

PAST DESIRE

with Yael Bartana (IL), Ulla von Brandenburg (D), Chen Chieh-Jen (TW), Martin Gostner (AT), Franz Kapfer (AT), Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven (BE), David Maljković (HR), Rosell Meseguer (ES), Lorraine O'Grady (US), Margaret Salmon (US)

October 15 – December 4, 2011

Press conference: October 13, 2011, 10 am

Opening: October 14, 2011, 7 pm

Speakers at the opening

Dr. Benedikt Erhard, Tyrolean Government Culture Department

Dr. Beate Ermacora, Director Galerie im Taxispalais

Dr. Jürgen Tabor, Curator of the exhibition, Galerie im Taxispalais

At a time when history is accelerating as a result of profound socio-cultural change, political shifts or technological evolution, reconstructing our individual past becomes the basis for a fragile identity. This raises the question of the subconscious in history. How do psychological elements shape our historical narratives, and both collective and individual memory?

Starting with this question, the **Past Desire** exhibition is showing ten international artists whose approaches clearly differ from those following documentary and historiographical principles in that they focus on the personal significance of history. The desire for identity, which is always a desire for memory and history as well, represents an important pivotal point here because it establishes an important connection between the subconscious and the conscious, and also between the individual and the collective.

The ambiguity of the exhibition title **Past Desire** relates on the one hand to the longing, characteristic of contemporary society, for collective historical narratives and also personal, subjective memory. On the other hand the title is directed at the entanglement of the individual in history, which is captured in buildings, photographs, archives, memorials and monuments, but also in commemorative or memorial rituals. In this context the works shown in the exhibition focus on three central topics: on the landscapes of architecture and memory that represent and mediate history, and are also symbolic manifestations of the psyche of past generations; on the memory media of photography and film as well as on traumatic moments of the past that constantly penetrate the awareness of the present in different forms. The specific perspectives of the artists that are implemented in the exhibition through the media of photography, film and drawing, and also through sculpture and three-dimensional scenography make it possible for us to take a culturally differentiated look at the psychology of history and memory.

Artist Talks

Sat, November 5, 2011, 5 pm, on the occasion of the Premierentage 2011

Ulla von Brandenburg in conversation with Beate Ermacora

Fri, November 25, 7 pm

Martin Gostner and Franz Kapfer in conversation with Jürgen Tabor

In her films, **Yael Bartana** (*1970 in Kfar Yehezkel, lives and works in Tel Aviv and Amsterdam) observes and analyses the everyday life of Israel together with its political reality and its cultural, religious and national identity. In her video *Trembling Time* (2001), Bartana records a special phase in the memorial day that takes place annually in Israel by order of the state to commemorate soldiers who have died for the nation. Working from a bridge over a four-lane highway in Tel Aviv, Bartana focuses on the moment when all the sirens in the country rise to a climax and normal traffic is brought to a standstill. This creates a mythical memory period, but it still seems like an inevitable Kafka-esque decree.

In **Ulla von Brandenburg's** (*1974 in Karlsruhe, lives and works in Paris and Hamburg) film installation *8* (2007), several complexly interwoven spatial and filmic planes represent the linking of the psychological with the historical. In her installation, she leads the visitor through an extensive labyrinth of coloured lengths of cloth, which he or she must pass in order to watch the 16mm film. As if on a dreamlike, surreal journey through time, the camera navigates slowly through a Baroque palace, past twelve tableaux vivants, the protagonists of which are frozen as if in photographic poses symbolically representing a historically developed subconscious.

In his photographic and film work, **Chen Chieh-Jen** (*1960 in Toayuan, lives and works in Taipeh) refers to historical photographs of society-based acts of violence, analysing the psychology of the perpetrators and their victims, as well as the later impact of the photographs themselves. In his video installation *Lingchi – Echoes of a Historical Photograph* (2002), Chen relates to a historical photograph of a pre-modern Chinese execution ritual captured in 1905 by a French colonial soldier. Confronted by the torture fixed by the photograph and the cultural suggestion of particular cruelty, Chen uses a cinematic re-enactment to invoke the situation directly again, in order to process the story by allowing it to speak directly.

