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NEW PRACTICES ACROSS DISCIPLINES



Primate (USA, 1974) - Frederick Wiseman, © Zipporah Films, Inc.

BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM

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FOREWORD

Rabih Mroué projects images of a main street in Beirut for a performance. Photos of Hezbollah martyrs have been attached to lampposts in the central reservation. Mroué draws his audience's attention to a confusing element – the martyrs all have the same body. The reality shown on the photos is manipulated in order to communicate additional significance. The interplay between the photos and the various layers of meaning is the crux of this performance, which is enlightening in every respect.

Mroué's piece clearly illustrates the role of documentary strategies in the arts, which are not concerned with simply depicting reality in contrast to a fictitious reality. Instead our attention is drawn to how we construct reality with our signs, images and symbols. The crucial step consists of leaving behind art as a self-referential system of signs and admitting an external reality upon which our own language can be constructed.

Different constructions of reality on the basis of different languages and systems of signs have been a central theme for the Haus der Kulturen der Welt since its inception. Its very name implies the tension inherent in the relationship between interpretative and semiotic systems, namely between culture and reality, in other words, the world.

However, over the last twenty years it has become ever more necessary to devote greater attention to this relationship, for several reasons. Firstly, there is the rapid development of the media which, thanks to the technological opportunities offered by digitalisation, is increasingly beginning to lead an independent existence beyond the association with non-media based realities. Additionally, increasing mobility has caused direct competition between various means of representation and their associated ways of seeing the world. This places the question of their relationship to the world in a new light. Last but not least, we are currently clearly in a transitional phase brought about by the developments mentioned above, among other things, where the old frames of reference are being questioned, necessitating the development of new representational forms and content within the debate about a reality in flux.

The BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM will make a contribution to this debate by incorporating a range of contemporary and historical perspectives.

Bernd M. Scherer, Director of Haus der Kulturen der Welt

DOCUMENTARY PRACTICES ACROSS DISCIPLINES

HILA PELEG

When we hear 'documentary', we commonly think of documentary films. The field of the documentary, however, can be understood – and indeed must be, as this project maintains – in much broader terms. In the past decades, the widespread belief in any form of non-fiction as generating neutral, truthful and objective representations of reality has been largely undermined. This is partly due to the general erosion of modern objectivist claims to knowledge and representation, and partly due to the proliferation of (e.g. digital) technologies and their capacity to manipulate. But expectations towards 'objective' true knowledge are notoriously persistent in the field of the documentary. The notion of 'truth effects', while common in theoretical reflection on culture and politics, remains a scandal of sorts in mainstream media and in political impact.

The initiative for this project derives from the necessity to abandon such dichotomies and the choices they impose upon both aesthetics and politics. The notion of truth has been contested within the field of the documentary ever since it was first defined. Some forms have been explicitly denounced as particular modes of producing 'truth' in the service of hegemonic powers, and that very critique has given rise to other forms. The 'old' conception of the documentary as a somewhat 'neutral' window to a reality 'out there' gradually gives way to a new understanding of the documentary as representational practices that are 'reality driven'.

Such practices must reflect and question their means of representation in their capacity to account for complex, layered realities. Rather than by 'capturing' reality, the documentary is then characterised – and differentiated from other forms of artistic and intellectual practice such as the writing of fiction – by a commitment to actual events, histories and sites. It is such commitment that then becomes the backdrop against which the means of representation are being measured

and assessed. This can – and indeed must – include a reflection of one's own speaking position as a producer of images and narratives, and a critical interrogation of the power politics inherent to signification, of the economies in which images and histories circulate, and the performative nature of montage, rhetorics, gestures, staging and frames.

This definition of documentary practices encompasses a much broader field of engagements, including literature, visual art, performance, cultural history and theory. The BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM therefore has, from the outset, been conceived as a way of engaging with the 'documentary' across a variety of disciplines, and it will further broaden the scope of this engagement in the course of its future development. Indeed, the engagement with the question of reality (contextual, political, historical, social, material, etc.) has been a key concern in artistic and discursive practices for decades. The self-reflexivity of the documentary form demands a recognition that there is no documentary form that is not 'artistic', 'intellectual' and 'political' in its qualities. Those qualities must be understood within the particular context in which they are articulated as much as within the conditions of their production and reception at large.

This first biannual festival is structured around six special thematic programmes developed and realised by commissioned curators, artists, filmmakers and theoreticians, further accompanied by a selection of performances and conversations.

An account for the shifts in the field of the documentary requires reemployment of its history – a history in which images, forms and genres themselves figure as agencies. For the inaugural edition of the BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM, two filmmakers were commissioned to each develop a comprehensive programme highlighting particular genealogies of the documentary in relation to their respective political contexts. Eyal Sivan's programme "Documentary Moments" looks at how World War II, and particularly the question of the representation of genocide, has given rise to a 'renaissance'

of documentary film, driven by the questioning of claims to power and truth. The second programme "Missing Image", devised by Florian Schneider, reflects on the period from the 1960s to the 1980s in which structural violence sanctioned by society and the state was at the centre of the critique articulated by politically engaged documentaries on German public TV. The programme is about missing images in two senses: the missing or distorted image of the socially and politically excluded; and the fate of those films which today are missing from television screens and the accounts of their history.

The idea of 'official', hegemonic representation means that only what can be represented enters the field of recognised reality. Theatre director Rabih Mroué interrogates images and objects from contemporary Lebanon, and questions them as witnesses and suspects alike. The disjunction between signs and referents, images and bodies, words and events that he finds, becomes a testimony to the politics of a culture in the aftermath of war. Such points of disjunction are also the subject of "A Blind Spot", the prequel to a larger exhibition for the second edition of BDF (2012) conceived by curator Catherine David, which looks beyond the assumed opposition between art and documentary, fiction and non-fiction, to investigate the real as opaque, ephemeral and even obscure.

The contemporary erosion of claims to power and truth in the documentary are the subject of a programme planned by film programmer Eduardo Thomas, bringing together contemporary experimental films from all over the world. The programme of screenings and talks reflects on the heritage of concepts such as authorship, authenticity and authority.

"Möglichkeitsraum" (The Blast of the Possible), three 'screen-performances' conceived by video artist Angela Melitopoulos, looks at the possibilities of the moving image in relation to how memory works and history is narrated. The screen-performances are live stagings of the process of montage of video and film archive materials, belonging to the history of activist media since the 1960s.

The means by which images create social identities and construct histories, furthermore, is the subject of a conversation between cultural historians Ariella Azoulay and Issam Nassar, who look at archive photographs from the late 1940s to the early 1950s taken in Palestine and Israel in a comparative examination of two conflicting spaces of memory.

The inclusion into and the exclusion from historical accounts and archives, or the point where a decision is forced about the truth or falsity of an image are genuine political sites that give rise to multiple forms of agency. The degree to which the language of the documentary is rooted in testimony and witnessing is the subject of a multifaceted programme devised by curator Okwui Enwezor. At the centre of this programme are public readings of documentary literature containing accounts of political events and atrocities. These readings are framed by interventions in public media reflecting the status of historical photographs, and artistic interventions within the HKW building.

Several pieces in the festival look at the performative aspect of documentary accounts. A special performance by artist Omer Fast tests the popular format of the live talk show and the confessional speech in relation to spectacle, authenticity and 'oral history'. Another live performance explores the body as a living archive of sorts: choreographer Xavier Le Roy's new work is a dance performance in which the documentation and enactment of a process are brought together.

My personal thanks go to the curators of the thematic programmes, and to all participating artists and contributors. I also wish to thank the BDF team. Thanks too to all the people involved in HKW. I am grateful to the architects of Kooperative für Darstellungs-politik, who developed the spatial setting for the festival, enabling a multiplicity of modes of presentation and spectatorship in one space, and to the members of Open Video – Multitude Media who record BDF ideas and events and define an online space for their presentation.

**“I saw
the severed hand
of a black activist
in a bottle
at a Port Elizabeth
police station.**

**The police
told me
it was
a baboon’s hand.**

Tony Cokes - Evri.13_Alternate Versions - ONHD (c.my.skull). Image: Scott Pagano.

DOCUMENTARY’S DISCURSIVE SPACES

OKWUI ENWEZOR

Perhaps it is best to begin the discussion of the role of the documentary in contemporary art and culture under the terms of what may be called, *pace* Rosalind Krauss, documentary’s discursive spaces. If you recall, it was at the height of the post-structuralist and postmodernist theories in the 1980s that Krauss pressed into service an analysis of the tension that exists between a photographic image and a lithographic translation of that image. In her careful analysis of the disjunction in the indexical traces that trail after the two pictorial supplements – the photograph and lithograph – she argues that the difference between the referent and the translation rests on the idea that “they belong to two separate domains of culture, they assume different expectations in the user of the image, they convey two distinct kinds of knowledge. In a more recent vocabulary, one would say that they operate as representations within two distinct discursive spaces, as members of two different discourses.”¹ If such a distinction exists between these two different mediums, it is not on the basis of the content of the images which are inscribed on their surfaces, rather it exists on the basis of the discursive spaces they each occupy: based on the effects of their individual levels of pictorial legibility, and to wit on the difference in affect of their separate aesthetic mechanisms. Krauss explains this difference according to the way the reception of photography at the end of the nineteenth century was organised by an aesthetic discourse defined by the space of the exhibition. While the lithograph would remain only as an illustration tool employed in technical manuals, the photograph was transformed by its entrance into the gallery or museum space, hence its discursive inclusion into the realm of aesthetic discourse. She writes: “Given its function as the physical vehicle of exhibition, the gallery wall became the signifier of inclusion and, thus, can be seen as constituting in itself a representation of what could be called *exhibitionality*, or that which was developing as

the crucial medium of exchange between patrons and artists within the changing structure of art in the nineteenth century.”²

Recent debates about the “documentary turn”³ in art are bedeviled by the same issues outlined above. In recent years, with the entrenchment of large scale, absorptive, tableau-format photography in museums and exhibitions, contemporary photography was signalling an aesthetic relationship closer to painting⁴ than to the fact-driven ideas of the documentary form. The field of contemporary art has been preoccupied with this debate and the dichotomies inherent in the shift from photographic images as facts to images as art issues and discourses relating to the documentary form. One line of inquiry on the state of the documentary image and its manifestation in artistic strategies rests on the seeming irreconcilability between the forces of art and their putative autonomy from the realms of mass media and culture and those of journalism. Art and documentary are often seen as antagonistic to each other and, therefore, exist in distinctly different discursive spaces. The documentary, it is often assumed, exists in that space of representation that deals mostly with the tawdry aspects of reality which feeds the insatiable appetite for the sensationalistic and emotional. Art on the other hand is idealistically manifested in reflexive complexities, by generating its own conditions of reality. Put another way, the documentary image is to art what the lithograph in the nineteenth century was to fine art photography. Their conditions of reception are based on the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion into and outside of regimes of aesthetic discourses. One (art) seemingly belongs to the discursive spaces of *exhibitionality*, while the other (documentary) promotes *exhibitionism*.

With the blurring of the boundary between mass and high culture, and the induction of the mechanical and digital images and objects into the facture of art, it seems only a particularly conservative agenda is served in the fencing off of art and documentary. Even if such separation were thinkable, the terms of public reception of images have certainly transformed the discursive spaces of both art and the documentary. For neither exists in purely distinctive spheres of reception as the contentious conjunction of the two domains already makes

clear when the bits and scraps of popular media began invading the surfaces of painting under the reign of collage. Or as evidenced in the interventions of the de/collage aesthetics of the post-war projects of Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé for example. Yet it is necessary to specify that the documentary and art do not always share the same logic nor operate with the same set of aesthetic protocols since their frames have been hollowed, especially in light of the increasing politicisation and sometimes fabrications⁵ of documentary images along with their potential for ideological manipulation. So what discursive spaces are possible for the documentary today beyond the sphere of media, reportage and journalism?

