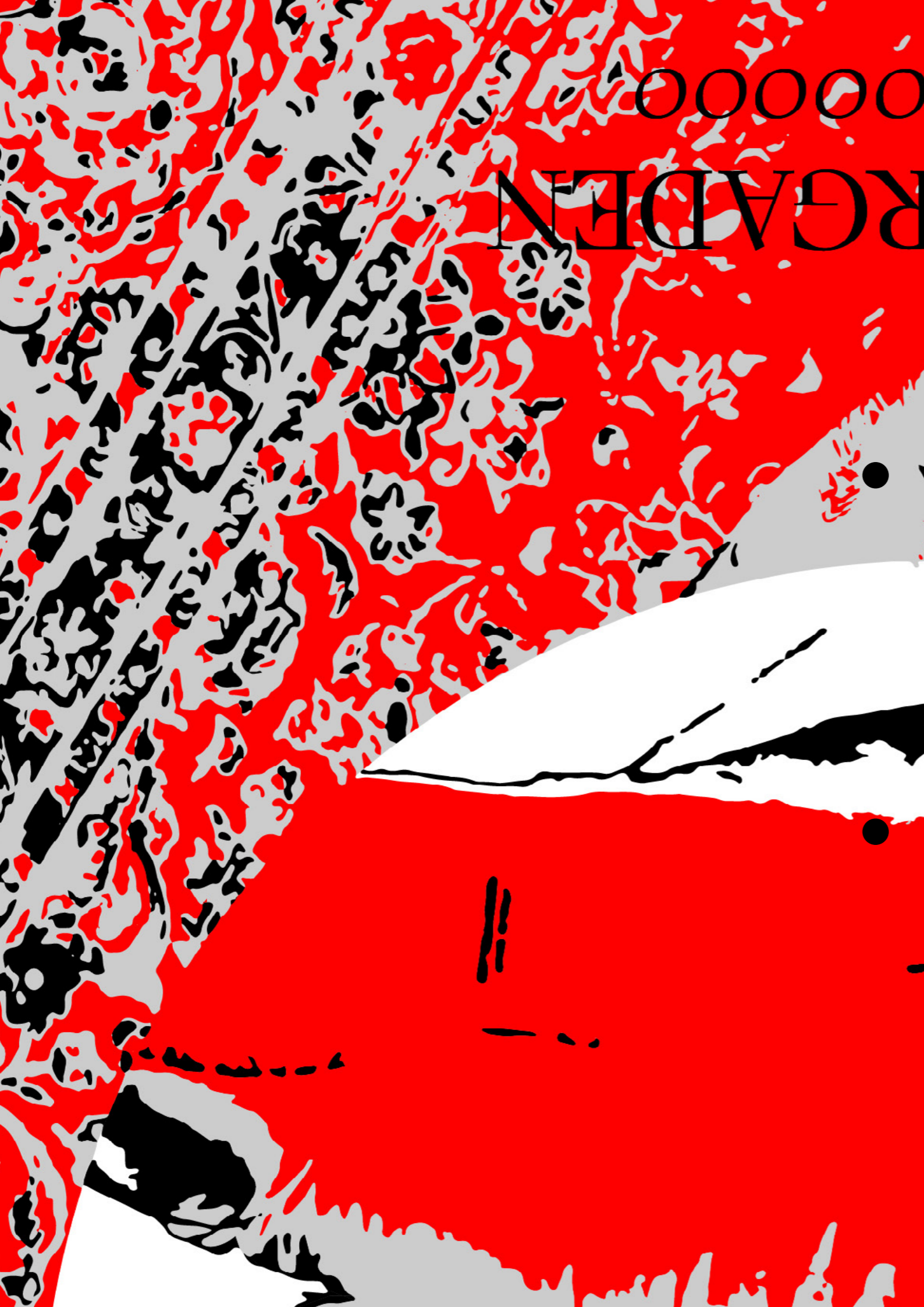




Easy Friemuth
ry at All

INTRO



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R G A D E N

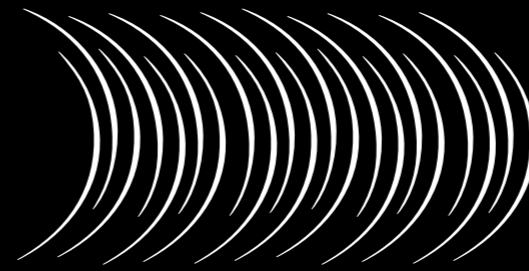
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EAN: 9788799077298

Dina El Kaisy Friemuth
No History at All

Udstillingsperiode: 05.11.2021 – 31.12.2021

O—OVERGADEN
Overgaden neden vandet 17, 1414 København K,
overgaden.org

No History at All



FORORD

Det er en stor glæde at kunne introducere denne første publikation om den fremadstormende unge kunstner Dina El Kaisy Friemuth, der udkommer i forbindelse med kunstnerens første soloudstilling *No History at All* på O—Overgaden. Udstillingen, der præsenterer en serie nye værker i form af et stort citat-dekoreret gulvtæppe, videoværket *House of KA*, en række plakater og tegneserier og et seks meter langt facadebanner med teksten "Some Ideas Have to Die", retter et kritisk blik mod historieskrivningens magtstrukturer og diskuterer blandt andet det glohede spørgsmål om repatriering; altså hvorvidt og hvordan vestlige museumsinstitutioner bør tilbageføre arkæologiske og etnografiske kunst- og kulturgenstande til deres oprindelige lande.

Udstillingen låner sin titel fra et kapitel i kulturforsker Ariella Aïsha Azoulay bog *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, hvor hun skriver, at historieskrivning er et værktøj til at fremmedgøre vores fortid, så den ikke bliver set som en del af nutiden. At historieskrivning er et magtinstrument og i sin form prædefineret til at ekskludere. Den sandhed er liden hørt for mange og derfor svær at tale om. Men det insisterer Dina El Kaisy Friemuth på! I deres arbejde italesætter de historiens dybt skævvredne magtforhold, peger på de indlejrede racistiske strukturer, vi som europæere og danskere helst ikke vil anerkende findes i vores kultur – eller vores historieskrivning – og gør os klogere på den nødvendighed, det er at forstå, at vi alle - også vi på Overgaden – som en hvid, dansk kunstinstitution – har et arbejde at gøre med at dekolonialisere og mangfoldiggøre vores institutionelle rum.

Det langvarige samarbejde, som ligger til grund for Dina El Kaisy Friemuths udstilling og denne publikation, er muliggjort af O—Overgadens INTRO-program, som er generøst støttet af Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansen Fond. INTRO er et helt særligt og ressourcestærkt etårigt udviklingsforløb, der har til sigte at støtte nyuddannede, unge billedkunstnere med

tilknytning til Danmark. Programmet, som fra gang til gang skræddersys til det enkelte kunstnerskab, indeholder både støtte til rejse og produktion samt til kunstfaglig, strategisk og teknisk rådgivning fra førende danske og internationale stemmer på kunstfeltet. Samarbejdet kulminerer i en stor soloudstilling på O—Overgaden samt en udgivelse i denne publikationsrække.

I over 35 år har O—Overgaden som institution haft fokus på at løfte morgendagens kunstnere frem i det danske kunstliv. Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansen Fondens støtte til at videreudvikle dette arbejde er helt unik – og vi skylder dem en stor og hjertelig tak for deres engagement. En varm tak til María Inés Plaza Lazo og María Berríos for deres tankevækkende tekster om og samtaler med kunstneren, og til Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, hvis vigtige bog *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* har været en instrumental inspiration for Dina, og som vi er glade for at kunne inkludere et særligt uddrag af i denne publikation. En særlig tak også til The Union – Danmarks fagforening for racialiserede kunstnere og kulturarbejdere – for at have kurateret en arrangementsrække i anknnytning til Dinas udstilling, der bl.a. adresserer spørgsmål om kolonialisme og sorthed i dansk kunst. Der skal også rettes en stor tak til O—Overgadens dedikerede kerneteam, som har arbejdet tæt sammen med Dina gennem hele forløbet: kurator Ida Schyum, presse- og kommunikationsansvarlig Line Brædder, vores tekniske troldmester Toke Martins, redaktør og oversætter Nanna Friis og blækspruttepraktikant Rikke Bank. En særlig tak til María Berríos og Christina Wilson for deres skarpe og omsorgsfulde mentoring, og til Anne Riber for at have været en instrumental del af INTRO-samarbejdets opstart. Frem for alt vil O—Overgaden gerne rette en rungende tak til Dina for et utrolig lærerigt og inspirerende samarbejde - for deres utrættelige arbejde med at organisere stemmer og samarbejdspartnere og for at være den lysende stemme, der peger os i retningen af en ny, antiracistisk historieskrivning.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn,
konstitueret leder, O-Overgaden

AT BÆRE SOLEN I SJÆLEN ELLER EN MILLION SMÅ HÆNDER DER RØRER JORDEN

María Berríos

Se kvinderne der tager deres sted tilbage, der ærer bedstemødrene ved at besøge deres stjalne objekter, fragmenter af verden, der blev revet fra dem med vold. Kvinderne strejfer omkring i deres forfædres artefakters kølighed, sørger for at tingene ikke er ladet alene tilbage, de viser deres respekt ved stolt at lade deres højrøde tøj blive kontraster til kapellignende konservatorers hvide handsker og rober. De kommer med varmen fra røde tracksuits og blodrøde latexbukser, og deres hår er flettet som faraoernes døtres. Moderens smaragdglans, hendes omsorg og taperheden i hendes slangeskindsvest leder dem på vej.

