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ABOUT THIS EDUCATION RESOURCE

Education Resource: John Neylon
This Education Resource is published to accompany the
exhibition

Adelaide International 2012: Restless
1 March to 5 April 2012

Including the work of eighteen international artists
located over four public galleries in Adelaide

Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art
Australian Experimental Art Foundation
Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia
Flinders University City Gallery

This Education Resource is designed to support learning
outcomes and teaching programs associated with viewing
the Restless exhibition by:
• Providing information about the artists
• Providing information about key works
• Challenging students to engage with the works and the
  exhibition’s themes
• Identifying ways in which the exhibition can be used as
  a curriculum resource
• Providing strategies for exhibition viewing, as well as
  pre- and post-visit research
It may be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition
or as a pre-visit or post-visit resource.
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LIST OF WORKS
RESTLESS: ADELAIDE INTERNATIONAL 2012

The catalogue for Restless contains an introductory essay by the exhibition’s curator Victoria Lynn, and is available for purchase at the venues.

More information on the exhibition can be found at:
www.adelaidefestival.com.au/2012/visual_arts/adelaide_international_restless

Lynn’s essay identifies a number of key themes or issues which offer frameworks for looking at and responding to works in Restless.

These can be summarized as follows:

Parameters

The exhibition has as its broad parameters notions of faith, emotion, mystery and the cosmos. These notions are not defined by absolutes such as ‘heaven’ or ‘hell’. Rather, this project is intended to explore the idea of restlessness associated with things being uncertain or on the edge.

This state of restlessness is defined in this exhibition by artists journeying or transitioning between one state and another.

Common concerns

From a curatorial perspective the works are underlaid with two common concerns.

The first concern is conjecture or a sense of questioning. The works ask rather than answer. They conjecture rather than solve.

The second concern is that of time. Time as explored or expressed in many works is not evenly regulated and linear. Lynn sees time being treated more as a ‘forcefield’ – ‘polycentric and fractal.’ There is a prevailing sense of time being absolutely present or splintered.
Thresholds

Works are characterized by a constant unraveling or negotiation between traditional certainties and the unknown. Lynn sees the artist as ‘a kind of trickster’ who invites us to ‘travel across thresholds and step into other worlds.’

These thresholds are various: political, architectural, linguistic, emotional.

Groupings

Within the lineup of artists there are clusters of artists defined by:

- Urban observations in which body fragments, citizens or the material of the city itself are reconfigured. Examples: Nancy Spero’s Maypole/take no prisoners. The dislocated and reconfigured figures of N.S. Harsha, encounters with the city in Francis Alÿs’ video work. The daily disorder and upheaval of the city captured in Socratis Socratous’ photographs.

- Questioning belief in language particularly translation in which meaning may be missed or distorted. Examples: Saskia Olde Wolbers’ video Pareidolia. (‘Pareidolia’ is a term that describes finding meaningful imagery in apparently abstract patterns and natural forms such as clouds). Lisa Reihana’s PELT series which suggest states of hybridity or overlap between human and animal nature.

- Notions of presence and absence. A number of artists explore territory between loss or disappearance and a determination to create a presence or memory in the face of that loss. Examples: Jinoos Taghizadeh juxtaposing revolutionary images from Iranian newspapers with iconic images from Western art history. Rabih Mroué using self-portraits as substitutes for missing persons in the newspaper. Teresa Margolles restoring the memory of faceless victims.

Summary

The final catalogue essay paragraph reads: ‘The works in Restless explore thresholds and transitions, departures and deviations. The resonant spaces of architecture, the translation of words and cultures, the precipice between life and death, presence and absence, are the various scores at play. The restless journeys, splintered sense of time and open-ended explorations in these artistic practices give us a new vision of the experience of dynamic force fields and mobility.’
2. EXPLORING THE WORKS

Francis Alÿs
Born Belgium 1959, lives in Mexico City

Gringo, 2003
in collaboration with Rafael Ortega
video documentation of an action, sound
5 min
courtesy David Zwirner, New York

Artist statement

‘Gringo is a short film which I did in the Mexican province of Hidalgo in the year 2002. I re-enacted an event that had happened to me in the past: I had to enter a small village and to cross it as to continue my way and I was walking with camera at hand. In the crossing I had to pass a street guarded by dogs, a dog’s territory. The dogs attacked me and I instinctively used the camera which I was holding both as a shield to protect myself from the dogs’ aggression, by simply maintaining them out or reach and as a weapon, virtually to attack the dogs by describing large curves in the air with the camera.’

‘I didn’t know how the dogs were going to react, which of them would be the leader, how quickly they would realize they were stronger than my camera, etc...you have to very quickly decipher what the dogs tactics will be... To maintain at once the control on the situation and the dramatic tension for the film, you sort of have to act like a dog among dogs; as if you were improvising with other actors, you have to guess what their next move will be and precede it. So it’s more primitive than improvisation, it’s survival instinct and near to animal aggression coming out of you.’

Francis Alÿs, extract from Restless exhibition catalogue.
Perspectives

Alÿs’ diverse works include notational sketches, drawings, lists, paintings, performances, slide shows, animation and videos, with one work often manifested in several ways. Walking is at the core of his practice: works are conceived on long walks through cities, particularly Mexico City, where he lives. Alÿs moves through locations, telling stories, mapping spaces, making connections.

www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au

Alÿs has maintained a studio in the Historical Centre of Mexico City since the early 1990s, and has made a series of works ‘within walking distance’ of this studio examining everyday life in the megalopolis, some of which are brought together here. The Collectors 1990–92 were magnetised ‘dogs’, which he walked around the city so that metallic detritus stuck to their surfaces.

Tate Gallery, exhibition notes, A Story of Deception, Tate Modern, September 2010.

This exhibition draws on the Museum’s unique and important collection of Alÿs’ work, highlighting three recent major acquisitions... These works present an investigation of methods of social action, from rehearsals and re-enactments in urban environments that address the politics of public space to large-scale communal participation where the culmination of many small acts achieves mythic proportions. The exhibition, which is conceptually grouped around these three thematic bodies of work, also includes additional artworks that the artist has developed around the idea of rehearsal and re-enactment in relation to progress in art and everyday life.

www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1104

WORK

See Gringo video: www.francisalys.com/online/gringo.html

‘In Gringo 2003, the camera becomes the foreigner, trespassing into the dog’s territory. A cacophony of barking and a circular motion pervade this work, which asks, who is the ‘savage’: dog or intruder? The two negotiate the threshold between their respective territories, highlighting the notion that creatures do not respect the spatial boundaries of the modernist environment.’

Victoria Lynn, Restless catalogue essay
FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

- The term ‘the human condition’ is frequently used to refer to some kind of truth or reality which applies to humanity in general. Do you consider that *Gringo* expresses or is concerned with something like this?

- Do you think the artist would be surprised or disappointed with your personal response to this work?

- Holding a camera is commonly read as a declaration of neutrality such as being an observer. But in *Gringo* it is wielded as if a weapon. Álys has stated, ‘The “allegory” comes in with the use of my camera both as weapon and shield.’ What might this be saying about the camera and its role within contemporary society?

- The artist has commented that he didn’t know how the dogs were going to react. Consider making an artwork or creating a performance in which improvisation plays a key role.
One interpretation of Alÿs’ work is that it presents perspectives on the unstable nature of entropic societies. Research the term ‘entropic’ and apply your findings to this interpretation of the artist’s work.

A writer has commented that ‘lots of artists consider the nature of art in their work - what art is, the way context confers meaning, how art operates in social networks and more.’ But he sees Alÿs as taking art ‘pretty much for granted.’ *

What do you think he means by this? Can this statement be applied in any way to Gringo?

* Christopher Knight, Los Angeles Times

FURTHER RESEARCH

www.francisalys.com (artist website, contains several videos)
www.vogue.com/magazine/article/a-dangerous-mind/#1
www.postmedia.net/alyss/interview.htm
www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/jun/14/francis-alyss-story-of-deception/print
www.frieze.com/issue/article/walk_on_the_wild_side/

See also Alÿs interviews on YouTube
N.S. HARSHA
Born India 1969, lives in Mysore

Extraction, 2012
acrylic, sugarcane, natural fibre rope and found stones
dimensions variable
courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery, London

Artist statement
‘I start a painting with a vague thought – it could be based on my everyday
experience, or something else altogether – and from there a story begins
to take shape. However, for me, painting isn’t always about creating solid
narratives. I fill my work with gaps and loose ends; I want to lead and mislead
the viewer. Ambiguity makes a picture very exciting.’