To address some of these issues, what is required is to first evaluate what the term documentary really represents, and secondly to articulate its discursive meaning. The documentary image according to classical definitions is always that product of representation surrounded by a nimbus of facts. Whether in its context, or subject matter, or location, it demands that form of legibility that nothing in the frame is extraneous to the image, nothing added, nothing withdrawn. On the one hand it is an authentic artefact of the event it documents, and on the other it is a truthful inscription of what it represents. Such authenticity and truthfulness, or facticity cannot be a supplement of an occurrence, not a translation or interpretation of the subject matter in the mode of what the artist Jeff Wall calls “near documentary”, namely, an image which intentionally looks like, acts like a documentary but in fact is not a documentary. To deviate from this simple rule of the documentary as embodying in its inscription a direct correlation to its physical referent shatters the vessel of both believability and trust which is part of its public *fait accompli*. The history of the documentary is riddled with numerous moments when this vessel has been shattered, either by outright forgery or by an eagerness to over-interpret or over-dramatise the subject for the event of the documentary is necessarily a testimony to something that happened. Therefore, to document is to simultaneously witness the passing of an event and thus to capture and inscribe that

vanishing past. There are, obviously, other constraints that surround the way in which the documentary is both imagined or “disimagined”⁶, to borrow a term from Georges Didi-Huberman.

Let us examine a separate indictment of the documentary: its supposed ethical blindspot, with regard to showing the unbearable, the unrepresentable, the unimaginable. These seeming impossibilities can sometimes confine the documentary image to a zone of silence, ringing it with technologies of opacity by withdrawing it from public view. Images of extreme violence and cruelty are often candidates for this kind of seclusion. Perhaps, because the image is imagined as over-representing its subject matter, or as too graphic in its insistence on veracity. Such images represent a kind of paradox in the manner in which the documentary must function discursively. Therefore, as a general rule of thumb, the documentary must always be tolerable, it should not invite moral or ethical sanction against its public legibility or legitimacy. The photographer must also, should be never seen as a partisan, an actor with an investment in how the facts of the image are interpreted. Despite the commonplace of the documentary image as unvarnished truth, in modern and contemporary culture, it is surprisingly surrounded by multiple prohibitions. In this sense what can be shown, what is permissible for public display, and what is deemed abominable to ocular decency becomes vital. In his essay, *The Intolerable Image*, the philosopher Jacques Rancière turns to this issue, related to documentary imagery of the kind that disturbs both ethical and social propriety, arguing that certain forms of political art have sought to traduce this public sanction, thus crossing the boundary “from the intolerable in the image to the intolerability in the image...”⁷

But beyond the image and its various orders of truth, authenticity, representability, intolerability, and so on, by what other means does the documentary signify? What are the rules that unite the signifier and signified in the realm of visibility or through acts of commemoration or structures of producing truth effects that inhere to the documentary?

“Rules of Evidence: Text, Voice, Sight” proposes to examine this question by closely associating the terms of the documentary with notions of testimony and witnessing that have been fundamental to the nature of the documentary form. The relationship between testimony and witnessing is part of a two-fold process that seeks a bridge between an account and its framing, a representation and its reception. In other words, “Rules of Evidence: Text, Voice, Sight” is predicated on not simply presenting the documentary as a form, but rather seeks to examine the discursive spaces of the form and the general conditions, techniques, and structures of producing diverse public infrastructures both in the classical reception of images in public culture and in the institutional framing of the meaning of the documentary. However, against the tendency to offer the documentary, *a priori*, as purely a matter of exhibiting and making visible images or representing their visceral effects, this project seeks to put in remand – temporarily – such effects. To do so, it calls for an initial withdrawal of the image from both the standpoint of *exhibitionality* and *exhibitionism*, tendencies often generalised as conditions of reception of the documentary genealogy as a fact/truth based social regime.

The regime of the documentary always seems to compel the receiver of the image (preferably the still photograph or video image) or the participant in its analysis toward a materialised explication that begins with what may be designated as rules of evidence, namely that its form and content be neatly aligned along the phenomenological axis of fact and truth. The documentary as such therefore calls for two discursive frameworks – the testimony of the image and the witnessing of the phenomena it contains – in order to transform rules into systems of social perception.

This classical domain of the documentary object and its images have in the last several decades proliferated such that it is impossible to bring to the public arena other means of reflecting the documentary object. If there is an impasse in documentary’s discursive spaces, it is partially premised not on the status of the image per se, but

on what can be conceived as the rules by which the seemingly self-explanatory conditions of the documentary form can be analysed. This analysis is the premise of the curatorial proposition for “Rules of Evidence: Text, Voice, Sight”. It is situated between *exhibitionality* and *exhibitionism*.

“Rules of Evidence: Text, Voice, Sight” involves three simultaneous sequences: the first concerns the fact/truth-based question surrounding documentary images in contemporary media. In this sequence four documentary photographs from the last century to more recent images have been selected. In addition, four writers have been invited to analyse these images in the form of short editorials that address their varied representations. The four images, along with the editorials, will then be presented in the taz newspaper in Berlin on the 5th of June 2010. The images will be accompanied with questions and evaluations of their conditions of production and reception during the course of their circulation. In this way, the project not only addresses anew the critical evidentiary notions attaching to the images, but also the dialectical hole in which those images are plunged when their veracity threatens to overshadow the singular truths they may be telling. Mediating this dialectic requires an exhibitionary framework as well as a typographical formulation. It is on this basis that an invitation was extended to Ecke Bonk, a “typosoph”, a neologism describing the intersection of typography and philosophy. Bonk’s work is concerned with thinking seriously about the way typography works on the reader and receiver of communication, about the legibility of signs within their assigned instrumental registers, be it the page or the screen, book or tabloid. His work will address typosophic issues generated not only by the images but the texts that they accompany. He will not so much design the pages for the re-circulation of the four images in popular media, but will be focused on providing a discursive space in which the images will hopefully accrue new discursive capital.

The four images include Robert Capa’s famous and iconic war photograph “Falling Soldier”, which depicts a loyalist militiaman

shot at a key moment of battle at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. The photograph shows the man at the moment of impact, as the bullet pierces and penetrates his body. His body is pitched backwards by the impact of the bullet just before he falls to the ground. Suspended from the ground and yet falling, the photograph isolates what could be called an unrepresentable moment, the point between life and death. Ever since it was first published controversies have surrounded the veracity of this monumental example of the decisive moment of the documentary. Compounding the issue are recent revelations by researchers that the original caption misidentifies where the event occurred, therefore further raising the issue of whether this moment of death of the loyalist militiaman was staged. The historian Eduardo Cadava examines this gap in the representation of Capa's "Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936", 1936, writing:

"Rather than deliver truth, the photograph seems to have removed truth from perception altogether. The "Falling Soldier" remains compelling, however, because it evokes all the modern debates over documentary photography's veracity. Acting like a kind of 'espejo' or mirror, it reflects as much about the violence of war as about the public's desire for truth. It also tells us as much about the relation between a photograph and the stories that seek to understand it, as it does about the historical contexts in which it was produced... It also enacts – as it did when it first was published – the decontextualisation that takes place in every photograph. Signalling the enigmatic relation between life and death, the image that seems to depict death records its own death, its own incapacity to show or represent. The decisive moment portrayed by this war photograph is therefore the unresolved war between the photograph and the photographed – a force of destabilisation that, leaving us in suspense, keeps us falling..."⁸

Another image the veracity of which was brought to account is a now controversial photograph by the Lebanese photographer Adnan Hajj. It is an image which documents

the aftermath of a bombing by Israeli fighter jets of a suburb of Beirut during the Hezbollah/Israel war of 2006. Hajj's photograph had deviated from its initial documentation of the bombing, which is not in dispute. However, it was the effect of doctoring the image by using the digital tool of Photoshop to enlarge certain areas of the photograph by making the plume of smoke accompanying the bombing appear to cover a wider area than was initially the case, that brought the image to account, and a rupture in its normative status of truth. This photograph represents a paradox insofar as its veracity is concerned because it documents an actual event, only to undermine its ethical and professional competency by seeking to affect public opinion or to fudge the legibility and authenticity of the documentary fact and artefact. Writing on this image, Emily Apter notes that the scandal of the photograph partially lies in the public's trust in the truth of documentary representation, which the doctoring violates. It is because:

"We are psychically invested in photojournalistic credibility and most people want to keep it that way at all costs. The lesson of Hajj's tainted Beirut scene, if one might be adduced here, lies in its exposure of our investment in the representation of visual truth. In this context, the photograph stands as a 'work' of visual pedagogy, staging an education in critical viewing."⁹

The documentary image is supposed to perform truth effects. The social contract surrounding such images cannot be sun-dered, for to do so is to shatter the public trust, the believe we all invest in the search for truth. But not all images provoke the desire for truth. Some provoke the public desire to mask the truth, to keep it from public exposure, a situation that constitutes the intolerable image, and its intolerability. One such image is the photograph, "Vulture Watching Starving Child, Sudan, March, 1993", 1993, by the late South African photographer Kevin Carter. The photograph shows a scene in which the emaciated figure of a starving, exhausted child is crouched on the ground, head bowed into the dust like a supplicant. Behind her body waits a hulking vulture, pictured in a diagonal

so as to menacingly loom over the child. The photograph caused public outrage on several levels, and it is this outrage that Jacques Rancière examines in his editorial. He begins, following the public response to the photograph, by asking the question: "Are such pictures acceptable?" The debate around Carter's picture does not have definitive answers but it generates fresh considerations about its representation and marks the truth of its unbearability. The hunger for images which are truthful are counterposed to a physical hunger which envelops masses of the starving. How to reconcile these two hungers on the planar scene of the photographic image? Rancière writes:

"But they have exchanged their parts: the human being crawls, bowing her head over the soil, driven by the sole instinct of survival; the animal stands up with the quietness of the observer and the rigidity of the judge draped in his gown. The unbearable encounter of two hungers takes on the shape of a quiet fable where the bird of prey also plays the part of the judge. Fables don't call for pity. But they often speak about justice. Kevin Carter shows us a court where a certain 'human life' is on trial. This is why the small-time moralists can't forgive him: he shows that we don't need their conscience for judging such situations. The animal has already done it. What matters is to make our gaze live up to its verdict."¹⁰

The final image exposes the condition of the documentary at war with itself. It is a photograph embedded in the scene of an image war between two machineries of media discourse. The photograph by the Iraqi photographer Khalid Mohammed documents the gruesome scene of the killing of Blackwater guards working in support of the American war in Iraq. The burnt bodies of two of the guards strung up on the cross-beams of a metal bridge is an image of crucifixion and the carnage of war, but its publication again is counterposed to the notion of their public disclosure. Thomas Keenan addresses this question, writing: "What sort of evidence is his picture? Does it even belong to the realm of evidence any more? What comes to light in it, however

shocking, is nothing secret, nothing hidden – it offers to our sight nothing less than exhibition itself, the exposure of exposure... But the exhibition of the results, and the exhibition of that exhibition for the cameras, remains startling. This was something you could only do for an image, for the exposure and the memory, for the claim it makes on the imagination of others. And on their memories, their memories of other images... It's a photograph of a photograph, of the conditions of photography, of the presentation, exposure, abandonment of bodies before the camera. One day we will learn its lesson: the photo opportunity does not signal the disappearance of politics and violence into the superficiality of the image, but names the necessary starting point for an understanding of the image as a site of politics and violence – and for our reaction to it."¹¹

Each of these images operate in and are generated by specific discursive spaces and conditions. The objective of this discursive device is to move the image from the domain of its visceral effects to the context of collective, social analysis. In this way the goal is to transform the zone of evidence into a performative arena.

The second sequence of this project engages the arena of performativity, by an attempt to shape a dialectically constructed public event conceived around a five-day live reading project which will involve three books dealing with the documentary recounting of historic events. These books have been chosen for their precise, explicit reflections centered around several historic atrocities. The readings performed continuously over the duration of the festival proceed in a relay format bringing together a collectivity of voices, both professional actors and members of the general public reading directly from the chosen texts. The principal goal is to have readers from across different generations from young to old reading passages from the selected books until completion. The selected books are: W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, on the firebombing of German cities during World War II; Antjie Krog, *Country of my Skull* on the testimonies of the South African Truth and

Reconciliation Commission; and Philip Gourevitch *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*, an account of the Rwanda Genocide. Ranging from the literary to the reportorial, to the journalistic, these three books animate aspects of the documentary form that generally make no appearance in exhibition contexts.