Sammen går de op ad trapperne til Vestens tempel, de udfordrer århundreders fortællinger om, at deres ting blevet taget fra dem, fordi de ikke var i stand til at passe på dem. At de ville have det bedre i de kolde krypter på museet, en institution der i sagens natur blev skabt for at kunne opbevare enorme udplyndringer. Kvinderne anerkender mødrene, stiller sig foran en stenmoder, der beskytter sit barn, svøber det i omfavelse. Og selvom disse bygningers beskidte vægge er blevet vasket rene og malet hvide for at kunne rumme udslættelsen af alle de stjalne historier, ved kvinderne, at kraften i deres bedstemøders sol ikke kan læses inde.

Disse historiers kraft findes i kvindernes sjæle, de bærer den med sig. De rører ved verden med den. Hvide fædre troede, at objekterne de anbragte i glaskister var døde, og de erklærede objekterne fortidige, så de selv kunne få oprejsning, blive nye mænd. Og de byggede store mausoleer for deres store, nye ideer. Men kvinderne vidste bedre, de mærkede deres bedstemødre hjemsoge de prægtige, hvide sale, animere dem, de brændte sig ind i kvindernes hjerter, hver gang deres historier blev genfortalt.

Nu bliver de æret og genrejst af mellemartslige amuletter, kakerlakker, sorte katte. Af slangen Ka. De lever og bor allesammen i forskellige hverdagsritualer af selvomsorg, af krigsførelse, den slags ritualer, der finder sted i ethvert rum, i køkkener, på pladser, på gadehjørnet, siddende på tæpper. En kvindernes fejring, glæden ved at dele deres historier med hinanden. Rygterne om deres ord kan sive ind i alle sprækker. En nødvendig og hverdagslig overlevelses- og søsterskabsceremoni. En genrejsning af den heksekunst, der kan skabe den nødvendige udslættelse af museumsimpulsen. Opfundet og reproduceret af de hvide fædre og deres såkaldte berettigelse til at vide, at tale om, at eje, at penetrere, at besidde og til at være nysgerrig på alting; deres vedvarende begær efter at uddanne og endda stritte imod med alle deres radikale ord, mens de desperat klamrer sig til deres skleroseramte, senile magt. Samtidig føler kvinderne, kvinderne elsker, og vi DANSER.

Billeder: Anders Sune Berg, Dina El Kaisy Friemuth, Diara Sow, FYEWW, Xuan Ngucyn, Seb Holl-Trieu.

Oversættelse: Nanna Friis

Redaktør: Nanna Friis

Tekst: María Berríos, María Ines Plaza Lazo, Dina El Kaisy Friemuth, Aukje Lepoutre Ravn, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay

MUSEET HAR INGEN SJÆL

En samtale mellem María Ines Plaza Lazo og Dina El Kaisy Friemuth

Trykt i 200 eksemplarer

Korrektur: Ida Schyum, Nanna Friis

(María Ines Plaza Lazo)
Dina, hvad er essensen i *House of KA*?

(Dina El Kaisy Friemuth)
I antik egyptisk tro manifesterer sjælen sig på mange forskellige måder. Khet, Sah, Ren, Ba, Ka, Ib, Shut, det er bare nogle af dens navne. Guden Atum skabte verden med magi, sjælens kilde, der altså bor som en evig kraft i ethvert væsen. Men ikke kun væsner; skulpturer kan også indeholde de afbildedes sjæle, og på den måde blive en slags evighedsportaler for de sjæle, der findes på jorden. Nu om dage mangler mange antikke skulpturer deres næser. Næserne blev knækket af for at befri sjælen fra det objekt, der bar den. Alt det her har jeg lært af min mor. Hun er en del af essensen i *House of KA*: en essens som er iboende i alle de mennesker, der har været undertrykt af kulturelle hegemonier. Men hvis du spørger mig om museet har en sjæl, vil jeg bestemt sige nej.

(MIPL)
Det horroragtige lydspor, der danner ramme om din mor og Ebows møde med de egyptiske skulpturer på Neues Museum i Berlin, antyder en direkte forbindelse mellem personernes kroppe og de udstillede artefakter. Hvilke storslåede historiefortællinger er du villig til at ødelægge her?

(DEKF)
Min bror Karim lavede soundtracket til videoen. Han fandt på stemningen, tilpassede den til nutidige museers atmosfære og komponerede alting, efter vi havde talt om, hvordan vi har det i den slags rum. Det får mig på en måde til at føle, som om jeg er med i en Indiana Jones-film, at jeg er her for at performe en slags tilbagelevering af noget til dets oprindelsessted: dets kontekst, dets folk. Det var en central del af det europæiske koloniseringsprojekt at skabe historien om Europas kulturelle overherredømme i forhold til andre kulturer. På samme måde som den store fortælling om den hvide race. I det her eventyr (og fantasien lever absolut stadig i dag) er araberne barbarer, der ikke værdsætter deres egen arv, ikke er i stand til selv at restaurere eller til at bygge museer efter europæisk forbillede. Udslættelsen af Palmyra i Syrien er et eksempel, Vesten godt kan lide at bruge på, hvor farligt det ville være at returnere kulturskatte – et eksempel som også passer perfekt til billedet af den uciviliserede verden, 'de andre' har skabt.

(MIPL)
House of KA refererer til din mor som en, der viderefører denne arv. Hun var selv turistguide i Egypten, guide i egyptisk historie. Hvordan har hendes arbejde påvirket din opfattelse af nationale narrativer, antik mytologi og skabelsen af personlige minder?

(DEKF)
Egypten var faktisk et af de første lande, hvor en megaturisme satte ind, og hele økonomien ændrede sig fra landbrugsøkonomi til meget turismebaseret, mens

Cairos indbyggertal voksede fra 2,5 millioner til 20 millioner mellem 1950 og 2020. Det er også begyndelsen på historien om, hvordan min mor mødte min far. Maha studerede filosofi på universitetet i Cairo, som under Gamal Abdel Nasser blev gjort bredere tilgængeligt, og virkelig bidrog til at skubbe en middelklasse fremad. Hvad angik jobmuligheder var det imidlertid kun i turismeindustrien, man kunne bruge en humanistisk, kulturel universitetsgrad. Så lidt ligesom egyptiske artefakter blev interessante for Vesten, blev min mor taget med til Tyskland af en turist. Den historie lyder selvfølgelig ikke særlig romantisk, og der er selvfølgelig masser af kærlighed og omsorg, jeg ignorerer her, det er bare for at lave et eksempel. Da jeg læste Houria Bouteldja, der siger: "Jeg er her, fordi hvide mennesker var i mit land, fordi de stadig er der" følte jeg virkelig, at det resonerede med min mors historie.

(MIPL)

Jeg elsker, hvordan tegneserier findes som et genkommende element i din praksis. De er på den ene side en slags resume af, hvad andre af værkerne i rummet kan aktivere, og på den anden side et virkelig godt værktøj til mediering, en humoristisk måde at forholde sig til diskurs på. Hvad er kondenseret i tegneserien *Some Ideas Have to Die*, og hvordan udfolder historien sig?

(DEKF)

Det er i virkeligheden alt sammen den samme historie, bare fortalt på forskellige måder. Det jeg godt kan lide ved tegneserieelementet er, at jeg kan lade skulpturerne tale, gøre det på en legende måde, og at det bliver en slags collage. Det er dejligt, at du spørger, hvordan historien fortsætter, for det er jeg også selv nysgerrig efter at se. Tegneserien har været et godt redskab for mig til at få adgang til materialet, betragte det fra forskellige vinkler, lidt ligesom hvis flere forskellige mennesker fortalte historien. I videoværket er det snarere fortællingen om den hvide institution, der sammenstilles med Mahas historiefortælling. Tegneserierne er mine noter.

(MIPL)

Udstillingen sørger, via sit netværk og fællesskab, for at samtalerne er og forbliver relevante. En kollektiv research med ønsket om at gavne fællesskabet: den nødvendige, lokale viden er indlejret i kroppe. Hvad afdækker du, der hidtil har været usynligt?

(DEKF)

Lokale historier fortalt af lokale kroppe er en smuk måde at formulere det på. Jeg håber virkelig, det er det, det er. Men jeg tror også på, at udstillingsrum har potentialer, og at vi kan anvende dem på mange måder. Både som refleksionsrum og til at socialisere. Sara Ahmeds tekst "Phenomenology of Whiteness" har haft stor indflydelse på mig; måden hun taler om museets fysiske hvide vægge, og hvordan det føles at træde ind i det rum som en ikke-hvid krop. Det er i virkeligheden derfor, jeg gerne ville ændre opmærksomheden fra de hvide vægge og glasmontrer, og pege den i retning af et farvestrålende tæppe som udstillingssted.

