

## Spaces of Remembrance

**An exhibition with winners and nominees of the Marcel Duchamp Prize in cooperation with the ADIAF, 7th July – 9th September 2012**

Memories can be sweet or painful. Sometimes we indulge in them, sometimes they are deceptive, and sometimes they take leave of us. There are memories we do not want to lose at any price, and others we try to avoid as much as possible. A certain smell is often sufficient to bring a whole chapter of one's life to mind, whether we want it to or not.

Our relationship to the past is characterized by the knowledge of the insurmountable distance to it. Only memory is capable of bringing the past in to the light of the present; it is a procedure, however, that does not take place without interpretation and selection and hence is per se construed and fragmentary. Furthermore, it contains an almost melancholy component: the experience that the memory references must first be completed in order to reach our consciousness—memory always presupposes a loss. And yet memory is not only backward-looking; it also offers an opportunity to gaze forward: we employ memories to confirm the present, as an impetus of renewal, or to question our own standpoint. Memory serves self-assurance, it endows identity.

The discourse concerning memory has increasingly grown in significance with the ongoing medialization of our society, the dematerialization of all data and the associated possibilities of relocating memory, and it furthermore resonates in the production of contemporary art as well. In our dealings with memory, space (not in the sense of a spot on a map but as a social framework) is perhaps the most important category. Memories are stored and conserved, ordered and inscribed in spaces. Art is an apt example of this: once taken up in the canon of museum collections, art not only embodies a part of our collective memory but is itself also decisively involved in the production of memory. Artists therefore play a special role in the construction of spaces of remembrance: they communicate between epochs and generations and contribute to preserving of the pool of our shared knowledge. At the same time, their works are often also critical examinations of this knowledge to the extent that they subvert or call the preexisting historiographic canon into question. Art itself can consequently also be seen as technique of remembrance.

The Spaces of Remembrance exhibition is devoted to the mediums of storing and archiving memory as well as the artistic reflection of history. The manner in which memories—that initially always reference an individual experience—can become generally binding unfolds particularly vividly in the works of the six artists gathered together here. But on the other hand, they also concern themselves with the destruction and rewriting of “monuments of remembrance,” deal with the transitoriness of memory and its ability to fluctuate or with the reconstruction, the restructuring of remembrance spaces and the gaps in them.

**Anri Sala's** (born 1974, Tirana) video *Byrek* (2000), is given over entirely to an identification ritual that the artist is visibly trying to preserve: his own grandmother's daily preparing of byrek. Personal memories of his own family's history are superimposed here with the general difficulty involved in preserving and handing down the traditions of one's own origins over geographical and temporal distances.

In **Kader Attia's** (born 1970, Seine-Saint-Denis) floor sculpture *Couscous* (2009), a specific food is likewise equally the existential staple of a specific geographical region and the carrier of individual memory. The grain is heaped to form a hilly landscape that, however, is interspersed with gaps. The openings evoke associations of the obliteration or disappearance of entire cities and peoples.

Remembering and forgetting, writing and rewriting are similarly central aspects of **Mircea Cantor's** (born 1977, Oradea) video *Tracking Happiness* (2009). Women dressed in white walk in a circle one behind the other. Each of them holds a broom in her hands with which she obliterates the tracks of her predecessors and lays down new tracks of her own at the same time, which will also be covered over at the next moment. The round dance is repeated ceaselessly like a mantra, alluding to the impossibility of permanence and perpetuity.

In **Cyprien Gaillard's** (born 1980, Paris) photo series *Geographical Analogies* (2006–12), transitoriness is already a done deal through the selection of the material. The continuously developed picture atlas is a key work in the artist's long-term exploration of the relationship between nature and architecture. Presented in a kind of display case, the series of Polaroid photographs shows a very personal selection of natural sites, mythically-charged places, constructed monuments, and urban life in general. In repeatedly documenting decay and destruction Gaillard is less concerned with loss than he is fascinated by the transformations to which our environment is subject. As such, the collection of pictures stands expressly for the parallelism of various times in space.

**Tatiana Trouvé** (born 1968, Consenza) understands drawing as a mental process: a steady production of ever new spaces of remembrance takes place in the serial operation of drawing. The spaces that emerge in this way are elusive and seem, like memory itself, to be fluid rather than static. The impression is created that the forgotten and the absent are just as much a part of the drawings as the visible. This lends the works an almost somnambulist, dream-like aura.

**Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's** (born 1965, Strasbourg) on-site installations involve accessible rooms in which biographical memories are interwoven with reminiscences from literature and film. The living spaces she has set up tell their stories with reduced means, particularly through the meticulous use of light and color and the appearance of people and occurrences. The memory chambers can be autobiographical in nature or concern the lives of others; they never exhausted themselves in the mere depiction of a subjective experience, but are also always documents of a specific time that transcends the individual.

The exhibition *Spaces of Remembrance* features winners and nominees of the Marcel Duchamp Prize. The most important French prize for contemporary art has been awarded annually since 2000 to an artist living in France by the ADIAF (Association pour la Diffusion Internationale de l'Art Français – Association for the International Diffusion of French Art), whose membership is made up of approximately 300 private collectors. The prize is endowed with 35 000 € and tied to a solo exhibition by the award winner at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

The accompanying catalogue, featuring texts by Kathrin Barutzki, Elodie Evers, Philipp Fürnkäs, Magdalena Holzhey, Doris Krystof, Miriam Lowack, Heike Munder, harriet Zilch and others will be published by Kehrer Verlag.

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