The third sequence involves the work of four artists: Tony Cokes, Walid Sadek, and Juan Maidagan and Dolores Zinny. These artists were invited to respond to aspects of the first two sequences or to create a context for their reception in an exhibition-like environment. The given rule of this participation is that the artists do not work with images of any kind, but rather to ground their contributions on formats such as text-based documentary forms, design, and architectural/sculptural responses. The overall objective of this project is based on procedures of animation rather than on rules of evidence that are often grounded in the display of images. Therefore, the physical manifestation of the project within the confines of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt is to set up the protocols of reception, to introduce a third discursive arena that connects the spaces of public mediation to the domain of literary recitation to the medium of exhibition. In this sequence, Zinny and Maidagan define an architectural limit within which the readings from the books will occur. Using soft material such as fabric, they have created an environment that serves as a kind of proscenium in which the legibility of the recitations will be delivered. However, the architecture and its defined spatial contours do not confine the performance, but rather serve as an interface for public encounters. Cokes on the other hand takes the form of text-based installation to deal with problems of reading and comprehension as well as to penetrate the logics of testimony in relation to the documentary. In his project *Evil.13: Alternate Versions* he sets selected excerpts from the three books to a recursive stream of articulations, between the specular and the textual, using “strategies of citation [to] provoke an awareness of gaps in our reading / understanding of history and the contemporary moment. By re-presenting previously published documents, journalism, theory,

and literature in differential forms, scales, and speeds... call[ing] attention to normative protocols of reading, and their cognitive and political failures.” By establishing the relation between texts and their reception, he offers a dialectic for “potentially excavating the accepted terms of discourse, enabling a minor analytic against the ‘transparency’ of documentary images.”¹²

To what extent is the documentary transparent to the events it depicts or represents? Throughout this text, I have tried to grapple with issues related to the documentary’s discursive spaces, its coding, and its various modes of public address. Walid Sadek’s contribution “Mourning in the Presence of the Corpse: Thinking Sociality in Protracted Civil War” is an attempt to transform the documentary turn into an examination of the conditions of witnessing and the aporias of testimony, especially in moments when memory is not an absolute ally towards a fidelity to truth. The piece exists in the form of a philosophical essay that speculates on the question of bearing witness in the intractable zone of mourning, or as Sadek writes about thinking:

“... the consequences of living the aftermath of violence, that is of living in the ruin. The work of mourning, in the presence of the corpse, is marked, as far as I have theorised, by a ‘stay’ rather than a ‘wait’ and by an uneasy silence or soliloquy which occupies the living who stay or linger/tarry with the corpse. This work of mourning is therefore without the promise of release, it is work in the sense of poesis; it makes a place. Further, this text is not of the event nor does it search to return or recapture the event. It certainly does not claim to accompany the (violent) event. Rather, this text is for me part of the work that survivors do, those who enter the place where knowledge is born out of the work of mourning, the work of forgetting and the work of waking the corpse.”¹³

What is evident in this statement is that the documentary surpasses the evidentiary, the authentic artifactual moment, it is beyond the event and not coded in representation. The theme of civil war, and its entanglement

with what Sadek calls post-memory is presented as a trope with which to limn remembering and also to account for the opacity of memory. In “On Semaan: A Non-Vengeful Native” (2010) Sadek presents the follow up to “Mourning in the Presence of the Corpse”. It is a short text, set in an village which has been abandoned by its former farming inhabitants. The text is centred around a character named Semaan. Sadek sets the narrative in the chaotic rubble of a ruin in which grows a massive deciduous tree, whose ripening fruit sort of feeds the hunger for remembering.¹⁴ The ruin is both memory and its aftermath, the post-memory. The ruin marks a gap in knowledge of the event which can only be inscribed through acts of memory, and structures of memorialisation, the “waking of the dead”. Each of these propositions opens up the ongoing dialectic between the documentary as a visual phenomenon and as an intimate, proximate relationship to events that lie beyond the inscriptible, that is to say beyond the image. It is on this basis that “Rules of Evidence: Text, Voice, Sight” exists outside of the nimbus of facts and truth. Instead, it proceeds along the edges of abyss between the intolerable and intolerability, between veracity and fiction, visibility and opacity.

1 Rosalind E. Krauss, *Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986) p.132

2 Ibid, p.133

3 See Claire Gilman and Margaret Sundell, “The Storyteller” in *The Storyteller*, Gilman and Sundell, eds. (Zurich: jrp/ringier, 2010) p. 7-69. See also my own essay in the same volume, “What is it? The Image, Between Documentary and Near Documentary” p.73-82

4 For a discussion of this shift see Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Fried’s account of the transformation of photography as art did not discuss the disjunction between so-called art photography and the documentary. He did however, explore how the concept of the documentary was used to generate the “near-documentary” a term coined by the Canadian artist Jeff Wall, and which represents the foundational concept that underpin the compositional attitude of his large-format, backlit lightboxes.

5 Two images in this project, Robert Capa’s seminal

“*Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936*” and Adnan Hajj’s “*Smoke Over Beirut*” were included with reference to issues of political manipulation and outright fabrication. While the facts surrounding the making of the two photographs are all too real, namely war, the images themselves have raised serious questions about the blurring of the border between documentary evidence and interpretative evidence.

6 For a remarkable interpretation of the complexities of the documentary and its relationship to atrocity see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images In Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, translated by Shane B. Ellis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)

7 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, translated by Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2009) p.84

8 Eduardo Cadava, excerpt from the editorial contributed to accompany Robert Capa’s “*Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936*”, 1936, published in *die tageszeitung*, June 5, 2010.

9 Emily Apter, excerpt from the editorial accompanying Adnan Hajj’s “*Smoke Over Beirut*”, Beirut, 2006 published in *die tageszeitung*, June 5, 2010.

10 Jacques Rancière, excerpt from the editorial accompanying Kevin Carter’s “*Vulture Watching Starving Child, Sudan, March, 1993*”, 1993, in *die tageszeitung*, June 5, 2010.

11 Thomas Keenan, excerpt from the editorial accompanying Khalid Mohammed’s “*Blackwater Agents Hanging from the Bridge, Fallujah*”, 2004, published in *die tageszeitung*, June 5, 2010.

12 Tony Cokes, Proposal for *Evil.13: Alternate Versions*, 2010

13 Walid Sadek, from a correspondence with the author.

14 BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM will present this new work by Walid Sadek.

Rules of Evidence: Text, Voice, Sight

A conversation between Okwui Enwezor, Ecke Bonk, Tony Cokes, Walid Sadek, Juan Maidagan and Dolores Zinny. **Wednesday, June 2, 8.30 pm**

Publication in the German daily *taz* on June 5th with contributions by Emily Apter, Ecke Bonk, Jacques Rancière, Tom Keenan and Eduardo Cadava.

Public readings of the books: *On the Natural History of Destruction* (W.G. Sebald), *Country of my Skull* (Antjie Krog) and *I Would Like to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will All Be Dead* (Philip Gourevitch) take place in the foyer of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (**June 2 to 6**).

Evil.13: Alternate Versions (installation, 2010) by Tony Cokes and **Blei in den Nähten** (installation, 2010) by Zinny / Maidagan in the foyer and upper level of Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

“**On Semaan: A Non-Vengeful Native**” (text, 2010) by Walid Sadek is distributed throughout the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. (**June 2 to 6**)



Djibouti oder Die Gewehre sind nicht geladen, nur nachts. Michael Mrakitsch, 1975

Shalom oder Wir haben nichts zu verlieren Michael Mrakitsch, 1983

MISSING IMAGE #1 Three TV films by Michael Mrakitsch and strategies for reenvisioning them

FLORIAN SCHNEIDER

He had a reputation as the “Dostoyevsky of documentaries” (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and as “the most stubborn, obsessed documentary filmmaker in German TV” (*Der Spiegel*). His films were celebrated as a “triumph of the documentary over fiction”, yet even twenty years ago they had seemed to “disappear in the bargain basement of a fallen medium” (*Die Zeit*).

Very few people have heard of the filmmaker, actor and painter Michael Mrakitsch nowadays. He was born in Nuremberg and made his home in Switzerland, dying last March after a long illness. He worked for a number of German TV stations from the early 1960s to the 1990s, and his films are among the most exciting, challenging and thought-provoking works from a short era of film and TV history which, although it has not entirely disappeared, has certainly been buried in the stations’ archives.

Mrakitsch’s works comprise a number of major political documentaries, essay films, portraits of artists and several feature films, all of which have been labelled ‘difficult’ for at least three reasons.

Firstly, Mrakitsch devoted himself almost exclusively to comparatively ‘weighty’ subjects. Although his filmmaking career began with a series of shorts for the satirical Swiss TV programme *Freitagsmagazin*, he transferred to the documentaries department of Süddeutscher Rundfunk in Stuttgart following a dispute with his superior. Later he worked primarily for Radio Bremen and Saarländischer Rundfunk. The films he produced with editors such as Klaus Simon and Elmar Hügler gradually became longer, repeatedly dealing with no less a theme than “violence sanctioned by society”.

Michael Mrakitsch was regarded as an inconvenience from the very beginning. Some

called him a “bogeyman of editors”. Like many of his colleagues of the time, he had entered film through the back door. Initially he had studied painting at the Geneva University of Art and Design and was part of the Dieter Roth/Daniel Spoerri circle in Berne. In the late 1950s he moved to Paris for an extended stay, where he worked as a trainee on *nouvelle vague* films and met Alain Resnais.

Mrakitsch was a lone wolf, yet he always worked on comparatively well equipped TV productions rather than as an independent. He was not prepared to comply with their regimentation and insisted on maximum artistic freedom, a condition which the bureaucrats at the TV stations conceded only reluctantly or following nerve-wrecking conflicts. More than anything else, he never made it easy for himself.

The ‘difficult’ label has also been applied because it is not exactly easy to identify the significance of Mrakitsch’s films from a contemporary perspective. His credo was that “debate in society must be held in the dominant medium”. It was a short-lived battle that was doomed to failure from the outset, but precisely for that reason it has offered insights into a situation where TV has lost its dominance yet its former influence is retained in the formats of new media.

Mrakitsch’s films deal with the impossibility of making a film, at least in the conventional sense. The nature of this impossibility varies from case to case and must be investigated each time anew. Everything that can be seen or heard happens despite these and several other circumstances.

Each film made by Mrakitsch is an exhibit testifying not to a necessarily distorted reality but to a complex, serious and absolutely uncynical attempt to gain insight from the failure of strategies for visualisation. This insight goes far beyond documenting a false reality and can therefore only persist in making clear what is truly false.

Djibouti oder Die Gewehre sind nicht geladen, nur nachts (Djibouti or the guns aren’t loaded, only by night) is the unintentional and

largely reluctant dissection of the more or less obviously repulsive nature of a colonial regime which has long outlived itself while assiduously presenting its post-colonial continued existence far beyond the present day.

Mrakitsch travelled to Djibouti with a small TV crew to make a film about German mercenaries in the foreign legion. It was probably intended to be an exposé observing the crude banality of everyday German culture, a genre characterised by the 'Stuttgart school' of Roman Brodmann, Wilhelm Bittorf, Elmar Hügler and Peter Nestler in the 1960s and early 1970s; Mrakitsch was dismayed to be included as one of its proponents. However, the protagonist suddenly refused to appear on camera once shooting started. Mrakitsch started filming regardless – fragments of images that should not even really be considered, opportunities that happen by chance after all, referring to a project that has already failed, and long journeys to the surface of a reality that cannot be comprehended with any haste.

The film that was created in the editing suite brought to account the visual repertoire of foreign reportage which dominates to this day – third world misery on display in hastily cobbled together images which are capable of wresting a touch of exotic beauty from even the most blatant forms of poverty and exploitation. The film is overlaid with a commentary that deals with the oppressive helplessness of its creator in escaping the colonial – or even post-colonial – exploitative and dependent structure, if only symbolically, in order to complete the appropriate film for the subject matter.

The film is certainly not about the real situation in Djibouti. The city is an invention, as the title of the second film nearly twenty years later indicates, and each attempt to engage with the perfidy of the colonial reality must inevitably end in complicity with the regime. The only way to escape it is by numbing all the senses.

So what should be done? Mrakitsch did not ask that question once, let alone suggest an answer. Between the images and in the

absence of any figure of identification, the unspoken hope of liberation movements can be sensed, soon transforming these snapshots of a travelling German documentary maker into waste paper or a footnote to a newspaper review. It was subsequently said that the leader of the independence movement who later became president saw the film, and that the director of the TV station in decolonised Djibouti wanted to broadcast it. But not until Djibouti was really liberated.

