

# Dina El Kaisy Friemuth: *No History at All*

5 november — 31 december, 2021

Hvornår kan man definere noget som fortid? Billedkunstner Dina El Kaisy Friemuth kaster i deres første institutionelle soloudstilling *No History at All* et kritisk blik på historieskrivningens magtstrukturer og spørger, hvorvidt det i sig selv er et imperialistisk foretagende. Udstillingen præsenterer en serie nye poetiske værker i form af et specialdesignet gulvtæppe, en videoinstallation, plakater, en tegneserie, et facadebanner og et særlig kurateret eventprogram.

I stedet for at bevæge sig oprejst gennem udstillingen, er publikum inviteret til at tage plads på et stort tæppe prydet med politiske citater og egyptiske betegnelser for sjælen. Fra det bløde tekstil kan man se videoværket *House of KA*, som er skabt særligt til udstillingen. Til tonerne af et gyserinspireret lydunivers følger vi El Kaisy Friemuth sammen med tre familiemedlemmer på Neues Museum i Berlin. Med filmiske referencer til *Nat på Museet* og TV-serien *Pose*, ser vi dem iagttage egyptiske skulpturer i museet efter lukketid. El Kaisy Friemuths mor, der er tidligere egyptisk rejseguide, fortæller historier om den egyptiske tro på sjælens vandring rundt om jorden, alt imens der klippes mellem, at hun og hendes lytterskare sidder i museet og i hjemmet. Dermed bliver museets store, statslige historiefortælling stillet overfor den feministiske sammenkomst og deres egne erfaringer. *"I am here because white people were in my country,"* står der på tæppet med et citat af den antiislamofobiske aktivist Houria Bouteldja. Det er som om, at både El Kaisy Friemuths mor og artefakterne på en gang kommunikerer disse ord.

Udstillingen låner sin titel fra kapitlet *No History at All* i kulturforsker Ariella Aïsha Azoulays bog *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (2019). Heri argumenterer Azoulay for, at historieskrivning er et værktøj, der gennem århundreder er blevet brugt til at fremmedgøre vores fortid, så den ikke bliver set som en del af nutiden. Men, skriver Azoulay, imperialisme lever i bedste velgående som en del af verdensordenens magtstrukturer. Det er blandt andet synligt på vores museer, hvor koloniserede landes stjalne kunstværker og artefakter bliver vist frem som fortidens etnografika.

Idet historisk koloniserede folkeslag og nationer netop i de her år beder Vesten om tilbagelevering af stjalne artefakter, spørger El Kaisy Friemuths video indirekte til, om genstandene bør blive placeret i de respektive returlandes museer? I stedet for museet, der er defineret af vestlig historieskrivning, kan man – som Azoulay argumenterer for – alliere sig med fortiden og de vidensformer, som eksisterede før kolonialismen udryddede dem. Set med de øjne fremstår El Kaisy Friemuths udstilling som en undvigelsesmanøvre, der vækker egyptiske artefakter til live gennem morens fortællinger og tegneserier fremfor at lade dem være døde og fikserede i glasmontre.

Dina El Kaisy Friemuth (f. 1988) bor og arbejder i Berlin og København. De er uddannet fra Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi samt UDK Berlin i 2016, og er medstifter af kunstnerkollektiverne FCNN – Feminist Collective With No Name og D.N.A. sammen med Anita Beikpour og Neda Sanai. El Kaisy Friemuth er en del af Berlin Programme for Artists 2021-2023 og har senest udstillet på Gasworks (London), den 11. Berlin Biennale (Berlin), Ariel (København), 1-1 (Basel), Bergen Kunsthall (Bergen) og 55-11 Gallery (New York). Udstillingen er kulminationen på El Kaisy Friemuths deltagelse i *INTRO*, som er O – Overgadens etårige, skræddersyede udviklingsprogram for unge kunstnere i Danmark.

