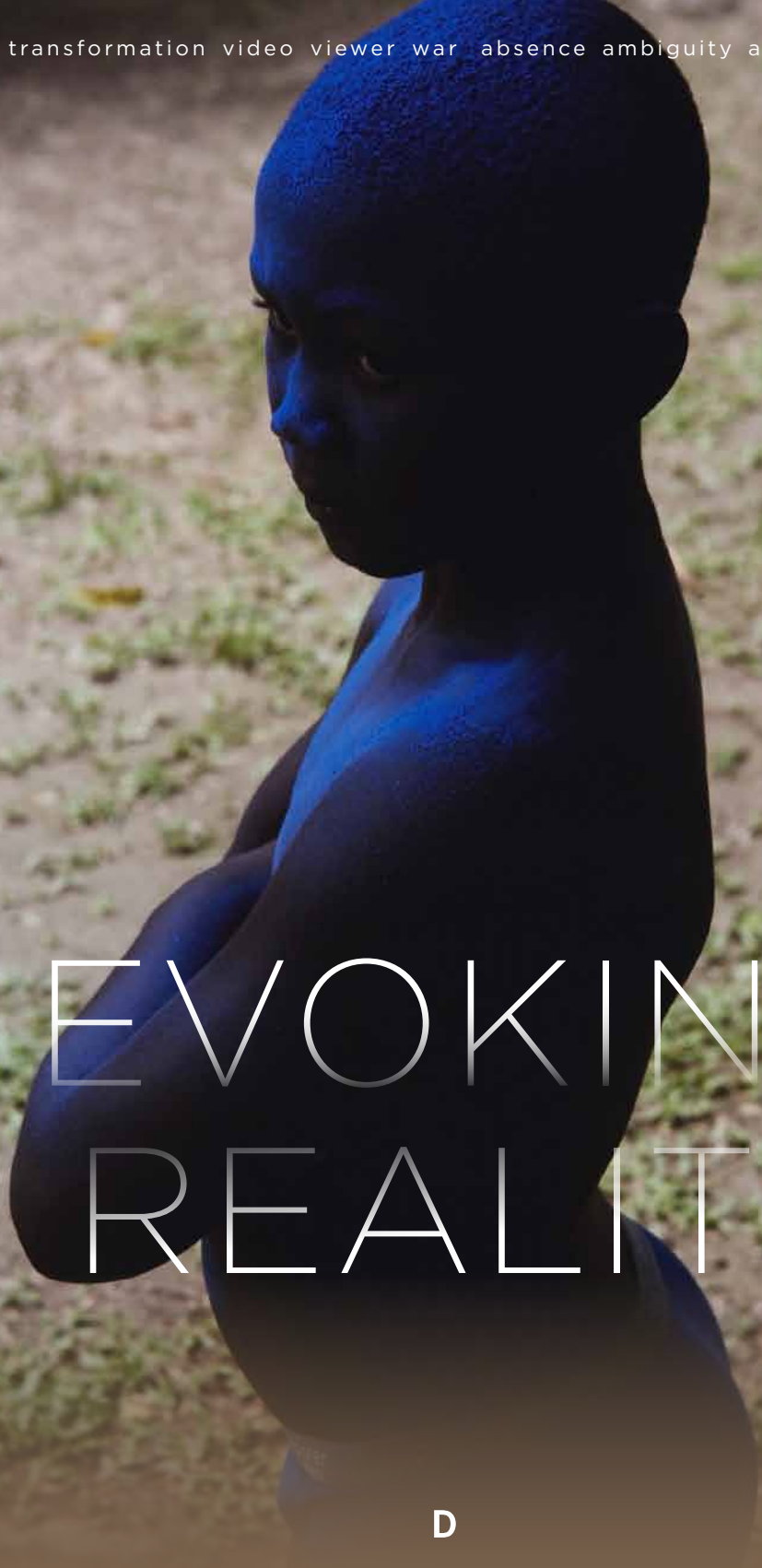society transformation video viewer war absence ambiguity association capitalism

conflict conformity criticism deconstruction documentation dissonance discrimination dissonance evocation fiction

interview intimacy memory narrative observer participation passivity photography racism reality resistance sexism

EVOKING REALITY

D

A C

frame fragment globalization history identity image imagination individual

Mustafah **Abdulaziz** (USA), Jane **Alexander** (ZA),
Clément **Cogitore** (F), Tacita **Dean** (GB), Alia **Farid** (KWT),
Cao Fei (CHN), Abrie **Fourie** (ZA), Pieter **Hugo** (ZA),
Sigalit **Landau** (IL), Richard **Mosse** (IRL), Viviane **Sassen** (NL),
Oskar **Schmidt** (D), Berni **Searle** (ZA), Guy **Tillim** (ZA),
Sharif **Waked** (IL/PS), Maya **Zack** (IL)

EVOKING REALITY

November 24, 2018 – May 5, 2019
Daimler Contemporary, Berlin

Curated by
Renate Wiehager and Nadine Isabelle Henrich

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PIETER HUGO *Untitled, Agbogbloshie Market, Accra, Ghana, C-print, 2010*

PREFACE

RENATE WIEHAGER   Head of the Daimler Art Collection

The text for this catalogue was written in the late summer of 2018, a time when the politics sections of daily newspapers in Germany were dominated by two major stories. On the one hand, there was the 60 billion dollar credit line to Africa announced by Chinese General Secretary and President Xi Jinping at the China-Africa Summit on September 3. Press photos have circulated around the world showing Xi with a delighted South African President Cyril Ramaphosa accepting the far-reaching announcement with a handshake on behalf of the continent, from which 53 heads of state had traveled to Beijing. On the other hand, a few days later, there was Angela Merkel's visit to three African capitals—Bamako in Mali, Niamey in Niger and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. The press images are all the same: Angela Merkel greeting heads of state—Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of Mali, and Mulatu Teshome of Ethiopia. These are the countries young people are coming from in the hope of being accepted into Europe, fleeing from war, looking for work and a better life. The critical discussions in Germany and Europe following Merkel's September 2015 decision to open borders to refugees forced German policymakers to realize that causes and problems needed to be examined and addressed right at their source. In 2017 and 2018, Merkel visited the poorest countries in the heart of West Africa (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria), which are starting points for refugees heading north. She then visited Tunisia and Egypt, from whose coasts African refugee boats set out for Europe.

There is a longer back story to China's spectacular credit line. By the early 2000s China had already begun laying the groundwork for an economic region spanning Asia, Africa and Europe. President Xi Jinping announced the new initiative in 2013 with the resonant title 'One Belt, One Road' (later changed to 'Belt and Road,' as the emphasis on 'One' was perceived negatively). It soon became known (and equally soon feared by a critical public) under the fanciful name 'New Silk Road,' referring to the trade routes used in antiquity. It is designed to connect China with 64 countries from the eastern Chinese coast across the Indian Ocean to Eastern Europe and the east and west coasts of Africa. Since then, China has been pursuing its goals in Africa, in terms of geopolitics and power, but primarily economic and financial influence, with a combination of (a little) development aid and (a lot of) foreign trade promotion, which has led to the rapidly growing dependency of African states on China. By 2018, China had made around 600 million US dollars' worth of direct investments—as against more than 70 billion in loans to African governments, linked to specific projects in the areas of energy and infrastructure, which in turn are carried out by Chinese companies.

Our exhibition, 'Evoking Reality,' focuses on photographs and video pieces from the 2000s to the present showing people of African descent, who represent the broadest possible spectrum of contemporary living situations and cultural ties: children and teenagers on the smoking peaks of Agbogbloshie, an electronic waste dumping ground

in the Ghanaian metropolis of Accra in West Africa, 2005 (Pieter Hugo); young drug victims on the streets of Cape Town, 2000 (Jane Alexander); office workers, joggers and business people, some in traditional robes, others in Western clothing, on the urban streets of Nairobi and Harare, the capitals of Kenya and Zimbabwe, 2016 (Guy Tillim); residents of Petros Village, Malawi, a community plagued by poverty and hardship (2006) and angry crowds in the streets of Kinshasa during the democratic elections in the Congo, 2006 (Guy Tillim); young K.R.U.M.P. dancers on the stage of the Opéra Bastille in Paris, 2017 (Clément Cogitore); a female performer sitting naked in a spotlight undergoing a highly metaphorical process of 'whitening,' 2001 (Berni Searle); black teenagers—descendants of African slaves—in the village of Pikin Slee in Surinam, in South America, 2013 (Viviane Sassen); children portrayed in scenes of pristine nature, South Africa and Rwanda, 2016 (Pieter Hugo); children in a refugee camp in North Kivu, in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2012 (Richard Mosse). Almost all the works have been acquired since 2002, as part of the internationalization process of the Daimler Art Collection or for various temporary exhibitions, and are now being shown together for the first time.

When we began planning the exhibition 'Evoking Reality' in the summer of 2017, we could not have imagined the intensity and prominence with which not only political issues but also cultural events of global significance related to Africa or people of African descent would be shaping the news agenda in 2018. The renaissance of Afrofuturism began at the start of the year with reports of the US film 'Black Panther,' by African-American director Ryan Coogler, the first blockbuster with an all-black leading cast, which tells the saga of the first black comic superhero and his mythical homeland of Wakanda in central Africa. It coincided with the European tour of California rapper Kendrick Lamar, who also produced the soundtrack album for 'Black Panther' and whose lyrics deal with his experiences of childhood and violence as a black youth in 1990s America. Other highlights of black culture in 2018 include the post-colonial Afro-Caribbean sounds and beats of Shabaka Hutchings and his band 'Sons of Kemet;' the first novel from Cameroon-born American author Imbolo Mbue, 'Behold the Dreamer,' which tells

the story of the Jongas, a Cameroonian immigrant family in New York, during the Wall Street crash of 2008; US rapper and actress Janelle Monaé's appearance (in a black tuxedo) at the Grammy awards at the end of January 2018, where she denounced racial discrimination, abuses of power and violence against women; Rashaad Newsome's performances, which meld sculpture, digital programming and voguing, a dance style of the black queer scene in New York; the rediscovery of the novels of James Baldwin from the 1960s, which have a very special significance for the current and future relevance of 'Black Lives Matter,' the international movement of African American communities opposing violence against black people; Theaster Gates' impressive project 'Black Madonna,' which celebrates the self-confidence, the self-sufficient presence and the role of Afro-American women in politics, culture and society of the 20th century; the first long-awaited appearances in Germany of cinematographer and artist Arthur Jafa, who is fighting for a 'black cinema' to enable the 'power, beauty and alienation' of black culture to find expression.

In addition to the topics and motifs of our exhibition 'Evoking Reality' listed above and presented in works by artists ranging from Jane Alexander to Richard Mosse, we have identified three additional focal points, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following introduction: artists' responses to the Israel-Palestine conflict and the aftermath of the Holocaust (Sigalit Landau, Sharif Waked, Maya Zack); the reading of images of historical conflicts as visual warning signals of current problems (Tacita Dean, Oskar Schmidt); and images of landscapes (Mustafah Abdulaziz, Clément Cogitore, Richard Mosse), architecture (Alia Farid) and working life (Cao Fei), innocuous at first sight, that on closer examination reveal radical critical analyses of phenomena of our time.

ALIA FARID *Ma'arad Trablous,* video, 2016

EVOKING REALITY INTRODUCTION

RENATE WIEHAGER AND NADINE ISABELLE HENRICH

Jane Alexander, *African Adventure,* ink print, 2000

The unavoidable reality of national and international conflicts, as well as personal, individual contingencies, form the area of exploration in our exhibition. Modes of representation are reflected and consciously transcended, and the presentation of documented testimony is transformed into a conceptual pictorial theme. (Re)construction, alienation, blending fictitious and real elements with one another, or the appropriation of media and technologies from areas unrelated to art (surveillance technology, border protection) all represent new strategies in a conceptual and image generating practice. While themes include events, conflicts, and the realities of the current age of globalization, these topics are not treated as anonymous facts. The focus is cast on people and their direct surroundings; people who might appear in one moment as actors, and as victims of the current political climate and socio-economic constellations of power in the next. In many of the photographs on display, national identity is expressed as a construct that is both fragile and desired. In her publication 'Regarding the Pain of Others,' Susan Sontag formulates this observation movingly and concisely: "To the militant, identity is everything."[1] In reference to the thoughts of Sontag, the exhibition 'Evoking Reality' explores how crises and conflicts on both personal and political levels are contemplated aesthetically, and references strategies for triggering the imagination through 'the real.'