The terrible thing is that liberation never happened, or is still waiting to happen. When Mrakitsch returned to Djibouti in 1991, during the first Gulf War, everything had changed in order to stay the same as it had been before the nominal independence from the French colonial masters. By contrast with the first Djibouti film, where the colonial perspective remained unbearably inaccessible and was not broached in formal terms, in the second film the local protagonists were granted a voice – poets and authors who talk about “what is happening now” in their “invented, paralysed land”. This time there is no trace of empathy, or even sympathy, which are otherwise characteristic of documentaries on the third world. The film concludes: “We observe each other, fleetingly or with an attentive casualness, but we hardly exchange a word. A few times we catch each other’s eye.”

Mrakitsch might be one of the few documentary makers who have consistently resisted the temptation of including victims in their films – neither for their own sakes, nor to choose a supposedly more harmless or more efficient way to expose the schemes of those responsible for the situation, and also not to hold up a mirror to the audience, who can be reassured that they are benevolent, well-meaning observers.

The reality of the film image does not claim to produce – or even accurately represent – a link to how things really are. The image documents the filmmaker’s defeat against a superior force that must be combated in some other way, in a battle that must take place somewhere else. In a different context and with somewhat unpredictable conse-

quences, the film can only produce something approaching the truth about social relationships if this defeat is successful.

Drinnen, das ist wie draußen, nur anders. Protokolle aus einer psychiatrischen Anstalt (“Irrenhausprotokolle”) (Inside, that’s like outside, just different: A record of a psychiatric clinic – Madhouse Minutes) is set in a psychiatric institution near Düren (half way between Cologne and Aachen) which was regarded as progressive in the 1970s. It was probably the first time that patients in a psychiatric clinic had been allowed to speak on German TV, but they were mostly seen behind a window which made the screen appear strangely doubled. It is the reflection of a society which is capable of sedating those who are no longer able to reproduce their labour as a product.

The film abstains from any form of investigation, and clearly does not aim to expose inhuman conditions, rehabilitate patients who had been falsely hospitalised or accuse the management of neglect. Instead, the static camera repeatedly and without any intervention by the filmmaker records both the regulations according to which the institution functions and the results of this system being implemented.

“The new institutional patient is a person whose presence in society threatens to be more disadvantageous than advantageous, an individual whose socio-economic relevance has become questionable and should be evaluated.” Mrakitsch’s off-screen commentary is restricted to essential information and is delivered in a comparatively dry tone.

“The people who are dumped there are unreliable, difficult, irritating, disturbing, unpredictable, but not actually ill. Illness itself plays a secondary role in the institution.” This rather unspectacular conclusion is meticulously documented and flawlessly argued. After all, the administration of every-day misery is more harrowing than any scandal: “Making distress merely bearable is essentially the same thing as humanising the inhumane.”

The film’s theme, as with *Djibouti*, is sedating the desire for self-determination, the stealthy extinguishing of subjectivity via medicated intoxication, and safe custody and displacement for the living dead, all attitudes which seemingly exclude any hope of escape. Conversations between doctors and patients reveal how any hope of improvement gradually fades away. And yet the patients are not victims, because they seem to be aware of the futility of their situations to a disturbing degree. The longer the image of their torpor remains, the more they retain a positively exceptional dignity.

Yet the patients’ relative aplomb has a paralysing effect on us, the audience, for our assumed normality is visibly exposed as an artificial construct or, even worse, as a lucky coincidence. “A society of autonomous processes threatens, a society as a total institution where chance alone is a sign of life.”

Schalom oder Wir haben nichts zu verlieren (Shalom or We have nothing to lose) is sheer horror; it is shock at the reality of war, depictions of which have now become a staple ritual component of virtually every news programme. The film amasses impressions of encounters which must have been so disturbing at the time that the broadcaster accompanied the showing with a specially produced guide to the history of the persecution of Jews and the Shoah.

In 1982 Mrakitsch visited a group of settlers in the West Bank who were devotees of the movement Gush Emunim (‘Bloc of the Faithful’), which advocated a Greater Israel. “Fences, barbed wire, spotlights. I tried in vain to block out associations of the ghetto and concentration camps. It was painfully incomprehensible to me how young Jews, of all people, could spend their lives behind a military entanglement. Were they too young already to be alarmed?” asked Mrakitsch upon seeing the paramilitary settlement. The film depicts the process of capturing land and carving up the Palestinian settlements, which had only just commenced in a systematic manner while the film was being shot. At that time the goal of Israel’s colonisation policy was still wage labour. Yet as the

Palestinians in the West Bank knew full well: "They're taking our land, what will stop them from taking our work?"

Mrakitsch then travelled to the Palestinian refugee camp Burdsche el-Schimali. Many of those he met had only a few years previously survived the siege of Tel al-Zaatar (the blockade of a refugee camp in Beirut by Christian militia which ended in a massacre in 1976) and had sought refuge there. Shortly before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacre of Sabra and Shatila they were once more at risk of being surrounded and under rocket attack.

The film takes place in "a kind of gruelling timelessness". The confusion of war is related in long interviews from the perspective of the Palestinian refugees, just as the last autonomous structures of the Palestinian liberation movement are being destroyed, having come closer than ever before to setting up its own state. With the Israeli annexation policy, Christian militia, and Syrian rockets, the film is a desperate attempt to counter war propaganda, exhortations to keep going, and deliberate misinformation with the aid of a kind of historiography from below. At a length of 135 minutes in a prime-time slot, it was interrupted only by the evening news.

"We catch ourselves shooting strange pictures that have nothing to do with our central theme. Images of a shameless, almost obscene lack of history." The documentary is forced to capitulate to the irrevocable situation created by the military. The film crew has returned to the bunker at the end of the film because the Israeli military has begun to bomb the refugee camp.

"I represent the Enlightenment, but I no longer believe in it," said Mrakitsch once. He claimed to be working in the tradition of 1960s French film essayists, who he valued for their literary approach and particularly because they did not "betray their objective to cinematography".

He saw documentaries as a conscious rejection of art, and in this respect an eminently political act and an inevitable shift towards a more social attitude which accompanies

a materialism that is still astonishingly refreshing and undogmatic. Even if the films may initially give a different impression, they are neither about bringing the world into one's living room nor are they concerned with lecturing people from up high. Mrakitsch's works mark the imaginary vanishing point of an enlightened bourgeoisie which has long since ceased to exist because it either made itself of use to fascism or was destroyed by it. It is a kind of intelligentsia, literally an informed bourgeoisie, because forming an untoward opinion goes hand in hand with reconquering one's own voice, one that exists primarily because it would be able to intervene in a situation rather than merely accurately reflecting that situation.

This attitude could well characterise a whole generation of West German intellectuals who experienced fascism and the war as children, who wanted to make a radical break but for whom neither dogmatic one-party socialism nor the romantic impetuosity of the Oedipal revolutions in the 1960s was an option. Fuelled by the urgent need for the 're-education' of everyday West German culture and despite all the dire predictions, they started using TV as a new medium to provoke the alienated, false consciousness with a level of intellectualism which was uniquely resistant to the efficient thinking of unbridled industrial capitalism and the brutality of its institutionalised after-effects.

There are many reasons why this strategy did not really work, and its failure is hardly surprising from a modern perspective. Resignation and a retreat to aesthetics in the face of the emerging post-industrial entertainment industry were more or less the inevitable consequences of an approach that on the one hand had to act in an uncompromising manner and on the other was completely riven.

This mini retrospective of three TV films by Michael Mrakitsch and the three projects that succeeded them is not merely a tribute to an equally important yet long-forgotten protagonist of West German documentary filmmaking. The films are possibly being shown for the first time outside a TV setting, away from the medium that produced them

and generated the conditions with which they are so closely linked. From a modern perspective at least, they represent exactly the opposite of what TV is or claims to be, while in return issuing a stern rebuke about what TV could indeed achieve but has long ceased to even dare imagine possible.

The aim of showing and seeing these films once more after so many years is to conduct an experiment with a genuinely open outcome. Bad films always look the same. Good films, by contrast, have a different effect each time they are viewed.

Missing Image #1 Screenings with introductions by Florian Schneider

Djibouti oder Die Gewehre sind nicht geladen, nur nachts (Djibouti or the guns aren't loaded, only by night), D: Michael Mrakitsch GER 1975, 53 min, OmE. *Djibouti, Wiederbegegnung mit einer Erfindung 1973/1991* (Djibouti, Revisiting an Invention) D: Michael Mrakitsch, GER 1991, 60 min, OmE. **Wednesday, June 2, 10 pm**

Schalom oder wir haben nichts zu verlieren (Shalom or We Have Nothing to Lose), D: Michael Mrakitsch, GER 1983, 130 min, OmE. **Thursday, June 3, 12 noon**

Drinnen, das ist wie draußen, nur anders. Protokolle aus einer psychiatrischen Anstalt (Inside, that's like outside, just different. Madhouse minutes.), D: Michael Mrakitsch, GER 1977, 97 min, OmE. **Sunday, June 6, 2.30 pm**

Die Flüchtigkeit des Dokumentarischen. (The Fleetingness of the Documentary) Florian Schneider talks to Rick Prelinger, founder of the Prelinger Archives. **Sunday, June 6, 4.30 pm**

Films listed as OmE are shown in the original version with English subtitles.



TRAVERSING THE MEMORY FORCE FIELD

ANGELA MELITOPOULOS TALKS TO
BERT REBHANDL ABOUT HER PROJECT
“MÖGLICHKEITSRAUM (THE BLAST OF
THE POSSIBLE)”

Ms Melitopoulos, your project at the BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM 1 is called “Möglichkeitstraum”. What is it about?

It's essentially more about producing formats than projects. It is a sort of montage performed live on stage. The format calls for a slot of between ninety minutes and two hours, and several different archives are involved in total, but I only work with one other person each time. In each of the three events we just deal with one specific archive, and together we work out his or her attitude to that archive. I call it “The Blast of the Possible” because whatever is contained in the archive at a virtual level is updated in the live performance or show. This idea is closely linked to Bergson's concept of the virtual and the actual time regime, which has been a frequent aspect of my work over the years. Other works of mine have also followed the idea that montage will return to what it was before the advent of the blockbuster, namely on the stage, yet still making some reference to cinema. The theatrical stage and the cinema auditorium are brought together to form a space for montage. During each individual slot this other person and myself consult their archive. The result is a performance on screen for two hours. Initially, there will always be a kind of double screen, which allows a relationship to develop between two images. There will also be a sound-mix and a spoken component, so we'll be making use of every opportunity to make the images dynamic.

Who are the people you are working with?

Firstly there's Bettina Knaup, who put together the *re.act.feminism* exhibition last year with Beatrice E. Stammer at the Berlin Akademie der Künste. This theme is continued in an

archive of feminism and performance art, in other words, about a form that can be archived in assorted forms – as a video recording or a reenactment, something that a number of women artists have been doing since the early 1970s. Knaup and Stammer looked up this form of reenactment because we wanted to see what significance it had for an archive. In a screen performance everything is interconnected, so you don't just see things one after the other. This will enable us to see how films offer a different reading in another era and context.

I'll be working with Stefanie Schulte Strathaus from Berlin's Arsenal cinema for the second slot. Arsenal represents this concept of the vitality of film. Each screening is an event, and each audience 'feeds' the archive. There is a link between the singularity of the event (a showing or a festival) and the feedback to the work in the archive. We're going to try to shed light on this connection by taking three examples from the past. In 1973 Helke Sander and Claudia von Alemán organised the *Frauenfilmseminar*, the first event ever devoted to women and film in Germany. It was where the link between heteronormativity and labour economics was established, and where many of the principles were worked out for what is now called biopolitics. It's unbelievable how up-to-date these films still are today, also in terms of precarity generally. Everything the participants discussed in 1973 is still relevant – the penetration of private space by patriarchal hierarchies and of public space by the gaze, as well as underpaying and refusing to recognise reproductive work. Looking at what happened in 1973 is like taking a cross-section through time with the aim of understanding and investigating which conclusions can be drawn about systems of government.

And what about the third archive, pre- sented by Brian Holmes?

