise en scene*.

Two years ago, I was asked by an initiative set up by the BBC and the Art Council of England to submit a proposal for an archival project. This initiative (named Made in England Initiative) gave me carte blanche to go into the BBC archive to see whether I could create anything. Because of that freedom, it seemed to me that we should use this opportunity to highlight what 1948 has meant for England by taking a look at the Empire Windrush generation – this time, through the prism of Epic poetry.



John Akomfrah, *Mnemosyne*, 2010.

In his book *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Paul Gilroy talks about the melancholia set in motion by the Empire Windrush moment and the ways in which it triggered a set of obsessive-compulsive denials of the epistemic shift that the Windrush rupture entails. In the throes of that melancholia, the Windrush moment will be cast and understood as a moment of defacing what he calls the ‘clean edifice of white supremacy’. For me, one of the forms that particular melancholia rests upon is a denial – a denial of the ontology of the Windrush figure, a denial of the resonance, implications, and reality of that figure. My interest in rescuing something had once again become the guiding light of this piece.

So, what was it? Well, it’s called *Mnemosyne* (2010). The opening caption (*Mnemosyne then gave birth to the nine Muses*) tells you that this is a project about Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory. It also tells you that it is divided into nine chapters and that each chapter is named after one of the nine daughters of this goddess. *Mnemosyne* was a really interesting project on memory because it tried to operate with four varieties of memory at once: the memory of the televisual archive, a literary archive, a private one, and an imagined manual of affective recollections from the Windrush generation. The idea behind the manual was inescapably bound to the work I had done in the past. Over the years, I had spoken to and had filmed interviews with many members of the Windrush generation. During the course of these encounters, they would always say three things. These became the organising motifs for the film.



John Akomfrah, *Mnemosyne*, 2010.

One was that no matter what time of year they arrived in Britain, they always mentioned the cold; they always felt cold. And that became the first visual trope – hence, our frozen mise en scene.

The second was that most of them had come from tropical climates to Britain when garments and dyes were being rationed, so their clothes were brighter. In turn, they would speak about how colour had separated them.



John Akomfrah, *Mnemosyne*, 2010.

Every time you spoke to your mum or grandma, they would always say the same thing: ‘Everything was either grey or white and we really stood out; we just felt too colourful’. This became the second aesthetic trope.

The third was: no matter who came with them and how many of them made the journey, they always tended to stress that the arrival was a very solitary one for them; they felt alone. Whether on a ship full of people or on a plane, it didn’t matter – they were in that labyrinth of solitude.

All of our interviews contained versions of this primal scene of becoming and the compulsive nature of telling it with their incantatory logic and obsessive repetition. I realised they were not merely sociological accounts of arrival: what I was hearing was a ‘truth’, but not necessarily one grounded in the ‘facts’ of migration. I was in the deep interior of the imagination and of perception and therefore I needed to find an appropriate approach to give them room and legitimacy. These three became the unspoken motifs of my piece, its affective markers.

Over the years, I have worked with a variety of approaches to memory and with *Mnemosyne* I called upon some of them. The first is an idea that you find in many writers and thinkers from James Joyce to Antonio Gramsci to the Communist Manifestos. It states that moments of crisis, or moments of emergency are also the same conditions under which new things emerge. Thus, memory is a kind of crossroad, a junction, an intersection where the old and the new meet.



John Akomfrah, *Mnemosyne*, 2010.

The second idea is, again, one that you find in a range of writers. My first understanding of it was from Aimé Césaire one of the founding figures of the Negritude movement, but you also see it in the work of Michel Foucault, for example. It is the notion of memory as counter-cartography: memory as a map by which one re-navigates the present. This idea of memory as counter-cartography is not the same, but can be confused with another similar idea – the idea of memory as counter-hegemony.

It differs greatly from the former and can also be found in the works of a range of writers, such as Frantz Fanon, Gaston Bachelard. It is a way of invoking memory as a means of bypassing the status quo of the present. The second to last is an idea that you find very commonly in forms of materialist historiography, which is that somehow one can access a forgotten drama via memory as a way of re-legitimising it and bringing it back to life when it is lingering on the outskirts of the present. It is memory as a way of gaining renewed access to that slightly hidden drama.

The last invocation of memory that became central to *Mnemosyne* comes largely from the work of the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg, with whom I made a film. In his work, memory functions as an appeal. It is part of the way we invoke 'our obligation to the dead'. This notion of memory as incantation, as a way of doing what the Africans refer to as 'pouring libation' to the dead was also central in the making of *Mnemosyne*. Pouring libation is a religious ritual where you pour water on the ground and ask the dead to come and drink it. It is a way of evoking the dead and indicating that you have an open door policy to their existence in your life and that they can come in anytime they want. However, they must wait to be hailed, to be called upon. With that, I can't think of a more fitting way to end my discussion today.

The Wolf-Beast Century¹

Angela Ricci Lucchi: When we started out in the seventies, everyone thought we were crazy: two people destroying cinema. Our research was completely misunderstood in Milan, but we managed to survive as artists because we emigrated. We packed up our bags and started roaming around the United States, France, and elsewhere, and this is what we still do today. Today we see that our work is being taken up and there's a lot of research from the seventies that is being addressed again today. But we refuse all those labels they've stuck on us – anthropologists, ethnologists, archaeologists. We know that labels are necessary in order to define our work, but we refuse them and, more than anything, we refuse the label of 'archivists', because we work for the present. We want the present to interact with the past and we use the past to talk about today. Our first work to be acknowledged internationally, *Dal Polo all'Equatore* (*From the Pole to the Equator*, 1986), is a film about violence: violence in the environment, as it is used against animals and people. It's a film that culminates in the First World War and it was the beginning of all our research into violence. We somehow used to think we were exorcising violence. But now we find ourselves facing such a level of violence, including cultural violence, that our excavation of the ideology in archive materials – and it's not just the cinema we are interested in, but also photography – and what we learn to read in the archives, also helps us decipher those images that are served up to us every day.

Yervant Gianikian: We emerged from about 12 years of building up our trilogy on war, which started in 1992 and ended in 2004 with *Prigionieri della guerra* (*Prisoners of War*, 1995); *Su tutte le vette è pace* (*Peace on All the Peaks*, 1998) and *Oh! Uomo* (*Oh! Man*, 2004). We tried to dig deep into this wound in Europe, not to create some nostalgic work, but rather one that focuses on the history of the past 15 years.

¹The title refers to a line of the poem by Osip Mandelstam, *For the Future Ages'* *Resounding Glory*.

We always work at the same time as ongoing conflicts and geopolitical situations in the world, so we made *Prisoners of War*, and especially *Peace on All the Peaks*, during the Balkan War, while *Oh! Man* we made at the start of the first war in Iraq, and it's dramatic to see how the past just keeps coming back. *Prisoners of War*, for example, which was shown in Sarajevo in 1996, when the Balkan conflict had just come to an end, showed how it was still dangerous material, even though it had been shot from 1915 to 1918. The enemies could be seen, so through this film there was an excavation into alliances: the Serbs saw their enemies and, in turn, the Bosnians saw theirs. And we had the same verification of archive material film shot again by us in Sarajevo as well as in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and in Belgrade. To go to Belgrade we had to take a plane from Trieste because there were no direct flights. And we encountered so many problems. In Zagreb we even had the secret police in the hall during a screening, because they thought there was material against the Croats. We asked not to show the film, so that we wouldn't put our organizer friends at risk. But it was too late. After the film, we were asked not to talk about its content and so, for about a couple of hours, we only talked about the techniques we had used. In the end a man stood up and said: 'Don't think that here we're all for the war', and he wrote the best article on *Prisoners of War*. It was entitled *Our Victorious Generals*. That's a phrase by Karl Kraus in *The Last Days of Humanity* (1922). Archive work continues to have this power to rediscover the past, but also to search for peace. The same thing happened in Cannes, in 2004, when we screened *Oh! Man* and we showed the wounded, mutilated bodies of soldiers. People on the street told us the film shouldn't just be shown in cinemas, but rather in public spaces and in schools. This film was linked to mutilated soldiers going back to America. They were never seen. Arthur Schnitzler wrote: 'They say: He died like a hero. Why do they never say: He suffered a splendid mutilation? They say: He died for his country. Why do they never say: He had both his legs amputated for his country?' To return to the beginning, to the seventies, we salvaged some material that was about to be burnt because no one was interested in it: the private film collection of Luca Comerio (1876-1940). He was the king's operator, the man who influenced Futurism. His film camera used to travel on trains, on cars, on ships and on planes. He used all those film techniques that were to become part of the theories and ideas of Marinetti, and vice versa. The two were also brought together by their physical proximity, for both their homes were close to Corso Venezia in Milan. We found this material, in which Comerio had edited travel films

from the beginning of the century, under the title *From the Pole to the Equator* in the late twenties, when the age of silent movies had already come to an end. He was trying to gain access to the Istituto Luce in Rome, so he'd made a compilation of material with captions attributed to D'Annunzio – demented captions about 'race', about the 'sanctity of frontiers', and about the 'eternal struggle'. He made reference to the First World War even though he was already in another age. In the end he was not accepted by the Istituto Luce, partly because his technology was outdated. In this film, he had begun to edit documentary films of his own, together with those of others he had collected. We must admit that all this documentary material wasn't of great interest in the seventies, because then people only wanted fiction and that's why it was going to be burnt. It was in an awful state, literally decomposing: there was a particular type of mould, which we call 'chemical amnesia', on the film and there was also an inflammable and explosive material called nitrate. It was about 80 years-old, but some of the materials dated back 100 years, so we couldn't see them in movement – we couldn't put them into a projector, not even a moviola, as they broke so easily. In order to see them, we had to unravel them slowly by hand, for hundreds and hundreds of meters. We spent an enormous amount of time studying this material, cataloguing it, and looking at it through a magnifying glass. The work on this film kept us busy from 1982 to 1986. The first screening was in Los Angeles, where we created the music with some Californian friends. We spent at least two years living in a dark room and we also invented a film-shooting technique to re-shoot everything we had been struck by in this material – which, by the way, could not even be reproduced in laboratories because they didn't accept inflammable material that might catch fire or explode. This technique used a machine that we call the 'analytical camera' – a machine that moves forward one frame at a time in a process we've used to make all our films. This machine could re-shoot the frames just as they were, or it could go in depth and isolate details, observing the hidden areas of the picture so as to see these frames as series of little transparent photographs. Sometimes things were going on at the edge of the frames. For example, we realized that soldiers were being hit and they were falling down right at the very edges, and sometimes they were even being hidden by the projector mask. These were the things we were interested in, just as we were interested in finding out how the soldiers died during the war that Comerio filmed. We were interested in taking the time of the soldier being hit and falling. This happened in an almost infinitesimal fraction of time, for the soldier might be hit and

fall within the space of just three frames, so at the cinema, in a normal screening, you would often only sense it, without actually seeing it. It was a subliminal vision. For this salvage work of ours, we then used a multiplication of the individual frames, making it possible to analyse what was happening. From 1997-1998 we made a little video with this material that we used for the war scenes in *From the Pole to the Equator* and about ten years later this material had already vanished – the film could no longer be unraveled and had become a solid block. This is the story of nitrate, which we are so interested in as much for its form as for its content of memory and violence. As we see it, this memory that slowly erases itself has great symbolic value. *Trasparenze* (*Transparencies*, 1998) is a work on ‘self-erasing’. It started out as a video-letter for a friend and with these images we revealed the material qualities that we come up against when re-filming films. *Transparencies* shows the First World War, which is no different from the wars of today. Part of Comerio’s work is now lost, but we’ve fixed it in our own way to make this memory visible and indestructible. An excerpt from *Transparencies* became the signature of the Torino Film Festival from 2002 to 2006. We haven’t used Comerio’s 19th century pictures in our work. The 20th century starts for us with a film that’s one and a half meters long, which Comerio himself shot in a previous format: the first format that existed – the Lumière format, with two round perforations on the sides. This film, which consists of about one hundred frames, shows the funeral of Umberto I, the king of Italy who was killed by an anarchist in Monza. You could say that Italian cinema started with this image of violence. We were told that the king’s son was on a cruise in the Mediterranean, and that they weren’t able to contact him, so the king’s body was kept for many days in a bathtub filled with ice. In the film you can see the king’s horse and a procession of orphans with shaven heads following the coffin. We worked our way through the century touching on the theme of violence.

ARL: During our trip to the Balkans, we found more material with which to build up our inventory. The journey was full of escapades, because going to a country that had just emerged from the war with a film on war, *Prisoners of War*, was decidedly provocative. We then made *Inventario Balcanico* (*Balkan Inventory*, 2000) because we didn’t accept what we were being told about these ‘barbarian, savage Slavs who keep murdering each other’. It seemed impossible that a country that had produced such great personalities – like Danilo Kiš, Paul Celan, Ivo Andrić, Mircea Eliade, Elias Canetti, and Emil Cioran – could lack the values of culture and civilisation.



Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi, *Inventario balcanico (Balkan Inventory)*, 2000.

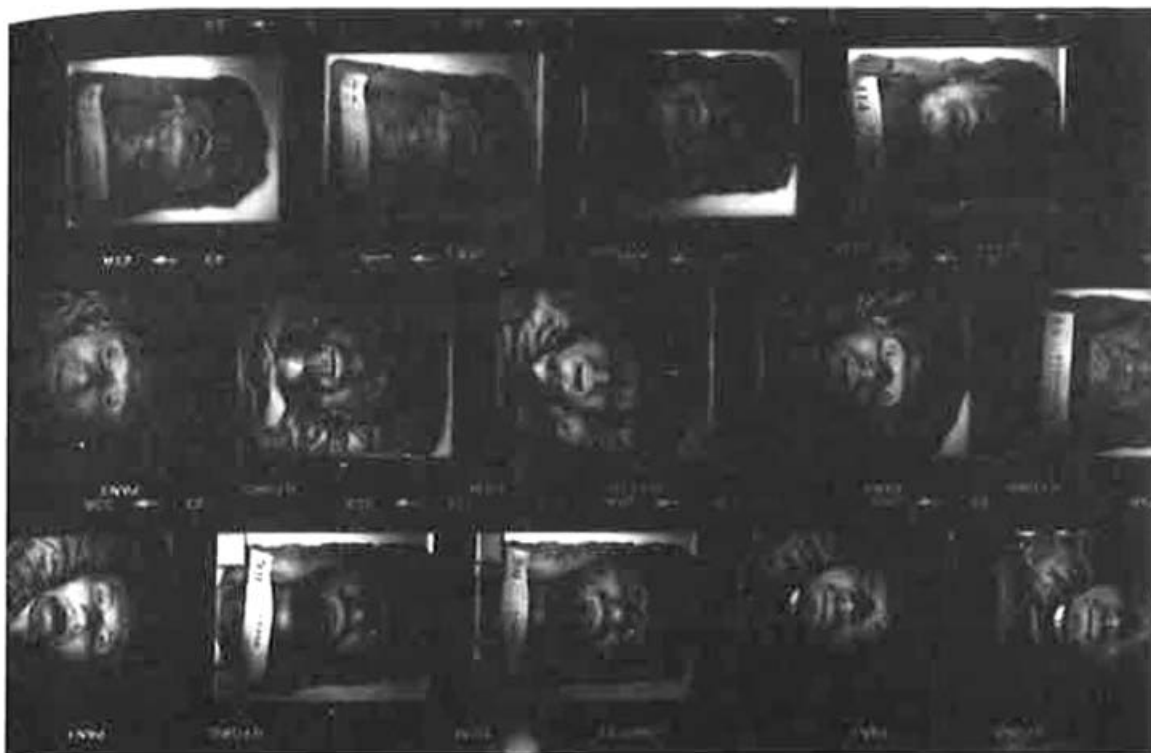
In the Balkans we found material shot both by the Germans, who occupied the land in the Second World War, and family films shot in the Balkans. We followed the course of the Danube – which rises in the Black Forest and ends in Medea's Black Sea – and its journey through Europe goes through all our culture. It's not true that the Balkans are not a part of our culture: by destroying them we've destroyed a truly vital and outstanding part of our culture. We developed strong feelings about this film – it's a film of geography and architecture and, after watching it, an architect friend of ours told us he'd never thought he would be moved to tears by an architecture film. At times the architecture is moving, in the sense that it's no longer there – it's vanished, and that too is a world that has disappeared, bombed both during the Second World War and during the recent Balkan wars. To intensify this sense of exile even further, we used the moving music of the Armenian Djivan Gasparyan, which is a sort of symphony of farewells and of lost homelands.

YG: *Cesare Lombroso* is a film we made in 1975 in the Cesare Lombroso Museum of Criminology in Turin. It's a film about a terrible place that has remained closed until the present day. Cesare Lombroso was a collector of corpses, skulls, and photographs of criminals and their objects, and he used to receive objects for his research from all over the world. We accompanied the film with the smell of carnation – it was a performance. Strassmann, who was part of the Lombroso school, carried out research about the sense of smell among criminals. He used diluted essence of carnation and claimed he had discovered that most criminals suffered from anosmia – which means they didn't perceive smells as 'normal' people – and in female criminals the degree of anosmia was even greater. This work was a turning point and an encounter that greatly affected us. It gave us even greater insight into the century preceding that of the great world wars. One curious and very strange thing is that Cesare Lombroso wished to have his own body shown in the museum together with those of other criminals. Collecting can't go beyond than that: when a collector wants to display himself in his own collection. In Luca Comerio's archives we found material about animals that we link to Lombroso's: *Animali criminali* (*Criminal Animals*, 1993), eight minutes for Arte France.

As Lombroso saw it, humans were not the only criminals, but also animals and plants. Luca Comerio assembled films shot in Germany in the early years of the century, in which animals of different species devour each other. He adds captions that talk of the 'eternal struggle', likening it to the fight between men, between soldiers in the First World War... with fatalism!

ARL: Our work is not easy to follow, in any sense, and in this film we wanted to point out how violence is not so much that of animals, but of the people who use snakes or ducks to make films and of how people enjoy watching a poor duck dying of heart attack before being swallowed by a crocodile.

YG: This work is very close to pornography – to pornography on film – in which one species is pitted against another. *Balkan Inventory* came out in 2000. Seven years later we saw another sort of pornography on television. It was a fight between one ethnic group and another – a fight on film, almost provoked. After *Balkan Inventory* and *Images d'Orient Tourisme Vandale* (2001), we made the third film in the trilogy, *Oh! Man*, and for many months we were unsure whether or not to use the images we'd already used, those of the cripples, the wounded bodies of soldiers, reconstructed bodies or those of children – often orphans – who'd suffered from malnutrition.



Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi, *Cesare Lombroso. Sull'odore del garofano* (*Cesare Lombroso. On the Scent of Carnation*), 1976.

This is a post-WWI film, when a new man had been created in a wound in Europe. A man who wanted vengeance and who was not content with what he had, or wanted to avenge his friends who had died in the trenches or on the battlefields. He often returned to places as a 'tourist'. This was the beginning of Fascism. The terrible images of our film came from France and Italy: the reconstruction of the disintegrated body of the man-soldier. The film follows the structure of the human body starting from the soldiers' heads. We too carried out a surgical operation – cinematographically – removing the doctors and their names, which were in the frames: We removed them and showed only the soldiers' faces. The original material showed the names of the doctors and the brand names of the prostheses. The soldiers' names were ignored: they were just 'unknown soldiers'. The problem was that we needed great courage to film such atrocious things. One day we read Leonardo da Vinci's writings, in which he says that the artist has only one weapon, which is that of showing what happens, and he has to show war in all its horror: crushed flesh, teeth knocked out, and broken bones. These words gave us the courage we needed. In Spain, during a retrospective of ours at the Filmoteca Española in Madrid, we again saw Goya's work on war, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*.

In Susan Sontag we read of opposition to showing atrocious images. But we followed Leonardo's ideas and thus decided to continue. In 2009 we tried to reconstruct the century and to continue our studies with a work on Fascism, but it seems that you can't make films on Fascism any more – there are no available means to do it. This is a study that started with the film *Lo specchio di Diana* (*Diana's Looking-Glass*, 1996) which is subtitled in English, because the script is by James Frazer and Wittgenstein. We carried out a sweeping, in-depth study of material from the early Fascist period to make this film. *Diana's Looking-Glass* is Lake Nemi, where Caligula had two gigantic ships built. We don't know what they were used for – they may have been floating temples or used for imperial festivities – but we do know that they were between 70 and 80 meters long. For propaganda purposes, Mussolini wanted to show the power of the Romans compared with his own and with the conquest of an empire that was all set to take place. So in 1926 he started draining Lake Nemi and the whole mass of water flowed into the sea. Lake Nemi is where William Turner painted a picture called *The Golden Bough*, which is also the name of the book by James George Frazer that tells the legend of Diana and her forest. According to this story, the custodian of this forest was a priest, but he was also a murderer. Legend had it that sooner or later the priest would come, and he would break off a golden bough and kill his predecessor. All those who have violated this forest and this lake have been killed: Caligula, Mussolini... The ships appeared after years of excavations. It was a social diary of Italy that lasted from 1926 to 1940. A huge museum was built and the two ships were winched into them. For the opening in April 1940, Mussolini appeared for the first time in military uniform, whereas previously he had always dressed as the Prime Minister, with boots and bowler hat. It was April 21st: the day the Nazis entered Zagreb. In 1944 the two ships were destroyed when two German soldiers escaping after the Battle of Anzio entered the museum and set them on fire. The final part of the film concerns the conquest: Mussolini's African dream. We added material on the war in Ethiopia, which proves the existence and use of mustard-gas bombs. This is the only document in which this type of bomb can be seen being loaded onto an aircraft. The film ends with the shattering of Mussolini's dream of an African empire. We do not use off-screen commentary in our work, preferring to allow spectators absolute freedom to create their own interpretation. *Images d'Orient Tourisme Vandale* is a film about the travels of Italians through India in 1926. It was produced by Arte France and we showed it for the first time at the Venice Biennale in 2001.

The film is based on Henri Michaux's *Un barbare en Asie* (1933), and on the diaries of Mircea Eliade about the revolts leading up to the independence of India and on repression by the police. These texts are the 'recitar-cantando' – the sung recitation that accompanies the film. It was a dramatic coincidence that we edited these words of protest by Mircea Eliade on the very days that the repression was taking place in Genoa in 2001. Work on the past never fails to link up mysteriously to the present. As I was saying, *Images d'Orient Tourisme Vandale* is a film that revolves around the archive of a political journey, but certainly not one organized by a Cook agency. We also created other films about travel and continents. In *Asia-Africa* (2005), for example, we see tourists travelling in the seventies, apparently unaware of the conflicts and genocide going on around them. They are not interested, or do not want to be, for they are too busy basking in the sun or going off on unspeakable 'exotic' explorations. *Images d'Orient Tourisme Vandale* introduces this way of interpreting mass tourism. *Diario Africano* (*African Diary*, 1993), is a work on Orientalism shot with a little cine-camera in Morocco and Algeria in the twenties. We compare it with Gustave Flaubert's travel diaries in the same places: an 'oriental' sentimental education. I find it interesting to look at these films again 15 years later, and to meditate on the issues concerning the veil, on the Western view of the Middle East, and on the fact that it is no longer possible today to make films as they did then, with violence, violating the veil.

ARL: Now I'd like to talk about another presentation of our work for an audience in constant movement – not in cinema halls but contemporary art exhibitions. In 2001 Harald Szeemann asked us to take part in the Venice Biennale. We made *La marcia dell'uomo* (*The March of Man*): a work on three screens with three projections of different kinds, in which the spectators too are 'on the march' as they go along the 25 meter installation.

Dominique Païni was the director of the Cinémathèque Française in Paris at the time and he provided us with some of the archive material.

We went to Paris and chose some chronographic images made by Etienne-Jules Marey in the late 19th century, before the discovery of the Lumières. The subjects are in Senegal, taken without any racial intent, but for scientific purposes, using a number of cameras simultaneously. We again filmed the movements that appeared in the first of the three halls in the Arsenal, one frame at a time, with hope for progress in the century to come.



Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi, *Frammenti elettrici n. 3 – Corpi* (*Electric Fragment n. 3 - Bodies*), 2002.

In the second hall, the images were of African natives forced to wear **women's underwear and bowler hats**, and to eat at a **rickety table trying to use forks, which, for them**, were unknown. They were **derided cinematographically**. This was in about 1910, before the First World War. The last hall closed with other pictures shot in Africa. In the sixties a European traveller filmed naked young African women, showing off with them behind black glasses. And he had himself filmed while he paid them.

We made another series of short works that we call *Frammenti elettrici* (*Electric Fragments*, 2001-2009), about social privations and the differences between the human 'species'. **One of these** is *Rom-Uomini* (*Gypsy-Man*, 2001), **a film about the gypsies who reappeared in Italy following the Second World War, after the genocide of their people in the Nazi death camps. Travelling as a family on a hand-drawn cart, this journey was filmed by an upper middle-class family on a lake in the north of Italy.** Harald Szeemann saw this work and showed it in 2002 in an exhibition called *Aubes. Réveries au bord de Victor Hugo* held at Maison di Hugo in Place Vendôme in Paris. It was an exhibition he was extremely fond of. Szeemann placed this film installation in the bedroom where Victor Hugo died: The last dream of a writer **who loved the gypsies and the wretched. This work on *Electric Fragments* expanded, with *Corpi* (*Bodies*, 2003) and *Viet-Nam* (2001).**

The Fabric Workshop Museum in Philadelphia made an installation called *New Caledonia* (2004) for the *Experiments with Truth* exhibition curated by Mark Nash. The work derives from the discovery of some material shot in New Caledonia, the French colony near Australia, with documents shot by ethnographers illustrating an extraordinarily primitive population, the Kanaki. It's incredible – this was in 1945, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki! In Polynesian, 'Kanak' means 'man'. They've been living in the archipelago for 3.500 years. 'Il n'y avait rien sauf des Kanak', said a French minister visiting in the 19th century. In 1774 James Cook discovered New Caledonia: 'It is inhabited by a race of people very different from those we have seen to date'. And today a Kanak descendant says: 'Foreigners came to take, to overthrow, to scatter, to exterminate. They killed the chiefs and the people. They stole the land'. *New Caledonia* was shown together with three 'electric fragments' in a complex installation both in Philadelphia and at P.S.1 in New York. This installation can be compared with another one called *Terra Nullius* (2003), for the Witte de With in Rotterdam. This is a work on the Australian aborigines, with images shot in the early 20th century near Sydney. Just near the city of the whites, we see the natives' shantytown. The film is accompanied by a written text, which is longer than the images. '*Warra, warra!*': *Go away! The cries of the Aborigines echoed for the first time.* The arrival of deportees was an authentic catastrophe for the Australian aborigines.

Some say our pictures are too beautiful. Others, on the other hand, say they're highly ethical. We, however, do not distinguish between aesthetic and ethic. What we work on is the violence of history, on the violence inherent in the pictures, which we try to reveal.

ARL: If we'd had the public in mind, we'd have been terrified years ago. Our films and installations are by no means easy, and they demand complex processing by the observer. We're fully aware that people refuse to think with their own brains these days, or to accept things that are different from the pulp forced down our throats by the media. It's a struggle against our own times. It's a tough battle and one that's hard to win. But it has to be fought. As we've often maintained, artists need to face up to their own times. The violence that we're offered by the cinema and television no longer has any effect – it doesn't have the power to disturb us any more, and I think we need to think about these mechanisms.

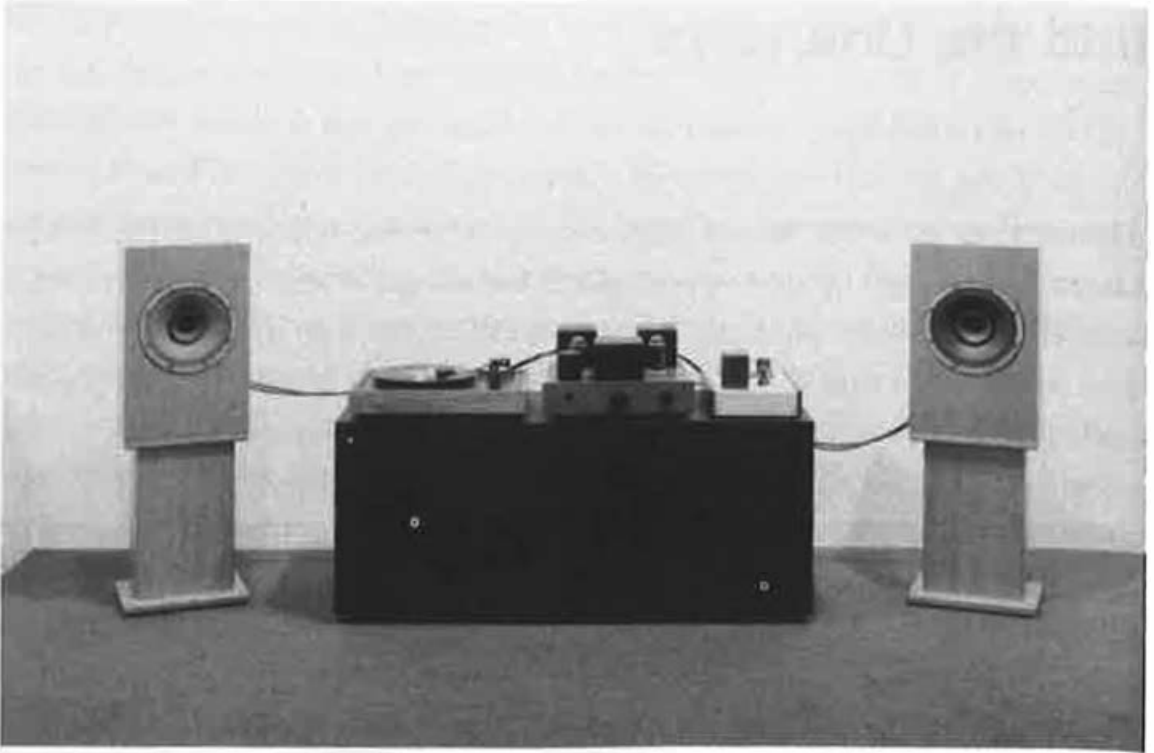
YG: So you can see we're looking for history, and not just that of the West – we are obsessed by it and we want to find out about it. Another important aspect of our work is the genocide of the Armenian population in 1915: *Uomini Anni Vita* (*Men Years Life*, 1990). We were the first to get hold of material from the Soviet archives in the eighties – it was extremely complicated and quite exhausting, but we made this film while the Soviet Union was collapsing. There's a large part that concerns Russia before the Revolution, and a part about the first signs of communism.

We weren't content just to collect this material, but we personally filmed the last survivors of the historic avant-garde movements. We filmed Ida Nappelbaum, the daughter of the photographer of Lenin and of Mayakovsky, who was an important photographer and poet in the Acmcist movement. This is a film – *Interni a Leningrado* (*Interiors in Leningrad*) – that we're still working on. There are things that shake us, because we see how history continues to have its say. History continues to be an open wound.

Into the Unknown

My work as an artist began immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union had opened up new opportunities for my generation, whose members were around 20 years old then. It was a period of absolute happiness and freedom in the sense that the ideology had failed and our history had simply become an act of freedom. With this liberation, new challenges also arrived for my generation, because art in the Eastern European countries had been excluded from the global history of art. On a personal level, my life was full of stimuli and interesting events and I felt the need to refer directly to history, trying to find new forms of creativity that were linked less to art and more to life and history. I began to take an interest in film direction at the end of the nineties and it was a slow beginning; it was only in 1997 that I made my first film. A period of time had been necessary to recognise that a particular past had been irreversibly closed. At the time, it was crucial for me to distance myself from the post-avant-garde Soviet artistic traditions. The genealogy of my work had a different central nucleus that was closer to western art, including the use of images. It was a period of invention of this new artistic territory, which today is recognised as specific to central Europe. In the nineties, discussing art meant talking about post-Soviet art, a debate that, in our context, could be seen as similar to post-colonial discourse.

When I began, it was not possible to talk about art in the Soviet Union with the meaning that we attribute to the term today, inasmuch as Socialism did not permit any freedom of expression. There was no space for ideas that were critical of the State or which questioned the role of art within public institutions. Artists could not travel and exhibit their works abroad. Debate was inexistent. The conditions for any autonomy of art were missing, so, in this sense, possibly, no art as such existed at all. If art was that of political commissioning, other forms of expression seemed to me, as a consequence, to be more significant. I was interested in investigating uncontrolled mass creativity, collective invention that resulted from the progressive, radical modernisation of the landscape, the drastic social changes going on in society in the sixties and seventies. I will start by showing you my production of a work that I made a couple of years ago. It's not a film but a sound installation, a set for a performance, which exemplifies my way of returning to the past. It is a stereo installation built using electronic components made in the thirties.



Deimantas Narkevičius, *Whatever You Play, It Sounds Like the 1940s*, 2009.

In that period, the National Socialists were in power in Germany and were interested in the progress of new technologies, primarily in order to make propaganda more effective. One of their aims was to produce radio with a better quality of sound for the Führer's speeches broadcast into every home. The Telefunken engineers managed to make a technological leap with the introduction of radios using empty AD1 tubes. These devices are still considered amongst the best ever produced. Legend has it that National Socialism became popular because a new generation radio carried the Führer's words into all the middle class homes with a quality of sound that made the listeners believe that the Führer was standing next to them. I wanted to work on this legend and made a stereo system using the same technology. What you can see is the result of my collaboration with sound engineers. The system was built using tubes and electronic components that were originally created to serve Nazi radio and cinematic propaganda.

What I was ultimately interested in was not the physical object, the fetish, but its iteration, the performance aspect of the work. The spectators who visit the exhibition are invited to bring along their vinyls and to listen to the different quality of sound. *Whatever You Play, It Sounds Like the 1940s* (2009) is the title of this work, which was put on display for the first time at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius during the 10th payed edition of the Baltic Triennial.

Visitors could listen to any kind of music they wanted: rap, rock, classical music. At the moment of listening, it became clear that the extraordinary quality of the sound was the result of brilliant technology, produced by one of the most oppressive regimes. The political value of my work was not always clear: the greater part of the spectators, in effect, enjoyed themselves and nothing more, without asking themselves about the origins and aims of this installation.

I am now going to make a leap in time and return to my film work. It's a project from 2005 and is entitled *Matrioškos* (Russian dolls). It is a reflection on an already existing film, *Matryoshkas*, produced by a Belgian television channel a few years earlier. The channel had produced a film using a large number of actresses from the East. It's the typical story of pimps who go from Belgium to Lithuania to recruit young women on the pretext of making them into models, convincing them to sign contracts that they can't read and introducing them onto the Belgian prostitution market. Unfortunately, this was a very successful film that was bought by forty television channels, in Europe and the rest of the world.



Deimantas Narkevičius, *Matrioškos*, 2005.

When I went to Flanders to research this project, I asked my assistants if they knew Lithuania. They didn't know much, and what they did know was mediated by this film. It's embarrassing for an artist to arrive in an unknown country where a negative image of the place from which he comes from has been created. What I did was to make my film of reflections on the existing film. I contacted the professional actresses who had worked in the Belgian television film and asked them to play the same parts in my film as if they were recounting a personal, lived experience. To begin with, no one accepted. They claimed that, as actresses, they could play any part but could not pretend that a role was their 'real life'. It was hard to convince them that my work did not call their professionalism into question but that this was a project of reflection on the way the mass media works. In my project of films in the form of docu-fiction, these actresses are presented as real prostitutes who talk about the horrible life they lived in Belgium. I hope it is sufficiently clear to the spectator that this is not a documentary but a manipulation, a fiction. Some of the actresses say things that make the fictional aspect of the film very evident and their actions deconstruct that which, in the first instance, may appear to be a documentary.

I don't believe that *Matryoshkas* is the only attempt to represent the new Europe in this manner. By a strange coincidence, the film was made between 2003 and 2004, just before the plebiscite on the annexation of Eastern Europe by the European Union. There is a jumble of stereotypes presented to the spectator from one part and another of Europe, almost like a warning of what the future of young people in Eastern Europe might become. The construction of symbols in this film is very clear: there was normal life and then capitalism arrived, and chasing after money forced us to abandon traditional good behaviour and moral principles. There were undoubtedly dangers lurking in the shadows, but why did this film try to darken our future? I would now like to refer to an article in the catalogue of my personal exhibition at the Reina Sofia museum, written by Boris Buden. It is important to remember what happened immediately after the unification of Europe. With reunification we found ourselves with the same political and economic systems as the rest of the world, but we were different, with our own peculiarities. What made us different was our culture that is conditioned by the past and, for us, by a very recent past. This is a past that we can still remember, not remote events, but a history lived by people who are still alive. I refer here to State Socialism that lives in the memories of people not as a finished and archived history but as subjective, changing, individual memories.

This is the reason why I began to dedicate my work to the stories of the Communist period, stories with a personal value, not representative events but little stories that can be seen as marginal episodes. I was not interested in the visual arts of the official artistic scene but in other practices such as urban planning, television found footage, populist fashion, music, the non-design of the period.

Naturally, the most important component, for me, remained the media: the film and television productions of the period because they represented our popular **culture, to which I refer when I use a certain visual code**. A particularity of **the Communist media propaganda** was a sort of **undertone** in the visual representations of daily life. The directors and operators tried to invent, **creatively**, new ways of **expressing their critical vision**. Due to the presence of a **form** of media 'code', **directors and spectators**, in the East, were (I don't know if they still are) more critical of the media. This fascinated me when I began to work with the archives and television technologies of the sixties.