Historiography as a collective construct and memory as a subjective reflection on the past are central themes in the work of Maya Zack, Oskar Schmidt, and Tacita Dean. Their works illuminate the relationship between individual fate and national histories. Drawing on conversations with witnesses, Maya Zack uses digital drawing programs to reconstruct rooms from the past; specifically, living rooms in Berlin before the Holocaust. *Living Room* presents a black and white reconstruction of a location taken completely from memory. "Memory works with frozen images, and the individual image is always the basic unit."[2] (Sontag) Oskar Schmidt takes a similar approach by creating three-dimensional reconstructions of iconic locations in photo journalism in his studio. His photo series *American Series* references Walker Evans, who photographed victims of the Great Depression from the southern United States in 1936. Evans' powerful close-up of the haggard faces of a family on their dilapidated front porch, framed by the darkness of the doorway, has formed an indelible part of our visual memory. Schmidt removes the individual and historical elements of fate from these spaces by replacing the previous residents with objects of daily use. His photos cast doubt on our ability to experience history through photographic documentation; they subvert our trust in the possibility, in the ability to "regard the pain of others" (Sontag) and to draw motivation from these works to take action in the present.
Historical postcards of tragic events from the World War I era form the basis for Tacita Dean's photo

series *The Russian Ending*. The motifs include scenes from war, whale hunts, natural disasters, and funerals. The artist alters the scanned images through the act of writing instructions for a possible film adaptation on the historic, ready-made material. While national history is presented on the front side, the unofficial, personal narration operates as its palimpsest. The interweaving of levels, separated by chronology and emotion, express 'reality' as a multi-perspective complexity. The purpose of all three artistic positions is to sensitize the observer to stereotypical, redundant images of identity and reality.

The dubious nature of identity, in its irresolvable dependence on political structures and power dynamics, is the central theme of the twelve-part series *Congo Democratic* by Guy Tillim. How does the political structure of a government influence the lived reality of the individual, and what hopes and motivations drive the political engagement of the individual? Tillim captures the utopian yet possibly futile impulses of potential democratic futures in photographs of public gatherings, manifestations and demonstrations, as well as the intimate spaces where personal opinions are formed. People, frequently depicted from the rear or side, converge in the gatherings as if they were blind, as if they want to disappear in the crowd. Unexpectedly, they become part of a movement that also absorbs, equalizes and nullifies the emotional furor of the individual. Tillim places images of private

retreat, here the living rooms of decision makers from a variety of political movements, in contrast to images of the agitated masses. Their solitude and time alone, to ponder individual questions and qualitatively new societal ideas, formulate what is likely the largest contradiction to the furor of the emotionally-charged masses. In *Congo Democratic* and his photo series *Petros Village*, Tillim removes the blue sky seen in tourist brochures, and instead focuses his lens on the earth, depicting the trodden, loamy soil, rivulets, garbage and signs of daily life. The purpose of the photos is not to elicit pity from the observer. Instead, the artist places us within the context of fates that we are not familiar with, which are a part of our present age.

The complex relationships between people and their living spaces is a central issue for many artists featured in this exhibition. The photo series *My future is not a dream* by Cao Fei includes the pictorial themes of social dislocation, otherness, and isolation. Posed portraits of workers in unnamed workshops in South China register the discrepancy between the reality of their lives and their individual yet alienated dreams. The photographic works of Jane Alexander demonstrate how fictitious elements can shed light on the radically inhumane social and economic disparities in lived reality. In *African Adventure*, Alexander combines urban environments and nightmarish figures in tense street panoramas. The latent intimidation of the bizarre plastic animal figurines, set against the reality of

Richard Mosse, *Spiders, Infra* series, C-print, 2015

addiction and desperation, could hardly be more unsettling.

On the peripheries of society, existence and reality can seem almost surreal. Pieter Hugo effectively reveals the absurdity and aggressiveness of everyday scenes in the photo series *Hyena Men* and *Permanent Error*, which brings the repressed and uncomfortable into focus. Standing barefoot in a landscape filled with high-tech garbage and shrouded in plumes of smoke emanating from burning cables, the figures pictured in the strange reality of Agbogbloshie, Ghana, assume an almost mystical prominence. These images evoke similarities to iconic war photographs or heroic paintings of historic battles and indeed for Pieter Hugo, history itself is a constant reference point: images generate more images. "I saw the landfill for the first time in a photo in 'National Geographic.' The fact that photos move me to create my own photos is a common theme in my work."[3] How is our perception of reality changed in and through the medium of photography? How does it influence our visual memory? Pieter Hugo: "It occurs to me that the Iraq invasion changed our view of the world. Before the invasion, infrared photography called to my mind nature photos, with leopards that were disturbed while they were eating. Now, this makes me think of war and conflicts. I'm beginning to ponder the unique relationship between photography and surveillance, as well as the military industrial complex."[4] 'Evoking Reality' addresses this topic and offers a way for us to re-

flect on the mechanisms of our perceptions. How is our view of landscapes directed through global economic and industrial interests, and organic systems which are brought out of balance in the pursuit of development? Since 2012, Mustafah Abdulaziz has been capturing these ominous changes in a number of photo series, one of which is entitled *Water*.

Artistic appropriation of image-generating technologies for surveillance and military purposes is both a conceptual and a political act. Richard Mosse uses this strategy on various visual and subject levels. Just like with Mustafah Abdulaziz's works, the observer is drawn to the deceptive beauty of global landscapes, but the images prompt questions and doubt. The line between deceptive beauty and subcutaneous moments of aggression is highlighted when considering the pink photo series *Infra* by Richard Mosse, which is based on infrared film used by the military and are imbued with ominous beauty.

Can national borders, as we think of them in the traditional sense, direct or even stop the migration of people in a globalized world? Can these lines that were once drawn on a map determine the lived reality today and provide or block opportunities? The aesthetically filmed, radically political rooted video entitled *Mermaids (Erasing the Borders of Azkelon)* by Sigalit Landau allows observers to experience these invisible dimensions of geographic borders both visually and physically. A desire for border-free

public realm manifests itself in the movement of the waves, which draw temporary lines in the sand. This video was shot on a beach between Aza (Gaza) and the Israeli city of Ashkelon, which both are separated by the border. Viviane Sassen also addresses the metaphor of blurred surfaces by using silver foil as a reflector. When her face disappears, it transforms into the face of Narcissus, who observes himself in the moving surface of the water. In the photo series *Etan and Me*, skin color becomes a reflection surface for questions related to the perception of self and of others. "Are we ever able to truly know someone, to truly know ourselves? And if I look at myself, can I ever get a clear view of who I am?" (Sassen). Our individual viewpoints, personal biases, and judgments guide and limit our perceptions and our understanding. The topic of race is addressed in Bernie Searle's video *Snow White* in a way that is both powerful and poetic. Lit from above, a woman's dark body is covered with flour, slowly

turning her body white. Water is poured onto her and, with a ritualistic, archaic simplicity, the woman begins to knead dough.

The exhibition 'Evoking Reality' seeks to trace the various manifestations and interpretations of what we perceive as reality, and to address the observer's imaginative power and critical intellectual curiosity.

Endnotes

1 Sontag, Susan: *Regarding the Pain of Others,* New York 2003, p. 17.

2 Ibid., p. 29.

3 Hugo, Pieter: *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea,* exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Munich 2017, pp. 166–167.

4 Ibid., p. 238.
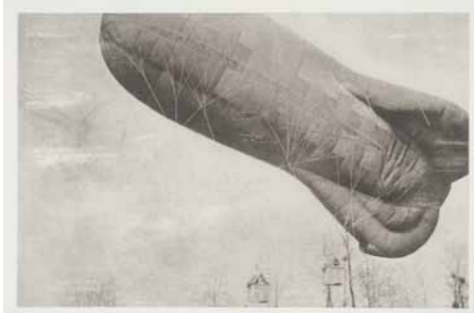
Tacita Dean,
The Russian Ending,
photogravure, 2001

[Row 1]: Ship of Death / The Crimea / The Wrecking of the Ngahere / Erinnerung aus dem Weltkrieg

[Row 2]: Ballon des Aérostiers de Campagne / The Sinking of the SS Plympton / Death of a Priest / La Bataille d'Arras

[Row 3]: Götterdämmerung / Der Rückzug nach Verdun / Zur Letzten Ruhe / The Wreck of the Worthing Pier

[Row 4]: The Story of Minke the Whale / So They Sank Her! / The Life and Death of St. Bruno / Vesuvio

[Row 5]: The Tragedy of the Hughesovka Bridge / Die Explosion in dem Kanal / Beautiful Sheffield / Ein Sklave des Kapitals

Maya Zack, *Living Room 4,*
anaglyph print, 2009

Oskar Schmidt, *The American Series
I-XII (Chair),* Inkjet print, 2011

HISTORY AS AN ACT OF RE-PRESENTATION SPACES OF REMEMBRANCE IN VISUAL ART

Tacita Dean, Maya Zack, Oskar Schmidt

WIEBKE HAHN

Tacita Dean, *The Russian Ending (Ship of Death)*, photogravure, 2001

The visualization of events in the medium of photography determines our understanding of history. It acts to raise awareness as well as to form opinions and thus shapes our cultural and communicative memory. Often, the images are perceived as constituting reality, despite their representation and reception depends on the certain political-cultural context of interpretation and action. This fragility of historical presentation and the loss of informative value of photography is the prelude of the 'Evoking Reality' exhibition. While Tacita Dean cinematographically stages a new sequence of events with historical images, Oskar Schmidt brings to mind the composition of iconic images by means of re-staging. Maya Zack's renunciation of analog techniques illustrates a new materiality, aesthetics and aura, which the means of digitization lend to the medium.

History as a narrative construct

The understanding of history as a coherent, historical reality based on a systematic approach lost its meaning at the end of the 20th century. In his posthumous theses 'On the Concept of History' (first published in 1942) already Walter Benjamin calls for this to be perceived as a constructive principle. Today, the long-recognized categorical separation between history, memory and recollection is increasingly being abolished in historical theoretical considerations. In juxtaposition of writing and historiography, Jacques Rancière considers historiography, literature, facts and fiction together in view of narration, which selects and arranges the

visual and the expressive and exerts an influence on identity and action.[1]

Documentation as a field of action—Tacita Dean

Tacita Dean explores the basics of film in terms of temporality as a superimposition of the past and the present. Based on Hal Foster, her approach can be characterized as "artist as archivist,"[2] providing her essential artistic impulse from a pool of images such as postcards, drawings or film clips. In the act of appropriation, she deciphers and deconstructs the alleged realities inherent in those, revealing connecting lines between history and the present. For her 20-part series *The Russian Ending*, 2001, she refers to historic postcards from the beginning of the 20th century. Using photomechanically produced copper prints, called heliogravure or photogravure, she enlarges and duplicates the historical images and supplements handwritten remarks. The hanging as an image sequence arranged by the artist resembles a narrative about tragic events and their consequences: sinking warships, aerial photographs of destroyed regions, explosions, scenes of funerals. The partially overwritten and blurred text fragments on camera work, sound, light and genre resemble director instructions and transform the photographs into cinematographic storyboards. The depictions thus find their way into the present. They are manipulated to adapt to a new style of visual production. The first image, *Ship of Death*, depicts a flooded boat on a turbulent sea. Blurred shades already

eroded by the sea suggest the dead. The left corner of the picture says 'last scene' and includes a foggy person called the 'ferryman.' The waters are localized as 'Styx,' according to Greek mythology the river that divides the world of the living from that of the underworld. An arrow towards 'Hades,' or 'it's over,' allows one to guess how the story continues. The following images are similar to this dramaturgical style and can be read individually and equally as an overall staging. Observers are instructed to experience with all senses: 'imagine the scent,' for example, is added to the depiction *Death of a Priest*. The title of the series refers to the different export versions in the earlier film industry. At that time, different versions were produced to respond to different reception habits: while the films for the American and Western European market ended with a 'happy ending,' the films for the Eastern European market ended mostly tragically.[3] Tacita Dean's comments, such as 'The Russian German Ending' or 'A German issue film' are to be understood as referring to the manipulation of history according to cultural readings.

Between historiography and remembrance Maya Zack

Maya Zack deals with the question of how history is remembered and how these personal memories can be experienced. The photograph *Living Room 4* is part of an audiovisual installation that consists of a total of four depictions of the living situation of a Jewish family in Berlin-Charlottenburg in the 1930s.

The basis for the visualizations are the borrowed memories of Yair Noam, born Manfred Nomburg, who was forced to flee in 1938 because of his Jewish background. His narrative is also available to the visitors and gives the abandoned room the notion of family togetherness. Upset bowls and cups on the dining table suggest the family's hasty departure. Digitally reconstructed, Maya Zack precisely and faithfully visualizes his memory story as well as the lapses in memory: In addition to the meticulous details, viewers repeatedly come across empty spaces and missing parts, because the artist did not add anything to the sometimes nebulous memory fragments. The breakthroughs in the wall and the visible repair work, on the other hand, reflect the artist's conceptual decisions, because she wants "[…] to open access to the memory of a person, to his 'memory plumbing' […]."[4] Similar to a puzzle game, she combines the individual memory elements together, each part that is not found remains as an image gap.

The intensive preoccupation and dealing with traumatic experiences goes back to a visit to her grandmother's parents' home, who fled from Slovakia to Palestine after the contractual alliance with the German Reich. She processed her personal emotion of absence and emptiness into the video work *Mother Economy*, 2008.[5] Zack began conducting a series of interviews with Jewish refugees in Israel, building on the historiographic method of oral history, which appreciates orally transmitted memories as primary historical testimonies.[6] In doing so, she appropriates

Oskar Schmidt, *The American Series I-XII,*
Inkjet prints, 2011

the medium of photography in her documentary function. At the same time, she negates this property by employing the medium as a historiographic reconstruction in a way that conveys history and focuses on the authenticity of narration.