Brian and myself have both done work on Félix Guattari in the past. He will be giving a performative lecture on developments in media activism and cybernetics. This lecture will contain four plateaus, starting from the end of World War II. First Holmes will address the transition to the idea of cybernetics and how the US government has dealt

with this. It is his aim to discuss this first transition of cybernetic systems as an integral part of governmental power. He will take a propagandistic documentary such as Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* as his starting point, supplemented by documents about the “kitchen debate” between Khrushchev and Nixon in the late 1950s. The second plateau will deal with the 1970s, when video cameras had become widely accessible as a way of producing subjectivity and forming the self. Holmes will attempt to integrate the element of “filming oneself” into this relationship. Forms of family therapy that relied on video had a deterritorialising or liberating effect, which, according to Holmes, strongly influenced video as an art form in general and which in his opinion formed part of video art. A third plateau will concentrate on networks, something that was considered at a theoretical level in the 1970s but was only really put into practice in the 1990s. It is a network that in turn has become the object of a society of control. We will present various American activist projects, some of which are already familiar, for instance Brian Springer, who distributed satellite feeds of political programmes where you could see politicians just before they went on air. For the final and fourth plateau we're also investigating how political movements are currently rejecting means of communication – Tikkun, for example, is one of the groups calling for all mobile phones to be thrown away in order to encourage other forms of communication. It's all about forms of community, space, locality. I'll definitely be integrating a number of ideas on the themes of migration and mnemotechnology, because the whole idea of “Möglichkeitstraum” was linked to those from the start.

There are previous versions of this project, also entitled “Möglichkeitstraum”.

It's a series which I would characterise as format development. The first version of “Möglichkeitstraum” consisted of photographs taken by the UN of Varosha, a ghost town on Cyprus. They were displayed in a derelict area of Kreuzberg where part of the Berlin Wall once stood. Each photographic image was mounted such that it created a montage in the public domain. There were also audio

files which could be accessed by telephone, containing tales of people living in borderline situations or who had transgressed boundaries. Someone who has been living in Kreuzberg illegally since 1993, for example. A Palestinian who crossed the border, landed at Dubai airport and then effectively disappeared – all that remains is a thin voice as he phones the lawyer of an NGO; apart from that this person has completely gone. There were also the sounds of protest from a *No Borders Camp* in Greece or a Filipina migrant from Cyprus, one of hundreds of thousands of domestic workers who have decided to leave their home countries and offer their services somewhere else in the world.

What role does the archive play in this “Möglichkeitstraum”?

This project took Cyprus as its starting point, where the negotiations between North and South on the divided island were exemplified through archives. Abandoned rooms and ownership disputes originating from the “ethnic cleansing” in 1974 will be investigated, although the changes cannot actually be completely reconstructed because of the archives themselves. Following a change of government, new ownership laws were introduced which resulted in a non-resolvable political border, one that cannot be reconstructed in any detail. “Möglichkeitstraum” presents images of a town where overgrown plants are taking over, which is a further option for utilising the space. I'm talking here of a “blast of the possible”, an ex- or implosion of whatever is feasible. When people believed in reunification there was a surge of energy in that direction. Now the mood is more pessimistic, and it's necessary to take action.

How is “Möglichkeitstraum” related to and determined by the past?

Essentially, the idea that a narrative using moving or historical images is somehow connected with memory, with thinking about time, is inherent to my work. Thinking about time is characterised by automated or non-automated processes. Automated ones are liberating because you don't have to think about them. There are also processes for

which you have to make a decision and establish a kind of relationship, which in turn establishes new levels of language. These processes taking place in someone's memory – in their body memory as well – can be easily related to a particular form of video or film art work. That's what Deleuze did, and what we did too on video philosophy with Maurizio Lazzarato. Montage is about forming time, a continuum, fractures – how do you conceive the end of a continuum? How can you think about the transition from one continuum to another? How do you approach narratives that do not subject themselves to the dictates of a fake continuum, but rather accept and describe transitions from one continuum to another? That leads to a kind of thinking which not only serves the potential of establishing a super-continuum, but also attempts to present fractures as an inherent aspect of what will actually be possible, what is heterogeneous, and what produces a different form which is not often permitted because it does not tell the narrative we are used to.

How important is Bergson's philosophy for you in this respect?

Bergson sees both levels – actualising and virtualising – as central, but I'm just as interested in Foucault, who claims that it is possible to establish what is possible or real, for instance, in an image or archive. Any action that can be remembered is virtual. Actualising refers to what can be achieved in a concrete relationship of strength – not everything that is virtual is always accessible. All pasts exist simultaneously for Bergson, with the actualisation functioning as the densest moment of all the different pasts. The present time is also differentiated by nothing more significant than its density. The past is a time tunnel confronting a kind of contemporary expanse. In this sense, you perform the act to arrive at this freedom. You have an archive, a timeline, you try to come up with a concept and not just implement certain scenarios.

Mnemotechniques have at least two aspects, one that is more somatic and one that is more technical. How does that work in your opinion?

Mnemotechniques are frequently connected to objects. It is not just my intention to describe images as objects, because I am one of those people who describe objects as subjects, too. There's a kind of physical consolidation in every image. Each has its own reference to memory which is conceived as a vector, instead of thinking about an image as representation. What does an image represent? Which world? Does it represent anything at all, or does an image serve some other purpose, something like the discovery of a force vector, a direction of force, or a formation, in which the thought formulates a direction towards something else, just as a word refers to something else in the sphere of communication. The issue then is not renewing a boundary between myself and the external world – what is internal and external to me – but the communication between the memory force-field of the image and my mental capacity to relate this force-field to my memory. It is a field that flows or vibrates, where nothing is depicted that could be a fixed or objective world. All these flows are moving at different speeds and colliding with each other. These are the affective experiences we can sense, even physically.

If we want to relate this to migration, what role do images play in that respect? As a replacement for the experience of loss or mobilising identity?

Migration, as I have experienced it, creates a relationship between two locations – an eternal back and forth which is actually a kind of freedom, because the structures are not family-based. Photography is just an everyday process within this freedom. My parents always took photos, as well; migration has generated enormous numbers of images, and not just in my family. I think it is generally true, primarily as a way of showing where you were and how you lived. But then you realise that there's a whole different level of taking pictures, at which point you start taking them differently, and more than that, you start seeing the world differently. You start seeing the world from the perspective of creating images, which generates a completely new process – analysing the world, for example, and noticing that the world is so much richer than imagined. Nowadays these

processes no longer relate solely to migration, but to mobility as well. Brian Holmes has elaborated on the significance that filming oneself had in terms of subjectivity in the 1970s, and I believe migration is very similar. If you take a utopian perspective, it turns every migrant into a filmmaker, into a representative of history at a micro-level, into a messenger who knows how to shed a different light on all this geopolitical rubbish being produced by the mass media. That's why excluding migrants from becoming citizens and acquiring legal status, preventing them from becoming people who can tell stories, is so crucial for the established order. Not only do migrants relate desubjectivised tales of border crossings – are you allowed in or do you have to stay out? – they are ambassadors for post-colonial conditions and a different set of spatial relationships, which are suppressed for political reasons. And this is pure biopolitics.

What role might consulting archives play generally for political subjectification?

I think that *Assemblages*, a film I did recently with Maurizio Lazzarato about Félix Guattari, is interesting because we did some of our work with archives that have their origins in *cinéma vérité*. Fernand Deligny, for example, filmed long sequences of working with mentally ill people. He reached a whole different level with this kind of mapping which allowed him to make contact with autistic children. These are very different worlds which can only come into contact with each other by using non-rational, non-verbal techniques such as touch. Other physical forces besides one's own – the filmed image, for example – can possibly be felt most strongly in the montage sequence. When these things enter our consciousness we can create a constitutive level for ourselves. I think the battle is no longer merely taking place as rational language, but also at an affective, biopolitical level. Thus, the level of media which we are confronted with while we simultaneously produce it is also a blast of the possible where personal archives play a major role.

Möglichkeitsraum (The Blast of the Possible)

The Life of a Film Archive. A screen performance by Angela Melitopoulos and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus. With clippings of films by Claudia von Alemann (*Es kommt darauf an, sie zu verändern*, 1972/73), Pauline Boudry und Renate Lorenz (*Charming for the Revolution*, 2009), Beate Rathke (*Toss it, Baby*, 2007), Helke Sander (*Subjektivität*, 1966 and *Eine Prämie für Irene*, 1971), Jack Smith, Joyce Wieland (*Handtinting*, 1967) and the new women's movement of the years 1967–1973 et al. Guests: Claudia von Alemann, Karola Gramann, Nanna Heidenreich, Heide Schlüppmann and Marc Siegel. **Thursday, June 3, 10 pm**

Extra-disciplinary Art Practices and Media Activism. A screen performance by Angela Melitopoulos and Brian Holmes. With clippings of films and sound recordings by Antonin Artaud (*Pour en finir avec le jugement de Dieu*, 1948), Stewart Bird, Rene Lichtman and Peter Gessner (*Finally Got the News*, 1970), Frank Capra (*War Comes to America*, 1945), Harun Farocki (*Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten*, 2001), Paul Garrin (*Man with the Video Camera*, 1989), Arthur Ginsberg und Video Free America (*The Continuing Story of Caryl and Ferd*, 1972–1975), Raphaël Grisey & Bouba Touré (*58 Rue Trouseau, Paris*, 2008), Julie Gustafson (*The Politics of Intimacy*, 1974), IBM (*SAGE Film*, 1957), Doug Hall (*This is the Truth*, 1982), Joan Jonas (*Vertical Roll*, 1972), the Nixon-Khrushchev "Kitchen Debate" (1959), The Living Theater (*Paradise Now*, 1969), Robert Morris (*Exchange*, 1973), Antonio Muntadas und Marshall Reese (*Political Advertisement*, 1960/1984), Paper Tiger TV (*Ddtv_58_global_dissent*, 1991), Richard Serra and Carlotta Fay Schoolman (*Television Delivers People*, 1973), Brian Springer (*Spin*, 1995), *Subcomandante Marcos addresses "Free Media"* (1996) et al. **Friday, June 4, 12 noon**

Feminism and Performance Art. A screen performance by Angela Melitopoulos and Bettina Knaup. With clippings of films by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (*Mouth to Mouth*, 1975), Laura Cottingham (*Not For Sale*, 1998), VALIE EXPORT (*Hauchtext: Liebesgedicht*, 1970–73 und *Hyperbulie*, 1973), Sanja Ivekovic (*Instructions No1*, 1976), Françoise Janicot (*Encoconnage*, 1972), Ana Mendieta (*Alma Silueta en Fuego (Soul Silhouette on Fire)*), *Untitled (Flower Person)*, 1975), Linda Montano (*Mitchell's Death*, 1977), Ulrike Rosenbach (*Glauben Sie nicht, dass ich eine Amazone bin*, 1975), Martha Rosler (*Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained*, 1977), Pauline Boudry und Renate Lorenz (*n.o.body*, 2008), Andrea Saeemann & Katrin Grögel (*Performance Saga Interviews*, 2007–2008), Carolee Schneemann (*Meat Joy*, 1964), Gabriele Stötzer (*Trisal*, 1986), Mierle Laderman Ukeles (*Touch Sanitation Performance*, 1979) und Faith Wilding (*Waiting*, 1972) et al. **Saturday, June 5, 2.30 pm**



Les Statues Meurent Aussi (FR 1953) - Chris Marker, Alain Resnais.

TOUT EST DANS LE MONTAGE Notes on “Documentary Moments: Renaissance”

EYAL SIVAN

On a chilly spring night of April 1961, the Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann gets taken out from his high security prison in order to attend an extraordinary unofficial and discrete session of the Jerusalem district court where his trial has been taking place since the month of March. Following a request from Eichmann’s lawyer the court convenes to preview the films which the attorney general wished to show during the next day’s public session.

Wearing a prison uniform and wool pullover, the defendant Adolf Eichmann enters the dark court and takes his place in the glass booth opposite the cinema screen. The mute scene of the man in his sixties, wearing a homey outfit, staring with curiosity at the images appearing on the screen in front of him, was secretly recorded on video. In fact, Leo T. Hurwitz – the American director in charge of the Eichmann trial multi-camera recordings – violated the legal framework of the court’s video recordings and documented the perpetrator Adolf Eichmann as an ordinary silent cinema spectator in his intimacy.