The film *Into the Unknown* (2009), for example, is a montage with material taken from the **archives of E-TV**, and **precisely the film shots produced** by the DEFA in the **ex-German Democratic Republic**. The images show the **ordinary life of East Berliners** documented **over the course of twenty years (with a high percentage of films from the sixties and eighties)**. **These are everyday scenes of both the city and the countryside, details of people at rest and at work, great crowds at an official open-air gathering**. The internal **scenes are of both public and private spaces**. **The images suggest the ordering of people's lives. Individuals are compressed into restricted social systems**. **The images, made originally to promote the way of Socialist life, show us how well balanced this style of life was**. **With a new montage of film clips and the combination of audio traces, I wanted to bring back a certain existential weight to these cinematic representations of the archetypal protagonists of Socialism**. **Old workers, young students, busy doctors and nurses are all fragile human beings, sensitive to the passing of time, this flow that washed away the system 2 years ago**. **Even if many of the people in the film are still alive, their archetypal visualisation is changed and exists only in the films made by the DEFA: the images have disappeared, their style is ephemeral**. **Is this a problem specific to the system of 'State Socialism'?** In the sound tracks there are many voices talking in English. The audio is taken from a range of documentaries of the period and not directly from the film sequences. Some expressions have been taken from the Czechoslovakian film *Vyzva do Ticha* (*The Silent Challenge*, 1965).



Deimantas Narkevičius, *Revisiting Solaris*, 2007.

The text expresses the complicated relationships that people have with their environment. Constant internal monitoring and the censorship of speeches and politically correct behaviour cause a slight form of schizophrenia in a certain number of citizens. **Despite all this, the imposed normality and highly organised life represented in the GDR film material reflect an ideal of life or an exemplary vision. I believe that this creates an attractive cinematic standard, once it has been removed from the political context of the period. I believe that the introduction of unsynchronised voices interrupt this idealised filmic vision, evoking a tension and a sense of irritation in the imagination of this historic period that had to disappear from cultural circulation.**

Nonetheless, probably one of my most radical projects, which refers to the cinematic model of the period, is my film *Revisiting Solaris* (2007) an extension of the film *Solaris* (1972), by the Russian director **Andrei Tarkovsky**, considered a classic. The film is based on the eponymous story by the Polish writer **Stanisław Lem**. In the film, astronauts travel through space and approach Solaris, the conscious planet. This planet generates spectres, bringing to life the people present in the astronauts' memories who reappear from the past and become people in the film. The astronaut Chris Kelvin, on the space mission, meets the image of his wife who appears in the film as a very attractive woman (Natalya Bondarchuk).

The construction of the film makes this very unsettling since, generally speaking, everything that is fiction in films appears as such, whereas in Tarkovsky's film we have fiction within the fiction and this disorientates the spectator.

I contacted the protagonist of *Solaris*, Donatas Banionis, thirty-four years after Tarkovsky's film had been made and asked him to replay the part of Chris Kelvin during the three days of filming. My short film was based on the last chapter of Stanisław Lem's story, which is not in Tarkovsky's film. Since he had made a fairly liberal interpretation of the story, by personalising it with autobiographical details, I felt that I too could permit myself to intervene creatively in Tarkovsky's film.

The interest and fascination that this masterpiece had for me can be seen, from a current point of view, to derive from what might seem like an anachronistic direction. A sort of symbolic scenic sequence that lasts into infinity, typical of Tarkovsky's style and, in particular, of the cameraman Vadim Jusov, who filmed *Solaris*. These scenes are both monumental and dramatic and give us an idea of what experimental cinema was in the Soviet Union.

Some of the passages in the last chapter of Stanisław Lem's story play a significant role in my work. The text of the subtitles is complicated and dense and accompanies images that are so slow that they are almost stills, bringing the story back to its original form. The highly symbolic landscapes photographed by Mikalojus K. Čiurlionis represent the perfect set for this film. Čiurlionis was a member of the *Mir Iskustva* (World of Art) group, one of the first Russian symbolist groups. Symbolism was very popular at the start of the Twentieth century and its influence led to a split from academic art and, later, was translated into the most radical avant-garde movements. Symbolism, originating in painting, is also present in Tarkovsky's shots and I began to recognise this link between Čiurlionis' photographs from 1905 and Tarkovsky's film of 1972.

There is a scene with a man standing in the snow that is a reproduction of the first scene of Tarkovsky's film when Donatas Banionis is in the garden before meeting with the astronaut who will advise him of the strange phenomena happening in space. There is a citation from another beautiful scene from the film in which Tarkovsky filmed the 'future' and, in effect, shot streets in Tokyo in 1971. What is seen in the film as the future is, in fact, a future that has already passed, yet, even if it no longer existed, still gave an idea of progress. Tarkovsky interpreted the story in a very personal way and, in effect, in his film, the protagonist returns to earth as his father's prodigal son, with a symbolism that significantly modified the original story.

I tried to follow the film traditions of the Soviet media in which significance can be read between the lines. I am not interested in sterile statements but in narrative forms in which the spectator participates in the creation of significance on the basis of their experience. Another great director, Werner Herzog, has said that film exists only in the moment in which it is shown to the public. This is as true for my films as it is for all the others.

The Language of the Past

In my videos, I do not develop any pre-established ideas and I am not interested in provoking anyone. I try to do my best to be invisible, not to influence the people I'm filming while they get used to their private environment with their own usual rituals: and even if they are acting the part of someone, they can do this in the way they want. It's almost like filming animals: in a positive way lacking any cynicism. Sometimes I have to speak to one of the cameramen, but, as was the case in my film *The Pit* (2002), they immediately started to order the others about and limit things they could do and became quite brusque. I believe that documentaries are over-filled with the directors' self-expression, by their poetry and philosophy. Television journalism, on the other hand, creates specific realities because someone is making money from the impact that it has on the spectators. Journalistic reports claim to be building events, situations and episodes while I'm not interested in extraordinary events. What interests me are the mental states of people, their thoughts and the very process of communication. What I try to transmit is an inter-subjective reality that belongs as much to me as to the characters in my films, something that we have in common. When I work on the montage, I always keep in mind the general idea of the place and context in which the work will be shown. This, at times, helps to focus on certain aspects of reality, but I don't believe my films can be interpreted outside these same contexts.

In my film *Hot* I brought together, in a typical factory of the sixties and seventies, workers who had laboured for thirty years. I invited them to eat in the factory canteen, in disuse for many years, serving them the meals typical of those years, food that was very similar to that served during the Soviet period, in such a way as to arouse and stimulate their memories of the Communist past. Four toasts during the meal provided the idea for the montage. These people, rather than talking about the past, discussed the current situation in the country. I found the way in which the ex-workers told their personal stories very interesting because it was possible to see how these people knew what to believe during the Soviet period, whereas now they were fairly disorientated and didn't know how to live any longer.

I filmed *Hot* in 1999, when many people in Lithuania had begun to think that, possibly, the situation in the Soviet Union was better, and I made this film to understand what ordinary people really think and feel.

This was a very large factory that produced electricity meters. When I went, around 800 people worked there, and the canteen where the film was shot had been shut down. No one knew about this work and even less about why the canteen had been closed. I shot this film without any promoting. I talked at length with the workers and they told me that they would be happy to come for a dinner and I thought I wanted to make a film about the past. So I waited until the factory manager had abandoned his work and we shot the film. I don't know if this is a case of explicit nostalgia for the Soviet past. This feeling developed on its own – it wasn't part of my programme. As a child, I too ate in a Soviet canteen. This real fact – this specific food – was used to reawaken in the participants of *Hot* almost a corporeal memory. However, what emerged was their way of thinking, influenced by ideology.

I would also like to talk to you about another film where, inversely, I used found footage: *Language from the Past*, made in 2004. In this film, I was interested in the technical aspect: in re-recording the 8mm film, transferring it to video and connecting it with an important story – that of the man who had made the old film. I made *Language from the Past* for an exhibition of young artists in Leipzig in 2004 entitled *I am here, you are there*, on the subject of ethnic minorities and isolated cultural groups. The protagonist (who is only seen at the end of the film) is a Russian speaker who lived in Lithuania for many years, had roles in the government apparatus of the Soviet period, but still could not speak Lithuanian. He had completely lost his sense of country, of civil solidarity and social security when English pushed the Russian language out of Lithuania. His social identity depended, above all, on language. Both the film *Vaskichi* (2004), which I will talk about later, and this work tackle the subject of how language constructs reality.

This film, however, is about the question of minorities in Lithuania. The protagonist, as I said, is a man of Russian origin who has lived at length in this country but has never learnt Lithuanian well. If anything, he speaks it very badly. During the Soviet period, it was normal to speak Russian, wherever you went you could use this language and everyone understood it. But, once independence had been achieved, the Lithuanian people declared Lithuanian to be the official language, so that all the people living in this country needed to know it in order to get any kind of work. I'm not against Lithuanian, especially for those who speak the language well.

I had just met this man and he had talked to me about a film he had made and so I had the idea for this film. It was 2004 and Lithuanian independence had happened some time before. Many saw Russia in a negative light and even more so everything that Russia had done to Lithuania. Thus, as soon as I met this man, I thought I could take on and show another point of view apart from the generally existing perspective. It was important, for me, to make this film because many Lithuanian politicians are still exploiting the Russian question. They say that, we are all Lithuanian, but the Russians only do something good for Lithuania when they fight against Russia. What comes out of the film is that, although the protagonist is a Soviet, what is represented is the image of daily life for many Lithuanians. The lives of the Lithuanian and Russian people were profoundly mixed together and it is now very difficult to separate them. At the time, when I was young, I clearly found the Soviet regime inadequate insomuch as we felt we were cut off from the world, despite the fact that there were many positive aspects. But, from today's point of view, thinking back to my childhood, I have to admit that, in some ways, we were happier.



Gintaras Makarevičius, *Vaskichi*, 2004.

I would now like to show you this film on children playing at war in an area of Vilnius. Its title is *Vaskichi*, which is the name of a typical children's team game. In this film, I was again very interested in how language can create reality: I did the montage so that it looks like an action documentary. The children were playing in front of me; I filmed them and showed them what they were doing. They decided what was right and what was wrong with the filming – they were the directors. They acted sincerely and made a very precise, critical analysis of the first version of the film. Then I made another version, following the conceptual thread that was very important for me. If you watch this film from start to finish, you can see that the children talk between one shot and the next. Then they decide who should be filmed and who not. Then, given that it is not easy to decide, they abandon the game. Again what interested me in this work was depicting this new generation growing up in the years of independence because the game played during my generation, was, in some ways, much more politicised. When we played, the two opposing teams were usually either Russians against Germans or cowboys against Indians. However, in this film, the children's teams have no names. So, belonging to one team or the other is less important. It's just a game that is there to be filmed, a game like Rock-Paper-Scissors. The film lasts 17 minutes and you can understand what the children wanted to tell us and possibly you can also see the stylistic intent behind its making: the model was that of children playing computer games, and I tried to do the same with the video-camera.



Gintaras Makarevičius, *Winter Parallels*, 2008.

I want to show you some parts of the film *Winter Parallels* (2007). It took me over a year to film it, and it covers the lives of four people. *Winter Parallels* was also inspired by ordinary social life in Lithuania. Since, in 1999, when I began to make short documentary films, I have always been interested in the stories of people with a modest social status. Dramatic situations that might shock an outside observer are, however, the ordinary conditions of these people. Initially I thought of making a film about people coming from different social contexts, but I then understood that the question I was mainly interested in was another. It was that of understanding the motivations that force certain people to be employed in unpleasant, psychologically difficult and often underpaid work. The film's protagonists, who I got to know in depth before filming, were all very kind, sensitive and generous people who could have done any other kind of work but who had consciously chosen their professions. Whether it be a dogs' home, a centre for disabled children, an immigration centre, or the emergency road accident services, these people are faced, daily, with dramatic events and the complicated fate of both humans and animals. Our conversations made it clear to me that none of them would want to leave their work. In the film, the four protagonists never meet each other directly so I tried to find some possible parallels. The film enters contemporary Lithuanian life in a different way. It is the typical situation in which people begin to grow in a consumer generation and in which we can perceive that they are increasingly abandoning their ideals.

In the film, there are four people who did not choose very tranquil worlds. I was with them for a whole winter, naturally assisted by the cameraman. I tried to understand the reasons why they had made these choices. I wanted to find the ways in which it is possible to compare their experiences. I was looking for very simple, ordinary people, very normal people with nothing special about them – people who were not suffering from mental disorder or with particular psychological concerns. That's it: I wanted to show these people and how they worked. One of them worked in an animal shelter. Another was a teacher in a school for difficult children, yet another is a driver who drives cars in a garage. Lastly, there is a girl who works with refugees, as a social worker. I have not included any interviews in the film but was rather looking for particular moments, natural situations that can only be recorded by staying through an entire season with someone: you need a lot of time to get something that is natural and ordinary. I wanted to make this film in a very realistic way, but, at the same time, I can say that, in some ways, it is, naturally, a fiction.

It is very difficult to show reality, even if I learnt something with *Winter Parallels*: I stayed for about a year and a half, we filmed 30 hours, of which I made of montage of only 54 minutes.

I believe that my feelings are difficult to explain and, in effect, all my films are built around my direct experiences. It is impossible for me to say which is my best work, the most successful one, but all these films were created in order to replay particular experiences in my life. I have never tried to show what hurts me. It is truly something awful: I have lost brothers, I lost a father and many other things to which I was attached, but, every time, I started to paint again. When I started painting, I looked only at myself and painting was very linked to myself. But, in reality, by doing this, I built a trap between myself and everything else outside me, in my private life, in my social life. I then understood that the external dimension was much more important, but also, in some way, dramatically linked to my origins. It could be that these sensations arise when watching one of my films, but I don't want to provoke any kind of feelings with regard to the Soviet period. The past is not important for me: all I want is to understand what I am and where I am. This is my main reason for making films.

I would like to end with my last film from 2008: *The Testament of Siberia*. Here I used archive footage, as in *Language from the Past*. I received this material from a man, but I never found out who filmed this Super 8mm.



Gintaras Makarevičius, *Testament of Siberia*, 2008.

The voices you can hear, on the other hand, are those of my father and his brother. In 1999 I made a sort of interview with my father. I kept this recording for a long time and reflected on what it meant for me up until 2008. This film deals with the life of the narrator, the man whose voice we hear talking about Siberia. His family was deported during the conflict with Russia and after the occupation. While the voice narrates these dramatic childhood memories, on the screen I use a video showing the New Year celebrations of an anonymous Soviet family. I brought in these dissonant parts because I too made similar films as a child during the sixties and seventies and I can still remember those family parties. My personal experience is very similar to the archive footage I used in the film. Obviously, I also knew my father's story before I began this project. He had told me, a few times, about the Siberian community, about his experiences, but, naturally, I had never been there, and what I wanted to express in the film was this superimposition of two memories – mine, of my childhood, which I tried to recreate through the visual traces – and his, that we hear in the telling. The quality of the archive material is very poor and I deliberately chose the fragments that I felt to be significant, building them into other material. In the first part of the film, there are no images for about two minutes. We can hear my father talking and then his brother, who had come to visit him because he was very ill. Then both of them start talking about Siberia.

Memory and Conflict

Never Again! Again and Again When Memory Serves Political Violence

I am not a professional lecturer, nor am I an expert in the field of trauma or memory. As such, I will try to use my humble experience as a filmmaker and an Israeli to highlight the parts of my cinematographic work over the last 20 years that deal with issues of politics and memory and, more recently, the visual representation of genocide.

To avoid any misunderstandings, let me first establish what the French call 'un champ sémantique' or a 'semantic field'. The dictionary definition of memory is: 'The set of **psychic functions** which **allows us to perceive the past** as the past. (and) **Preservation in the brain of impressions which continue to influence our behaviour in the form of habits**'. The word 'memory' is used in the **western world mostly to point out collective or individual memory**. In **recent years it has quite often been used in reference to the Second World War crimes** or, to be more specific, the Jewish genocide during the war. 'Memory' became an undefined interdisciplinary field. In the context of this lecture, I **will consider memory as remembrance** – the act of remembering by an **individual** and a national **collective**.

With the word 'trauma', I mean the consequences of an event that make an individual unable to use his usual psychological defences. For example, the traumatised individual is unable to forget or to 're-narcissize'. I will refer to collective trauma as learnt suffering on a mass level – a taught trauma transmitted by national or political institutions.

Memory – or 'to remember' – is not the opposite of 'to forget'. Instead, the opposing terms are 'to erase' or 'wipe-out' and 'to conserve'. Remembrance is an interaction **between memory and forgetting**, which always **involves** a selection. **Or, in Goethe's words: 'When I hear memory, I ask myself what was forgotten.'**

You will not hear me use the words 'Shoa' or 'Holocaust', as both are religious notions that uproot the event of genocide from its political and realistic dimensions. I will later address the roots of these metaphysical notions. I've titled my lecture 'Never again! Again and Again. When Memory Serves Political Violence'. I would like to discuss my personal artistic experience through four of my documentary films. *Aqabat-Jaber, Passing Through* (1987) and *Aqabat-Jaber, Peace with No Return?* (1995) are about a Palestinian refugee camp near Jericho in Palestine. Both films deal with the Palestinian remembrance of the 1948 disaster, when more than 720.000 civilians were expelled from their homes in 1948 by Zionist forces. My film *Izkor, Slaves of Memory* (1990) deals with the Israeli education system in terms of building a national collective memory. I will make some reference to my film *Itsembatsemba, Rwanda One Genocide Later* (1997), but I will mostly concentrate on my last work *The Specialist, Portrait of a Modern Criminal* (1999) co-written with Doctor Rony Brauman. It is a courtroom drama inspired by Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem. Report on the Banality of Evil*. The two-hour film is composed exclusively from the 350 hours of unseen footage recorded during the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann that took place in Jerusalem in 1961.



Eyal Sivan, *Izkor, Slaves of Memory*, 1990.

Using these examples, I will try to illustrate the approach of a born and bred Israeli documentary filmmaker who decided to exile himself and dedicate his artistic work to the relationship between remembrance and political violence. On an individual psychological level, the triangle trauma-remembrance-violence is quite well known as a means of describing the fact that a traumatised individual can potentially turn into an oppressor. It can occur with case of sexually abused children, abused women, or even concentration camp survivors and is what is usually referred to as the effect of repetition. On a collective level, despite its clear existence, this triangle or repetition is difficult to examine. Collective trauma is difficult to study or to highlight.

It is hard to recognise the link between collective trauma, collective memory, and collective violence. It is well known that memory is used for building national identity. The Serbs' violent attitude in Bosnia and Kosovo has shown us once again the extent to which memory is one of the favourite tools of nationalism and totalitarianism. Memory can easily become an instrument that stimulates, encourages, and justifies different forms of collective violence. What a terrible circle it is: remembrance of inflicted crimes or of trauma as an instrument of crime against others.

As is the case for an individual, on the collective level we remember what happened to us, how we were oppressed, and the suffering that we endured. Eventually, we remember our heroic and positive creative deeds, and it's these heroic acts that we hold close. This is how nations remember. Of course, we do not remember the sufferings of others or our own cowardice. Tzvetan Todorov writes: 'The world of heroes, and maybe this is its weakness, is a one-dimensional world which includes only two opposed terms: us and them, friend and enemy, courage and cowardliness, heroes and traitors, black and white.'

Collective memory divides the world in two: us – the victims and heroes, and them – the criminals, oppressors, cowards, and followers. This 'us' does not depend on the extent of the crime or suffering. It is the way it is used which determines truth and reality. As a result, being victims or heroes is like an inheritance. I will concentrate on what we are used to seeing as victims. On a collective level, it suffices to be a self-declared victim and to be recognised as such; in turn, any violent or criminal act done by this collective of victims will be judged with leniency.

Even the suffering endured by others becomes a subject of suspicion – if a scale of suffering is established, then violence caused by a victim is not real suffering. This is the case in Israeli–Palestinian relations and is also what Edward Said, a Palestinian scholar from Columbia University, means when he says, ‘we (Palestinians) are the victims of the victims’.

Kurds remember Saladin as their hero, they remember dozens of years of Turkish oppression and persecution, but, of course, they do not remember that they were the ones who executed the criminal order for genocide from the Ottoman authorities against Armenians in 1915. The French collective memory concerning the Second World War is mainly about the fact that France was occupied by Nazi Germany and about the French resistance. The Vichy regime is a new entry in the French collective memory and the French army crimes in Algeria have still not registered. We can continue on this track with the Serbs remembering the battle of Kosovo best, the Turkish and Muslim oppression of the Orthodox, and the Second World War suffering. Rwanda’s Tutsis remember the 1963 massacres and the 1993 genocide, which justified the massacre of Hutu refugees during the war in Zaire in 1999. This is the case in Northern Ireland, and in the ex-Soviet Union, and so on. However, I will concentrate on Israel’s policy of remembrance.

No other nation in the second half of 20th century has transformed the remembrance of suffering into an instrument of justified oppression as Israel has done. Of course, no other nation has quite the same moral high ground as Israel. In a speech he made in Kansas City, on November 14th, 1970 (three years after the occupation of the West-Bank and Gaza strip), Elie Wiesel said: ‘There is a State, it is different to all the others. It is Jewish and, as such is more human than any other.’ ‘Memory’ – argues Arnaud Meyer – ‘privileges orthodoxy and consensus instead of freedom, thinking, and criticism. [...] Those who stand on the total exceptional character of holocaust block any attempt of aesthetic transfiguration or historical construction. Operations must be done in universal terms and categories’.

Already by the time we were in kindergarten in Israel, we learnt that *our* ancestors were slaves in Egypt. As a matter of fact, ‘ancestors’ was not a word that was used – it went something more like ‘we were slaves in Egypt’. We learnt that *we* were persecuted for more than 2.000 years by the Pharaoh, by the Greek invaders of Palestine, and by the Romans. We learnt that *we* were chased and exiled. We learnt that *we* suffered among the gentiles.

Of course, the central issue was remembering the Jewish genocide. Our existence as Jews born in Israel is a sort of revenge on history. In 1976 at the Yad Vashem memorial (which was built on the site of a destroyed Palestinian village in 1948), Mordechai Gur, Chief Commander of the Israeli armed forces said: 'The Shoa constitutes the legitimate basis of our enterprise... Our army takes its force and power from the secret martyrs of the holocaust and the heroes of the resistance.' We were brought up to become proud Jewish warriors. We were supposed to defend our state and our nation from future suffering with our bodies and souls. 'Izkor', which means 'remember' in Hebrew, was the order. 'Never again' was our mission. I will return to this idea again later, when I discuss my film *Izkor, Slaves of Memory* that I directed in 1989.

At the commonplace secular Israeli school that I attended in Jerusalem, a sentence from the Talmud (one of the Jewish religious books) hung above the blackboard in our classroom, as in most Israeli schools: 'Do not do to your friend what you would hate for him to do to you.' In fact, according to our education, this friend was just another Jew – it was 'us', the collective 'we' that I mentioned before. It might be that I misunderstood this sentence. My understanding, and that on which I later based my artistic work, was that 'my friend' is simply any other human being with whom, as Hannah Arendt says, I am condemned to try and build a common world. This is, in fact, what the French scholar Tzvetan Todorov meant by 'exemplary memory', which he places in opposition to 'literal memory'. Literal memory is centred on ourselves. According to Todorov's book *Les abus de la mémoire* (the abuses of memory), exemplary memory: 'Allows the past to be used in view of the present. Memory can be used as a lesson about injustices acquired in the past and to help fight those taking place in the present, to help us to live ourselves and to advance toward the other.'

In 1986, one year after I left Israel and settled in Paris, I directed my first film *Aqabat-Jaber, Passing Through*, a feature length documentary about a Palestinian refugee camp in the occupied territories. My work about these refugees was the first time that I worked with the representation of victims. I wondered what a refugee is, a person who receives the memory of the 1948 catastrophe almost 40 years later. What is the link between these displaced Palestinians, chased from their land and houses by the Jewish army in 1948, and their lost land? And why are they so attached to the notion of the refugee?

'Refugee' – said a man who I interviewed – 'means that I will go back to my village one day.' It was the village he was chased from with his family when he was just a few months old. For an Israeli Jew, making a film like that in Arabic wasn't an everyday event, but our stories had parallels. I was struck to discover that the event of the expulsion of more than 720.000 Palestinians is referred to as the 'Nakba' in Arabic, which means 'catastrophe'. This is the exact same definition as 'Shoa' in Hebrew. The second thing was the Palestinian memory, which is linked to a concrete space, geography, trees and plants, houses, and villages; a place that does not exist anymore and that we never learnt about; a place that could only be represented through memory. We – Israeli Jews – we grow up on the words of Israel Zangwill Israel Zegwils (a major Zionist thinker): 'We, people without land, we came to a land without people.' Israel's Prime Minister Golda Meir said in 1969: 'There is no such thing as a Palestinian people.' The same Golda Meir went to visit the city of Haifa in the North of Palestine in 1949, a few days after the city was emptied of its Palestinians inhabitants. She went into the abandoned Palestinian homes and later wrote of the experience: 'I saw dishes of food, the beds still warm, the fires in the ovens, personal belongings everywhere and I said to myself, this must have been the vision of the emptied Jewish villages in Eastern Europe in the forties.' Yitzhak Rabin, a brilliant officer in the Israeli army in 1948, describes the expulsion of the Palestinians from the centre of Palestine near Tel-Aviv in his memoirs. As Minister of Defence during the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, the same Yitzhak Rabin gave the orders (which were followed) to break the hands and legs of Palestinian children, to destroy houses, and to expel more than 300 Palestinian leaders beyond the borders of Palestine.

Can we believe that our education and the memory we had been taught became a sort of credit for crime over the years? If we refer to Elie Wiesel, it seems unfortunately possible. In his book *Against Silence. The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel*, he wrote about the June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon – which cost approximately 20.000 people their lives: 'I believe one cannot judge an ancient people on the basis of episodes. We are a 4.000 year-old people and what we do today reflects a history of four 4.000. Episodes are episodes.' Concerning Jews who condemn Israel's behaviour, Wiesel suggests: 'Would it not have been better to have offered Israel unreserved support regardless of the suffering endured by the population of Beirut.'

In Oslo on December 10th 1986, during his acceptance speech for the Nobel peace prize, he also said: 'I fought oblivion and lies: to forget is to choose to be an accomplice. I swore never to shut up when human beings are persecuted or humiliated.'

During the Palestinian Intifada in 1990, I directed a film called *Izkor, Slaves of Memory*. In the film, the Israeli religious philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz, a spiritual leader of the movement of Israeli soldiers who disobeyed the army by refusing to serve in the occupied territories, said: 'We allowed ourselves to kill refugees in refugee camps because all of this happened to us.'

In fact, a few months after the release of my first film *Aqabat-Jaber, Passing Through*, the Palestinian uprising broke out in the occupied territories. Everyone around the world could see the barbaric behaviour of the young Israeli soldiers towards the un-armed Palestinian youth right on their TV screens. Like many others, I was shocked. Not so much by the violence, but by the disparity between the commands to 'remember' and 'never again', which we were brought to follow, and then the behaviour of my own 'friends'. I decided make a film that questioned the construction of the Israel collective memory.

Izkor, Slaves of Memory is a film that follows life in Israeli schools for one month. It starts in kindergarten at the beginning of April and follows through to Independence Day right at the end of the month in a high school. In Israel, April is the month of memory. It starts with Passover, the remembrance of freed from slavery under the Pharaoh. A few days later, is the day commemorating the Shoa and heroism. Then comes Memorial Day, when we commemorate Israeli soldiers killed in wars, and finally, Israeli Independence Day. This is the temporal framework of the film.

I shot this film based on my own memory of school. I shot it from the point of view of a child. The camera gets higher with the age of the children. I decided to follow a family and I looked for one with children in a range of classes from kindergarten to high school. And I chose a Jewish family that had no direct connection to Europe in a broad sense (a family of Moroccan origin) and had no soldiers that fell or were wounded in any of the Israeli wars. The film starts with a scene in a secular kindergarten, where we see children between the ages of three and four sitting on the floor singing: 'We were slaves... now, we are free men!' This is accompanied with physical gestures.

After that, they enact the exodus from Egypt with a song. They put clothes and other things in bags. The teachers ask the kids 'Why are we drinking salty water?' After a few different answers from the children, they scream the right answer: 'The tears, to remember the tears of the slaves in Egypt.' Then the following scenes are about Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) with a group of older children. There are girls around nine or ten years old, sitting in a hall in their school, making decorations. Together they cut out yellow stars from a big sheet of yellow cardboard. The camera approaches and I ask one of the girls: 'What does this mean to you?' She says: 'It means that they suffered, it is very sad.' I continue: 'What do you feel about it?' She answers: 'It is as if it happened to me when they tell us about it.' Then there is another scene with a class of 12 year-olds. The kids are learning to read a text for a ceremony that will take place in the courtyard of the school. The text is as follows: 'Remember, O Israel, the souls of six million Jews. Men, women, boys and girls, the old, the new-born, school children disappeared, assassinated, burned alive, taken to the slaughter house in a train of death, sacrificed in the holocaust...' And they all end together '...Jewish blood cries for revenge.' This education splits the world in two. This memory *par excellence*, this representative approach leads to a sort of permissiveness. For example, there is a scene in the courtyard of the high school with teenage girls and boys just between Memorial Day and Independence Day. We are talking about what is happening in the occupied territories at that time – during the Intifada in 1990. They define themselves as humanists and leftists. One of the boys says: 'I will tell you what's going on there in the territories. You do your military service. The army is obligatory. In the army, in a country that has this law, the only thing you can do is to obey the law. You mustn't give your opinion, especially in the army. Your superiors give you orders, and you respond to these orders. If he tells you to shoot, you shoot.' Later, I found this group of kids in the entrance of their school, hanging up a huge poster that they had designed, which had 'Izkor' (remember) and 'never again' written on it. I just point out that service is obligatory for everyone in the Israel army, with three years for boys and two years for girls.

The film *Izkor, Slaves of Memory* ends with a scene where 18 year-old boys are taking an oath as Israeli soldiers joining the army. Most of the oaths for the special unit are conducted on Mount Masada, which is the location of a major revolt ending in a mass suicide during a siege by the Romans in the 1st century.

I will read you the oath: 'You are going to swear your allegiance to the Israeli Defence Forces.' The oath is: 'On my honour, I swear and I commit to remain faithful to the State of Israel, to its laws, its legitimate authorities; to respect without condition or reserve the discipline of the Israeli Defence Forces; to obey the orders and instructions of my superiors, to give even my life in defence of my country and the independence of the State of Israel.'

I didn't pursue the system of Israeli military education in this film. However, around the same time, there was a group of Israeli filmmakers – made up of two filmmakers, two cinematographers, and two psychologists – that had opened up a basement in Tel-Aviv and invited soldiers who were in service in the occupied territories to come and speak to the camera. You don't see the psychologists – you just hear them. This kind of experiment was done in America with a film about the massacre of Mi Lay in Vietnam. I would like to quote just two scenes of this film. In one, the guys are in a medium shot and they speak in front of a black wall. The first explains: 'We were in a small unit, we took a house in a refugee camp under siege and we received the order to move into the house. Then, everybody ran into the house, broke everything, even the crystal...' And then he abruptly said: 'Of course, I didn't participate. They were beating up the family, and I suddenly imagined something in front of **me** that was hard for our generation because of our own history... Our **soldiers** with a different uniform in front of me.'

Another scene from this film shows a psychologist who was an officer in the reserve military service. He explains that he was outside a house in a small village not far from Bethlehem. The unit he was directing encircled the house in a routine night control and asked the Palestinian people to come out. The Palestinian **family didn't** come out of their house. He **shouted** to them: '**If you don't come out, we will use teargas.**' But they still **didn't come out**. He **shouted** once again: 'If you don't come out, we will use gas' and then the unit threw teargas into the house. A few minutes later, a Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance came. **A man** came out of **the house** with a one month-old baby in his arms – the **baby** was dead. The **psychologist** explains: 'I went up to this man and I started to shout **at him and** when I **went back** to the military base I called my family in **Tel-Aviv and I wrote to my sister** to tell her what happened.' Then the psychologist interviewing him asks: 'Was this a sort of process of confession? Did you want to be forgiven for what you did?' He said: 'Yes, I wanted to be forgiven.' Then: 'And you never thought of asking

the Palestinian family to forgive you?' He looks at the camera and says: 'I never thought about it', which is followed by a very long silence, and then he says: 'No, they have to ask me to forgive them for what they made me to do to them.'

Around the same time, which was during the Intifada in the occupied territories, a very harsh debate surrounding the question of obedience started in Israel. This debate was not new. It first came up in 1982, when the subject was triggered for two reasons: first, one of the official organisers of military and government events, Dan Almagor, a poet and a writer, decided to appear in the central square in Tel-Aviv during a demonstration by the Peace Now movement. He asked them if he could read a very short poem, which ended with the following words: 'Generals, stop beating the kids, prepare yourselves. One day, you will find yourselves in the glass booth.' Of course, every Israeli knew that the 'glass booth' was a reference to the Eichmann trial.

The second was Professor Leibovitz (once again) who called for disobedience among Israeli soldiers in the name of the memory of the Eichmann trial. He said: 'Remember that Eichmann obeyed legal orders.' In fact, the Eichmann trial is the beginning of what I would like to call the 'ideology of holocaust' or 'Shoism'. The Eichmann trial opened up the possibility for the very first appearance of witnesses who had survived and spoke openly. The trial took place in the biggest auditorium in Jerusalem. It was not in a court, but rather a court was set-up on a stage and the trial was held in public.

It was in 1961, just after video had been invented in 1959. The entire trial was to be recorded with four cameras. Obviously, the idea was to do it for the sake of memory, to remember. The event of the Eichmann trial, his capture by the Israeli Secret Service in Argentina, and David Ben Gurion's announcement that Eichmann, one of the biggest murders of Jewish people was in Israel and would soon be tried, was like a new birth for Israeli society. Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of the State of Israel vowed to make Israel the sole representative of six million martyrs and to teach the world and Israel's youth a lesson. (I won't get into lengthy quotations on this, but you can read about it in a book I wrote with Rony Brauman on the subject). What was the need for the Eichmann trial in Israel in 1961?

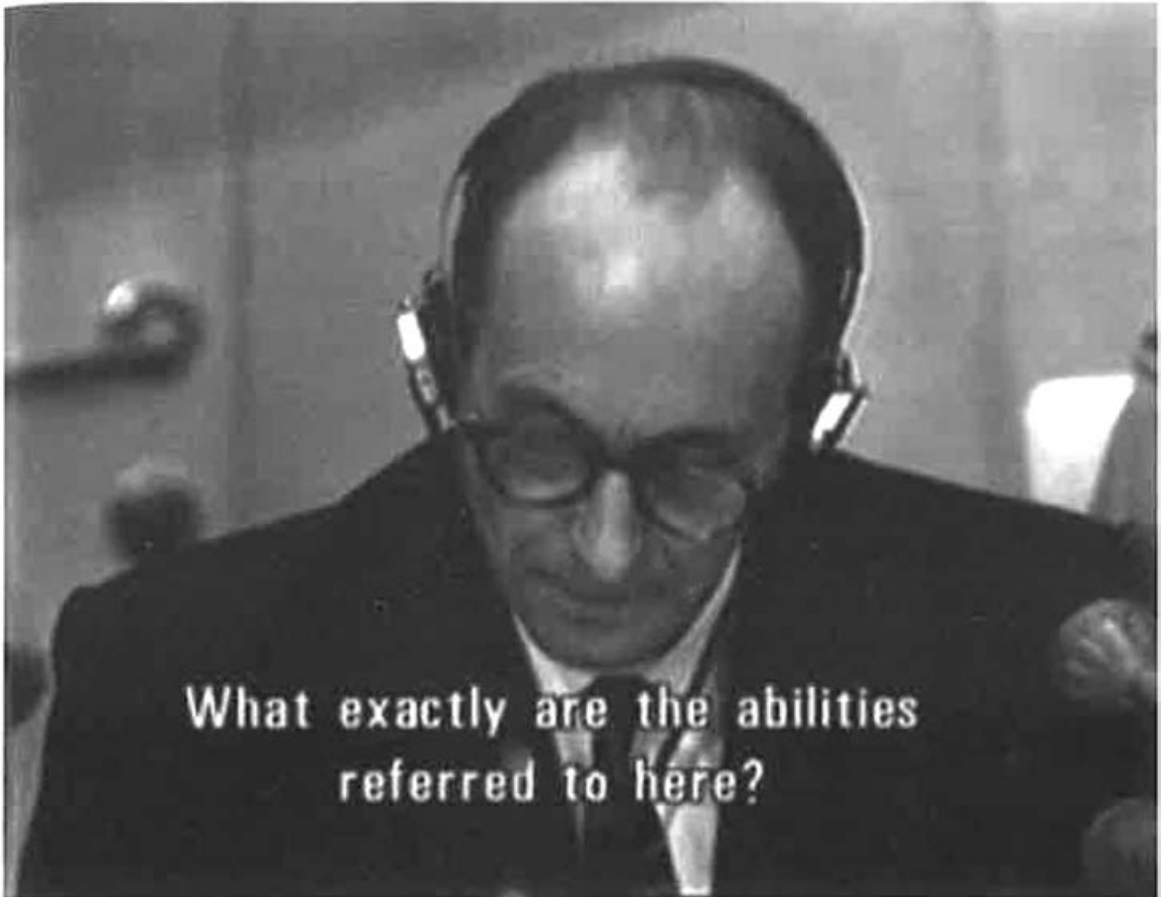
In the fifties, there was a mass immigration of Oriental Jews to Israel. In Israel, they were forced to settle in transit camps or in new towns built in the desert with very poor living conditions.

