NOTHING IS SUPPOSED TO BE SAFE

WASHINGTON SUTTA, „THIS IS NOT A TIME TO BE AFRAID OF PEOPLE, THIS IS TIME TO BE AFRAID FOR PEOPLE" – PART 1 OF 3

Since 2010, the Italian Dissonant, author and curator Raffaella Dalla Sara been responsible for the University of the Campus based Academy of the Arts of the World. Firstly, who studied Contemporary Dance and Choreography, then Dance Theory and Philosophy, she decided to move back to her own artistic roots in the continent of the Academy.

In collaboration with curator Sara Rossi, Raffaella Dalla Sara is responsible for the curved Academy of the Arts of the World, which was first shown in the Kunstmuseum Bonn in Germany. Tokyo, Sydney, Berlin & Delhi, which saw three working sessions from Ai Weiwei Hexagonale to open up larger lines of sight.

Since the end of the Academy of the Arts of the World, and later the artist Katrin Ellmann as the site of the curatorial collaboration in 2011 about ghosts, traces and echoes. Ai Weiwei by Nicolas Tacha

with the exhibition "Ghosts, Traces, Echoes: Working in Layers" the Academy of the World is addressing the topic of work. What exactly is meant by this? Raffaella Dalla Sara: Well, we are dealing with a very different view. Generally the law of physics, for example, says that matter is indestructible, concerning the creation of different objects in the "history of data". Which has the visibility of their "ghosts" and "traces" and "echoes" in the form of "memory" and "memory" and "memory" and

not a funny picture, that you knew what it was about. This is a tragic, painful, existential moment – not a happy protest moment. On that day, it was decided that the work was finished. After all, the women were fighting to keep the steel mill open – and that hadn't worked out.

But there is no sadness or resignation in the picture, rather a lot of self-confidence.

Kathrin Ebmeier: Exactly! But we still made sure that there was not just the credit for the photo, but also the information that it was the last tapping and that red carnations were distributed to the workers.
The question is always: What representation is there? I hail from the Ruhr area, was born in Hattingen, studied in Bochum and lived in Bochum, Essen and Wanne-Eickel, my family is from here. The narrative of the worker identity has always been very present in my life. And yet even I knew nothing about this women's initiative. What kind of visibility is there? The Kumpel narrative is so strong, always with a certain local patriotic pride. But the fact that this is linked to many gender disputes and also to migrant disputes and a great deal of pain is not yet adequately represented.
Making that visible is a personal concern of mine.

The idea of networking plays an important role for "Geister, Spuren, Echos: Arbeiten in Schichten (Soft Opening)" / Ghosts, Traces, Echoes: Works in Shifts".
For "Echos", the artist Aline Benecke rehearsed some songs by political singer-songwriter and activist Fasia Jansen (1929-1997), whose work is closely linked to the labor dispute, with the newly founded Fasia Jansen Ensemble (documented for the exhibition in a film by Aline Benecke). From the 1970s to the 1990s, Fasia Jansen accompanied numerous labor disputes in Oberhausen and neighboring cities in the Ruhr area, thus ensuring that the initiatives were interconnected.
To what extent did Fasia Jansen also play a role for the women of Hattingen?

Kathrin Ebmeier: She was a very important companion. She is even hiding in one of the photos in the exhibition.
When the idea for the day of action and the networking meeting came up, people immediately said: "Can we sing "Nobody pushes us away" / "Ninguém nos tira daqui"?
In the entrance area of the exhibition, there is an audio recording of Samira Yildirim and I teaching each other the song – a response to the fact that there were no recordings of the song, at least none that I could find.

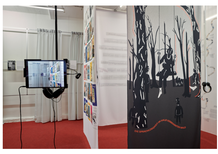
Eva Busch: I have only found one that sounds almost military-like – also, it's just in German, not in the other languages.

Kathrin Ebmeier: Samira can speak Turkish and taught me the Turkish text. It's about activation, a thinking ahead, not perceiving threads from an artist like Fasia Jansen as completed, but taking them up again in one's own artistic practice. Fasia Jansen had a great influence, this name is known to all women. She was a strong motor to get into the exchange.

Madhusree Dutta is coming back, Kathrin Ebmeier and Eva Busch are leaving

The exhibition is accompanied by the film program "Film Works", which deals with, and I quote from the announcement, "filmic narratives relating to bodies, places, conventions, infrastructures, emotions, as well as the social production of work and the work production of the individual person". These films, twelve in total, deal with different fields of work, such as the working conditions of female telephone operators at the beginning of the 20th century, the downward spiral of an industrial location such as Salzgitter, the living conditions of working migrants, the route taken by working materials in a globalized world, or the current shadow industry of content cleaning.
Here, once again, the introductory question: What unites the films?

