



19.05. – 18.06.2017

THE CONUNDRUM OF IMAGINATION

PRESS RELEASE

THE CONUNDRUM OF IMAGINATION

ON THE PARADIGM OF EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY
OPENING: THURSDAY, 18.05.2017, 6 PM



Imagination creates the situation,
and, then, the situation
creates imagination.

It may, of course,
be the other way around: Columbus was discovered
by what he found.

James Baldwin, Imagination



Of all the waves of explorations known in history, from the Carthaginian in West Africa in 500 BC, through the Greek's ventures in Northern Europe around 380 – c. 310 BC, the Han dynasty's exploration of Central Asia in the 2nd century BC, the Vikings exploring most of Europe and setting foot in America around 800 to 1040 AD, the Polynesian exploration of central and south pacific until 1280, the Chinese exploration of Southeast and South Asia as well as the East African coast in the 14th century, the most striking of all, most productive and enriching for some and at the same time most devastating of all ‚exploration ages’ was what has been coined the ‚European Age of Discovery’. The stories of the European explorers that charted the world from early 14th to 19th centuries in their discovery spree – from Columbus to Humboldt, Cao to Cook, from Dias, da Gama or Magellan to Vespucci, Tasman or Bering – have been told and retold.

Their praises of how they ‚discovered’ lands and waters, vertebrates and invertebrates, how they were the first to crest mountains and their contributions in the natural sciences and geography have been sung. Accolades have been given to the explorers for setting trade routes between continents, which they ploughed with the three G’s at the forefront of their minds: Gold, God and Glory.

So while the ‚European Age of Exploration’ is still highly celebrated in most of the world, with countries, cities, rivers, animals and plants still carrying the names of its main protagonists, and with countries setting up cultural and political agendas and institutions in reverence and commemoration of these explorers, it is important to reflect on the other consequences of this Age of Exploration, beyond the advantages evident from the European perspective or viewpoint of the axis of power.

INES DOUJAK

Skins | 2016

© Ines Doujak

WILLIAM HOGARTH

Columbus Breaking the Egg |

1752

GOLD ... In the midst of an economic stalemate in Europe due to the then disputed Mediterranean and the perilous Arabian Peninsula that hindered trade with Asia, European kings had ushered explorers into the high seas to find alternative ways to get to the sources of gold, spices and other resources. This thus opened the way for an age of global capitalism and imperialism. Apart from an uneven economic structure built on exploitation, these explorations led to the initiation of the transatlantic slave trade as unpaid labourers for the European plantations. The



economic models set up then are still preeminent in the contemporary.

GOD ... An important part of the companhia of conquistadors were the clergy men that were at the same time companions of warriors, who came with a firearm in one hand and the bible in the other. While missioning and securing religious

territory for the pope and kings back in Europe were more of an excuse to get more support for their trips, these explorations led to the eradication of autochthone religions and cultures in their bid to impose a monotheistic Christian religion to the world. They went as far as not only forcefully converting natives to Christianity, but as stipulated e. g. under Castilian law prohibited non-Catholics from dwelling in captured territory and thereby prompting a Hispanicization and Catholicisation of the whole territory.

GLORY ... An accumulation of wealth and territory, a superimposition of your civilisation, cultures and religions, a propagation of your epistemologies and thereby destruction of other knowledge systems is nothing if it is not recognised and glorified. It is said that one of the most important power installation mechanisms is the act of naming. Thus by naming countries, cities, insects, plants, animals and mountains with the likes of Humboldt, Magellan, Tasman, Bering or Cook their glories live on. At the time of the ‚European Age of Discovery‘, the newly invented and popularised medium of writing came in handy in the dissemination of the explorers‘ claims of discovery, their righteous deeds and the knowledge they had acquired. Such was the case when Humboldt disseminated the information that he was the first to climb mount Chimborazo, which was strange as knowledge of that mountain had since time immemorial been part and parcel of myths and knowledge systems of the Ecuadorian people. Glory also came on both sides of the Atlantic as explorers were either feared as gods in the conquered land or honoured as great knights, scientists, and visionaries in their fatherlands. All these came along with the spread of diseases that were imported into the conquered territories, an erasure of native civilizations, cultures and languages, peoples and paving the way for colonialism.