In turn, there were big demonstrations against Ben Gurion at the end of the fifties. For example, we could have seen demonstrations in Haifa in northern Israel with North African Jews, mainly Moroccans chanting: 'King Mohamed take us back home.' They had suffered major discrimination from the Ashkenazi, or western majority at that time. This was also the time when Israelis did, in fact, change ethnically. These Oriental Jews – who didn't know and, for the most part, didn't have first hand experience of the genocide and persecution of the Jews in Europe – became the majority. In one of his speeches about the Eichmann trial and in reference to the Oriental Jews, Ben Gurion said: 'We have to show them what real suffering means.' However, it was also a time when holocaust survivors from the camps didn't dare to speak of their experiences. We remember the story of Primo Levi, and maybe you are familiar with it – he was not in Israel and also didn't manage to find a publisher. They didn't speak until the Eichmann trial. We know hundreds of stories of people removing their tattooed Auschwitz numbers in Israel. Their story is told in a book by Tom Segev, an Israeli member of the school of New Historians, that is called the *The Seventh Million* and is about the relationship between Israel and the Shoa. We had a name in Israel for the people who came from Europe – we called them 'soaps'. I wasn't alive at the time, but in my school we used the word 'sabon' (soap) to refer to the kids who had big glasses, the good children who were white (who never saw the sun light). There was real discrimination, but Israeli society changed in 1961 when we heard the voices of the survivors for the first time. This was important in the Eichmann trial, in which Eichmann himself played a very secondary part. Most of the journalists who were there, most of the visitors, and the broadcasts on Israeli radio were particularly interested in the first three months of the trial when the survivors spoke. This was totally understandable in the context of the sixties.

As mentioned, the Eichmann trial was fully recorded on video. In the year following the trial, there was some footage that travelled around the world. During the trial itself, there were broadcasts. For example, on German television (and I'm not sure about Austria) there were regular broadcasts following the trial proceedings. It was the same in United States and in France. However, when Eichmann came to speak, the journalists left, the people left and there was no further interest in the recorded footage. Nor was there much interest at the end of the trial in viewing the full-length (approximately 500 hours) archive footage, which contained some unique material.

It can be considered unique because it was the only Nazi criminal trial that was filmed in its entirety. The Nuremberg collection has 12 hours of footage. The Hamburg trials, the Rudolf Hess trial, and the Tokyo trials were all not filmed. The Eichmann trial is indeed the only trial that was filmed in full. In a way, the images of the silent man in the glass booth pleading 'not guilty' became an icon that replaced all other words. This footage just disappeared; it completely vanished for 35 years. We can say that memory replaced history. There was some archive material available, around 60 hours worth, which was a sort of very poor quality summary that was held in the Israeli Archive Institute. This is the reason why we always see the same clips when we see scenes from the Eichmann trial in many holocaust representation films. There is also always a voiceover over the sound track – it is just an illustration.

The film *Itgaber, He Will Overcome* (1993) is a portrait of Yeshayahu Leibowitz and is about disobedience. While making it, I was sitting in a room in the Archive Institute in Jerusalem and discovered that 60 hour selection of Eichmann trial video material. Afterwards, I returned to Jerusalem and talked to Dr Rony Brauman, who was President of Medecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) at the time. I told him: 'I saw some archive video material of the Eichmann trial and when I was working with Professor Leibowitz on the subject of disobedience, he frequently used Eichmann as an example...' Then he said: 'You must read *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Hannah Arendt.' And then I asked: 'What is *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and who is Hannah Arendt?' Because, even today (2000), none of Hannah Arendt's books have had been translated into Hebrew and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was not yet published in Israel. Rony Brauman and I decided to try to make a cinematic adaptation of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. This film mainly focuses on the figure of the perpetrator and we show very few survivors in the film. We followed the trial. We do not follow the idea of the trial in Jerusalem as Attorney General Gideon Hausner presented it: we didn't build a geographical trial – it is not a history of Jewish suffering from the Pharaoh to the Nazis, as he put it. We just tried to build the imaginary trial of a specialist, a term that is taken from Hannah Arendt's title in French *Un spécialiste de la question juive* (an expert in the Jewish question). I prefer the analogical approach and to move the focus from the figure of the victim to the representation of the perpetrator as a way of universalising the approach to political crime. Unfortunately, I don't have time to speak about the Rwanda film, which also centres on the figure of the perpetrator through Thousand Hills, the Rwandan Hutu power radio station that called for genocide.



Eyal Sivan, *Un spécialiste. Portrait d'un criminel moderne* (*The Specialist. Portrait of a Modern Criminal*), 1999.

In conclusion, I do not believe in self-representation of trauma in any collective, social, or political sense. It is important for the traumatised individuals to represent themselves. The monstrous war crimes committed by an ordinary man such as Eichmann should not imply that we are all potential criminals and, thus, we are all guilty. Confusing this potential guilt with actual guilt is to disqualify the possibility of justice. 'If everybody is a criminal, nobody is a criminal', says Arendt. And this is exactly what Eichmann tried to argue in his trial – that everybody is criminal, and that everybody is responsible. This is why the Arendt's work invites us to judge every event as a new and as a singular event – to think about facing the consequences of our own deeds. 'Morally speaking' – says Arendt – 'it is as bad to feel guilty when we did nothing as it is to feel innocent when we are guilty.'

Please allow me to close with the following words from Professor Alfred Grosser book *Crime and Memory*: 'And even if my actions led to little else, my life will have a meaning from the sheer fact that it has been lived.'

Lived according to death. Behind me, the memory of the dead who might have lived if crime had not assassinated them. Mourning only has meaning in the confirmation of values and of life, otherwise why would I be so upset that they went too soon – other than to cry over what I have lost? My memory calls on me to take action to avert further suffering, if only by communicating a little confidence and joy to those who suffer today, to avoid them having no alternative but to resort to violent revolt, which so easily becomes criminal.'

Disappearance and Memory of the War

I will not do a formal reading, but instead go through different artworks that I have developed over the years and, while doing so, discuss my artistic process and how it deals with the theme of memory and the documentary practice. The first project is called *Objects of War* (2000–). With the official end of the civil war – which was not actually just a civil war – that started in 1975 and ended in 1991, the main questions my generation of artists had were: How do we narrate something so dramatic? How do we approach history? How do we recount such events when many issues were left unresolved, such as the fact that the war had not ended with a peace treaty or a true reconciliation, but rather with a sort of amnesia¹ and a self-amnesty law that had been made by those in power? What was our responsibility as artists?² From these questions about the notion of responsibility, how to approach history, and how to deal with the narration of such tragic events came the project *Objects of War*.

Maybe the word amnesia is overused. Although I don't think there is or was a general amnesia in Lebanon, I use it here to say that amnesia was almost institutionalised by the fact that the people who were in power and the perpetrators of crimes during the war amnestied themselves with a law at the end of the war, creating the impossibility of openly discussing what had happened during the war. It produced what people commonly called 'a state of amnesia', but when you talk to people, there is, of course, no 'state of amnesia'.

- 2 The issue of the artist's responsibility is not new. At the end of the wars in Lebanon – the official end, since they haven't really ended – there was no serious attempt from the government or the political class to reflect on what had happened and no public debate for everyone to discuss the possibility of thinking about a shared history and identity together. It became clear that it was among the artist's responsibilities to provide alternative discourses on that matter and to underline the absence of any official discourse or the excess of ones that were politically affiliated to the wars' militias. Having grown up in a certain context in Lebanon, it is very normal that artists coming out of such an experience would reflect upon it.



Lamia Joreige, *Objects of War*, 1999–.

The idea behind *Objects of War* is very simple. It had become quite clear that it was not possible for me to say: there is one history of the war and one discourse or one narrative. That is how the idea of fragments became very important to me, as I found myself torn between the necessity of recounting history and the knowledge that it would have been practically impossible to recount it in its full form. I decided I would use proposed subjective histories and simultaneously underline the idea of those histories having missing elements. I asked several people that I knew and later also strangers to provide me with an object that could be the starting point of a story. The object had to be something personal that they owned – a familiar object that was related to their experience of the civil war. People started bringing me their objects and, from the start, the idea was to show the objects along with the video. So, the main goal was not to make a film, but rather an installation in the space. Some of the objects were quite peculiar – there was something to water the plants, a drawing, a passport, a flower, a teddy bear, a radio. They were all very personal objects.

The object became the **trigger** for the memory and **the** relationship between them is based on the idea of 'performative memory',³ as well as that of language and **of** re-enacting a personal experience **within** the present.

When I displayed the objects in a museum with a **label** indicating **the** owner and origin, **the** latter acted as a **document** and became a **relic**.⁴ So, I started creating this on-going series that became an open archive, a sort of archaeology of the war. The first version of the video for *Objects of War* was edited, but I decided to stop editing from 2003 onwards, so that **every** time I filmed **someone**, it all depended on the time or needs of the individual, giving **every** interview a different timing.⁵ The diversity of the many stories narrated, their accumulation, and their unequal repetition links every personal experience to the collective one, making the idea of a unique truth difficult, if not entirely unattainable.

- ³ The term 'performative memory' can be understood here as the re-enactment of something that has happened in the past and is replayed or re-enacted in the present. It is not the idea of memory that interests me, but the idea of a process that encompasses the losses. The attempts at remembering and the possibility of remembering are always performed in the present through the language. When one remembers or when someone's memory is stimulated by a question, like in the video *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, or triggered by an object, like in the installation *Objects of War*, what is happening in the present is the act of remembering, which is 'performative'. There is nothing exact like a 'factual' souvenir, but the fact of remembering or evoking something in front of a camera that is simultaneously recording something that has happened, and the idea of remembering or forgetting it is a performance of memory in the present.
- ⁴ Although *Objects of War* borrows from documentary practice and could even be considered a document itself, as it presents unedited footage and relics from the war, it also largely deals with fiction. The mere fact that people are filmed, that they are 'playing' – telling stories, perhaps reinventing their lives – implies a type of fiction. Furthermore, the fact that many elements of history are missing and the very process of remembering and forgetting all involves fiction. Since there was no public debate at the end of the war, it became more interesting to deal with subjectivities, with fragments, with what remains and what is visible, while also pointing at what remained invisible and missing, thus leaving room for imagination and fiction.
- ⁵ When I removed the idea of editing from *Objects of War*, it was because it allowed the speaker to go on for a certain length of time, which I think is very important. This time allows the experiences from all of the stories/histories to unfold. I am very interested in real time sequences and the experience of unedited material that allows that unfolding. Simultaneously, I am interested in the idea of 'elliptical' time, which is not a contradiction. One allows the experience to unfold, while the other allows me to convey an idea of time that is not necessarily about progression or about the past, present, and future.



Lamia Joreige, *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, 2003.

The idea of relative truth brings us to a second project that I did while I was working on *Objects of War* that is also related to the ideas of fragments of history, of a multiplicity of discussion on the war, and of performative memory. *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* (2003) is a 54 minutes documentary – although, I don't actually know how to define in terms of genre, as it looks like a straightforward documentary, but is more inspired by artistic practice. Even though it has a beginning and end, it could have also lasted 30 hours if not for the restrictions of format. In fact, it doesn't really have a beginning or an end. Originally, my intention was to do a feature film based on the structure of the film *Rashomon* by Akira Kurosawa from the fifties, which tells the story of a murder as recounted by five different protagonists, each giving his own version of the facts and his own truth. I wanted to make that film happen in Beirut in the middle of the eighties. At that time, I was a film and painting student and I didn't have the means and capacity to do such a big project. A decade later, this project became a short fiction titled *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, which was first released in French and German in 2003. In 2009, I made the website hereandperhapselsewhere.com with the Arabic and English translations.

You can browse through the five protagonists and click on each of the characters: the sniper, the militiaman, the old lady. Set in the middle of a district in Beirut, each of them tells the story of how they killed Wahid Saleh, a man that disappeared. This place is real and fictive at the same time: of course, it refers to what was commonly called the 'Green Line', which was surrounded by a no man's land and divided East and West Beirut during the war. In the fiction of *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, the area is not geographically real, but is based on reality.⁶

To realize this work, I decided to take my camera and go out into the streets without **any preparation**: I **wondered what would have happen** if I went and asked **the same question to all the inhabitants I encountered** in the neighbourhoods around what used to be the Green Line. That meant walking east and west across what used to be a real dividing line, but also a mental division that had lasted for a very long time. I took a map and I created a film that went from the harbour to the suburbs, going east and west, asking the inhabitants one question: 'Do you know of someone who was kidnapped here during the war?' Sometimes people refused to answer and at others, the question triggered either a very strong testimony or a digression from the question of the disappearance to other issues of the civil war and the Lebanese wars at large. To do that cartography, that mapping of the city, I used archives of former checkpoints and I brought photographs from daily newspapers. The city had several checkpoints and some of them were also points of passage. At these checkpoints, militiamen or various armed forces often used to ask for people's papers and this is where many of the kidnappings occurred during the war.

The reason why I asked this question about the kidnapped is that there were 17.000 people who disappeared or were kidnapped during the war and no one knows the circumstances surrounding it or what happened to their bodies. Among the kidnapped, was my uncle, my mother's brother, who was taken in 1985 and never returned. This personal family drama raised the question of the collective memory and the collective history.

⁶ In *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, the names of the characters and the location are fictitious but informed by **real lives**, by maps and **photographs** of the city, by accounts of snipers and families of **disappeared persons**. **When filming** a city in general, even if the scenes can be **imagined**, I am recording a present, making a *de facto* document, as it is a diagnosis of the city **at a specific moment** in its history.

This is something that happens often in my work – the personal and the collective memory and history meet, feed off, and confront each other.⁷ I did not prepare and only had the help of a sound assistant when I asked people the question. They looked at the photograph to locate the former checkpoint with me. The work's title refers to Jean-Luc Godard's film *Ici et ailleurs*, which has influenced many people. Obviously, the method and the practice here are different, but I sometimes like to steal titles or deviate from them to create my own. There is a very simple explanation for this title: the Green Line divided people and is located here, but it could just as well be elsewhere – it could be east and west, it could be here and there – but these are the stories of the disappeared, stories that were shared around the world in many other countries that were confronted with similar issues. When working in and on a specific context, the idea that the testimonies and statements expressing the human experience will attain a universal dimension is always on my mind. These questions of relative truth, loss, and disappearance are also at the heart of the film *A Journey* (2006), but in a more personal way this time. *A Journey* is a complex work that I realized, as I often do, by collecting materials, such as notes or photos or videos, and later working them into a 'montage' to construct the narrative. In 1999, I started filming my grandmother for *Objects of War* and later I accumulated different material. It was only in 2005 that I started to see the possibility of making a film that could start with the character of my grandmother Rose, who was born in Palestine in 1910, moved to Lebanon in 1930, and whose family also moved to Lebanon in 1948 after their expulsion from Jaffa when Israel was created. I'm not very interested in linear narratives; in all of my projects I try to create something with a non-linear temporality, or non-linear narrative. So, the film is constructed using found footage from Super 8 films, contemporary videos I filmed of my grandmother and mother, as well as photographs acquired from different collections. It tries to construct a narrative that conveys the notion of elliptical time. At the heart of the film, there is still the question of the disappearance of my uncle, but here I deal with it in a much more personal way than in *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*.

⁷ The point of departure of *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* is precisely the knowledge that there were 17.000 people kidnapped, as well as an interest in what would have happened if I went out into the streets and asked this question. What would emerge?



Lamia Joreige, *A Journey*, 2006.

In *A Journey*, the character of my grandmother both allowed me to create a link and to question the complex relationship between the history of the Palestinian and Lebanese people from the catastrophe of 1948 onwards. It also allowed me to reflect upon our present situation and how it relates to the failed promises of peace and modernity that were made for our region many decades ago. In this film, I look back from what seems to be a hopeless present to a moment in our past when things still looked possible. Our present did actually inherit the fragmentation of the entire region and society, and the elliptical narrative of this film reflects this fragmentation. In *A Journey*, my grandmother encounters many losses: first her homeland Palestine, then her son who was kidnapped during the Lebanese war and was never returned and, at the end, her death is implied without being shown, as her contact with reality becomes very fragile. In *A Journey* there are no answers to the question of identity, no answers to the disappearance of my uncle, and finally, as my grandmother's illness grows and she becomes frail, she almost totally loses her sense of reality. The film follows her character and, in parallel, my own quest for an identity. It also depicts a relationship to a territory that is now inaccessible and to the idea of Palestine as a place that created a community among Arabs and has led to much fantasy, but at the same time also led to so many transformations in our region.



Lamia Joreige, *Replay*, 2002.

Thus, it is the idea of Palestine as a place that is unreachable and inaccessible, something that is real and fictive at the same time. The film ends at the border of Lebanon and Israel/Palestine. As you may know, we are still officially at war with Israel; therefore, it is a border that we cannot cross, making it very important to end the film there.

It should be noted that this complex relationship is brought up in the film precisely because it is rare in Lebanon to deal with the unresolved issue of relations between the Palestinians and Lebanese. This is because, as much as all of the Arab countries have agreed share in Palestine's cause, the Palestinian refugees that have been in Lebanon since 1948 have created a massive demographic transformation and the creation of many factions in Lebanon, which are linked to the beginning of the civil war in 1975. The fighting among different Lebanese factions began with the issue of the Palestinians and their fate has been part of a strong division within Lebanese society. As such, this question is still very delicate and controversial today.

Now I'll go back in time to a work called *Replay* (2002). In *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere*, as well as in *A Journey*, I worked with archives using different methods. The project *Objects of War* could be considered an open archive. In *Replay*, however, some of the images were found in a book titled *The War in Lebanon. Images and Chronology*, which was poorly printed in the early days of the war. When I discovered it, I had just started working as an artist and found myself haunted by those images. In one of them, you can see a man that was shot while being photographed or who was photographed while being shot; in another, there is a barefoot woman and you don't know whether she's screaming or escaping or if she is running towards us, calling for help. I did not know what to do with those images for many years. Then, one day I realised that I had been linking them to the banality of everyday life. I had been wondering why, seeing a man fall in the street, I imagined that he was actually dying; why did I project so much violence onto the image of a man that was simply falling down? I realized that it was because, for me, the image of the man falling was an image/fragment of something that had already happened and had been replayed and re-enacted many times in other geographies.

I imagine that the idea that this man had died in an undefined past, that the man who was falling in front of me here had already fallen before in another time, was likely unconsciously influenced by Chris Marker's film *La Jetée* and by its expression of a non-linear time, where the past, the present, and the future do not exist or, rather, they coexist. The relationship to memory here also uses performativity, but in a different way.

I asked two performers to re-enact the moment that I had pictured happening before the photographer took those pictures, thus, an imagined moment. I asked a man to fall down and this one sequence of him falling is looped. Likewise, I asked a woman to run towards the camera as if she were constantly escaping and constantly trying to reach us. The use of repetition creates a feeling of melancholy because their actions are vain, but it also simultaneously conveys this idea of the re-enactment of something imagined. Three synchronized screens of equal size make up the installation that presents this work. Each sequence lasts four minutes. The left and right screens are in black and white until the end of the loop, when they become coloured, referring to this idea of archives, as if these archives were brought back to life. I used the sea in the middle, partly because I think Beirut is defined by the horizon of the sea, but mainly because the concept of *Replay* is based on this idea of a 'rupture of time'.



Lamia Joreige, *Nights and Days*, 2007.

The sea is also the place of uninterrupted rupture, of uninterrupted movement, and the installation is based on this idea of the instant of rupture, of the instant of violence onto which one can project something. It is based on an imagined instant onto which I projected a story.

When I finished *A Journey*, the film dedicated to my grandmother, in June 2006, I thought that it would be my last work dealing with the Lebanese wars. Unfortunately, in July 2006, another war broke out: after Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers, the Israeli army attacked Lebanon and the siege lasted 33 days. I didn't want to do a film because I was very shocked at the time and I don't use a reporter approach in my work; instead, my method deals more with events that have happened in the past, with a distance – a critical distance. I didn't know what to do with myself during this war apart from filming from my balcony and filming the empty streets of Beirut, cooking for friends, and trying to overcome the fear and the state of waiting and anticipation at that moment.

The first questions that came to me regarding my practice were: how can I work in the immediacy of the event without having a critical distance?

How can I testify on the horror while it is happening? How can I resist the pressure of fulfilling the requests of so many people calling us from outside Lebanon and asking for images and recordings of the war? There were many films that were produced on the spot and were not necessarily of any artistic value, but instead responded to an outcry. *Nights and Days* (2007) considers the relationship between the time when a dramatic event occurs and the production of documents on that event – the relationship between the overwhelming experience of war and the knowledge of the war. It asks whether it is possible to represent it, to understand the war as we experience it.

When I mentioned filming from my balcony or capturing the empty streets of Beirut, it was because at the beginning of 2006 we all saw ourselves as potential targets, we all thought that we were in danger and, of course, it was very scary because they were bombing bridges and homes. However, after ten days, it became clear that the targets were the southern suburbs and the south of Lebanon, where the majority of people supported or lived under the control of Hezbollah. It became clear that, although we were hearing the bombs and it was terrible to know that these bombs were killing people who were only a few kilometres away, we were not direct targets. I think that how you position yourself is also very important in documentary practice. One cannot claim to have the position of the victim if one is not the victim, but one can still reflect on the events. Here we go back to the position of Godard when he did *Ici et ailleurs*. I wanted to reflect on this war but, at the same time, I knew it was not the same as if I had lived in the south. I mention this point because it informed the very structure of the film, which is divided equally in two parts. The first part is a personal account with a voiceover, which is deliberately used because it's my own experience. In the second part, the voiceover (my voice) **withdraws**, leaving room for the sound that **accompanies the devastated landscape of the south**, as if there were no longer any speech that could testify for this devastated land.

Reflections on Palestinian Militant Cinema

'It's now mid 1976... The airport is closed. We have 15.000 metres of coloured **negatives and reversal films. There is nowhere in Beirut where we can develop and print these films. Some of the films have been locked up in the canisters since they were shot three months ago. They will definitely be destroyed if they're not developed as soon as possible.**'¹

In 1976, while the civil war was raging across Lebanon, a group of Palestinian and Arab militant filmmakers called the Palestine Cinema Institute had been agonising for months over what to do with the thousands of metres of undeveloped film they had shot during the events of the civil war, focusing particularly on the Tel El Zaatar massacre. Intending to make a film, they had been desperately searching for the means to keep the celluloid material from disintegrating, as well as the finances and a location to develop the negatives. Finally, they were put in touch with the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI). The PCI agreed to co-produce the film and offered to use its developing labs, which were run by Unitelefilm in Rome. However, one question remained: how would they get the large cans with 15.000 metres of film out of Lebanon and into Italy.

Mustafa Abu Ali, one of the filmmakers, embarked on an uncertain journey, bringing all of the negatives with him. He began his journey by avoiding the several checkpoints between Beirut and Sidon Port, continued by nearly **being caught by the Israeli naval patrol while illegally aboard a Cypriot ship, followed that with a one week delay in Larnaca, and then ended it with Italian customs police confiscating the negatives at the Rome airport.** Meanwhile, Mustafa had a fake passport and the negatives had no official **supporting documents. It was only after the PCI's intervention that the films were released and finally arrived at Unitelefilm labs.**

Mustafa Abu Ali, *Accounts from the Cinematic Experience During the Lebanese War (1975-1976)*, in 'Soura Filistiniyah', n. 1, 1978. Translated by Reem Shilleh from Arabic.

The negatives were developed and the film *Tel El Zaatar*² was made out of the rushes. The main questions here are: who were those filmmakers? How did this group come to exist? Is that related to a sort of history?

By the end of 1967, three young filmmakers had crossed paths in Amman, Jordan. They were Mustafa Abu Ali, Hani Joharieh, and Sulafa Jadallah. Mustafa and Hani both went to the London Film School from 1964-67. The London Film School was known for drawing inspiration from Russian film schools, social realism, and Italian neorealism. The United Kingdom was coming out of the post-war depression and the atmosphere in London was changing: it was the time of the Beatles and there were many American intellectuals and students around, mainly avoiding the draft and being sent to the war in Vietnam. Many independent cinemas held late night and all night screenings of anything from the classics to more contemporary cinematic forms like the French *nouvelle vague*. It was a time when student movements were growing stronger and began to organise in order to assert political and social change. During the Six Day War in 1967, Abu Ali was in London. Devastated by the distance from Palestine and an event that would become the crux of modern Arab history, he followed the news about how Israel had defeated the four Arab armies (Syrian, Egyptian, Jordanian, and Iraqi) and occupied the remaining Palestine.

Meanwhile, Joharieh had finished his studies in London and returned to Jordan to work in (state-run) television. He stood on the eastern bank of the River Jordan amidst the masses of bodies, who were weighed down with as many of their possessions as they could carry. Through the viewfinder of his camera, he recorded the moment in which the Palestinians became refugees. He filmed the bodies crossing the destroyed Allenby Bridge into Jordan in order to escape the war.

Sulafa Jadallah, originally from Nablus, graduated from cinematography studies at the High Cinema Institute in Cairo in 1964, becoming the first female Arab cinematographer. At the time, the Palestinian student union in Cairo was becoming a hotbed of political activity and had sown the seeds for future political revolutionary movements. Jadallah was active within the union and joined Al Fatah, the largest of these organisations, to photograph activist fighters before they headed out to battle. These images were then to be used in posters commemorating these fighters if they were martyred.

² For a very long time, the only copy of the film was preserved at AAMOD (Audiovisual Archive of the Democratic and Labour Movement) with an Italian voice over.



Hani Joharieh e Sulafa Jadallah (on the right side) in the Jordan Valley, Unknown photographer.



Sulafa Jadallah e Mustafa Abu Ali in proximity of Al Karameh Village, Unknown photographer.

Later, in 1967, Khalil Wazir, a Palestinian leader and one of the founders of Al Fatah, asked her to establish a photography unit in Amman. The unit office was called 'the Kitchen', simply because the lab was set up in the kitchen of an apartment that was a secret operations office. In the Kitchen, photographs were developed alongside where bombs were being made and military operations were planned. Hani and Mustafa joined the unit, which would later develop into the Palestine Film Unit (PFU).

Between 1965 and 1967, revolutionary tensions were rising among secret Palestinian guerrilla organisations. Military operations were being struck down in the occupied territories and driven out of Jordan. In 1968, Israel invaded the Jordanian territory near the border and was on its way to destroy the Palestinian military training camps. On March 21, they reached the village of Karameh, where they were met with resistance from Palestinian guerrillas. After hours of fighting, a number of Israeli soldiers were killed and tanks were destroyed: the Israeli army was forced to withdraw.

The sense of defeat that had settled over the Arab world after the Six Day War had stripped the Arab people of any hope of ending Zionist colonialism in Palestine – Israel seemed like an invincible super power. But now in Karameh, a small group of guerrilla fighters had made a crack in this illusion. A crack that brought back hope. Palestinians resurfaced in the global media, becoming visible to the outside world again. Secret guerrilla groups stepped out of shadows and began to organise themselves in a revolutionary movement for the liberation of Palestine. The Palestinian revolution had officially been lunched and recognised not only by the Arabs, but also by the whole world. Their determination to take the struggle into their own hands came as a result of the desire to reclaim political self-representation and build a national narrative that included all of the dispersed Palestinian people. Jadallah, Abu Ali, and Joharieh understood very well that image production was essential to shaping that self-representation: they formed the PFU, which acted as the filmmaking arm of Al Fatah. They documented popular events, demonstrations, militant training camps, the daily life of a revolution. They also worked as fixers and took part in productions by international crews that came to Jordan to produce films and newsreels about the Palestinian revolution.

The necessity to create the image of the new Palestinian was a direct result of nearly two decades of absence. Since 1948 and the day of the Nakba (or catastrophe), Israel had been creating propaganda and other strategies for the systematic erasure of the Palestinians' existence in Palestine and around the world.

The only **visual** representation of the **Palestinian dispossession** and **people** was made **through** the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)**. The agency generated a body of **images, both photographs and films, to document a people** in distress. Entirely depoliticised, these images became iconic of the Palestinians' suffering, **presenting** time and again the **Palestinian as a victim, defeated and hopeless**. **But there was a rupture after the victory of Karameh in 1968. It was the beginning of the revolution. Militancy surfaced and infiltrated the refugee camps all over Jordan. The people were coming out of the shadows of invisibility. They went and stood in front of the camera.**

'For a people who had disappeared in 1948, images were not only a representation, but a way of existing; for people who suffered from invisibility, the camera was their weapon to come back.'³

Following the events of May 1968, Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin formed the Dziga Vertov Group in Paris. They travelled to Jordan between 1969 and 1970 to work on a film about the Palestinian revolution. The film was to be a representation of their radical view of what cinema's role should be in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism. Their intentions were **to produce a film that would put into practice the theory of images as weapons, as a means of changing the world: another tool of revolutionary political work. Mustafa Abu Ali and Hani Joharieh joined Godard and Gorin during production. They discussed how to find and develop new cinema aesthetics and language to act as part of a revolution.**

Khadija Habbashneh, head archivist at the Palestine Film Institute, filmmaker, and wife of Mustafa Abu Ali, remembers that period: **'Mustafa and Hani dropped all of their work and went around with Godard, constantly talking about the ideal way to show the Palestinian question. Once, when Godard was over for dinner, he was looking at our small library and he found some books about himself. He took them out and threw them in the garbage and said, "That was all before. Now I am a different person.'**⁴

³ Elias Sanbar. Interview by Mohanad Yaqubi. Paris, December 2010.

Khadija Habashneh. Interview by Mohanad Yaqubi. Ramallah, February 2011.

In 1970, Godard and Gorin went to the USA, where they travelled to a number of cities to raise money and interest for the film, which had been tentatively titled *Until Victory or Methods of Thinking and Methods of Work in the Palestinian Revolution*. They met with journalists and gave lectures in universities. They discussed the Palestinian revolution and the development of a media discourse in America that would give relevance to the various struggles around the world. They raised questions on the relationship between images and ideology. Ralph Thanhauser documented Godard and Gorin's trip and compiled the material to produce the 1970 film *Godard in America*.

Godard: The people's army can only live and carry on if there is a creative element of the people inside the army. The people's army can only live and carry on if there is an effort to develop the revolutionary capacity of the people, which means political work, which means the creation of the organisation of popular militia. If it's a people's war, it means an arms struggle plus political work and that equals a long war.

Gorin: This is very important because they are always telling the children 'we will not reach the sea, and maybe you won't either, but your son will, so you are the generation of victory', so all this is the process of fighting between the old and the new.'

Godard: For a revolution in the Arab world, there is the Palestinian face and the Arab heart. It's because of how the Palestinian face is thinking and acting that the Arab heart will beat in a different way and not in the old traditional way. And that way is to present the Palestinian revolution as an advanced element of the whole Arab world.

Gorin: The concrete situation is that those people are in refuge camps in countries like Lebanon and Jordan. There are Palestinians all over the Arab world.⁵

Godard wasn't the only one interested in the Palestinian revolution and its image production – many filmmakers were. This relationship to cinema really began taking shape with the events that occurred in France in May 1968.

⁵ Ralph Thanhauser, *Godard in America*, 1970, USA.



Jean-Pierre **Gorn** and Jean-Luc **Godard** (Dziga Vertov Group) on set of the film *Jusqu'à la victoire* in a Palestinian refugee camp, Jordan 1970.

Many political groups were mobilising students and workers. They organised events to educate, raise awareness, and engage them in dismantling oppressive capitalist structures and encourage them to become active participants in the shaping of their rights. May 1968 introduced a new perspective on political life in France, but it also led to the development of a new positioning of cinema in the capitalist world.

While researching the influence of the changing international scene of 1968 on the newly formed film group of the Palestinian revolution, the name of Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan came up as one of the first filmmakers in France to make a film about the Palestinian revolution.

'In 1967 and 1968, our group – the Gauche Proletarienne – reinvented the mass mobilisations and forms of street activism that had almost been forgotten with the evolution of the communist party in France, which was a very bureaucratically pro-Russian party. I think, as intellectuals and Maoists, we were innovative, organising mass demonstrations with all the drawings, singing, and political speeches in the subway, but of course, these were all the traditions of the communist movement that had almost been forgotten.

We were concentrated around the issue of the Vietnam War and we were very active about that, which had partly led up to what happened in 1968. I was also very drawn in by the Palestinian issue. I didn't try to make a big film, but just wanted to have a propaganda film, an intelligent one and, in fact, that is how it worked out. At that time, support for the Palestinian struggle was growing, so there were many activist committees that needed such a film. I've been told it was not only in France, but also in Germany, so it served as very good support for all of these committees around the world. I think the film has been viewed by thousands and thousands of people. The whole thing was just shots of photographs that were hung on the wall. That was the whole film and we didn't have an archive. Mahmud Hamshari⁶ and Eiz Eldien Qalaq⁷ tried to find us as many photos as they could from Palestine, then we chose from them, put them on the wall, and that was it. At the end, we used a real archive of Vietnam, which I think I took from Joris Ivans⁸.⁹

The film was called *Palestine Will Win* and it got lost – even De Sardan himself hasn't seen the film since 1972. After the victory in Al Karamah, many Palestinians joined the militant factions of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). The PLO became the representative of the Palestinian people and of their struggle by uniting the different political movements under its umbrella (Al Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – PFLP, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine – DFLP). It successfully mobilised international support for the revolution, which was financed by a number of friendly countries and regimes. In turn, this meant that a whole spectrum of ideological practices was running through the PLO and the revolution. In Al Fatah alone, there were groups who affiliated themselves with the Maoist ideology, others with Arab nationalism, some with the formal Soviet ideology – the so-called Moscow line – and those who associated with the right wing of the Islamic Brotherhood.

Al Fatah's representative in France who was assassinated by the Mossad after the Munich operation.

⁷ Head of the Palestinian student union in France between 1968-1970. He became the representative of Al Fatah in France after the assassination of Hamshari and he was assassinated in 1978 by an unknown.

⁸ Dutch documentary filmmaker and communist.

⁹ Extract from Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan.

The members of the PFU stood more on the side of Arab Nationalism and the Maoist ideology, which resonated in the aesthetics of the images and filmic language they produced between 1968 and 1970.

'For us as Maoists, the slogan that we used a lot in those times (every revolutionary movement must have a revolutionary ideology behind it) was that we had to stage the image of the people's struggle. Many times, we would ask fighters to march and cultivate the land with their guns on their backs.'¹⁰ PFU film production followed the important stages of the Palestinian revolution, committing itself to current events. The first film made by the unit was *No to the Peace Plan*, which was a commentary of the Rogers Plan and included shots of demonstrations against it. United States Secretary of State William P. Rogers proposed a plan to achieve an end to belligerence in the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, it didn't recognise the rights of the Palestinian people, so the PLO organised mass rallies in a number of Arab countries to demonstrate against the plan as a means of putting pressure on the Arab governments to refuse it. The success of the Palestinian revolution came with its downsides. Large numbers of Palestinians and Arabs joined and formed militias. The capacity to take in, organise, educate, and train these masses was insufficient. The formal leadership of the PLO was unable to control the situation at the time and this created a tension between the Jordanian monarchy and the Palestinian revolutionary movement. Jordanians could not afford the risk of having the kingdom hijacked and controlled by Palestinians. Around the end of 1969, Sulafa Jadallah was filming militants training in a military camp when she was mistakenly shot in the head by an untrained fighter who had recently joined the PFU.¹¹ She was permanently paralysed. Losing a member, Joharieh and Abu Ali's determination only grew as they continued to film the revolution and prepared themselves for what was yet to come.

The decision had been made to put an end to the revolutions and the task fell to King Hussein of Jordan. Alarmed by the growing power of the Palestinian militia in his kingdom and backed with the full support of the United States, in September 1970 he ordered his troops to seize the Palestinian refugee camps and kill whoever tried to resist. This attack soon became known as the Black September.

¹⁰ Elias Sanbar. Interview by Mohanad Yaqubi. Paris, December 2010.

¹¹ Abu Tharif. Interview by Mohanad Yaqubi. Ramallah, October 2013.

The Palestinian fighters stood their ground, viciously defending the camps against the Jordanian army. Finally, after two weeks of continuous shelling in Amman and other cities in Jordan, Yasser Arafat managed to escape Amman and join the Arab leaders in Cairo. There, the Arab League brokered a cease-fire and the Palestinian troops and militia were to withdraw from camps in Syria and the south of Lebanon. Arafat showed the Arab leaders three reels and images made by Joharieh and Abu Ali.

Mustafa Abu Ali left Lebanon and edited the PFU's second film *With Soul With Blood*, using the rushes Joharieh and he had shot in Jordan. The film was completed in 1972 and was screened in the Damascus Film Festival, where it won a prize for the best documentary film. Hani Joharieh was unable to join the PFU or the revolution in Lebanon – his house had burnt down along with his travel documents. Jordanian intelligence refused to issue him new papers, so he was forced to stay in Amman. He opened Studio Heba, a photography studio, and photographed weddings and birthday parties. Abu Ali re-built the unit. He organised for a number of young women and men to travel to Germany and the USSR to attend film courses. Most of them returned by 1972 and shortly thereafter the unit increased its output: they produced more than twelve films in 1973 alone. Beirut was so radically different from Amman. It was culturally and politically diverse and, most importantly, it offered the potential for the intellectual and institutional growth of the revolution. The PLO started to change from a militant liberation organisation into an institution with a complex structure, adopting the reality and difficulties of acting in a country like Lebanon, with its own governmental institution. This had a direct effect on the PFU – they changed their name to the Palestine Cinema Institution (PCI) and became part of the Unified Media (which had seven other departments), meaning less room for experimentation in films and more tasks to fulfil as the cinema institute of the Palestinian People. Aside from the PCI, a number of other film departments were operating within the different Palestinian organisations. These were the PFLP Central Media Committee; DFLP's Central Films; Cultural Media Unit of the Arab Liberation Front; and Samed, established by the PLO. The general atmosphere was very vibrant and attracted many Arab and international filmmakers. Two films that stand out as key examples are *L'Olivier* by the Groupe Cinema Vincennes and *Red Army/PFLP Declaration of World War* by Masao Adachi and Kôji Wakamatsu. The seeds of failure and conflict were embedded in the Cairo Agreement even before the revolution moved to Lebanon.