(MIPL)

Du har modarbejdet misrepræsentationen af BIPOC og queerpersoner i mainstreammedier og -diskurser i nogle år efterhånden. Hvordan startede det, hvordan går det?

(DEKF)

Det startede med Feministisk Kollektiv Uden Navn, et kollektiv vi grundlagde i København i 2016. Vi fik opmærksomhed fra mainstreammedier, og vores aktioner og værker endte i aviser snarere end på kunstinstitutioner. Derfor besluttede vi os for at undergrave denne mediekontekst og lave vores egen nyhedsudsendelse FCNNNews. Under overskriften *Gør det usynlige synligt* kuraterede vi kunstværker, historier og interviews med en række forskellige kunstnere og kulturarbejdere. Det var virkelig befriende at overtage mikrofonen. Siden da har vi arbejdet i mange forskellige konstellationer, senest sammen med Neda Sanai og Anita Beikpour som D.N.A. At arbejde kollektivt er en central del af min praksis, og det har haft stor indflydelse på den måde, jeg arbejder individuelt.

(MIPL)

Turen gennem museet refererer til de stigende krav fra tidligere koloniserede folk og nationer om at få returneret de artefakter, som Vesten har stjålet. Videoen spørger indirekte, hvorvidt disse artefakter skal anbringes på museer i deres oprindelseslande, når selve museet som institution er defineret af vestlig historieskrivning.

(DEKF)

Jeg tror, det er en af grundene til, hvorfor jeg taler om sjælen i relation til de her objekter og deres iboende historier. Jeg ønsker at diskutere fra et omsorgs- og følelsesperspektiv snarere end på baggrund af rationalitet og historie. Når man udelukkende afgør et objekts betydning på baggrund af dets materialitet og tidslighed, virker det logisk at transportere objekterne fra et museum til et andet. I virkeligheden er det ret ukreativt. Jeg synes ikke, det er fair at fortælle Egypten – eller hvilket som helst andet land, hvorfra objekter er blevet stjålet – hvordan man bedst fejrer og bevarer disse objekter. For mig at se er det en virkelig snæversynet kolonialistlogik, der siger: I får dem kun tilbage, hvis I anbringer dem på museer, og værdsætter dem på den måde vi gør.

(MIPL)

Hvorfor er dette tyveriaspekt så væsentligt, og hvorfor undgår du reel argumentation?

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Dina El Kaisy Friemuth vil særligt takke:
Niehaus, Anita Beikpour, Neda Sanai, Ebru Düzgün, Berlin Programme for Artists, Simon Denny, Sarah Friend, Mooni Perry, AFSAR, Yalda Afsah, Willem de Rooij, Elif Saydam, Ahmet Ögüt, Rhea Dall,

Ida Schyum, Aulje Lepoutre Ravn, Nanna Frits, Ariella Aisha Azoulay, Nawal El Saadawi, Houria Bouteldja, LIZ, Sara Ahmed.
Grafisk design: fanfare
Typografi: Glossy Magazine, Bold Decisions
Printet hos: Raddraier, Amsterdam

(DEKF)

Jeg synes, det er vigtigt at kalde handlinger, hvad de er uden at lede efter en særlig retorik, der passer til narrativet. Disse objekter blev stjålet. At sige at det var en forkert handling – og at der derudover må finde en returnering og en undskyldning sted, som vil være en lang reparationsproces – er det mindste vi kan gøre i forhold til det omfang af kriminalitet, der ligger bag den primære, koloniale gestus.

(MIPL)

Hvordan forbinder du *No History At All* til de teoretiske pointer i Ariella Aisha Azoulay i *Against Imperialism*?

(DEKF)

Jeg har haft den her tykke bog med mig i løbet af det seneste år, og den har inspireret og lært mig meget. Især elsker jeg alle kapiteltitlerne, fx "No History At All" eller "Well Documented Objects – Undocumented People". Jeg har tænkt over, hvordan jeg bedst kunne honorere de mennesker, der har givet mig gode råd, og nogle af dem har jeg så samlet i tæppeværket i udstillingen. Metodologien i tæppets motiv stemmer ret godt overens med tegneseriernes, det er en collage af statements, som jeg har indsamlet, mens jeg arbejdede på det her projekt, en slags arkiv. Ariella Aisha pointerer, hvordan plyndrede objekter er blevet gjort til kunsthistorie, som om de kun tilhører en fortid og ikke tilhører de mennesker, der har skabt og omgivet dem. Hun sammenligner endda objekter med flygtninge, og påpeger, hvordan "they are missing their previous life and being missed by those who were left behind or deported elsewhere".

(MIPL)

Du har også været involveret i etableringen af The Union, en fagforening for racialiserede kunstnere og kulturarbejdere i Danmark, hvis arbejde blandt andet handler om at kalde forskellige former for racediskrimination ud – såvel som arbejdsforholdene i kunst- og kulturindustrierne.

(DEKF)

The Union er i virkeligheden et projekt, der startede som et netværk for en del år siden, da nogle af de første sager om racevold i kulturindustrierne kom frem i lyset i Danmark – eksempelvis forfatter og musiker Madame Nielsens blackface. Mange forskellige stemmer så pludselig sig selv kæmpe individuelle kampe med deres respektive arbejdspladser, og det er virkelig vanskeligt og udmattende at gøre den slags alene. Det begyndte med adskillige møder i Folkets Hus på Nørrebro i København, hvilket var en stor succes og virkelig en god anledning til at lave netværk og bygge broer mellem en række kollektiver, der allerede i mange år havde arbejdet med dekolonial kritik, eksempelvis Marronage og Adoptionspolitisk Forum. Allerede på et af de første møder blev ideen om at etablere en egentlig fagforening introduceret.

(MIPL)

Hvordan går det indtil videre med det arbejde, og hvordan fortsætter det herfra?

(DEKF)

Det egentlige bureaukratiske arbejde med at stable en reel fagforening på benene er blevet gjort af en virkelig fantastisk gruppe kulturarbejdere, der er baseret i Danmark. For at gøre foreningen så funktionel og effektiv som muligt, fokuserer den på arbejde og praksisser i Danmark. Nu er strukturen defineret, og man kan melde sig ind og læse mere om foreningens arbejde på theunionbipoc.com.

(MIPL)

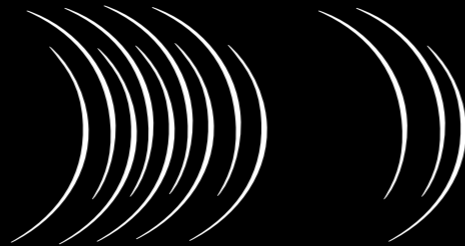
Jeg kan ikke lade være med at fordybe mig i gulvtæppet igen, og stille det her spørgsmål tilbage til dig: Hvad er det bedste råd, du nogensinde har fået?

(DEKF)

Maha siger altid, at jeg skal være mere tålmodig. Og at jeg skal lytte til min *Ib*, den del af min sjæl som er hjertet. Hvad med dig?

(MIPL)

"Hvis hundene gør, er det fordi, vi bevæger os fremad". Det er noget i den stil, Don Quixote siger til sin makker Sancho Panza, og jeg elsker det, fordi jeg som en idealistisk, men ekstatisk rytter i en vanvittig post-ridderlig verden (aka moderniteten) også holder fast i et etisk ideal om, at individer kan have ret, selvom samfundet tager fejl. I forhold til den stigende klassebevidsthed, vi er nødt til at holde fast i, lader netop den sætning til at forbinde sig til ideen om at vriste historien løs fra en kanon og kritisk gennemgå den koloniale, imperialistiske – og derfor rådne – konstruktion, museet er. Jeg synes udstillingens tæppe er et passende sted at tænke over Don Quixote – og på min far som med sin universelle tænkning også gav mig en personlig oplevelse, og samtidig ansporede mig til at læse Cervantes som min egen historiefortælling.












SOUL 

SOME IDEAS HAVE TO DIE

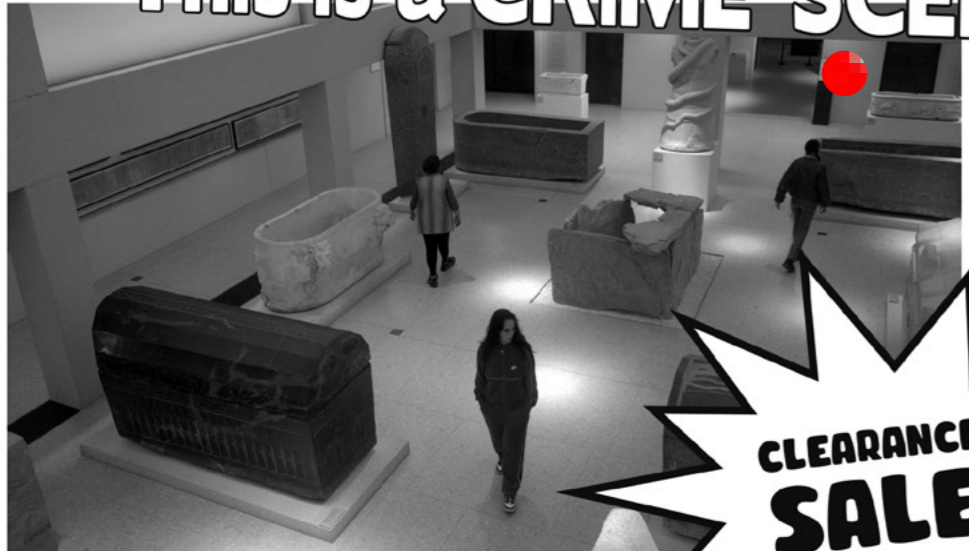


I MISS THE HEAT
OF SAND THE SUN
THE MOON THE STARS...
FRESH AIR !!