N.S. Harsha
The Observer, 20 September 2009
www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/sep/20/guide-to-painting-ns-harsha

Perspectives
‘Harsha operates within the venerable tradition of miniature painting but
brings to it an expansive intellect. He is quizzical about structures and
borders, the zones where art and life intermesh. Referring to miniature
painting’s basis in storytelling, Harsha creates jewel-like works that,
teeming with life, draw the viewer into detailed scenarios. While these are
based on personal observation – people at work or leisure – the results are
increasingly directed towards existential notions of the absurd.’

Martin Coomer, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.

‘His large-scale and intricately detailed canvases depict a microcosm of
Indian life. The multitude of figures are all animated in unison and focused
on an incongruous or comically strange event. Or they are animated by
some mutual curiosity. Harsha’s paintings wittily combine rites and rituals
common to Indian life with images drawn from world news.’

Savita Apte, Rebecca Morrild
www.heartmus.com/n-s-harsha-3368.aspx
Grant me absence from the market of meaning,
2010, acrylic on canvas, 168 x 122 cm

**WORK**

The Victoria Miro site offers an extensive gallery of Harsha’s work
www.victoria-miro.com/artists/_36/

In this Observer article Harsha gives insights into his approach to painting.
www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/sep/20/guide-to-painting-ns-harsha

**FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH**

- Research Indian miniature painting traditions and apply your findings to a reading of Harsha’s work.
- One reading of Harsha’s work is that it simultaneously operates at a macro and micro level. Analyse the work from this perspective.
- The artist talks about ‘loose ends’ in his work. What do you think he means by this? Can you see any?
‘I often work with water-based paint, because the flow is immediate, but depending on the situation and the work, I also use many other objects... This interaction with materials is not just about experimentation, but rather I treat these materials how I treat space and place. They have their own story to tell ... we need to listen to them and start a journey.’ What do think the artist means by this statement? Can you apply it in any way to his work in the Restless exhibition?

‘I like the visual flatness of my works when viewed from afar, but, upon closer observation, they reveal hundreds of stories and mysteries.’ Does this comment by the artist influence your reading of the work in any way?

FURTHER RESEARCH

ARTINFO October 9, 2009
www.artinfo.com/news/story/32625/united-nations/
www.victoria-miro.com
Divertimento - 4 movements for voices, whistles and strings, 2011, mixed media

ANNIKA LARSSON & AUGUSTIN MAURS

Annika Larsson
Born Sweden 1972, lives in Berlin
www.annikalarsson.com

Augustin Maurs
Born France 1975, lives in Berlin
www.written-not-written.de

Divertimento - 4 movements for voices, whistles and strings, 2011-12
performance
courtesy the artists and Andréhn Schiptjenko

Performance: 1 March from 7pm, Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art
SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS
Born The Netherlands 1971, lives in London

Pareidolia, 2011
single channel HD video with sound
12:25 min
courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, London

Perspectives

Are you a writer? ’No. But I guess fiction is my main source of inspiration I’m constantly reading and writing things down, but you know I think writing is difficult. When I’m making actual work, I guess sort of it is ninety percent of it is making, making sets in the studio. In the studio I listen to a lot of novels on tape, so I am constantly engaged in ways of narrating. Even if I’m socializing, I’m looking for stories, so I’m definitely listening for stories. That’s sort of an interest of mine, the way writers sort of filter experience in a distant way: They see the actual story as well as the emotional experience.’

So you don’t sit down and write out the whole story in one or two sittings. ’No. I do the writing only in pieces. I have a notebook, so I make notes and then I put it into a PC and I end up with lots and lots of unrelated material. I add things I find along the way and then I edit it down.’

Do you outline or go with flow? ’Towards the end, when the visuals are almost done and the story has to come together, I do guide it a bit. But when editing I lay the narrative/voice over down first and then I can slot the visuals into it.’

blogs.artinfo.com/modernartnotes/2008/02/qa-with-saskia-olde-wolbers-pa/

WORK

Pareidolia 2011 has as its narrative a fictional take on the situation leading up to the creation of the book Zen in the Art of Archery, by Eugen Herrigel. The author’s interpretation of Zen, pivots around an event he witnessed where his tutor, the eccentric archery master Awa Kenzo, shoots at the target in the dark and succeeds to split the first arrow with the second. In Herrigel’s book the master then exclaimed; It, the Divine, has shot! Apparently neither man spoke each other’s language and the man who served as the translator between the German professor and the master was absent the night Herrigel witnesses this epiphany.
Pareidolia is told from the fictional point of view of this translator and his alter-ego, a bird, and their musings over hunting versus Zen archery and the creation of the popular book. When asked to retranslate the book into Japanese, his character questions subjectivity, translation, and belief. The title points to the need for caution where stories are involved.

www.secession.at/art/2011_olde-wolbers_e.html

‘Saskia Olde Wolbers’ video Pareidolia 2011 is dominated by a strange bird-like creature that sways in a slow and deliberate manner against an abstract, eerie background. The film’s surreal visuals are shot inside a model set of a university lecture theatre, an archery hall and various traditional Japanese interiors, alternating with animatronic birds drinking from dripping plants. ‘Pareidolia’ is the term that describes how we find meaningful imagery in apparently abstract patterns or structures, such as clouds. At the very heart of this is the notion of belief itself – if we see it, does it exist?’

Victoria Lynn, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.
In Olde Wolbers’ slowly unfolding spaces of memory submerged in paint and water, the characters and their stories reveal the inherently contradictory, fluid, and ambivalent quality of truth and fiction. In the context of this reading of the artist’s work investigate the way *Pareidolia* incorporates elements of contradiction, fluidity and ambivalence.

‘Olde Wolbers’ stories are like ice crystals: They’re beautiful and complicated, and you have to examine them carefully to fully appreciate them. Then, just as you begin to figure them out, they melt and vanish.’ Does this comment impact on your personal response to *Pareidolia* in any way?

* Interview with the artist:
  blogs.artinfo.com/modernartnotes/2008/02/qa-with-saskia-olde-wolbers-pa/

The artist has stated that, ‘I started working with video because my pieces were becoming more narrative, and I thought video was a great way to combine visual and narrative. I think it’s problematic with art when you have to read a lot and look at something. In a way it’s also very seductive to listen to a voice, and most of my images move or the camera moves and it’s a good way of drawing people into a story.’ Can you find examples in this video of the way the movement of the images or camera ‘draws’ you into the story?

* *Pareidolia* as a psychological phenomenon is the basis for an ancient and cross-cultural tradition of attaching significance to random occurrences in nature such as cloud and rock formations or fabricated structures resembling such things as human faces. Research this topic and consider using linked ideas in your studio practice.

FURTHER RESEARCH

[www.maureenpaley.com](http://www.maureenpaley.com)

See also:
[www.secession.at/art/2011_olde-wolbers_e.html](http://www.secession.at/art/2011_olde-wolbers_e.html)
LISA REIHANA
Born New Zealand 1964, lives in Auckland

PELT: Aquila, Camarillo, Sabino, Pilosus, 2010
series of four digital prints on Hahnemuller 305gsm paper
160 x 160 cm each
courtesy the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

Perspectives
Lisa Reihana is of Ngā Puhi: Ngāti Hine and Ngāi Tu descent. Her practice is wide-ranging and includes installation, moving image and time-based media, sculpture, photography, performance, costume, body adornment and text-based works. Her work comments on gender politics, cultural agency and museological interventions. Reihana completed a major commission ‘Mai te aroha, ko te aroha’ for Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington in 2008. A development of this work is included in Te Po O Matariki (2010) where Whirimako Black performs a karanga, the first sound heard on the mārae in formal occasions and the call-and-response by Senior Māori women as part of Māori welcoming ceremonies known as powhiri.

A strong component of Reihana’s practice is to convey the importance of matriarchy within Maori culture. However, in her most recent series of photographs, Reihana tackles male representations and, in particular, seeks to redress the visibility of takataapui, the Maori cross-gender community. These intriguing portraits present male Maori ancestors in various guises and associations. They range from the staunch masculinity of the demigod Maui who surfs a silver wave, to the androgynous figure of Diva, from whose hand a tui bird flutters. With Dandy, Reihana imagines first encounters between Maori and the Europeans as they alighted from their ships.