The problem with the agreement was that the Arab League did not take into consideration Lebanon's very sensitive socio-political structure and the sectarianism that had them constantly on the verge of conflict.

With time, Palestinian movements began to play a role in the political fabric of Lebanon. Involvement was intrinsic to their presence in Lebanon and the moment arrived when they had to choose a side after the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1975. Waves of ethnic cleansing washed over Lebanon and the Palestinians were not spared. The right wing Phalangists began exterminating anyone who wasn't Christian in East Beirut, including the Palestinians.

At the end of 1975, Hani Joharieh managed to join his comrade Mustafa Abu Ali in Beirut again after five years of being unable to leave Jordan. Just like before, he still believed that the revolution was at the frontlines and that the camera should be with the fighters. He was killed five months later in April 1976 while filming another episode of the civil war near a village called Ein Tora. In tribute to Hani Joharieh, Mustafa Abu Ali made one of his best films *Palestine In the Eye*. The film narrates the history of the PFU, covering the key events of the unit and the development of its filmic style. It depicts how the Palestinian cinema grew confident alongside the revolution, considering its history, and reflecting upon it.

'What do I do now?... Off to France... Two weeks later, the films were taken to Unicite, a lab in Paris, to be developed with the help of Elioni Sitti and Unitelefilm in Rome. However, after being developed, the films stayed with Unitelefilm for three months instead of being returned to Rome right away to begin working on the film *Tel al-Zaatar*. It was for silly reasons, not even worth mentioning here. Some of the material was lost during that time. After great efforts and a lot of work in cooperation with Unitelefilm in Rome, *Tel al-Zaatar* came out. This film was a true practical test for the meaning of solidarity among progressive powers. I can proudly say: we passed this test despite the serious difficulties we suffered in the process. After the film *Tel al-Zaatar* we were left with 10.000 metres of colour film that we didn't use, in addition to the black and white films. We plan to make a film about the historical, social, and political dimensions of the Lebanese War that will put Lebanon back on the map when it comes to participation in the Arab world, the Middle East, and its on-going conflict.'¹²

¹² Mustafa Abu Ali, *Accounts from the Cinematic Experience During the Lebanese War (1975-1976)*, cit.

Infiltrators

In 2006, I started taking photos of the checkpoints to document how Palestinians suffer to cross these few meters to reach their houses, schools, and to continue with their daily lives. These checkpoints separate the Palestinians from each other, since they are sometimes located between cities and villages, forcing Palestinians to spend around six hours or so waiting to cover a distance of 5.000 meters.

These checkpoints made me feel angry and humiliated and provoked me to do something against it. Thus, I started taking photos to understand how the checkpoints function and I learned that there are more than 600 checkpoints in the West Bank. I came up with the idea for my project when I decided to visit my sister in the city of Nablus, where you have to cross a major checkpoint with hundreds of lines of miserable children, women and elders.

Accordingly, while I was waiting in line, my sister called me and said: 'Where are you? The food is getting cold, when you are coming?' 'I'm at the checkpoint', I answered. This phone call motivated me to give my exhibition the title *At the Checkpoint*. When I went back home, I started choosing the pictures I intended to show and decided to hang them on the razor wires at the checkpoints where the Israeli soldiers would see them. I chose a date for the exhibition and I invited human rights activists and institutions, Israeli institutions that fight against the checkpoints, journalists and diplomats who live in Palestine. I printed the photos that I previously took and, together with the people who came to support me, hung 41 pictures by hand. Sixty people attended this exhibition to support me and the project, as well as the thousands of Palestinians who were obligated to cross at the checkpoint. Two Israeli soldiers came and started looking at the photos: they were happy to see themselves in them. It was shocking, since I was sure they would have hated them. Contrastingly, the Palestinians were anxious to hurry things along, so they did not waste time by paying a lot of attention to the exhibition. The soldiers tried to remove the pictures, but the presence of journalists, politicians, and some Israeli activists made that mission hard for them and made them hesitate to order for their removal.



Khaled Jarrar, *At the Checkpoint*, Howarra and Qalandia checkpoint, 2007. Photo: Rula Halawani

As for the soldiers, at that time they couldn't arrest or shoot me because I was never alone. I used to go there with a group of journalists and I also tried to keep my distance from the soldiers to avoid anything happening. A clash between the soldiers and me was not my intention at all. I focused more on the movement, I was trying to show the checkpoint as an obstacle.

State of Palestine Stamp

In one of my new artworks, I made a stamp for the State of Palestine. Since we are not allowed to stamp any passport from Palestine according to the Oslo Accords of 1993, I started stamping the passports of people who visited Palestine with a rounded stamp that I designed with the sentence 'State of Palestine' written in Arabic and English. I placed a jasmine flower and a bird in the middle to reflect the high and positive spirits, as well as the hospitality of the Palestinian people. As for the bird, in my research I learned that there was a Palestinian bird (the Palestine sunbird) that Israel was trying to rename in order to use it as its national bird, so I decided to use it in my design.



Khaled Jarrar, *State of Palestine*, 2012.

After designing of my stamp, I started asking a lot of people about why we were not allowed to stamp passports. I asked many lawyers whether or not it was legal to do so, as I did not want to put my work on a wall this time, but on official documents. Eventually, I found out that it was entirely illegal because that stamp did not belong to an official State. However, I believe that Palestine is an official State and therefore I wanted to make my State official by stamping its name on passports. Consequently, I started to approach people in the city of Ramallah at the stop for buses coming from Jerusalem and saying: 'Hello, my name is Khaled. I made this stamp and I would like to stamp it on your passport' and then explaining to them how risky it would be. For them, what I was doing was as shocking as it was essential for me to do: I needed to know how this project would turn out. Some people agreed to take this risk with me and I started stamping their passports and taking their personal contacts in order to follow up their stories in relation to the stamp. Eddie, from South Africa, was the second person whose passport I stamped and the first to try to travel out of Lod airport in Tel Aviv. When an Israeli soldier saw the stamp on his passport, he called his colleague over and neither of them understood what the stamp stood for,

so they asked Eddie: 'Where did you get this from?' He said: 'From Palestine.' The soldier answered him: 'This is the first time I've heard of the Palestinians producing such a stamp.' So, at the beginning, the Israelis themselves thought it was official, even if they didn't know exactly where it came from. The stamp somehow became famous – more than 40 passports were stamped and people started sending me emails about how Israeli soldiers had stopped them for interrogation for three or four hours at Lod airport. Some of them told me that they were strip searched just as a punishment for having their passport stamped. Putting this stamp on Palestinian passports did not make it official, but it provoked the Israelis and made them treat Palestinian even more aggressively. One time I was invited to a museum in Rome to exhibit my works apart from the stamp. There, I met a man from the north of Italy, who – as I had been told by the curator of the exhibition – had been waiting for me for more than five hours. When I finally met him, I realised that he didn't speak one word of English and he just wanted me to stamp his passport. So I did and it was my first stamp in Rome. Then I requested that somebody ask him where he was from and he eventually explained that he had to go back home because he had to work that day. Thus, he crossed 800 kilometres just to have his passport stamped and that really touched and motivated me to go on with my project.

In 2012, I was invited to the Berlin Biennale and I took the opportunity to keep on stamping passports there at the Checkpoint Charlie and also in many other cities such as Rome, Brescia, Paris, and Norway. Moreover, I decided to develop my project further, aiming to go beyond the fake stamp stage and to create something more real. I applied at the German post office, where it is possible to get an official postage stamp that can be used to send letters and postcards all over the world. For the design of the postage stamp, my model was the old Palestinian currency used during the British Mandate from 1917 to 1947. These postage stamps became official and started being produced by the German post offices and used by people in their mailings. I saw my postage stamps in Germany, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and more. Twenty-nine thousand stamps were printed and all of them were sold. I also applied at the post offices in Brussels, Norway, and the Czech Republic. My project was refused in France, Canada, and Spain.

In total, I stamped 700 passports, 23 of them were Israeli passports. During this period, I stamped an Israeli passport for Alison,



Khaled Jarrar, *State of Palestine*, 2012.

a girl I knew in Ramallah who had American and Israeli passports, since she grew up in the States and then moved to Palestine, obtaining an Israeli passport at the age of 19. I stamped her American passport and two weeks later she came back again and said 'Khaled, I would like you to stamp my Israeli passport.' At the time, I didn't know she had an Israeli passport and told her: 'I think this would be a very bad idea, I'm not sure, it's too risky'; however, Alison insisted upon having the stamp on her passport. After some time, she travelled to the States to visit her parents and when she returned, the Israeli soldier at the airport asked her: 'What is this?' She answered: 'The State of Palestine stamp.' 'You know, the State of Palestine does not exist', he said to her and she responded: 'The State of Palestine existed before the State of Israel.' The soldier reported the conversation to his supervisor, who came and ordered for Alison to be put in isolation for one hour. After that, they started interrogating her: 'Where did you get this stamp? Who gave you the stamp? Who is this guy? How tall is he? What does he look like?' They asked about

everything. As a result, they took her Israeli passport and cancelled it without even listening to her motivation for having the stamp.

The stamp gave me a lot of trouble. The Jordanians stopped me twice because they found the stamp in my luggage. They interrogated me, took photos, confiscated my passport and asked me what I was doing, who had given the stamp to me, and why was I carrying it. I tried to explain that the stamp was my way of talking about our right to freedom and I showed them photos and videos of the exhibition I had done. I was also stopped by another Jordanian police officer who saw the stamp and asked me about it. I told him: 'It's my artwork, I'm an artist.' He said: 'Well, I've seen this stamp, I've seen it before.' 'Maybe in the newspapers or TV or something', I answered. He said: 'No, no, I saw it on passports, did you stamp those passports?' I responded: 'Yes, I did.' I didn't really want to tell the whole truth about it, but I found out that this officer had stopped three British people – two women and one man – for four hours to interrogate them about the stamp, asking who had made it, where exactly the bus station was, what I looked like, how tall I was, and what the colour of my skin was.

The Israeli Intelligence at Allenby Bridge also stopped me once in 2011. I was coming back from Paris, where I had had an exhibition. The Israeli Intelligence interrogated me in a deceptive way. They shook hands with me in a friendly manner and said: 'Oh Khaled, how are you? Would you like some water, orange juice, or something?' I said: 'No, thank you. You stopped me, so tell me what you want'. The guard: 'No, don't worry, there's nothing'. So I answered: 'I'm not worried, but I would like to understand why you stopped me'. Then he said: 'Oh, I like your artwork and I would like to know more about what you're doing'. He actually asked what and where I painted, what was I doing, and what kind of art I made. I told him about a lot of stuff, but I did not tell him about the stamp and the soldier did not ask me about it.

Palestinian Army Experience

The Palestinian army hired me to make video and photography projects about them, since I was trained as a soldier and worked as the bodyguard to Yasser Arafat for eight years. I see them as very personal projects, since they reflect who I am and my experience. The art projects show the training, the hard work, and the systemic brainwashing inflicted upon the young boys who become soldiers. This experience meant a lot to me and was somehow easy, because I used to be in the army elite and have to admit that I sometimes still think as a soldier.



Khaled Jarrar, *Infiltrators*, 2012.

Infiltrators Documentary

The story of the documentary *Infiltrators*, which was produced in 2007, started when I heard about Palestinian taxi drivers who tried to smuggle Palestinians through without having to cross the checkpoints or having Israeli permits. I went to a place near Jerusalem and took a taxi along with seven other people. This way of passing is considered illegal according to Israel. Eventually, we all made it into Jerusalem and that is how I discovered this route and how I started my project.

I kept following the Palestinians in their crossing to Jerusalem, which they did for several reasons, such as praying, going to their houses, and going to hospitals, among others. This experience caught my attention because of the Palestinians' sheer will to get past all of the obstacles to reach Jerusalem, so I documented it to show this great challenge to the world.

I somehow became friends with the smugglers and the taxi drivers. I used to go with them while crossing into Jerusalem illegally and documented everything they did. I witnessed more than 450 Palestinians succeed in crossing, all of whom were ready to run into forests to cross into to Jerusalem. For the smugglers, it's all about business and making money – you can find their cars on the highway where they pick up Palestinians and start driving in a very dangerous way to avoid the Israeli soldiers, who can follow and arrest them or possibly send dogs after them into the forest. In the documentary you can see different people trying to go to Jerusalem for various reasons; it also focuses on the topic of the 'discrimination wall' and how it separates Palestinians from their homes and lands.

While shooting this film, I learned how to survive. I had been arrested many times and I used to throw the tapes before the soldiers could catch me and then, after having been released, I used to go back to the exact place where I had thrown them and continue my project as if nothing had happened. For me, the main reason behind shooting this film was to show the world the real experience of the people and how they face all of these terrible circumstances but manage to stay in high spirits. However, this crossing was so dangerous and, once the soldiers caught us, they often started shooting endlessly. I still remember the man who had been caught by Israeli soldiers and shot point blank – they just put the gun to his head and shot him mercilessly.

As for the smugglers, it took me a very long time to gain their trust. Most of the time, I was kicked out under the accusation of being a traitor or a secret agent for the intelligence. They threatened me with knives or by saying that they would break my camera. However, after a while, they started to trust me and realised that I did not take photos of their faces and only wanted to document the suffering of the crossing.

The Football Project

The project idea came from a group of kids who used to play football in a yard that later was too small because it was divided in the middle by the 'discrimination wall'. Speaking with them, they told me how hard and dangerous it was to play football there because the ball could end up beyond the wall. So, I cut pieces from the wall, smashed them, and mixed them with new cement to make a football.

I'm not a Politician... I'm Palestinian

Regarding the Palestinian situation, I don't want people to look upon us as victims. We are not victims and we are also not heroes; we are just trying to go about our daily lives, despite the occupation and its oppression. I don't like when foreigners classify us as victims because they visited Palestine for three days or even three months, nor do I like when they sometimes think that we live a decent life. We have faced shootings, killings, and arrests. I still remember when we were forced to stay home during curfews for more than three weeks and how we weren't allowed to leave our houses and sometimes even our rooms. And that is why I don't want to tell the Palestinians' story as an artist or politician, but instead through my experience here as a citizen, as a Palestinian.

Memory and Documentation

**In Defence of
the Poor Image**

The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution.

The poor image is a rag or a rip; an AVI or a JPEG, a *lumpenproletariat* in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends toward abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming.

The poor image is an illicit fifth-generation bastard of an original image. Its genealogy is dubious. Its file names are deliberately misspelled. It often defies patrimony, national culture, or indeed copyright. It is passed on as a lure, a decoy, an index, or as a reminder of its former visual self. It mocks the promises of digital technology. Not only is it often degraded to the point of being just a hurried blur, one even doubts whether it could be called an image at all. Only digital technology could produce such a dilapidated image in the first place. Poor images are the contemporary 'Wretched of the Screen', the debris of audio-visual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies' shores. They testify to the violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement of images – their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audio-visual capitalism. Poor images are dragged around the globe as commodities or their effigies, as gifts or as bounty. They spread pleasure or death threats, conspiracy theories or bootlegs, resistance or stultification. Poor images show the rare, the obvious, and the unbelievable – that is, if we can still manage to decipher it.

Low Resolutions

In one of Woody Allen's films the main character is out of focus.¹ It's not a technical problem but some sort of disease that has befallen him: his image is consistently blurred. Since Allen's character is an actor, this becomes a major problem: he is unable to find work. His lack of definition turns into a material problem. Focus is identified as a class position, a position of ease and privilege, while being out of focus lowers one's value as an image. The contemporary hierarchy of images, however, is not only based on sharpness, but also and primarily on resolution. Just look at any electronics store and this system, described by Harun Farocki in a notable 2007 interview, becomes immediately apparent.² In the class society of images, cinema takes on the role of a flagship store. In flagship stores high-end products are marketed in an upscale environment. More affordable derivatives of the same images circulate as DVDs, on broadcast television, or online, as poor images.

Obviously, a high-resolution image looks more brilliant and impressive, more mimetic and magic, more scary and seductive than a poor one. It is richer, so to speak. Now, even consumer formats are increasingly adapting to the tastes of cineastes and aesthetes, who insisted on 35 mm film as a guarantee of pristine visuality. The insistence upon analogue film as the sole medium of visual importance resounded throughout discourses on cinema, almost regardless of their ideological inflection. It never mattered that these high-end economies of film production were (and still are) firmly anchored in systems of national culture, capitalist studio production, the cult of mostly male genius, and the original version, and thus are often conservative in their very structure. Resolution was fetishized as if its lack amounted to castration of the author. The cult of film gauge dominated even independent film production. The rich image established its own set of hierarchies, with new technologies offering more and more possibilities to creatively degrade it.

See Woody Allen, *Deconstructing Harry*, 1997.

² See 'Wer Gemälde wirklich sehen will, geht ja schließlich auch ins Museum', conversation between Harun Farocki and Alexander Horwath, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 14, 2007.

Resurrection (as Poor Images)

But, insisting on rich images also had more serious consequences. A speaker at a recent conference on the film essay refused to show clips from a piece by Humphrey Jennings because no proper film projection was available. Although there was at the speaker's disposal a perfectly standard DVD player and video projector, the audience was left to imagine what those images might have looked like.

In this case the invisibility of the image was more or less voluntary and based on aesthetic premises. But it has a much more general equivalent based on the consequences of neoliberal policies. Twenty or even 30 years ago, the neoliberal restructuring of media production began slowly obscuring non commercial imagery, to the point where experimental and essayistic cinema became almost invisible. As it became prohibitively expensive to keep these works circulating in cinemas, so were they also deemed too marginal to be broadcast on television. Thus, they slowly disappeared not just from cinemas, but from the public sphere as well. Video essays and experimental films remained for the most part unseen save for some rare screenings in metropolitan film museums or film clubs, projected in their original resolution before disappearing again into the darkness of the archive. This development was of course connected to the neoliberal radicalisation of the concept of culture as commodity, to the commercialisation of cinema, its dispersion into multiplexes, and the marginalisation of independent filmmaking. It was also connected to the restructuring of global media industries and the establishment of monopolies over the audio-visual in certain countries or territories. In this way, resistant or nonconformist visual matter disappeared from the surface into an underground of alternative archives and collections, kept alive only by a network of committed organisations and individuals, who would circulate bootlegged VHS copies among themselves. Sources for these were extremely rare – tapes moved from hand to hand, depending on word of mouth, within circles of friends and colleagues. With the possibility to stream video online, this condition started to dramatically change. An increasing number of rare materials reappeared on publicly accessible platforms, some of them carefully curated (UbuWeb) and some just a pile of stuff (YouTube).

At present, there are at least twenty torrents of Chris Marker's film essays available online. If you want a retrospective, you can have it.

But the economy of poor images is about more than just downloads: you can keep the files, watch them again, even reedit or improve them if you think it necessary. And the results circulate. Blurred AVI files of half-forgotten masterpieces are exchanged on semi-secret P2P platforms. Clandestine cell phone videos smuggled out of museums are broadcast on YouTube. DVDs of artists' viewing copies are bartered.³ Many works of avant-garde, essayistic, and non-commercial cinema have been resurrected as poor images. Whether they like it or not.

Privatisation and Piracy

That rare prints of militant, experimental, and classical works of cinema as well as video art reappear as poor images is significant on another level. Their situation reveals much more than the content or appearance of the images themselves: it also reveals the conditions of their marginalisation, the constellation of social forces leading to their online circulation as poor images.⁴ Poor images are poor because they are not assigned any value within the class society of images – their status as illicit or degraded grants them exemption from its criteria. Their lack of resolution attests to their appropriation and displacement.⁵

Obviously, this condition is not only connected to the neoliberal restructuring of media production and digital technology; it also has to do with the post-socialist and postcolonial restructuring of nation-states, their cultures, and their archives. While some nation-states are dismantled or fall apart, new cultures and traditions are invented and new histories created. This obviously also affects film archives – in many cases, a whole heritage of film prints is left without its supporting framework of national culture.

³ Sven Lütticken's excellent text '*Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images*', in *e-flux journal*, n. 8, 2009, drew my attention to this aspect of poor images. See e-flux.com/journal/viewing-copies-on-the-mobility-of-moving-images/

Thanks to Kodwo Eshun for pointing this out.

⁵ Of course in some cases images with low resolution also appear in mainstream media environments (mainly news), where they are associated with urgency, immediacy, and catastrophe – and are extremely valuable. See Hito Steyerl, 'Documentary Uncertainty', in *A Prior*, n.15, 2007.

As I once observed in the case of a film museum in Sarajevo, the national archive can find its next life in the form of a video-rental store.⁶ Pirate copies seep out of such archives through disorganized privatisation.

On the other hand, even the British Library sells off its contents online at astronomical prices. As Kodwo Eshun has noted, poor images circulate partly in the void left by State cinema organisations who find it too difficult to operate as a 16/35 mm archive or to maintain any kind of distribution infrastructure in the contemporary era.⁷ From this perspective, the poor image reveals the decline and degradation of the film essay, or indeed any experimental and non-commercial cinema, which in many places was made possible because the production of culture was considered a task of the State. Privatisation of media production gradually grew more important than State-controlled/sponsored media production. But, on the other hand, the rampant privatisation of intellectual content, along with online marketing and commodification, also enables piracy and appropriation; it gives rise to the circulation of poor images.

Imperfect Cinema

The emergence of poor images reminds one of a classic Third Cinema manifesto, *For an Imperfect Cinema*, by Julio García Espinosa, written in Cuba in the late sixties.⁸ Espinosa argues for an imperfect cinema because, in his words, 'perfect cinema – technically and artistically masterful – is almost always reactionary cinema.' The imperfect cinema is one that strives to overcome the divisions of labour within class society. It merges art with life and science, blurring the distinction between consumer and producer, audience and author. It insists upon its own imperfection, is popular but not consumerist, committed without becoming bureaucratic. In his manifesto, Espinosa also reflects on the promises of new media.

⁶ See Hito Steyerl, 'Politics of the Archive. Translations in Film', in *Transversal*, March 2008. See eipcp.net/transversal/0608/steyerl/en/

From correspondence with the author via email.

⁸ Julio García Espinosa, 'For an imperfect cinema', in *Jump Cut*, n. 20, 1979. Translated by Julianne Burton.

He clearly predicts that the development of video technology will jeopardize the elitist position of traditional filmmakers and enable some sort of mass film production: an art of the people. Like the economy of poor images, imperfect cinema diminishes the distinctions between author and audience and merges life and art. Most of all, its visuality is resolutely compromised: blurred, amateurish, and full of artefacts.

In some way, the economy of poor images corresponds to the description of imperfect cinema, while the description of perfect cinema represents rather the concept of cinema as a flagship store. But the real and contemporary imperfect cinema is also much more ambivalent and affective than Espinosa had anticipated. On the one hand, the economy of poor images, with its immediate possibility of worldwide distribution and its ethics of remix and appropriation, enables the participation of a much larger group of producers than ever before. But this does not mean that these opportunities are only used for progressive ends. Hate speech, spam, and other rubbish make their way through digital connections as well. Digital communication has also become one of the most contested markets – a zone that has long been subjected to an on-going original accumulation and to massive (and, to a certain extent, successful) attempts at privatisation.

The networks in which poor images circulate thus constitute both a platform for a fragile new common interest and a battleground for commercial and national agendas. They contain experimental and artistic material, but also incredible amounts of porn and paranoia. While the territory of poor images allows access to excluded imagery, it is also permeated by the most advanced commodification techniques. While it enables users' active participation in the creation and distribution of content, it also drafts them into production. Users become the editors, critics, translators, and (co)authors of poor images. Poor images are thus popular images – images that can be made and seen by the many. They express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission.⁹ Altogether, poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction.

⁹ See Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude. For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004.

The condition of the images speaks not only of countless transfers and re-formatting, but also of the countless people who cared enough about them to convert them over and over again, to add subtitles, reedit, or upload them. In this light, perhaps one has to redefine the value of the image, or, more precisely, to create a new perspective for it. Apart from resolution and exchange value, one might imagine another form of value defined by velocity, intensity, and spread. Poor images are poor because they are heavily compressed and travel quickly. They lose matter and gain speed. But they also express a condition of dematerialisation, shared not only with the legacy of Conceptual art but above all with contemporary modes of semiotic production.¹⁰ Capital's semiotic turn, as described by Félix Guattari,¹¹ plays in favour of the creation and dissemination of compressed and flexible data packages that can be integrated into ever-newer combinations and sequences.¹²

This flattening-out of visual content – the concept-in-becoming of the images – positions them within a general informational turn, within economies of knowledge that tear images and their captions out of context into the swirl of permanent capitalist deterritorialisation.¹³ The history of Conceptual art describes this dematerialisation of the art object first as a resistant move against the fetish value of visibility. Then, however, the dematerialized art object turns out to be perfectly adapted to the semioticisation of capital, and thus to the conceptual turn of capitalism.¹⁴ In a way, the poor image is subject to a similar tension. On the one hand, it operates against the fetish value of high resolution. On the other hand, this is precisely why it also ends up being perfectly integrated into an information capitalism thriving on compressed attention spans, on impression rather than immersion, on intensity rather than contemplation, on previews rather than screenings.

¹⁰ Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.

¹¹ Félix Guattari, *Capital as the Integral of Power Formations*, in *Soft Subversions*, S. Lotringer (ed.), Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1996.

¹² All these developments are discussed in detail in an excellent text by Simon Sheikh, 'Objects of Study or Commodification of Knowledge? Remarkson Artistic Research', in *Art& Research* 2, n.2, Spring 2009. See artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/sheikh.html

¹³ See also Alan Sekula, *Reading an Archive. Photography between Labour and Capital*, in *Visual Culture. The Reader*, S. Hall and Jessica Evans (eds.), London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 181-92.

¹⁴ See Alexander Alberro, cit.

Comrade, what is your visual bond today?

But, simultaneously, a paradoxical reversal happens. The circulation of poor images creates a circuit, which fulfils the original ambitions of militant and (some) essayistic and experimental cinema – to create an alternative economy of images, an imperfect cinema existing inside as well as beyond and under commercial media streams. In the age of file sharing, even marginalized content circulates again and reconnects dispersed worldwide audiences. The poor image thus constructs anonymous global networks just as it creates a shared history. It builds alliances as it travels, provokes translation or mis-translation, and creates new publics and debates. By losing its visual substance it recovers some of its political punch and creates a new aura around it. This aura is no longer based on the permanence of the ‘original’, but on the transience of the copy. It is no longer anchored within a classical public sphere mediated and supported by the frame of the nation-state or corporation, but floats on the surface of temporary and dubious data pools.¹⁵ By drifting away from the vaults of cinema, it is propelled onto new and ephemeral screens stitched together by the desires of dispersed spectators. The circulation of poor images thus creates ‘visual bonds’, as Dziga Vertov once called them.¹⁶ This visual bond was, according to Vertov, supposed to link the workers of the world with each other.¹⁷ He imagined a sort of communist, visual, Adamic language that could not only inform or entertain, but also organize its viewers. In a sense, his dream has come true, if mostly under the rule of a global information capitalism whose audiences are linked almost in a physical sense by mutual excitement, affective atonement, and anxiety. But there is also the circulation and production of poor images based on cell phone cameras, home computers and unconventional forms of distribution. Its optical connections – collective editing, file sharing, or grassroots distribution circuits – reveal erratic and coincidental links between producers everywhere, which simultaneously constitute dispersed audiences.

¹⁵ The Pirate Bay even seems to have tried acquiring the extraterritorial oil platform of Sealand in order to install its servers there. Jan Libbenga, ‘The Pirate Bay plans to buy Sealand, in The Register’, January 12, 2007. See theregister.co.uk/2007/01/12/pirate_bay_buys_island/

¹⁶ Dziga Vertov, *Kinopravda and Radiopravda*, in *Kino-Eye. The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, A. Michelson (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 52.

¹⁷ Ibid.



Public ceremony organized by the mayor of Puebla, Mexico, to destroy pirated DVDs in circulation.

The circulation of poor images feeds into both capitalist media assembly lines and alternative audio-visual economies. In addition to a lot of confusion and stupefaction, it also possibly creates disruptive movements of thought and affect. The circulation of poor images thus initiates another chapter in the historical genealogy of non-conformist information circuits: Vertov's visual bonds, the internationalist workers' pedagogies that Peter Weiss described in *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, the circuits of Third Cinema and Tricontinentalism, of non-aligned filmmaking and thinking. The poor image – ambivalent as its status may be – thus takes its place in the genealogy of carbon-copied pamphlets, cine-train agitprop films, underground video magazines and other nonconformist materials, which aesthetically often used poor materials. Moreover, it reactualises many of the historical ideas associated with these circuits, among others Vertov's idea of the visual bond. Imagine somebody from the past with a beret asking you, 'Comrade, what is your visual bond today?' You might answer: it is this link to the present.

Now!

The poor image embodies the afterlife of many former masterpieces of cinema and video art. It has been expelled from the sheltered paradise that cinema seems to have once been.¹⁸ After being kicked out of the protected and often protectionist arena of national culture, discarded from commercial circulation, these works have become travellers in a digital no-man's-land, constantly shifting their resolution and format, speed and media, sometimes even losing names and credits along the way.

Now many of these works are back – as poor images, I admit. One could of course argue that this is not the real thing, but then – please, anybody – show me this real thing. The poor image is no longer about the real thing – the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation. In short: it is about reality.

¹⁸ At least from the perspective of nostalgic delusion.

Rewriting Memory

‘The history of art is the struggle
between all optical experiences,
invented spaces, and representations.’

Carl Einstein

‘We remember nothing, we only rewrite memory’. In his film *Sans Soleil*, Chris Marker makes an extraordinary statement. As I see it, therein lies the new potential of an open source and documentary approach towards the challenges of the political that are connected to collective intelligence and collective imagination. How do we shape and develop technologies of a self that would be capable of rewriting history, since we may have finally had enough of all the fabricated fictions that reduce and limit complex realities towards more or less paranoid plots and universally exchangeable narratives?

I.

The backdrop of much of the recent debate on the relationship between art and politics is an erosion of art’s utopian horizon, upon which its power to generate counter-concepts was based. Art’s power lay in the ability to imagine things differently, in the rejection of the given, and in the subversion and transgression of the boundaries of a disciplinary modernity and its hegemonic rationality.

Under the parameters of the disciplinary regime, the utopian imagination was fuelled by ideas and practices of transgression, subversion and inbounding that were based on the ideas of an ‘outside’, a ‘beyond’, and progression. These ideas gave shape to an entire economy of the imaginary into which creative imagination and the ideas of an emancipatory politics were fused.

With the rise of what has been called cognitive capitalism and the society of control in which the creative imagination and the modulation of the imaginary are put to service as productive force and resource, the dialectics of affirmation and negation and the parameters of critique are subjected to tectonic shifts.

This affects a crisis in the economy of imagination itself – in the very ability to imagine things differently. Today, the static boundaries against which a dissident imagination was shaped are on the move, subjected to management, calculation, and evaluation, giving rise to novel configurations of power in which the imagination's power to negotiate the limits of the possible is itself at stake. What will be the production of vision that is emerging out of the current crisis?

A production of vision that is based on the opposite experience: rather than fragmentation, alienation and disconnectedness, it is the experience of networked control, monitoring in real-time, and the performance of a charismatic self...

In a society of control, imagination seems to become almost equal to the power to make an image. We can experience two different modes of image production: pre-emptive and anticipatory imagery. Pre-emptive images postulate a continuum, while the anticipatory mode implies a rupture between present and future events. The pre-emptive mode relates to a fabrication of fiction, while anticipation attempts a defence of the real that is crossed out.

II.

What is the political? Politics is the art of creating a political body: in its very essence, it is the art of properly placing objects and subjects. It is the knowledge of where things or (increasingly important) people are situated, identifying their places and establishing an order by separation, segregation, classification and organisation. The properness of the resulting order appears as if organic. Its appropriateness resonates the fact that the knowledge of situations has been appropriated and turned into the key property of power. Thus, modern politics have emerged as strategies of inclusion and exclusion: regimes that discipline individuals, restrict their freedom of movement, arrest them at specific places for certain amounts of time.

The political, in turn, appears as a line of flight – it is all about escaping an established order of politics: refusal, secession, migration, exodus. The political is the becoming minoritarian; it is the resistance against the knowledge of power that renders subject and object as identifiable and therefore calculable within a spatio-temporal domain that renders them functional within the apparatus of industrial production.

Over the past few decades, we have been experiencing how the paradigm of discipline, how the very idea of inclusion and exclusion, and how politics have undergone dramatic shifts: rather than placement, it is about localisation;

rather than identification, politics require the performance of a charismatic self in real-time. What is then political? What would constitute a refusal of politics as we know them? What would characterise a resistance against power as we experience it today?

The act of resistance has two sides: It is human struggle, ranging from Bartleby's micropolitical 'I would prefer not to' to the simple insight that there is always a way out, no matter how desperate a situation may seem. The semiotic machines of becoming minor that generate the great myths of exodus are essential for survival in reverse engineering mode. It is resistance against death. It is a sign of life. But resistance is also the act of art. Art is resistance against communication. It is resistance against the sharing of opinions, the exchange of everything that is made exchangeable and the communication of communicability. It is resistance against the aestheticisation of participatory politics and the user-generated fabrication of fiction. Resistance becomes politics as soon as it is made public. But it becomes political as a production of reality, an augmentation of reality through the production of vision of a different kind. It is a transformation of how we see, rather than what we see.

It is a defence of the real that is crossed out. In that respect, there are no politics, but everything is virtually political.

It is an act of speech and it is the making of an image, but what is audible and what is visible are no longer in sync, but in permanent crisis.

— What is at stake is the very capacity to make an image. Today's crisis of imagination poses the question of property: Whose images? Whose fictions? Who is producing them and who owns them? What does it mean to own an image?

— 'Uns trägt kein Volk, aber wir suchen ein Volk' (We don't have the support of the People. But we are looking for People).¹ Art is made for a people who are missing. 'A people' needs to be invoked rather than represented or addressed, let alone actively involved, since the people no longer exist, or not yet...

— What matters in art as well as in life is the collaborative restructuring of social facts, the making of the world, rather than mirroring and re-affirming the existing order and the prevailing values as well as their meanings.

III.

The documentary mode is characterised by a very peculiar relationship to the unexpected, unforeseeable, and incalculable. This is what still distinguishes it from fiction, which is ruled by the idea of pre-emption, by fabricating a narrative before the project actually takes place and aligning the respective images in advance.

The documentary is anticipatory. Its anticipatory character is in radical opposition to the former assumption that documentary films are boring. It rejects the idea of presupposing a possible reaction by the spectator and therefore has to refuse also the notion of interactivity that is based on offering a choice. In documentary there is no determination and there is no choice. Documentary projects are realised after the event. They do not happen while shooting, but while editing. Their place of birth is the editing room. The core notion of the documentary refers to an artificial re-composition of a past event, but in a way that it will return in the future and in newly created relationships to yet unknown witnesses who will be enabled to account for that creation, and not the event itself. The network appears as a redundant array that documents any possible move. It logs and captures, records and stores any interaction between subject and object. Its reality is documented before it comes into place, let alone becomes a matter of criticism.

Against this backdrop, documentary film is fighting a losing battle. As soon as a clip, sequence, or entire video is uploaded, its content exists only in relation to an already foreseen activity that is going to be computed and therefore documented anyway. This mode of the documentary is characterised by:

— The emancipation of the documentary from its carrier medium.

— A very peculiar relationship to the unexpected, unforeseeable, and incalculable. The documentary filmmaker is mostly occupied with waiting. Waiting for something to happen that cannot be calculated.

— The digitisation of film has triggered a complete redefinition of editing: rather than cutting into the material by splicing the film stock, different streams of data are connected and disconnected, joint and separated in a way that is only affecting the metadata, as opposed to the material itself.

— The mode of the documentary as we know it has always emerged out of a desire and its technical realisation to get out of the hermetic spaces of the

studios and into the streets, capturing public life, appropriating a reality that would exist independently from the filmmaking. The streets of the documentary today are on the internet.

— The documentary as a space that reconstructs a past by anticipating a future event that is open, and without emptying its possible meaning and reducing it to a set of possible options.

IV.

Facing the advent of new technologies that will revolutionise the production of moving images on the web (html5), a wide range of new possibilities opens up to radically re-think conventional filmmaking. The aesthetics of these new possibilities is radically experimental. It requires reflections on the formal conditions of contemporary image making:

1. The relationship between the legible and illegible – as soon as film is brought ‘online’, there is a seemingly irresistible tendency to entirely reduce the image to what is readable. In the realm of the digital and under the conditions of the network, the illegible parts that used to constitute the image are in danger of extinction: everything is supposed to become legible and decipherable in order to be searched and found, categorised, indexed or tagged, and ultimately subject to an algorithm.