NEUES MUSEUM
Berlin
Bodestr.
Sep. 2021



This is a **CRIME SCENE !!**



CLEARANCE SALE



I was buried with my people in peace for thousands of years...



United since my creation



Everytime you take a photograph of her you take a piece of her she literally fades away !!



Nefertiti is one of the most famous Egyptian icons of the 13th dynasty bc. She was stolen by German archeologists in 1912 and kidnapped to Berlin, Germany.



Nefertiti wants to return home but the museum rather wants to continue to perpetuate a colonialist paradigm and refuse to return artifacts that were stolen or acquired in an illegal or illegitimate fashion: during periods of occupation, colonialism, and war.

TO BE CONTINUED...



KA - like the snake from jungle book

they just st

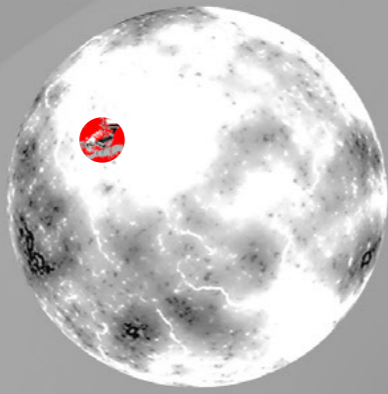
kin is soft, but my
heart is cruel,
and my bite is deadly.
- Nawal El Saadawi

LOHS

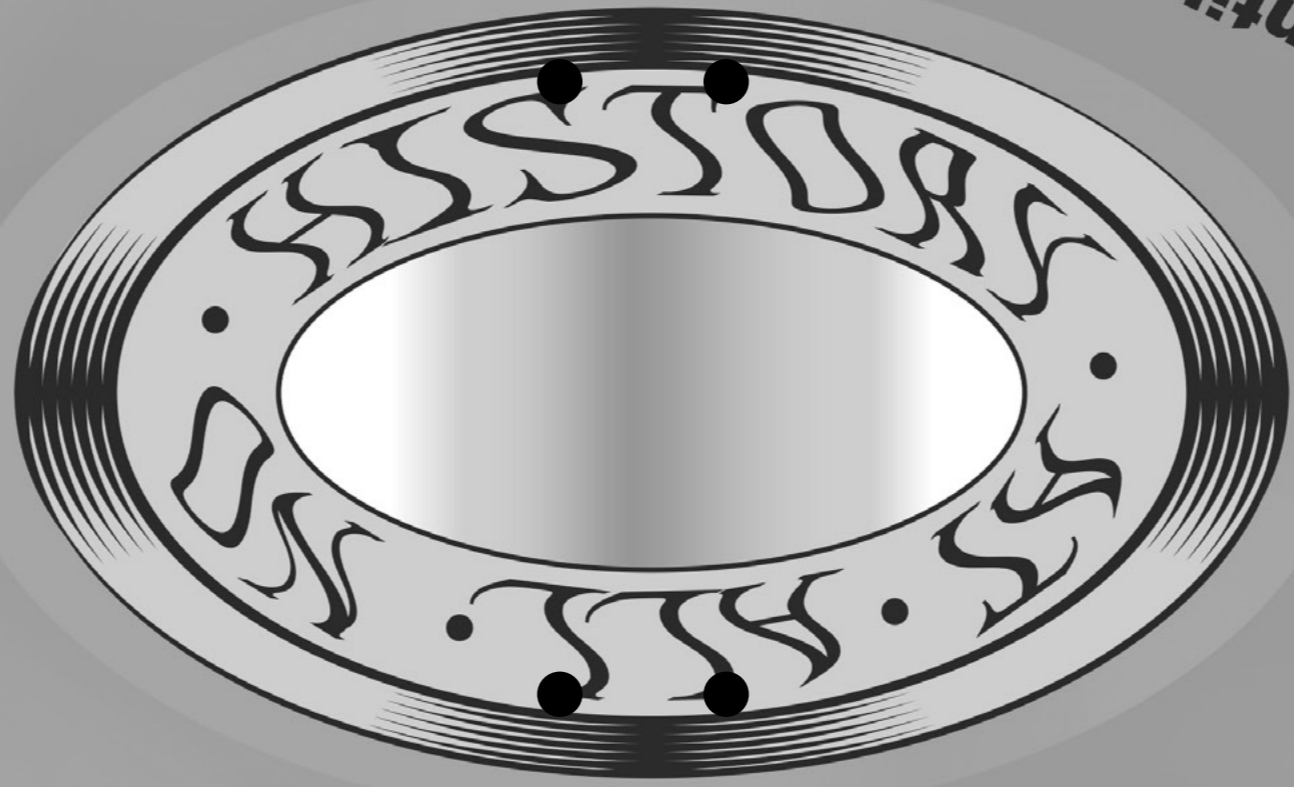
قطه

until they find their soul

snoregung and dangerous.
ing the truth.
and dangerous woman,
You are a savage,
They said,
and dangerous pu



SOME IDEAS HAVE TO DIE
lügen labern lästern
- LIZ



I am here because
were in my country
because they are still
- Houria Bouteldja

THEY GO ROUND AND
ROUND AND ROUND

what is the best advice
you've ever been given
GHOSTING

SAH

SILENCING

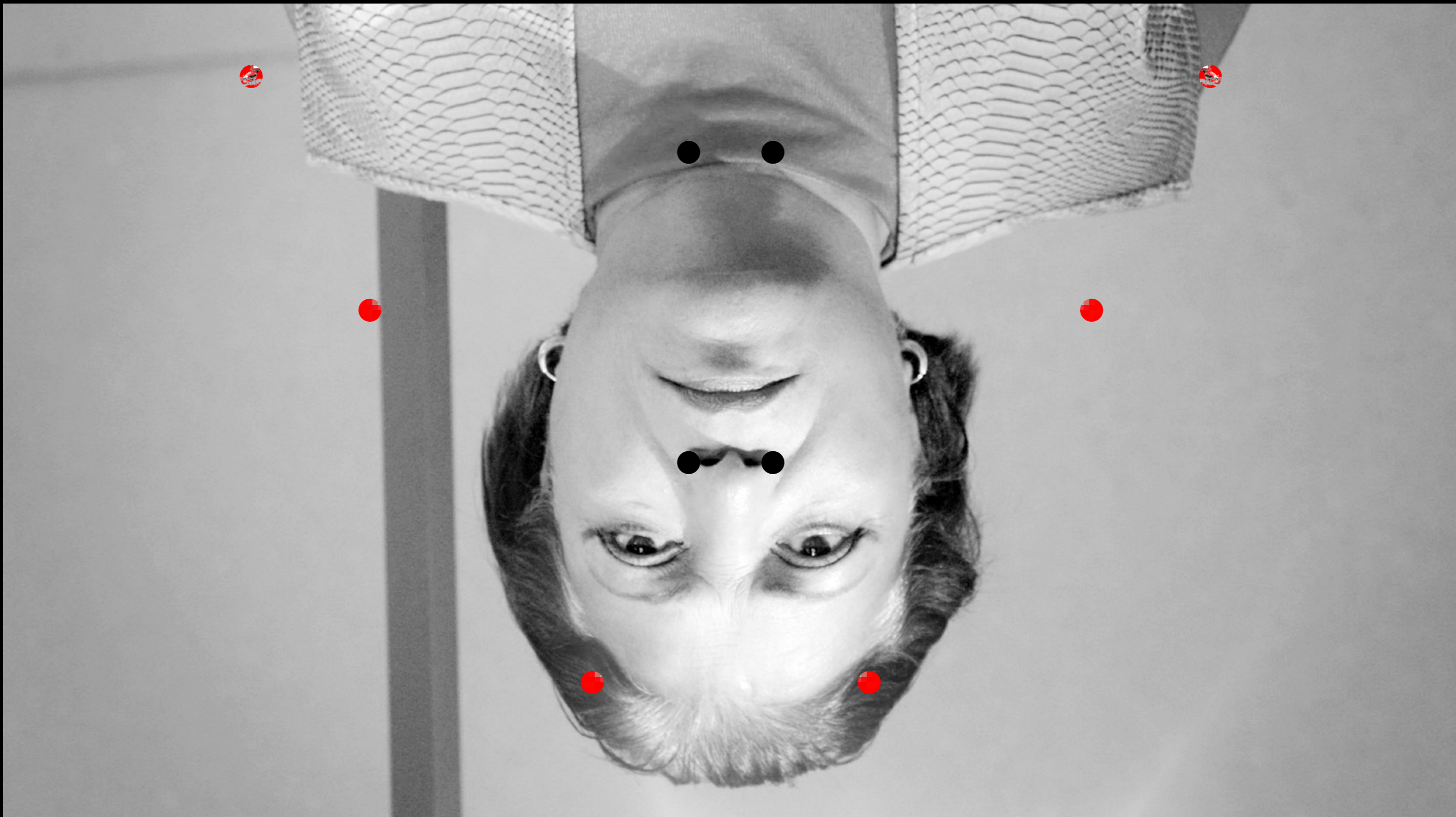
it's called silence - its very simple



عزير







With the formal abolition of slavery, people and institutions remained unaccountable for the further dispossession of African Americans. This was possible because the principles of differentiality and world-carelessness underlying existing institutions were not undone, and the violence integral to the operation of these institutions continue to shape modern narratives of liberation and social progress