The exhibition project *The Conundrum of Imagination* aims at exploring the paradigm exploration and discovery as an empirical system. The project is not about pointing the forefinger at anyone, not about Columbus nor Humboldt nor any of their peers, but rather about humanity’s insatiable desire for wealth that goes beyond the proverbial searching for and sharing greener pastures, but rather possessing and depriving others of those pastures.

The exhibition will investigate humanity’s endless quest for knowledge, but also the tendency to foster certain epistemological systems and suppress others through selection mechanisms. The project will get granular on religion and culture as tools for the crafting of identities within societies, but as weapons for the construction of the other and similarly utensils for suppression. The exhibition will seek at situating the concept of exploration and discovery within a genealogy of academic disciplines, e. g. Anthropology.

JOHN AKOMFRAH

Tropikos | 2016

Filmstill

Courtesy Smoking Dogs Films;

Lisson Gallery



The Conundrum of Imagination will aim at investigating continuities of the notion of exploration from its earliest days into the contemporary. For this, a spotlight will be set on the way exploration of back then is reflected in the exploration today of the moon and other planets beyond the earth. But even more crucially, the project will look at the Internet as a contemporary terrain for exploration, where the same laws of three G's are applicable.



The project will pick up on James Baldwin's question what if the explorers were actually discovered by what they found and not the other way round. The project is about the human psyche and the predicaments that our minds set us up in when the "conundrum of the imagination dictates, discovers, or can dismember what we feel, or what we find," as is the case with the concept of exploration.

We do not know enough about the mind,
or how the conundrum of imagination
dictates, discovers,
or can dismember what we feel,
or what we find.

*James Baldwin, Conundrum (on my birthday)
(for Rico)*

The presented works will be new commissions inspired by the concept of *The Conundrum of Imagination* and each artist will present an installation and a performance/lecture piece.

THE ARTISTS

John Akomfrah is an artist and filmmaker, whose works are characterized by their investigations into memory, post-colonialism and temporality. He often explores the experience of the African diaspora in Europe and the USA.

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc devotes his focus to the cultural hegemonies upon which the evolution of contemporary societies is based. Through video, photography and installations, he explores the principles behind the dominant presence of pre-existing elements and events – notably those linked to imperial and colonial history.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo is Cameroonian filmmaker and artist. Bekolo radically questions and deconstructs the notions, processes and perceptions of both film- and exhibition-making. For this project he will present a new film installation called *Our Wishes*.

MATHIEU KLEYEBE ABONNENC

The Night Readers | 1983/2017

Courtesy Gallery Marcelle Alix and the artist

NAUFUS RAMÍREZ-FIGUEROA

Babylonian Fantasy II | 2015

Commissioned by Gasworks and coproduced by Wiener Festwochen

© Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa

Melanie Bonajo is a filmmaker and performance artist. In her work she searches for headstrong paths in an ultra-capitalist and increasingly sterile, technological world, and resists the traditional division between humans, nature and technology. She will produce a new video piece entitled *Progress vs Sunsets – Re-formulating the Nature Documentary*.

Combining documentary and subjective viewpoints, **Filipa César's** films are concerned with the relationship between history, memory, image and narrative. Their freedom of tone and form is reminiscent of the form of the cinematic essay, in which the image serves as a starting point for open narratives, developed like a stream of thought.



Cooperativa Cráter Invertido is a creative community that emerges from continuous making. Based in Mexico City, the collective seeks for collective answers and actions by developing modes of autonomization and reflection about political emancipation.

Ines Doujak works with colours, movement, texts and sound. **John Barker** is a novelist and writes political essays. They share a common interest in the political dimension of cultural exchanges.