In the end, this means the death of film. Instead we need to look forward to the unreadable, illegible, and therefore unforeseeable. For instance, we need to develop creative relationships between tags and images rather than descriptive ones. We have to learn to welcome what is not calculable.

2. Exploring an ‘absolute’ out-of-field. The re-invention of the documentary will take place outside of the field and not inside the frame. Networked environments allow filmmakers to work with sources that are not ultimately captured in the original process of shooting. The potential of the network is that of an absolute ‘hors-champ’ – something that is not visible and not understandable but perfectly present. The absolute out-of-field of the networked environment demands a passage from the one to the many-voiced: text streams, for example, that do not just translate what is said, but add voices that are not visible and not audible.

3. *De-cadrage*. The result is a substantial and permanent destabilisation, renegotiation, and reorganisation of the frame. There is no escape into full-screen mode. On the contrary, the content of the image is constantly fleeing a proper framing, crossing the border of the picture in order to make itself common with alien information, unrelated events, or inappropriate flows. Under these circumstances there is no opportunity to re-adjust the frame, there is no possible *re-cadrage*. *De-cadrage* is the absolute condition of the networked image – it constitutes its freedom of movement.

4. A-synchronisation. In the last instance, we have to give up one of the main virtues of analogue filmmaking: the retrospect synchronisation of the movement of the image with additional flows, most notably sound. Finally we are irrevocably out of sync. This is opening up to the great potentials of an untimeliness that might be capable of overcoming the image's enslaving of the sound, the commodification of the sense through the plot, and last but not least, the self-humiliation of the alienated spectator.

5. Discontinuity. Current online aesthetics are mainly characterised by weaving every item into a mesh of similarities and connotations – also known as tagging or 'customers who bought this item also bought...' It is supposed to appease us in view of the arbitrary and hallucinatory aspect of networked realities. It reintroduces the mechanisms of a conventional reality that reduces complexity and heterogeneity to concepts and terminologies that are based on sameness, identity and similarity. In doing so, it destroys any aspect of form that is non-repetitive. 'Classical representation creates a continuous space in which objects and persons are arranged as discontinuous entities.'²

To rescue us from the deception of monotonous reality that is based upon the repetition of the same, we have to figure out what could, on the contrary, constitute a notion of networking that is based on disjunctions rather than conjunctions, rupture rather than continuity: an algorithm that produces dissimilarity rather than similarity, difference rather than sameness, multiplicity rather than identity.

² Georges Didi-Huberman, "Picture=Rupture." Visual Experience, Form and Symptom according to Carl Einstein, in *Papers of Surrealism*, n. 7, 2007. See surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal7/

6. Transvisuality. Aesthetical experiments with the networked character of production will come along with a transformation of vision, of the laws of vision that determine how we see a world that has become a networked space. They need to explore a new field that I would suggest be named after Carl Einstein's 'trans-visual'. It operates in the void of a gap that opens up between what is real and imaginary, what is conceivable and inconceivable, what is visible and what is not. The transvisual is what is beyond optical experience. In certain ways, it marks the opposite of the unconscious. How can we see the network? Or better: what would be networked seeing? Einstein suggested a radical transformation of vision based on 'the hegemony of the inner life over the outer life', facing the 'abyss of inner experience', and subsequently leading to the 'final disintegration of the I in the creative act'. Contemporary positivism of a world that is paralysed by networking technologies needs to be rejected by a new kind of verticality. In both, contemporary production and aesthetics, there is nothing less at stake than the relationship between subject and object in a new experience of networked spaces.

Finally, the challenge is about how to re-acquire a somehow stable and clear view or visualisation of a world that has undergone dramatic changes due to the stunning experiences of an acceleration on various different global scales.

Subjective Camera and Collective Memory

‘To be is to be perceived and to perceive.’
Samuel Beckett / George Berkeley



Shooting of *Von Gegenüber (From the Opposite Side)*, Münster 2007.

In film, a subjective view can be a look at a reality that is explicitly defined by a personal gaze. This is what Maya Schweizer and I did in our film *Metropolis, Report from China* (2006) when considering contemporary China from the perspective of filmmakers intending to remake the film *Metropolis* (1926) by Fritz Lang. The result is an investigation of the differences between a utopian fiction of the past and the reality of Chinese mega-cities today: a video essay in which we are looking at China today through the eyes of Fritz Lang. *Metropolis* had just been included in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register and we wanted to show how a document of collective memory could be used to create a subjective view today.

This method of entering someone else's gaze to look at the world is at the core of filmmaking, as it coincides with the principle of the spectator who needs to forget that he is in the cinema in order to enter someone else's fiction on the screen. What is the most radical subjective view in film? In film terminology, the subjective camera is also known as point-of-view (P.O.V.) – a camera shot in which the viewers see what is happening in the film through the eyes of one of the characters. For years, this technique has also been well known in another form of media: first-person shooter video games in which the player is the protagonist of a quest or battle. Just as the player operates through the eyes of his own protagonist in a game, the viewer is confronted with another point of view in a film.

The Lady in the Lake (1947) is the first film ever to use the P.O.V. shot throughout the entire movie. The director, Robert Montgomery, presents the plot exclusively through the viewpoint of the main character Philip Marlowe. Viewers only get to see Marlowe when he comes stands in front of a mirror or any other reflective surface. Metro Goldwyn Mayer advertised the film as the most revolutionary since the introduction of the sound, as the audience and the main character were to solve the mystery of the crime together.

In some cases, especially with horror films, the P.O.V. shot continuously functions as the narrative perspective. Without a general viewpoint, a feeling of insecurity and helplessness can be generated, and it is only through the plot that we know from whose perspective the shot is taken (most often through the eyes of the killer or the monster). For example, in David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980), we sometimes see through the eyes of the protagonist, emphasised by a recognisable and unusual breathing sound. Because of many porn films use the subjective view, the P.O.V. shot is an essential target of feminist film theory, as it mainly depicts events from the perspective of the male protagonist and by objectifying female characters under his gaze. Regarding computer action games, the subjective camera has always been a means of expressing the player's involvement in the game, as a promise of participation and inclusion.

These days, there are small cameras that you can attach to your head that can later be used to rewind your everyday life if you missed certain moments or if something special happened. Many of these cameras are used in cars to record accidents and prove one's innocence when accused of hitting another car. Once, I thought about building such a subjective camera to record whatever happened throughout the day as a means of analysing one's viewpoint.

In this text, I will address the psychological and philosophical implications of this type of filmmaking. First, I am going to talk about a film by Dziga Vertov, then about Samuel Beckett's *Film* (1965), and last, about one detail of *The Message* (1977), a film by the American-Syrian filmmaker director Moustapha Akkad. Last year at documenta 13, Rabih Mroué presented a project called *The Pixelated Revolution* (2012) in which he refers to handheld cameras, especially those in mobile phones, that are used by Syrian rebels to film their opponents. Some of these rebels filmed their own deaths when they discovered their enemy within the frame and then were shot. In 2007, I made the film *Von Gegenüber (From the Opposite Side)* for Skulptur Projekte Münster, an exhibition dedicated to art in public space.

From the Opposite Side

This film features a subjective camera, which is the viewpoint of a homeless man who spends 24 hours looking for a place to stay near the Münster train station. The film was projected in an empty cinema close to the location of the film shoot. The plan was to present the public with a radically different subjective vision of this particular public space of the train station: through the film's subjective gaze, the palpable existence of the homeless man developed as he looked for a place to go. The viewers had to become programmed to the subjective gaze, which they then had to reconcile with their own external reality after leaving the cinema. On one hand, the subjective view was simply a representation auctorial cinema, as it presenting a constructed story to the audience. On the other hand, this subjective film happened to be authoritarian in its attempt to program the viewpoint of others and that it imposes itself on the individual, forcing him/her to either leave or look. However, when looking, the spectator becomes dizzy as part of the cinema machine. The relationship between a film made with a subjective camera and the spectator is a strange one. After making the film, I realised that there is a strong, somehow magnetic interaction between the viewpoint of the person on screen and the spectator's perception. It can be attractive or repulsive. There is also a third element that is not part of this direct relationship between two subjectivities – the collective: the entity that is outside, the location, the society, the politics, the culture. The subjective view for either the author of a film or the spectator is dependent on 'what it sees'. This happens when the spectator leaves the cinema.

After the experience of watching a film, this is the most important movement: to adapt to reality with one's own eyes, leaving behind the screen. The experience of the other viewpoint and other way of looking only remains in the spectator's memory. While making *From the Opposite Side*, I became interested in other films using this technique.

Dziga Vertov: *The Man With the Movie Camera*

In addition to making films, Vertov wrote manifestos and developed, for example, the concept of 'Kinoki' or 'Cine-Eye'. This 'eye' was supposed to replace the camera and become the actual author of films. This is the theoretical background of the P.O.V. – in opposition to films that were based on a narrative or theatricality, Kinoki was supposed to become the starting point for a new cinematic trajectory, based on the enjoyment of seeing like a mechanical camera/eye.

Who isn't familiar with *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929)? It is the convergence of two entities: the subjective human gaze on one hand, and the cinematic machine on the other. In terms of cinema and modern man as machine, it is a utopian film and not a dystopia, in so far as it has a certain liberating gesture.

I would like to refer to the end of the film, when the camera moves into the cinema itself and looks at its own images on the screen. One could say this is a kind of emancipated camera. Jean-Louis Comolli writes:

'The Man with the Movie Camera atomises the audience: the presentation of the film generates singular viewers with individual gazes. Obviously this other version of the foundation history told by the film (the cinema being the future of mankind) has a political dimension. [...] Even if it is about reaching the masses, the aim is to reach individual subjects. How to arrive at the individual by passing through the collective, how to get from the undistinguishable mass to the collection of individual subjects, this is indeed a political question – and the more so a question of filmmaking [...]

Differently put: in order to produce the spectator, in order to reach the subjective part of the spectator in the way Vertov imagines it, one needs a machine. It is through the eye – the cineaste's most erotically charged sense – that the machine reaches the subjectivity of the spectator perhaps even permeating it.¹

The next example will illustrate the perception that occurs between being the observer and being the one who is observed.

Beckett: *Film*

Film was written by Samuel Beckett and directed by him and Alain Schneider in 1965. Beckett shot this conceptual film in New York: the decision to go there didn't end at his desire to more intensively explore what was for him a new medium, but also the encounter with Buster Keaton, who had agreed to play the main part in the film.

The initial title of the film was going to be *Eye* before it was changed, which indicates what the work is about: *Eye* not only means 'eye' in relation to the act of seeing, but homophonically refers to the word 'I' as in me. These two meanings are represented throughout the film. The word eye both alludes to psychology (I, self) and the final title *Film* alludes to the technical equipment, which is the camera.

In his film, Beckett splits one subject into two parts: the camera-eye (E) and the object of perception (O), played by Buster Keaton wearing an eye-patch on his left eye. E follows Buster Keaton (O) without him noticing the camera. The film consists of three parts: the first one takes place in the street, the second one on the stairs in the house, and the third in a room that Beckett describes as belonging to O's mother – it is O's place of retreat and thus the main location of the film. He wants to rub out anything that is reminiscent of eyes or that challenges our perception (even visual memories) by taking away any pictures, animals, faces or other vaguely anthropomorphic things. At the end, the camera orbits around Buster Keaton. Finally, he tiredly sits down on a chair and the camera looks at him: when he returns the look and stares directly into the camera, he closes his eyes. The film is finished.

Beckett was asked to explain the film in layman's terms:

'It's a movie about the perceiving eye, about the perceived and the perceiver – two aspects of the same man. The perceiver desires like mad to perceive and the perceived tries desperately to hide. Then, in the end, one wins.'²

In addition to addressing epistemological questions, the film plays with the possibilities of cinema and especially of the subjective gaze. The starting point is a separation (between E and O).

The shooting script begins with the following phrase: 'Esse est percipi' (to be is to be perceived), a phrase by the Irish philosopher and priest George Berkeley, who lived during the first half of the 18th century. For Berkeley, a chair only exists when perceived by a human and a human only exists because he is perceived by God. There is, however, a fundamental difference in Beckett's version of the phrase, which is explained in the script:

'All extraneous perception suppressed, animal, human, divine, self-perception maintains in being. Search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception.'³

According to Beckett, the quest for non-being is impossible because you can't withdraw from 'self-perception', while for Berkeley, humans can't avoid the perception of 'the divine'. Beckett's film seems not to be an illustration of Berkeley's words, but rather its antithesis.

Beckett replaced Berkeley's divine gaze with a twofold gaze. Is there anyone out there on the other side of the camera? Definitely, in the case of the audience. It seems like Beckett revolutionises Berkeley and replaces God with the other self: the audience.

² Samuel Beckett, quoted in 'Beckett', *New Yorker*, August 1964.

Samuel Beckett, 'Film. The script', in *The Complete Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*, London: Faber & Faber, 2006.

What occurs between perceiving and being-perceived is defined through a separation, which is a fundamental rule of cinema that Beckett emphasises, both as a metaphor and a cut between two identical characters that just behave differently. On the one side, we have a camera as a metaphor for the spectator and, on the other, an actor who senses the presence of an audience that he is separated from.

For another example involving Berkeley's idea of the divine gaze that one can't escape, I'd like to take a look at the use of the subjective camera in films depicting religious themes.

Moustapha Akkad: *The Message*

The film I would like to discuss here has also been referred to as *Mohammad, Messenger of God* (1977). The film follows Muhammad's first years as a prophet, starting with Islam's beginnings in Mecca, where the Muslims are persecuted, going from the exodus to Medina, and then ending with the Muslims' triumphant return to Mecca. Some of the stars in the film are Anthony Quinn, Irene Papas, Michael Ansara for the English version, and Abdullah Gaith, Muna Wassef, Hamdi Gaith for the Arabic one. Both were shot at the same time, with filming in Morocco and Lybia.

In accordance with Muslim beliefs regarding depictions of Muhammad, the prophet could not be portrayed on-screen nor could his voice be heard. This rule extends to his wives, his daughters, his sons-in-law, and his caliphs. Whenever Muhammad is present or very close in the story, his presence is indicated by light organ music. Someone else, such as Hamza, Zayd, and Bilal, repeats his words as he speaks. When a scene calls for him to be present, the action is filmed from *his* point of view. Others in the scene nod to the unheard dialogue. The decision to film using the P.O.V. of the prophet caused a controversy. Initially, it seemed like a plausible way of getting around the religious restrictions. In another way, the prophet is not visible but, as we know from Beckett's *Film* among other examples, the subjective view is meaningful and stands for someone specific. In this abstract way, however, the prophet became an image: The P.O.V. shot makes the spectator inhabit the role of the prophet, since the gazes of the most important surrounding characters go straight into the camera. Based on Berkeley, a religious philosopher himself, one could say that it's impossible to escape from the divine perception. A different reading makes the spectator the object of controversy.

One could also say that – even before the spectator – it is the filmmaker himself (who decided for such a step) and the cameraman (who during the shooting must take the position of the prophet) who become the object of the controversy. This film had serious consequences: in 1977, a terrorist named Khalifa Hamaas Abdul Khaalis and 11 armed accomplices took 149 hostages in Washington, DC. There was a standoff with several demands declared, one of which was that Khaalis wanted to prevent Akkad's *Mohammad, Messenger of God* from being shown anywhere in the world. Two people died during the siege. Years later, Akkad and his 34 year-old daughter, Rima Akkad Monla, were killed in the November 11, 2005 bombings in Amman, Jordan while they were pre-producing a film about Saladin – a film against the crusaders. They were both in the lobby at the Grand Hyatt when a suicide bomber sent by Al-Qaeda detonated his device. There was a big funeral in his homeland, Syria, when he was buried. His grave had images from his films.

Rabih Mroué: *The Pixelated Revolution*

In *The Pixelated Revolution* (2012), Rabih Mroué showed the limits of the contemporary subjective camera. In the video/lecture performance, he tells about Syrian rebels using the cameras on their mobile phones to film the enemy when he is pointing his gun at them. In many cases, the people filming have been killed while trying to get the actual threat on their life in the frame. When the camera meets the gaze of the gun, the cameraman is killed, leaving only the images of their murderers behind. This is an unfair war game, showing that the camera is not an equivalent weapon and that the view through the lens does not shield against a bitter reality.

Whether cinema defines two spaces separated by the screen: the production room behind the screen and the presentation room in front of it – and the footage refers to what is already separated in time. Here the screen is attached directly to the lens: the P.O.V does not reproduce the disconnection of the viewer from the scene, and it only constitutes a false separation from reality.

We can only start to think about it theoretically with a distance, without forgetting that these were real people dying, not extras in a film.

Cinema of the Invisible

In the course of my work there have been a few recurring questions over the years. I have an ongoing interest in the question of representation of political ideas and more specifically the phenomenon of terrorism. Another obsession is the idea of 'invisible cinema' or images that have disappeared and perhaps also the question of memory and false memory. The work that I have been doing in the past few years plays around with these different notions and some of the works address difficult political issues frontally. Other works really do not have a political content in their appearance and instead focus more on the question of narrative and the question of cinema, the cinema that we create by ourselves in our heads.

I'm French but I was born in the United States as a result of my father being a student in an American university. I grew up mostly in France, and when I finished high school I decided to go back to the US and ended up living there for about 12 years. I was living in New York during September 11th 2001 and like many people who lived in New York at the time I was on the rooftop of my building when the Twin Towers collapsed. I had a camera with me but I didn't take any pictures that day; and for several years after that, I questioned myself about the role of the artist in relationship to certain dramatic paradigm-shifting events. I've worked on a series of pieces that tiptoed around this question, this is one of them and it is called *Sugar Water* (2007). Shot in a subway station in Paris, it is a slow piece, almost performative. It unfolds in the time that it takes to wheat-paste five posters on the wall. It is basically a piece that collapses different dimensions of time inside of each other. There is the time of the event which is being photographed and which, if it were real, would have taken a few seconds to unfold. Then it is broken down and extended into the time that it takes to 'paint' it inside of this space on the wall of the station. Of course this is a context-specific space because it is the space where there are generally advertisements inside of the subway. It also has this gilded frame, which relates to the frame of a painting. So it is as if in the space of this video, different dimensions of time coexist with each other. I changed the name of the subway station, I renamed it 'Erewhon'.



Eric Baudelaire, *Sugar Water*, 2007.

It's an anagram for 'nowhere', an anagram which is also the title of a book by Samuel Butler that takes place on an island called Erewhon, a Victorian era fiction that supposes that time has frozen on this particular island. In a way, something similar happened in terms of the way we experienced time on and after September 11th in New York, and this is related to the way we experienced images of September 11th. Our reading of images has a very specific context, and it varies in different times and places. For example if you take the images on the posters in this work, if you imagine they were taken in the eighties in France, the image of a car exploding would probably make you think of an accident. But in Beirut, the same image of a car exploding would be very specifically related to a car bomb. In France, in 2006-2007, when I was making this video, the image of a burning car evoked a phenomenon in the suburbs around Paris where young people, due to social and economic alienation, would burn cars. This had nothing to do with terrorism, it was more about social decay. *Sugar Water* plays with these different associations and it plays with the experience of the time within which we see them.

I will now speak about another work from 2009, *Chanson d'Automne*, that I think is quite exemplary of what my practice was about. September 2009 is when the world financial markets were starting to collapse and in the course of the month of September I collected articles from the Wall Street Journal, the newspaper of reference of the capitalist system. There is a second element to this piece: a poem by Paul Verlaine that we learned about in history lessons in France, specifically its use as a code during the Second World War. Translated into English, the poem would read something like this:

*When a sighing begins
In the violins
Of the autumn-song,
My heart is drowned
In the slow sound
Languorous and long*

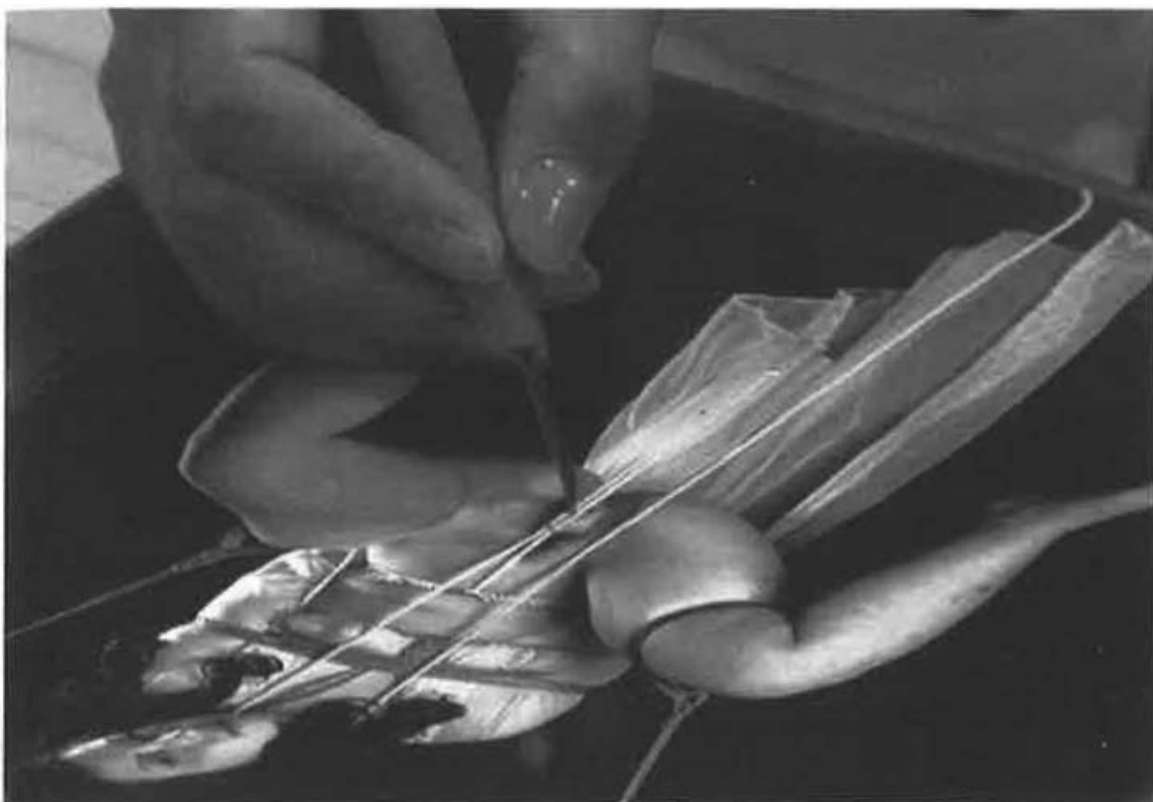
So I found, or rather I went looking, for these exact verses embedded in the pages of The Wall Street Journal. The significance of this poem is that in 1944 on the BBC radio, every night, there would be coded messages intended for listeners in France, secret messages addressed to members of the French resistance who knew what these messages really meant. In June 1944, before the Normandy invasion, the BBC broadcast two verses from Verlaine's poem *Chanson d'Automne* as a way to inform the French resistance that the invasion was imminent, triggering a number of acts of sabotage to assist in the liberation of Europe by Allied forces. I was interested in the idea of 'finding' the very same coded message inside another media 60 years later. You could say I am making a parallel between the German occupation of Europe and the current world order subjected to the hegemony of financial markets. I think I was most interested in asking a question at a time when the collapse of the financial system seemed imminent: What does it mean to resist today? If the same poem can be decoded from within a media today, who would be making this call for resistance and who would be listening to this call for resistance? So I think of this piece as an open question.

When I was in Japan in a residency program, I was not making any pictures. I had a difficult time filming because I found that in Japan everything was very different, of course, and complicated to comprehend and therefore complicated to photograph or film. As a result of not making pictures, I started collecting existing pictures instead.



Eric Baudelaire, *The Makes*, 2009.

I started collecting publicity photographs for Japanese movies that I had never seen. I came across this image and it immediately brought a story to my mind. This child who is about to be shot reminded me of a story in a book by Michelangelo Antonioni called *That Bowling Alley on The Tiber*. A book where Antonioni published 'narrative nuclei' for movies that he would have liked to make but that he was never able to film. One of the stories in the book is about a man who sees two children playing, he sees a moment of beauty in the way they are playing. He then gets out of his car and approaches them, takes out a gun and shoots them both. The man knows that later on life will never be as beautiful as it was at that particular time for these children, so he decides to freeze life in this moment of beauty and joy because he knows it is soon going to disappear. Somehow, I saw this film unfolding on the surface of a series of unrelated film stills that I was collecting in Japan. I imagined that this was the man, on this picture, and I imagined that these were the children, and when the gun goes off, the mother hears the sound and she screams outside the window, and so we have this third photograph. And then the man gets back to his car and drives away, on this other photograph. From here on, I was looking through thousands of photos that I was finding, film stills from various Japanese films that I had not seen and I matched them with pages that I had torn out from this Antonioni book.



Eric Baudelaire, *[sic]*, 2009.

It was a way of giving an existence to films that were never made by simply associating found objects that together would create the paratext for the missing film. If you create enough paratext, it may substitute itself for the existence of the text itself, a movie that actually never existed. The project is called *The Makes* (2010) and it started as a series of collages or assemblages inside vitrines, then I also decided to make a film. The protagonist of my film is Philippe Azoury, a film critic, a famous French critic. He develops a critical discourse about Antonioni's 'Japanese' period, with documents and photographs in hand. So we have these photographs of films I have not seen contextualised by a critical discourse by a very serious critic, and so I called this movie *The Makes*, because it is like the remake of a film that was never made in the first place. One last short piece that I made while in residency in Japan. I was going to the newspaper store to buy *Artforum*. As I turned the pages of the magazine I came across things like this: this is a picture by Richard Avedon of Andy Warhol's Factory but all the sexual parts have been scratched from the page. Then I found this issue of *Frieze* magazine, with a picture of a naked dancer, and his sexual parts have also been scraped off the surface of the printed page. I was curious because Japan is not a puritan country; it is a country that has a tradition of erotic, even pornographic, woodprints going back centuries, so why are they scratching away these pages today?



Eric Baudelaire, *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, and 27 Years Without Images*, 2011.

I found out that there is a grey area in Japanese law: the penal code says that obscenity cannot be sold, but the constitution says that there cannot be censorship. And so there is a tradition of artists who have provoked with their work to try to see how to negotiate this legal contradiction. The most famous being Nagisa Oshima who directed *In The Realm of The Senses* (1976). I decided to make a collection of these 'scratched out' spaces, scratched because the concept of obscenity is tied to the question of desire. The Supreme Court in Japan has defined this difficult notion of obscenity in a fascinating way: 'What is obscene is that which unnecessarily excites desire'. It is a wonderful phrase because it questions the necessity or non-necessity of desire. And in a way it brought me back to the history of image making which revolves around the question of desire, the question of where desire resides inside an image. Taken quite literally, these 'scratched out' spaces are the spaces of desire, in the mind of the anonymous scratcher. From here I made a short film called *[SIC]* (2009), where I restage this situation, bringing it outside of the strict documentary dimension, partly fictionalising what I am portraying in order to open up broader questions about the relationship between the image and intangibles that are representable or unrepresentable.

Once again, my last work, *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years Without Images* (2011), addresses the issue of the unrepresentable. There are three people in the title of the work. Fusako Shigenobu is the founder of the Japanese Red Army: she's the one who left Japan in 1969 to settle in Beirut. Her daughter, May Shigenobu, was born in 1973 and lived her life until the age of 27 in a complete clandestine manner. Her existence was a secret and she had to hide her identity for the 27 first years of her life, until the year 2000 when her mother was arrested. Then, she was able to emerge into a different phase of her life, where she was allowed to say who she was; that was the time she also moved back to Japan. The third person in the title is Masao Adachi, an experimental, quite radical, formally political, very emancipated director and film writer, whose work – I think – is really interesting in the Japanese new wave cinema of the sixties. He became increasingly politically radicalized, both in his films and in his ideas, so that he eventually decided to make a film about the Japanese Red Army in Beirut and, finally, he joined them, spending 27 years not so much as a filmmaker, but rather as a fellow traveller or a person who's participating in Japanese Red Armies activities.

The Anabasis is a journey and the story of these three characters, which are all in the film and also in some of the works on paper and photographic works, which are parts of the installation.

In 1969, Adachi, together with a number of filmmakers and theorists who were working with him, had this idea around a project based on a serial killing: the main character was a real-existed young man of 19 who had shot and killed three strangers. What seemed to be just a random act of violence had become a serial killing, which captivated the Japanese public because nobody understood why he shot this people. That is why this collective of filmmakers including Adachi decided to make a film about this. Obviously, they couldn't approach him because he was in jail, so they decided to start by just doing some location scouting in a number of different locations where this young man had lived. They did a geographical biography of this young man's life. Going from the place he was born to the different places where he lived, it occurred to Masao Adachi and Masao Matsuda, the anarchist theorist who was working with him, that perhaps there was something interesting in the landscape. I think they came from the belief that if this young man, who's name was Norio Nagayama, had killed randomly, it was probably not a random occurrence, but it had something to do with the environment in which he grew up and lived his life till the last point of alienation he must have felt.

And the source of this alienation had probably something to do with power structures in Japan in the sixties. That is how they developed this idea of the 'landscape theory', or *fūkeiron*, which consists in making a film about a human story, but turning the camera to the landscape that this person has experienced instead of towards the subject of the film himself. It is in a way a sort of circumscribing a subject by looking at the architecture and the landscape around it instead of the subject itself. The film that Adachi made using the landscape theory was called *A.K.A. Serial Killer*. After this film, he abandoned the theory.

I had this idea of turning the theory back on the theorist and said: what if I make a film about the theorist applying the theory that he developed? So I used this idea of landscape theory essentially to film the places in which Adachi lived by turning the camera towards the landscape that he experienced, but I wouldn't say I simply applied the landscape theory in my film. I would say that I was interested in testing the landscape theory in order to see what it tells us, what it teaches us. To be honest, I think it is a problematic theory, because it is very deterministic and the determinism of the landscape theory is something I am comfortable with, because it is going to reveal things: when the camera spends enough time scrutinizing a surface you are going to learn something. So there is obviously something very interesting about this theory, but I wouldn't say that I'm a practitioner of it.

Voice – Script – Public (In Public, The Public) – Collective – Cultural Production

I thought it would be nice to start with the film – which is called *Bete & Deise* (2012) and is still very, very fresh – but perhaps I can just speak a little bit about my method of working first. In general, I started working the way I do because of an interest in the voices of others and using them to make compositions. So, I invite people to join me at a film shoot, which can be a public occasion and may or may not be a live event. However, it always has a ‘live’ aspect to it. I invite these people to speak as themselves in various ways and through that I create what I call the ‘script’. This script develops during the shoot, which I consider to be the productive moment. This productive moment emerges collectively – you could think of them as ‘collective moments’. Sometimes this whole set up is a conversation about ‘collective trauma’ – which was very much the case in *Instruction* (2009), which addresses the question of how society perceives a moment of trauma afterwards. *Instruction* is a work I did on the war of independence in Indonesia, which was formerly a colony of the Netherlands. This particular war is a topic that is very difficult to speak about in the Netherlands. The work is much more about what makes it so difficult to discuss than it is about that war itself. I will come back to this later.

For certain works, I use existing sources to prepare a script in advance. This script is, in a way, used to activate that particular history and elaborate on its relationship to the present. The works themselves are moments of trying to work through something, whereby, in my opinion, it may become an active process of elaboration. Let’s call it something between research and elaboration. And by ‘the work itself’ I mean: when we are working – the moments of production when I get these other people involved. I had a script in *Instruction*, which is immediately visible to the audience. Here are some stills from the work where someone is clearly reading from a piece of paper. In the work that I would like to show you now, I left out this idea of the piece of paper and reading in public, but used other methods of setting things in motion.



Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *Bete & Deise*, 2012.

It is still a similar *modus*, whereby moments from the past are called upon and brought to the present through this act of filming and this act of conversation. For instance, one interest that shaped this work is: What is on-camera presentation? What can it mean in relation to our reality, or to our being? This on-camera presentation has something to do with acting, but also not. In this day and age, it also carries a certain promise, for instance, of being made future work or earning money from being in front of a camera. Nowadays, people seem strongly drawn in by the promise of fame that occurs with the presence of a camera. Taking the place of ‘work’, the camera mediates this promise. For me, the involvement of the camera creates the moment in which we will produce the work, which is not only meant as a collective moment with a certain output or result, but is also a moment of working through something together: a moment of possible transformation.

The work we are going to see is the final part of a trilogy that I started in 2009. Central issues in this trilogy include: the notion of voice, public voice, cultural production, and those as they pertain to work and women. The notion of cultural production here has two levels – it has to do with me as someone who is involved in cultural production, but also the people I invite into the works in relation to that. In the film that we are going to see, two women meet in Rio de Janeiro in an old house that is being transformed into something new. The women come from different eras of struggle, but also different classes. They are alike in their involvement in popular cultural production, but I was also interested in addressing their differences in terms of political presence. The older one, Bete Mendes, is a famous telenovela actress. The telenovela is a very prominent and popular art form in South America and can be described as something akin to the soap opera. Bete was very active in movements against the dictatorship in the sixties, when she was also a successful young actress in early telenovelas. Within that context, something happened to her and she stopped being politically active for a while; however, in the late seventies, she returned to political activity with the labour movements. This was a very significant time period in Brazil because the labour struggle led to great political change. Bete Mendes also had an active role in the formation of a political party in the beginning of the eighties. It was named Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) and formed by a group of academics, intellectuals, and union leaders, including Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who later became president of Brazil. Additionally, Bete had a role in the National Congress in the mid eighties.

As you can see from her background, she had a clear relationship to change and politics at that time. Deise Tigrana, the younger woman, sings a very popular type of music called Baile Funk or Funk Carioca. In case you haven't heard of it: it's a very rough style of rap music that specifically comes from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and there was a moment when it had a particularly strong female presence. As a voice coming from this musical movement, that presence was very relevant. They sang extremely explicit sexual text that was also very much about themselves. So, Deise is younger than Bete, comes from a very different background, and in her case, I think that her political and artistic being are completely aligned. For Bete, on the other hand, I think that the political and the artistic exist on two different planes.

One final detail on this that might be nice to know: some of you know of the singer M.I.A. and her hit *Bucky Done Gone*. The sample that made that song so powerful actually came from a song by Deise Tigrana. M.I.A. bought the sample, giving Deise's career a huge boost. She comes from a very poor neighbourhood – a favela called Cidade de Deus. It is a very violent place, which you may know from the popular film *City of God* that came out a few years ago. This information is mainly just to give you a little background on these people and who they are.

In making this work, I am very interested in looking for and trying to figure out something surrounding a moment of collective struggle from the past alongside a comparable moment of collective struggle from today that looks very different and has a different form. It is the exploration of this difference that I tried to set in motion between these two women who clearly have differing relationships to the public self and the public political self.

Cultural Production: The Filmic Image – Cinema

I would now like to contextualise the film work by first showing you a small part of a ten minute film from 1968 that is sometimes described in filmmakers' circles as an example of how cinema can potentially relate to reality and transformation. This film is a very simple recording of a moment that in itself could have been revolutionary. It was filmed in Paris by students of the film academy who wanted to capture the strikes of 1968 as they occurred.

They went to the suburbs with a ten-minute role of 16mm film and they caught the moment when the workers were going back into a factory after weeks of striking and negotiations with the bosses. The film is called *La Reprise du Travail aux Usines Wonder* (Return to Work at the Wonder Factory).

The central figure, a woman who embodies the idea of change and the fight for this change, is both a character of political fiction and yet completely real at the same time. With her physical appearance and on-camera presence, she is also a reference to the female presence in the cinema of that time, which effects the value of this document. Amongst other things, I am looking at this for a certain quality that I experience as being ‘cinematic’ – something that makes the magic of film; something I would like to achieve in the works I make, but without turning to the pre-existing rules on how that is done. Instead, I want to see if it can start to appear from something ‘real’ that is always rediscovered in the process.

In a lecture that I recently attended in Brussels, the philosopher Jacques Rancière mentioned that: ‘The power of cinema is the power of a singular condensation: the surface of the moving image. Entirely true and at the same time entirely fake.’

Cultural Production: Voices – Public Voices

When I was working on the piece at the beginning of the series that ends with *Bete & Deise*, I wanted to look at the effects of the changes we are experiencing in what we call ‘work’. I came across some women who perfectly represented the shift from the Fordist model of labour to the post-Fordist model. The post-Fordist forms of labour are more performative and can be seen as being modelled on cultural professions. These women had been working in the Levi’s factory until they were forced to leave their jobs when Levi’s stopped all production in northern Europe.

This was in the late nineties, rather than the eighties, which was a more common time for these factories to shutdown. The group of women that worked at this jeans factory was actually incredibly powerful and thought that they could win the battle against Levi’s. So, for months and months, they struggled collectively, but in the end they lost the battle.



Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *Après la reprise, la prise*, 2009.

After they lost their jobs, some of them were approached by a man who wanted to make a theatre production of their story. At first he offered them a series of writing workshops, the results of which he would use as the basis for a script. Later, he asked five women to actually be in this theatre production, which meant that some of them became actresses. They toured throughout France and Italy with the piece for two years and it was so successful that it led to professional acting careers.

While the French word *reprise* means ‘to go back to work’, it also means ‘re-take’ in film terms, just as *la prise* means ‘the take’ or ‘the shot’ (of a film). For the title of this piece, I played with these different meanings to refer back to the film that I came across in my research, as well as the more recent moment when this story happened, and also the moment of filming that I had created to elaborate on the recent past. *Après la reprise, la prise* (2009) was the result of inviting two of the women that became actresses to meet a group of young students who might have become factory workers in another era. We set up to film this meeting and all of the other scenes in their school. Imagine these women who became actresses after they had been seamstresses in a factory for years. Imagine the difference in their work in these two moments.