In his works, **Martin Gostner** (*1957 in Innsbruck, lives and works in Innsbruck and Düsseldorf) addresses elements of a traumatic history that have etched themselves on the global memory, particularly through the way they were conveyed by the media. In the *Bamiyan Apparat* installation, he invokes the unsettling image of the empty caves left over from the destructive act in which fundamentalist Taliban had blown up the centuries-old Buddha statues of Bamiyan (Afghanistan) in their rocky niches in 2001. *A Thick Aura over Dealey Plaza* deals with the place where American President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. The object consists of a model of Dealey Plaza covered by a skin of breadcrumbs partly burned almost black, attempting to capture the historic aura of the square.

In his performances, drawings, photographs and three-dimensional works, **Franz Kapfer** (*1971 in Fürstenfeld, lives and works in Vienna) investigates selected sites of memory, analyses their formal and symbolic language and so proffers insights into both ideological and psychological thought patterns. In his *Hôtel des Invalides* (2011) series of drawings and his three early performances *St. Sebastian Friedhof*, *Kapitelplatz* and *Elisabeth* (all 1991), he analyses various aspects of the historical mentality of French and Austrian Baroque. In his works it is also the revelation of personal factors introduced by him into the examination that is significant.

In **Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven's** (*1951 in Antwerpen, lives and works in Antwerp and Berlin) autobiographical drawings, the reaction to the immediate surroundings, to the rooms she spends time in and the stream of experience she sees herself confronted with have a central part to play. In Kerckhoven's work, the diary-like, automatic drawing functions as an idiosyncratic recording system in which she processes her individual experience, but also political and social themes as well as memories and symptoms of the subconscious. The three series of small-sized, detailed drawings *Schöneberger Ufer* (2008), *Systems of Status* (2006/2007) and *Une Légende Dorée* (2008) are a selection from a large chronicle of narratives that represent the entanglement of social influences and individual character.

In his installations, films, drawings and paintings, **David Maljković's** (*1973 in Rijeka, lives and works in Zagreb) main concern is with continuities and breaks in the Yugoslavian socialist project as well as with its images and symbols, some of which continue to exert a supra-temporal force, but generally have lost their definition. In his film *Retired Form* (2008), he looks at the way in which the historical formal language of a modernist monument dating from the 1950s blocks out immediate understanding. In the *After the Fair* (2009) installation, Maljković looks at the yawning gap between the socio-utopian thinking of the former Yugoslavia around the 1950s and the precarious social state caused by switching to the capitalist economic system in the 1990s.

In *OVNI Archive* (UFO Archive, 2007-2010), **Rosell Meseguer** (*1976 in Orihuela/Cartagena, lives and works in Madrid) devotes herself to the world of espionage and the associated information politics during the two world wars, the Cold War, and up to the present day. The archive consists of a collection assembled by Meseguer of photographs, newspaper cuttings, books and similar materials that lead like clues into an unfathomable world of political thought. The archive's branching groupings and connections are reminiscent of Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas, with Meseguer following the mysterious traces of the secret service underground like a psycho-historian.

In her 16-part photo-installation *Miscegenated Family Album* (1980/1994) **Lorraine O'Grady** (*1934 in Boston, lives and works in New York) devotes herself to the difficult relationship with her older sister by juxtaposing photographs of her family with ancient Egyptian portrayals of Nefertiti showing a similar situation of sisterhood. The selection is based on astonishing formal and aesthetic analogies between the portraits of antiquity and the contemporary images. The home-made family album 'interweaving' her own origins with a different culture and identity represents also an expression of the artist's own hybrid identity.

Margaret Salmon (*1975 in New York, lives and works in Kent, London and New York) concerns herself with the genre of portraiture in her oeuvre, investigating the very different facets of everyday human life. Her two-channel video installation *Everything that rises must converge* (2010) is based on two films transferred to DVD that she made using two different kinds of 16mm film material, in order to create a subtle double portrait of her two young daughters. The two films express a deep human longing for things past and for the personal motifs and biographies that may be linked to memory.

CATALOGUE

Vergangenes Begehren. Past Desire

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