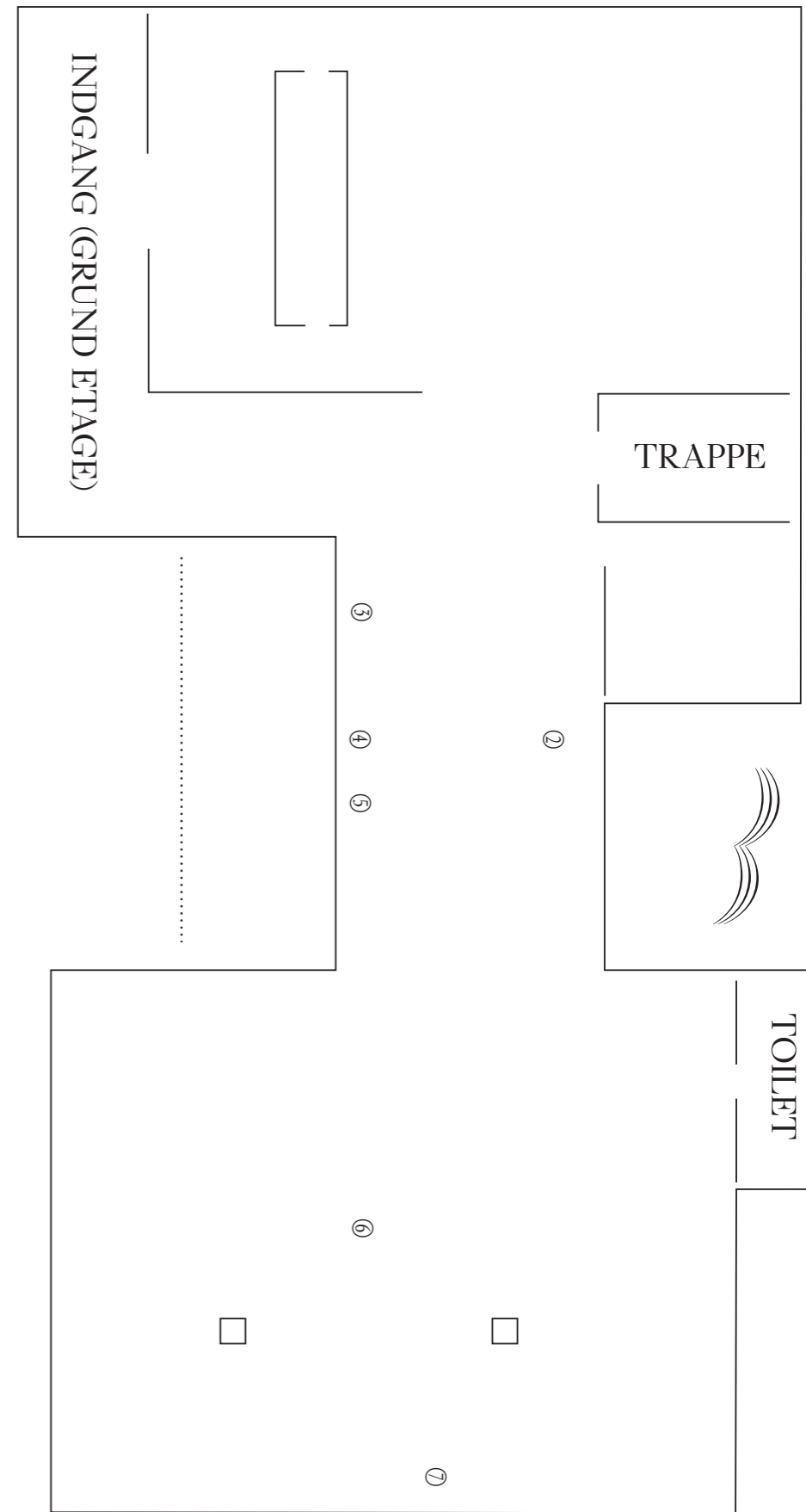
① *Some Ideas Have to Die*, 2021  
200 × 660 cm.  
Mesh banner

③ *Soul*, 2021  
200 × 150 cm.  
Vynklistermærke

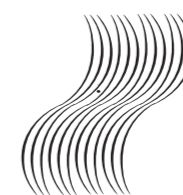
⑤ *House of KA*, 2021  
200 × 150 cm.  
Vynklistermærke

⑦ *House of KA*, 2021  
HD-video med lyd i loop

⑥ *No History at All*, 2021  
740 × 1250 cm.  
Tæppe med print



I forbindelse med udstillingen er der planlagt en eventrække for at inkludere nuancerede perspektiver på udstillingens tematik. Blandt andet afholder fagforeningen The Union for kulturarbejdere i Danmark en samtalerække om kolonialisme i dansk billedkunst, oversættelse som modmagt og iscenesættelse af den sorte krop.