WORK
www.capitaltimes.co.nz/article/3399/Strongwomen.html (this article contains insights on PELT)

‘Lisa Reihana’s photographs PELT: Aquila, Camarillo, Sabino, Pilosus are staged interpretations of imagined beings presented in digitally-rendered utopian landscapes. The female nudes in Pilosus and Aquila wear a black garment made from monkey fur. In Camarillo and Sabino the women boast a white, feathered bustle. The titles refer to horse, monkey and eagle, while
the series title *PELT* references the skin of an animal... here the animal is a kind of adornment, or second ‘skin’ to the alabaster white of the naked flesh.’

‘Set in other-worldly landscapes, these women come to represent a type of being, poised between states of human and non-human, and giving rise to the question of the mutual attributes of animals and humans. The sense of being out of place and out of time, frozen and isolated in an icy digital field, suggests the fantastic. The figures are on the edge of an abyss that lurks inside every act of translation and transformation – they stand at the juncture between life and death.’

Victoria Lynn, *Restless* exhibition catalogue essay.

**FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH**

- ‘The heroines that occupy her desolate alien landscapes are hybrid creatures upon which viewers may project their own narrative propositions.’ Keeping this comment by Shelley Jahnke* in mind consider creating your own narrative or story in which these images of Reihana’s appear.
• *PELT* is related to Reihana’s *Digital Marae* series, which reinterpreted Maori customary narratives in a dynamic and contemporary ways. Web-research the artist to familiarise yourself with the Marae series and consider how the two series are linked.

• Jahnke comments that ‘Skin is a complex metaphor, at once a layer and a protective barrier from the outer elements while also being a politicised parchment saturated with connotations of colour, race and associated implications of purity.’ Is this a useful idea to apply to a reading of the *PELT* series?

• Do you agree with the statement that ‘Reihana’s treatment of the nudes seems to confound any suggestion of eroticism or sexuality’?

• Central to Reihana’s practice is the idea of archetypes. Research this topic and apply your findings to an analysis of the *PELT* series.

• Think about, record and later compare with others your first impressions of Reihana’s imagery and what it might be about or saying?

• It has been observed that the feathers on the figures in Reihana’s photographs reference the use of plumage in Maori ceremonial costumes. Source the relevant Adelaide Now media article (ref. *Adelaide Now Lisa goes full pelt for feathered friends*) as a starting point for research into this aspect of Maori culture; then consider how the artist has incorporated this into her imagery.


**FURTHER RESEARCH**

Lisa Reihana is extensively represented on line. The following is a selection.

www.beehive.govt.nz/node/30919
www.artsdiary365.wordpress.com/2011/01/13/unnerved-lisa-reihana/
www.pasifikastyles.org.uk/artists/lisa-reihana.php (includes audio interview with artist)
An on-line magazine (*Fascineshion*) interview gives valuable insights (plus videos) into the artist’s ideas and formative influences,
ANRI SALA
Born Albania 1974, lives in Berlin

Answer me, 2008
single channel HD video with stereo sound
4:51 min
courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

Artist Statement

‘Answer me, the new film that you are premiering at your exhibition in Miami, was filmed in Berlin, where you are now based, right?’

‘Yes, it was shot in Teufelsberg, which means “Devil’s Mountain” in German. It’s a very singular place not only for its architectural qualities but also for where it’s built: atop a hill made from the rubble of postwar Berlin. Another building, a military-technical college designed by Albert Speer, is buried under the hill. Later on, the NSA built a listening station on top of the hill to monitor Soviet and East German communications... The impressive length of the echoes in the main dome provoked my desire to stage it in a story, whose drama would come “under the influence” of the building. In the film, as a woman tries to end a relationship, her companion refuses to listen and plays the drums fiercely to silence her. Next to her, the drumsticks resting on a vacant drum play to the echo of his drumming.’

Perspectives

‘Anri Sala’s works from the 1990s explored the narrativities peculiar to the documentary genre (the personal account, the interview, the archive) to offer a sensitive political portrayal of the changes that had (then) recently shaken Eastern Europe. It has been said of Anri Sala that he belongs to the last generation of artists to have grown up under Albania’s Communist regime and the first to have had contact with the world of Western and international art. Operating on the border between these two spaces – these two situations – his early films take a moving but unflinching look at the ideology that dominated his country and the utopian role it assigned to art in the construction of a new social vision.’

Marie Fraser, Chief Curator, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, Canada

**WORK**

The MAC show reflects the growing importance Sala attaches to sound and to recasting its relationship with the image. Rather than using sound to produce a specific effect, as in the movies, he sets out to capture the effect of space on the production of sound. Several of his films have consequently been shot in places that generate very particular sonic experiences, such as the echo in *Answer me*, while others record live performances that Sala himself has orchestrated.

www.e-flux.com/announcements/anri-sala-2/

‘Inside the abandoned building, a young man concentrates with superhuman intensity on the drums, which he is playing with enough vehemence to drown out the words of his female companion. The only phrases audible over the barrage of sound are “Answer me” and “It is over”; the last remark is made in the silence that follows the frenetic drumming, as though to announce the end of the relationship and the artwork in the same breath. But there’s one last shot that shows the building silhouetted against the Berlin sky; shaped like a prick and balls, the dilapidated structure seems emblematic of the tattered state of their affair.’

Sarah Kent, review, 9 October 2011, Anri Sala, Serpentine Gallery.

www.theartsdesk.com/visual-arts/anri-sala-serpentine-gallery-0

**FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH**

- DD: Music is core element of a lot of your work. Why is it important to you?
  
  Anri Sala: ‘To put it simply, I’m interested in finding or directing situations in which emotions do not pass through verbal language and verbal understanding.’

- DD: How do you use it as a tool?
  
  Anri Sala: ‘Music offers me a remarkable opportunity to both enhance and decline a narrative.’

Interview with Anri Sala www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/11754/1/anri-sala-

Consider the (above) comments by the artist. In the context of the video *Answer me*, what do you think they mean?
• Sala has commented that ‘Because music has this gift to suggest imagery, I like the conflict between the imagery evoked by the music and the actual imagery that is in the film.’ Looking at the video is it possible for you to identify how this kind of conflict could be created?

• The inspiration for *Answer me* was a note left by the film director Antonioni, indicating that he wanted to film the breakup of a couple by shooting not their conversation, but their silences. Web-research the films of Antonioni to investigate if there is a connection between the two director’s approaches to using sound.

• ‘The young Albanian video artist Anri Sala makes slow, exacting videos that are beautiful, haunting, and absurd in equal measure.’
  Quinn Latimer

Does this observation offer a useful insight into Anri’s work and *Answer me* in particular?

Experiment by listening to the sound track without looking at the video. Consider if this experience gives you a heightened awareness of sound as an active component within the video.

• In *Answer me* the echo of the drum obliterates the woman’s words. Can you think of reasons why the artist has done this?

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

Interview with the artist
video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8965426400791308088

Marion Goodman Gallery: extended profile on artist with images
www.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/2009-05-06_anri-sala/

Brief interview with the artist
SOCRATIS SOCRATOUS
Born Cyprus 1971, lives in Athens and Nicosia

Architectural strategy 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 186.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled I 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 142 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled II 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 124.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled III 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 124.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled V 2011
c-print photograph
142 x 124.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled IV 2011
c-print photograph
54.5 x 54.5 cm

courtesy the artist and Omikron Gallery, Nicosia

Perspectives
In his work Socratous tangibly “discusses” how humans deal with destruction and deconstruction. This is a subject that the artist has revisited many times in his career. The urban environment’s destruction due to natural and human causes, but also the way humans experience and comprehend incidents as such, are expressed through the materials he uses. His expressive tools, metal pieces of different type, size, weight, colour and texture, twisted and bent in a variety of shapes, remind us of the urban architecture and building.