Since they were already actresses, they were the perfect people to invite for such a project. Just like with *Bete & Deise*, I did not prepare a script for this. I just set up some scenes for them to react to or to enter into a dialogue. I let the contrast between their sense of collectivity and sense of presence – the younger ones having a very strong sense of the latter – take the centre stage.

It is important to point out that this piece ended up as a set of analogue slides. They are still images with slow transitions between them and are edited together with the dialogue that took place. However, all of the material was shot on film. Just to give you an insight into the process: the day of filming is a very important event. It is what I call the 'productive moment'. It is the moment when something happens. Afterwards, I take on a large editorial role by then forming the 'script' out of what happened during shooting. The stills are taken from the filmed material, which originally had time and movement.

It's a bit difficult to get a full sense of the piece, but there is a sort of alternating between scenes where the women are talking about their struggle and how they dealt with it, and scenes where the students are expressing their way of thinking about the collective. The students do not articulate things together as a group – they do not share a voice like the women did. The women shared in this struggle, came to a response together, and then expressed it collectively. They came together as one voice. With the younger generation, it is more like they have their individual voices and they talk, talk, talk, but actually they just babble. They have another method of 'voicing' something that seems to be much stronger for them: how they put themselves forward; their physical presence. The scene in the mirror tries to capture that. They look at each other and they talk about their looks. If one thinks about street image today and how we become acquainted with certain groups, it is largely through the ways these groups or individuals present themselves in public.

Production: Collective – Performance

A year after making *Après la reprise, la prise*, I went to São Paulo to produce a work for the São Paulo Biennial. I was thinking about globalisation and how it occurs in different parts of the world. For instance, being very aware of the northern European situation, I thought that the production of jeans, which Levi's took out of Europe, might have moved to Brazil because it would be cheaper there. However, that was not the case. When I initially visited a jeans factory in Brazil to see if Levi's had taken production there, I found out that they had previously been there, but already moved on. Global textile production had already moved much further to much cheaper areas.



Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *Pertinho de Alphaville*, 2010.

Brazil had a very strong labour movement and is not the cheapest place of production. As explained earlier, that labour movement from the end of the seventies had an effect on the whole society. Keeping that in mind and wanting to continue looking at how the new models of work might have affected subjectivity somewhere else, I went into a factory and took a look around.

The particular factory that I visited is located very near to a place called Alphaville. This fun fact served as a direct motivation to go there – with *Alphaville* being the title of Jean Luc Godard's 1965 film, it seemed close to being part of the cultural baggage and cultural production. Its connection to *Alphaville* was a noteworthy element of the piece, but this factory was particularly interesting because it was run by a woman director, which is quite unusual in Brazil. Furthermore, it had undergone large changes very recently, having gone from a quite massive operation to a much smaller one in 2008. I will be showing you one particular clip of the work that is in the same format as *Après la reprise, la prise*, namely a slide installation. In the clip, there is a moment when the owner talks about how, when the factory shrank to its much smaller operation, they started only producing jeans for their own shop, which they opened inside the factory. On top of that, they had decided

– just before I came to film – that they were going to move their last workers into the middle of the shop, so that the customers could see these women perform their work. There were only 15 women left to sew the jeans. In this way, performative labour can be seen in a very different light. It was quite spectacular in some ways.

I collaborated with all of the women who worked in the factory – from the seamstresses to the director. I also collaborated with a woman who works in the theatre where I filmed some of this project. What you will now see and hear is a conversation between them. The woman from the theatre talks to one of the seamstresses. At the end, there is a conversation between two girls who work in the office and you hear their idea of what their ‘work’ is and how it’s changing nature has a lot to do with the importance of the ‘image’.

Voices – Connections

To wrap up the evening, I would like to refer back to *Instruction*, which I mentioned right at the beginning, because there are connections that may not be so obvious. The kind of globalisation processes that I try to think about – as well as the idea of how subjectivity is produced – all have a great deal to do with the past and how things and places were related in the past. Therefore, we can see that these works, which I made in relation to our colonial past and our present relationship to it, are not necessarily unrelated to the works I am producing now that relate to processes of change.

The main text *Instruction* was based upon was the transcription of a television programme that came out in 1969. It was not for nothing appearing in that period. The television show involved an interview with an ex-soldier who spoke about the distressing events in the Indonesian War of Independence in which he had fought 20 years earlier. This created an incredibly tense moment in the Netherlands, where a lot of protesting against the Vietnam War was going on at the same time. So, it was a wonderful moment for these things to come out after 20 years of silence. I found it interesting to work with this particular television programme because it is a moment when things got exchanged through the media. As such, I was not looking directly at the past, at the war and its excesses, but looking at the moment in which there was something being excavated in the media about that past.



Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *Instruction*, 2009.

It's worth noting that the Vietnam War was very much the same type of guerilla war as the Indonesian War of Independence between 1946–1949. However, the Vietnam War was highly criticised around 1969 and there was a great deal of uproar about it, whereas, prior to that TV programme, no one had mentioned the Indonesian War of Independence. Furthermore, after that moment in 1969, the subject was carefully put away again. Even now, the military academy uses examples of guerrilla warfare from the Vietnam War and not from the Dutch equivalent, even though it is the same in many respects.

As a final detail, I would just like to mention that the voices I worked with for *Instruction* are students of the military academy. They are training to be officers. They are young – the same age as the boys that were sent to the war in 1946–1949. Many young people were sent out to battle at the time.

My particular interest in their voices was two-fold: not only are they training to be officers in the present-day military and having thoughts and doubts about their moral position in that, but they also happen to be the same age as many young men and women that are being sent to any war and getting caught up in very, very stressful situations where their moral judgement is put to the test. Now I will just show you a small clip of this text from the TV programme being used.

They read the transcript and afterwards react from their own perspective. Sometimes they are surprised that these things happened and sometimes they are confused about how to relate this past and their particular position. These reactions are a product of their being in the middle of it.

Maybe it is also important to point out that I filmed this work inside of the academy, which was quite an interesting event. Part of the production process is to find a way to get access and support or permission for work within the institution. One could easily just go outside and make all sorts of work that could later be projected onto an institution, but I find it much more interesting to work from within. Of course, it wasn't all that easy to get this off the ground. I think I got lucky and it was an unusual situation when the man responsible for our admittance took up the challenge of letting me do this. He was constantly controlling the situation, but I think he was curious at the same time – curious about what would come of this filmmaking event.

Memory and Migration

Don't Stop in the Dark

Trans-event, boundary event: perhaps this is how I could situate my work. For me, that which is cinematic, poetic, and political *thrives* at the boundaries of cinema, poetry, and politics. Yet, few art works deal with the boundaries of art rather than functioning merely as instrument for self-expression or for information. Films and installations are all experiences of limits – or of the boundless within the bound. Each is realised at the borders of several cultures, genres, or realms (visual, musical, verbal, for example); each constitutes in its own way a questioning of these borders.

The Politics of Forms and Forces

Power relations lay at the core of normative representations. The politics of form can neither be reduced to the series of '-isms' that mark social and artistic movements, nor equated with questions of genre, style and composition, or representation. Form in its radical sense should address the formless, as it ultimately refers to the processes of life and death. Affirming form is recognising the important contribution of each vibrant life as a continual creative process. All the while, letting form go is acknowledging our own mortality – or the necessity to work with the limits of every instance of form. In these times of ending and returning postcolonial struggles, postmodern recovery, and 'green sustainability' (to use some trendy terms), artists working in third intervals, at the margins of mainstream productivity would have to be at once very primitive and very cultured. Awkwardly, efficiently 'low' and competently, unfittingly 'high'; shuttling effortlessly between the *avant-* and *arrière-garde* and surfing in and out from the middle, between all fixed extremities. Socially marginalised groups could thus be both provocatively high-tech, and defiantly vernacular.



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Night Passage*, 2004.

Remember the rules of night passage. Don't stop in the dark or you'll be lost. Move to the rhythm of your senses. Go where the road is alive', said a character in *Night Passage*, a feature film I co-directed with Jean-Paul Bourdier in 2004. The crossroads are where the dynamics of film events lie. They are empty centres, thanks to which an indefinite number of paths can converge and part in a new direction. Inter-, multi-, post- and trans-: these are the pre-fixes of our times. They define the before, after, during and between of social and ethical consciousness. Each has a history and a seemingly precise moment of appearance, disappearance and re-appearance. Although bound to specifics, they are, in fact, all related as trans-event.

In ancient African and Asian 'arts', if composition, legibility, or resemblance never really constitute the criteria for true artistic work, it is mainly because – rather than abiding by form or content – emphasis is laid on the 'breath' that animates a work and brings it to life. In my practice, such a work remains attentive to its own 'nature', to the movement of its unseen undercurrents, and to its continual processes of formation and de-formation. Highly attuned to moments of transition and to the transience of visible realities, it is free to move between genres, between the photographic realism of mainstream films, the anti-representative materiality of experimental films and the anti-photographic of virtual reality.

As is known from analyses of the film world, there are two distinct Western avant-gardes: one based on the tradition of the visual arts, and the other, on the tradition of theatre and literature. Working at hiding the stage, mainstream narratives are all theatre; it is with money power (in buying locations and expertise) that they naturalise their artifices. (It suffices to listen to these narratives without looking at the pictures to realise how much they remain entrenched in 'acting' and theatrical delivery.). Experimental films, in contrast, borrow so heavily from painting and plastic arts that they're often conceived in negative reaction, against anything considered to be impure to their vision – such as the verbal dimension and other non-visual concerns.

In playing with both traditions of the avant-garde, my work continues to raise questions about the social and political dimensions of form. Not only is it at odds with classifications such as documentary, fiction, or film art, it also explicitly explores the fluid relation of infinity within the finite. To use an image, it is not only the shape or the flowers and fruits of a plant that matter, it's the sap that runs through it.

Every visual manifestation is experienced as being at once definite in its structural condensation and indefinite in the fluidity of its spirit. In tuning in to the forces of a life event, one can say that form is attained only to address the formless. Working with an ear and eye for the empty field of possibilities and potentials allows one to remain in touch with the infiniteness of a form that is also no form. Rather than merely speaking of production of images or of meaning, one can approach image making as a net of under – and crosscurrents – a manifesting of forces.

When reality starts speaking to us differently, it leads to what I've called *an elsewhere within here*. My films and installations are made to shift our perception of reality and experience images as immersed in the whole of our body. This is aesthetics radical force. Indeed, without an awareness of its social and existential dimension, aesthetics remains largely conventional and normative. In realising an installation or a film event, I work less with digital per se than with the way of the digital. It is not a question of producing a non-human, automated vision, nor that of turning every live action image into data for manipulation and special effect purposes. Understanding what is radical to digital imaging allows one to work differently with the experience of film and imaging, while soliciting from the viewer *a new seeing*.

Seeing Sounds Hearing Images

Experimenting with words, images and sound, I find myself constantly struggling with the limits of both language and image. Certain viewers have related to my films and installations as to musical scores, others have repeatedly used the terms 'poetic', 'sculptural', 'spatial', and 'architectural' to describe them. The film *Naked Spaces, Living is Round* has, for example, been compared to an Indian musical raga, while *Reassemblage* was said, in its use of silences, to induce in the viewers a state where 'they see sounds and hear images'. Form and content are inseparable in my work, for they are *both* equally historical and plastic. Here, reality in its social and historical dimension is not a material for artistic reflection or political commitment; it is what powerfully draws one to cinema and yet cannot be captured without dissolving itself in its fragile essence when one approaches it without subtlety and vulnerability. As stated in *Reassemblage*, but realised in all aspects of my film practice, 'I do not intend to speak about, only [to speak] near by.'

The making of each work transforms the way I see myself and the world around me. Once I start engaging in the process of making a film or in any artistic excursion, I am also embarking upon a journey whose point of arrival is unknown to me. The work here is a gift. Whether it is worth passing it on or not depends on whether it succeeds in taking me elsewhere from where I started out. Because my work has often proven to be disturbing in the way it unsettles old viewing and thinking habits, and because of the ensuing hostility it has encountered, I have had to learn to speak lucidly about it. But, for me, intentions and preconceived ideas have a very limited role in the creative process. Most fascinating are the impasses, the blind procedures, the magical accidents, the unwanted discoveries, as well as the time wasted, the useless moves, the resonances generated despite one's wishes and unknown to oneself in advance, hence unforeseeable to the performers and to the viewers during the unfolding of time on screen (film or video).

In these works where the boundaries of either film or art are pushed, viewers often find themselves at a loss – in a foreign land that puts them in a state of heightened uncertainty as to what they are *really* seeing or hearing. For example, time, spatial relations, voice, and rhythm, are for me some of the most revealing elements in image and sound work.



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage*, 1982.

Whether one is conscious of it or not, rhythm marks one's experience of film. A commentary, a dialogue in film is first viewed and felt as a rhythm, a sound, and a colour before it takes on a meaning. So, in conceiving an image, a shot, or a sequence, one is working with rhythm above all. However, for me, rhythm is also not synonymous with action or editing, nor is it a mere aesthetic device.



Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage*, 1982.

Gertrude Stein wrote about acquiring the rhythm of a person's personality by listening, seeing, and feeling. Rhythm is what nonverbally determines the quality of a relationship – between and within each component of the sound image. It should convey a multiplicity of experiences between what is seen and what is heard; experiences in which neither the word is ruled by the image, nor the image by the word; and hence, experiences which can continually shift one's ground in one's perception of people and events.

Multiplicity and The Transcultural

In the process of visualising reality, if cultural, as well as gender, sexual, and racial diversities have always been an important part of the criteria for selecting crew and cast, story and subject, location and geopolitical context, they were not upheld for their own sake. What I find infinitely more challenging is to work on and from multiplicity. The term, as used here, should be neither equated with liberal pluralism nor confused with multiculturalism as taunted by the mainstream media. In normalising diversity, multiculturalism remains deceptively colour-blind and utterly divisive.

Its bland melting-pot logic denies the racism and sexism that lies at the core of biopower and biopolitics. Rather than having difference treated as mere conflict, in my work difference comes with the art of spacing and is creatively trans-cultural. Here *trans-* is not merely a movement across separate entities and rigid boundaries, but one in which the traveling is the very place of dwelling (and vice versa), and leaving is a way of returning home – to one's most intimate self. Cultural difference is not a matter of accumulating or juxtaposing several cultures whose boundaries remain intact. The crossing required in the transcultural undermines fixed notions of identity and border, and questions 'culture' in its specificity and its very formation.

Multiplicity further defines the time-space in which the different elements of the visual and sonic fabric (images, graphics, words, music, and environmental sounds) are woven. Their expansive relation in my works is not one of domination and subordination. Ear and eye, for example, never duplicate one another. They interact in counterpoints, syncopations, off beats, and polyrhythms, to borrow some musical terms. Rhythm is the base from which form is created and undone. It determines both social and sensual relationships. In the play of hear and see, silence and sound, stillness and movement, the hearing eye and the speaking ear are constantly at play, and form and formless are the two facets of a single process – or of life and death.

The Seismographic Needle

A creative journey cannot in any way be repeated. This is the impasse I've always faced with each project. One experiences a micro-death with the completion *and* the birth of each work. And it is this death that allows one to go toward things always as if for the first time. Aside from wishing to transform and to be transformed in creating – to sensitise people to other ways of experiencing film and art and, as such, of letting reality speak – I also hope that the circulation and exhibition of my work will contribute to redefining the notion of 'audience', by which people tend to confuse marketing power and standardisation of needs with the ability to speak across boundaries of language, class, gender, and culture, for example. For people working in media networks, the notion of the 'general public' has no reality; it is all a question of audience targeting in the process of commodification. There is, therefore, more than one way to understand what a 'wide audience' is: in terms of quantity (according to sales opportunities) or in terms of ability to offer different

experiences to different social groups among viewers, for example. It is the latter that I continue to explore, for in the context of experimentation, both knowing and not knowing to whom one is addressing one's work can leave one trapped in a form of escapism; despite one's resistance to the mainstreaming of art, one cannot continue to protect oneself by remaining safely within identified limits.

Each work made is, for me, a bottle thrown into the sea. By exploring the limits of known and unknown audiences, I am bound to modify these limits, the demarcations of which change with each work and remain unpredictable to me. Unlike commercial work or straight oppositional work, critical artistic work offers neither an immediate solution nor immediate gratification. They are not immediately useful or effective, but can act in the long term, haunting their viewers, changing their perception of life. As filmmaker Robert Bresson nicely put it, 'to be original is to wish to be like everybody else without ever succeeding to do so'.

It is said that the artist is like a seismographic needle – one who feels the slightest changes that occur around him/her with acute intensity, one who remains keenly alert to what tends to go unnoticed or to be taken for granted in daily life. Artists are often threatened by the common opinion that a society can do well without art and that their activities in urgent political situations are of little value. But throughout the course of history, across cultures and nations, one also knows that the artist's activity is considered suspect because it disturbs the status quo or the comfort and security of stabilised meanings and normalised practices.

I believe one should struggle on the front where one is best. Art is a form of production. Aware, however, that oppression can be located both in the story told and in the telling of the story, an art critical of social reality neither relies on mere consensus nor does it ask permission from ideology. The works I have been producing can be viewed in general as different attempts to deal creatively with cultural difference (the difference both *between* cultures and *within* a culture). They seek to enhance our understanding of the heterogeneous societies in which we live, while inviting the viewer to reflect on the conventional relation between supplier and consumer in media production and spectatorship.

Sahara Chronicles

Let me start by saying that I use investigative video and fieldwork as a form of artistic practice. I have been mostly interested in transnational and extra-territorial spaces, such as container harbours, tourist resorts, and refugee camps. In that sense, I have been focusing on spaces that are constituted by the movement of people. Although I have followed a wide range of modes of migration and the aesthetics they produce or in which they inscribe themselves, my talk today focuses on two projects: *Sahara Chronicle* from 2006-2007 and *Contained Mobility* from 2004.

With the creation of the Schengen space and its new border regimes in the nineties, the Maghreb countries and the entire Sahara basin experienced a major transformation. For decades, the Maghreb region has traditionally sent migrant workers to Europe, but with the sub-Saharan migration traversing the Maghreb, the region has now been transformed into a transit space and even a space for receiving migration. This process has reconfigured the entire geography of Northern Africa. *Sahara Chronicle* aims to capture this period of change.

The news media have a very peculiar way of representing clandestine migration to Europe. They direct their spotlight on the failure of the stranded migrants (the 'Naufragés') and, by the same token, celebrate police efforts in which transgressors are successfully apprehended; victorious passages go undocumented. The media tend to condense reality into a symbol, creating images of urgency and emergency that freeze the person into the still picture – into one dramatic frame. Rather than taking a victimising or even a judgmental approach to migration, the aim of this video project was to simply document migration related activities in an unexcited manner. *Sahara Chronicle* is not about migration stories of difficult routes and failed hopes, it's not about listening to the migratory experience. What this project does instead is take a systemic approach to migration.



I have noticed a certain fascination with these geographies of power among artists, particularly for the new technologies of border control. However, I feel that even if you take a critical stand towards these visions of control, you cannot help but to reproduce and perpetuate them. Instead, I have focused on geographies of resistance, or counter-geographies, as I call them, in an effort to record moments where control does not work; where migrants undermine the efforts of authorities; where they effectively go around, beneath, or above control structures.

Over the course of three years, I made five fieldtrips to the major gates and nodes of the trans-Saharan migration network in Morocco, Niger, Libya, Mauritania, and Senegal and started producing an indefinite number of short video documents. I visited several pivotal sites, like gates and nodes in the transportation system. My focus is on migration as a social practice and as an interaction with other fellow travellers, as well as with locals. In the process of creating this network, migrants have developed a very complex type of topographic knowledge, organisation, and systems of communication.

What I will talk about is the menu of the DVD with a collection of 12 videos that document different forms of migratory movements and how they are organised. One of the points I am trying to make, not only in this project but also in previous videos like *Black Sea Files* on the Caspian oil geography, is that migration is not a solitary isolated event, but always occurs in connection with other flows of data, capital, and resources. We know this in theory, as there is a lot of good theory on space available to us, but there are not very many artworks that really make an effort to make that connection. In the Sahara, it's striking to see that the most important nodes of migration also happen to be the sites of uranium mining, iron and phosphate extraction, and of industrial fishery catering to European consumption.

Let's look at a first clip of Agadez, a desert town in the heart of Niger, which was the first destination on my field trip. Agadez is the southern gate to the Sahara and an important logistical centre. And, of course, it's the capital of the Tuareg, the nomadic tribe that secures the migration routes through the desert. What we see in the first clip is the central piece of this *Sahara Chronicle* project.

The video was shot in the courtyard of a trans-Saharan truck company. A next truck is being prepared and loaded for the passage to the Libyan border. It documents the moment of departure, a moment when everything is still possible. Agadez is the place where everyone has to find a means of transportation, make contact, and find 'brothers' to travel with because no one goes past Agadez alone. In this clip, I present the different figures in the illegal migration records in Agadez, from the young water bearer to the top coxer who runs the whole business. I'm doing here what I always do in my videos, i.e., link these micro politics on the ground with the macro level of theory and globality. What's interesting here is that they are already performing in the position between those levels themselves, because they are already part of a network of global dimension. Interestingly, the patron of the transportation company speaks about the fact that he brings the 'refoulés' (the rejected ones on the Libyan border) back with the same truck and gets two barrels of diesel oil from the Libyan military for it. On a local underground level, as well as on a high level of international diplomacy, migrants have become the object of negotiation. During my research, I found out that Germany has supplied Libya with desert drones to survey the southern border. I have made a request with the military department under Muammar Gaddafi to obtain some of these images, but received no reply. So I went ahead and created a simulation of the desert drone images. This is the second video, which is actually a fictional document.

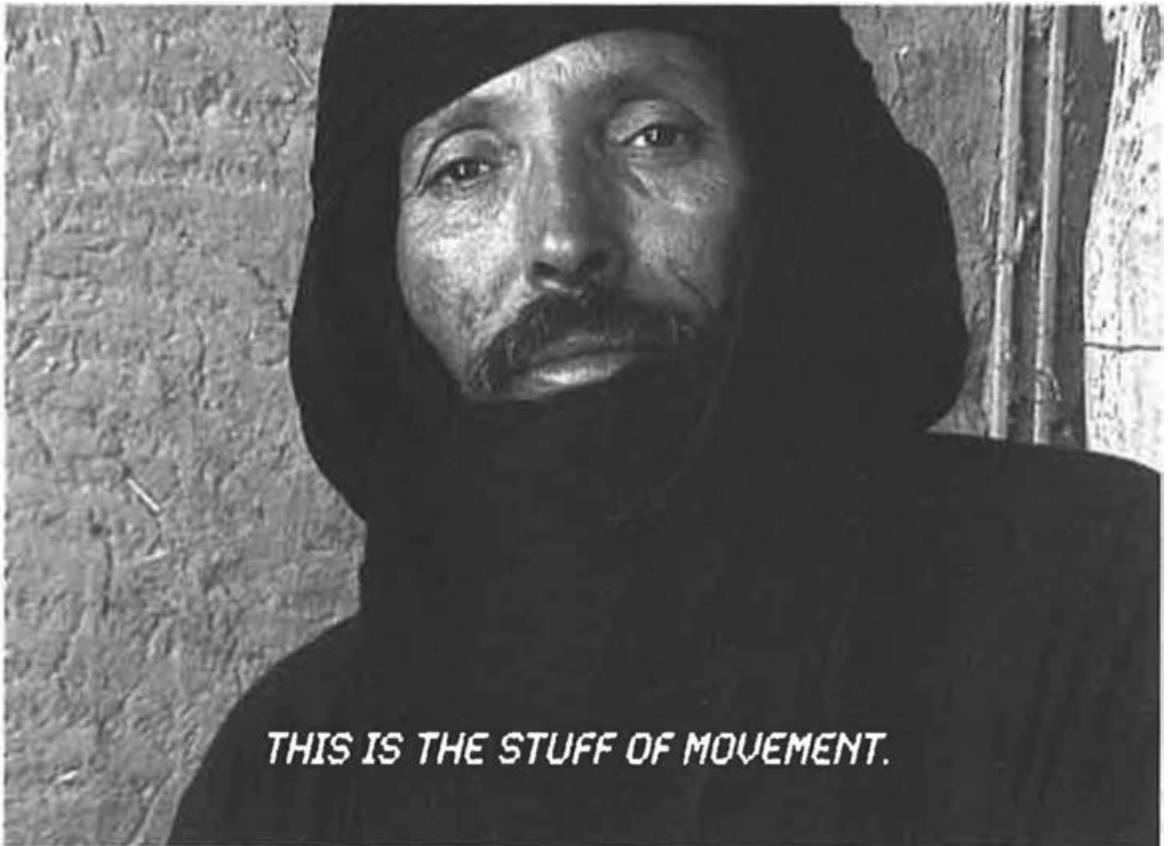
This section also gives me the opportunity to introduce a more theoretical discourse from this overall project. Clearly, this is also a sound piece, as it includes material from 15 different TV and radio stations in North Africa and the Middle East. My reason for doing this is that I felt that so much of migration is actually taking place in the virtual space; it's about digital information and control of migration, about sensors and visualisations, but also about the use of mobile phones. All these different technologies are used in order to move and track, and I felt that many aspects of migration could not be documented simply by making images on the ground. It became clear that if you were just standing in a field with your Sony camera, you would not capture the entire idea or field of migration – it needs an additional dimension and that is the reason for creating this signal territory. Nonetheless, it's obvious that this document has a different indexical relationship to reality than the other videos.



Ursula Biemann, *Sahara Chronicle, Radio Drome*, 2006-2007.

Now I would like to speak about the third video from *Sahara Chronicle*, which is an interview with the Tuareg who runs a migration line in Libya. He is based in a smaller town, Arlit, 200 kilometres north of Agadez where uranium was discovered in the sixties at the height of the cold war. This uranium mine was the reason for the start of the Tuareg rebellion in the nineties. Adawa was a rebel leader during that time and now he speaks of his activity as someone who moves of clandestine migrants. The first part of the interview is about his migration practice.

The second part of the interview is significant because the Tuareg territory was divided up during the partition of Africa in the late nineteenth century and the Tuareg people were turned into a minority in five countries, including Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali, and Chad. They live a transnational existence by definition, constituting a fairly connected transnational community. They also don't particularly identify with the nations that they are part of. Reviving their international ties is actually the reason why the migration network across the Sahara works so well today. Thus, it's not enough to simply ask why the migrants come, and it's not just a matter of poverty.



Ursula Biemann, *Sahara Chronicle. Intervista Adawa*, 2006-2007.

There are many other reasons why this vast system works, one of which has to do with the colonial practices regarding space that Adawa describes so well. I do believe that this video is a historical document because it speaks about a **specific moment in history where he is** the key figure. He also speaks about the **fact that the returning rebels, after signing** a piece treaty, were never socially integrated, but were on a kind of waiting list for full citizenship. These are things that we can hardly understand in Europe, where citizens' rights and nation states are very strong, whereas there are these semi or low intensity citizenships that don't give people proper civil rights throughout most of Africa.

Until recently, Africa enjoyed a politics of continental freedom of movement whereby any African could move to any other African country, settle down, find work, and build a community. Yet, with the creation of Schengen space, which abolished the European domestic borders and reinforced the borders on the outer rim, the Maghreb countries were asked to stem migration flows from the deeper south and requested visas for travellers coming through the desert. The freedom to move freely within Europe came at the price of immobility in Africa. Needless to say, African travellers were not pleased with the idea that they could not move through a space that they considered their legitimate zone of mobility.

These installation images show you what this video work looks like within a space. The project contains an undefined number of videos, which are never shown all at once, since there is always something unknown, hidden, and incomplete about clandestine migration. My preferred method of showing **them** is in the form of an **installation**, whereby **some videos are projected** and **others** can be viewed on **monitors**, creating a **multi-perspective audio-visual environment that can be inhabited by viewers in much the same way that the migration space is inhabited by the actors depicted. This proposes an installation in the art space that allows us to experience how a multiplicity of personal stories finally merge into a transnational system that unfolds in the minds of the viewers.**

In their loose interconnectedness and their widespread geography, *Sahara Chronicle* mirrors the migration network itself. It has no intention of constructing a homogenous, overarching, contemporary narrative of a phenomenon that has long roots in colonial Africa and is extremely diverse and fragile in its present social organisation and human experience.

The project includes ten photo-text panels made of photographic material that I received from the Royal Moroccan Gendarmerie in Laayoune, Western Sahara. The police make weekly surveillance flights through the desert to photograph the traces of migrants crossing. What they found are these **small mobile structures that the migrants built themselves. Surprisingly, they also found the skeletons of boats in the middle of the desert. These boats are being constructed in dunes because they can't use fishing boats on the shores anymore, as they are coded with numbers and their times of departure and return are strictly controlled.** In order to **get around the harbour controls**, local carpenters built boat kits for the migrants to be shipped into the middle of the **desert**, where they assemble them **together and then bring** them to the **shore**. So, from the aerial view, you see **many such boats**, finished and unfinished, and sometimes also the migrants acting as if they were dead **wood lying around**, hoping **that they will** not be **recognised as living beings.** **Here is a particularly touching image where you recognise an outline made of stones**, suggesting a garden or a place for prayer, as if the desert space is too immense for a human being to conceive of, so they create confines around the tent. The text on the panels tells this story. When the officers in the airplane spot **migrants**, they **send a** signal to the policemen on the **ground** and tell them to **capture** the migrants and burn the boats – end of story.



Ursula Biemann, *Sahara Panels*, 2005.

Sahara Chronicle is a project that has been developed in the context of a larger research project that I initiated called *The Maghreb Connection* involving scholars and artists from both sides of the Mediterranean. The idea was to research migration networks in the context of a network of cultural producers. Since the relationship between Europe and Maghreb is a post-colonial one, 'positionality' played an important role in our project. It was crucial to include artistic positions from North Africa; we also had an Algerian geographer and a Moroccan sociologist in the group, whose research focused on migration movements. *The Maghreb Connection* was first exhibited at the Townhouse Gallery in Cairo in December 2006. The exhibition later moved to the CCA in Geneva, was shown at the Bamako Biennale, and in Abidjan.



Ursula Biemann, *Contained Mobility*, 2004.

So, it was able to reach an African audience. As an independent video work, *Sahara Chronicle* has been exhibited in 25 countries so far, which demonstrates the immense interest among art audiences in engaging with questions of migration and borders, recognising artistic means as valid forms of engagement with social issues.

I would now like to discuss *Contained Mobility*, a project commissioned by the Liverpool Biennial in 2004. The Biennial expects artists to produce site-specific work, making reference to Liverpool. I was particularly interested in the port of Liverpool as a very big container harbour with a history of being the biggest slave harbour in England. Geographic information systems and vessel traffic information systems had just experienced a boom following 9/11. It was clear to me that these new surveillance systems not only affect the control of the flow of goods and containers, but also have an immediate effect on illegal migrants using the same venues. The piece is a synchronised two-channel video where these two forces, the migrant's desire for mobility and the will for control, are shown side by side.

In 20 minutes, the video tells the story of Anatol, who was born in the Siberian Gulag and travelled westwards as a child, spending most of his childhood in Belarus. In the nineties, he started to look for work and later tried to enter Europe through every possible frontier. He crossed every border, travelled through 15 different countries over green borders, stayed in countless refugee camps, and did many illegal things, but he actually manages to enter every country. And in the end, of course, he arrives in Liverpool.

This video is made of images that I filmed in Rotterdam harbour, visiting software companies for container traffic information systems and interactive navigation maps. I interviewed Anatol at length and set him up in a container – it's a *mise-en-scene*, he doesn't actually live there. He sits at the foldable desk, he eats, and goes to sleep, he performs daily activities.

What struck me when listening to Anatol's story is that he doesn't fit into that older mould of migration stories where you leave your country and move to another place, find work, settle down, and build a community. His is an endless journey, never reaching a destination, he is always moving on. He is living in a transnational, trans-local, post-humanist space. It's a different mode of being migrant, which I wanted to give form to with this piece. What interests me in his trajectory, again, is that it presents a geography of resistance, a counter-geography, because he resists every form of border control.

Timescapes and the Negative of Europe

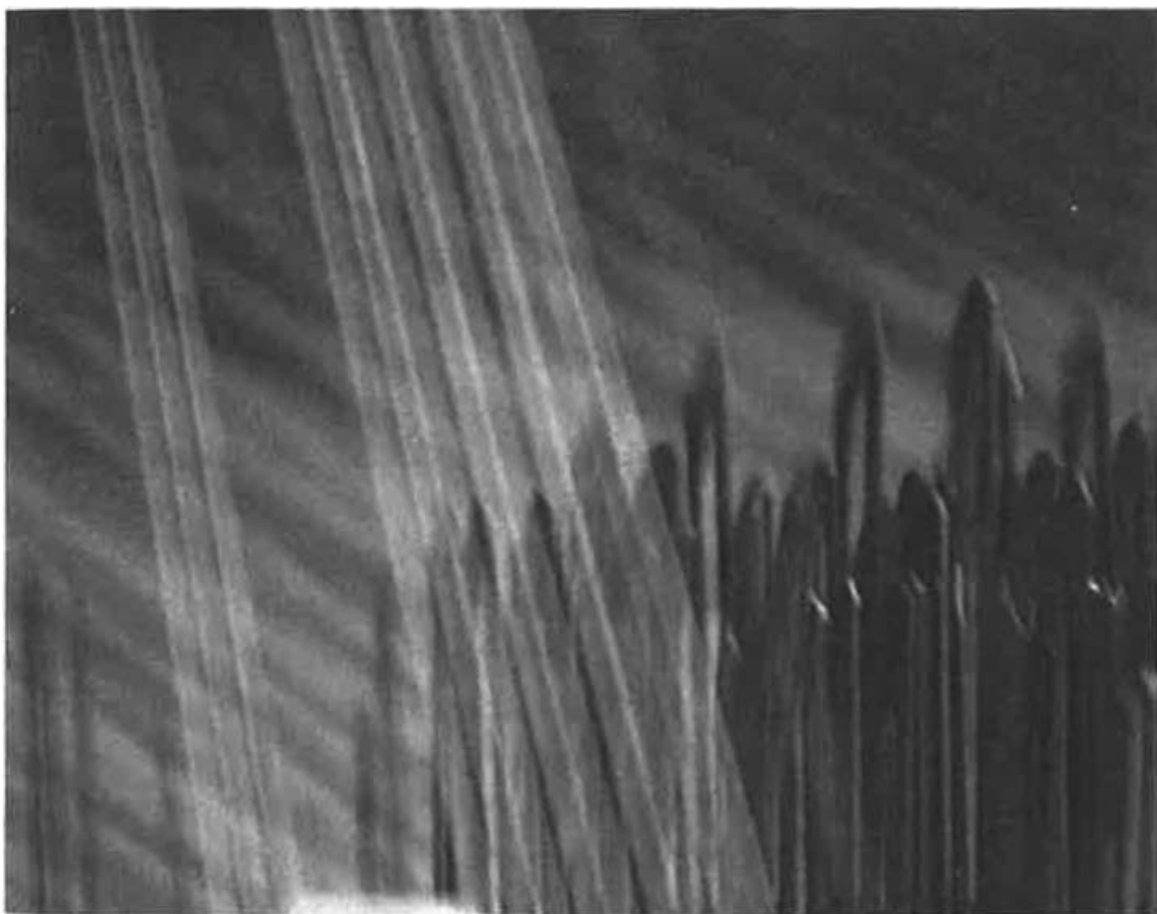
I started making video-works in order to record voices, which is something that refers to my experience with migration. The Greek side of my family has a refugee history that led them to cross Europe from Turkey to Greece to Vienna and then to Germany. I would argue that this type of migration – it was a real Exodus – is a work of memory that develops with the need to record and photograph the passage through the various locations. This can be recognised in my generation, but was already taking place with my parents' and my grandparents' generations. Taking pictures between two places, collecting photographs, archiving them, showing them from one place to the next, explaining one location in another location are all quite natural symptoms of migration – or of telling one's story through travel. My artistic practice since childhood has reflected this impulse to make pictures of the places that I pass through.

With the development of photography and video from the seventies to the eighties, when cameras became available to a larger group of people, another crossover took place: the constant recording and production of images creates a form of understanding the self that exists within a relationship to technology. The concept of the 'second-self with media' emerged during the eighties and has had a *de facto* influence on most of the trends of the video art movement in Europe and the United States. Today, it is quite obvious that it's not just a story of migration and escape, but also about tracing flight lines. If the most visited location in your flat is a computer screen, then the archive of your own history, of what you see, read and reflect with media, parallels your thinking. Your way of thinking and your ability to shape your subjectivity with media are essential.

The globe is enclosed in a sphere of images and sounds. These streams of information are called the 'Noosphere', a term derived from the Greek word 'Nous', which refers to the highest part of one's self. Forming a neologism, we can say that 'Noo-politics' is a politics of memory articulated through the digital video image.