**Between historical citation and re-creation
Oskar Schmidt**

While in 'Camera Lucida' (first published: 1980) Roland Barthes still refers to the mimetic quality of photography, Susan Sontag already questioned the truth content of the medium by pointing out the photographer's subjective and selective decisions.[7/8] This ambivalence between authenticity and authorship, widely discussed in the theory of photography, is also dealt with by Oskar Schmidt in his edition *The American Series I–XII*.

The reduced still lives in black and gray tones appear timeless, prompting a contemplative attitude of reception. The point of beginning are the iconic, social documentary photographs by Walker Evans, which emerged in the 1930s during the Great Depression in the southern United States, partly on behalf of the government. Evans strove to portray the everyday culture of America, detached from references to daily politics or artistry. He created portraits, interior photographs and city photographs, which today are part of the cultural memory. In contrast to art photography and journalistic documentary photography, he described his work as "documentary in style"[9] and thus significantly influenced its development.[10] Their veracity is con-

troversial to this day due to their social distancing and dramaturgical staging.

The photographs on display here are based in particular on two of Evans' photographs from 1936: A portrait of father and daughter Burroughs sitting on the porch, looking into the camera and an interior shot taken in the house. In his studio, Oskar Schmidt re-stages the situation in original size and constructs various image compositions, concentrating on details and material surfaces. People remain as empty spaces. The photographs stand between appropriation, quotation and re-creation. The common dichotomy between reality and artificiality finds its abolition in this illusory world. With an analog large-format camera and always under the same lighting conditions, he puts those objects into focus again, which under ordinary circumstances would not develop a noticeable presence: worn-out everyday objects, weathered wooden floorboards and even the dust of the 'dust bowls,' which was everywhere due to the long-lasting drought. However, only the process of perception and the knowledge of historical reference give the pictures their narrative structure.


Walker Evans, *Floyd and Lucille Burroughs, Hale County, Alabama,* **1936**

Schmidt reflects on the meaning-constituting principles of visual media and indicates how strong its reception depends on extra-pictorial factors, the photographer himself, the verbal framing as well as on the concrete viewer situation.

Endnotes

1 See Rancière, Jacques: *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, New York 2011, 5th edition p. 38.

2 Foster, Hal: "An Archival Impulse," in: *October*, Vol. 110, Autumn 2004, pp. 3–22.

3 Dietrich, Dorothea: "The Space in Between: Tacita Dean's Russian Ending," in: *Art on Paper*, Vol. 6, No. 5, May–June 2002, pp. 48–53, here: p. 52.

4 *Heimatkunde. 30 Künstler blicken auf Deutschland*, published by Inka Bertz, exh. cat. Jewish Museum Berlin, Munich 2011, p. 172.

5 Schischa, Rebecca: "Ghosts in the Living Room. Maya Zack's Latest Art – The End of Jewish Life in Prewar Berlin," in: *The Forward*, 08.08.2011.

6 Catani, Stephanie: *Geschichte im Text. Geschichtsbegriff und Historisierungsverfahren in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, Tübingen 2016, p. 299.

7 Barthes, Roland [1980]: *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography,* New York 1982, pp. 76f.

8 Sontag, Susan: *On Photography,* New York 1977, p. 12.

9 See Brix, Michael: "Walker Evans' photographisches Werk 1928–1938. Ein Feldzug gegen Richtigdenken und Optimismus," in: the same/Birgit Mayer (ed.): *Walker Evans Amerika. Bilder aus den Jahren der Depression*, Munich 1990, pp. 23–45, here: p. 23.

10 Ibid., pp. 23f.
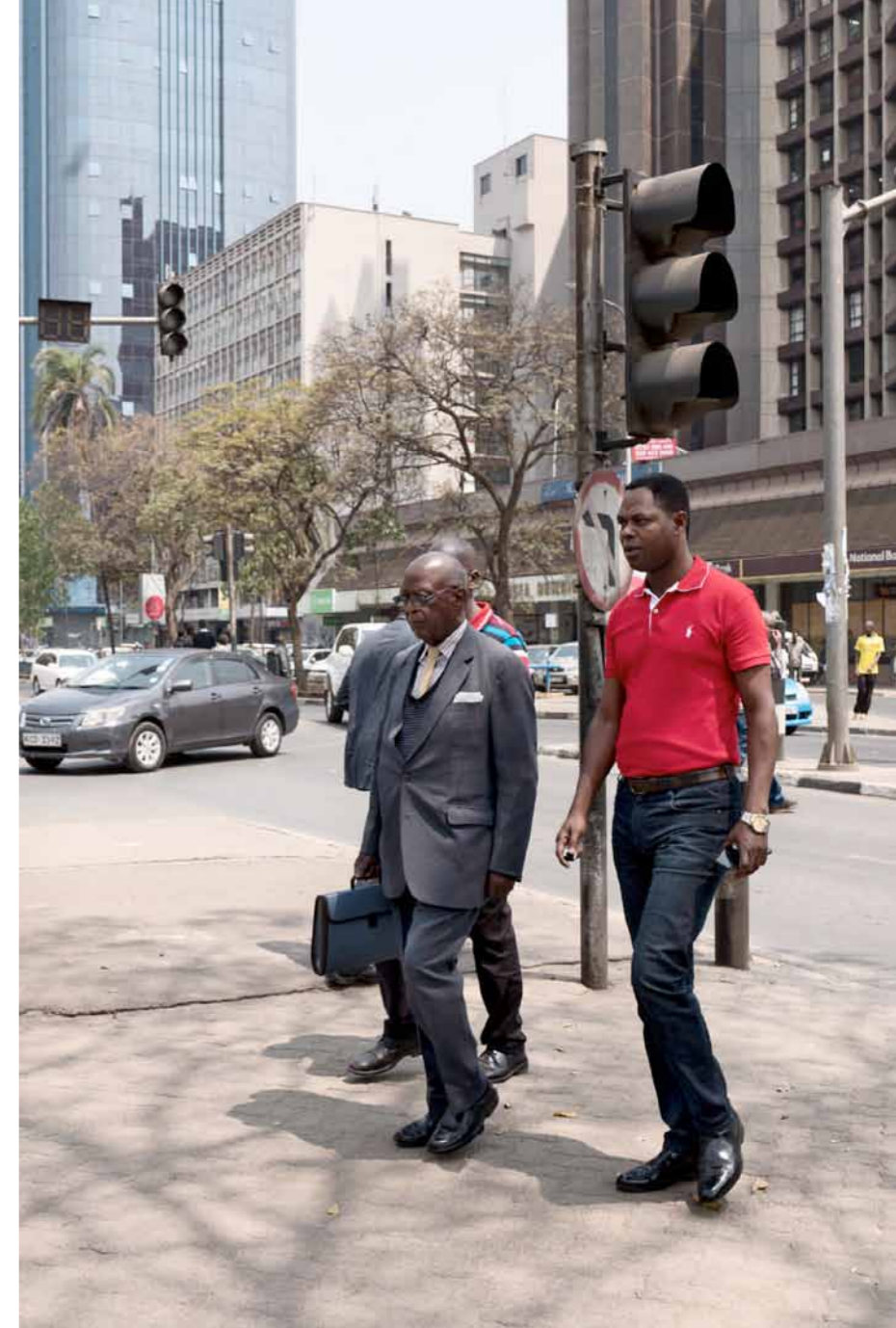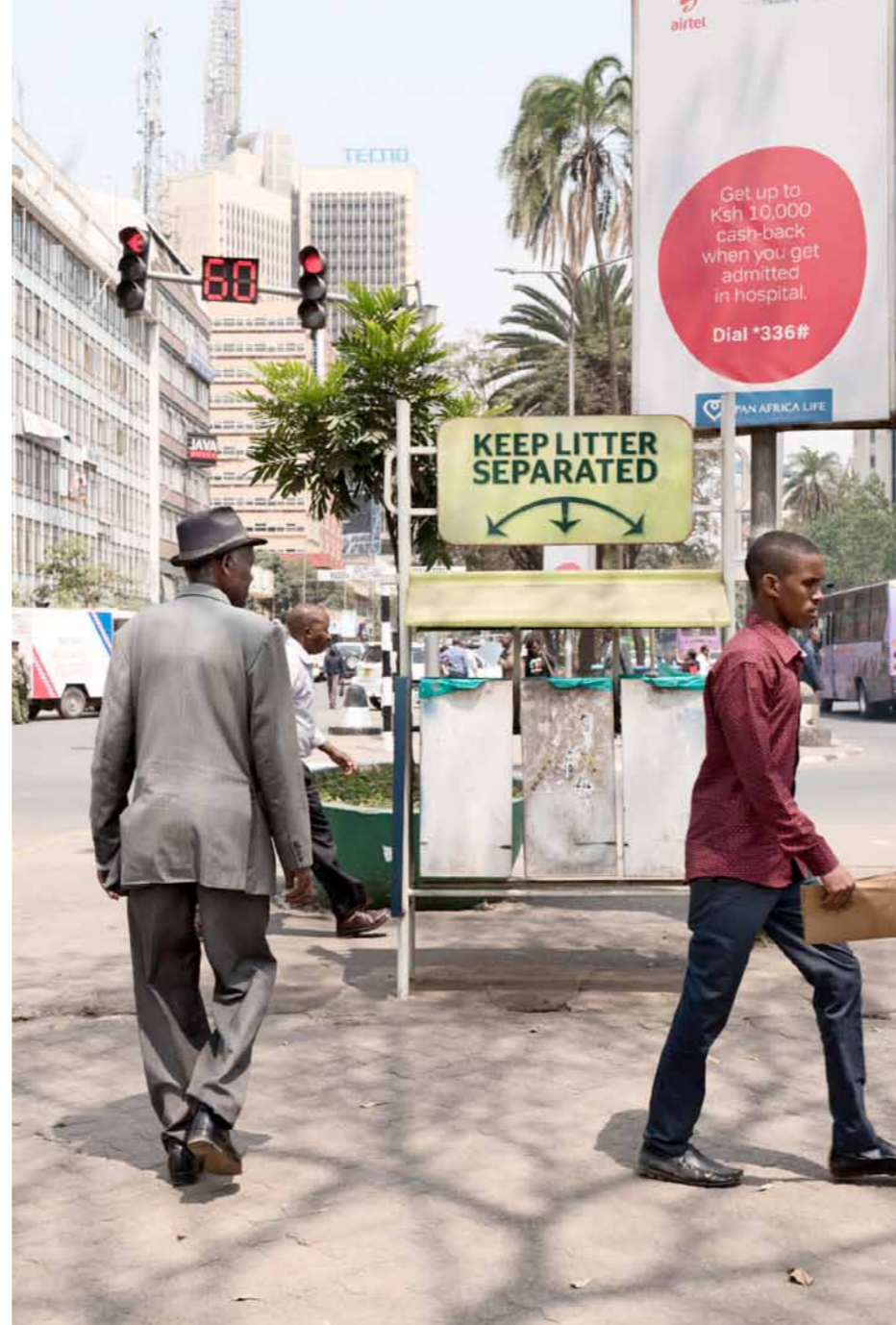
GUY TILLIM *Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi,* triptych, *Museum of the Revolution* series, pigment prints, 2016

MUSEUM OF THE REVOLUTION—GUY TILLIM

RENATE WIEHAGER

From the very beginning of his career in the 1980s Guy Tillim has developed a new approach to photography, as a medium that can reveal the cracks and contradictions in South Africa, first during Apartheid and then in postcolonial society. For his series *Museum of the Revolution* Tillim won the prestigious Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation Award in 2017. The photos were taken in the African cities of Johannesburg, Durban, Maputo, Beira, Harare, Nairobi, Kigali, Kampala, Addis Abeba, Luanda, Libreville, Accra, Dakar and Dar es Salaam. The title of the series, *Museum of the Revolution,* refers to the museum of the same name in Mozambique, but at the same time it also plays on the ubiquitous signs of past revolutions and historical conquerors in the streets of Africa (in monuments, street names, etc.).

Guy Tillim's wide-ranging body of work is grounded in documentary photography. With his new series, the result of three decades of artistic practice and a continuation of his photographic research in the streets of African metropolises, which started around 2000 (*Jo'burg,* 2004; *Avenue Patrice Lumumba,* 2008; *Libreville,* 2012; *Jo'burg: Points of View,* 2014), he has added a dimension to contemporary international photography that had not existed before in this specific form: a genuinely African type of street photography. We are familiar with photos of life in the townships by outstanding pioneers like David Goldblatt or Santu Mofokeng and many younger African artists who capture eye-catching, snapshot-like scenes of life in the streets and townships. Guy Tillim, however, follows with his new series *Museum of the Revolution* a different path, one that points to the future of the continent.

Tillim's camera does not select, it uses no technical tricks, it does not seek out spectacular or original settings and does not widen the angle or zoom in, but rather it defines the boundaries of the image in the same way as the human field of view: it simply shows us what we can see, in a natural way, if we go there, where people in the major cities of Africa go about their business, organize their everyday lives— and thus their future. We see inside the cities as if we were looking through a multi-sectioned window at street level, just a few feet away from the people out there. The world press prefers to convey the negative aspects of the continent—perhaps one of the most powerful forms of racism today. Guy Tillim shows us the Africa of growing prosperity, economic development, improved infrastructure, increasing educational opportunities—and with it an Africa of hope, confidence and cautious optimism.