Omikron Gallery, press release for Socratis Socratous, Inviable refuge
www.omikrongallery.com/artists/Socratis%20Socratous/EN/SocratousEN.html
WORK

’Socratis Socratous, who lives in Athens, captures the daily disorder and upheaval of the city. In the ancient concept of the Greek ‘agora’- considered the first site of democracy - citizens would discuss common interests. In these works, our gaze is directed to an unhinged destructive force: metallic objects, pieces of frames, scattered building materials are thrown into the air and photographed. These momentary sculptural compositions reflect upon the notion of uprootedness, where the frame of the city no longer offers either safety or common ground. While Álys’ Gringo posits animal instinct against the prospect of ‘invasion’, Socratous’ works are more ambiguous in their depiction of turmoil – for contained within them is a gesture to the sky (or the heavens), which could be equally one of frustration and anarchy as it is one of hope for change.’

Victoria Lynn, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.

‘Influenced by recent violent incidents, racist attacks and social upheavals in urban areas around the world and especially in Athens,, the artist transforms the city into his own “battlefield” and strips her of her materials. Metallic objects with which the citizen usually “armours” himself in order to express his resentment, his frustration and despair in an undeclared war against “the system”, become in the artist’s hands the raw materials for a different kind of sculpture. Using special equipment he throws them in the air and captures with a camera their spectacular fall.’

Elena Parpa, Omikron Gallery catalogue essay
www.omikrongallery.com/artists/Socratis%20Socratous/EN/SocratousEN.html

FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

• From Plato’s Kallipolis in The Republic to Le Corbusier’s propositions, the city has been associated with the search for happiness and ideal coexistence. Research this idea of the city as a site for human happiness and progress and consider the way Socratous reconciles this with the widespread contemporary disorder which characterises contemporary urbanised life.

• One reading of Inviolable refuge is that of the city turning against itself, decomposing and exploding like a firework (Elena Parpa). How does this fit with your reading of this imagery?

• It has been suggested that the imagery of the Architectural Strategy series offers a choice between ‘the violated and the inviolable side of the world (Marina Fokides). Is this a useful clue to the artist’s intentions?
How effective is the choice and use of materials in the Architectural strategy series in conveying the artist’s ideas?

Does the title of this series inform your understanding of the work in any way?

Has some aspect of the artist’s strategies or methodology suggested options you could explore in your own studio work?

FURTHER RESEARCH

This site provides the catalogue for the exhibition Inviolable refuge that includes extensive essays on Socratous’ practice by Marina Fokides and Elena Parpa.

www.omikrongallery.com/artists/Socratis%20Socratous/EN/SocratousEN.html

This Thessaloniki Biennale site contains images of Inviolable refuge.

biennale3.culturakosmos.gr/en/artists/Socratis_Socratous
NANCY SPERO
Born USA, 1926 – 2009

Maypole/take no prisoners 2007
handprinting on aluminum, ribbon, steel chain, and aluminum pole with steel base
dimensions variable
courtesy the Estate of Nancy Spero and Galerie Lelong, New York

Artist statement
‘I have deliberately attempted to distance my art from the Western emphasis on the subjective portrayal of individuality by using a hand-printing and collage technique utilizing zinc plates as an artist’s tool instead of a brush or palette knife. Figures derived from various cultures co-exist in simultaneous time... The figures themselves could become hieroglyphs—extensions of a text denoting rites of passage, birth to old age, motion and gesture.’

www.artnet.com/awc/nancy-spero.html

‘Today it’s the same, absolutely the same as it was 40 years ago [referring to the Vietnam War], only worse. The government hides everything from us today ... The Maypole is full of victims; the blood is coming out of their heads. They’re decapitated ... I responded to the debacle in Iraq as I did during the Vietnam War, by trying to express the obscenity of war.’

Artist quoted in Deborah Frizzell  ‘Heads round the maypole’ essay, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.

Perspectives
‘Nancy Spero’s Maypole/take no prisoners 2007 considers the obscenity of two wars: Vietnam and Iraq. Suspended and dislocated, the fragmented faces seem as if they are on their way to another world. This maypole is not a site of celebration, but a whirlwind of severed heads that honours the dead. The circularity of the installation suggests a kind of force field. Indeed, some figures rise up, as if in defiance of their fate, while others seem to cascade towards the earth. This dual tension underscores the restless nature of the work, as does the alternate use of ribbons and chains, and their associated metaphors of celebration and incarceration.’

Victoria Lynn, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.
This Vernissage site provides a video tour of Maypole/take no prisoners. blip.tv/vernissagetv/nancy-spero-maypole-1980107

Additional images of this work can be found at: www.newsgrist.typepad.com/culturalpolitics/2009/05/nancy-speros-war-maypoletake-no-prisoners.html

See also www.artnet.com/artwork/426141268/111920/nancy-spero-

‘Maypole/take no prisoners is one of the last works Nancy Spero (1926–2009) created in her 60-year career as an artist-activist. Thus it is fitting that the recreation of Maypole, a nomadic shape-shifter which varies from venue to venue, takes its place amid the Restless contemporary spirits at the Adelaide Festival...It is comprised of over 200 disembodied heads made of aluminum, painted and cut-out, suspended and dangling from a metal pole. Maypole’s fiercely urgent, raging psychic energy embodies Spero’s consistent and passionate engagement with contemporary political, social and cultural concerns, and with the construction of historical memory.’

Deborah Frizzell, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.

‘What is most disturbing about Spero’s use of this material is the seemingly neutral, dispassionate manner of its display. In a sense, the works are pitiless. She exposes the viewer to the horror, but without any mitigating element of reflection or contextualisation. The tactic is repeated in her curious final work Maypole/take no prisoners II (2008). This is a strange, liminal object: a maypole bedecked with slim red and black ribbons and chains from which hang aluminium plaques bearing grisly two-dimensional images of severed heads. Not quite a sculpture and not quite an installation, it’s probably best described as a three-dimensional drawing. Spero labelled the heads “victims”, but they are more likely to inspire revulsion rather than compassion. Again, there is no pity here. In these works, Spero seems to have arrived at a stark answer to her own question: it’s an artist’s task not to rationalise, soften or explain, but to expose and inflict.’

F R A M I N G  Q U E S T I O N S  A N D  R E S E A R C H

- Does the title of this work (Maypole/take no prisoners) inform your reading of the work in any way? Can you think of an alternative title?

- Why do you think the artist has chosen the organising structure of the maypole to format her ideas? Do you think this is an effective strategy?

- ‘Maypole’s double-sided heads psychologically engage the viewer... The same frontal or profile image may be hand-printed in many different ways, so that a variety of ‘readings’ and directional movements are suggested, having the effect of shifting emotional states and an eerie free-for-all movement.’ (Deborah Frizzell). Analyse Maypole/take no prisoners from this perspective.

- Spero once commented that this work was ‘all about victimage’. What do you think the artist meant by this statement?
‘Maypole’ is very much a public sculpture. It is as public an object as the medieval executioner’s stakes on which the severed heads of the condemned would fester and rot in rows in the civic square for all to witness.’ Does this observation by Deborah Frizzell alter your response to the work in any way?

The visual motif of bodies in trees can be found in work by Francisco Goya (1746 – 1828) and Jacques Callot (1592 – 1635). Locate images of this work and consider if this information influences your reading of Spero’s work in any way.

Extend your research to investigate the way artists in the modern era have used art to comment on war and violence.

One reading of Spero’s work is that it often combines classical elements of classical mythology with contemporary reportage. Can you see any evidence of this in Maypole? Can you think of any reason why Spero uses such diverse elements within a single work?

Discuss your personal response to this work with others.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

This Galerie Lelong site contains extended gallery of Spero’s work.
www.galerielelong.com/artists/

Spero is extensively represented on line. See the following selection.
www.guardian.co.uk/culture/audio/2008/nov/26/searle-spero-private-view
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjPU4BL7RJM
www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2004/jan/09/art1
www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Remembering-Nancy-Spero/19626
www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/arts/design/20spero.html
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nancy_Spero
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjPU4BL7RJM
lib.stanford.edu/women-art-revolution/bio-nancy-spero
Danae Stratou
Born Greece 1964, lives in Athens

The Globalising Wall, 2011
single channel video installation
10 min approx
courtesy the artist and Zoumboulakis Galleries, Athens

Artist statement
‘Walls have a longstanding relation both with freedom from fear and subjugation to another’s will. After 1945, walls acquired an unprecedented determination to divide. They spread like a bushfire from Berlin to Palestine, from the tablelands of Kashmir to the villages of Cyprus, from the Korean peninsula to the streets of Belfast. When the Cold War ended, we were told to expect their dismantling. Instead, they are growing taller, longer, more impenetrable. They leap from one continent onto the next. They are globalising. From the West Bank to Kosovo, from the gated communities of Egypt to those of California, from the killing fields of old Ethiopia to the US-Mexico borders, a seemingly seamless wall is meandering across its way, physically and emotionally. Its spectre is upon us.’