In order to exemplify these ideas, I will refer to my project *Passing Drama* (1999), which started as a confirmation of my already established practice of making videos of places in cities. I would also like to refer to the phrase 'video is time', which my professor Nam June Paik used to say when I was at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Thus, the politics of memory are politics of temporality, i.e., noo-politics reflect on the concept of time. In the book *Videophilosophy* (1997), my friend and collaborator Maurizio Lazzarato develops on Henri Bergson's ideas as they relate to the image. **If we agree with the philosophy of this book and have an understanding of how memory works, then we can conclude that video technology simulates memory. Considering Bergson's ontology of time, we could say that the entire world is actually made up of time and time alone.** In 1896, Henri Bergson wrote an influential book entitled *Matter and Memory* in which he defines matter and memory as two distinct forms of time. Simply put, one is a material time in the form of a repetition and the other is a form for time, or a duration in which variations of time can be shaped. If we observe our own ways of thinking while being connected to the Noosphere and how our own brains work, then we can identify these two forms of remembering: one type of automatic memory and a type of living memory that is actively forming time. Bergson states that memory is a moment of the past that is inserted within the present. In a sense, it is the insertion of something that is dead into something that is alive. For Bergson, matter is a time sequence in which **each** passing moment is reproduced in the following moment. In turn, the **faculty** of human memory is **one** in which a moment can be formed by stretching or condensing time, thus constituting memory.

In *Videophilosophy*, Maurizio Lazzarato states that video **technology stimulates these functions of the brain.** On the one hand, there is **the camera recording**, the reproduction of a sequence – a temporary sequence – in which time is automatized: it corresponds to 50 frames a second and that consistency does not change. It is about the technological coding of light in an automatized process in **digital media.** On the other hand, you are **actually able to stretch and condense time and form a time sequence.** Stretching and condensing are also digital actions in scientific practices like the system of coding DNA.



Angela Melitopoulos, *Passing Drama*, 1999.

It is with these actions that the non-coded margins of code appear. *Passing Drama* is a project that attempts to address the memory of the refugees in my family. At the time of my research, it was a completely forgotten history. For example, my aunt didn't really know where my grandmother was born. This story is about refugees after World War who came from the Ottoman Empire, which spanned from Turkey to Greece. In 1923, 1.5 million refugees from Asia arrived in Greece and were relocated all over the country. My family came to a city called Drama. This exodus did not end in Drama: it continued in the Second World War, when many of the children of these refugees escaped the Bulgarian occupation and became 'forced workers' during the Nazi occupation in Vienna. After the Second World War, these Greek people in Vienna could not and did not want to go back to Greece because there was a civil war. Some, like my father, stayed in Vienna and then moved to Germany. Later, in the fifties and sixties, many of these refugees from Asia Minor that had become Greek, migrated from Northern Greece to Germany and became the first group of migrant workers in factories and other jobs after the war. However, with that next move and arrival in Germany in the sixties, their whole history from before the First and Second World War was erased.

In the first half of the 20th century, politics of population exchange and population movements were enforced by the Treaty of Lausanne from 1923, but these facts do not tell the story of what historically or politically happened to millions of refugees on their exodus. Without no historical reconstructions, archival, or historical research being made by Turkey, Greece, Vienna or Germany – without open archives – the tragic and traumatizing history of these people has only been passed down verbally within families and communities. The story was told from one generation to the next: from my grandparents to my father to me and my brother. Each time the story of this transition was told by one generation to the next, it was also embedded in the story of a new transition from one country to the next. This process of passing a story from one generation to the next indicates that the story is told and retold again and again in a different situation each time. And each time it is told, the listener inscribes his understanding into the story. That being said, the story that travelled through my family was never official. According to the nation-state, their political, social, and existential story did not exist. Their position as storytellers was constantly in conflict with and overwritten by the official version of the history. If your position is constantly being overwritten, how can you make it a political one?

How do you know that it should concern a mass movement of people like those refugees after the World Wars who have still not gained their political position in Europe? Therein lie the politics of memory as I see it.

It is a history of genocide and ethnic cleansing that cannot be told because there is no possibility of expressing and articulating it in political society. This was the most problematic part of this work: how does one tell the story of 1.5 million refugees, later growing to three or four million during the Second World War, that moved across Europe? This history could not be fully referenced within the testimonies of individuals. Each protagonist in *Passing Drama* had a different geographic path and a different narrative. How can all of these different narratives become a history?

While researching for this film in 1999, I had to make some radical decisions. One of which was that I was not going to make a documentary; I would not reconstruct a missing history or try to speak for a group of people in terms of ethnicity. Instead I turned to what was available and referred to the understanding of sound. I referred to how this story 'sounded' to me: the auditory shape of my family history. *Passing Drama* is the sound-picture translated into images. These voices have resisted an erasing process of history. But how does one tell a story of people whose forgetting of yesterday has mixed with the forgetting of today? How does one deal with the process of forgetting when recording and writing something against that forgetting? I will name two concepts I was working with that are based on the ideas of Henri Bergson: first, the idea that the present is the most condensed of all past times that exist simultaneously and second, that the present is the actualisation of all past times. Storytelling as a process of memory that is actualised in speech is the most condensed time, meaning that a word in that speech points to a 'thousand plateaus'. So, I was not trying to make a documentary or a reconstruction. I watched these images and interviews that I had recorded on different locations along the migration route and I started to inscribe the process of looking onto the images and sound over and over again. When I saw a detail in the image and remembered or recalled another, I recorded my slowing down or drifting away into the other image by compressing or stretching the automatised video time from 25 images a second to a dynamic time sequence and then I recorded this process of inspecting the images more closely onto a new tape. At a certain point in the video, one of the protagonists says: 'In 24 hours we had to leave our houses'. This is a sentence that, of course, not only applies to these people and at the same time that I was recording it, there was the war in Yugoslavia that was exactly the same story.

How does one trace this kind of repeating structure of a migration, of exodus, of genocide and history that is not part of the official history? How does one trace these personal insights without making a one-sided history out of it? For me, there is always something in the voices that contains more than the text. So, with these interviews, I did the following: I tried to understand the way the people spoke. There were some phrases in these voices that were different from other phrases in other voices because they had a kind of melody that was quite like a song. I understood that this was the case because they had been repeated from one generation to the next, again and again and again. So, it was the history of these people from within the families. It was actually a history that was around 30 sentences long, 30 collective sentences that were repeated and repeated. Sentences like stones. It is a 66-minute video. The second phase of the film was edited after having processed the material with the dynamic motion control of analogue video with one that could build different levels of image speed or image reading speeds. These created different speeds related to a distinct generation of the telling of the story. From the third, to the second, and so on, back to the actual occurrence. I selected sentences of testimonies about the exodus based on vocal melodies.



After that, I loaded all of the materials into the computer and started assembling sequences that weaved places, imagined places, and places imagined over generations into a perspective starting from real time. The digital machine as a weaving machine can be seen as a representation of a work place, as these refugees in Greece after 1923 became workers in the textile industries; however, the weaving machine mainly serves to structure the narrative itself. The images of weaving machines in *Passing Drama* describe a history of machines (the industrial weaving machine is a precursor of the digital machine) that became the mnemonic structure of the story. It also describes the industrialisation of Greece that was achieved by force through the economic misery that these refugees suffered. In a way, workplaces structure the potentials of our memory and our capacity to express it. On top of that, the refugee is an excellent storyteller, because living and creating a narrative are vital to each other.

After 1923, refugees in Greece that were survivors of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, as the exodus from Turkey was called, worked in the tobacco and the textile industry. Weaving is a non-linear process where you can follow multiple threads. In weaving, you can make a thread visible or invisible by placing it in the foreground or background.



The narrative is not a history of people going from one place to the next, but rather a history that shows how one place interacts with the next – how one thread is linked to another and how one level of intensity and its effect on us can transition into another. It's about the transition between different levels, how something comes to mind, and how something disappears even if it is a fundamental experience on a larger scale of history. Transitions have a microscopic physical moment that shapes the mnemonic narrative. They relate to the physicality engendered within a relationship to machines. I believe that we will have a history based on mnemonic concepts associated with machines in our future – all types of machines and not just the ones producing images.

The film evolves from a sort of texture to a known frame of reality. One problem was that some of the images had various levels of significance for me, but I could not tell if this significance would make sense to others who had never experienced a radical displacement. Consequently, after *Passing Drama*, I developed another collective editing project that focuses on the concept of how an image produced in one place is understood by someone living somewhere else. The first gesture of *Timescapes* (2005) was to choose a specific geography. Once again, I chose the same geographical line between Germany, Greece and Turkey.

In maps of Southeast Europe from the end of the 19th century, you can already see the railway connection between Berlin and Baghdad that was known as the Baghdad Railway project. This line of the Baghdad railway shaped my biography because was part of my childhood travel back to Greece every year. Simultaneously, it is the geographical line shaping a collective memory of the first and second generation of migrants in Western Europe. Greek, Turkish, and Bulgarian migrants travelled together along that same path for a few days every summer before the Yugoslavian Wars began, as it is also a road that was constructed to create unity in Yugoslavia. The Brotherhood and Unity Highway (or *Autoput*, as it used to be called) is a national project developed by Tito that was intended to help create the Yugoslavian identity by connecting all of the republics and it recalls two of the three concepts of French Revolution. This same road is in one of the European 'corridors' today. The corridors are major infrastructure projects from the West to Southeast Europe and beyond. The corridors are the tool that the European Union uses to concretely form the expansion of Europe toward the South and East. It is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the world.



Angela Melitopoulos, *Corridor X*, 2006.

The corridors not only create roads, pipelines, and communication infrastructure, but also financing tools, technical expertise, social organisation of work, and ways for money to circulate from the headquarters in Brussels to the new member states.

My idea was to work with artists along Corridor X and build a collection of images or a common video database together. The collective editing project *Timescapes* was made with the Videa activist group in Turkey, Greek filmmaker Freddy Viannelis, Serbian artist Dragana Žarevac from Belgrade, Hito Steyerl from Berlin, and myself. Each of us produced four hours of raw material for the database. In the end, everyone had 20 to 25 hours of raw material to work with and we met to start the editing process. The idea was that we could edit simultaneously and send the editing lists over the Internet, so that we could see what the others were doing with the same images at the same time. How long does an image appear in one sequence versus another? What do we edit out of the material? How do we work with duration? What does an image that I recorded mean to someone else from another location? How is one appropriating it? How is one placing it in a narrative? *Timescapes* analyses the editing process while it is taking place. This was meant to be a tool for a shared composition, a force against the politics of segmenting memory. However, interestingly enough, the location of each participant negated this possibility, because the way that the mass media version of the geography was very dominant in our minds. In the group discussions, geography was based on an understanding of what is 'East' and what is 'West' that was somehow fixed. The relationship to the cardinal points was expressed within a judgement of images that smoothed the concrete experience everybody could have with one's own recording.

I shot on the road leading from the North to the South. When my images were used by my colleagues, I had the impression that their interpretations were based on mass media. This was a symptom that was not only expressed in the way that everybody handled editing, but also in the discussions. The dominant view as a view that shaped the collective memory space of this project was related to a development of infrastructures that took place in the past. We showed all of the films and installations from the project. Three double screen video installations and two films were included in an exhibition at Kunstwerke in Berlin called *B-Zone. Becoming Europe and Beyond*.

Corridor X (2006) is my part in this project. It is a split screen 'road movie' along Corridor X through Ex-Yugoslavia along the Baghdad railway (Bagdadbahn) and the Brotherhood and Unity Highway. The split screen creates a view between two places, two locations that are always changing, dynamically interconnecting a fixed position to the end or beginning of the next movement. Texts and articles about the project were published in a larger reader named after the exhibition.

At the exhibition, a visitor could find an explanation of the production process and maps. Images from the database appeared in different videos, so there were at least five films made of the same images and sounds, but with completely different outcomes because of each invented editing strategy.

There are two versions of *Corridor X*: one is two hours and the other is 80 minutes long. It is about my childhood journey, travelling from Germany to Greece along the Brotherhood and Unity Highway, and passing through the archive materials produced by my collaborators.

It is very important to note that this European corridor was essentially being constructed since the 19th century, since the Baghdad railway, and then later with Tito's highway. These historical layers of infrastructural projects actually help form the memory of our perception of this geography.

The Baghdad railway was also a contemporary business model, a public-private partnership that is at the core of neo-liberal European expansion politics today. *Timescapes* reiterates the post-colonial politics of Otto von Bismarck and the founding moment of the Deutsche Bank Consortium, who financed the Baghdad railway. The Ottoman rulers granted the Deutsche Bank territorial sovereignty for 20 kilometres along the railway tracks between Berlin and Baghdad.

While recording in the car on the Brotherhood and Unity Highway, we saw the destruction of this geographical line and the highway that was a product of the Yugoslavian Wars.

The road between Zagreb and Belgrade was closed for five years. No more migrants travelled back to their countries from Germany. Travel on the *Autoput* stopped and people started taking planes. From that moment, Europe became completely different. People from Yugoslavia that could previously travel to Italy or Germany with ease could no longer travel at all anymore and had to deal with three or four new borders. On top of that, a younger generation from Macedonia was refused travel to the West or even any possibility of exiting their national boundaries. Their new territory was 200-300 kilometres long. At the time of my filming, people I met there told me they felt a sort of claustrophobia. In these segmented spaces, a new politics of migration had taken place. Therefore, *Timescapes* is about the memory and political segmentation of memory that leads to a different understanding of this part of Europe. It is not about a panoramic understanding of a bigger landscape, but about the understanding of a relational, bipolar means of regulation being constructed by EU foreign politics that is built based on the model of the Bagdadbahn and the loss of the Brotherhood and Unity Highway. The wars and post-war management of the EU led to refugee migration programmes that try to deal with migration fluxes in Europe. We would never call them 'population exchanges', but we must admit that moving refugee groups in Europe on the basis of ethnic identity can be called a politics of ethnic cleansing that is normalised by EU politics.

Imago Mundi

I'm very happy to be here, especially because I've never been to Milan before and, as you will find out, I like travelling a lot. In 1991, I decided to travel around the world while remaining in Vienna. It was a journey that lasted almost three years, during which I visited 17 different 'countries', all in the same city. It was a journey like any other: taken by public transport and with a lot of luggage, including my camera and microphone. The only difference was that most of the people I met on my trip spoke German and I slept at home every night. It is important to say that I only went to public celebrations and only by invitation. Actually, these were events that anybody could have attended, but I very rarely met anybody else from Vienna. The first image is called *Sudan Day*. The Sudanese community in Vienna is celebrating with singing and dancing. Then there is a Taiwanese dance class, followed by a Turkish double wedding. In case you are wondering why the images look so grainy, the answer is that I learned to be a photographer at a technical school, since there were no photography courses at art academies in Vienna at the time. I wasn't very happy with this purely technical education, so I sold all my photo equipment as soon as I finished school and started making films.

For this travel project, I decided to shoot on Super 8 film and then use one frame of the 18 frames per second as a photo. The reason I preferred Super 8 film to photography was that, on one hand, I was trying to convey this kind of energy I felt at all the celebrations I visited and, on the other, I didn't want my images to look like they were from a tourist brochure. As everyone knows, the person taking the photographs never gets to see anything because he is so busy trying to find a good subject and the right framing. Since I wanted to find out what was going on in Vienna, I decided to shoot some films and then decide later which photograph/frame to use.

The *Foreign Vienna* project happened between 1991 and 1993 at the peak of the belief in multiculturalism. The question of the foreigner, of the Other, of the migrant wasn't a political topic yet. Half a year after I started traveling, one of our right wing politicians, Jörg Haider, decided to make it the main issue of his election campaign. Near the end of my trip around the world in Vienna, I tried to find a Scottish community to visit. I couldn't, but I met a man who said: 'I'm Austrian, but I feel like a Scotsman, and I do Scottish dancing, so maybe you can film me?' I thought it was not really what I had set out to do, because the project was about people coming from all over the world to live in Vienna, but it gave me the idea for a second piece of work on the question of the Other. This would become a project with my first staged photographs called *Xenographic Views* (1995) and also my first critical dealings with ethnography. Thus, I started another trip around the world in the city, calling myself a 'xenographer', an invented word meaning someone who describes foreigners. The 'natives' I met were all Viennese people without migratory backgrounds who said they had a second cultural identity. In *Foreign Vienna* and *Xenographic Views* I tried to ask the question: who is a foreigner? I pretended to be a traveller at the turn of the 19th century, which is why the photos look ethnographic and are hand tinted. In ethnography, there's the term souvenir photography. For example, when an ethnographer goes to a village and people are dressed just like anybody else. He meets an old man and asks him: 'Do you still have the old traditional clothes you used to wear or only wear for special occasions? Would you put them on so I can take photographs of how it used to be in the past?' That has a certain similarity to what I did. The people you see had all the traditional clothes at home – I didn't bring them. The interesting thing about these staged photographs was that I had to stage a scene that someone else imagined. The people described how 'their countries' looked to me and what should be depicted in the photographs. It is important to note that all of the locations in the images are in Vienna or just outside of it. This is also a commentary on photography as a medium, about framing, and credibility. The project is presented in an old-fashioned looking travel book, containing the stories of the 'natives'.

One of the topics I am trying to deal with in all of my work is how images help to create stereotypes of the Other and how they are passed on over time.



Lisl Ponger, *Wild Places*, 2001.

In this photo, the subject's arm is tattooed with: 'Missionary, Mercenary, Ethnologist, Tourist, Artist'. A tattoo can also be seen as an exotic appropriation. It is important for me to point out my ambivalence between being fascinated by the exotic and critical at the same time. Around 2000, I started getting in contact with non-white artists in England. The white art world was asking non-white artists to include the history and geography of where they came from in their work and, if they didn't, it was called out for mimicking western art. Later, documenta 11 certainly changed some of that. That is how I decided I would do the same myself and started asking question about 'my' history and geography, even though that was not being asked of white artists.



Lisl Ponger, *The Big Game*, 2000.

I started a series of self-portraits where I took on different roles from white colonial history such as the white huntress or the *gone native*, which is a derogatory term used by the white community for white people who began to take on characteristics of the 'foreign' culture in which they were living.



Lisl Ponger, *Gone Native*, 2000.

This image refers to the film *Out of Africa* (1985) by Sydney Pollack. After that, I made a series of photos concerned with the power dynamic between the person photographed and the photographer, especially when the subject of the photograph is not on the same level of power as the photographer.



Lisl Ponger, *Out of Africa*, 2000.

This certainly happened in colonial times, but continues today in tourist photography. The series consists of five images in which all of the people in front of the camera have their eyes closed as a gesture of resistance to being photographed.



Lisl Ponger, *Meet me in St. Louis, Louis*, 2000.

This photo talks about World's Fairs, where people were exhibited, often together with animals. The girl is a Swiss art student in Vienna and the stuffed animals are part of the collection of the only Austrian white hunter who used to shoot animals for the Natural History Museum and was also an active Nazi during the museum's heyday.

Now I would like to talk about the importance of research in my work. In staged photography, there are almost no coincidences. That means: every object in my photos was researched and therefore I should be able to explain every detail.

Here is another work from the same series called *Measures in the Afternoon* (2000), which is a small hint at my past as a filmmaker, as it plays with the title of one of Maya Deren's films. It deals with the anthropological measuring of people during colonial times.



Lisl Ponger, *Measures in the Afternoon*, 2000.

For example: some Austrian anthropologists, who were often also missionaries, went on expeditions to the Congo to measure pygmies. During the First World War, the same anthropologists measured Jewish men imprisoned in a football stadium in Vienna. Some very clever person once said: 'History likes to repeat itself, only in different disguises.' The next image (*The Strange Mission*) contains a personal story.

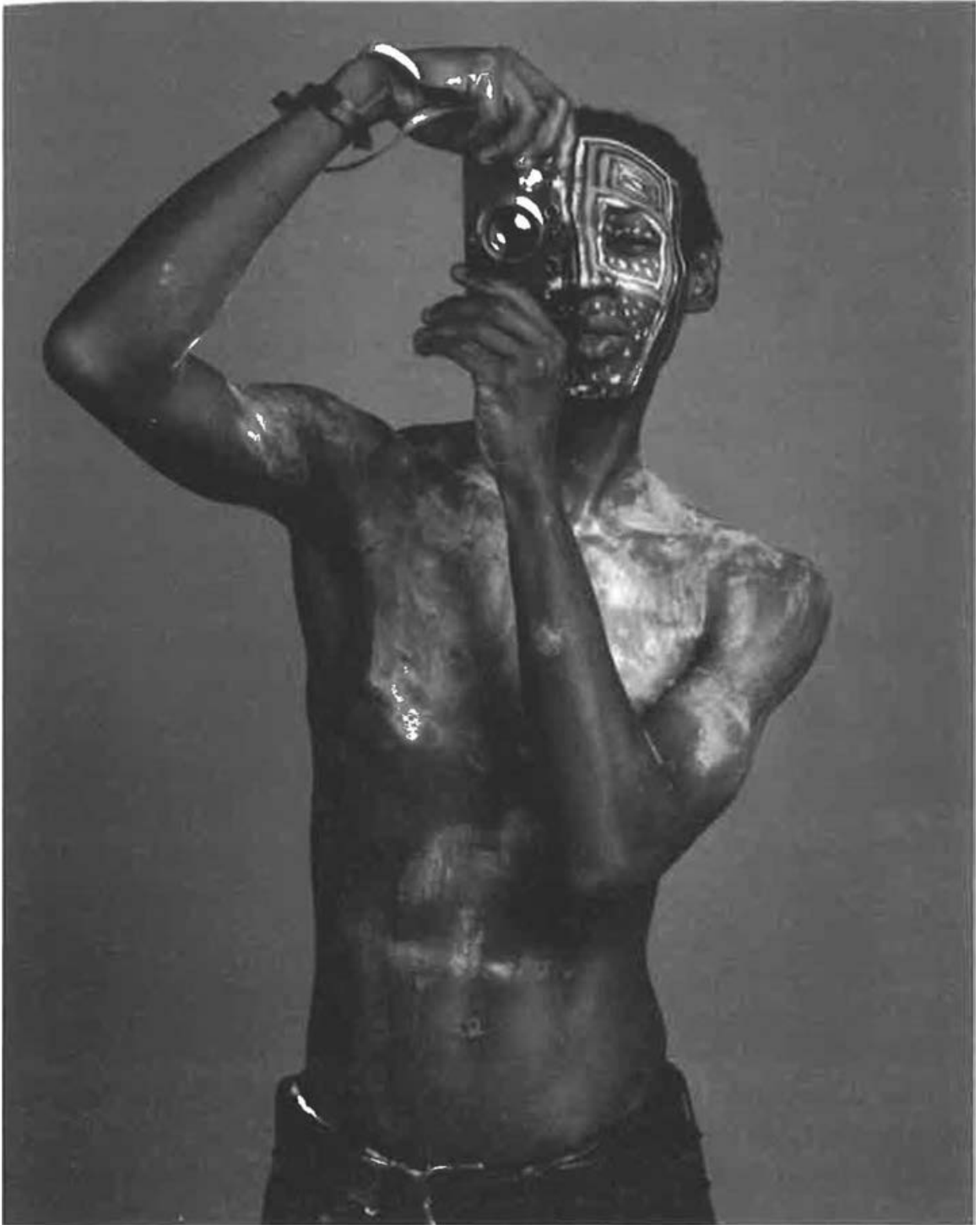
When I was six years old, the religion teacher in primary school asked us to collect silver paper from chocolates and cigarette packs and make them into balls so that they could be sent to Africa for small heathen children to play with them. For many years, I thought that a small child somewhere in Africa was playing with my silver ball, but when I staged this photo and started researching, it turned out that the aluminium was being collected and sold, and then the money was used to build up missions in Africa. The image also deals with the topic of used clothes. There are organisations that collect used clothes and thereby address our guilt about 'poor' countries. So, we give away our used clothes and drop them off in some containers where they are collected for certain organisations. The clothes are then washed and sorted: the quality clothes are sold in western Europe, the next best stuff goes to eastern Europe and Asia and the rest goes to Africa, where they help to destroy the local textile industry. There are very big used clothes markets that sell the used western clothes by the kilo. In some countries they call it the new Silk Road, running in the opposite direction of the old one.



Lisl Ponger, *Destroy Capitalism*, 2005.

I am also very interested in art history. This image (*Destroy Capitalism*, 2005) is the starting point for my film *Imago Mundi* (2007). This film seeks to find out how to visualise political discourse. The photograph is based on the Spanish baroque painting *The Knight's Dream*, painted in the Dutch and Flemish fashion. At the time, part of Holland (present day Belgium) was Spanish and part of the Spanish Habsburg Empire. The original picture is a vanitas still life, a type of painting that I used to think was mainly about the ability to paint different surfaces like glass, metal, or food beautifully, but it is also a very precise analysis of the power structures of the time. Many people think that only modern art is extremely coded, but in fact all art from all times is coded. And it always was. You can read what you know in it. And this is where research comes in again: the more you research, the more you know, and the more you know, the more connections you can make. From that time on, I became very interested in Dutch baroque painting. One reason was that Dutch painters had a very 'photographic' way of looking at the world and, since I like collecting objects as well, it seemed to help me understand what they were thinking. Painters, however, can paint any object they like whether it's in front of them, from memory, or something invented. Photographers, on the other hand, have to photograph something that's actually there, that they have in front of them, a specific object. This is especially the case for analogue photography, as it is in my work. I also got very interested in the different layers of meaning of everyday objects, so I decided to try and stage a piece of work with a vocabulary that was similar to that of the Dutch painting, but set in the present.

There is another noteworthy aspect concerning stereotypes and the construction of images. I have always been interested in Leni Riefenstahl as a person and in her historical function. She made films *Olympia* (1938) and *Triumph of the Will* (1935) for the Nazis. She had always stated that she was just an artist and that she had nothing to do with Nazi ideology. This was absolutely untrue, since she was a close friend of Adolf Hitler and produced the most important propaganda films for the Nazis. There was one film called *Tiefland* (finished in 1954), where she had some Romani women acting, who had been taken away from the camps where they were being detained. When Riefenstahl was asked about them after the war, she said that all of those people were probably fine and that nothing had happened to them. In fact, just after filming, some of them were taken to concentration camps and killed.



Lisl Ponger, *Leni Riefenstahl Diptychon*, 2002.

She went on trial for her involvement with the Nazis, but was acquitted. After the war, it was very difficult for her to work as a film director and, interestingly, just like some other film directors from that time, she suddenly discovered exotic countries. In her biography, she describes how she read Hemingway's *The Green Hills of Africa* and was so fascinated by it that she went to Africa and 'discovered' the Nubas, a people who live in Southern Sudan.



Lisl Ponger, *Die Beute*, 2009.

In fact, she wasn't the first white person to visit the Nubas; nevertheless, she became very famous for her Nuba photographs and they have just been re-published. Here is the *Leni Riefenstahl Diptychon* (2002). One of the photos is titled *Sidy Mamadou Wane, curator from Vienna and Dakar acts the part of a Nuba*. The camera the young man is using to photograph is actually the camera that Leni Riefenstahl used to photograph the Nubas. Of course, one wouldn't know that by looking at it, but for me the fact is a commentary about photography and authenticity. One of the biggest auction houses for photography is based in Vienna and this camera happened to be there on auction. I was able to borrow it for two hours, before it was auctioned off for 6.000 euros. The picture called *Die Beute* (The Loot, 2006) deals with the influence and appropriation of non-European artefacts concerning modern art and modernism.

You can see a student of ethnology and art history trying to categorise African artefacts alongside western objects for sale in museum shops and placed within the context of tourist or souvenir art, which is what non-European mass-produced souvenirs are called.



Lisl Ponger, *There's no Place...*, 2007.

The woman in the pictures is dressed in some of those museum items: a Paul Gauguin t-shirt, a Gustav Klimt scarf, on the desk there is a teacup with a Vincent van Gogh's painting printed on it, and there are tissues with the *Mona Lisa* and a puzzle of Pablo Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*. The woman is holding the catalogue published for the *Primitivism* exhibition in New York (1984) and the room she is standing in is a reference to Sigmund Freud's office in Vienna, who also had a collection of archaeological and non-western artefacts. All of the objects I used in the photo were bought in 'one euro' shops as a commentary on the mass availability of the copied items. There is also an image dealing with fortress Europe. In Italy, many of the Madonna statues wear a halo of stars (*There's No Place...*, 2007).

These stars have the same form and are the same number as those on the flag of the European Union. My Madonna, however, is not only the European Union Madonna, posing in front of a EU blue sky, but also Dorothy from the forties movie *The Wizard of Oz*. The photo's title quotes a song sung by Judy Garland in the film *There's No Place Like Home*. The EU Madonna wears a cape made of camouflage fashion fabric called Sky and trimmed with the American flag. The ruby shoes and blue stockings are another reference to Dorothy. Salman Rushdie wrote a very interesting analysis of *The Wizard of Oz*, in which he gives the film a migration context: in fact, Dorothy has to go through all sorts of adventures to be able to go home and it's only at the end of her journey that she realises that she just had to click her ruby heels three times to return.

The Madonna holds one hand up, the first and second finger are blackened from having her fingerprints taken. When the police detain someone, they take those two fingerprints, but if you're found guilty, they take all five. In the film, Dorothy holds a magic staff, in my picture the Madonna holds an Austrian police club.

Eleven years after I had made the photo series *Foreign Vienna*, a museum asked me to exhibit those photos again and, in fact, it was one of many times that I had been asked by many different institutions over that period: apparently, it was the kind of work that everybody was happy with. Everybody but me, in fact. I don't exhibit that photo series anymore because too many things have changed for it still to make sense: the political situation, the self-understanding of migrants, and so on. And, of course, the whole discourse around migration has changed, along with my personal viewpoint. At that point, I remembered that I had shot Super 8 films to use as photos and I decided to make a film with the unused material – that would give me the opportunity to look at my own approach critically. This then became the film *Phantom Foreign Vienna* (1991-2004). I do the voice commentary on the film myself. I ask myself how to edit the material and what the possible categories are: Geography? Colour? Time of the filmed events? And so on.

Two other films I would like to speak about are made from found film materials. The use of found footage has a long tradition in avant-garde film, with different people using it in different ways: feature film scenes, newsreel, cartoons, etc. I used amateur travel films shot by western tourists in exotic countries. Some of the films were borrowed from my family and friends, but most of them were found in a big box on a late afternoon at the flea market in Vienna.

Amateur **travel** films are very interesting: they are **often** made by a couple travelling **around** the world. The man **usually** films, **while** the woman takes care of the music or the titles. I wasn't able to find out who had made the flea market films. There are companies in Vienna where Super 8 films can be digitalised and **often** people don't **ask for** their **original film back**, probably not **realising** that **DVDs will** not outlast film. I **have** an agreement with one of the labs: people that don't want their film back are asked whether it should be **destroyed or can be passed on** and, if the latter, it is passed on to me. Those films **look like** they were made with just one type of film because the **35 mm copy is colour corrected so well**. *Déjà vu* (1999), for example, consists of **55 different rolls of film and two different formats: normal and Super 8**. **All of it was transferred to 35 mm film with the people telling stories and the sound added afterwards.**

As we come to the end of the presentation, I would just like to share a few more thoughts on *Imago Mundi. Das Gültige, Sagbare und Machbare verändern* (*Imago Mundi. Challenging what is accepted*, 2007) It is **my most recent film and my first feature film-like work**. It was made with **a team** and shot by a camerawoman, whereas I previously worked alone and without actors. **For financial reasons, *Imago Mundi* was shot on video: it was a new experience for me and if I should make another film, it would be along these lines.**

The Colonial Misunderstanding

I would like to talk to you about something of great importance, which is memory. I am African and it is right to remember that since the dawn of the cinema through to the fifties, the African continent has been amongst the most represented in films, but always by non-African directors. It might be gratifying to talk of Egyptian cinema or that of other African countries, but it has been colonial cinema, which has defined, for a very long time, and still influences the image that we have of Africa. For this reason, after, or just before, independence, when Africans began to use film cameras, one of their main objectives has been that of providing a representation of themselves that is different to the dominant one. Even the history that they taught us in school was European – French, in particular – and our history was told from the point of view of others and never our own. Oral history, in particular, was considered as a lesser form of history and was not taken seriously. When Africans began to make films, they felt the need to build or rebuild history on the basis of a form of collective memory, which had to be completely reconstructed. This is especially true in relation to documentaries, towards which I was immediately drawn.

The films I saw in France represented, for me, an area of play and pleasure and were such even when they contained significant content and images. My desire to make films was also born out of a need to evade what I felt, paradoxically, associated with a form of violence, close to the colonial era and evident immediately afterwards. And it was this suffered violence that lay behind my first work and which influenced me for the first 20 years.

In 2005, when I finished one of my films entitled *Le malentendu colonial*, I realised that, in effect, nearly all the subjects I had tried to develop for 20 years in my films, were already present in the first, *Hommage* (1985). In this film I had tried, for the first time, to remember the conversations with my father and a past that then seemed unimportant, and to relate these to the present and the unsatisfying reality I was living.



Jean-Marie Teno, *Hommage*, 1985.

In the very process of constructing the film, the act of remembering and re-activating this memory was very important, but, in order to represent it, I had to tackle the question of the future. *Hommage* presents a reflection on a moment of stasis in which you are blocked and no longer know where you are going; you try to remember the past and formulate hypotheses to understand the present. It is a conversation between a person who has left and emigrated and one who has remained in the country of origin: two people who have two different perspectives on the same reality. *Hommage*, for me, is a glance at the 'dislocated person', which many of us are, divided between somewhere else that is our present and a place that no longer exists or which we no longer want to accept. It is precisely this dislocation that I have tried to represent in the film, by means of a conversation between two people who are effectively two sides of the same coin.

So, let's start by watching *Hommage*, and afterwards I will show you some scenes from my subsequent films, in order to continue reflecting on the subject of dislocated memory and this daily violence and the fate of many Africans after independence. This was my first autobiographical film. At the time, just saying 'I' was a great triumph. It is clearly my most personal film, but this was because it was so difficult for an African to speak up. Even in literature, autobiography seemed to be reserved for people from the North;



Jean-Marie Teno, *Afrique, je te plumerai*, 1992.

Africans couldn't have an autobiography. At the same time, it was problematic talking about a collective memory or collective history without thinking about the journey of personal memory and without enunciating what we were living. In effect, *Hommage* was one of my first attempts to try out irony, play, and this violence. The next scenes that I will show you are taken from another film entitled *Afrique, je te plumerai* (1992), which I shot six or seven years later and in which I tried to push beyond these reflections.

I took another step and, after I had said 'I', I wrote the screenplay on my own because I had gained confidence about these subjects and managed to have my own point of view to speak up. *Afrique, je te plumerai* is constructed more or less around the same dichotomy of play and violence.

This is a form of violence that is often used against people, but is also violence of the system, which, after colonisation, manifested itself at a social level in the states that followed it. When I made this documentary in 1987, drought was always talked about in relation to Africa. I come from Cameroon, and, in this country however, as in other African countries where it rains, two illnesses out of three are caused by water because, in the working-class areas like the one I grew up in, there is no running water and people dig wells close to the latrines where the water is infected. So there is a vicious circle for the people living in insalubrious areas. They are always ill even when they look after themselves. Sick children often can't get to school, and the lack of education prevents them from leaving these areas and having opportunities.

I talked about this problem in the film *Bikutsi Water Blues. L'Eau de misère* (1988), which I shot in the rainy season in order to demonstrate that the problem isn't that there is no water, but that the water is undrinkable.

The last film I'm going to show you, *Clando* (1996), talks about the situation of a rich country, with so much potential, but in which none of this is used to improve people's lives: every time that they rebel, the only response is repression by the police. It is the first and only fiction film that I have made to date. The protagonist of the film is Sobgui, an IT programmer from Douala, who lets some youngsters use the machines in his office to duplicate a flyer against the government. The police were watching, however, resulting in his arrest, imprisonment, and torture. One day, without explanation, the political police throw him out on a street corner and order him not to move until they return. As the hours pass, Sobgui realises that the police are not coming back, but, despite this, he continues to be their prisoner. We see, therefore, how the state ends up using violence to create a form of 'memory of fear', to inscribe fear into the mentality of the people, so that forms of resistance cannot exist.

In my work, reflecting on memory is a way of demonstrating and trying to deconstruct not only the methods that have been used, but also the web of this complexity that creates oppression in our society. In looking backwards, in finding the ways of rereading the past, we not only try to understand the present but also to write into this a reflection on the future.



Jean-Marie Teno, *Clando*, 1996.

And it is thus that the work of memory, in our expressions and in cinema, needs to be written into the society in which freedom is continuously sought, where the journey is still a long one to reach what, elsewhere, are considered basic rights. I hope that people do not watch a Jean-Marie Teno film expecting to see a film about Africa, rather that they understand that it is an African's point of view, with his pain and subjective vision of Africa. I hope, with my work, to manage to touch the human being inside each of us, showing the violence in a context that can speak to each and everyone. Showing the memory of all this violence in Africa today, I believe poses a lot of questions for people. In fact, I would like to conclude with two reflections that can help to transpose the themes of violence and memory. If we consider the financial situation in Europe, I believe there to be a form of unspeakable violence, which has a devastating impact on the lives of people in Europe and the rest of the world. This too is a form of more subtle violence that may not be seen but still leaves its mark on the memory of individual existences. On the other hand, when I talk about colonial and post-colonial violence in relation to Africa, it is not to deny the inherent violence of traditional Africa societies.

I come, originally, from the reign of Bandjoun, and in this society there are many forms of violence integrated into education, which, for those who have not had this kind of education, may seem inconceivable. In the framework of this society, this was possibly an attempt to reinforce the immunising defences of people who had to face a very hard life, to create a sort of 'domesticated memory of violence'. And it is this violence that has led to the acceptance of both colonial and current violence. For this reason, the work on memory helps us to understand what is happening, what we have been through, and to deconstruct the chaos of the present.

