

steirischer herbst 2017

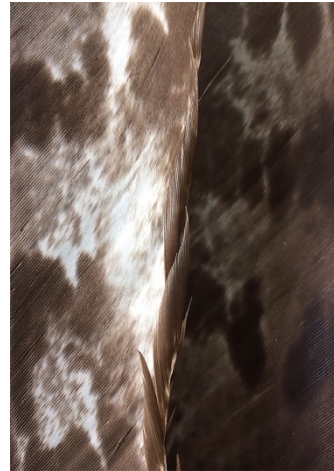
Prometheus Unbound

herbst exhibition

Neue Galerie Graz
Joanneumsviertel, Zugang Kalchberggasse, 8010 Graz

23/09 – 03/12
Tue – Sun 10.00 – 17.00

Opening Sat 23/09, 11.00



Participating artists Jonathas De Andrade (BR), Lothar Baumgarten (D), Yervant Gianikian + Angela Ricci Lucchi (IT), Friedemann von Stockhausen (D), Clemens von Wedemeyer (D), Aimée Zito Lema (AR/NL)

Curated by Luigi Fassi
Assistant Curator / Production Manager Birgit Pelzmann

Cinema screening Lothar Baumgarten: Ursprung der Nacht (102 min., no language) /
Jonathas De Andrade O peixe [The Fish] (37 min., no language)
Wed 11/10, 20.00, Filmzentrum im Rechbauer kino, Rechbauerstr. 6 / 8010 Graz

Performance: Aimée Zito Lema: Rond de Jambe
Fr 13/10, 16.00, Neue Galerie Graz

The herbst exhibition examines questions that emerge as soon as the discussion turns to culture. What defines cultures? How enduring are they over time? And where are the origins of the foundations of what we regard today as European culture? The figure of Prometheus lends itself as an illustration of these questions. Since ancient times, the Titan who stole fire from the gods to give it to humanity has been regarded in Western tradition as the creator of civilisation and bringer of culture. His deeds embody the irreversibility of knowledge and possession of culture and underpin the notion of man as an autonomous being.

This interpretation of the myth, in which progress and technique (*techné*) are allied with politically loaded humanist values, took a new turn in modernity. Prometheus became a symbol of freedom and self-reflection for emancipating man not once but twice: from being at the mercy of the forces of nature and from political-religious systems of rule. On the other hand, this cult of Prometheus also enabled the project of instrumental rationality that was used both to legitimise the alleged superiority of Western culture as well as to affirm European modernity as the endpoint of human evolution – a universal hero of mankind became the local hero of the West. The exhibition explores the potential of the ancient myth and its modern interpretations, asking: What can we learn today from the long tradition of Prometheus?

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To begin with, some familiar associations. The image of the immortal Titan, for example, naked and chained to a rock in punishment for his sacrilegious deed, recalls depictions of suffering from Christian tradition and resonates in the suffering bodies of the present day. But his story also opens our eyes to a future that can be nothing but uncertain in view of the antagonistic Promethean relationship between destiny and self-determination, failure and progress, captivity and liberation. Freed from his chains, *unbound*, Prometheus can be seen as a metaphor for a contemporary global history, one viewed from a perspective that reaches beyond the European matrix: Prometheus *unbound* has now fled to an open territory where it is no longer Western history that determines its direction. The artists explore as yet uncharted forms of knowledge and different systems of imagination, harnessing the hidden nature of things in order to probe history – inspired by an ancient drama of ethical struggles, unresolved ambivalences, hubris and damnation.

Commissioned by steirischer herbst
In collaboration with Neue Galerie Graz

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Prometheus Unbound – WERKE

FRIEDEMANN VON STOCKHAUSEN

Born in 1945 in Karlshafen, Germany.

Lives and works in Berlin.

The ancestral dimension of the Prometheus myth is shared by the works of Friedemann von Stockhausen and Lothar Baumgarten. The two artists collaborated on the realisation of several works in the exhibition that are seeking a response to the question of the ultimate meaning of the promethean myth and its relevance in the present day.

Friedemann von Stockhausen's practice engages with the medium of drawing and collage to reflect upon the nature of organic life and its manifestations throughout various evolutionary states across time and the realm of nature. This same interest is also at the core of his confrontation with the complexity of the figure of Prometheus. Stockhausen's works—gathered under the title *Sacrificial Parts*—interpret Prometheus as both a demiurge, a creator that gave life and shape to humans, and a fragile creature himself, also made of flesh, bones and blood. This paradoxical dimension of Prometheus, paired with his experience as a force of immortal, titanic nature, but also as a suffering, tortured being, recursively appears as an unresolved dilemma in Stockhausen's work. His works explore these questions, along with the dualism between the divine and human worlds; between body and artefact, so highlighting Prometheus and his condition as a symbolic image of the human one. Prometheus, according to tradition and ancient myth, rebels against the practice of blood sacrifice—an offering that is demanded by Zeus—but himself ends up the victim of physical suffering, bound to the most vulnerable side of his nature, that of bodily fragility. This dualism between the immortal and titanic natures of Prometheus is evoked by Stockhausen's stretched forms, emphasizing the physicality of the promethean myth, and creating deconstructed forms in which the body is resolved in an almost landscape-horizon format. What recurs constantly in the works realised for the exhibition by the artist is the presence of organisms in states of metamorphic transformation; potential human forms coming to life and yet still not fully developing. Materially, the figures, objects and animal skins allude to the human body in a state of mutation, constraint and pain. But further, they also allude to a more pragmatic dimension of the practice of sacrifice where one element of a system is relinquished, sacrificed, in order to ensure the totality's continued existence. Prometheism is interpreted thus by the artist as a powerful and indeterminate force, within a reflection on the most enigmatic aspects of a myth that touch upon Man's life and destiny; upon damnation and possible redemption. Almost a philosophical theodicy—an interrogation of the nature of evil—as viewed through the perspective of bodily life, in Stockhausen's works the ancient myth leads to an evocative and unsettling picture of the human condition.