Yanis Varoufakis
www.mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/sv311010.html

Perspectives
‘Together with Yanis Varoufakis, Danae Stratou embarked on a journey to divided lands in 2008–09. On either side of the walls in Mexico/USA, North and South Korea, Israel/Palestine, Ethiopia, Cyprus, Kashmir, Kosovo, Egypt and Belfast we see images of irresolvable despair as well as daily survival. Edited into a minimal, seamless and endless line, The Globalising Wall 2011 video is like a train ride, highlighting the indefatigable nature of enforced thresholds – architectural, religious, economic and cultural – that encircle the globe.’

Victoria Lynn, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.
‘Danae Stratou’s new work attempts to capture the Globalising Wall’s stirrings in a constructed video. Using stills that she took during our travels to seven of the wall’s original ‘sites’, she put together a moving strip of images that expose the wall’s unyielding motion, its audacious reach for new lands to divide, its monotony, its aesthetic, its sense of hideous purpose. The video is projected on a large freestanding grey wall, upon which the Globalising Wall appears as it would to a passenger travelling on some imaginary train that speeds past its intercontinental length.’

Yanis Varoufakis, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.

This site includes a video of The Globalising Wall.
www.mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/sv311010.html

This site provides detailed background on The Globalising Wall project.
FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

• Has viewing this video changed your awareness of or attitude to ‘globalized walls’ in any way? If so why do you think this has happened?

• Consider if the ‘globalizing wall’ concept applies in any way to your immediate world – perhaps your home city or local community. Does a ‘gated community’, for example, function effectively as a wall? If so can you envisage a way to use art to explore this?

• Consider the way the artist has composed the video to function as a series of unfolding frames – as if views from a train window. Is this an effective strategy to represent or explore the subject?

• Consider if this work has given you an idea that could be applied within your own studio work.

• Experience this video with your eyes closed. Listen to the sound. Do you think the artist has given any special thought to impact sound will have on personal responses and experiences?

• Yanis Varoufakis has referred to these walls as ‘spectres’. What do you think he means by this? Is this idea embedded in the video in any way?

FURTHER RESEARCH

The artist’s site offers a comprehensive introduction to her practice.
www.danaestratou.com

See also
www.artbreath.wordpress.com/2008/09/09/stratou/
Teresa Margolles
Born Mexico 1963, lives in Mexico City

127 cuerpos/127 bodies, 2006
Installation with remnants of autopsy threads
dimensions variable
courtesy the artist and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich

Artist statement
‘Everyone dies but not everyone is murdered. I want people to recognize that.’

Teresa Margolles: sac.dukejournals.org/content/110/4/933.abstract

Perspectives
‘Teresa Margolles explores the transition from life to death. The brutal kidnappings and murders in Mexico, related to drug wars, form the basis of her research into the political and economic inequalities of her country. The works are born of a violent context, and offer a kind of historical memorial for the victims. The fabrics have been soaked in soil and the body fluids left behind by those who have been murdered, and this forms a kind of archive for the artist. As such, the artist brings us right up against the taboo subject: death. These are deeply emotional and dramatic works that are part of a palpable flow through life, polity and death. Their indefatigable abstraction combined with their material presence render them very much part of our world, even though they contain the restless spirits of the departed.’

Victoria Lynn, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.
'Examining the transition from life to death, body to corpse, Teresa Margolles maintains how not even death can function as a leveller of social inequality. The procedures and rituals that surround death – what the artist refers to as 'the life of the corpse', a subject central to her work of the past fourteen years – are as much a product of social and economic circumstance as life itself. Commonly the result of violent crime or drug abuse, the identity of the bodies Margolles comes into contact with often remains unknown. They are disposed of with anonymity and without ceremony.'

See also video interview this Tate Liverpool site.
www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/liverpoolbiennial06/artists/margolles.shtm

'Using reduced but always drastic means, Teresa Margolles (born in Culiacán, Mexico, in 1963) creates extremely poignant works of art. At first glance, her works often seem to be minimalist in their form. Viewers only discover that they are deeply emotional and dramatic when they become aware of the rigorous realism in the choice of material. Margolles uses substances such as blood, body fat or even water used to wash dead corpses not only symbolically, but also palpably, attacking human beings’ fears of contact in a subtle way. In the last ten years, her art has revolved around the issue of what happens after a person dies and what death leaves behind.'


'Margolles originally comes from Culiacán, a town scarred by the drug trade, a place where many people die violently and young. The poverty that drives under-age mothers to dump their new-borns in the garbage, however, is not limited to this town but is endemic to Mexico. Many families cannot afford proper burials and so the corpses get sucked into a bureaucratic system of 'disposal', intending to make them smoothly disappear...Margolles, who works only with the bodies of those that suffered a violent death, wants to rescue them from invisibility.'

Amanda Coulson, 'Teresa Margolles'.
www.frieze.com/issue/review/teresa_margolles/
FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

• “[Margolles] interrupts the art space by bringing in these materials that are really charged, which traces the relationship between death and power. It’s about necropolitics, and the eruption of necropolitics in the art sphere.” *

Research the term ‘necropolitics’ and apply this to your interpretation of Margolles’ work.

• ‘Death is not a standardized moment or an equal event; it can be untimely, premature, and violent. As such, death spotlights difference; death has a social life that is contextualized by brutality, inequality, poverty, and politics. To achieve this recognition Margolles works in medico-legal and forensic spaces, creating aesthetic pieces from the remains of crime.’ *

127 Cuerpos / 127 Bodies, 2006
* Cuauhtémoc Medina. This is an extract from the essay, ‘Materialist spectrality’, Teresa Margolles, What else could we talk about?, RM Verlag, SL, Barcelona, Spain, 2009, printed on the occasion of the 53rd Venice Biennale.
With the previous statement in mind consider how Margolles’ art differs from or is similar to popular TV series featuring forensics (e.g. Bones, Silent Witness).

saq.dukejournals.org/content/110/4/933.abstract

• It has been said that Margolles has an ability to draw viewers into and make them a part of realities they might rather not even think about. Does this comment apply in any way to her work in Restless?

• Cuauhtémoc Medina’s catalogue essay* contains the observation that ‘that the emergence of pure destructiveness is also the sign and the engine of transition from one period to the next.’ Do you think that Margolles’s work comments on or explores this idea in any way?

• Cuauhtémoc Medina. This is an extract from the essay, ‘Materialist spectrality’, Teresa Margolles, What else could we talk about?, RM Verlag, SL, Barcelona, Spain, 2009, printed on the occasion of the 53rd Venice Biennale.

Keeping this comment in mind, how do you personally feel about ‘real’ materials directly associated with violent death being used within art works?

FURTHER RESEARCH

This site provides a comprehensive profile on the artist
www.peterkilchmann.com

Margolles YouTube interviews and documentation of exhibitions.

See in particular art critic Waldemar Januszczak on site at Margolles’s installation/performance, Mexican Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2009. Site also includes interview with Margolles.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtLcedTTIBc

CHOSIL KIL

Born South Korea 1975, lives in Seoul and London

_Painting 14_, 2011
cotton mix, canvas stretcher, 100 x 80 x 12cm

_Painting 14_, as a starting point, other paintings and sculptures will be made at the site for this exhibition

_Volume I_, 2012
manuscript, 28 x 7.5cm
courtesy the artist and Galerie Opdahl, Berlin

**Artist statement**

“What underlies all my work is the process of change. Changing context, changing physical form, changing function. I seek to document everyday events in order to disassociate them from the context within which they have occurred. Through this disassociation I gain a new level of control over the memory of an event and can place it within a new context, completing the transition from ordinary to extraordinary. It is this transformation that allows me to resolve personal experiences and question everyday occurrences in a new way.”

www.lonnstromintaide museo.fi/eng/funktiot.php?id=190

**Perspectives**

‘Also sitting on the cusp of presence and absence are Chosil Kil’s sculptural works. A new body of works will be created in Adelaide for the exhibition. She often drapes fabric over an object, then applies a glue-like solution so that the fabric hardens in the shape it has adopted. The original object is taken away, and what is left is a trace or impression of the original. These can be everyday items, or stretchers used for painting. There is a subtle indeterminacy and informality inherent in the sculptures, as they shift between forms. The surface aims to invoke the memory of the original object, while remaining relatively abstract because of its silhouette appearance.’