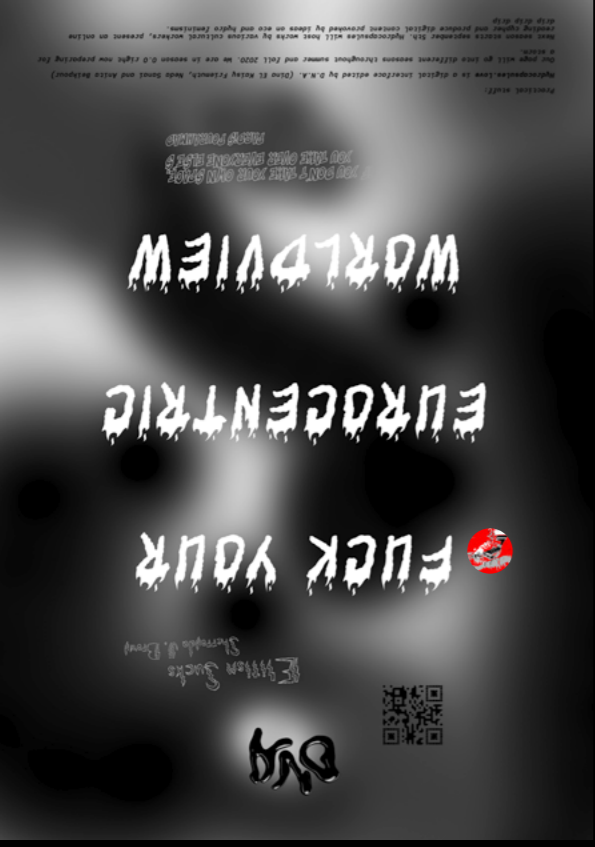
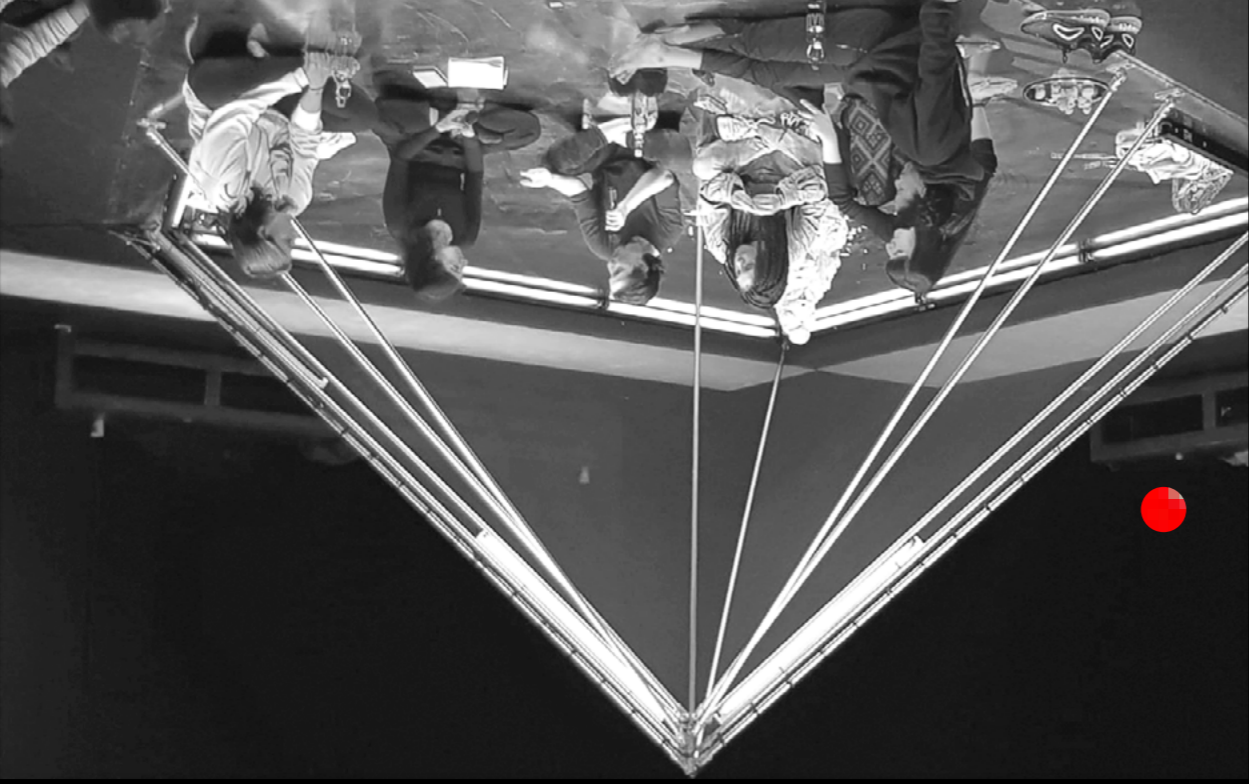
Revisionist historians can rewrite imperial time lines, insert "forgotten" moments, and even modify the way some of their milestones are remembered. As they do so, however, they affirm the mode of operation of the time line—a pure form whose content alone may be revised. The technology of history thus operates through us, through our interest in revising such time lines, in advocating for the inclusion of "forgotten" moments, and in seeking recognition of their status as important historical events. Like tedious archival ants we search for other milestones, or smaller subsequent events, that may explain why, at a certain historical moment, the victims were able to articulate such demands (as if they were ever incapable of such a thing) or why they chose to advocate them at another moment, as we are invited to make sense of history as a progressive template. Thus, for example, numerous historical explanations could be given for why the Palestinian infitada erupted in 1987, with no account of the role of the historian in reaffirming that this is indeed their first uprising since the 1967 conquest, and in fact, negating again other non-imperial modes of being in the world, premised on the belief in the reversibility of violence rather than in its perpetual continuance.

Experts in various fields and "good citizens" are called upon to engage in this task with prudence, by investing hope in moderate approaches, affirming the danger to the existing economy and political regime that awarding such reparations (for example, the return of millions of Palestinians to their lands) would entail, and warning of the risks of creating precedents in such delicate cases. Through citizens' participation, imperial technologies mold the violence they exercise—which cannot have a history in the first place—as objects of history, endowed with histories of their own. What is written as the history of emancipation, as granted by Lincoln, is actually the history of the operation of the technology of imperial history that produced it as event and object of study. It is the same for these categories: slavery, indentured labor, boarding schools, prisons of imperial violence interpellate us to interpret discrete events of which they consist and place them "historically" in relation to each other, preferably in an ascending order. We should be careful not to learn the labels given these situations and structures too well, because they incite us to forget that our aim is the recuperation of the worldly condition that could be sung aloud with others—not writing them into a dead and closed history as either heroes or victims.

The technology of history transforms the meaning of violence by spreading the belief in its deployment toward just ends. Thus, for example, advocates of reparations, who have no doubts that their claims do not exist separately from others, can nonetheless find themselves singling out moments as turning points in the history of reparations: as one historian writes, "the biggest achievement in the rapidly growing reparations movement was the 2001 (finalized in 2002) declaration of the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance." The question is not whether this event was as important as the author argues, but the way it is often compared and ranked in relation to others as if imperial violence or demands for reparations were matters of progressive deployment.

Tools of torture, placed on people's necks or wrists, not only widely appear in printed "images of slavery"; they also were part of political literacy, so citizens might tolerate slavery as acceptable. These objects of torture are spectacularly visible as part of the imperial regime of imperceptibility that renders the accountability of perpetrators who act lawfully in public unimaginable. Singling them out now in museums and textbooks, showcasing them as horrifying remnants of the past, is the outcome of a regime that has made its own violence into an object of history. By so doing, the removal of these objects from everyday use can count as a phase on the road to freedom; thus, the infrastructure of their invention, production, and operation is preserved intact. Invited to look at images of slavery, imperial visual literacy schools spectators to recognize "slaves" and overlook criminals, who are called "overseers," designed by an obsolete term endemic to the plantation system, as if those imperial rights, gestures, and procedures have nothing to do with the world we inhabit in the present. The body of knowledge and of know-how that lies behind the imperial enterprise of administering people continues to be studied and elaborated in the best universities, in a variety of departments, by the most "cutting edge" scholars in economics and political science, in architecture and medicine, specializing in analyzing and planning "growth" in different domains. This body of knowledge could not have been grown and expanded without the reproduction of rights to the bodies of the enslaved. The right to herd people, the right to chain them, to choke them, to intimidate them, to prevent them from being in a world of their own, to torture each one of them and call onto others to attack and harm them, to block their movement, to force them to obey, to use them to build regimes and wealth. This is the challenge of reparations: how to restore at the micro level—the relation of people to bodies—a threshold of unacceptability of these devices, skills, knowledge, rights, and techniques.