Viron Erol Vert's artistic interest in myths, legends, faith systems, cultural identity and linguistic experience but also his personal history and multicultural background play a key role in the layout of his research process. The Project „Of Part and Loaf“ puts the Mediterranean in the centre of a complex artistic confrontation in which the ambivalent historic and contemporary aspects of this geographic area are investigated.



Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. He writes, talks and thinks around images, with an interest in investigating their emergence, transmission and disappearance within contexts of globalism and governance.

Marco Montiel-Soto, himself a traveller and an immigrant, constantly finds himself returning; Returning to his home of Maracaibo, Venezuela or from there returning to his chosen home of Berlin. The starting point and goal of his journey becomes imaginary, those are the artist's dream locations that melt into one another.

Dineo Seshee Bopape is a South African artist, combining a digital and analogue aesthetic, as well as natural and synthetic elements such as plants, wood, mirrors, and video monitors, to engage with powerful socio-political notions of memory, relationships and representation.

Through the photographic layering of histories, Nigerian photographer **Abraham Oghobase** creates an alternate, fictitious reality asking in the framework of this project: what if Austria had colonized Nigeria? The project reflects on what was and what is (history and present day actualities) while asking what could have been (imagined realities).

Ahmet Öğüt will revisit his existing work *Black Diamond* for which he fills the museum space with a mountain of coal and buries a little piece of the Leopold Museum in the mountain he creates. This „museum piece“ will be removed from a wall inside the museum and is there replaced by a valuable diamond.

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa's practice is rooted in folklore and dreams, conspiracy theories, ancient mythologies and magic. His absurd and humorous approach colours many of his sculptures, performances and works on paper.

Pascale Marthine Tayou's works not only mediate between cultures but are also produced in the knowledge that they are social, cultural, or political constructions. His work is always closely linked to the idea of travel and of coming into contact with what is other to self. Tayou's objects, sculptures, installations and drawings

COOPERATIVA CRÁTER

INVERTIDO

Faceless of History visits

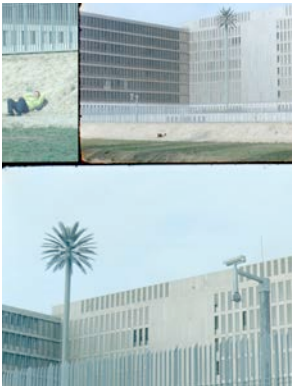
Malinalco | 2017

Photo: Pauline Doutreluingne

AHMET ÖĞÜT

Black Diamond | 2010

© Ahmet Öğüt



dwell upon an individual moving through the world and exploring the issue of the global village.

OPAVIVARÁ!, art collective from Rio de Janeiro, develops actions in public spaces of cities, galleries and cultural institutions, proposing inversions in the use of urban space, through the creation of relational devices that provide collective experiences.

PERFORMANCE/LECTURE PROGRAMME FOR THE CONUNDRUM OF IMAGINATION

OPENING DAY THURSDAY 18.05.2017

- 6 pm:** **Leopold Museum:** Welcome and introductory speech by Hans-Peter Wipplinger and Tomas Zierhofer-Kin and the curators Bonaventure Ndikung and Pauline Doutreluingne
- 8 pm:** **Performeum:** Opening *The Conundrum of Imagination*
- 8.30 pm:** **Performeum:** Dineo Seshee Bopape: ... *struggle of memory against forgetting* (performance)

FRIDAY 19.05

- 7.30 pm:** **Performeum:** Ho Rui An: *Solar: A Meltdown* (Lecture Performance)

SATURDAY 20.05*

- 4 pm:** **Leopold Museum:** Ahmet Ögüt: *In search of museum inside the museum* (Lecture)
- 5 pm:** **Leopold Museum:** Ines Doujak, John Barker und Lukas Goldmann: *Skins* (Performance)