Victoria Lynn, _Restless_ exhibition catalogue essay.
‘Working with textiles of differing makes and descriptions, acrylic paint, gravity and a special PVA solution, Kil makes two-dimensional ‘paintings’ that manifestly revolt against their two-dimensional status by surging outward into three. Her pictures are liable to resemble three-dimensional topographical maps, and seem to or sometimes do actually incorporate objects, or look as if they were blown by some interior wind, like curtains hovering in front of a window. In some cases, they come off as permanently wrinkled, like laundry that has been freshly hung out to dry. In others, the surface of the paintings assumes a merely worried and crinkled aspect, like a brown paper bag.’

Chris Sharp, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.
FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

- The artist has stated that she sees the process of change as underlying all her work. Do you think this applies to Painting 14?

- Do you think the observation that Kil’s sculptures ‘operate in the realm of resemblance, rather than representation’ (Lynn) is a useful insight for engaging with this work?

- Has this work suggested options to explore in your own studio work?

FURTHER RESEARCH

‘Where I work’, Chosil Kil artist profile.
www.artasiapacific.com/Magazine/68/WhereIWorkChosilKil

www.lonnstromintaidemuseo.fi/eng/funktiot.php?id=190

Video of Chosil Kil constructing installation, Somerset House, London
www.lonnstromintaidemuseo.fi/eng/funktiot.php?id=190

**RABIH MROUÉ**
Born Lebanon 1967, lives in Beirut

*Noiseless* 2006-2008
installation: single channel video with sound, wall text
4:30 min
courtesy the artist and Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Beirut/Hamburg

**Artist statement**
Interview: Cosmin Costanoș with artist
[www.formerwest.org/ResearchInterviews/InterviewwithRabihMroue](http://www.formerwest.org/ResearchInterviews/InterviewwithRabihMroue)

‘We are living in the age of the image. The eye is the king of the sense organs and seeing is the most important way of perception. With regard to the popularity of the eye it seems difficult for me to represent or to reproduce everything visually on stage. Therefore I often use words to create pictures. If you want to see something as a spectator, you have to build the image in your mind. This way the image does not exist materialistically and is not a document. I have the feeling that this virtual image is much stronger than putting a concrete image on stage. The use of images in my works is very little. I wouldn't say minimal but condensed; I try to condense images.’

Sabine Wirth and Eike Schamburek interview with the artist, Schau ins Blau, 24 January 2009.

**Perspectives**

‘Rabih Mroué is one of the most important representatives of a broad and diverse movement in art, which deals with questions of the archive. He has called his personal collection “expanded memory,” which is not always a positive matter, nor is it something he owns. On the contrary, his work takes aim at a culture that has difficulty putting the past behind and “erases memory,” right when it would actually improve human coexistence.’

Bert Rebhandl
‘The narrative devices that Mroué employs – the premises on which his performances are built – almost always concern forms of inquiry that are open and underway in the time and space of his works. His pieces almost always feel like works in progress... as structures or skeletons for his works, these forms of inquiry have the effect of engaging viewers not with spectacle but with the development of thought. His performances crack open the creative process and with it the urgency of the issues that lie at the core of Mroué’s concern, namely the meaning of the body on stage as a metaphor for the agency of an individual in society, culture, a political system and a state.’

Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, ‘Rabih Mroué: Forms of Engagement’
universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2010/rabih_mroue
‘I have been collecting my photographs as a missing person as they have appeared in newspapers. It was not clear to me why I was doing it, but I felt somehow intrigued by the question: Where could a person disappear to, particularly in a country like Lebanon, so small, where it is said that everyone knows everyone else, where the least said on its society is that it is confessional, communitarian, tribal, and so on and so forth...It seems that no matter how well control and authority are established over this country, or any country for that matter, there are always cracks and fissures where individuals disappear into; to them, they escape, in them they elude, get lost, and sometimes even commit a crime and all this without leaving behind not a single trace.’

Artist’s comment on Noiseless, extract from Galerie Sfeir-Semler site www.sfeir-semler.de

‘The one-channel video Noiseless (2008) exemplifies how Mroué seamlessly oscillates between personal ruminations on national identity and the problem of Lebanon’s unaccounted for disappeared. We are shown a newspaper cutting recounting the circumstances of Mroué going missing, accompanied by the artist’s photograph. As Mroué’s disappearance morphs into the newspaper clippings of other missing persons his image starts to fade, until blank. Again the individual and the collective blur, as the visual traces of those who are forgotten are literally erased from the body politic’s memory. Painful reminders of the past, which are reduced to smudges and then to nothingness.’

Natt Muller, exhibition review, I the Undersigned. www.metropolism.com/reviews/rabih-rabih/

‘In ’Make me Stop Smoking’ what remained unseen was equally as important as that which was seen, when for instance we came to footage of massacres, that Mroué pre-empted as an example of how an image can burn itself into your consciousness, it was his decision not to show us the gruesome scenes that he had described that was, perhaps, even more affecting than the horror it itself would have been. In this way he personalized the experience he himself had had as a spectator, leaving the audience with the distinct feeling that they were being spared something truly excruciating that the artist would have to live with forever.’

FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

- In *Noiseless*, Mroué explores the themes of memory and forgetting. How does he go about doing this?
- The artist has commented that the media uses imagery in a particular way to get its message across. Do you think this realization has had an impact on the devices used by the artist in *Noiseless*?
- One interpretation of Mroué’s practice is that what remains unseen is as important as that which is seen. Apply this idea to your response to the video.
- The artist has commented that, ‘I like to condense images’. Can you see any evidence of his approach in *Noiseless*?
- Does Mroué’s work (and *Noiseless* in particular) have a political edge or dimension?
- Mroué has commented, ‘I am not telling in order to remember. On the contrary, I am doing so to make sure that I’ve forgotten. Or at least, to make sure that I’ve forgotten some things, that they were erased from my memory. When I am certain that I’ve forgotten, I attempt to remember what it is that I’ve forgotten. And while attempting to remember, I start guessing and saying: perhaps, maybe, it’s possible, it might be, probably, it can be, it looks like, it seems that, I am not sure but, etc…’
  
  Can you see any connection between these comments by the artist and his video *Noiseless*?
  
  * Artist’s comment on *Noiseless*, extract from Galerie Sfeir-Semler site www.sfeir-semler.de

FURTHER RESEARCH

Selected YouTube interviews
www.schauinsblau.de/2-ethik-und-aesthetik/bild-and-ton/bildende-kunst/rabih-mroue/


See also
www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/2788/1/rabih-mroue-at-the-tate-modern
JINOOS TAGHIZADEH
Born Iran 1971, lives in Tehran

Rock, paper, scissors 2009
series of collage on offset lenticular prints
50 x 35 cm each
courtesy the artist and Aaran Gallery, Tehran

Artist statement
‘A parallel anxiety in the 30 year-game of “Rock, Paper, Scissors,” in which I am destined to choose the Paper at the risk of being cut by the Scissors, with the parallel Rock that I am determined to wrap, if the Scissors allows. A childish game of all these parallels, which with the slightest movement, hesitation, or a momentary lapse, changes its role, and whatever the new role maybe, it will certainly be predestined by the grown-up game…’

Payvand Iran News

Perspectives
Taghizadeh’s techniques work on different levels: they suggest an ironic counter-narrative to official discourse; private responses to public events; the chasm between what is promised and what actually happens; and the true meaning behind the politically correct euphemisms in which Khomeini’s revolution, like others before it, excelled.

www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/04/iran-revolution-art-jinoos-taghizadeh

WORK
This article in The Guardian (‘Rock, paper, scissors and a hard place’, 4 March 2009) shows the full set of images for Rock, Paper, Scissors.
www.guardian.co.uk/world/gallery/2009/mar/02/iran-islam
'Taking Iranian newspaper accounts of the overthrow of the regime in 1978 and the rise to power of the revolutionaries, Taghizadeh embedded images from Western works of art – such as the chaotic nightmare world of Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel’s timeless Flemish peasants and the French revolutionary paintings by Jacques-Louis David – onto these newspaper pages. On every frame she superimposed the game of rock, paper, scissors in the form of outstretched hands: open palms, fists clenched or fingers splayed wide depicting the game of chance and opportunities. ’I am destined to choose the paper at the risk of being cut by the scissors, the rock that I am determined to wrap if only the scissors allow,’ the artist explains.’