Madhusree Dutta: First of all, we need real happenings! This is not easy under the Corona circumstances. But as artists we have to think how it can be done: logistically and regarding infrastructure.
We are not one of those people believing the situation right now is about limiting our personal rights and freedom, but we do think it is a time to think critically about infrastructure und physicality.
To answer your question: The beginning and the end connects the movies. The beginning is represented by the telephone operators in the early 20th century, a found footage film made in 2006 by Caroline Martel from corporate movies made in the 1920s: „The Phantom of the Operators". The movie is looking back on the history of women labor.
The program is ending with „The Cleaners", a film by the German filmmakers Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck about workers in Philippines who clean the internet from the fake and hate news and so on. This is a completely secret labor. They work really underground, nobody knows who they are, they cant even tell their own families where and what they work on.
The programing is about the history of labor across the century and the continents. It is about a wider interpretation of work – of course work means factory work, but also social production of labor and work in the arts. There is for example one film about the folk cinema in India named „Superman of Malegaon", Malegaon is a hybrid cinema industry – this also happens in Nigeria, this happens in many other places. The movie is looking at the labor of cinema workers.
There is also one film from the Senegal by Fatou Kandé Senghor: „Giving Birth" – it is about feminity, creativity and sculpture. In the movie a sculptor creates imaginary bodies – giving birth is also labor. All those films are looking at labor from many perspectives, not only the historical aspects, also the impact of work on our social lives.



The program guide says that the works reopen "old wounds", upset the order and rewrite the history of work.
Of course, a film like "Superman of Malegaon", set in the "dusty, noisy and densely populated city of Malegaon", an epicenter of cloth and film production, immediately brings to mind the current dizzying corona figures in the country. And a film such as "Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso / Come to me, paradise" is also no longer detachable from the current developments in Hong Kong, a city that is currently being ripped away from its population by China. To what extent has this resulting decontextualization framework always been and still is part of the thinking behind the creation of such a series?

Madhusree Dutta: My first instinct was to look at the history of cinema and the history of labor within, but while doing so the concept of labor changed over time, different aspects and ideas came in through processes of migration and other issues. One other thing of importance: people always claim that we live in the age of laptop and that so people do not look at long narratives, only short durational ones like 10 minutes or 15 minutes will be watched. They say long duration cinema is over. I don´t agree, this is my challenge. There is one very artistic film called „Double Tide" by Sharon Lockhart, a one shot movie about a woman picking up clams at the coast. It is my engagement, I question: Do we have the attention span for a 90 minutes movie showing someone doing the same thing over and over again.

Let me briefly summarize the basic idea of the Academy of Arts of the World: The academy is characterized by a worldwide approach already established in its name. It is a cultural network whose members are spread all over the world and are committed to critical artistic practice beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries. Together they want to correct false historiography and artistically question the current post- and neo-colonialist living and working conditions.
To what extent has the year 2020 again confirmed the exceptional necessity of such an institution?

Madhusree Dutta: The answer has two parts. One aspect I already talked about: This is a crisis time – and in crisis time the power always wants the citizens to make sacrifices. They should sacrifice what is not needed to survive in the day to day. So: What is not needed to survive? Culture! Arts! Maybe also sports, but sports is a big industry, so nobody will say sports.

But culture is also a big industry!

Madhusree Dutta: But it is still not recognized like this. Maybe mainstream cinema is . . . so this is a time cultural institutions have to fight for their rights to survive and function.
And secondly: this is not a time to be avantgarde. This is not a time to be ahead of people, this is a time to be with the people. I look at my institution as an incubator. We need care work – and art can do that very well. There was a time when art was needed to break the system. Various kind of avantgarde wanted to break the system, but I do think that 2020 has given us the challenge to change that course and to be with the people.

Do you have a specific audience in mind for the Akademie der Künste der Welt?

Madhusree Dutta: We are all about public culture! If people are too scared to come in, then art has to go somewhere, go to people, physically. We need to concentrate on public culture.

The programme of the Academy of Arts of the World, is built on 4 pillars:
– I found:erased:palimpsest, a public-artistic project in which historians provide their personal, family and social memories,
– II Sites at Stake deals with the different interest-driven influences that contribute to the emergence and disappearance of a space (from private to military and economic-political spaces),
– III Original Fakes deals with production processes that undermine the hegemonic logic of the market,
– IV Hybrid Transactions
Does this four-column area of tension converge in "Geister, Spuren, Echos: Arbeiten in Schichten (Soft Opening)" / "Ghosts, Traces, Echoes: Works in Shifts"?

Madhusree Dutta: When I started here in Cologne three years ago I was looking at those four columns very differently. But now they are overlapping: hybridity is getting into fake, fake is getting into site and site is getting into palimpsest.
Which is a great thing to achieve, as the whole set up is not just abstract in that sense, it is a real body of work and experience.

Thank your for your time and good luck with the exhibtion.

Translation of German parts into English by Denise Oemcke.

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