"In Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, on the Avenida 24 Julho, there is an institution called the Museum of the Revolution. The avenue was named soon after the establishment of Lourenço Marques as the Portuguese colonial capital. The 24th of July 1875 marked the end of a Luso-British conflict for possession of the territory that was decided in favour of Portugal. One hundred years later the name of the avenue remained the same, but its meaning changed. Mozambique's independence from Portugal was proclaimed in June 1975; the capital was renamed Maputo, and now the 24th of July is Nationalisation Day, celebrating the transfer of ownership of all Portuguese property and buildings to the state. A 13-year civil war followed, ending in 1990; the People's Republic of Mozambique became the Republic of Mozambique and a new economic era began. In the Museum of the Revolution there is a panoramic painting produced by North Korean artists depicting the liberation of the capital from Portuguese colonial rule. It illustrates the rhetoric of a revolution as the leader and followers parade through the streets and avenues, laid out with grandeur by the colonial powers. These streets, named and renamed, function as silent witnesses to the ebb and flow of political, economic and social shifts of power and become a museum of the many revolutions that have taken place in African countries over the past 65 years. These photographs were made on long walks through the streets of African capitals. When I began photographing in the 1980s, these reflected the economic stagnation wrought by socialist policies that usually accompanied African nationalism. They reflect a different reality now, of rebuilding and enterprise, and new sets of aspirations imbued with capitalistic values."[1] (Guy Tillim)

Endnotes

1   *Guy Tillim, Museum of the Revolution,* exh. cat. Stevenson Cape Town 2017, n. p.

Guy Tillim, *Harare,* **diptych,** *Museum of the Revolution* **series, pigment prints, 2016**

Guy Tillim, *Supporters of Jean-Pierre Bemba line the road as he walks to a rally from the airport, Kinshasa, July 2006, Congo Democratic* series, pigment print, 2006

Guy Tillim, *Joseph Kabila election campaign billboard, Kinshasa, July 2006, Congo Democratic* series, pigment print, 2006

Guy Tillim, *A political election meeting takes place in a Kinshasa suburb, and election posters on poles in the street outside the home, July 2006,* diptych, *Congo Democratic* series, pigment prints, 2006

HOW GUY TILLIM WRITES HISTORY DIFFERENTLY

FRIEDERIKE HORSTMANN

Guy Tillim, *A traditional dancer and crowd salute Jean-Pierre Bemba as he walks to a rally from the airport, Kinshasa, July 2006, Congo Democratic* series, pigment print, 2006

If one looks today at the thematic series by the South African photographer Guy Tillim that have been produced since the 1980s, their innovative moment becomes comprehensible, which distinguishes his photographs narratively and aesthetically and sets them apart from the usual photojournalistic style of their time. The artist draws attention to unusual, often overlooked perspectives, rather to the accidental than to the substantive, and refuses to be distinctly positioned.

In his series *Congo Democratic*, Tillim observed the atmosphere ahead of the first free presidential and parliamentary elections in Kinshasa in over 40 years in July 2006. He captures moments on the margins of the events in the capital of the unstable Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has undergone years of bloody clashes with 3.5 million victims—mostly away from official stagings. In restrained subdued hues, the spectrum of shots ranges from ruinous tristesse to political commitment to latent violence. The focus is usually a bit staggered and unhinged: Even in the shots of public meetings or demonstrations, the crowd is often dim, out of focus or shadowed, in profile or back view and the thronged bodies sharply cut at the edge of the image. In its image design, the series is discolored, the light pale, the sky overcast. Tillim's series in subdued green, gray and brown tones creates a kaleidoscope-like overall picture that neither denounces nor heroicizes the often random protagonists.

His photographs instead articulate a mistrust of forms of media staging. The fragile images of reality, witnesses to a transitional moment in history, are aimed at a critical raising of awareness of the observers. In *Congo Democratic*, what the series hides seems almost more remarkable than what it shows. What is striking is the relationship between the title of the work and the photograph: While the often long captions precisely locate the past events with location names and personal names, the photographs refuse such concretion and deliberately subvert the expectations that these meticulous titles trigger. If Tillim is to be presented with an inadmissible visual obscurity here, it seems more appropriate to read his photographs as a gesture that does not want to get hold of the concept, as a gesture that calls into question a conceptual concealment of political facts, instead of preserving something incommensurable in the images—as Renate Wiehager aptly stated in her essay: "Despite the fact that locations and situations are precisely identified, Tillim does not provide us with any photographic findings that can be exploited journalistically. He draws us into a cycle of interpretations and viewpoints, ways of seeing and interpreting, he forces us to be open to connections and references in a way that converts apparent 'weakness' of judgement into the strength of precise and repeated looking."[1]

This multiplication of perspectives makes up the successive history in *Congo Democratic*. Or it

settles as something the photographs carry with them and leave behind. *Congo Democratic* is not a historiography in the traditional sense: not objective, not linear, not stringently arguing, not abstracting. History is told here from its edges, through detours. The series drifts, swings, circles, zigzags. Again and again there are cuts and breaks, between the private and the public, between emptiness and abundance, silence and noise. But something comes together across the cuts, in the breaks we can read the sediments of social crisis. Tillim's serial work does not serve as an attempt to filter out a final motif from a multitude of images. Rather, the recontextualization of the individual image within the series articulates a skepticism or rather a conditionality of one's own cognition—just like Tillim's recurring new exhibition displays of the series.

In 2007, he presented *Congo Democratic* with thumbtacks on the wall at documenta 12. Away from the pinned pigment prints, the series included a six-page ballot with 885 names and tiny photos of the candidates. For Tillim—who in addition to his artistic work has also been working as a reportage photographer for national and international media since 1986—art and journalism do not seem to be mutually exclusive: *Congo Democratic* was not only featured at documenta and the São Paulo Art Biennial, but also in a newspaper in Kinshasa. The title-to-image relationship described above seems to favor this institutional transfer with its different forms of reception and distribution as well as the modes of

commercialization: Tillim's captions serve to convey information in a journalistic context of exploitation, whereas the images—also enlarged in the exhibition context—rather than separating meaning or making a definite breakdown instead produce legends and readings that do not simplify the ambiguities of life into sharply outlined narratives.

Tillim's view, which unobtrusively but emphatically directs our attention, implies and anticipates a confused political situation: 9,707 people stood for 500 seats in parliament, 33 for the office of president. His series links different situations and locations, focusing on three political groups: The photographs of Unified Lumumbist party meetings show gatherings in the atmospherically subdued environment of private apartments, whereas the atmosphere at a rally by the followers of Étienne Tshisekedi is more dramatically charged with a burning car tire. Tshisekedi appealed to his supporters to boycott the election in protest of incumbent Joseph Kabila, as many believed Kabila had manipulated the electoral process with bribery. People danced, sung and shouted at the rallies organized by the advocates of his challenger, Jean-Pierre Bemba. The photograph *Presidential candidate Jean-Pierre Bemba enters a stadium in central Kinshasa flanked by his bodyguards, July 2006* draws attention as Tillim allows our view to get caught up in the vagaries, despite, or better, due to the highly staged political event and thus confronts the gaze with its limits. In the center one can see the bull-necked wide back of the

Guy Tillim, *Presidential candidate Jean-Pierre Bemba enters a stadium in central Kinshasa flanked by his bodyguards, July 2006, Congo Democratic* series, pigment print, 2006

Guy Tillim, *A statue of Patrice Lumumba erected by Laurent Kabila, and an unfinished tower built during the Mobutu years, look down on Jean-Pierre Bemba supporters as they make their way to a rally, Kinshasa, July 2006, Congo Democratic* series, pigment print, 2006

presidential candidate Bemba, flanked by two bodyguards as he enters a stadium. Pictorial strategies of the unrecognizable form the image: the people prominently in the foreground turn their backs to us, their bodies are sharply cut or their gaze is obscured by pilot's sunglasses. The masses of people depicted in the middle and background also appear dimly and remain silhouetted shadow-like figures. Tillim leaves room for associations knowing that he cannot comprehend figuratively what constitutes the hardly understandable political situation.

His series connects peripheral locations, shows unspectacular situations, banal streets barely populated by people, rivulets, rubbish and inconspicuous traces of everyday life: a holey flag blows in the wind in the dreary front yard of a local party headquarters, laundry hangs on a line; a goose drinks from a puddle of a garbage-strewn street beyond a crumbling brick wall. Such a tendency towards more open narrative structures, non-functional details and vacant storylines is characteristic for a photograph evoking a rather realistic mode of reception, thus producing 'reality effects'—to reference Roland Barthes.[2] According to Barthes' hypothesis, the production of this effect is coursed by a special attention to detail, more precisely: the admission of

'useless details' that do not appear in the sense of a narrative context, do not fulfill any function in it, and seem like an interpolation of 'reality.' Accordingly, a seemingly superfluously named object or the incidental gesture does not refer to the content, but rather to the category of reality: The supposedly useless details in Tillim's photographs are not the real thing, but they say: "We are the real thing." For Tillim, it is often an attention to detail and reduction—or even dissolution—of the dramatic structure that enhances the viewer's perceptual and cognitive freedom towards the images, as well as a composition, or rather a detail, that reminds the viewer that the images are something that elude ones gaze, that a photographic offstage exists next to their edges.

Tillim's photographs create an open picture of reality through de-dramatization, an episodic narrative structure, and attention to those things that are out of the frame. They are exemplary pictures of the times in which the unrevealed of a post-colonial history and the ideals of the legendary leader of the Congolese independence movement Patrice Lumumba momentarily flash: Just like a hand to the greeting the arm of a statue of Lumumba is raised over the demonstrators. Lumumba, who went down

in history as the first elected Prime Minister of independent Congo in 1960, spoke at the independence celebration against the Belgian king and denounced oppression, contempt and exploitation by the Belgian colonial power. The Pan-African freedom fighter paid for his appearance with his life a year later—Belgian agents had Lumumba shot. In Tillim's image, the memory of Lumumba and his ideals live on, into an open future.

Endnotes

1   Wiehager, Renate: "Living on the earth and beeing able to see the stars," in: *Guy Tillim. DaimlerChrysler Award for South African Photography 2004,* ed. by the same, exh. cat., Berlin 2004, pp. 10–16, here p. 13.

2   Barthes, Roland: "The Reality Effect," in: same: *The Rustle of Language,* Berkeley/Los Angeles 1989, pp. 141–148.

Clément Cogitore, *Digital Desert #2,* C-print, 2015

Clément Cogitore, *Zodiac,* C-print, 2017

DANCING ON THE VOLCANO KINGDOM RADICALLY UPLIFTED MIGHTY PRAISE
Clément Cogitore

NADINE ISABELLE HENRICH

Clément Cogitore, *Les Indes galantes,* video, 2017

The increased presence of moving pictures in reporting—since the 1980s with video cameras and television and since the 2000s with smartphones in combination with a general societal willingness to livestream on the Internet—has changed the perception and the operating principles of photography, combined with algorithms and image databases, where pictures circulate globally in the most varied contexts. These processes require a new thinking, "which appropriately reacts to complex socio-technical dynamics and practices, that generate and move 'images'."[1] Works such as Clément Cogitore's *Les Indes galantes* can be understood in the context of these media and technical developments of global imagery, which constitute an irresistibly changing visual memory. In this work, documentation and experience coincide as the result of dancers constantly recording with a personal smartphone in 'real time,' while being filmed and observed by others—multiple structures of perspective. An increased democratization of visibility in the virtual world stands in opposition to the still existing societal mechanisms that reserve real locations and institutions of arts from parts of society and thereby systematically separate them.

"Documentaries always build on an organized reality, on a fictionalized reality."[2]
(Clément Cogitore, 2017)

The artistic practice of the French filmmaker, video artist, and photographer Clément Cogitore can be located in the intermediate space between cinema and contemporary art. Cogitore considers fictitiously the traditional differences defining cinematic staging in opposition to a 'true' documentary and acts without those categories. Photography and the moving image hold the potential to question reality, to deconstruct the presumed immutability of current reality, and to create alternative realities that make the "here and now" recognizable as one of multiple versions. The present and especially the future are interpreted as being malleable, as being modifiable. An analytic view of existing and established orders, their artistic and real transformation, are the basis of the *Les Indes galantes* project. In his projects, Cogitore closely works with communities that representatively make phenomena recognizable, thus posing macrosocial questions. Each ones individual concept of reality meets with the group's dynamic, both continue to expand in their meaning. These processes transmit a symbol-like conception for fundamental questions on the dynamics of human coexistence through "a miniature picture of macrosocial phenomena."[3] (Clément Cogitore, 2017)

"In my view *Les Indes galantes* is about young people dancing on top of a volcano. [...] Clearly this explosion is to some degree political."[4]
(Clément Cogitore, 2017)

Les Indes galantes is a contemporary staging of the Baroque opera ballet by the French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau from 1735. Rameau was inspired by the tribal Indian dances that were performed in Paris by Metchigaema chiefs in 1723 and included their rhythms and movements in his composition. The genre of ballet opera goes back to the composer André Campra, whose 'L'Europe galante,' which debuted in 1697, brought love stories from France, Italy, Spain, and Turkey to the stage. Rameau juxtaposed this European emphasis with a Baroque view of forms of galant love in Peru, Persia, and the indigenous North America. His staging was exotic, with opulent garments, astounding the French audience of his time with fantasies of distant lands. These fantasies of 'exotic otherness' in Cogitore's video work, developed from a performance at the Opéra Bastille in Paris, have disappeared.