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When can you define something as “past”? With their first institutional solo exhibition *No History at All* artist Dina El Kaisy Friemuth critically investigates the power structures implicated in history writing and asks whether it is in itself an imperialistic practice. The exhibition presents a multitude of poetic new works consisting of a commissioned floor carpet, a video installation, a series of posters, a cartoon, and an event program.

Rather than moving around in an upright position in the exhibition, visitors are invited to take a seat on a carpet decorated with political quotes and different Egyptian terms of the soul. From the soft carpet one can watch the video work *House of KA* produced specifically for this exhibition. Accompanied by a horror-inspired soundscape we follow El Kaisy Friemuth along with three family members at the Neues Museum in Berlin. With filmic references to *Night at the Museum* and the TV series *Pose*, we see them as they observe Egyptian sculptures at the museum after hours. El Kaisy Friemuth’s mother who used to be an Egyptian tourist guide, tells stories about the Egyptian faith in the soul’s wandering around the Earth. Meanwhile, the video jumps between footage of the mother and her audience sitting in the museum and in the home. In this way, the museum’s grand storytelling is juxtaposed with the feminist gathering and their personal experiences. On the carpet is a quote by the anti-Islamophobic activist Houria Bouteldja: “*I am here because white people were in my country.*” It feels as if El Kaisy Friemuth’s mother and the museum artifacts are simultaneously communicating these words.

The exhibition borrows its title from the chapter *No History At All* in cultural theorist Ariella Aïsha Azoulay’s book *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (2019). Azoulay argues that history writing is a tool that, through centuries, has been used to alienate our past so as not to be perceived as part of our present. However, Azoulay claims, imperialism is alive and kicking as part of the power structures of today’s world order. Among other places, this is evident in our museums where artworks and artifacts stolen from colonized countries are displayed as ethnographies of the past.

As previously colonized nations start to claim their stolen artifacts back from Western countries, Dina El Kaisy Friemuth’s video indirectly asks if these objects should be placed in the museums of their respective origin countries? Rather than the museum, which is defined by Western history writing, one can, as Azoulay argues, join the past and those different modes of knowledge that existed before being eradicated by colonialism. From this perspective, El Kaisy Friemuth’s exhibition appears as an evasive manoeuvre resuscitating Egyptian artifacts through the mother’s stories and cartoons rather than leaving them inanimate and fixed in glass vitrines.

Dina El Kaisy Friemuth (b. 1988) lives and works in Berlin and Copenhagen. They hold an MFA from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and UDK in Berlin (2016) and are a co-founder of the artist collectives FCNN (Feminist Collective with No Name) and D.N.A. together with Anita Beikpour and Neda Sanai. El Kaisy Friemuth is a part of the Berlin Programme for Artists 2021–23 and has lately exhibited at Gasworks (London), the 11th Berlin Biennale, Ariel (Copenhagen), 1-1 (Basel), Bergen Kunsthall, and 55-11 Gallery (New York). The exhibition is the culmination of Dina El Kaisy Friemuth participation in O—Overgaden’s tailored one-year development program for young artists in Denmark *INTRO*.