"No History at All", pp. 557-564, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, Verso Books, London, 2019. Reprinted with the permission of Verso & the author.



NO HISTORY AT ALL

Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism

Ariella Aisha Azoulay's book

This text is an excerpt from

Ariella Aisha Azoulay

Imperial time lines are predicated on the notion of progressive emancipation. Reparations claims are integrated into these solid time lines that consist of imperial sovereign deeds such as the creation of states and the beginnings and ends of wars. For reparations to be transformative, these time lines should be interpreted as solid markers of violence that need to be decommitted. The triple imperial principle—time, space, and body politic—is congealed in these time lines. This is emblemized by the temporal dissociation of violence from reparations, as if claims for reparations are the product of progressive minds and not part of worldly sovereignty, an onto-epistemological mode of sharing the world. The imperial fragmentation of a worldly understanding of reparations is an imperialistic desire to negate the incommensurability between the two modalities of sovereignties and to assimilate as few worldly claims as possible into its structures, without surrendering the imperial principles through which devastating technologies of violence continue to operate.

Fragmented and reduced to discrete cases, these claims seem to emerge in a "post-crime" era, when imperial crimes in their crystallized form, such as "slavery" or "expulsion," have been declared over and done with. Being declared over without abolishing the technologies, imperial crimes for which reparations are demanded are not over, cannot be over, as indicated by the basic claims for reparations: "the Nakba continues" or "prison labor or "indentured labor" are "the continuation of slavery." This incommensurability between imperial and worldly sovereignty made it possible that former slaves could be removed from the plantations they built with no compensation except legal emancipation, while also thrown into a hostile world with no closure of this violence or reparations for generations of servitude. The astonishment that officials in various Freedmen's Bureaus expressed when former slaves claimed their rights to go back to their "places of servitude" and benefit from the hands they cultivated, testifies to the extent to which imperial rights over others were not reversed in the post-emancipation world but continue to preside over all other systems or rights. This immanent temporal tension is key to understanding why, to begin with, reparations have been made into discrete, deferred, and monetary claims rather than anti-imperial mass movements, part of an attempt to actualize a worldly sovereignty. The transformation of reparations claims into discrete cases that concern mainly the victims is achieved through the denial, repression, suppression, and reduction of claims. Thus, the technology of progress continues to differentiate the descendants of victims from their ancestors, often by depicting them as more astute or moderate in claiming reparations and suggesting that their ability to perceive and protest the crimes perpetrated against their ancestors is a result of the Western education that they received.

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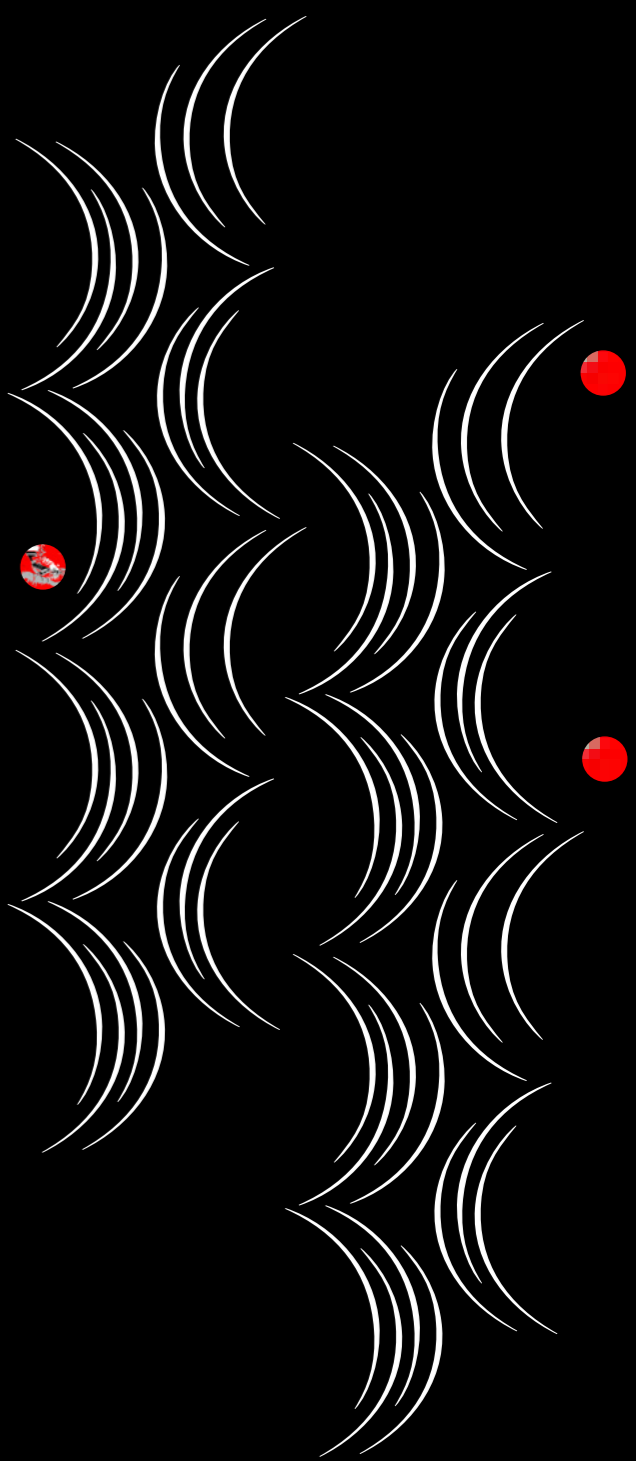
The singling out of the 1976 Land Day general strike of Palestinians (citizens of the state of Israel) as the first marker of land reclamation exemplifies the denial of the worldly sovereignty instantiated through multiple forms by Palestinians since 1948—infiltration, protests, clandestine cultivation of lands, legal means, marches, strikes, and more. By reclaiming what was taken from them, Palestinians refused to recognize the legitimacy of imperial sovereignty on stolen lands and continue to act as members of the worldly sovereignty in Palestine with whose destruction they refuse to comply. Their return was and still is a key for its renewal. The violent response to these claims—smashing and denigrating them, using military force, depicting them as terrorist attacks on the state's sovereignty, rejecting and suppressing them—should be understood as the struggle of imperial sovereignty to destroy worldly sovereignty and the possibility for the repair of destroyed worlds. The discipline of history denied their standing as members of a threatened worldly sovereignty and endorsed the outsiders' status allocated to them by the imperial sovereignty that struggles to impose itself as a fait accompli.

Not surprisingly, demands for reparations have assumed a history of their own, separated from another history—that of the violence that they sought to end. Placed on time lines, these discrete moments are compared with prior claims and ranked according to their success or failure in making history. Needless to say, success or failure in advocacy of these claims should have little to do with the reasons, motivations, and justifications for ending the violence reparations seek to address.

Reparations have nothing to do with progress, neither that of perpetrators nor that of victims; rather, they represent a rejection of the imperial principle and a recovery of a worldly human condition, worldly sovereignty. Since regime-made disasters do not consist of punctual abuses, substantial reparations claims necessarily consist of a demand to stop the operation of violence and to reverse its consequences. Sabotaging the technology of violence, in fact, could in itself be a mode of reparations. Given the role of the technology of history in the production of imperial crimes, reparations claims should be reconceptualized not as a form of alternative history, but of no history at all. History is not just an academic discipline or a profession, nor is it merely a genre of narration. As a form and body of knowledge, but above all as a technology of rule, history is an imperial invention that was central to the exercise of imperial violence well before it was institutionalized in the nineteenth century as an academic discipline. History provides the tools to make the political and scientific taxonomies of the world into law, even as it accounts for the massive violence used to expose people and worlds to the imperial appropriative gaze and its taxonomic desires.

Once things, places, events, actions, animals, and plants are named and classified, they necessarily start to have their own history, and their study is legitimized by another, separate field of history—the history of history—in a way that confirms the existence of these sui generis histories from which the constitutive violence is now absent. Nothing can escape the jaws of history. We, the imperial subjects, are compelled to believe not only that everything has a history, but also that we are capable of making history, and we are made to act accordingly. We are trained to appraise our actions in the present, as if we were capable of shaping their anticipated results, and to evaluate them later according to their outcomes, as if by following certain prescribed practices we could mold the future. As if the hurts of manufacturing the future is not in itself the cause and effect of the closed circuit of imperial reparations. Let us look at two approaches to history and history. The end of slavery in the United States, as proclaimed by President Lincoln, was declared a milestone in the transition of American society from a society of slaveholders to a liberal democracy. In a brilliant withdrawal from the archive, W. E. B. Du Bois potentializes the archival violence and foregrounds the meaning of the mass escape of slaves from their servitude as a general strike that decided the Civil War and brought slavery to its end. Du Bois shifts the meaning of such a largescale event from single archival documents—the Emancipation Proclamation or the Thirteenth Amendment—to the worldliness performed by hundreds of thousands of people who quit their positions and went on strike.

