

RELATED EVENTS:

JAZZ CONCERT

EAST – WEST
(of Hudson)

Ali Perret – Piano
Thurman Barker – Drums
Lou Scott – Bass
Mike Antonelli – Tenor Sax

Saturday, April 9

8 pm @ Joyous Lake
Route 212 42 Mill Hill Road, Woodstock
www.joyouslake.net
845-679-8100

PANEL DISCUSSION

April 28, 2005

Yael Bartana, Sislej Xhafa, and Emily Jacir
in collaboration with Human Rights Department

Moderated by: Pelin Uran and Yasmeen Siddiqui

Made possible by the Monique Beudert Fund and
the Human Rights Program at Bard College

for more information: 845-758-7598

a forest and a tree

April 9 – May 8, 2005

Yellow Bird Gallery

19 Front Street, Newburgh
Gallery hours: Wed–Sat 11:00 am–7:00 pm,
Sunday 12:00 – 5:00 pm
845-561-7204

Center for Curatorial Studies Bard College

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504-5000

Tel: 845-758-7598; Fax: 845-758-2442

E-mail: ccs@bard.edu

a forest and a tree

Yael Bartana, Phil Collins, Esra Ersen,
Emily Jacir, Sislej Xhafa

curated by Pelin Uran

A Master of Arts Thesis Exhibition
Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

Within the last twenty years, the interest of the art world in the “other” has caused artists from non-Western cultures to highlight their identity and cultural origins and to locate themselves within that arena. Theories and practices that inflated the importance of cultural criteria assumed that racial or cultural difference was essential to empower these artists.¹ However, attributing a different social and historical space to non-Western artists has marked them as “others.” *a forest and a tree* challenges the current practice of reading the works of non-Western artists through the filter of national, ethnic, or cultural origins. This exhibition seeks alternative interpretations of these works that are more constructive in perceiving the relationship between the self and the other. These works are shown together to demonstrate the aesthetic and intellectual ground that they share.

In *a forest and a tree*, the works of each artist acknowledge the power structures and antagonisms in society and imply a relationship to universal human conditions. *Trembling Time* by Yael Bartana questions national identity and the state's imposition of a belief system. In *how to make a refugee*, Phil Collins criticizes the representation of the other in the mainstream media. *This is Disney World* and *Brothers & Sisters* by Esra Ersen voice the conditions of repressed minorities. Emily Jacir's *from Texas with love* underlines the human desire for freedom. *Stock Exchange* by Sislej Xhafa questions the position of the subject in relation to economic systems.

This exhibition seeks to associate the artists' concerns in an expanded field and to encourage understanding of the relationships between the universal and the particular. The multi-layered, semi-abstract quality of many of the visual elements in the artworks makes it possible to view their issues of national identity, immigration, exile, and the lives of the refugees and repressed minorities from a wider perspective than one defined by geography or ethnicity. The absence of visual specifics in most of the works invites viewers to make connections and associations between different situations and to interpret disconnected and fragmented contents as inter-relational and applicable to a variety of contexts.

By broadening the meaning of the works in such a way, *a forest and a tree* also asks whether art can be the space in which social issues, with their particularities, can be extended beyond individual cases, and be understood through more universal implications. Are there ways to reflect on the issues of immigration, exile or the formations of national identity that are addressed by these works while remaining respectful of the particularity of each work?

That *a forest and a tree* includes only video works does not position it as a medium specific exhibition or its artists as video artists. Video is not intended here to be an identifying material or medium that defines the artist but should be seen as another material put to use in the service of an idea.²

CHECKLIST:

Yael Bartana

Trembling Time

2001

Video projection

Duration: 7 min.

Courtesy of Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam

Phil Collins

how to make a refugee

1999

DVD

Courtesy of the artist and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

Esra Ersen

This is Disney World

2002

Video projection

Duration: 9 min. 10 sec.

Brothers & Sisters

2003

Video projection

Duration: 23 min.