The dancers interpreting the operatic ballet are young Parisians and dancers from Belgium and Germany. Bodies and dance articulate individual stories, whose narratives achieve a collective meaning. The movements are expressive and have a strong psychological power. The K.R.U.M.P. style of dance does not differentiate between inner, personal experience, individual condition, and outward expression, gestures, and body language. On the contrary, internal emotions come out in the form of freestyle body movements. 'Stomps,' 'chest pops,' 'arm swings' formulate stories that are called 'taunts.' The goal is not a composed choreography for the viewers, rather a state of movement, which allows the inner and the outer to become coherent, which makes positive as well as negative emotions visible, lets them come to the surface. This state, which allows the inner and the outer, the psyche, thoughts, and emotions to become one with gestures, movement, and body, is called 'amped' or 'buck' and makes nonviolent, physical expression of disappointment, frustration, pain, and aggression possible.

K.R.U.M.P. (Kingdom Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise) refers to the Los Angeles Riots, an outbreak of violence on April 29, 1992 that lasted several days in reaction to the acquittal of the policemen who severely beat Rodney King, an African-American taxi driver, during an arrest. South Central Los Angeles was the epicenter of the unrest, which was a reaction to the racist police brutality, and that is where *krumping* arose as a nonviolent form of resistance from the confrontation with racism in its violent, systematic dimension. The dance spread across the US and to Europe and today is an international expression of resistance and a criticism of discrimination and racially motivated violence. In February 2017, violent protests arose, reaching into the center of Paris, caused by the severe mistreatment of a

Clément Cogitore, *Les Indes galantes,* video, 2017

young black Parisian in the suburb Aulnay-sous-Bois during an arrest. Police violence against black citizens has become a global issue and finds its nonviolent resistance in the spread of *krumping*.

"The myth of the underclass is a cultural and political construct which has a distinct historical emergence and development in public discourse. It began to take distinctive shape in the wake of late 1960s representations of 'urban crisis,' which focused on riots, disorder, and decay in African-American urban centers. [...] It is inextricably linked to ideological issues of race and representation,"[5] as Liam Kennedy describes the emergence of the postindustrial ghettos in the US in conjunction with racist narratives. These urban manifestations, which have been described as an 'urban crisis' in the US since the late 1960s, are based on systematic mechanisms of exclusion. Similar structures can also be found in the surrounding area of Paris, the banlieues. The psychological dimensions, individual experiences, and collective dynamics constituting the reality of repression and discrimination by racist structures of contemporary societies form the actual, socio-critical context, in which *Les Indes galantes* can be read.

Les Indes galantes thematizes Eurocentric history and its mechanisms of cultural appropriation, thus negotiating questions about new concepts of national identity and about contemporary narratives for a multicultural French society. This society,

grown over centuries, forms itself as a conglomerate of many cultural influences, but, nevertheless, is still permeated by hierarchies of racist structures generating diametrically opposed everyday realities within a city. By opening the elite location of the Opéra Bastille for the first time to K.R.U.M.P dancers, who were normally shut out of spaces of priviledge, *Les Indes galantes* carries out a symbolic takeover. The dancers develop their own individual and simultaneous collective interpretation of this Baroque operatic ballet. They disrupt the barreers of visibility by at the same time entering the stage, filming each other with their smartphones and beeing recorded by the video camera. The work creates an artistic synthesis, a point of contact, of parallel societal realities and their 'stages' in media. *Les Indes galantes* establishes "artistic practice as a co-designer, as an actor in the concert of reality,"[6] in that it recognizes societal mechanisms, intervenes in existing orders, and organizes them according to new principles to evoke a different present and with it a different future.

"This dance is a chance because it is part of the violence that we create and it is a good way to understand it by freeing ourselves from speech. The only dance worth dancing."[7] (Heddy Maalem, 2012)

Endnotes

1   Holert, Tom: *Regieren im Bildraum* [Ruling in the Image Space], Berlin 2008, p. 16.

2   Clément Cogitore, Interview about *Braguino*, 2017, http://www.arte.tv/de/videos/077193-006-A/clement-cogitore/

3   Ibid.

4   Clément Cogitore, Interview about *Les Indes galantes*, 2017, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMv4EyS08_g

5   Kennedy, Liam: "Representations of the Underclass: Race, Poverty and the Postindustrial Ghetto," in: The Ghent Urban Studies Team (ed.): *The Urban Condition: Space, Community and Self in the Contemporary Metropolis*, Rotterdam 1999, pp. 266–299, here: p. 267.

6   Lang, Johannes: "Drei Wirklichkeitsbezüge künstlerischer Praxis" [Three References to Reality in Artistic Practice], in: Lotte Everts/Johannes Lang/Michael Lüthy/Bernhard Schieder (ed.): *Kunst und Wirklichkeit heute. Affirmation – Kritik – Transformation* [Art and Reality Today. Affirmation – Critique – Transformation] Bielefeld 2015, pp. 7–15, here: p. 13.

7   Heddy Maalem, choreographer of 'Éloge du puissant royaume,' cit. in, same: "Je parle KRUMP," in: *Africultures*, No. 99–100, May 2012, p. 249.

JUXTAPOSING OUTER AND INNER SPACES

Mustafah Abdulaziz, Alia Farid, Cao Fei

NADINE ISABELLE HENRICH

Mustafah Abdulaziz, *Construction of bridge over Ganges tributary. Bihar Province, India,* Inkjet-print, 2013

How is our everyday environment shaped by a reality marked by global power structures at all levels? How can the impact of these complex global contingencies be made visible? Do the spaces in which we work, the cities and landscapes in which we move relate to the desires and needs of the individual? Conversely, how does our action change our immediate environment, but also in particular: how does it affect places that are far from our physical spaces of movement? These are some of the questions inspired by the exploration of the works of Mustafah Abdulaziz, Alia Farid and Cao Fei.

The *Water* series—Mustafah Abdulaziz

In 2012, Mustafah Abdulaziz started the ongoing long-term project *Water*, which deals with the changes in global landscapes caused by the dramatically dwindling element of water and the resulting deprivation of resources for humans and nature. For the photographer the starting point to deal with anthropogenic landscapes as a result of climatic changes was the confrontation with a United Nations (UN) statistic, which predicted that 3.4 billion people would be affected by a lack of water by 2025. The series is thus conceived as a holistic form of photographic typology of a natural resource in crisis and envisages making people around the world aware of the existential significance of the element of water and inspiring them to understand global contexts.

Structured into chapters, the project reflects our complex relationship with water, how we use and abuse it, in order to understand our participation in one of the greatest global challenges of our time. In doing so, he focuses on landscape transformation processes and their visual manifestations, as well as on the elementary and multilayered interconnectedness of mankind to this most important basic element. Water as a life-sustaining resource, as a basis for nature, animals and humans, as well as its levels of meaning in spiritual, religious and social contexts are tangible in Abdulaziz's documentary and epic images. The aesthetics of his photographs, which often show broad landscapes with relatively small people, invite you to let your eyes wander through these miniatures and to grasp their details as well as their compositional entirety.

Mustafah Abdulaziz, *Sand ships. Dongting Lake. Hunan Province, China,* Inkjet-print, 2015

Aesthetic experience and dimensions of content prove to be dissonant here. The dissonant moment related to the aesthetic appearance and the existential theme occurs where the viewer's attention is attracted by the visual beauty of the large color photographs and, in the immediate handling, is also confronted with the contradictions and complexities of our reality. It is not the visual appearance of the photo that scares us, but becoming aware that the photographic recording of the appearance of a place often does not allow us to recognize the causalities that characterize it, but rather veils it aesthetically. Abdulaziz's photographs combine the concepts of document, criticism and aesthetics.

Mustafah Abdulaziz, *Drought conditions, 12% full, Cantareira Reservoir. São Paulo, Brazil,* Inkjet-print, 2015

Alia Farid, *Ma'arad Trablous,* video, 2016

Cao Fei, *My future is not a dream,* C-prints, 2006

By intensively grappling with a globally present topic, we, as viewers, are directly put into relation with all those places and people and are provoked to think about questions of global responsibility.

Experiential spaces of sculptural architecture Alia Farid

In her video work *Ma'arad Trablous* [The Exhibition of Tripoli], 2016, the Kuwaiti artist Alia Farid creates a poetic seeming stroll through bizarre monumental terrain. The places the protagonist passes through resemble a brutal sculpture park of enormous proportions. Farid works with performative elements and new media in a hybrid field between art and architecture to enhance critical thinking regarding the experience of urban spaces. The video *Ma'arad Trablous*, created at the invitation of the São Paulo Art Biennial, deals with the historically divergent developments of two similarly planned projects of the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer: the Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo, which he designed in part, and the exhibition center Rashid Karami International Fair in Lebanon's Tripoli. The construction of this exhibition center was interrupted in 1975 due to financial problems and the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, which lasted until 1990. In their permanent condition as ruins, these structures housed ammunition, militia and refugees and are today used for concerts and as recreational areas.[1] Farid's work deals with the adaptation, translation and use of architectural concepts for different geographic regions. She surveys the function

of these constructions in different cultural, social and political circumstances and the transformation processes of their use. A crucial content and quality aspect of the video *Ma'arad Trablous* is that the female protagonist mastering the escalating architectures, seeks to give the sheer scalelessness of the buildings planned and erected by men, a human, an individual: a female signature and interpretation.

My future is not a dream—Cao Fei

At the invitation of the Siemens Arts Program, Cao Fei spent several months in a Foshan-based factory where OSRAM produces light bulbs for the global market. This is where the staged portrayal series *My future is not a dream* was created in 2006. The photographs show the workers dancing to music they chose, dressed in costumes and moving through the factory, posing as a music band, or staying immobile at their work station while the production process continues around them. We see images of people trying to find themselves in a rationalized, anonymous environment characterized by technology. The photographs reveal the dissonances between individuality and conformity, dreams and desires in contrast with the real conditions that constitute the reality of a factory worker. The anonymizing functionality and industrial systematics of the working environment form the critical counterpoint to the creativity and personal expression of the individual.

Already in her work *COSplayers*, 2004, the artist dealt with the tense contrast between imaginary worlds and reality, as it manifests itself in the enthusiasm for the act of dressing up with elaborate, imaginative costumes. Like *My future is not a dream*, *COSplayers* contrasts intimate inner worlds, which are shaped by dreams, fantasies and desires, with everyday life, creating surreal appearing situations. The works of Cao Fei describe with the words of curator Hou Hanru Generation Y's 'politics of intimacy,' a generation that experiences the consequences of globalization and whose identity is deeply influenced by these recent transformations. *My Future is not a dream* questions the role of

Cao Fei, *COSplayers,* 2004

the individual in a system of compliant multiplicity and explores reality as a complex meshwork of real circumstances and the imaginations and dreams of inner worlds of thought, juxtaposes self-perception with the outside view and makes evident the incompatibility of market-based premises with the wishes of the individual for expression and visibility.[2]

Endnotes

1   See http://www.32bienal.org.br/en/participants/o/2620

2   For a comprehensive study on the work of Cao Fei see the artists monograph of the Daimler Art Collection: Renate Wiehager / Christian Ganzenberg / The Pavillion Bejing (ed.), Cao Fei, *I watch that world pass by,* Cologne 2015.

MOMENTS OF CONTACT—BODY, SOCIETY AND HISTORY

Berni Searle, Viviane Sassen

NADINE ISABELLE HENRICH

Berni Searle, *Snow White,* video, 2001

"I am the place in which something has occurred." (Claude Lévi-Strauss)

In April 2018, Susan Goldberg, editor-in-chief of the well-known magazine 'National Geographic,' published an issue on the topic of 'race.' In her foreword, for the first time since the magazine's founding in 1888, she formulates self-critical reflections about and confessions concerning racist narratives, both, in images and in content. Goldberg begins by referring to her own role as the first woman and first Jewish person to head the magazine and describes herself as "a member of two groups that also once experienced discrimination here."[1] She discusses photographic reports that consist of an "us-and-them dichotomy between 'the civilized' and 'the uncivilized',"[2] repeated over many decades and anchored in the collective image memory of the readers. The artist Ngendo Mukii responded to Goldberg's strivings regarding a first reflection and critique of the racist performance of the reports in the magazine with her article 'National Geographic's Photography Erased People. It's Too Late For An Apology.'[3] She describes the irreversible societal, political, and economic effects of a photographically propagated image of 'Africans' as "precious things to collect, or the monster 'other' to fear." Methods of representation that, in the words of Mukii, "affected the way that we Africans look at ourselves," thus fundamentally transforming and systematically modulating self-perception. 'Race' is a social construct, to

whose implementation photography made a fundamental contribution. Power-generating strategies such as racism and discrimination therefore have a highly problematic connection to the photographic image—a very current situation that demands awareness, questioning, and a fundamental change in photographic and media methods of representation.