Filmed by the Allied forces during the liberation of the Nazi concentration and death camps, the images on the screen were totally new to Eichmann. Hurwitz’s mute scene of Adolf Eichmann, the documentary cinema spectator, tells the initial encounter between the criminal and the image of the crime. In addition to these images previously screened at the 1945–46 Nuremberg Trials (which since then have gained an iconic status of the Holocaust representation) the Israeli attorney general chose to screen to the defendant and the court the short documentary film *Nuit et Brouillard* (Night and Fog). Produced ten years after the Nuremberg Trials by the French filmmaker Alain Resnais, edited with a text by French author Jean Cayrol and a score by German composer Hanns Eisler, Resnais’

32-minute film commissioned in 1955 by the French World War II history committee (Comité d’histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale) is the first fictionalised documentary representation of the Nazi concentration and extermination system.

As only one of the four cameras installed in the Jerusalem court could be recorded on videotape, Hurwitz decided to trace the images of the spectator. He focused on Adolf Eichmann’s initial discovery of the images rather than on the screened image, privileging the projection rather than the screening. The counter shots, the screened film footage, create (in real time) a confrontation between the Nazi’s gaze and the consequences of his deeds. Eichmann the spectator becomes a witness.

Almost five decades later, Resnais’ friend and colleague, the French image-maker Chris Marker, downloads Leo T. Hurwitz’s night screening shots from the Eichmann trial video archives available on the Internet. Chris Marker, Resnais’ assistant on *Nuit et Brouillard*, synchronises Hurwitz’s shots with those of Resnais’ film. Re-placing the missing sound and changing the screened images with the equivalent scenes from Resnais’ *Night and Fog*, Marker composes Henschman Glance. Horwitz’s unauthorised images of Eichmann watching Resnais’ *Night and Fog*, edited by Marker together with the original film’s sound and colour shots are an invitation to experience the destabilising effect of watching the horror with the perpetrator, and through his eyes. The unsigned 32-minute documentary composition *Henschman Glance* is a paradigmatic representation of the documentary practice question. The observation of the perpetrator, the visual interrogation of the witness of the political evil, the investigation of power and authority, marked the post-World War II documentary cinema.

Paradoxically, immediately after the end of the war, documentary moving images seemed to gain both the status of witness and proof. During the Nuremberg Military Tribunals (NMT) staged in Germany in 1945, documentary images were mobilised in order to deliver their truth testimony, to

show reality. Staged in order to give an image to the Nazi horror, the cinema screening in court (becoming simultaneously a cinematic object) is a turning point for documentary cinema interrogation.

A generation of young filmmakers born between the 1920s and 1930s and having grown up through the war would gradually and by various modes domesticate the documentary cinema in order to interrogate the documentary practice's potential to produce truth.

Suspicious of power and inhibited by the urgent interrogation of authority, challenged by public habits of spectatorship under the shadow of propaganda and the cold war, the post-World War II documentary practitioners forged new modalities of production and distribution, and witnessed the arrival of the TV channels as influential actors. The twenty years that followed the end of World War II led to major aesthetical-political debates and experimentation around cinema, documentary practice and language – two decades which became the backdrop for a process of reinvention and emancipation of the documentary moving image. It was a practice expropriated from ruling power and re-appropriated by independent images-makers in order to achieve its re-politicisation and apotheosis during the late 1960s and 1970s.

In order to tell the story of the regaining of confidence in the documentary image after World War II, this montage is seeking to narrate and review some landmarks of the practice's history(ies). "Documentary Moments" is a montage born from the desire to observe, to grasp, to historicise and then re-view the documentary gesture. It is a feeling of need to elaborate on the articulation of the documentary film practice as a tool enabling the reading of the image – any image – as image.

1946, the year when the Nuremberg trials were staged in Germany, is designated as the year zero of documentary film practice. The project "Documentary Moments: Renaissance" brings together the 'classics' of documentary cinema in an attempt to write

the oral history of the post Euro-Genocide (documentary) image. Four takes depict the reinvention of documentary language and the exploration of its potentialities in the years that followed the war.

An historical era during which, being a favourite tool of power, the documentary images were disseminated as a weapon among others.

"Take 1" delineates a path toward the seminal *Nuit et Brouillard*. Several short documentary films produced in the 1940s and 1950s will be screened: *Guernica* (1950) and *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (Statues Also Die, 1953) as well as *Henchman Gance* with commentaries by cultural historians Adrian Rifkin and Marie-José Mondzain.

"Take 2" of "Documentary Moments" is called "Memory of the Future". It consists of a revisit of the film *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961). Directed by anthropologist Jean Rouch and sociologist Edgar Morin, *Chronicle of a Summer* builds truth through constructed or almost fictional situations. When released, it provoked heated debates on the relationship between cinema, reality and truth. In 2007, artists Ayreen Anastas, François Bucher and René Gabri unearthed an interview with Edgar Morin, in which he mentioned a cache of original rushes. With the assistance of Françoise Foucault, a former collaborator of Rouch, they succeeded in finding nearly everything that had not been included in the final edit. Shots from the original 16 mm rushes of *Chronicle of a Summer* and a discussion with Edgar Morin will make up the core of this programme.

"Take 3" is entitled "'Direct', 'Truth' and other Myths". Independent producer and filmmaker Frederick Wiseman's unswerving interest is to produce direct cinema, a notion refuted by Wiseman himself. Since the mid-1960s, he has scrutinised American life and institutions, revealing the mechanisms of administration and hierarchy. His practice is a benchmark in the entire history of social documentary. Both a school and a genre, Wiseman's infinitely re-qualified cinema is indispensable in any debate on the potential of the documentary image to produce truth. Significantly, Wiseman declares, "Cinema vérité is just a pompous French term that

has absolutely no meaning as far as I'm concerned." A conversation between Frederick Wiseman and film historian Stella Bruzzi is followed by a screening of his film *Primate* (1974), which presents a scientific study of the physical and mental development of primates, as conducted at Yerkes Primate Research Center.

"Take 4" is called "Wartime/War crime". Filmmaker Marcel Ophuls uses the documentary interview and montage to review and re-edit historical narration, subverting the hegemony of authority and its propaganda image. His epic oeuvre – both in scope and in length – is a landmark of the critical historical essay. By introducing the filmmaker as an actor of history, "where (my) point of view and creativity come in", he re-defines the notion of resistance. A conversation between Marcel Ophuls and Eyal Sivan is followed by a screening of the film *The Memory of Justice* (1973-1976). The film uses Telford Taylor's book *Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy* as a point of departure in exploring wartime atrocities and individual versus collective responsibility.

Documentary Moments: Renaissance

Take 1 – Towards Night and Fog: Alain Resnais.
Thursday June 3, 7 pm

Take 2 – Memory of the Future: Edgar Morin.
Friday June 4, 6 pm

Take 3 – 'Direct', 'Truth' and other Myths: Frederick Wiseman.
Saturday June 5, 4.30 pm

Take 4 – Wartime/War crime: Marcel Ophuls.
Sunday June 6, 6 pm

TRANSCRIPTIONS – On Authorship, Authority and Authenticity

EDUARDO THOMAS

What follows is a text based on ideas brewed collectively. It has been written on the road, taking advantage of the chance to meet people along the way. The spirit that motivates it is a strong belief in idleness as a method to find some truth out there, and as such it is a combination of fragmented ideas, associated here so the reader may find a way of his/her own in them.

The text derives from several sources. Some of the quotes come from a series of conversations with various thinkers: Luis Muñoz-Oliveira (philosopher, based in Mexico City), Ben Russell (filmmaker, based in Chicago), whose film *Let Each One Go Where He May* is part of this programme, and Rafael Saavedra (writer, based in Tijuana). I thank all of them for their time and kind help. Some other quotes come from the films included in the programme to be shown at the BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM 1, others are borrowed in a more conventional sense from texts already published.

This text proposes to talk about **Authorship** as a process of **influence** and **tradition**; to discuss **Authority** in terms of **legitimacy** and **presence**; and to think of **Authenticity** as a balance between **accuracy** and **sincerity**. It is very hard to tell authorship, authenticity and authority apart when considering their relation to creative practice; they intertwine and are very close to one another. For that reason the dialogue of quotations that this text reproduces will sometimes do the same and link them. However an effort was made to keep them from being understood as interchangeable. Much against the notion of the author as a founder, or even an 'originator', by contrast to thinking of it as the rightful owner of something, having 'produced' it by soliloquising, it becomes evident to me that the strategies of appropriation, mimicry, quotation, allusion, and collage, alongside the more overtly acknowledged process of collaboration, lay at the core of any creative process. To consider the figure of the author as one

who bears an almost divine gift, a 'genius', and creates from his/her own mind alone, would somehow neglect the idea of someone who goes along with the constant negotiation of ideas that find their way across time... or as John Donne puts it:

"All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. . . ."

In that sense authorship holds a sense of continuation, not necessarily linear, which allows for different approximations to coexist. Such continuity we may very well call tradition.

"Finding one's voice isn't just an emptying and purifying oneself of the words of others but an adopting and embracing of filiations, communities, and discourses. Inspiration could be called inhaling the memory of an act never experienced. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos." – [Jonathan Lethem]

How far aside must we push these ideas, or how much should we keep from them, in order to fully understand the creative process and the value of the author in it?

I see the author as a cause. Invention does not mean creating something out of nothing, I don't believe one can produce anything that wasn't. One has to consider the path of the author as the path of sincerity. [Luis Muñoz-Oliveira]

Tradition is a reflexive process in which the vision of an author has to place itself amongst references, and pick relationships, complicities along the way, so we may find ourselves in doing so. [Rafael Saavedra]

The author is at the end, like any other, looking for self-understanding, and these references and influences, tradition, become guidelines from which to draw from. The author is never alone, that is, as he/she builds his/her working process upon tradition.

I am interested in a legitimate space, a site of presence, where the relationships of proximity emphasise the openness of film. I am interested in producing an experience, not explaining anything. [Ben Russell]

"To see things together in respect of the one." – [Plato]

And our mood plays a role in this process,

too; depending on our mood certain influences will be triggered and others won't. [RS]

Yet the authorship of something implies an expression of the self, a stance that places the individual within tradition. In order to find its voice, the author draws from tradition, but in so doing expresses a vision that could be regarded as unique. Would this contradict what has been said above?

There is no such thing as total parting from tradition, it all is the same language, however, discourses are never the same. [LMO]

No other person writes like I do, that is because I am an individual whose personal experience (perspective) and subjectivity will remain unique compared to someone else's. That is where the validity of a position becomes important in a discourse. [RS]

Authorship then builds on an alchemy of elements borrowed from a wider, greater source, in order to achieve a discourse that would allow a self to be recognised amongst the stream of tradition.

Discourse is a social construction, to me the phenomenon within the discourse is what is more interesting, the search that lies within it. There are no discourses alike, the way of the author is the way of sincerity. [LMO]

"Tradition is the handing on of fire and not the worship of ashes" – [Gustav Mahler]

Tradition is rich in references, information that has to be gathered and assimilated, dealt with and processed through the work of the author. But the value of information is not enough by itself; the task of authorship should not be reduced to the act of placing references. Fact after fact are not relevant any more as would be to highlight the links that run through them. That is when the assessment of information becomes significant, and when the position of the author as a voice that articulates a dialogue within tradition in its own ways gains weight.

Through finding its position amongst the array of influences the author acquires the sense of reflection and the ability needed to consciously choose a path, to actively assume a series of decisions that could eventually constitute an author's vision.

To go with tradition is not to break with it, but to bring it somewhere else, carry on that fire and take it somewhere else. In that sense authenticity is linked to tradition; the authentic is the object in itself. [LMO]

Fate is ours to make, or so we are told. And as much as the past seems to be something immutable, History can always be reviewed and unveiled in a fashion that echoes our relationship with the future. Alternate readings of the past through methodical examination open anew subjective lectures and interpretations of what was.

A sense of authentic search is what we grasp from Lee Anne Schmitt's film *California Company Town*, in which a careful, almost obsessive recall on the history of townships across that western state places our understanding of it in a different perspective. Her work opens a sincere quest for knowledge, one that questions an empty notion of authority as it projects her findings into our present and what may lie ahead.

The knowledge that stems from the work is the cause. [LMO]

Whether looking for self-understanding, building a historical narrative, dealing with social representations, or psychological and political interpretation, the figure of the author is that of being the one who argues. The articulation of ideas exposed within a tradition will determine the position of the author and the scope of influence of the work.

