

## Images of History in Contemporary Art

### Workshop: Transgenerational Corpographies of Memory

As part of the *Images of History in Contemporary Art* research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) in Bern, the workshop *Transgenerational Corpographies of Memory* will take place:

November 18, 2021, 2:30–6:30pm  
November 19, 2021, 9:00am–5:00pm

#### LOCATION

Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF)  
Am Neuen Markt 9d  
14467 Potsdam

*Transgenerational Corpographies of Memory* is a visual art and history workshop that uses two audio-visual artistic works as a departure point to explore the dimensions and trajectories of transgenerational memory within the medium of artistic film. The workshop consists of two parts: the film screenings and the discursive program. The underlying works stage female biographies of the 20th and early 21st century based on two women's self-narrated memories.

The workshop structure is triadic, meaning that the works will be analyzed from an artistic, art historical and historical perspective in a complementary way. The aim of this transdisciplinary investigation is to explore transgenerational cultural memory work in contemporary art via pictorial "close readings." The central questions are: How can we grasp the connection between history, transgenerational memories and artistic images of history? How do these works integrate critical, dissonant historical voices?

Participants: Melanie Franke, Ulrike Gerhardt, Francisca de Haan, Gal Kirn, Alexandra Köhring, Lene Markusen, Marta Popivoda and Jelena Vesić

Thursday, November 18, 2021  
FILM SCREENINGS

The two audio-visual works *Landscapes of Resistance* (2021) by MARTA POPIVODA and *Revolutionary Women* (to be completed in 2022) by LENE MARKUSEN will be screened. Both filmmakers are interested in the human body as a material and ephemeral archive and carrier of individual memories, as well as in monuments and sculptures as embodiments of collective memory. This axis between the individual and the collective, official and alternative historiography, as well as between oral and visual history, characterizes the mnemonic corpographies of these works, which involve up to three generations. How are these previously untold, transgenerational stories of 20th century women ("herstories") translated into the visual?

2:30pm Arrival

Welcome: Melanie Franke (project lead, *Images of History in Contemporary Art* SNSF project)

Ulrike Gerhardt (post-doc)

3:00–5:00pm

Screenings of

Marta Popivoda, *Landscapes of Resistance*, 2021, 4K, color, stereo sound, 95 min.

Lene Markusen, *Revolutionary Women*, 2021, HD, color, stereo sound, rough cut, 25 min.

5:00–6:30pm

Apéro (drinks and snacks)



Marta Popivoda, *Landscapes of Resistance*, 2021, film still, 4K, color, stereo sound, 95 min., depicted is a monument, erected in 1958 in Belgrade and dedicated to the communist freedom fighter and physician Vera Blagojević (1920–1942), who was murdered by the Nazis, sculptor: Vida Jocić.

Friday, November 19, 2021

DISCURSIVE PROGRAM

## Workshop Panel I: How Can a Landscape Speak?

In the film *Landscapes of Resistance* (2021) by Marta Popivoda, one of the first partisans of Serbia is accompanied on her mental journey into the past. It is Sonja Vujanović who furthermore was one of the leaders of the resistance movement in Auschwitz. The memories of the 97-year-old witness travel through time, landscapes and along urban monuments, ending in the bodies of the new generation of anti-fascists. Based on this multidirectional narrative, the panel includes three disciplinary perspectives: Filmmaker MARTA POPIVODA, historian GAL KIRN and art historian JELENA VESIĆ will reflect on the tension between history and memory and the challenge of transforming a historico-political landscape into a narrative agent.

9:00am

Arrival

Welcome: Melanie Franke (project lead, *Images of History in Contemporary Art* SNSF project)

Ulrike Gerhardt (post-doc)

9:30am

Marta Popivoda

## Landscapes of Resistance: The Womanly Face of the War, or How to Populate the Landscape with Multiple Gazes

Marta Popivoda will introduce her film *Landscapes of Resistance* (2021) and the long-term artistic research around it, done in collaboration with theorist and dramaturg Ana Vujanović. The research is envisaged as an artistic-political journey through the landscapes of anti-fascist and communist memories – especially those of partisan women. It is a research journey that is not afraid of being poetic, affective, and experiential, while conceptually and rationally outlining the problem of erasing these memories from the history of today's European society.