SUNDAY 21.05

- 6.30 pm:** **Performeum:** Cooperativa Cráter Invertido: *Kamsamida kamsamida: A Walk in the Darkness* (performance)
- 7.30 pm:** **Performeum:** Abraham Oghobase: *What if Austria had colonised Nigeria?* (lecture)

THURSDAY 25.05

- 8 pm:** **Performeum:** Marco Montiel-Soto: *Expedition on a Permanent Storm* (lecture)
- 9 pm:** **Performeum:** Viron Erol Vert: Live drawing session *Dreamatory* with musician Hanno Hinkelbein (performance)

FRIDAY 26.05

- 8 pm:** **Performeum:** Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: *Birth séance* (performance)
- 9 pm:** **Performeum:** Matrix Botanica: *Matrix Botanica: Pilgrimage with the animals* (music performance), Performeum

SATURDAY 27.05

- 8 pm:** **Performeum:** Jean-Pierre Bekolo: *Our Wishes* (lecture)
- 9 pm:** **Performeum:** Filipa César & Louis Henderson: *Op-film: A critical archaeology of optical technologies from the lighthouse to the GPS* (lecture)

FILIPA CÉSAR

The Trouble with Palms

[repérage] | 2017

Production still

SUNDAY 28.05

- 8 pm:** **Performeum:** John Akomfrah: *Of Time and the City*:
An illustrated talk about Akomfrah's recent work (lecture)
- 9 pm:** **Performeum:** Mathieu K Abonnenc:
Wacapou, a room in my mother's house (lecture)

OPAVIVARÁ! will present *TUPYCOLÉ*, an indulging, tasting, fleshy and anthropophagical performance intervention at different locations in the city.

18 May, 8–10 pm: at Performeum

19 May, 3–7 pm: at MuseumsQuartier/Leopold Museum

20 May, 3–7 pm: at Columbus Center (Columbusplatz 7–8, 1100 Wien)

25–28 May; 1–4 June; 8–11 June; 15–18 June, 6–8 pm: at Performeum

WIENER FESTWOCHEN 2017

12. MAI BIS 18. JUNI 2017

THE CONUNDRUM OF IMAGINATION: 19. MAY BIS 18. JUNE 2017



CONTACT WIENER FESTWOCHEN

Tomas Zierhofer-Kin

Intendant

Wolfgang Wais

Executive Director

Wiener Festwochen

Lehár-gasse 11/1/6, 1060 Wien

Festwochen-Service Tel. +43 1 589 22 22

www.festwochen.at

www.facebook.com/wienerfestwochen/

www.instagram.com/wienerfestwochen/

www.twitter.com/WienFestwochen

Press Department, Wiener Festwochen

Anne Zimmermann (Leitung)

Judith Kaltenböck, Matthias Kieber,

Stefanie Preißler, Sarah Preyer

Tel. +43 1 589 22-330, -335, -336, -337, -338

pressebuero@festwochen.at

www.festwochen.at

Main sponsor Wiener Festwochen:

Erste Bank

Wiener Städtische

Casinos Austria



CONTACT LEOPOLD MUSEUM

Hans-Peter Wipplinger

Artistic Director

Gabriele Langer

Managing Director

Leopold Museum-Private Foundation

MuseumsQuartier Vienna

Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna

office@leopoldmuseum.org

Tel. +43 1 525 70-0

www.leopoldmuseum.org

www.facebook.com/leopoldmuseum/

www.instagram.com/leopoldmuseum/

www.twitter.com/leopoldmuseum

Press & Public Relations, Leopold Museum

Klaus Pokorny (Head of)

Anna Suetter

Tel. +43 1 525 70-1507, -1541

presse@leopoldmuseum.org

www.leopoldmuseum.org

Partner of Leopold Museum:

Wiener Städtische

Press release and press images can be found on www.festwochen.at/presse

(user name *presse* and password *Information*)

and on www.leopoldmuseum.at/presse/Festwochenausstellung