Snow White—Berni Searle

The work *Snow White*, 2001, conceived as a double projection by Berni Searle, marks the first video piece done by the artist, who received her Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from the University of Cape Town in 1992. Early on, she used her own body as material for her pieces, which she examined in light of the highly complex and problematic dimensions of the categories of physical constitution in reference to societal, political, and economic mechanisms. She uses processes of transformation as a starting point to question 'physical characteristics,' such as skin color and gender, which are instrumentalized for racist and discriminative narratives. Her works can be read in the context of artists such as Penny Siopis, Marlene Dumas, and Zanele Muholi in terms of feminist and social-critical considerations of the history and present of discriminatory structures in South Africa.

Searle confronts the constitutional promise to protect against discrimination and the right of equality before the law with the reality of the black,
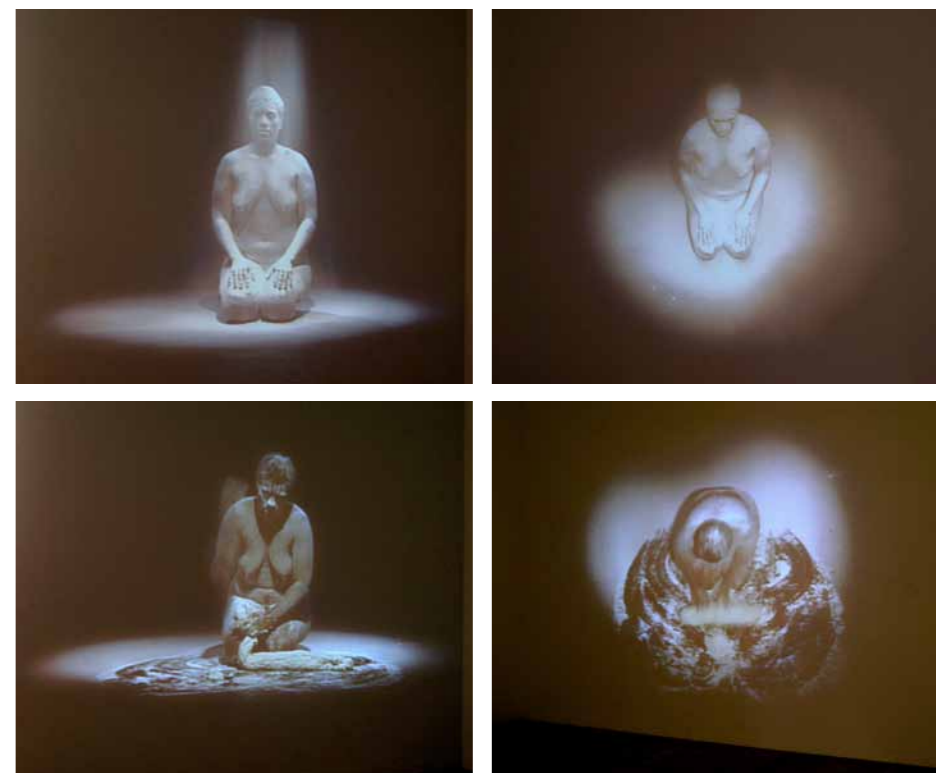
female body, which is still defined by various forms of violence and suppression.[4] She subjects identity to essential artistic inquiry by transforming the appearance of her own body in the light of colonial categories, which still exist in post-apartheid South African society. The video piece *Snow White* is the first filmic continuation of Searle's previous photographic self-portraits, like her series *Color Me*, 1998, and *Not Quite White*, 2000. The novel quality of *Snow White* unfolds in the visual transformation of the body of the artist, a process which is experienced even more vividly in the moving picture than in the photographic self-portrait. The double projection, which spatially situates the recipient between the two projection surfaces, creates a situation of simultaneous intimate and sensual versus oppressive perception.

The title *Snow White* obviously refers to the popular fairytale of Snow White but can also refer to Marlene Dumas' painting *Snow White and the Broken Arm*, 1988, which should then in turn be positioned

with respect to the painting *Elegy to Steve Biko* [5], 1981, by the South African painter Paul Stopforth. *Elegy to Steve Biko* is a posthumous portrait of the South African Black Consciousness activist Stephen Bantu Biko (1946–1977). Executed in graphite powder carefully polished in layers of Cobra floor wax, the image is carved out in innumerable,' hairthin cuts from its ground.[6] Marlene Dumas chose the same composition of the reclining portrait for her *Snow White and the Broken Arm*, 1988, which thematically and regarding the work title relates to Berni Searle's. Dumas' painting gives form to considerations about her actual physical constitu-

Paul Stopforth, *Elegy,* 1981

tion as a South African woman with white skin in relation to questions about the political, societal, and economic dimensions of this physical makeup: "The fact that I realized that because I was white in South Africa I was one of the oppressors greatly confused me. I personally don't see myself as a real oppressor, but I am a part of the oppression nevertheless [...] It can never really be resolved."[7] Dumas' confrontation with the complexities of a historically and societally determined identity that is

Marlene Dumas, *Snow White and the Broken Arm*, 1988

not consistent with her own values and convictions creates the tension that can be found in the auto-biographical *Snow White and the Broken Arm*. The image shows a naked white woman lying on a white bench observed by a series of white male figures that seem to reflect the observers of the painting in the act of watching. On the woman's shoulder, the white skin of her body peels back to reveal a view of darker skin. Skin color as a societal garment in its complexity can be understood as a social construct and political instrument.

This implied transformation inherent in the image, in reverse takes place in Searle's *Snow White*, 2001, as a ritual process of 'whitening' by a slow sprinkling of flour and later water. The naked artist can be seen once from the front and once from above. White flour continuously falls on her and covers her black skin with a light layer of powder. A visual transformation from black to white takes place until finally water follows the flour and the bone dry powder is transformed into a thick mass that the artist slowly begins to form into a loaf of bread. In all of its metaphorical meanings the work can be read in different contexts. Along with the racial themes of apartheid, there is an echo of the creation myth in the kneading and forming act of movement. But also the patriarchal location of the woman in the kitchen, which has already been parodied from a feminist perspective in video works like

Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975, the colonial enslavement of black South African women as housekeepers and cooks, and the continuing existence of these discriminating structures in the present all create a reference space for Searle's work.

The transformation of the naked female body by the layer of flour creates not only a change of color, but also of physical modulation by covering and deforming the 'female' physical characteristics. Skin color and gender are transformed to the same extent and evade assignment and categorization. Conscious androgyny, which rejects traditional gender categories, is often present in Searle's works. Her photographic self-portraits and video pieces deconstruct stereotypical traditions of representation. The image of the woman as a sexualized, mute object, especially in commercial photography, indicates parallels in the staging of black people as 'sub-human' and their photographic construction as a fundamental 'other,' which can be seen, as mentioned in the beginning, in the current discussion on the racist photographic narratives of the 'National Geographic.' Today, black women in particular are still affected by the connection between racist and sexist methods of representation. A growing awareness of the corresponding problems seems to develop in current discourses. However, the far-reaching aftermath of these classifications on "science, politics, and the global distribution of wealth"[8] determine the actual reality. As a consequence, they demand to be actively reflected upon, revised, and transformed into new kinds of images.

Pikin Slee and *Etan & Me*—Viviane Sassen

"Form is irrelevant, I utter.
The sentence leaves my mouth as something I cannot swallow.
We see a room trembling
with particles forming irregularities
that would only lead to other questions."[9]
(Maria Barnas)

The works of Viviane Sassen constitute how an aesthetic that is borrowed from commercial contexts can be formulated visually and content-wise in a completely different way. The Dutch photographer

Viviane Sassen, *Cyanos, Glyco, Coco, Pinkin Slee* series, C-prints, 2013

works at the interface of fashion photography and contemporary art, creating complex, highly aesthetic imagery that formulate a modern poetics of everyday life between staging and documentation, abstraction and figuration. In the series *Pikin Slee,* 2014, portraits and still lifes create a contemporary pictoriality of life in nature in some nearly abstract, clearly composed images with contrasting plays of light and shadow as well as bright colors. The photographic strategies of suggesting exclusivity, which come from the context of fashion, characterize Sassen's photographic language, which artistically interprets a still life of plastic containers with the same attentiveness as a portrait.

The village Pikin Slee, located on the upper Suriname River in the rain forest of the Republic of Suriname in South America, is where the series of the same name was created in 2014. The inhabitants of the village belong primarily to the Saamaka tribe, descendants of the 'maroons,' people of various African backgrounds that fled enslavement as plantation workers by the Dutch colonial masters. The term 'maroon' comes from the problematic Spanish word 'cimarrón,' a term for runaway pets, that was also used for slaves who had run away. This critical, historical point of contact between the artist's country of birth and the inhabitants of Pikin Slee, who could converse in Dutch as a result of

that history, forms the historical reference space of this series of images.

In addition, Sassen refers to their common relationship with the African continent, which she shares with the people of this village. The artist spent her early childhood in Kenya, her two brothers were born there, and her early childhood memories begin with impressions of Kenya. Viviane Sassen describes her thoughts to the reference points that connected her to the villagers as "the notion of the strange lines of faith which tied together my own history and theirs, in the form of a mutual connection to Africa and the Netherlands."[10] The series takes a look at a living situation that unifies closeness to nature and the omnipresence of industrial objects and creates a poetics of everyday life in a synthesis of past and present. *Pikin Slee* creates a very contemporary aesthetic, which is at the same time timelessly sovereign beyond the cliché of the 'other.'

"Are we ever able to truly know someone, to truly know ourselves? And if I look at myself, can I ever get a clear view of who I am?"[11] (Viviane Sassen)

The confrontations with connotations and historical references of perspective can be found again in Sassen's series of (abstract) (self)portraits, which is entitled *Etan & Me*, 2013. Viviane Sassen uses

Viviane Sassen, *Etan / eboy 16:00; Untitled / me #1,*
Etan and Me **series, C-prints, 2013**

Pieter Hugo, *Portrait #30, South Africa,* **C-print, 2016**

silver foil for the metaphor of blurred surfaces; her
face appears while disappearing, like the face of
Narcissus observing himself in the rippling surface
of the water. In the photo series *Etan & Me,* skin
color becomes a reflective surface for questions
of self-perception and the perception of others.
The interaction with transformation and abstraction
of the reflected image also asks the question how
'a clear image' of someone or of oneself could even
be defined.

Endnotes

1   Goldberg, Susan: "For Decades, Our Coverage Was Racist. To
    Rise Above Our Past We Must Acknowledge It," in: *National
    Geographic*, No. 4/2018.

2   John Edwin Mason, Professor at the University of Virginia for
    African History and the History of Photography, looks at the
    archives of the 'National Geographic' regarding racist points
    of view, cit.: Goldberg, Susan: "For Decades, Our Coverage
    Was Racist. To Rise Above Our Past We Must Acknowledge It,"
    in: *National Geographic*, No. 4/2018.

3   Mukii, Ngendo: "National Geographic's Photography Erased
    People. It's Too Late For An Apology," in: *Bright Magazine*,
    28.03.2018.

4   Cf. presentation 'Three South African Artists, Three Aspects of
    South African Feminism' by Pamela Allara at the Elizabeth A.
    Sackler Center for Feminist Art on January 26, 2014, https://
    www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/video/videos/three-south-
    african-artists-three-aspects-of-south-african-feminism

5   Paul Stopforth (*1946), *Elegy*, 1980, graphite and wax on
    paper on board: 149 × 240 cm. Courtesy of Durban Art Gallery.

6   Cf. Smith, Kathryn: "Under the Influence of … Paul Stopforth's
    Biko painting called 'Elegy'," in: *The Conversation*, August 17,
    2016, https://theconversation.com/under-the-influence-of-
    paul-stopforths-biko-painting-called-elegy-64031

7   Dumas in an interview with Anna Tilroe (1985) cit. in Bosma,
    Marja: "Marlene Dumas: Talking to Strangers," in: *Dutch
    Heights*, No. 3 (September 1990), p. 14.

8   Mukii, Ngendo: "National Geographic's Photography Erased
    People. It's Too Late For An Apology," in: *Bright Magazine*,
    March 28, 2018.

9   Fragment from Maria Barnas' 'Botch,' 2015, in: *Umbra. Viviane
    Sassen*, Munich/London/New York 2015, n. p.

10 Pikin Slee. Viviane Sassen, Munich/London/New York 2014,
    n. p.

11 *Fotografie: International. Video, Mixed Media,* Daimler Art Col-
    lection, Berlin/Stuttgart 2015, p. 328.

Pieter Hugo, *Portrait #12, Rwanda,* **C-print, 2015**

REGARDING THE CRITICAL POTENTIAL OF AMBIGUITY

Pieter Hugo, Richard Mosse, Sigalit Landau, Sharif Waked

NADINE ISABELLE HENRICH

Pieter Hugo, *Mallam Galadima Ahmadu with Jamis and Mallam Mantari Lamal with Mainasara, Nigeria, Hyena Men* series, Inkjet print, 2005

Pieter Hugo, *Mallam Umaru Ahmadu with Amita, Nigeria, Hyena Men* series, Inkjet print, 2005

The strategies used to artistically question the topics of political, societal, and economic conflicts and their individual and collective dimensions are constantly changing. In the context of the emergence of 'Late Photography' at the beginning of the 2000s and the increased migration of documentary photography from the original photojournalistic context to the institutional exhibition spaces of contemporary museums and galleries brought up new questions about the medium: "What should we do with this kind of ambivalence? Does it have any kind of critical potential? Can such a lack of conclusions create any hope for resistance or political change?"[1] The New York Photography Festival in 2012 carried the significant title 'The Razor's Edge: Between Documentary and Fine Art Photography,' which Glenn Ruga, the curator and founder of the Social Documentary Forum, chose pointedly. In the 2000s with photographers such as Guy Tillim, Pieter Hugo, and Richard Mosse, a new kind of openness and freedom arose in dealing with photography that is critically documentary and politically engaged. This corresponds to a confrontation with the methods of representation of the photographic medium and its history that is deeper and qualified in a new way.