Labour and its Memory

Marco Scotini: When the first version of *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (Workers leaving the factory) appeared, in the mid-nineties, Maurizio Lazzarato's *Lavoro immateriale* (Immaterial labour) was also published.² For you, that was the opportunity to celebrate 100 years of the medium of cinema; at the same time, the citation of Lumière's film was able to become, on that date and in perfect assonance with the failure of the conditions of the industrial society, the explicit end mark of the forms of production and subjectivity that had accompanied the Fordist period. The most important part of this association is precisely the relationship between the conditions of general production and the technologies of the production of images as such. In your opinion, does the fact that working conditions in the cinema are increasingly less represented have to do with the transformation of production forms and, therefore, with the condition of non-visibility of immaterial work? Perhaps, this has spread to such an impossible degree that it now encompasses the whole of life, and therefore, this marked invisibility. But who are the new workers? How should they be represented? How can we now determine the measurement of working time in relation to a time that can no longer be qualified as work-time? How can we photograph or film the subjects of this peculiar contemporary economy?

This interview was recorded in August 2010 in Farocki's Berlin home, and was made on the occasion of the commissioned proposal for the curatorial project of Manifesta 9 in the mining area of Limburg. As the project's advisor, I had chosen to collaborate with the sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato and Farocki himself. To our proposal of 'working on work' and on the history of the workers movement, transforming the exhibition format into a production site, was preferred an exhibition on the natural history of the material: coal.

The book *Lavoro immateriale. Forme di vita e produzione di soggettività* (Ombre corte, 1997) collects interventions originally appeared on the magazine *Futur antérieur* between 1991 and 1996. In English translation, the essay *Immaterial Labor* has been published in *Radical Thought in Italy. A Potential Politics*, P. Virno and M. Hardt (eds.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.



Harun Farocki: The interesting aspect for me is that this very first film shows something which only exists for a brief moment, because when the workers have left the factory and go out, in a split second, they are no longer workers as well as a coherent group, they are just pedestrians. And, with some few exceptions, like in the genre of dance films – or dancing films – let's say, in the American revue films, people are dressed uniformly (and Fritz Lang's 1927 film *Metropolis* has this kind of attitude: you see workers and they are obviously marked as workers), but in the social reality today it's hard to decide if somebody is a worker, somebody unemployed or somebody else on their way to the sports ground; it's not at all visible. That's why this motive of leaving the factory is something that only exists for a moment. If you look back to iconography, of course there are examples of forerunners. The corral is something similar: when you want to count the animals, you have to put them to a narrow space and pass them through a gate. Consider also Odysseus, when fighting against the Cyclops: he was beneath the animals and the blind Cyclops was touching them because then he could control them when they were moving through this narrow space. It is a very old idea then that you have to compress a mass to get its image or to depict its essence, that's the interesting aspect. In communist theory – the theory of Rosa Luxemburg for instance – there was always the idea that the place in front of the factory was this very important place:



the latter is supposed to be exclusive (because the factory is not accessible by the public), then workers start to deal with economic issues and then move to the streets as social strata are joining them.

Ironically, this is a revolution that never played herself out in this way: the end of Communism was marked by such events, let's say the Lenin-Shipyard in Danzig, where they were first striking against bad working conditions and then the entire public joined them and the *Solidarność* was founded, too. It is very astonishing that this space in front of the factory only in the early years of history – of film history – begins to play a certain role in fantasizing communist films' plots, also in the fifties, but later this topic is totally lost, and there is this other strange moment in which the social identity of work gets lost and you become a coupled individual/consumer; this has played out very often. Also in Pier Paolo Pasolini's film (*Accattone*, 1961), *Accattone* comes to borrow money from his formal wife and then he meets Stella, and the social identity, the individual identity, begins when work ends. This also shows that work is not really a topic which can be depicted or 'spectacularised', it is always the end of work, and that's all already in the first film: it is very fascinating that in the first film, which is *L'arroseur arrosé* (Louis and Auguste Lumière, 1895), the work could also be reversed, so that it already has such a strong meaning for a topic.



Harun Farocki, *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (*Workers leaving the factory*), 1995.

MS: If *Workers leaving the factory* allows us to observe this departure of the workers from the factory, how is it possible to see this departure from the mechanical forms of production within the domain of the image? How does an image work today?

HF: When work loses its materiality, when it becomes computer work, which is somehow the general tendency of a computer machine of replacing all machines or swallowing them – not really replacing them, but swallowing them – then also visibility and the visibility of work are already quite disturbed by electrical and chemical revolution. Whereas in the first revolution, that just connected so much to the train and the steam machine, everything was mechanical, that was how cinematography and technique worked so well together. From then on, it is already troubled and you remember perhaps in the seventies, when computers still had these huge tape reels, they hold these films and the moving of these tape reels going back and forth, because that was the only thing that moved on the computer. Of course, we all know that all these visualisations take place in the field of computers; you have graphics which make the inexplicable explicable again, so we have a new generation of image graphics, moving graphics, interactive graphics, and so on, where work is somehow depicted only by the system itself and not by people observing it.

MS: Not long ago Sergio Bologna, a theorist of the workers' movement, wrote these notes: 'Look at the image of a miner, *gueule noire*, with a lamp on his forehead, of a worker on the production line, of any blue-overall labourer and it will say something to you, it will immediately transmit to you a reference of time and place, arouse in you memories of social dynamics, of collective behaviour. The images of the working classes of Fordism speak for themselves; over time they have accumulated meaning and such a strength of communication as to be the vehicle of values, culture, and history. Look at the images of a man and a woman sitting at a computer. It's a work position. Isn't it? But it doesn't have the same strength of communication. If anything, it might not be a work situation: it could be someone who is chatting, writing to a relative, playing patience, ordering their shopping. Work, today, has lost its representative nature, it has become opaque, or, rather, invisible. Whatever the case, even if you photograph it and stick a label on it, even if you explain it with recourse to words, it has lost its epic nature, it has lost history, and it has lost its significance.' And he added: 'It's a considerable challenge for the filmmaker, for the photographer.'

HF: It may be more accustomed to come back to this notion that film begins when work ends. Then of course you have this huge gap that so many things, which drive our society, are not really addressed. Therefore, let's say you come to a neighbourhood in all these post-industrial cities and you see all these high-rises, these offices, and you ask yourself: 'What do people do in there?' You have no knowledge about it. Yet, there's a factory, you know. Are they producing cars, or are they producing steel, or whatever? That's why I became, since the eighties, interested in finding out, in knowing more about how our society functions, and therefore I also made quite many films about totally immaterial labour, and advertising companies, or shooting centrefold photos for playboy magazine: it's not true that they are all the same press, it's just a kind of material work. It is of course true that this tendency of the workers leaving or having left the factory, or the fact that we are a work-society, has now reached a standard of rationalization where workers are not really needed. Just think about companies like Volvo or ASAP, they have only 5.000 people working for them. That's no more than a small thumb's workforce nowadays, it's no longer the national industry, it doesn't mean so much. There are more people in the banking business than in car manufacturing.



Then it is a very obvious consequence that goals move to poor countries and also workers moved there; it has ended, so, for instance, in a museum you can see handwork nowadays, nearly every face of industrialisation. It depends on in which country you go, but also within one country, within one construction site in India, you can see different time periods at the same time.

MS: In your research into cinema you have been the author who has most focused on this perfect parallel between work and the image. In a number of films you have shown how mechanical robots, taking the model of the production line, have ended up surpassing and replacing the workers themselves, just as sensory devices have done in relation to the work of the human eye in the production of images. How can we summarise this new visual regime that coincides with a progressive dehumanisation of seeing? A view that is replaced by a mechanical eye, a computer-controlled image-processing application?

HF: I try to use a term *operational images*. This goes back to Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*, where he says that a non-metaphoric language, an operational language, would be the one that a woodpecker uses: it's speaking with a tree and not about a tree. This is of course an idealisation in some way, because we all are speaking about it too, and also tools have a kind of aesthetic, not only a function. But this idea is true: in origin, these images are not intended

to be watched by spectators, consumers, and are not at all created for advertising or education or entertainment: they are just made because they are needed for the people running a program or controlling a program, not for the program itself, even if the program still needs images, of course. In this sense, those operational images are really something new, because if you think back to the first years of cinematography, in the early times of cinematography, film and photography had also a very important meaning in natural science and technique, and this meaning was totally lost. They started measuring the films, which became unneeded, especially the moving image was more in this field of education entertainment, but it was not part of production and research and this has changed status, it is different now: these kind of images have a different status and the idea for filmmakers is to read them differently as to show them. But the American Army already had the idea to take these images and to depict the first war against Iraq in 1992 mainly with these kinds of operational images, which are not really meant to be looked at by spectators, but they still have this representative function. And this was exploited in this way, so in that case that was also a strange avant-garde technique.

MS: With regard to the regimes of visibility of historic forms of work, when carrying out research into the mining sites of the Belgian Limburg area, I discovered that, in some ways, the organisation of labour would also intrude in the ordinary life and domestic space. The inhabitants lived in garden cities where everything was disciplined and under control, but, at the same time, it appeared fallaciously attractive to the workers from abroad. The main task of the mine owner was to get the work from transient workers and to give them a family, an education, and a social standing. Thousands of workers had to be recruited, housed, and trained. So housing was one of the mechanisms of control of the mining community's everyday life.

HF: I'm not specialized in this field, but, first of all, since the Industrial Revolution – this seclusion of work – began, the work (also in order to organise it in a better way) came out of public control. You can see that in traditional societies, which have all these traditional trades, there are also artisans and they work somehow excessively: you see them working on the street and the factory's system made an end to it. I think that the mining town is still an exception, mining towns have always attracted public interest,

and it had to accept it was of public interest: that's the reason why visibility and representation of the buildings already alludes to this fact, that they are something national, original. Moreover, only 40 years ago, the wealth of nations was very often shown by these little pictograms of elevators for the production of coal, or sort of. This showed a rush of so many Americans: 'Fewer! More!' or whatever, and that was something nearly similar to a church tower, it had a high symbolic meaning. Of course they were not technically accessible to everyone, but they had to allow people to come in. We see already in the case of Lumière that people are wearing their Sunday clothes, of course they didn't work in that way there; it was a very dirty and chemically poisonous work they were doing for them, for the Lumière factory, then they dressed up as if they would come from church. Also in the workhouse while they worked, already there you see that it is a field which is somehow left out, which is difficult to access. And if you look at how difficult it could be to access factories in China today, or also in India, you really understand the context.

MS: In your research, which matched film production with criticism, you obviously use every type of image that is produced in the various fields of communication and our social life. As a consequence, the idea of the archive as a great source to be used is central, but, at the same time, you have used the archive as the final moment of your projects, even managing to show collections of film sequences in the same way in which words are collected in a dictionary.

HF: The reasons for my interest in archival images has more to do with the idea of Modernism that you shouldn't write phrases on your own or coin expressions on your own, but rather quote pre-existing ones, adapt to pre-existing discourses, which were fashionable in the fifties. It is more to inform the basis of an idea, and in this sense you are a very strange artisan: you come with your camera to a place, and you look for the best position, and then you see that a lot of tripods of all the others are already set, are already standing from where you thought certain machines like that could be filmed; when put together, often in a factory, people say 'usually television film us from here, here, and here', and they are right, those were the best positions. It is very hard to be original and therefore I became interested in using pre-existing footage and to give a different accent, a deviant emphasis to them. This is what I think in general about the archive in literature, in science, everything was already pre-existing and not necessarily informed by me.



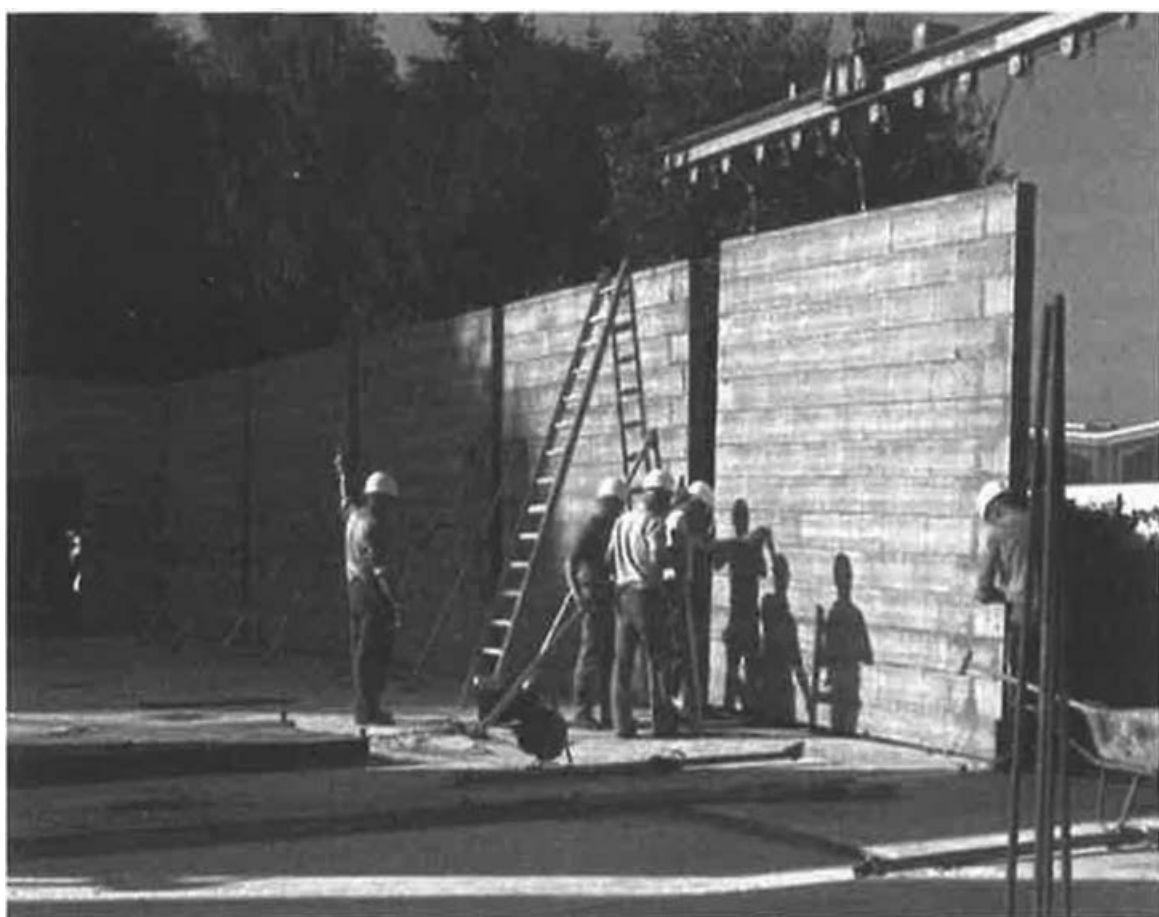
Harun Farocki, *Zum Vergleich* (In Comparison), 2009.

My approach is to impose a certain style without using these adjectives, rare expressions or some sort of special lighting. Seeing the way Michel Foucault reintroduces the idea of working with the archive or the way Walter Benjamin collected fragments with his *Passagen-Werk*, I just think it can't be compared to those ambitions, and therefore I don't have theoretically so much to say about it. I have more to do with this strong impression that it's better to re-read pre-existing images than to make new ones, which is not right every time, anyway.

MS: There is also one of your films made in 2009, *Zum Vergleich* (In Comparison), in which it is possible to see how what is disappearing in the West continues to be present in countries such as Africa, India, etc. At the heart of this film there is the process of making bricks using clay, and we see different traditions of brick production: the places, methods, and the different duration of production times. At the end, a construction robot also appears, which, once again, allows us to compare the production process with that of the creation of images: vision machines that no longer have a human eye inside them.



HF: Once I also had to deal with a building, because when you are building you produce something that is somehow designing. That's not maybe designing, but at least it represents an idea about the public and the social existence of the public and therefore is more interesting than to deal with television sets or other household goods. Then I thought that the brick is something that is really comparable, because visually it still looks identical, but it's not identical, even if at first sight it is comparable to the bricks we all know well, which are 8.000 years old in Peru, in Mexico, also in the Arab world.



Harun Farocki, *Zum Vergleich (In Comparison)*, 2009.



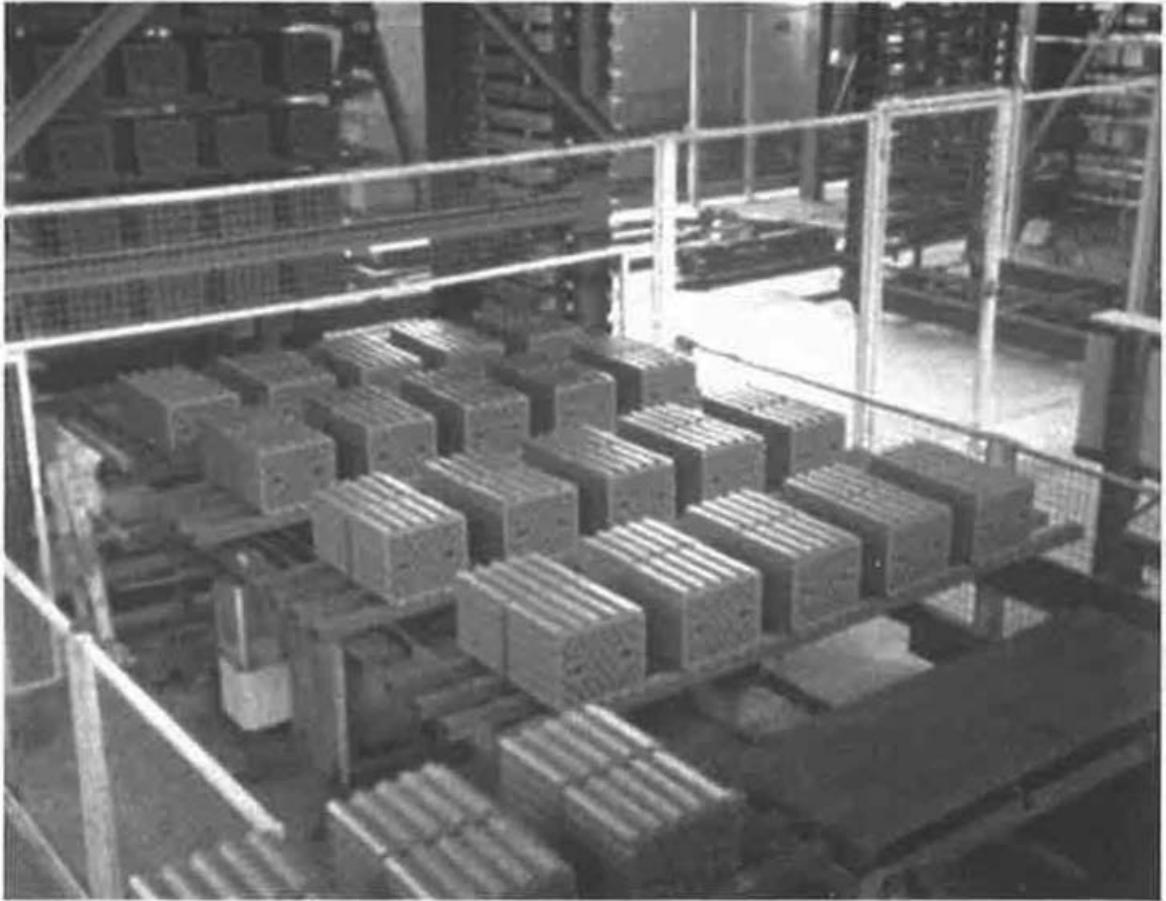
This is somehow the way I think building is made out of these small elements, which you can combine and that's a little bit like these elementary filming, or digits, or whatever could constitute an image – or also a text – and, on the other hand, you have these artisans with a long tradition, and everything which has to do with the earth has to do with femininity and mothers, and so on. Clay has a long tradition. Maybe this tradition could be considered as very simplistic if you were to view the public working in Africa and then get lost somehow only to see the industrialisation; then you start to see only the elegance of the machine in a futuristic sense. Luckily, it is a different thing to find out that there are very cheap means to do avant-garde films. I've showed it in a project shot in Africa and India, and the film ends with the images inside a Swiss factory (*In Comparison*), where the computer can place **the bricks** directly via a robot and by doing so it **can create** a graphic or an **image, without** human intervention: that's something **new, because** until now it was not well conveyed that the computer and the construction machine created plans for design and plans for logistics, but they did not really work them out. Then the mechanical work came back and humans have to move things and so on: in this case you have a direct line and this also means a new quality. It's not a total loss, but, in a way, a gain that you really find in a new aesthetics for the construction site. So, this was the field and it was also so interesting to find out that it's far easier to research something like industrial production if you come to the question: 'How is clay, how are bricks used in a certain country?' It's so difficult to find it out.

The best is to look on your own, because I spent so much time asking experts and at the end all were wrong. It is also very strange that this is still a very informal field, not really covered by statistics and public knowledge.

MS: This mechanisation of vision developed by the most sophisticated technologies brings with it a proliferation of types of image that progressively lose their classic characteristics. If it is true that the human eye behind the production of images has been abandoned, it is equally true that the eye of the spectator also becomes superfluous, no longer essential. Many contemporary images are not made to be seen. What is their new role then?

HF: Until now, the images which are used for surveillance have always dealt with public spaces and now we see it in the military that every single action is covered already automatically, so it's something strange that these images are not really meant to be images only in the case of trouble, when looking at them they are a kind of by-product, also waste. Usually, we take a videotape and erase it and only in the case of a special crime you try to recover it and look at it again. This disrespect for images of course interests us, like finding something on the second-hand market or finding something in the junk, which could be used in a different way; this is always attractive for filmmakers to misread the control images. In general, controlled images are also operational images, management can replace them and probably will soon, because the guards are not well paid (also in the case of the military), they fall asleep, they don't really watch the details. So a program comes in and reads images already, but it's still not possible to read images, not only in a technical sense – even in the technical sense it's difficult – and to translate them into language and into action.

There is something strange about the meaning of images: one would love to get rid of them and, on the other hand, one fetishises them. This is an interesting period, I think: perhaps that's related to the fact that cinema and the television industry are in a terrible state, I would say, worldwide. But the production of films and in the case of television also individual broadcastings, as American series, they are producing more interesting work than ever before in their history. If you just spend your time going to film festivals, you find interesting films from the most remote places in the world without any tradition or hardly any film history and not only expected from the same sources or big authors, and yet, on the other hand, it is a totally dysfunctional industry from which comes such an income.



MS: Therefore, procedures are of prime importance: as Jean-Luc Godard said, it's not about making political films, but about making them politically. How do you see this relationship between cinema and political engagement with regard to the new visual regimes?

HF: I think Jacques Rancière has recently expressed quite well that one shouldn't try to reconcile the artistic and the political, there should always be this tension. In the years after 1968, many of the politically engaged people said the decorum, the tradition, should go – actually it just needs efficiency. This is visible in both Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group, even if they addressed it differently. It was impressive that they did not make useful stuff, which mainly means leftist television. They also had a different approach to it, and this interested me too: approaching political production in a very strange manner that also focused on the pre-industrial society very much. I think this tension has to find a form, which is not ideal for both, and that is why this conflict and the discrepancy of these two fields still carries on as Rancière has said so well.

Ursula Biemann

Born in 1955, Ursula Biemann is an artist, writer and video essayist based in Zurich. Her artistic practice is strongly research oriented and involves fieldwork in remote locations, where she investigates the ecologies of oil and water – most recently for her project *Forest Law* in Amazonia (2014). She is part of the collective art and media project *World of Matter*. Biemann published several books and her video installations are exhibited at art biennials and museums worldwide. She is a researcher at the University of Arts in Zurich, ZHdK.

Mohanad Yaqubi

Born in 1981, Mohanad Yaqubi is a filmmaker, producer, and one of the founders of Idioms Film. He teaches film studies at the International Academy of Art in Palestine, and at the Media Department of Al-Qud University. He is part of Subversive Films, a curatorial and research collective that focuses on militant film practices. He is releasing his first feature film *Off Frame*, which is about Palestinian revolutionary cinema.

Lisl Ponger

Born in 1947, Lisl Ponger lives and works in Vienna. Her work concerns stereotypes, racism, and the construction of the gaze. It is located at the interface between art, art history, and ethnology in the mediums of photography, film, and installation. She has taken part in many different international exhibitions and film festivals including documenta 11 (2002), *Der Black Atlantic* (2004), documenta 12 (2007), and *Meeting Points 7* in Vienna (2014). Among others, her solo exhibitions include: *The Vanishing Middle Class*, Secession, Vienna (2014) and *Schöne Fremde*, Kirchnermuseum, Davos (2014).

Lamia Joreige

Born in Lebanon in 1972, Lamia Joreige is a visual artist and filmmaker who lives and works in Beirut. She uses archival documents and fictitious elements to reflect on the relation between individual stories and collective history. Her work is primarily focused on time, the recordings of the trace it leaves, and its effects on the imaginary. Some of her recent works include: *Under-Writing Beirut-Mathaf* (2013); *One Night of Sleep* (2013); *Beirut, Autopsy of a City* (2010); *Tyre 1,2,3,4,5, Portrait of a Housing Cooperative* (2010); *3 Triptychs* (2009); *Full Moon* (2007); *Nights and Days* (2007); *Je d'histoires* (2007); *...And the Living is Easy* (2007) in collaboration with Rabih Mroué; *A Journey* (2006); *Objects of War 1, 2, 3, 4* (1999-2006); *Embrace* (2004); *Sleep* (2004); *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* (2003). Lamia Joreige is a co-founder and board member of Beirut Art Center, a non-profit space dedicated to contemporary art in Lebanon. She co-directed BAC from its opening in January 2009 until March 2014.

Wendelien van Oldenborgh

Born in Rotterdam in 1962, Wendelien van Oldenborgh is an artist based in Rotterdam. Her practice explores social relations through an investigation of gesture in the public sphere. She received her art education at Goldsmiths, University of London in the eighties and has been living in the Netherlands since 2004. Some of her recent works include: *Forum Expanded* (2013); *La Javanaise* (2012); *Bete & Deise* (2012); *Supposing I Love You. And You Also Love Me.* (2011); *Pertinbo de Alphaville* (2010, Forum Expanded 2011). Van Oldenborgh has exhibited widely and participated in the 54th Venice Biennial (2011), the 4th Moscow Biennial (2011), the 29th Bienal de São Paulo (2010), and at the 11th Istanbul Biennial (2009). At the moment she is a guest of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin-Programme.

Clemens von Wedemeyer

Clemens von Wedemeyer was born in 1974 in Göttingen, Germany, and currently lives and works in Berlin. His work involves films and media installations that are situated between reality and fiction, reflecting power structures in architecture and social relations. Among his recent exhibitions: *Metropolis, Report from China*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (2011); *documenta 13*, Kassel (2012); *The Cast*, MAXXI, Rome (2013); *Every Word You Say*, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig (2014); *Muster (Rushes)*, MCA, Chicago (2015).

John Akomfrah

Born in 1957 in Accra, Ghana, John Akomfrah is a London-based artist, writer, film director, screenwriter, and theorist. He is one of the founders of the Black Audio Film Collective in 1982, and made his debut as a director in 1986 with *Handsworth Songs*, which examined the fallout from the 1985 Handsworth riots and won the Grierson Award for Best Documentary in 1987. In 1998, Akomfrah founded the Smoking Dogs Films along with his long-term producing partners Lina Gopaul and David Lawson. His film *Testament* (1988) is a portrait of an African politician forced into exile after a coup. The emergence of the black power movement in Britain was the inspiration for the film *Who Needs A Heart?* (1991) and *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* (1993). After the film *The Nine Muses*, which presented at the 67th Venice International Film Festival in 2010, his latest multiscreen video installation about Stuart Hall was presented at the Tate Britain in 2013. His new work *Vertigo Sea* is a three-screen film installation that premiered in the 56th Venice Biennial (2015).

Angela Melitopoulos

Born in Munich in 1961, Angela Melitopoulos studied fine arts with Nam June Paik at the Academy of Arts in Düsseldorf. As an artist/researcher in the field of time-based arts, Angela Melitopoulos has made experimental single-channel-tapes, video installations, video essays, documentaries, and sound pieces. Her work focuses on migration/mobility, memory, and narration. Her research project *Timecapex/B-Zone* was shown in winter 2005/2006 at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin along with the publication of the book *B-Zone* (Edition Actar). Her video works have been presented at international art exhibitions, film festivals, and symposia, including the Taipei Biennial 2012, where the audiovisual work *Assemblages* (2010–) was shown, which she made in collaboration with sociologist and philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato. Her videos have received numerous awards. She organises seminars and exhibitions, publishes essays, and is currently professor at the School of Media Arts at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen.

Eric Baudelaire

Born in Salt Lake City, USA in 1973, Eric Baudelaire lives and works in Paris. He approaches his practice as a combination photojournalist and artist-anthropologist. His latest film, *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years without Images* (2011) reviews the political paths and personal stories of the Japanese Red Army, together with the Palestinian cause. His work is part of several public collections, including that of the Whitney Museum, Centre Pompidou, the Fond National d'Art Contemporain, and the FRAC Auvergne. He has participated in numerous film festivals, including FID Marseille and the International Film Festival in Rotterdam. His latest work was presented at the Documentary Forum II in Berlin, at the Paris Triennale in 2012, and at the Beirut Art Center in 2013.

Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi

Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi have an incomparable documentary oeuvre made up of over 40 films since the 1970s. Working at the intersections of history, the archive, the ready made, and re-animation, their films are comprised of found footage that is mesmerisingly manipulated in order to give it new life and meaning: spectral apparitions that exhume forgotten and often shameful historical trespasses as they evocatively illuminate our own era. Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi's landmark experimental work *From the Pole to the Equator* (1986) redefined the documentary form and introduced recurrent themes in their work: war and peace, genocide and colonialism, death and cinema, the body and embodiment. Their techniques involve the manipulation of rare footage through re-photography, hand-tinted colour, and altering film speed to produce work that explores the fragility of the cinematic image and traces of historical ideologies. The two have presented work at major international film festivals including Cannes, Rotterdam, and Venice, as well as at leading museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and Tate Modern, London.

Khaled Jarrar

Born in Jenin, Palestine in 1976, Khaled Jarrar works primarily with video, photography, and performance. In 2004 he exhibited his photos at the Israeli checkpoints of Howarra and Qalandya, making them visible to the Israeli soldiers. His video *Journey 110* (2009) has achieved great international success and was selected for the programming of film festivals, galleries, and art spaces. With the project *Live and Work in Palestine* (2011–), he created the first unofficial stamp of the Palestinian State. Jarrar has participated in numerous international exhibitions, including the 7th Berlin Biennale (2012) and the 11th Sharjah Biennial (2013).

Gintaras Makarevičius

Born in 1965, Gintaras Makarevičius lives and works in Vilnius, Lithuania. His film research focuses on the social situation in his country after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Combining archival material along with his own shots, he builds a narrative that has the power to evoke old demons within the limits of the origins and the sensitivity of each viewer, incorporating the break between memory, experience, and knowledge. His works have been exhibited in numerous public institutions and presented in prestigious festivals, including the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen and the Festival International du Film de La Rochelle. In 2008, his film *Winter Parallels* received the first prize at the Fair Play Film & Video Awards in Lugano.

Florian Schneider

Born in 1967 in Monaco, Florian Schneider lives and works in Brussels. He is a filmmaker, writer, and curator. His work investigates the border crossings between mainstream and independent media, art and activism, theory and open source technology, documentary practices and new forms of curating. Within the Hybrid Workspace at documenta X in 1997, he initiated the campaign *kein mensch ist illegal* (no one is illegal). In 2006, he started the artistic research project *Imaginary property*, which operates at the intersections of an ongoing propertisation of images and the seemingly imaginary character of property in the age of digital production and networked distribution. Since 2014, Florian Schneider is the Head of the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art at the Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Eyal Sivan

Born in Haifa, Israel in 1964, Eyal Sivan is a photographer, political activist, film director, producer and writer. In 1985, he left Israel for Paris. He is the founder and artistic director of the film production company *momento!* and a member of the editorial board of the publishing house *La Fabrique* in Paris. He currently lives in London, where he is a professor in Media Production at the School of Social Sciences, Media, and Cultural Studies (SSMCS) at the University of East London (UEL). His first film *Aqabat-Jaber, vie de passage* was the winner of the Cinéma du Réel in 1987. Among other locations, it has been exhibited internationally at documenta 11 (2002) and Manifesta 5 (2004). Sivan has directed more than ten award-winning political documentaries, such as *Izkor, Slaves of Memory* (1990); *The Specialist* (1999); *Route 181* (co-directed with Michel Khleifi in 2004); *Jaffa* (2009) and *Common State* (2012). His main themes are the instrumental use of memory, nationalism, and the question of civil disobedience.

Hito Steyerl

Born in 1966 in Monaco and based in Berlin, Hito Steyerl is filmmaker, author and professor of experimental creation media at the Universität der Künste in Berlin. Through films, essays and installations, her works examine issues such as globalisation, feminism, and postcolonial criticism. In her films, such as *November* (2004) and *Lovely Andrea* (2007), Hito Steyerl explores the parallel lives of the images, their origins, and their trajectories, combining through documents and found footage with fictional elements. She has participated in numerous international exhibitions including Manifesta 5, documenta 12, the Shanghai, Istanbul, Berlin, Seville, Venice and Gwangju Biennales. She is author of *Die Farbe der Wahrheit. Dokumentarismen im Kunstfeld* (Turia+Kant, 2008) and *The Wretched of the Screen* (Sternberg Press, 2012). Some of her most recent works include: *Adorno's Grey* (2012); *Guards* (2012); *How not to be seen. A Fucking Didactic Educational* (2013) and *Liquidity Ink.* (2014).

Jean-Marie Teno

Born in 1954 in Famleng, Cameroon, Jean-Marie Teno is based in Issy les Moulineaux, France. His work focuses on the post-colonial heritage of African societies, particularly in his native Cameroon. Moving between feature films and documentary, he has produced and directed films for more than 25 years. His works have won awards at festivals around the world: Berlin, Toronto, Yamagata, Cinéma du Réel, Visions du Réel, Amsterdam, Leipzig, Rotterdam, San Francisco and London. Many of his films including *Homage* (1985); *Africa, je te plumerai* (1992); *Clandestine* (1996); *Chief!* (1999); *Alex's Wedding* (2002); *The Colonial Misunderstanding* (2004); *A Trip to the Country* (2008) and *Sacred Places* (2009), have been featured at festivals across the world. Teno has been a guest of the Flaherty Seminar, an artist in residence at the Pacific Film Archive of the University of California, Berkeley, and has lectured at numerous universities. Most recently, he was a visiting artist at Amherst College as a 2007-8 Copeland Fellow.

Trinh T. Minh-ha

Born in 1952 in Hanoi, Vietnam, Trinh T. Minh-ha lives and works in Berkeley, California. She is a filmmaker, writer, and composer. She has authored many books, the most recent being *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism, and the Boundary Event* (Routledge, 2010) and *D-Passage. The Digital Way* (Duke University Press, 2013). Putting cultural differences at the centre of her research, she is one of the leading voices of the post-colonial and post-feminist discourse of the eighties and nineties. Minh-ha's probably best-known film is her first one, *Reassemblage* (1982), shot in Senegal after three years of ethnographic research. Her films are *Naked Spaces - Living is Round* (1985); *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989); *Shoot for the Contents* (1991); *A Tale of Love* (1995); *The Fourth Dimension* (Digital, 2001); *Night Passage* (Digital, 2004), which were presented at the Whitney Biennial (1987 and 1993), documenta 11 in Kassel (2002), Kyoto Biennale (2003) and Paris Triennale (2012).

Deimantas Narkevičius

Born in 1964 in Utena, Lithuania, Deimantas Narkevičius lives and works in Vilnius. He graduated from the Art Academy in Vilnius as a sculptor and spent a year in London in 1992–93. Deimantas Narkevičius is one of the most recognised Lithuanian artists on the international art scene. Since 1992, he has exhibited around the world at many significant contemporary art venues and events. He showed at Manifesta 2 in Luxemburg in 1998, represented his country at the 49th Venice Biennial in 2001, and exhibited at the 50th Venice Biennial in 2003 and at the 14th Carrara Biennale in 2010. The first comprehensive book on his works was published by Archive Books in 2015.

Harun Farocki

Harun Farocki (9 January 1944–30 July 2014) was a German film director, screenwriter, media artist, and curator. He was born as Harun El Usman Faroqi in Neutitschein in German-annexed Czechoslovakia. His father, Abdul Qudus Faroqui, immigrated from India to Germany in the twenties. Because of the Allied bombing, his German mother was then evacuated from Berlin. After the Second World War, Farocki grew up in India and Indonesia before resettling in West Germany. Deeply influenced by Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Luc Godard, he studied at the German Film and Television Academy in West Berlin, from which he was expelled in 1966 for political reasons. His long list of credits since then includes over a hundred productions for video and cinema, the authoring and editing of the influential *Filmkritik* (Munich) and numerous gallery and museum shows. He made over 90 films, the majority of which short experimental documentaries. His last films include: *Sauerbruch Hutton Architekten* (2013); *Ein neues Produkt* (A new Product, 2012); *Zum Vergleich* (In Comparison, 2009); *Aufschub* (Respite, 2007); *Nicht ohne Risiko* (Nothing Ventured, 2004); *Erkennen und Verfolgen* (War at a Distance, 2003); *Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten* (The Creators of Shopping Worlds, 2001); *Gefängnisbilder* (Prison Images, 2000).

*Politics of Memory
Documentary
and Archive*

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