Other narratives, stemming from academic research and popular memories, traditions, and celebrations alike show that Lincoln's proclamation was not decisive in the abolition of slavery, yet continues to be overwheld by mainstream depictions nurtured by the archive, seen everywhere from school textbooks to Hollywood films, which present Lincoln as the decisive hero in the struggle to end slavery. The consolidation of emancipation as a milestone minimizes the significance of other processes through which slavery could have been materially undone, instead of sustaining the same political formation that had allowed slavery to exist in the first place. Instead of making substantial reparations for slaves the heart of a general project of world repair, publicly recognizing the centuries of abominable crimes they suffered, and assisting their former masters in unlearning the technologies that perpetrated reparations as an offer of reconciliation from the Union after it devastated the Confederacy. Thus, with the help of history as a technology, the Emancipation Proclamation that abolished slavery in only a few states, and as part of a bargain to maintain white supremacy and control over state apparatuses and wealth, was made a milestone in an imperial time line that consists of numerous other imperial crimes that have been naturalized.



University, which was made free during Nassar's regime and really pushed the middle class. However, when it came to job opportunities, tourism was really the only thing one could use a university arts degree for. So, just like Egyptian objects became interesting to the West, my mum was brought to Germany by a tourist. This story doesn't sound very romantic and, for sure, there was a lot of love and care I ignore here, but I am just using it as an example. When I read Houria Bouteldja saying "I am here because white people were in my country, because they are still there," I really felt it resonating with my mum's story.

(MIPPL)

I love how comic series emerge as a recurrent component of your practice. The form acts, on the one hand, as a summary of what other pieces in the room are intended to activate and, on the other, as a tool of mediation and a playful way of dealing with discourse. What is condensed in the comic series *Some Ideas Have to Die*, and how will the story unfold?

(DEKFF)

It is really all the same story, just told in different ways. What I like about the comic part is that I can let the sculptures speak and be really playful, and it is also a kind of collage. It's good that you are asking about how it continues, because I am very eager to see myself. The comic has been a good tool for me, to achieve and also look at the material from different angles, kind of as if different people tell the story. In the movie it is more the story of the white institution juxtaposed with Maha's storytelling. The comics are my notes.

(DEKFF)

The local story told by bodies is such a beautiful way of putting it. I really wish that it is that. But also I believe that exhibition spaces have potential and we can use them in many ways, both as a room for reflection and to socialize. A text that influenced me a lot is Sara Ahmed's "Phenomenology of Whiteness", where she talks about the physical white walls of a museum and how it feels as a non-white body to enter them. That is really why I wanted to shift the attention from the white walls and glass monitors to the colorful carpet as a space to exhibit.

(MIPPL)

You've been working against misrepresentation of BIPOC and Queer people in mainstream media and art discourses for a few years now. How did it start, and how is it going?

(DEKFF)

It started with Feminist Collective with No Name, a collective founded in Copenhagen in 2016. We got our first attention from the mainstream media newspapers rather than art institutions. So we decided to subvert this space and create our own news program, called FNNNews. With the tagline "Makes visible what has been made invisible," we curated artworks, stories, and interviews from many different artists and cultural workers. It was really liberating to take over the mic. Since then we have worked in many different formations, largely together with Neda Sanati and Anita Bekpour as DNA. Working collectively is a huge part of my practice and it has really influenced the way in which I work individually.

(MIPPL)

The tour through the museum refers to the rising demands of formerly colonized peoples and nations for the return of artifacts stolen by the West. The video indirectly asks whether these artifacts should be placed in their origin countries' museums, when the museum institution itself is defined by Western history writing.

(DEKFF)

I think that is a reason for why I am talking about the soul regarding these objects and their inherent stories. I want to argue from a perspective of care and emotions rather than a rational and historical one. When you only see the objects' importance in terms of its material and chronological placement, it seems logical to move them from one museum to another. That's really quite uncreative. I don't think it is fair to tell Egypt, or any other place from where objects were stolen, how to worship their own objects. It seems to me like such a small-minded colonizer statement to say "you get them back only when you put them in museums and value them like we do."

(MIPPL)

Why is the aspect of the theft so important, and why do you avoid stating all sides of the argument?

(DEKFF)

I think it is important to call actions by their name, and not to find a rhetoric just so that it fits a certain narrative. These objects were stolen. To not only say that this was wrong, that they should be returned, and apologies issued, but that there should also be reparations and that is a long and expensive process, is the least we can expect in response to the level of criminality behind this significant colonial gesture.

(MIPPL)

How do you connect *No History at All* to the theoretical claims of Aritella Aisha Azoulay in *Against Imperialism*?

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(DEKFF)

I have been carrying this huge book with me over the last year, and it has inspired and taught me a lot. I especially love the titles of the many chapters, like "No History At All" or "Well Documented Objects – Undocumented People." I was thinking about how to honor the people that have given me good advice

and so I gathered some of them on the carpet. The methodology of the carpet is quite similar to the comics: a collage of statements I gathered while working on this project; a kind of archive. Aritella Aisha makes the argument that looted objects have been rendered into art and history as if they only belong to the past and thus no longer belong to the people who have been surrounded by them since their creation. She even compares objects to refugees and says that they are "missing their previous life and being missed by those who were left behind or deported elsewhere" (p.150).

(MIPPL)

You've also been involved in the foundation of The Union, an organization representing racialized artists and cultural workers in Denmark, which calls out various forms of racial discrimination and working conditions in the arts and culture industries.

(DEKFF)

The Union really is a project that started as a network several years ago when some of the first cases of racial violence in the arts were called out in Denmark, such as the blackface worn by Madame Nielsen. Many individual voices found themselves fighting their workspaces alone and that is really difficult and draining. It started with several meetings in Folkets Hus which were a huge success, and really was a good way to network and build bridges between several collectives who have been working with decolonial critique for many years, such as Marronage and Adoptionspolitisk Forum. In one of the first meetings the idea of forming an actual working union was raised.

(MIPPL)

How is its work unfolding so far, and where do you plan to take it from here?

(DEKFF)

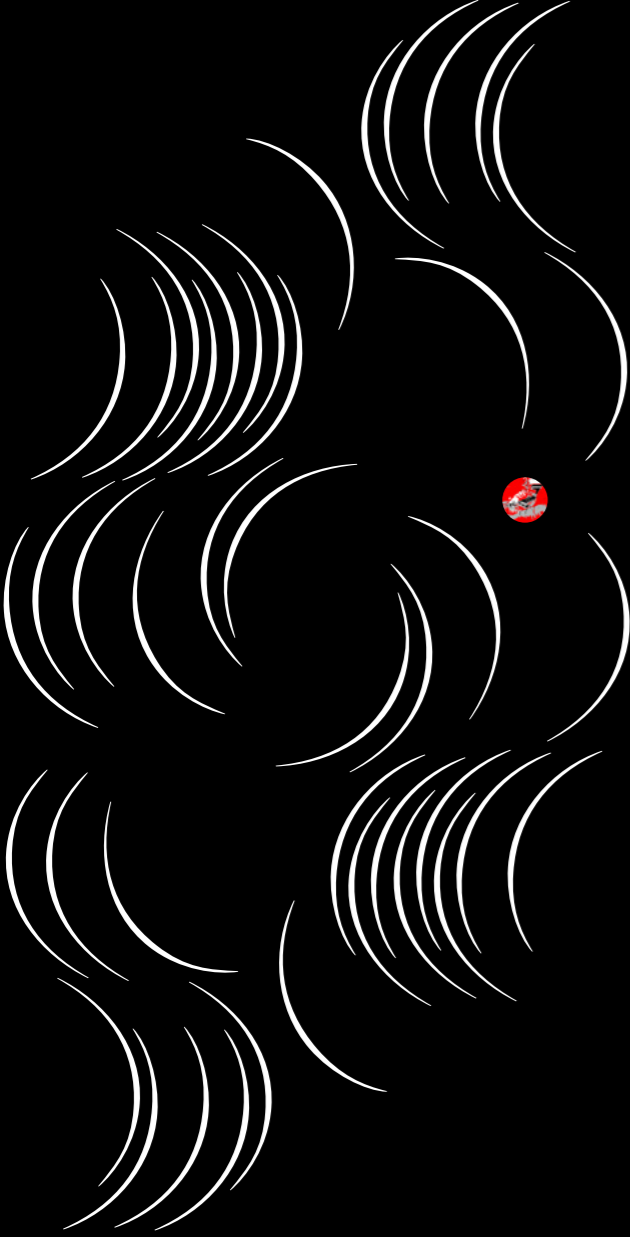
The bureaucracy and building of an actual workers' union has been done by a really amazing group of cultural workers based in Denmark. In order to keep it functional and effective it is focusing on working in Denmark. Now the structure is set, and you can sign up and read more about their work at theunionbipoc.com. I can't resist immersing ourselves in the carpet again and I ask you: What is the best advice you've ever been given?

(DEKFF)

Maha always tells me to be more patient. Also to listen to my *Ib*, the aspect of my soul that is the heart. What about you?