Courtesy of Platform Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul

Emily Jacir

from Texas with love

2002

Video installation; DVD and MP3 with 51 songs

Duration: 60 min.

Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York

Sislej Xhafa

Stock Exchange

2000

Video

Duration: 4 min.

Courtesy of Magazzino Arte Moderna, Rome

¹ Rasheed Araeen, "A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics," *Third Text* 50 (Spring 2000), 10.

² Lucinda Furlong, "Tracking Video Art: Image Processing As a Genre," *Art Journal* Vol. 45, No.3 (Autumn 1985): 234

ARTISTS:

Yael Bartana

was born in 1970. She studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem and graduated from School of Visual Arts in New York where she received an M.A. in computer art. Currently based in the Netherlands, she has lived and worked in Amsterdam and participated in the residency program at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten. Within the last decade, Bartana's videos have been exhibited mainly in Europe including 2004 Liverpool Biennial, and 2002 Manifesta 4. And more recently in North America, she participated in the "Tele-Journeys" exhibition, 2002 at the MIT List Center followed by a solo show at the same gallery.

Phil Collins

was born in 1970. He graduated from University of Manchester in 1994 majoring in drama and English literature. In 2000, he finished his masters in fine arts at the University of Ulster. Collins participated in the PS 1 Studio Program in 2001-2002 and IASPIS Program, Stockholm in 2004. Currently based in Belfast, he has worked in Belgrade, Baghdad, Ramallah, and the Basque Country. Recently, he has participated in the "Universal Experience: Art, Life and the Tourist's Eye" at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005, "Normalisation" at Platform Contemporary art Center, 2005, in Istanbul and "Tir na nOg" at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2004, in Dublin.

Esra Ersen

was born in 1970. She graduated from Marmara University Faculty of Fine Arts, Istanbul in 1995 where she received graduate and post-graduate degrees. In 2000, she received a post-diploma from Ecole Beaux-Arts de Nantes, in France. Recently, she participated in the exhibition "Whatever Happened to Social Democracy," at the Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art in 2005, the 2003 8th Istanbul Biennial, and 2002 Manifesta 4. She participated in the exhibition "How Latitudes Become Forms," at the Walker Art Center in 2002 and had a solo show at Moderna Museet, Stockholm in 2001.

Emily Jacir

was born in 1970. She earned a bachelor degree from the University of Dallas, Irving (1992) and a master in fine arts from Memphis College of Art, Memphis (1994). She participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program in 1998-1999 as well as in the PS1 Studio Program in 2000-2001. Recently, she participated in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, and the 2003 8th Istanbul Biennial. She also has presented her work at Alexander and Bonin Gallery in 2005 and at Debs & Co. Gallery in New York in 2003.

Sislej Xhafa

was born in 1970. He first produced his art after migrating to Italy and enrolling in the Florence Art Academy in order to obtain a visa. Currently based in New York, Xhafa has lived and worked in Italy and England. Over the last decade, he has participated in the 2004 1st Sevilla Biennial, the "Hardcore" exhibition in Paris in 2003, also the 2001 7th Istanbul Biennial, and 2000 Manifesta III.

WORKS CONSULTED:

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- Collins, Phil. "Dear A." *The Projection*. Utrecht: BAK basis voor actuele kunst, 2004.
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- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Post-modernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.
- Laclau, Ernesto. "Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity." *October*, Vol. 61, (Summer 1992): 85.
- Laclau, Ernesto, Butler, Judith and Žižek, Slavoj. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universalism*. New York: Verso, 2000.
- Laclau, Ernesto, ed. *The Making of Political Identities*. London: Verso, 1994.
- Mosquera, Gerardo. "The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems around Art and Eurocentrism." *Third Text* 21 (Winter 1992): 36.
- Muka, Edi. "When The Horse Gets Stolen", in *Sislej Xhafa: See no evil/Hear no evil/speak no evil*. Milano: Mazzotta, 2003.
- Owens, Craig. "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism." In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster. Port Townsend WA: The Bay Press, 1983.