① *Some Ideas Have to Die*, 2021  
200 × 660 cm.  
Mesh facade banner

③ *Soul*, 2021  
200 × 150 cm.  
Vinyl sticker

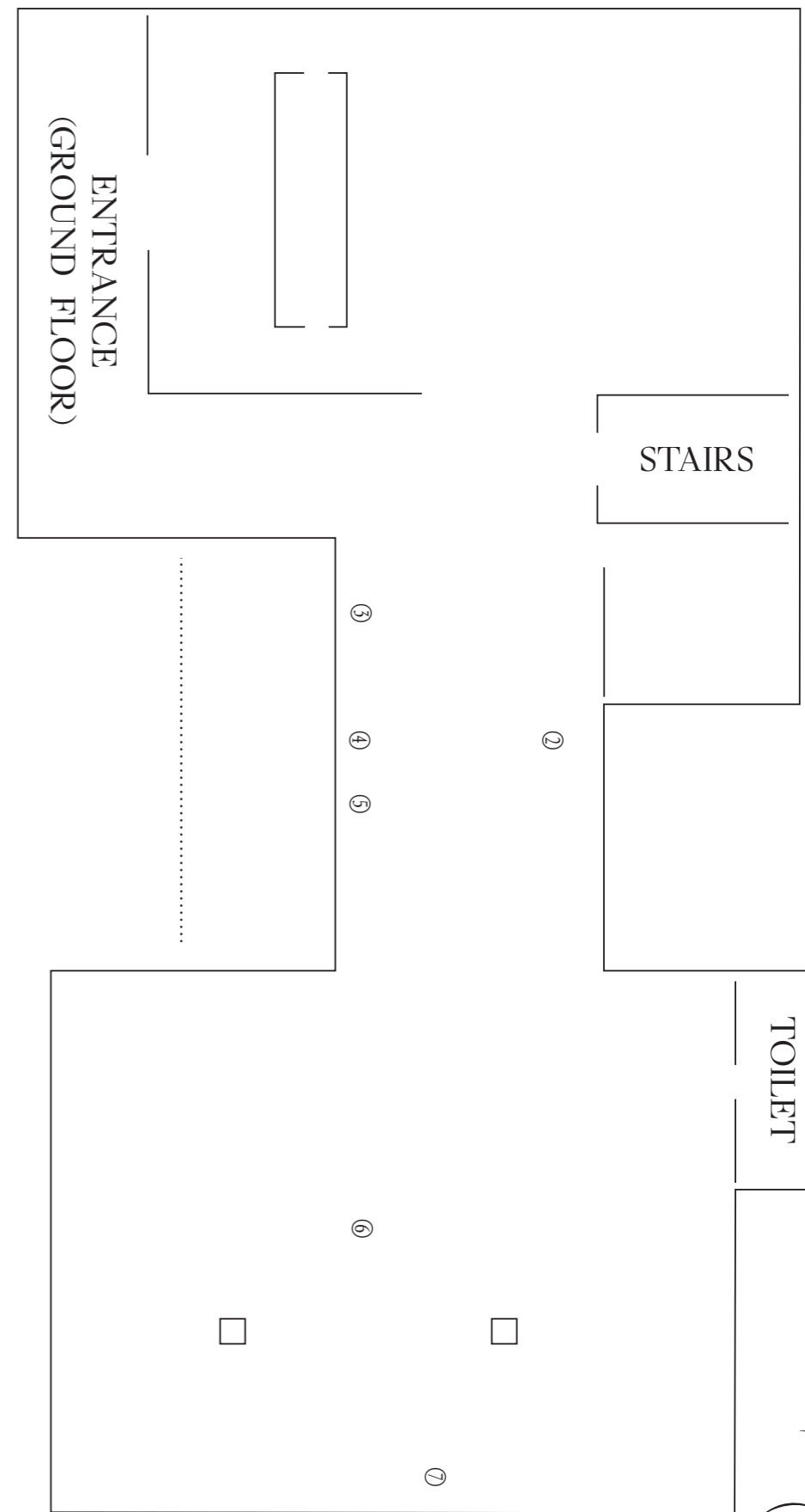
⑤ *House of KA*, 2021  
200 × 150 cm.  
Vinyl sticker

⑦ *House of KA*, 2021  
Looped HD-video with sound

② *Some Ideas Have to Die*, 2021  
2 × 200 × 150 cm.  
Vinyl stickers

④ *Aziz*, 2021  
200 × 150 cm.  
Vinyl sticker

⑥ *No History at All*, 2021  
740 × 1250 cm.  
Printed carpet



A specially curated event program accompanying the exhibition aims to include nuanced perspectives on the themes of the exhibition. Among other things, a newly founded union for racialized cultural workers in Denmark, The Union, will host a series of talks about colonialism in Danish visual arts, translation as counter-power, and the staging of the Black body.