Works on View

Sacrificial parts, 2017

Courtesy the artist

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LOTHAR BAUMGARTEN

Born in 1944 in Rheinsberg, Germany.

A confrontation with mythical thinking and the interrogative dimension of the Prometheus myth is highlighted by Lothar Baumgarten, who also investigates the meaning of prometheism and its enduring enigmatic potential throughout time.

Baumgarten, whose work has always been engaged in an intense reflection on nature and its problematic categorisation through the anthropic forms of culture and science, in a series of new works, has focussed a reflection on some essential aspects of myth. Who is Prometheus? As we have seen, the ancient Titan is an ancestral cosmological entity that precedes the Olympic gods; is a primordial power (temporarily) forced to having his liver torn apart by an eagle, with it then destined to regenerate each night in an endless cycle. Baumgarten represents these bare elements of the mythological events in their rough and burning materiality. In his body of work presented in the exhibition, entitled *Ascheregen*, scattered elements are gathered together: the names of the Titans appear painted over eagles' feathers; and ashes and charcoal stones are placed close to each other in an enigmatic evocation of Prometheus through biological elements and natural forms. Charcoal as a mineral element reappears in other sculptures, indirectly signalling the latency of fire as a primary element; a signal of intelligence and strength, but also one of fear and destruction. The sculptures made of piled compressed blocks of coal dust, *Orakel, Leber and Gebirge*—a tetrahedron, a conical shape and a round-formed object—resemble the sculpted anatomical protrusions on top of the so-called 'Liver of Piacenza'. The 'Liver' is a precious life-sized bronze model (found by chance in a field in Italy in 1877) of a sheep's liver from the second century BC and is covered with Etruscan inscriptions and serving as a planisphere of the heavens to perform haruspicy. Baumgarten's piece mobilises the symbolic potential of this enigmatic object to refer to Prometheus' oracular nature, able to predict Zeus' future and fate. The myth cannot be hermeneutically forced into any single interpretation, and, by its very structure calls for continuous re-reading, a process bringing to the fore its dialectic of progress and standstill; of development and failure. If the myth teaches both the permanence of the human possession of culture and the irreversibility of its development despite the opposition of the will of Zeus, Baumgarten explores such a statement, stressing the possibility –transmitted by the myth—of resistance through self-cultivation. In this way, elements from the culture of labour (*Tierra & Trabajo*) and civil engagement (*WUT MUT*) emphasise the manifestations of a possible *Bildung* that Baumgarten allows to emerge in his works on Prometheus. Stones, ashes, pigments, feathers, but also literary references, all converge to compose a body of research aimed at grasping mythical thinking by means of the hidden nature of things. This is done by exploring their enigmatic appearance, the history contained within their ephemeral materiality, as well as their organic consistency and seductive ambiguity.

In an older, seminal work, *Unsettled Objects* (1968-69) Lothar Baumgarten explores how objects and artefacts are displayed and presented to the viewers in different European ethnographic museums. His aim is to reflect on the way in which museums mediate and organise the knowledge of other cultures by providing a further frame of reference that begins with the arrangement of the objects and continues with the production of texts, labels, catalogues and various kind of documentation. The eighty images of *Unsettled Objects'* slide projection show artefacts from the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, according to the original display of museum when it opened to the public in 1874. Uprooted from their original environment and normal uses, the artefacts generate an exotic fascination precisely because of their arrangement in cases, frames, and storage drawers. The object of Baumgarten's research is thus not the other as represented by the objects, but rather the site and modes of the encounter with it, i.e. the display, its strategies and structures. The result of such a

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method is the colonial domestication of alterity into the forms of Western cultures.

On October 11, at 8 pm in the Filmzentrum im Rechbauerokino there will be a presentation of *Origin of the night (Amazon Cosmos)* 1973-77, an early, keystone film by the artist.

Works on View

Ascheregen, 2017

Tierra & Trabajo, 2003

WUT MUT, 2016

Orakel / Leber / Gebirge, 2017

Unsettled Objects (1968-69)

Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

JONATHAS DE ANDRADE

Born in 1982 in Maceió, Brazil. Lives and works in Recife, Brazil.