Authenticity is the vision of an author. [RS]

One does one's best to acquire true beliefs, and what one says reveals what one believes. The idea of meeting tradition is no more than to learn from it and recognise ourselves in it, find useful and valuable elements to appropriate and carry on. That is the task of authorship, and once it has been understood, the role one plays within tradition – the next step towards an understanding (of the self, or the world around us) – would be to pursue that search with authenticity.

Authenticity linked to the 'purity' or 'essence' of things makes no sense at all, to think of it in such way is to think of an empty search, a search impossible to be fulfilled. [LMO]

Sincerity is an expression of inner informational states, which operates in a space that is constructed by motivations to conceal and/or dissimulate. To achieve authenticity an accurate recount would not be enough without sincerity to help us find a way to avoid deceit, especially to escape self-deceiving.

That is where I, as a director, have to consider the elements I work with. I give directions to

actors, take care of a performance and follow the mandate set in the title, all in order to create an experience, a film experience. A possibility to escape the straightforwardness of film. [Ben Russell]

As João Moreira Salles says, in the voice of his brother Fernando (narrator of his film “Santiago”) when reflecting on the way he conducted a series of interviews with the former butler of his family...

“Today, 13 years later, it is hard to know until where would we have gone in search of the perfect frame, the perfect line. Watching the uncut material it becomes clear that all must be seen with a certain distrust.” [excerpt from Santiago, by João Moreira Salles]

An authentic work would then be a specific kind of discourse, one in which language (be it visual, written, spoken and so forth) is structured in such a way that it unveils the connections hidden in our everyday life, highlights the relationships that sustain our knowledge, and sheds light on different perspectives of understanding the world around us, one that accurately describes what the author sincerely pursues.

Once the author finds a way to build his/her work, alongside tradition, in an authentic way, this work meets an audience. The general idea would be to have the piece integrate tradition, and carry on with the process of influence and continuity. But the number of voices within tradition creates a need for clear reference. This is when a sense of authority is constituted.

Nowadays it seems as if authority would be based on popularity ratings though, a real joke! Because the actual sense of authority is to have an admitted reference, a sense diminished, then, by the abuse of it. [RS] Authority roots itself in the value attached to what the author expresses through his/her work. It all sums up to how carefully something is said and how much the lecture of its discourse is taken as authentic.

Thinking along this line, authority seems to belong in the realms of opinion or advice, depending on the amount of support rallied around the piece of work, or the clout achieved by its arguments.

“...if the canon of works, and the methods of interpreting them, and the historical narratives that explain those things, are all equally and simultaneously denounced as ideo-

logical impositions, we are indeed left with a space structured only by power.” [Bernard Williams]

Authority always needs to be justified. And in order for authority to sustain itself it needs not to be imposed, but recognised. Otherwise it will constitute a barren discourse.

Authority is allocated accordingly to who approaches the work; as the discourse is constructed, dogma must be avoided. When we talk about authority, dogma represents the most serious problem to overcome. [LMO]

In the work of Eileen Simpson & Ben White, *Struggle in Jerash*, we get the rare opportunity of sharing the comments and reflections as they spring fresh from an audience when confronted by a film. The British duo recorded the comments of contemporary Jordanian intellectuals reflecting on what they saw in a footage shot over 50 years ago. The relevance of recognition in order to legitimise something becomes evident when we hear such things like:

“Look at the king’s picture... some things never change here.”

“Those mountains are now actually full with refugee camps.”

“Maybe that’s how they spoke in the 50s.”

“She is supposed to be covering her hair now, so... things have changed, it’s nice to know how things were in the past.”

“Obviously the lifestyle at the time was a bit European...”

“At that point the pan-Arab feeling was very much emphasised. Now the emphasis is on Jordan as a separate identity, from Lebanon, from Syria, from Egypt... but at that point it was like one pan-Arab identity.”

[excerpts quoted from *Struggle in Jerash*, by Simpson & White]

There is no questioning of the authenticity of those comments while listening to them. And it is through that transparent collective reflection that a legitimate search for understanding is made present.

Just as the process of authorship is an expression of the collectivity in which the author is submerged, authority is a status granted by the context that hosts the work.

That is why the active role of the observer/the audience, is equally relevant to a piece’s legitimate validation, as much as the process behind its production. One could even try to go further and speculate on the moment

of observation as still being part of the making of the work, a process that comes to be when reflection occurs.

Do not confuse the film for what the film shows. The experience of the film is one thing, and it is an independent experience. [BR]

An important distinction between *fiction* and *lie* should be made at this point. Fiction as an inventive possibility, as a theory or model that allows for a critical reflection or artistic experience to happen, goes beyond mere falsehood or deceit. Fiction is a strategy that enables a coherent ordering of elements to shape a discourse. Let’s consider for example the following dialogue, enunciated by Thai non-actors playing the role of themselves in front of a camera in what sometimes escapes being read as an acted scene:

- The opposition and the government... it’s like they are acting in a movie, with us as an audience. They are making a movie for us to watch. They are the villain and the hero.

- What about the election commission?

- The commission is just after the money.

- They have no principle?

- No, not at all. Only the money.

- They must at least believe in something.

- These people have absolutely no principles. [Dialogue quoted from Uruphong Raksasad’s *Agrarian Utopia*]

The implications of a non-actor reflecting on the public acting of politicians raises the question of authority. Could this be an authorised voice to comment on what is being represented? In this case fiction serves sincerity and accuracy far better than any other narrative strategy. It opens a space in which an accurate and sincere approximation to a precise situation is made: a way to grant things presence.

This is but one of the attributes allotted to authority: a sense of verisimilitude. To express something accurately occupies documentary filmmakers all over, as much as the concern for an artistic experience is sought. *“The way I did the interviews pushed me away from him. From the start there was an ambiguity between us, one that explained Santiago being so uncomfortable. He was not just my subject, and I was not just a documentary filmmaker. During 5 days of shooting I never stopped being the son of the owner of the house, and he never ceased to be our butler.”* [excerpt from *Santiago*, by João

Moreira Salles]

By taking a closer look at the power relation that unfolded during the shooting of *Santiago*, Moreira Salles achieves an honest position of authority through his authentic reflection on his own work. It is one where we recognise the effort made to understand what kind of dynamics took place, unnoticed at that moment, between subject and documentary filmmaker, butler and master, as the creative process went on.

When considering the creative process, authorship, authenticity and authority may lie elsewhere. Dislocated in bits and pieces all around us, in the public sphere, as part of a commonality that constitutes our unconscious as much as the acknowledged world that surrounds us. The task of seizing this continuous flow is the core of that process.

A quotation serves as support, it should never be taken for the final point of a dialogue. [LMO]

Authorship, Authority, Authenticity. Recent Documentaries from Elsewhere

Conversation between Eduardo Thomas, Eileen Simpson and Ben White, followed by a screening of the film *Struggle In Jerash*, D: Eileen Simpson and Ben White, UK 2009, 63 min, OV
Thursday, June 3, 5 pm

Screening of the film *California Company Town*, D: Lee Anne Schmitt, USA 2008, 76 min, OV, followed by a conversation between Eduardo Thomas and Lee Anne Schmitt
Friday, June 4, 2 pm

Screening of the film *Santiago*, D: João Moreira Salles, BR 2007, 80 min, OmE, followed by a conversation between Eduardo Thomas and João Moreira Salles
Saturday, June 5, 12 noon

Conversation between Eduardo Thomas and Ben Russell, followed by a screening of the film *Let Each One Go Where He May*, D: Ben Russell, USA/Suriname 2009, 135 min, OmE
Saturday, June 5, 9.30 pm

Screening of the film *Agrarian Utopia*, D: Uruphong Raksasad, Thailand 2009, 122 min, OmE, followed by a conversation between Eduardo Thomas and Uruphong Raksasad
Sunday, June 6, 12 noon

“I AM TRYING TO DESACRALISE SOME OF THE TABOOS OF MY SOCIETY”

RABIH MROUÉ TALKS TO BERT REBHANDL ABOUT HIS PROJECT “THE INHABITANTS OF IMAGES”

You will present “The Inhabitants of Images” at the BERLIN DOCUMENTARY FORUM. What do we have to expect?

“The Inhabitants of Images” is about analysing political street posters that appear in the city of Beirut. I took two main posters and I will talk about them. The first one shows Rafik Hariri, the former Prime Minister, who was assassinated in 2005, standing next to Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was one of the Arab leaders of the 1950s and 1960s and president of Egypt until 1970, when he died. They are standing next to each other. But actually, these two men never met in their lives, and they are both dead. The poster puts them in a way as if they had met. Of course it is a photomontage, but it appeared like that on all the walls of Beirut. I was surprised about it and decided to take it seriously and to believe that Hariri had met with Nasser, and see what this meeting might mean today.

So you are developing a historical fantasy, a political conjecture from a given image?

Yes, but this is only the first image. The second is a series of posters of martyrs of Hezbollah. I talk about these identical posters, in which the young men who had died in the war with Israel appear individually, but the template is the same with all of them. Only the face and the name varies, the body and the background always stays the same. I talk about this phenomenon of martyrs earning a different body after their death. “Inhabitants of Images” is made of three chapters; this is the second, the one about Hariri and Nasser is the first, and the third is a rather short chapter about the video testimonies of the Communist Party’s suicide bombers who committed their operations in a very specific period of Lebanon’s history, which was between 1982 and 1987. There is one thing that I noticed: each one suicide assassin is becoming an image

in the background of the next one who is giving the testimony of his suicide. All of this taken together is an attempt to take some sacred taboos in my society and try to deal with them in a human way and desacralise them.

What does the term “inhabitant” mean? Generally we don’t talk about someone inhabiting an image, rather a person or a thing being the object of that image.

I live in a country where the walls of the city are always occupied by street posters. Most of them are of killed people. You see faces of dead persons. Sometimes they appear, sometimes they disappear, sometimes you see them moving from one image to another. These people have a life in the images; they inhabit them. Sometimes they are kicked from one image to another, they get destroyed or torn down, they get painted over, but you still know that there’s a face behind the paint – I take all that metaphorically. Sometimes you see people disappear from images, there is a space for them, but they are not there anymore. It seems irrational, what I’m talking about, but to me this irrationality is a kind of tool to understand and to reflect on the phenomenon of how a living society deals with the dead, how the dead are dealing with the living, of how the living and the dead share one space and are intermingled in one territory.

So you are reading the visual surface of the city, but not in order to get indoctrinated or to fall for propaganda, but rather to read the images counter-intuitively. In a way you become the author of these images. But from where did the Hariri/Nasser image originate?

Actually it has an author, but the author is a political party. No individual artist or graphic designer designs this poster, but a party, as it is with most of the street posters. This is one of the ideas that my project is a result of: I take these images more literally than they are meant to be. It comes not only from the stance of this political party, but from my sense of literacy, that I make up a scenario that Hariri and Nasser had accepted to meet after their death. So what would they want to tell the Beirut inhabitants? But it's even more

complicated, because I also relate the image to the period of time when this poster actually appeared, which was in 2007 – the same year the Hezbollah martyrs appeared, after the Israeli war against Lebanon in 2006. So we have another kind of montage that is also part of my project.

This montage would lead to a fundamental antagonism in Lebanese politics – different Muslim beliefs: Sunnis like Hariri, Shiites like Hezbollah? How do they actually cohabit in Beirut?

There is a big conflict in the region – not only in the Arab countries, so I include Iran – between the Sunnis and the Shiites. Hezbollah represents the Shiites, Hariri represented Sunnis. On the one hand it is a Lebanese conflict, on the other hand it is a regional conflict. That is very dangerous, because it affects the local politics of Lebanon. This is why I decided to talk about those images. Separating them is the short chapter about the Communist party. We are stuck between the two big forces Sunni and Shiite, the Christians are weak these days. It is difficult to find a place, another choice as an individual. When I talk about the Communist Party I am kind of talking about myself, because I was a member of the CP during that time (in the 1980s), but I am also talking about the absence of the role of the left today. The individuals in Lebanon in general can’t find any space to express their openness, their specific position. There is not much of a civil society.

Can you explain the relation between your format and the notion of documentary?

