

Arsenal Summer School, August 21–23, 2014

REANIMATION & REENACTMENT

Forms of Cinematic Reencounter

(The presentations will be held in German)

Since 2009 the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art has been running a Summer School, open to anyone interested in coming together for three intensive days to examine a topic at the interface of the theory and practice of film. The Arsenal Summer School provides a forum for an open-ended exchange, in which the participants' questions and reflections can develop a dynamic of their own.

The Summer School, now in its sixth year, will be held from August 21–23, 2014. It will concentrate on the Arsenal's important relation to its own archive, drawing from the ongoing project Visionary Archive. Under the title *REANIMATION & REENACTMENT. Forms of Cinematic Reencounter*, it will focus on the specific forms of re-seeing by which the past becomes present in the cinema.

As a central component of this Summer School, participants will come together to watch films from the Arsenal archive. The selection of films focuses on the diverse forms of re-stagings, re-enactments, and the encounter with spaces where the past lives on, transparently or covertly. Particular attention will be given to films from anti-colonialist, non-European cinema and the history of resistance remembered in them. In this constellation, the view to the archive falls on films that themselves act as an archive. They assemble and conserve images, sounds, and viewpoints, they fill in some of the gaps in knowledge and open up others. They allow us to get a view to cinema that faces up to history, collectively experienced, but remembered with contradictions.

The collective visualization of these different techniques of film memory in the Summer School is not meant as an innocuous, distanced view from the outside. Rather, we will make use of the possibilities of reencountering that are inherent in each film, in which there is always something of the past involved in a possible future.

With films by Neïl Beloufa, Vincent Dieutre, Assia Djébar, Ruy Guerra, Philip Scheffner, Ousmane Sembène, Pierre-Yves Vandeweerdt.

School conducted by: Marie-Hélène Gutberlet, Tobias Hering

Program

Thursday, August 21 (#1 Encounter & Reencounter)

2 pm

Arrival and greeting

2:30 pm

Introduction

Milena Gregor, Birgit Kohler, and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art)

Marie-Hélène Gutberlet and Tobias Hering (Visionary Archive)

3–5 pm

JAURÈS, Vincent Dieutre, France 2012, Blu-ray, OV/GeS, 83 min

Along with a friend, actress Eva Truffaut, filmmaker Vincent Dieutre watches video footage that he has made over the course of several months from the window of his lover's apartment. It shows an area not far from the Paris metro station Jaurès. The seasons pass. We see random street scenes, the overhead railway driving past, the canal, a camp of Afghan refugees built out of plastic tarps and cardboard boxes, police raids, and finally the removal of the camp. In the familiar intonations of a private tête-à-tête, Truffaut and Dieutre comment on the images, which are sometimes altered by drawn-on lines. They sit in a viewing room meant for dubbing and their conversation gets mixed in with the sound on the video footage, with sounds from the apartment, and snatches of conversations between Dieutre and his lover Simon, who never appear in the frame. The second view of these video recordings causes Dieutre to reflect on his nearly clandestine relationship with Simon, a *sans-papiers* activist, whom he admires for his political engagement, but also on his own distanced observation from the window, his view to the Afghan refugees, who simultaneously seem both very near and yet infinitely far away.

5–7 pm

SANS TITRE (Untitled), Neïl Beloufa, Algeria / France 2010, DVD, OV/EnS, 15 min

In a set pieced together from cardboard and photo wallpaper, various voices reconstruct the temporary occupation of a luxury villa by a group of occupiers who remain elusive. The commentary draws on rumors, news reports, and observations made from a distance, which still cannot solve the riddle of why the occupiers chose a building that is visible from so far away as a hiding place, and why they left so few traces behind. The picture this creates of the temporary invaders remains as cracked as the flimsy set of the stage.

Afterwards: excerpts from soundtracks from films to be screened the next days, and a discussion about the relationship between sound and image/what is seen and what is said/imagination and hearsay in the construction and reconstruction of cinematic reality.

8 pm

Dinner

Friday, August 22 (#2 Reenactment & Re-narration)

10–12 am

MUEDA, MEMORIA E MASSACRE, Ruy Guerra, Mozambique 1979, 35mm, OV/GeS, 75 min

Ruy Guerra's *MUEDA, MEMORIA E MASSACRE* depicts a public reenactment of the events of Mueda on June 16, 1960, when Portuguese soldiers opened fire on a crowd of protesters, killing hundreds of people. The massacre is now considered the catalyst for the anti-colonialist struggle in Mozambique's history, and was commemorated in popular stage plays as early as 1968, while the war of liberation (1964–74) was still going on. The reenactment filmed by Ruy Guerra was one of the first after independence and took place at the original location in Mueda. It represents not only the brutality of the colonial power, but also the ignorance and ridiculousness of its representatives, as well as the shameful role of the local collaborators. In order to achieve the desired didactic effect, the fictional scenes of the reenactment in the film were supplemented by commentary from eyewitnesses and frames of explanatory text. *MUEDA, MEMORIA E MASSACRE* was a production by the newly founded national film institute (INAC – Instituto Nacional de Audiovisual e Cinema) and made in the context of the political educational work of the new government of Samora Machel. Ruy Guerra, who was born in Mozambique, had previously returned from his exile in Brazil in order to take over the directorship of the INAC. As one of the leading figures of the Brazilian Cinema Novo, he had contributed to the development of a political avant-garde cinema and now found himself confronted with the programmatic expectations for cinema of a post-colonial state apparatus. Through its ambivalent, even contradictory form, the film also speaks to the different expectations for a cinema of decolonization.