(MIPPL)

"If the dogs are barking, it's because we are moving ahead." Something like this is what Don Quixote tells his companion Sancho Panza, and I love it, because, knowing it as an idealist yet delirious rider in a mad post-chivalric world (aka modernity), it focuses on the ethical ideal that individuals can be right while society is wrong. For the growing class consciousness we need to hold on to, this seems to connect to the core notion of rescuing history from a canon, and how you critically revise the colonial skeleton of the museum as an imperial matter, and therefore, a rotten place. I would say that this carpet is the right place to think about Don Quixote, and my father, who also gave me a personal experience with this universal thought, and who empowered me to read Cervantes as one's own storytelling.



HOLDING THE SUN IN THE SOUL, OR A MILLION SMALL HANDS TOUCH THE EARTH

Maria Berríos

Behold the women taking back their place, honoring their grandmothers by visiting their stolen objects, fragments of worlds violently torn from them. The women roam the coldness of their ancestors' imprisoned belongings, making sure they are not left alone, showing their respect by proudly flaunting their scarlet attire to contrast the white gloves and robes of the morgue conservators. They bring the warmth of red tracksuits and crimson latex pants, sporting a side braid, the hair-attire of the pharaonic daughters. They are led by the emerald brightness and care of the mother and the prowess of her snakeskin vest.

They walk together up the stairwells of the western temple, contesting hundreds of years of being told that the reason their belongings were taken from them was because they were incapable of caring for them; that they would be better off in the cold vaults of the museum, an institution that was, in fact, born to store the immensity of the loot. Instead the women acknowledge the mothers; they stand before one of stone, holding and protecting her child in her shawled embrace. And although the stained walls of those buildings have been wiped clean and painted white to host the erasure of all the living stories taken, the women know that the power of their grandmother's sun cannot be locked up. The power of those stories is in their soul; they carry it with them. With it they touch the world. The white fathers believed that the objects they had placed in crystal coffins were dead and declared them things of the past in order to redress themselves as new men, and constructed new great mausoleums for their big new ideas. But the women knew better. They felt the grandmothers haunting the grand white halls, animating, burning inside the women's hearts every time their stories were retold.

Now they are honored and regenerated by interspecies amulets, cockroaches, black cats. By Ka the snake. They all live and inhabit multiple everyday rituals of self-care, of warfare, ones that occur in all spaces, in kitchens, on squares, on street corners, sitting on carpets. A woman's celebration, the joy of sharing their stories with one another. The rumor of their words can slither in all cracks. A necessary and everyday ceremony of sisterhood and survivance. A regeneration of the witchcraft that will allow the necessary extinction of the museum impulse. Invented and reproduced by the white fathers and their entitlement to know, to speak of, to own, to penetrate, to possess, and to be curious about everything; their ongoing desire to educate, and even resist with their radical words while desperately clinging to their sclerotic senile powers. Meanwhile the women feel, the women love, and we DANCE.

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THE MUSEUM HAS NO SOUL

A conversation between Maria Ines Plaza Lazo
& Dina El Kaisy Friemuth

(Maria Ines Plaza Lazo)
Dina, what's the soul of *House of Ka*?
(Dina El Kaisy Friemuth)
In ancient Egyptian belief, the soul manifests in many ways. Khet, Sah, Ren, Ba, Ka, Ib, and Shut are some of its names. The deity Atum created the world with magic, the source of the soul that, as such, resides as an eternal force in every being. But not only beings; sculptures could host the souls of the depicted and could be a form of eternal portal for souls on Earth. Now, many sculptures have missing noses. Those noses were broken to release the souls from the objects carrying them. I learned all this through my mother. She is part of the soul of *House of Ka*, which manifests in the stories carried by the people oppressed by cultural hegemonies. But if you are asking me, if the museum has a soul, I would definitely say no.

(MIPL)
The horror-like soundscape that accompanies Ebow and your mother observing Egyptian sculptures at the Neues Museum in Berlin, suggests a direct connection between their bodies and the artifacts exhibited. What grand storytelling are you willing to destroy here?

(DEKF)
My brother Karim made the soundtrack. He came up with the mood, fitting it to the current state of museums, and composed everything after we talked about how we feel in those rooms. It kind of makes me feel like I am in an Indiana Jones movie and that I'm here to perform their return to their place of origin: their context, their people. It was a big part of the European Colonial Project to tell a story about their cultural supremacy over other cultures—similar to the grander storytelling of the White race. In this fairytale (still alive and well today) the Arabs are barbaric and don't value even their own heritage, are unable to do their own repairs or to build museums that look like European houses. The destruction of Palmyra is a story the West likes to use as an example of how dangerous it would be to give back the objects and which perfectly fits the image of the "uncivilized" that they have created.

(MIPL)
House of Ka refers to your mother as a carrier of this heritage. She was also a tourist guide for Egyptian history herself. How did her job influence your perception of national narratives, of ancient mythologies, and the making of personal memories?

(DEKF)
Egypt was really one of the first mega tourism places and the whole economy changed from rural/agricultural to tourism, and Cairo's population grew from 2.5 million to 20 million between 1950 and 2020. This is the beginning of my story of how my mum met my dad. Maha studied philosophy at Cairo



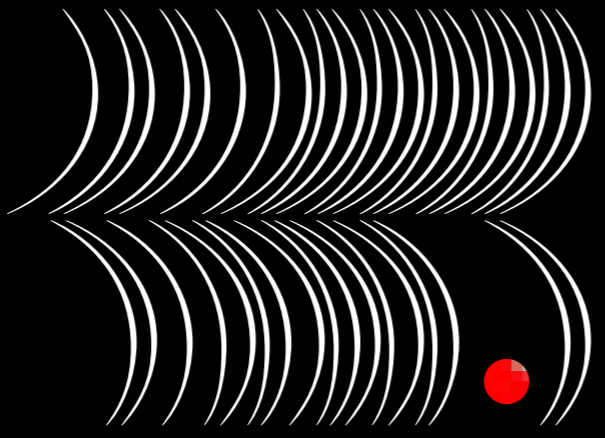
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Dina El Kaisy Fricmuth
No History at All
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No History at All



FOREWORD

It is a great pleasure to be able to introduce this first publication about the emerging young artist Dina El Kaisy Fricmuth, which will be published in connection with the artist's first solo exhibition *No History At All* at O—Overgaden. The exhibition, which presents a series of new works including a large red carpet decorated with quotations, the video work *House of KA*, a series of posters and cartoons, and a large facade banner bearing the words "Some Ideas Have to Die." Together, the works direct a critical look at power structures within history writing and raise, among other things, the burning issue of repatriation—that is, whether and how Western museum institutions should return archaeological and ethnographic objects to their original peoples.

The exhibition borrows its title from a chapter in writer Arifella Aisha Azoulay's book *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, in which she writes that history writing is a tool to alienate our past so that it is not seen as part of the present; and that history writing is an instrument of power wielded in order to exclude. This truth is new to many and therefore difficult to talk about, but Dina El Kaisy Fricmuth insists on exactly that. In their work, they articulate the deeply skewed power relations of history, point to the embedded racist structures that we as Europeans and Danes would rather not acknowledge exist in our culture or our historiography, and make us aware of the need to understand that everyone—including O—Overgaden, as a white, Danish art institution—has work to do when it comes to decolonizing and diversifying our institutional spaces.

The long-term collaboration preceding Dina El Kaisy Fricmuth's exhibition and this publication was made possible through O—Overgaden's INTRO program, generously supported by Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond. INTRO is a special and well-resourced, one-year development program aimed at supporting young, newly graduated artists with a connection to the Danish art scene. The program is tailored to the artistic practice in question and includes funding for travel and production as well as professional, strategic, and technical supervision from acclaimed Danish and international voices within the field of visual arts. The collaboration culminates in a large solo show at O—Overgaden, accompanied by a publication in this series.

For more than 55 years, O—Overgaden's core focus has been to help tomorrow's artists get ahead in the Danish art scene. Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond's support to further develop this work is completely unique, and we owe them a big and heartfelt thank you for their commitment. A warm thank you is due to Maria Inés Plaza Lazo and Maria Bettos for their thoughtful texts about, and conversations with, the artist, and to Arifella Aisha Azoulay, whose important book *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* has been an instrumental inspiration for Dina, and from which we are happy to be able to include an excerpt in this publication. Special thanks also to The Union—Denmark's union for racialized artists and cultural workers—for having curated a series of events in connection with Dina's exhibition, which address questions including colonialism and Blackness in Danish art.

Thank you also to the core team at O—Overgaden: Curator Ida Schyum, Head of Press and Communications Line Bredder, our technical wizard Toke Martins, editor and translator Nanna Frits, and our helpful all-round intern Rikke Bank. A special thank you to Maria Bettos and Christina Wilson for their focused and caring mentoring, and to Anne Ribber for coordinating the initial steps of the INTRO-collaboration. Finally, but foremost, O—Overgaden wants to extend a deeply special and heartfelt thanks to Dina for a deeply inspiring collaboration, for their tireless work in organizing voices and partners, and for being the luminous voice that points us in the direction of a new, anti-racist historiography.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn,
Interim Director, O—Overgaden

Dina El Kaidi

No History