I prefer to leave my works between several formats. One could speak of performance, of lecture performance, ... But if I had to give a term I would speak of a “non-academic lecture”. It is basically a documentary form – I am sitting there and I am trying to speak about these posters. I use all the tools of the documentary. I present evidence, but it is all part of an irrational idea: two dead men meet after their death. But I cover it in a very rational way, in the way in which a documentary could be done. I am always interested to raise this as a question in my work: what is a

documentary, and what is fiction? These two are strongly mingled. The difference between a documentary and fiction is something I couldn’t name; I don’t have the answer, but I would like to raise that question. When somebody writes history, is that only about facts? Where does the subjectivity go, where does the objective side go? This pretension of documentary, that it can tell you the truth, that it is based on real things – who has the power to do that? Who has the means to create this documentary? It is a kind of editing, which means by implication that whoever does something like that also knows that you hide certain things, while highlighting certain others. You give the possibility to the spectators to find a distance between what they are watching and what is actually represented, and this distance allows for one’s own thoughts, own interpretations.

It also seems to me that you somehow try to get beyond the implicit “pastness” of everything documented and open it to possibilities for the future.

Absolutely. We can apply the same questions as for the documentary. The images are proof of something, but we also know that images can be manipulated. There is the same set of questions for the photographer as for the historian. We don’t know what is “hors-champs”, and I am interested in the “hors-champs”: that which is outside the image. My work is an attempt to put the “champs” and the “hors-champs” together.

The Inhabitants of Images
A performance by Rabih Mroué.
Wednesday, June 2, 7 pm



Al-Quds/Jerusalem. Photo: Ali Zaatar, with the kind permission of Zaki Zaatar, 1948

A Blind Spot

PROLOGUE TO AN EXHIBITION –
CATHERINE DAVID

Curator Catherine David expands her on-going study of the various protocols set by artists in order to question the paradigms defining canonical forms of documentary. The project evolves around key art works from the past fifteen years as well as new pieces that explore the link between aesthetics, history and politics. “A Blind Spot” thus introduces aesthetic methods that wilfully suspend immediacy, transparency and coherence as devices conventionally enlisted to render perceptions of ‘truth’. Instead, the project focuses on inevitably filtered perception, on the opacity of reality and history, on the ‘blind spot’ where the categories of fiction and fact no longer prevail. David’s prologue to a subsequent exhibition (BDF2, 2012) highlights the work of artist Joachim Koester, who explores the tension between imaginary sites, aesthetic tropes and physical places. In his series of photographs *Morning of the Magicians* (2005) and his double video projection *One + One + One* (2006), Koester visits a house in Cefalù, Sicily, known as “The Abbey of Thelema”, which once served as a communal home for the infamous occultist Aleister Crowley and his group of devotees. A text accompanying the work provides insight into his extensive research on the subject.

The installation is on view at the auditorium of Haus der Kulturen der Welt from **June 2 to 6**. A conversation between Catherine David and Joachim Koester takes place on **Friday, June 4, at 4.30 pm**

Product of Other Circumstances

PERFORMANCE – XAVIER LE ROY

In his new piece *Product of Other Circumstances*, Xavier Le Roy continues his inquiry into the boundaries of dance and choreography. His performance simultaneously documents and enacts Le Roy’s approach to Butoh, a Japanese art form that emerged after WW II in the attempt to challenge the role of authority by subverting conventional notions of dance. The audience witness a form of story-telling and narration that draws on generic resources such as the internet, books, personal memories and anecdotes in order to come closer to understanding an alien form of culture. **Friday, June 4, 9 pm**

Talk Show

PERFORMANCE – OMER FAST

The artist Omer Fast continues his examination of how individuals and histories interact with each other through narrative. The programme starts with one person’s experiences – a real story with close ties to current global events and politics, recounted by a real person in the theatrical setting of a live TV talk show. The story is subsequently sent on a journey and becomes the raw material for the ‘broken telephone’ game. With each repetition of the process and each new rendition of the story, it transforms and mutates further, ‘looking back’ at the audience in ever-new and stranger ways. **Saturday, June 4, 8 pm**

The Catastrophe

CONVERSATION BETWEEN ARIELLA
AZOULAY AND ISSAM NASSAR

Cultural historians Ariella Azoulay and Issam Nassar discuss the representation of Palestinian refugees in photographs from 1947 to the early 1950s. Their conversation addresses theoretical and aesthetic aspects of interpreting photographs, as well as the role photography can play in questioning the dominant discourse on the creation of the State of Israel. **Thursday, June 3, 3 pm**

Emily Apter teaches French and comparative literature at New York University.

Ariella Azoulay is a teacher, curator, artist and documentary filmmaker in Tel Aviv.

Ecke Bonk is a German typosoph, multimedia artist, author, editor and teacher.

Stella Bruzzi teaches film at the University of Warwick.

François Bucher is an artist from Cali, Colombia.

Eduardo Cadava is professor of English and comparative literature at Princeton University.

Tony Cokes is a US post-conceptual artist. He teaches media production at Brown University.

Chris Marker is a French filmmaker and media artist.

Catherine David is a French curator and art historian.

Okwui Enwezor is a curator and art historian born in Nigeria.

Omer Fast is a film and video artist born in Jerusalem.

Rene Gabri is an artist born in Tehran, Iran.

Ayreen Anastas is an artist born in Bethlehem, Palestine.

Philip Gourevitch is a US freelance writer and journalist.

Brian Holmes is an activist and cultural critic born in the USA.

Thomas Keenan teaches comparative literature at Bard College.

Bettina Knaup is a German curator and cultural producer.

Joachim Koester is a conceptual artist born in Copenhagen.

Antjie Krog is a writer, poet and academic born in Kroonstad, Orange Free State, South Africa.

Xavier Le Roy is a dancer and choreographer born in Juvisy sur Orge, France.

Angela Melitopoulos, born in Munich, Germany, works in the time-based arts.

Marie-José Mondzain is a French philosopher, writer and art historian.

João Moreira Salles is a Brazilian documentary filmmaker.

Edgar Morin is a philosopher, sociologist and anthropologist born in Paris, France.

Michael Mrakitsch 1934–2010 was a German documentary filmmaker.

Rabih Mroué, born in Beirut, Lebanon, is an actor, director and playwright.

Issam Nassar, a specialist of the cultural history of the Middle East, teaches history at Illinois State University.

Marcel Ophuls is a German/French/US documentary filmmaker.

Rick Prelinger is an archivist, writer, filmmaker and co-initiator of Open Content Alliance. He lives in San Francisco.

Uruphong Raksasad is a filmmaker from Thailand.

Jacques Rancière is a French philosopher born in Algiers.

Alain Resnais is a French filmmaker.

Adrian Rifkin teaches fine art at Goldsmiths College, London.

Ben Russell is an itinerant media artist and curator currently teaching at University of Illinois, Chicago.

Walid Sadek is an artist and writer born in Beirut, Lebanon.

Lee Anne Schmitt is a writer and director of both film and performance events, born in the USA.

Florian Schneider is a German filmmaker, writer and curator.

Stefanie Schulte Strathaus is a video and film curator. She is co-director of Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art e.V.

W.G. Sebald 1944-2001 was a German writer, poet and literary theorist.

Eileen Simpson and **Ben White** are artists born in Manchester, UK.

Eyal Sivan is an Israeli filmmaker, producer and essayist.

Eduardo Thomas is a Mexican visual artist and film curator.

Frederick Wiseman, born in Boston, MA, is a documentary filmmaker, editor and producer.

Dolores Zinny and **Juan Maidagan** are an artist couple from Rosario, Argentina.

	WED, 2 JUNE	THUR, 3 JUNE	FRI, 4 JUNE	SAT, 5 JUNE	SUN, 6 JUNE
12 am		12 am Missing Image Screening "Schalom oder Wir haben nichts zu verlieren", D: M. Mrakitsch, GER 1983, 130 min, SEN Introduction by Florian Schneider		12 am Möglichkeitsraum Screen Performance Extra-Disciplinary Art and Media Activism With Angela Melitopoulos and Brian Holmes	12 am Authorship. Authority. Authenticity. Recent Documentaries from Elsewhere Screening and Talk "Santiago", D: J. M. Salles, BR 2007, 80 min, SEN With Eduardo Thomas and João Moreira Salles
12.30 pm					
1 pm					
1.30 pm					
2 pm			2 pm Authorship. Authority. Authenticity. Recent Documentaries from Elsewhere Screening and Talk "California Company Town", D: L. A. Schmitt, USA 2008, 76 min, OV With Eduardo Thomas and Lee Anne Schmitt		
2.30 pm				2.30 pm Möglichkeitsraum Screen Performance Feminism and Performance Art With Angela Melitopoulos and Bettina Knaup	2.30 pm Missing Image Screening "Drinnen, das ist wie draußen, nur anders. Protokolle aus einer psychiatrischen Anstalt" D: M. Mrakitsch, GER 1977, 97 min, SEN Introduction by Florian Schneider
3 pm		3 pm The Catastrophe Conversation Ariella Azoulay and Issam Nassar			
3.30 pm					
4 pm					
4.30 pm			4.30 pm A Blind Spot Conversation Catherine David and Joachim Koester	4.30 pm Documentary Moments Talk and Screening Take 3 – "Direct", "Truth" and other Myths: Frederick Wiseman "Primate", D: F. Wiseman, USA 1974, 105 min, OV With Frederick Wiseman, Stella Bruzzi and Eyal Sivan	4.30 pm Missing Image Conversation Florian Schneider and Rick Prelinger "The Fleetingness of the Documentary"
5 pm		5 pm Authorship. Authority. Authenticity. Recent Documentaries from Elsewhere Screening and Talk "Struggle in Jerash", D: E. Simpson and B. White, UK 2009, 63 min, OV With Eduardo Thomas, Eileen Simpson, Ben White			
5.30 pm					
6 pm			6 pm Documentary Moments Talk and Screening Take 2 – Memory of The Future: Edgar Morin "Chronique d'un été", D: J. Rouch, E. Morin, FR 1961, 90 min, SEN With Edgar Morin, Rene Gabri, Ayreen Anastas and François Bucher		
6.30 pm	6.30 pm Opening				
7 pm	7 pm The Inhabitants of Images Performance Rabih Mroué	7 pm Documentary Moments Talk and Screening Take 1 – Towards Night and Fog: Alain Resnais "Guernica", D: A. Resnais and R. Hessen, FR 1950, 13 min, SEN; "Les statues meurent aussi", D: A. Resnais and C. Marker, FR 1953, 30 min, SEN; "Henchman Glance", D: C. Marker, FR N.A., 33 min, SEN With Marie-José Mondzain, Adrian Rifkin and Eyal Sivan			
7.30 pm					
8 pm				8 pm Talk Show Performance Omer Fast	
8.30 pm	8.30 pm Rules of Evidence Reading and Talk Okwui Enwezor, Ecke Bonk, Tony Cokes, Walid Sadek, Juan Maidagan and Dolores Zinny				
9 pm					
9.30 pm			9 pm Product of Other Circumstances Performance Xavier Le Roy		
10 pm	10 pm Missing Image Screening "Djibouti oder Die Gewehre sind nicht geladen – nur nachts", D: M. Mrakitsch, GER 1975, 53 min, SEN; "Djibouti, Wiederbegegnung mit einer Erfindung 1973/1991", D: M. Mrakitsch, GER 1991, 60 min, SEN Introduction by Florian Schneider	10 pm Möglichkeitsraum Screen Performance The Life of a Film Archive With Angela Melitopoulos and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus		9.30 pm Authorship. Authority. Authenticity. Recent Documentaries from Elsewhere Screening and Talk "Let Each One Go Where He May", D: B. Russell, USA, Suriname 2009, 135 min, SEN With Eduardo Thomas and Ben Russell	
10.30 pm					
11 pm				11 pm Party with Barbara Panther, City Slang, Berlin (concert), DJ Julieta Aranda, Berlin, and DJ ponediscos tepepunk, Mexico City	

On view June 2 to 6
"Rules of Evidence" – Okwui Enwezor: Installations and works by Tony Cokes, Walid Sadek, Zinny/Maidagan (foyer and upper level); a public reading of books by Philip Gourevitch, Antjie Krog and W. G. Sebald (foyer); four documentary photos in tageszeitung on June 5th (with contributions by Emily Apter, Ecke Bonk, Eduardo Cadava, Thomas Keenan, Jacques Rancière)
"A Blind Spot" – Catherine David with an installation by Joachim Koester (auditorium)

SEN: Subtitles in English | OV: Original Version