Screening followed by discussion

1:30–4:30 pm

CAMP DE THIAROYE, Ousmane Sembène, Thierno Faty Sow, Senegal 1988, 35mm, OV/EnS, 150 min

CAMP DE THIAROYE narrates the return of the French colonial troops from the Second World War and the massacre at Thiaroye on the night between November 30 and December 1, 1944. The West African soldiers, who were known as the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, had protested against their unequal treatment as compared to their white colleagues. In order to crush the mutiny, the French army opened fire and killed over 300 soldiers from its own troops. The film poses the question of law and justice in a colonial context. It outlines various characters and ways of

thinking in dealing with the basic principles of the French revolution, liberty, equality, fraternity, which the colonized were excluded from. Against the backdrop of the Second World War and the participation of the colonial troops in the liberation of Europe from the National Socialists, this contradiction becomes particularly virulent. Sembène addresses the perfidy and horror of the events with burlesque exaggeration, gallows humor, and clever use of language. At the 45th International Film Festival in Venice the film won the special jury prize, but remained banned in France until the end of the 1990s and was also censored in Senegal.

Screening followed by discussion

5–7 pm

TERRITOIRE PERDU (Lost Land), Pierre-Yves Vandeweerdt, Belgium / France 2011, DigiBeta, OV/GeS, 75 min

On a thematic level, TERRITOIRE PERDU is about the so-called West Sahara conflict, about the displacement of the Sahrawi, who had earlier lived a largely nomadic life, by the Moroccan occupation forces, their forced exile in Algerian refugee camps, and their resistance. Vandeweerdt accompanies the soldiers of the Frente Polisario, the political and military organization of the Sahrawi, on their patrols and their routines. Since 1973 the Polisario has conducted an armed independence struggle and is recognized by the UN as the lawful representative of the Sahrawi. When Morocco used the truce brokered in 1991 to create precedents and to draw a boundary wall through more than 2,500 kilometers of desert, the military mission of the Polisario became paradoxical, for the soldiers now guard a border that shuts themselves out. As a film and as a sensory experience, TERRITOIRE PERDU, shot on black-and-white super8, is the attempt to provide a visual and acoustic expression to a political situation that seems hopeless, in which the dream of returning to the lost territory has already been carried over into the third generation. While all the images were made on this side of the boundary wall, on the barren terrain controlled by the Polisario, the soundtrack consistently brings in an idea of elsewhere: of the memories of a time when the space was still intact; of the trauma of displacement, the massacres, and the graves left behind; of the unbroken demand to abolish the borders and the civil resistance of young Sahrawis in the cities on the other side.

Screening followed by discussion

Saturday, August 23 (#3 Archive & Remix)

10 am–12 pm

LA ZERDA ET LES CHANTS DE L'OUBLI, Assia Djebar, Algeria 1982, 16mm, OV/GeS, 60 min

Her work as a novelist has made Assia Djebar one of the most familiar and widely read Arabic writers of her generation. As part of her engagement for Algerian independence, she made two films around the end of the 1970s – LA NOUBA DES FEMMES DU MONT CHENOUA (1979) and LA ZERDA ET LES CHANTS DE L'OUBLI (1982) – which are highly significant in the context of anti-

colonialist historiography, even if they have received relatively little attention. For *LA ZERDA ET LES CHANTS DE L'OUUBLI* Assia Djebar and her co-author Malek Alloula spent half a year in the film archives of Pathé and Gaumont viewing films and footage that French documentary film makers had shot during the colonial period. By means of montage, these “images of a killing gaze” are in a certain sense scoured for the truth that they precisely do not show, for the resistance that had withdrawn “behind the mask.” This merciless inspection is mixed with a soundtrack on which militant poetry, recitative, and experimental music are linked together into a swansong to colonial power.

Screening followed by discussion

1:30–3:30 pm

THE HALFMOON FILES, Philip Scheffner, Germany 2007, BetaSP, OmU, 87 min

THE HALFMOON FILES is a ghost story, a documentary, and an audiovisual research project on the interweavings of politics, colonialism, science, and media. The film's starting point is the sound recording of a prisoner of war from India, Mall Singh, who was interned at the time of the First World War in the “Halfmoon Camp” in Wünsdorf near Berlin. His voice crackles from a 90-year-old shellac record, which was among a few hundred found by Philip Scheffner in the sound archive of Berlin's Humboldt University. The recordings conserve the voices of colonial soldiers and were created in a unique alliance between the military, the academy, and the entertainment industry in the last years of the Prussian Empire. Searching for traces, Philip Scheffner follows these voices to where they were recorded. Like in a memory game that remains incomplete to the end, he uncovers pictures and sounds in which sudden connections between faraway places and widely divergent times flare up. But the action of the story evades the narrator and the ghosts return. From the fastidious data of the ethnologists and the sound researchers, the chronicles of their phonographs, the voices of the Indian and North African prisoners of war, and from the absence of their bodies and their stories, their traces in Wünsdorf today, and the process of searching itself, a complex network of voices, noises, and images emerges.

Screening followed by discussion

4–6 pm

Closing discussion with reception following

Event venue

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