To what extent can turning away from the traditional image narratives of photojournalistic iconography of conflict stimulate a re-sensitization and critical-intellectual activation of the observers in the next step? How can new thought processes, associations, reflections, questions, and revisions of established

narratives be evoked by opening ambivalent gaps for interpretation? The discussions around the expectations—and reception—of media images that deal with war, violent conflicts, and the resulting suffering have most recently been increasingly carried out in the context of VR (virtual reality). In this context, Susan Sontag's text 'Regarding the Pain of Others' (2003) acquires new urgency. In particular, Sontag's problematization of empathy and sympathy as "an impertinent—if not an inappropriate—response," which emphasizes our "innocence and impotence," can be read in a new way regarding the context of the current discourses on a criticism of empathy in psychology.[2] Paul Bloom, Professor of Psychology & Cognitive Science at Yale University, emphasizes self-referentiality, which conditions empathy and which must be associated with otherness as the construction of a division between 'us' and the 'other' in photography. "Empathy is biased; we are more prone to feel empathy […] for those who look like us or share our ethnic or national background. Empathy is narrow, […] insensitive to numerical differences and statistical data."[3]

Politics of space, location, and landscape

The last section of the 'Evoking Reality' exhibition is dedicated to positions that can be put in relation to each other regarding their implicit method of displaying, their openness, and the ambiguity of their message. It is not only the topic of individual and collective conflicts that unifies the works, but also in particular their complex, but indirect or even

dissonant relation of form and content. The latter initiates a process of critical awareness about the filters of one's own perception of still and moving images, which opens up the inquiry of one's own cultural and media imprints of their view. The dissonances between the appearance and the dimension of the content insofar unfold as critical potential, as it questions our handling of photography and video, sets ambivalence in opposition to the constructed belief in the unambiguous message of the image, and reveals our reality as a conglomerate of (navigable) perception processes. In the activation of the recipients, addressed by initial moments of irritation (dissonance), uncertainty of references to meaning (ambivalence), and the resulting questions (openness), criticism unfolds as an evocative process.

Dissonant connections—Pieter Hugo

In the portrait series of South African photographer Pieter Hugo, reality is portrayed in images that often seem 'surreal.' How can a living situation, spanned between the past and present of a location be represented in interaction with the individuality and expectations of a person towards the future? The landscape, natural or human-designed, that surrounds the subjects in the large-format portraits that Hugo took in Nigeria in 2005, in Ghana in 2010, in Rwanda in 2015, and in his country of birth South Africa in 2016, create a visual unity of person and environment that are interdependent. His excerpt-like focus on landscape brings with it a multitude of connotations and problematics. In his portraits,

Hugo directs the relationship of the individual, landscape, and remembrance and creates images that stimulate reflections on the idea of a traumatized landscape where narrations, personal and historical equally, have been written into. We perceive an intensive, though still dissonant relationship between people and environment: the adolescents are encompassed by the surrounding section of landscape and the beauty of the photographic observation appears deceptive. Pieter Hugo subliminally refers to historical events, as the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi, as well as to contemporary invisible global power structures and makes his motif readable in a complex present, which is characterized by the impact of multinationals, a 'non-localizable empire.'[4]

Like Richard Mosse, Pieter Hugo works with still and moving images, uses film recordings to make the situation of shooting photographs visible as a human encounter with specific mechanisms and dynamics. This interaction of staged portrait and filmed situation of genesis, which reveals the process of interaction between the photographer and the portrait subject, questions the presumably established power implications of the isolated photographic image. The photograph expresses an inherent tension that points to a visual symbiosis of suffering and strength. The possibly painful, problematic facts that determine the life circumstances of the portrayed subject (based on the observer's assumptions), seem to be erased in the moment of photography but stay suggestively present.

The teenagers show themselves to the photographer in strong, confident poses, with a clear, direct gaze. They are not photographed without their knowledge but are actively involved in the creation process of the image. Body language and gestures counteract the representation conventions of suffering, establishing an exchange engaged at eye level.

The video work *Permanent Error,* 2010, and the associated series of photographs, which includes the large-format, horizontally laid-out photograph *Untitled, Agbogbloshie Market, Accra, Ghana*, 2010, show people whose environment is shaped by the electronic trash of the technologized throw-away cultures of Europe. "About 80% of the electronic waste in Europe is sent abroad. This is called 'externalization of costs',"[5] as Hugo describes the economic phenomenon that has created a visually surreal, in fact highly poisonous landscape, where dark smoke accompanies the process of burning cables and devices. With the clouds of smoke and the low perspective, we, as observers, are confronted with a scene stretching out seemingly endlessly, which reminds us of war photographs, how they are inscribed into our collective memory.

The stripped metals are recirculated back to Europe by intermediaries. The resulting toxic landscape, consisting of meter-thick layers of burned rubber, plastic, and electronic waste, shows a location, whose foreign materials destroy the natural world with astounding speed as a consequence of global capitalistic mechanisms, and which has profoundly transformed the local situation negatively for the people. "I saw the waste depot for the first time in a photo in 'National Geographic'. The fact that photos move me to make my own photos is a common thread throughout my work,"[6] recalls Hugo. Photography as a referential, visual practice, which always refers to already existing images explicitly or implicitly, is a central aspect of Pieter Hugo's photographic practice.

The problematics in the context of racist practices of colonial photography and their continuity in photojournalistic reporting, as already critically illuminated by Susan Sontag, are invariably present when considering the photographs taken by white, male photographers of black people. Hugo's method of working, which combines film and photographic methods as in the project *Permanent Error*, consciously aims to reveal the genesis of the photograph inherent in the work, to thematize the staging process with the audible instructions of the photographer, and at the same time to reveal the hierarchies of the photographic gaze. The thematization of the creation situation and the exchange between the photographer and the subject of the portrait can be understood as a self-reflective approach, aiming for a consious act of deconstructing the highly problematic photographic traditions and hierarchies determining the visual history of the representation of the African continent.

Pieter Hugo deals with how our perception of reality in and through the medium of photography transforms continuously: "I noticed that the images of the first Iraq invasion changed our view of the world. Before that, I associated infrared photography and nature photography, with leopards that were disturbed at night when they were eating. Now I think of war and conflict."[7] The implications of the medium itself also provide the starting point for Richard Mosse and his decision to use infrared as a film to critically reflect our perception mechanisms as well as to understand (in)visibility as a manipulative instrument.

Landscapes of conflict and the politics of visibility—Richard Mosse

The Irishman Richard Mosse, who describes himself as a "conceptual documentary photographer," had been following the conflicts in Iraq and Gaza when the camera film producer Kodak announced in December 2009 they were going to stop the production of Kodak Aerochome Infrared Color Film after more

Richard Mosse, *Lost Fun Zone, Infra* series, C-print, 2012

Richard Mosse, *Stalemate, Infra* series, C-print, 2011

Richard Mosse, *Nyabiondo, Infra* series, C-print, 2011

than 60 years. Mosse took this end of a technical era of film as the impetus to expose his own photographic practice to a fundamental change and to make use of this surveillance technology developed by the United States military in the 1940s. Kodak Aerochrome III Infrared Film 1443 is sensitive beyond 730 nm, into the invisible near-infrared spectrum. Infrared, a spectrum that remains hidden from the human eye forms an invisible component of reality. As a consequence, inherent in this technical medium are questions about how human perception is partially constituted and how the visible is always opposed to the imperceptible. In spite of its extension of the light spectrum visible to humans, photography per se is conceived as a fragment and can be read as a pattern of selective perception, as it always hides the view more than it reveals.

Aerochrome infrared film instrumentalizes the photographic extension of the human eye for the military context, including the observation of regions whose dense vegetation obscured the view during attack. Similar to the defoliant Agent Orange, which was used for the first time by the American military in January 1965 during the Vietnam War, infrared photography made visible what was hidden by plants, e.g. an opponent in the underbrush or strategically important targets. Concealment strategies such as camouflage clothing are made visible by infrared by differentiating the pink-colored chlorophyll of the plants from the fabric of the uniforms. The manufacturer Kodak

described the film's areas of use as follows: "False-color reversal film, high dimensional stability for vegetation surveys, camouflage detection and reach resources."

Conceptually repurposing the military intention of the medium is the elementary condition in the considerations of Richard Mosse, who takes the medium itself as the starting point in his works and investigates the implications, contexts, and areas of use. The artistic concept of transforming a medium in form as well as in content, of using it not as intended and still using its original functional context as reference space (making visible that which is hidden) was first developed by Mosse in *Infra*, and he continued this media-specific conceptual method in *Heatmaps* and *The Incoming*. His series, in which he works with military imaging technology, raise questions about the visuality of war. What is the relationship of distorted images and nearly abstract human forms of appearance in surveillance and heat cameras to the decision-making processes of those who use these imaging technologies in a military context?

Mosse carries out this conversion of Western military imaging technology to confront the viewers with the reality of an exploited, destabilized country marked by decades of violence, which is the venue of geopolitical interests. The photographs of the *Infra* series were created in Ituri and in various provinces in North and South Kivu in the east of

the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The current situation of the people in the region is marked by poverty and recurring violence in spite of the wealth of natural resources, including gold, diamonds, platinum, and coltan.

To understand the contemporary reality of East Congo, it is fundamental to have a view of the past and a recognition of the historical continuities that cause the instability, corruption, and formation of over 30 rebel groups today. Being the product of a centuries overarching history of exploitation, oppression, and violence by once colonial and now neocolonial structures enriching themselves on the enormous resources of the country, reveals the relationship between the potentiality and wealth of raw materials and the miserable reality the population is in fact confronted with. Congo's complex, highly problematic relationship to Europe and the USA from colonial times to the present forms the topic of research of Adam Hochschildt, who is an American historian and author. In 'King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa,' published in 1998, he estimates the death toll of the colonial era at around 10 million people.[8] In 2012, Richard Mosse invited Hochschild to write the essay for the first publication of the *Infra* series and purposefully contextualized the photographs against the background of history.[9]

Past and present, determined by targeted influence, exploitation, and asymmetrical trade relationships of the West with the 'faraway' Democratic Republic of the Congo, are in an especially tense relationship with the functions, possibilities, and instrumentalization of photography for the construction of 'images of reality.' What image of colonial Congo does photography depict? How has the appearance of the region in the photographic images developed over the centuries until today? The crimes against humanity dictated by Belgian King Leopold II between 1865 and 1909 were spread around Europe by photographs of the victims of penal proceedings

taken by missionaries and were used to criticize Leopold II. This early form of visualization of crime and suffering, for an audience far away from the event, is important when dealing with the reception of Congo in the Western perception. Even today, the photographically mediated image of the region still consists primarily of starving, suffering children, mistreated women, dead bodies, and violent acts.

With the absence of the green tones of nature and their transformation into variations of pink, Mosse presents a contrary visual vocabulary, which is not loaded with the predetermined indications and associations of violence. Rather it opens up a completely different spectrum of meaning: pink as the embodiment of stereotypical girlishness; carefree security on the one hand, and sexuality, consumption, and pop culture on the other. As a consequence, content and aesthetic form contradict each other dramatically in the images. Their counteracting spaces of association and meaning generate a tension that brings the observers to stare into these dissonant imagery of the conflict. In regard to their size and epic photographic composition, these landscapes suggest the concept of the 'surreal,' although as Sontag already noted in 2003 in light of the photographs of Ground Zero, this "hectic euphemism" of course hides nothing other than "the disgraced notion of beauty."[10] The landscape of East Congo, in its highly aestheticized, bright pink appearance, reveals itself with its aesthetic even more vividly as a location of painful reality permeated by violence, which is still linked to the West, whose military once developed infrared photography in a highly problematic way by neocolonial structures.

Structures of separation
"Everywhere, individuals are under house arrest, travel is strictly controlled, and paths of migration are under police surveillance, while merchandise freely circulates in a hyperspace smoothed by the globalized economy."[11] (Nicolas Bourriaud)

Sigalit Landau, *Mermaids [Erasing the Border of Azkelon],* **video, 2011**

Sharif Waked, *Chic Point,* **video, 2003**

The video pieces by Israeli Sigalit Landau and Palestinian Sharif Waked, who end the tour of the exhibition 'Evoking Reality,' deal with the body as the starting point for the artistic inquiry of a reality, shaped by violent resettlement carried out by separation and displacement.

The thematic center of both works is the conflict in the Middle East that has hit the Palestine region, and especially the Gaza Strip, with eight wars, and the many violent conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, that severely affect the living situation of the people in the region and continue until today.