9:55–10:20am

Discussion

10:20–10:30am

Break

10:30am

Gal Kirn

## Filmic Counter-Archive: Emancipating (Yugoslav) Anti-Fascism Today

Antifascist and partisan memory, its narration and representation, constituted part of the dominant genre platform ever in socialist Yugoslavia since the end of the World War II. There have been very few filmic attempts to tell, show, narrate, point to a specific past in terms of "memory of the future." This lecture will make comparisons between Marta Popivoda's groundbreaking film in the time after the burial of anything connected to socialism and Yugoslavia and Želimir Žilnik's *Uprising in Jazak* (1973), the first film that contributed to the filmic partisan memory from below. How can one return today to the partisan past without succumbing to Yugonostalgia/partisan innocence?

10:55–11:20am

Discussion

11:20–11:30am

Break

11:30am  
Jelena Vesic

## Political Landscape, Militant Woman, Tender Embrace ...

Comrade Sonja – revolutionary, partisan fighter, concentration camp survivor, elderly woman – we are encountering her body in a series of cinematic close-ups – her hair, her moles, her veins, her wrinkled skin, her hands, her gaze. Sonja's voice speaks from the landscape, but it is not the magic of a forest goddess, nor is it an allegorizing gesture. In *Landscapes of Resistance*, both Sonja and the landscapes are given their full presence and autonomy, free from an obligation to represent. The directorial cut by Marta Popivoda shows them in a tender embrace, as good old comrades. This talk will look at her film in the context of "political landscape films" and the wider pictorial tradition of the historical landscape.

11:55–12:20pm  
Discussion

12:30–2:00pm  
Lunch break

## Workshop Panel II: Untold Herstories of the 20th Century

Part documentary, part fiction, Lene Markusen's film *Revolutionary Women* (to be completed in 2022) focuses on the migration story of 81-year-old "Ella." The ethnic German is the child of forced laborers from Lithuania who worked in Germany from 1940 to 1945 as part of the "Back Home to the Reich" (Heim ins Reich) program. In 1959, aged 19, after an odyssey through many refugee camps, "Ella" returns to Germany, where she lived from then on. *Revolutionary Women* investigates oral history to locate migration within German and European history. Filmmaker LENE MARKUSEN, women's and gender historian FRANCISCA DE HAAN and art historian ALEXANDRA KÖHRING will discuss the manifold potential of fictionalizing 20th century migrant, War and post-War biographies.

2:00pm  
Lene Markusen

## Fabulating on a Lithuanian–German Post–War Biography

In *Revolutionary Women* (to be completed in 2022), Lene Markusen retells the migration history of protagonist "Ella," a Lithuanian-born, 81-year-old ethnic German woman from the Rhineland who experienced World War II, a labor camp, starvation, a Gulag transportation escape, and a resettling to (West) Germany during the "economic miracle." Throughout the film, Markusen creates various roles: confident sisters and accomplices who re-embody and usurp different stations of "Ella's" life. In her talk, Markusen will present the visual and fabulatory strategies by which she explores the transformative potential of a post-War, European migrant experience.



Lene Markusen, *Revolutionary Women*, 2021, film still, HD, color, stereo sound, rough cut, 25 min.; depicted are four female performers during a reenactment of domestic activities on a grass-covered landfill in Florence, Italy.

2:25–2:50pm

Discussion

2:50–3:00pm

Break

3:00pm

Francisca de Haan

## Women's Migration and Political Activism – Some Intersections in Recent European History

Migration is a key component of European history – and has been for centuries. Women have migrated to cities to find work (often as domestic servants); they have fled/moved away from many forms of (social, economic, sexual, wartime) violence. These women's histories and their gendered and political activism are often lacking in the dominant stories or understandings of migration. Lene Markusen's filmic work focuses on the complexities of migration and its fundamental role in one woman's life. In her talk, Francisca de Haan will discuss examples of organized women's activities to help/support other migrants and refugees in the postwar era and explore some of the ways we can retrieve their histories and narratives, including the role of art in doing so.