Behrang Samadzadegan, Restless exhibition catalogue essay.
Framing Questions and Research

- *Rock, Paper, Scissors* contains images of paintings by Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450 – 1515), Pieter Bruegel (c. 1525 – 1569) and Jacques-Louis David (1748 – 1825). Research the work of these artists to develop an understanding of why Taghizadeh has referred to their work in this way.

- The multiple imagery created by the lenticular printing processes used in this work creates layers of information and requires some physical interaction from the viewer. Do you think this is an effective strategy in terms of conveying the artist’s ideas?

- A common reading of Taghizadeh’s work is that it explores or highlights the gap between hopes and rhetoric or reality. Does this apply to *Rock, Paper, Scissors*?

- *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, exhibited at the chic Aaran Gallery in Tehran, conveys the terrifying randomness of what can happen to individuals caught up in events. ‘I am destined to choose the paper at the risk of being cut by the scissors, the rock that I am determined to wrap if only the scissors allow,’ the artist explained.* Does this explanation satisfy your curiosity about the meaning of this work?


- The backdrop to Taghizadeh’s work is the 1979 Revolution, in Iran, and its aftermath. Apply your research of this topic to an interpretation of Taghizadeh’s work in Restless.

Further Research

The artist is extensively represented online. See the following selection

[www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/unveiled/](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/unveiled/)


This site contains an extended essay by Taghizadeh focusing on issues facing contemporary artists in Iran.


[www.aarangallery.com](http://www.aarangallery.com)
POSTCOMMODITY

Raven Chacon born USA 1977, lives in Albuquerque
Cristobal Martinez born USA 1974, lives in Phoenix
Kade Twist born USA 1971, lives in Phoenix
Nathan Young born USA 1975, lives in Albuquerque

*With salvage and knife tongue*, 2011-12
four-channel video installation with sound
courtesy the artists

**Perspectives**

‘Postcommodity is an American Indigenous arts collective comprised of Raven Chacon, Cristóbal Martinez, Kade L. Twist and Nathan Young. Responding to the tensions at play between globalism and indigenous cultures, the collective will create the work *With salvage and knife tongue*, 2011-12 partly in the US, and partly in Adelaide, that features both American and Australian Indigenous peoples speaking direct to camera. Central to this four-screen video work is the issue of language and, in particular, the colonial relationship of English to Indigenous languages. Rather than establishing a binary understanding of this relationship, the artists are interested in creating dialogue, a sense of convolution and morphing. Like the sonic ruptures in Anri Sala’s *Answer me*, Postcommodity’s new video installation literally speaks for and of dissonance – linguistic, cultural and political.’

Victoria Lynn, *Restless* exhibition catalogue essay.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

[www.postcommodity.com](http://www.postcommodity.com)
With salvage and knife tongue, 2011-12
Exploring the exhibition extends beyond looking at individual artist’s work to identifying and considering relationships between any works in the exhibition. An effective way to do this is to see Restless as an exhibition made up of groups of works with similar thematic links. Deciding on which themes are relevant to any exhibition is a personal process. Here are a number of suggested themes. As you explore the exhibition you may identify additional or alternative themes.

### Theme 1: Restlessness

The exhibition curator, Victoria Lynn sees this exhibition exploring the idea of restlessness. Key indicators of this are things being uncertain or on the edge and artists journeying or transitioning from one state to another. This idea has dominated modern to contemporary art. It can be applied to the subject or content of works that are concerned with social instability or radical change. It may also be concerned with issues related to an understanding or acceptance of what constitutes art in a contemporary world.

Consider

- The theme of trespass underlying Alýs’ video *Gringo*.
- The sense of being positioned between states of being human and non-human in Reihana’s *PELT: Aquila, Camarillo, Sabino, Pilosus*.
- Sala’s video *Answer me* which uses tension between questioning and answering and silence and sound to explore states of relationship between two people.
- Stratou’s video *The Globalising Wall* implying a cross-generational dynamic underlying the proliferation of walls dividing communities.
THEME 2: OTHER WORLDS

Lynn sees some artists behaving as kind of ‘tricksters’ who invite viewers to ‘travel across thresholds and step into other worlds.’ The key question here is ‘why?’ Is it to elicit some sympathy for an issue or persons? To formulate alternative systems of functioning as a society? To encourage the viewer to let go of the routines and certainties, which frame everyday life and see things from another perspective. Or simply offer an escape to another world in which the ‘normal’ rules don’t apply.

Consider

- Alÿs’ video *Gringo* being witness to the consequences of trespass.
- The collision of world views embedded within Harsha’s work.
- Reihana’s evocation of a meta-world within *PELT: Aquila, Camarillo, Sabino, Pilosus*.

THEME 3: QUESTIONING

In an uncertain or restless era, artists, through their work, raise questions or conjecture about things rather than articulate absolute positions. A key indicator in *Restless* is a constant unraveling or negotiation between traditional certainties and the unknown.

Invariably, this leaves the viewer with choices about possible responses or in a state of uncertainty about any messages or meanings the work may contain.

Consider

- Olde Wolbers’ video *Pareidolia* which explores the idea of formulating beliefs based on what one can see.
- Reihana’s *PELT: Aquila, Camarillo, Sabino, Pilosus* which conjectures about states of hybridity or overlap between human and animal nature.
- Taghizadeh’s use of a children’s game (Rock, Paper Scissors) to communicate about the riskiness of living between political promises and realities.
THEME 4: TIME

Complementing uncertainty is the idea implied in a number of works that time is a negotiable concept rather than a strictly linear procession from past to present. Victoria Lynn sees time being treated in some works as more like a ‘forcefield’ which is ‘polycentric and fractal.’ In some works there is a sense of time being absolutely present (‘here and now’) or splintered.

Consider

- Socratous’ illusionist suspension of time to create a visual metaphor for social disorder.
- How in Stratou’s video The Globalizing Wall time is collapsed by creating the impression of looking out of a speeding train.
- Mroué’s compression of time by substituting images of self in the video Noiseless.

THEME 5: CITY AS METAPHOR

These thresholds are various: political, architectural, linguistic, and emotional. Look for urban-context observations in which body fragments and citizens or the material of the city itself are reconfigured.

Consider

- Encounters with the city in Alýs’s practice.
- The daily disorder and upheaval of the city captured in Socratous’s photographs.
- Taghizadeh juxtaposing revolutionary images from Iranian newspapers with iconic images from Western art history.
- Margolles exploring a society’s sense of relationship with death.

THEME 6: HISTORY

Some artists revisit history in order to critique ‘official’ narratives or to raise awareness of the histories and even existence of marginalised groups within a given society. Strategies used by some artists include ‘unpacking’ historical events to allow them to be seen from different perspectives, focussing on the life and experiences of individuals and re-presenting history as an overlay of different (and sometimes divergent) narratives.
The later part of the twentieth century saw a revival of narrative as a key art practice strategy. Post-modernist perspectives encouraged a revitalisation of narrative structures in order to critique cultural systems or insert previously marginalised accounts (e.g. ‘minority’ groups) into mainstream histories. Narrative in contemporary art takes various forms with many favouring fictive constructions (as in literary or cinematic fiction), broken/interrupted/overlapping narratives, multiple endings and strategies designed to encourage the viewer to identify with the central narrative, create alternatives or ‘join the dots’ in order to uncover the story. Through such means the past, present and future can be considered from many different perspectives.

Consider

- Mroué using self-portraits as substitutes for missing persons in the newspaper.
- Margolles creating alternative historical narratives concerned with the fate and memory of victims of crime.
- Taghizadeh addressing (and critiquing) the way print media creates narratives by amalgamating diverse historical sources and repackaging them as a ‘news story’ on a contemporary event.

**THEME 7: VOICES**

The presence, perspectives and voices of minorities and disadvantaged people are often hidden or silenced. A number of artists within Restless engage with this issue. A common perspective is to create a presence of memory in the face of loss or erasure of identity.