The starting point of the critical observation is Israel's political control in particular, which is based on the extension of an infrastructure of systematic surveillance and border security.

Erasing borders—Sigalit Landau

The video work *Mermaids [Erasing the Border of Azkelon]*, 2011, takes reference points such as myth, history, politics, body, and topography. The setting of the video is the beach between Aza (Gaza) and the Israeli city of Ashkelon. 'Azkelon' is a neologism formed from the two cities, which are connected by a beach they have in common, but separated by a border. The relationship of landscape and the borders drawn are experienced by the actors in Landau's work bodily, at the same time as they are made tangible in their arbitrariness and absurdity. From the camera's bird's eye view, we, the observers, see three women running out of the water onto the beach and falling in the sand. Arms and legs

reach out, stretch, and crawl on all fours back into the sea. The women cannot stand up to the rhythmic, roaring waves, like an invisible force. The tracks they inscribe in the sand are erased by the next wave—a process of drawing and disappearing that does not want to end. The bird's eye view, which is reminiscent of surveillance by drones and topographical photography, emphasizes the reference to the presence of border lines. The place 'Azkelon,' like the mermaids, comes from the world of fairy tales and imagination. Body, place, and action come together to form a metaphor for the political conditions that determine the experience of the individual in this region and its divided society, which has been affected by profound conflicts for decades.

In the clothing of systematic surveillance Sharif Waked

In his video piece *Chic Point*, 2003, Sharif Waked presents outfits for smooth transitions at a checkpoint, as they define everyday life in the Gaza Strip and Israel. The elegant designs, presented by male models in runway mode with electronic music, leave unusual body parts uncovered, have openings for procedures, or are equipped with functions that allow the stomach to be exposed easily. It is fashion that is appropriate for the processes of exposure and frisking, which accompany the checks, and makes tangible a reality defined by practices of systematic surveillance. With the black humor that speaks from *Chic Point*, Waked resists the dynamics of intimidation and insecurity. The absurdity of the

daily confrontation with mechanisms of control and the omnipresence of state power is given a form of expression capable of speaking to people from the most diverse contexts. The video reveals the psychological dimension of forced exposure during security checks as a systematically repressive and disconcerting practice. In the designs, the reality of the conflict in the Middle East is manifested in the ordinariness of the unbearable.

Endnotes

1   Lisle, Debbie: "The Surprising Detritus of Leisure: Encountering the Late Photography of War," in: *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29, 5, September 2011, pp. 873–890, here: p. 875.

2   Cf. Sontag, Susan: *Regarding the Pain of Others,* New York 2003, p. 80.

3   Cf. Bloom, Paul: "Against Empathy," in: *Boston Review*, September 10, 2014.

4   Bourriaud, Nicolas: *The Radicant*, New York 2009, p. 58.

5   Hugo, Pieter: *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea,* exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Munich 2017, pp. 166–167.

6   Ibid., p. 238.

7   Ibid., pp. 166/167.

8   Cf. Hochschild, Adam: *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Boston 1998.

9   *Infra. Photographs by Richard Mosse*, Aperture Foundation, New York 2012, p. 131.

10 Cf. Sontag, Susan: *Regarding the Pain of Others,* New York 2003, p. 60.

11 Bourriaud, Nicolas: *The Radicant*, New York 2009, p. 68.

LIST OF WORKS

If not listed differently, all works belong to the
Daimler Art Collection, Stuttgart/Berlin

MUSTAFAH ABDULAZIZ
*1986 in New York City,
USA – lives in Berlin, D

1 *Construction of bridge over
Ganges tributary. Bihar
Province, India*, 2013

2 *Sand ships. Dongting Lake.
Hunan Province, China*, 2015

3 *A diorama of the Nanjing
Yangtze River Bridge sits
beneath the real bridge.
Nanjing, China*, 2015

4 *Drought conditions, 12% full,
Cantareira Reservoir. São
Paulo, Brazil*, 2015

Each Inkjet-print on
Ilford smooth cotton rag
310g range paper
90 × 109 cm
Loan by the artist

5 *Classic Club Golf Course.
Palm Desert, California, USA*,
2015/2018
Lightbox
172 × 200 cm
Loan by the artist

JANE ALEXANDER
*1959 in Johannesburg, ZA –
lives in Cape Town, ZA

African Adventure, 2000
Digital ink print on cotton
paper, ed. 1/3
10 parts, each 47 × 170 cm
Acquired 2003

CLÉMENT COGITORE
*1983 in Colmar, F – lives in
Paris and Strasbourg, F

1 *Digital Desert #2*, 2015
C-print, glass Diasec
120 × 170 cm
Acquired 2017

2 *Zodiac*, 2017
C-print
113,5 × 150 cm
Acquired 2018

3 *Les Indes galantes* [The
amorous Indies], 2017
HD video, ed. 5/5 + 1 AP
6 min
Acquired 2018

TACITA DEAN
*1965 in Canterbury, GB – lives
in Berlin, D and Los Angeles,
USA

The Russian Ending, 2001
Photogravure
20 parts, each 54 × 79,4 cm
Acquired 2002

[Row 1]: Ship of Death / The Crimea /
The Wrecking of the Ngahere /
Erinnerung aus dem Weltkrieg

[Row 2]: Ballon des Aérostiers de
Campagne / The Sinking of the SS
Plympton / Death of a Priest / La
Bataille d'Arras

[Row 3]: Götterdämmerung / Der
Rückzug nach Verdun / Zur Letzten
Ruhe / The Wreck of the Worthing
Pier

[Row 4]: The Story of Minke the
Whale / So They Sank Her! / The Life
and Death of St. Bruno / Vesuvio

[Row 5]: The Tragedy of the
Hughesovka Bridge / Die Explosion in
dem Kanal / Beautiful Sheffield / Ein
Sklave des Kapitals
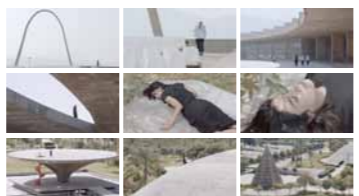
ALIA FARID
*1985 in Kuwait City, KWT –
lives in Kuwait City, KWT and
Puerto Rico, PRI

Ma'arad Trablous
[Giant Tripoli], 2016
Single channel HD video
14:24 min
Acquired 2018

CAO FEI
*1978 in Guangzhou, CHN –
lives in Beijing, CHN

My future is not a dream, 2006
8 parts, C-prints, ed. 2/12
Each 120 × 150 cm
Acquired 2015

ABRIE FOURIE
*1969 in Pretoria, ZA – lives in
Berlin, D

*Ampersand, Greenwich Street,
Manhattan, New York*, 1999
Black & white photograph on
baryta paper mounted on
aluminum, ed. 1/20
24 × 36 cm
Acquired 2010

PIETER HUGO
*1976 in Johannesburg, ZA –
lives in Cape Town, ZA

1 *Mallam Galadima Ahmadu
with Jamis and Mallam Mantari
Lamal with Mainasara, Nigeria*

2 *Mallam Umaru Ahmadu with
Amita, Nigeria*
Both from the series
Hyena Men, 2005
Inkjet print, ed. 6/8 + 1 AP and
3/8 + 1 AP
Each 51 × 51 cm
Acquired 2011

3 *Untitled, Agbogbloshie
Market, Accra, Ghana*, 2010
C-print, panoramic print
Ed. 7/10 + 2 AP, 119 × 220 cm
Acquired 2018

4 *Portrait #12, Rwanda*, 2015

5 *Portrait #30, South Africa*,
2016
Both C-print, panoramic print
Ed. 5/5 + 2 AP
Each 120 × 160 cm
Acquired 2018

SIGALIT LANDAU
*1969 in Jerusalem, IL – lives in
Tel Aviv, IL

*Mermaids [Erasing the Border
of Azkelon]*, 2011
Video, loop, ed. 3/9 + 2 AP
11:03 min
Acquired 2013

RICHARD MOSSE
*1980 in Kilkenny, IRL – lives in
New York City, USA and Ireland

1 *Stalemate*, 2011

2 *Nyabiondo*, 2011
Both digital C-print, 1/2 + 1 AP
Each 122 × 152 cm
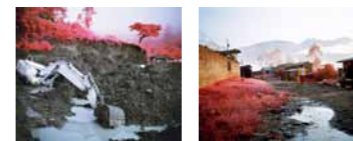
3 *Lost Fun Zone*, 2012
Digital C-print, 2/2 + 1 AP
183 × 229 cm

4 *Spiders*, 2015
Digital C-print, 2/5 + 1 AP
102 × 127 cm
All from the series *Infra*
Loan by carlier | gebauer, Berlin

VIVIANE SASSEN
*1972 in Amsterdam, NL – lives
in Amsterdam, NL

1a *Etan / ebony 15:00*

1b *Untitled / me #1*

1c *Etan / ebony 16:00*

1d *Untitled / me #2*

All from the series
Etan & Me, 2013
C-print, ed. 1/5 + 2 AP
45 × 30 cm
Acquired 2015

2a *At the scaffold*
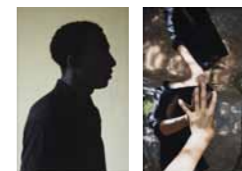
2b *Cyanos*

2c *Glyco*

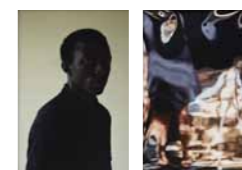**2d** *Coco*

All from the series
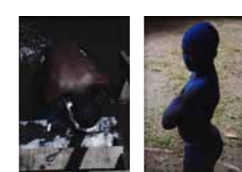*Pikin Slee*, 2013
C-print, ed. 4/5 + 2 AP
45 × 30 cm
Acquired 2015

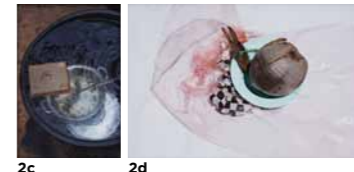**OSKAR SCHMIDT**
*1977 in Erlabrunn, D – lives in
Leipzig and Berlin, D

Chair, 2011
Inkjet print on Museo Fine Art
116 × 93 cm, ed. 1/5 + 2 AP

The American Series I–XII, 2011
Inkjet print on Museo Silver
Rag
7 parts, ed. 1/5 + 3 AP
46 × 38,4 cm
Acquired 2014

BERNI SEARLE
*1964 in Cape Town, ZA – lives
in Cape Town, ZA

Snow White, 2001
2 DVD projections, ed. 2/3
9 min
Acquired 2004

GUY TILLIM
*1962 in Johannesburg, ZA –
lives in Cape Town, ZA

1a *Running women*
1b *Boy with dogs*
1c *Girls at play*
1d *Blue bucket*
All from the series *Petros Village, Malawi*, 2006
Pigment print on cotton rag paper, ed. 2/5
55,5 × 83 cm
Acquired 2007

1a

1b

1c

1d

2 *Joseph Kabila election campaign billboard, Kinshasa*
Ed. 4/5

2

3 *Presidential candidate Jean-Pierre Bemba enters a stadium in central Kinshasa flanked by his bodyguards*
Exhibition print [N/C]

3

4a+b *Lumumbiste Party meeting and the street outside at a cell headquarters in a Kinshasa suburb*
Diptych
Ed. 4/5

4a

4b

5a+b *A political election meeting takes place in a Kinshasa suburb, and election posters on poles in the street outside the home*
Diptych
Ed. 4/5

5a

5b

6 *Protesters, supporters of Étienne Tshisekedi, calling for a boycott of the elections, Kinshasa*
Ed. 3/5

6

7 *A statue of Patrice Lumumba erected by Laurent Kabila, and an unfinished tower built during the Mobutu years, look down on Jean-Pierre Bemba supporters as they make their way to a rally, Kinshasa*
AP 1

7

8a

8b

8a+b *Lumumbiste Party activist at a meeting and the street outside, Kinshasa*
Ed. 4/5

9

9 *Supporters of Jean-Pierre Bemba line the road as he walks to a rally from the airport, Kinshasa*
AP 2

10

10 *A traditional dancer and crowd salute Jean-Pierre Bemba as he walks to a rally from the airport, Kinshasa*
Exhibition print [N/C]

2–10 All from the series *Congo Democratic,* 2006
Pigment print on cotton paper
Each 91 × 133 cm
Acquired 2017

11

11 *Harare*, 2016
Pigment print on cotton paper
Diptych total 135 × 180 cm
Each 135 × 90 cm

12

12 *Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi*, 2016
Pigment print on cotton paper
Triptych total 135 × 270 cm
Each 135 × 90 cm
Both from the series *Museum of the Revolution*
Acquired 2018

SHARIF WAKED
1964 in Nazareth, IL
Palestinian – lives in Haifa, IL and Santa Barbara, USA

Chic Point, 2003
Video, 5 min
Acquired 2013
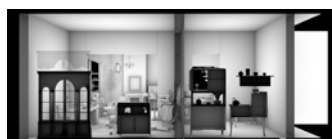
MAYA ZACK
*1976 in Tel Aviv, IL – lives in Tel Aviv, IL

Living Room 4, 2009
Anaglyph print, 2D, ed. 2/5
82,5 × 202 × 5 cm
Acquired 2013