3:25–3:50pm

Discussion

3:50–4:00pm  
Break

4:00pm  
Alexandra Köhring

## Artistic Fictions and Actions: Ways of Narrating NS Crimes

In her talk, Alexandra Köhring will look at examples of fictional documentary as means of transgenerational storytelling to commemorate the NS crimes. She will start her talk with an introduction on historical approaches of narrating the legacies of the NS as traces in bodies and habitus. Starting with the example of *Revolutionary Women's* "Ella" as a child of a forced labor worker, Köhring will respond to current fictional documentaries about Shoah victims. How do these filmmakers create body practices and habitus to generate options for action?

4:25–5:00pm  
Final discussion & conclusion

WORKSHOP CONCEPTION AND ORGANIZATION  
Ulrike Gerhardt

### REGISTRATION

If you are interested in participating in the workshop, please register by November 10, 2021 with Ulrike Gerhardt, [ulrike.gerhardt@fhnw.ch](mailto:ulrike.gerhardt@fhnw.ch). The number of participants is limited.

PROJECT WEBSITE  
[www.gbgk.ch](http://www.gbgk.ch)

The workshop takes place in cooperation with the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF) and the online portal [Visual-History.de](http://Visual-History.de).



## SHORT BIOS

MELANIE FRANKE is Professor of Art History and Research at the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel, where she heads the *Images of History in Contemporary Art* research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation in Bern. Currently, she is switching to the University of Potsdam where she will take over a chair for art history. She also works as a curator for the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum for Contemporary Art – Berlin. The second volume on the topic of “Narrative and Knowledge” about artist interviews is in the making and will be published in 2022.

ULRIKE GERHARDT works as a post-doctoral researcher in the *Images of History in Contemporary Art* SNSF research project with a focus on history in art after 1989/91, gender and transgenerational memory at the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel. In her dissertation she researched video-artistic works of the “Generation Transformation” in the context of shifting European memory cultures.

FRANCISCA DE HAAN is Professor of Gender Studies and History at the Central European University (Vienna), where she also heads the Department of Gender Studies and is Co-Director of MATILDA (European Master in Women’s and Gender History). She is currently finalizing an edited volume on communist women activists around the world (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

GAL KIRN holds a PhD in cultural theory and philosophy from University of Nova Gorica. He has been working on the intersection of cultural, memory, political and historical studies and has recently published the book *Partisan Counter-Archive* (De Gruyter, 2020) and co-edited the volume *Nights of the Dispossessed. Riots Unbound* (Columbia Press, 2021). He works as a principal investigator at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

ALEXANDRA KÖHRING (PhD) is an art historian working at the Foundation of Hamburg Memorials and Learning Centers, based at the concentration camp memorial Neuengamme. She has done research on art and architecture in the Soviet Union and the rebuilding of destroyed cities after WWII. For some time now, she has been focusing on the art and remembrance of Nazi crimes.

LENE MARKUSEN is a visual artist, scriptwriter, and film director. Her everyday ethnological and cinematographic view of female subjectivities suggests historical discontinuities as catalytic moments. Until 2017 she was a professor at the University of Fine Arts, Hamburg. Recently, she published her artist book *Sisters Alike: Female Identities in the Post-Utopian* (Spector Books, 2019). She received the Villa Romana prize in 2021.

MARTA POPIVODA is a filmmaker and video artist. Her feature documentary *Yugoslavia, How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body* premiered at the 63rd Berlinale, and is part of a permanent collection of MoMA, New York. Her work has also featured in major art galleries, such as Tate Modern London, MoMA, and MAXXI Rome. Her new film *Landscapes of Resistance* premiered in the Tiger Competition of the IFFR 2021 and won several awards.

JELENA VESIĆ holds a PhD in theory of arts and media. She is active in the field of publishing, research and exhibition practice that intertwines political theory and contemporary art. Her recent books are *On Neutrality* (Non-Aligned Modernity, 2017; with V.J. Vlidi and R. O’Reilly), *Yugoslav Art Space. Critic in the First Person* (with B. Dimitrijević and J. Denegri, 2021) and the co-edited volume *Feminist Takes* (with A. Majaca – initiator of the project and R. O’Reilly, 2021).



University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland  
Academy of Art and Design

#### THANKS

We would like to thank the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History for their constructive cooperation and for providing the large seminar room.

#### CATERING

Genusswerkstatt, Potsdam



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Leibniz Centre for  
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History Potsdam

#### VISUALHISTORY