Consider

- The memorialising of nameless victims in Margolles’ work
- Spero’s expression of the obscenity of war, manifested through emblems of indiscriminate carnage as old as warfare itself.
- Mroué’s subversion of the media’s method of signposting ‘missing persons’ to contradict the fatalism of erasure.
Theme 8: Tradition and Change

A feature of a number of Restless works is the way artists refer to traditions but adapt them within a moving image environment.

Consider

- Taghizadeh using a traditional children’s game (Rock, Paper, Scissors) to expose current political realities.
- Alÿs’ artistic practice, which incorporates reflections on the impact of change on traditional communities.
- Socratous’ referencing of classical ideal of the polis to explore age-old questions regarding the role and viability of the city and urbanised experience.
- The parable embedded within Stratou’s video The Globalising Wall which suggests that history, when it comes to closing off options, has a habit of repeating itself.
4. FOR TEACHERS

PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP VISIT TO RESTLESS

Restless is a multi-venue exhibition, and groups are encouraged to experience the exhibition across all four venues.

Please book your visit with venues NOW.

Numbers are restricted in some video projection areas. Booked groups will have priority, scheduled entry to the exhibition.

TO BOOK:

Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art
e-mail: samstagmuseum@unisa.edu.au
phone: 08 8302 0870

Australian Experimental Art Foundation
e-mail: info@aeaf.org.au
phone: 08 8211 7505

Contemporary Art Centre of SA
e-mail: education@cacsa.org.au
phone: 08 8272 2682

Flinders University City Gallery
download booking form from www.flinders.edu.au/artmuseum
or e-mail: museum@flinders.edu.au
phone: 08 8211 7505

All bookings will be confirmed with the supervising teacher/lecturer/group organiser.

Year Level
The Resource is designed to be used by secondary – senior secondary and tertiary visual art students.
PRE-EXHIBITION

Background briefing
Inform the students about the origins and content of the exhibition.
Refer to the Background briefing notes this Resource.
Access the Restless Education Resource from the gallery websites
Visit selected Restless artists’ websites.

Recommended
Organise group as smaller, independent viewing groups (recommended) and task these groups before dispersing within the exhibition. To facilitate structured viewing consider using the Get Started research activities included in this Education Resource.

Before groups disperse remind students of the usual gallery viewing protocols (such as being aware of others using the space) and to stress the nature of viewing this kind of exhibition which will require students to spend reflective time with works, immersing themselves within viewing experiences of up to 15 minutes or more.

This session will likely involve students being involved in some group and individual analysis and response. Scribing is optional but will be useful for on-site reporting and post-visit research.

A suggestion is that students in this session try two things: engage with the work of an individual artist and with one of the exhibition’s themes.

For this to happen it would be useful if the students had access to the Restless Education Resource prior to visiting the exhibition. This could allow students to make thematic selections before arrival.

POST VISIT

Post exhibition options primarily consist of sharing and analyzing the information gathered during the exhibition visit. This information might be:

- Information gathered on-site
- Individual opinions (shared)
- Different task or theme groups reporting findings
IN - E X H I B I T I O N  E N G A G E M E N T  A C T I V I T I E S  

The following tasks are designed to support/initiate structured viewing and engagement for students in the exhibition. They can be undertaken in any order and are suitable for individual and small group work. Implicit in some tasks is the idea that students or groups will report findings and discuss works with others.

Scribing is not necessary to undertake these activities but some of these tasks could involve scribing to support on-going post visit work.

Think about

- When you find yourself wanting to look at some works in particular do you think it is because the image or subject is interesting or is it because of the artist’s technique or way of interpreting the subject?
- Is there a particular work in this exhibition that contains or is saying things that you agree with or disagree with strongly? Talk to someone else in your group about your response.
- Is there a particular work in this exhibition which raises more questions than any other work?
- What kinds of questions does this work raise? Compare and discuss your findings with others.

First & last impressions

- What did you think about when you first came into the exhibition and looked around?
- Was there any work in particular you wanted to return to and look at again? Are there any reasons for this?
- Is there a work in this exhibition that you think you will find hard to forget? Why?
- Is there one work here which as challenged you in any way. Look at it again before you leave and consider why this is so.
Before leaving check out the exhibition one more time to see if there’s an idea or technique in a work that you could try when you get back to school.

Easy?

- Which work was the easiest and which work was the hardest to make – and why?

Analysis and response (individual work/s)

Choose any work that attracts your attention and apply any or all of the following questions:

- Could this idea have been better expressed in a different way?
- Can you see any kind of connection between this kind of art and others you know about?
- What do you think this work is about or might be saying?
- Has this given you an idea for something you could make as part of your art studies?

Select one work that appeals in some way and tell someone else your reasons for your selection.

Analysis and response (the exhibition)

- Write a review of the exhibition which explores the links or relationships between the works.
- Choose one of the themes suggested in this Education Resource and review the exhibition from this perspective.
- Are there other themes (not identified in this Resource) that could apply to this selection of work?
- Compare two or more works which appear to be exploring similar ideas in different ways.
6. FURTHER RESEARCH: RESOURCES

- All Restless artists have extensive online profiles varying from extended biographies and professional profiles, media articles and interviews and academic essays. Some have dedicated artist or gallery websites which provide valuable background briefing. These sites are referenced in the artists’ profiles (Section 2 Exploring the Works).

- The Restless catalogue can be accessed purchased from the participating venues.

- A general overview of the exhibition can be found on the Restless website
  www.adelaidefestival.com.au/2012/visual_arts/adelaide_international_restless
FRANCIS ALYS

Gringo, 2003
in collaboration with Rafael Ortega
video documentation of an action, sound
5 min
courtesy David Zwirner, New York

N.S. HARSHA

Extraction, 2012
acrylic, sugarcane, natural fibre rope, found stones
dimensions variable
courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery, London
supported by Australia-India Council

CHOSIL KIL

Painting 14, 2011
cotton mix, canvas stretcher
100 x 80 x 12cm
Painting 14, as a starting point, other paintings and sculptures will be made at the site for this exhibition

Volume I, 2012
manuscript
28 x 7.5cm
courtesy the artist and Galerie Opdahl, Berlin

ANNIKA LARSSON & AUGUSTIN MAURS

Divertimento - 4 movements for voices, whistles and strings, 2011-12
performance
courtesy the artists and Andréhn Schiptjenko

TERESA MARGOLLES

127 cuerpos/127 bodies, 2006
installation with remnants of autopsy threads
dimensions variable
courtesy the artist and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich

RABIH MROUE

Noiseless, 2006-2008
installation: single channel video with sound, wall text
4:30 min
courtesy the artist and Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Beirut/Hamburg

SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS

Pareidolia, 2011
single channel HD video with sound
12:25 min
courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, London
supported by Mondriaan Foundation

POSTCOMMODITY

With salvage and knife tongue, 2011-12
four-channel video installation with sound
courtesy the artists
supported by USA Consulate
LIST OF WORKS

LISA REIHANA

PELT: Aquila, Camarillo, Sabino, Pilosus, 2010
series of four digital prints on Hahnemuller 305gsm paper
160 x 160 cm each
courtesy the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

courtesy the artist and Omikron Gallery, Nicosia
support by Ministry of Education and Culture, Cyprus

ANRI SALA

Answer me, 2008
single channel HD video, stereo sound
4:51 min
courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

NANCY SPERO

Maypole/take no prisoners, 2007
handprinting on aluminum, ribbon, steel chain, and aluminum pole with steel base
courtesy the Estate of Nancy Spero and Galerie Lelong, New York

DANAE STRATOU

The Globalising Wall, 2011
single channel video installation
10 min
courtesy the artist and Zoumboulakis Galleries, Athens

JINOOS TAGHIZADEH

Rock, paper, scissors, 2009
series of collage on offset lenticular prints
7 works at 50 x 35 cm each
16 works at 16 x 23 cm each
courtesy the artist and Aaran Gallery, Tehran

SOCRATIS

SOCRATOUS

Architectural strategy 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 186.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled I 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 142 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled II 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 124.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled III 2011
c-print photograph
124.5 x 124.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled V 2011
c-print photograph
142 x 124.5 cm

Architectural strategy, untitled IV 2011
c-print photograph
54.5 x 54.5 cm
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