De Andrade's work revolves around the social history of Brazil, its relationship with Modernism and a diverse identity constituted by a variety of cultures and traditions. For the artist Brazil represents both an emotional terrain of confrontation; the site of encounters and clashes between people, their life stories and political visions, and also a model of cultural analysis that he deploys to examine contexts and social situations far removed from Brazil itself. The works of de Andrade engage in critical analysis through a disruptive poetic force. This is expressed in photographic, installation and film works that immerse the spectator in overwhelming intimate confessions, rigorous political analysis and innovative historical reflection.

In his new project, *Eu, mestiço (Me, a mestizo)*, 2017, de Andrade refers to a 1952 UNESCO study, *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*. The publication was authored by researchers from Columbia University in the U.S.A., who, in partnership with the government of Bahia in the north of Brazil, aimed at exploring what they defined as the 'racial democracy' of Brazil and the racial prejudice and discrimination in the country. The researchers showed photographs of white, black and mixed-race Brazilians to other Brazilians, who were then asked to evaluate the subject's attractiveness, work ethic and morality. The study described classifications based on physical criteria including quality of hair, flatness of nose, thickness of lips, and then showed how each was associated with a series of character attributes, such as laziness, aggressiveness, humility and so on. Those visible qualities, once tied to invisible ones, ended up affecting available socioeconomic opportunities for these people. But, being based on the promotion of the processes of judgement centred on racialised categories, the methodology of the study, despite having the aim of unmasking racism's potent and insidious presence, replicated the same contested racial and class biases. De Andrade has reactivated the parameters of the study and re-used the photographs as a sociological tool in order to investigate the legacy of the study in the same region where it was originally conducted, i.e. Northeast Brazil. The photographs of the installation consist of a series of portraits of the Brazilians there, developing a study of expressions, gestures and emotions that critically re-enact the questions of the 1952 study around race and class. The outcome provocatively brings back to the fore the racist categories of the 1950s—those allegedly out of date or completely forgotten—by showing how racist connotations are still used in Brazil today in daily life. It is thus the physical appearance of the body as a contested terrain of cultural investigation that is here, at the centre of the artist's work.

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On October 11, at 8 pm in the Filmzentrum im Rechbauerokino the Austrian premiere of de Andrades recent film *O Peixe (The Fish, 2016)* will be screened, a work that further articulates the artists confrontation with anthropology and race in contemporary Brazil. The film engages with the seductive qualities of rites and mythologies, and the ways in which these inform our view and understanding of culture.

Works on View

Eu, mestiço/Me, a mestizo, 2017

UV print on falconboard 16mm cardboard.

Instituto Moreira Salles Photography Collection. Project developed with the support of Instituto Moreira Salles. Curated by Thyago Nogueira and Valentina Tong (assistant).

Sitters: Adriana Costa Rego, São Luís, MA; Antonio Oristes Lima Neto, Imperatriz, MA; Bárbara Pereira da Silva, Imperatriz, MA; Beatriz Villarinho, São Paulo, SP; Drielle Shauanne Silva Santos e Dianne Yasmin Silva Santos, Ilhéus, BA; Emanuel Barros, Imperatriz, MA; Fernanda Ferri, São Paulo, SP; Lilian Vanessa Dias Avelar dos Santos, São Luís, MA; Luciano Mendes Garcia, São Luís, MA; Maria Faustina dos Santos, Imperatriz, MA; Monica Nunes de Azevedo, São Paulo, SP; Reginaldo Barros da Silva, Ilhéus, BA; Reylton Rafael Rosa Reis, São Luís, MA; Rondinele Carvalho, São Luís, MA; Tainã Santos de Souza, Ilhéus, BA; Vanessa Karinny, Imperatriz, MA; Zuleide Pereira de Souza, Imperatriz, MA.

Assistance: Julya Vasconcelos. Juma Marruá, Luciana Freyre d'Anunciação

Image processing: Equipe de fotografia IMS-RJ/ Photography team IMS-RJ/ Joanna Americano Castilho (coordination)

Print: Olho Digital

Courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano.

CLEMENS VON WEDEMEYER

Born in 1974 in Göttingen, Germany. Lives and works in Berlin.

The role of history, in particular the European one and its possible interpretations, is at the centre of the work of Clemens von Wedemeyer. By means of video, short films and multi-channel installations, von Wedemeyer opens up new, non-linear narratives within twentieth century history where real and fictional elements are mixed to elicit an ethically aware response from the viewer. *P.O.V. (Point Of View)* consists of constellations of footage appropriated from the archives of Captain Freiherr Harald von Vietinghoff-Riesch, an amateur cameraman who filmed behind the front lines during the Second World War in various European war scenarios.

In the six chapters of the work presented in the exhibition, the 16mm film materials are compared and analysed according to their historical and ethical meanings. Different points of view and perspectives are investigated by dissecting the filmic elements themselves, questioning who is behind the camera and what historical and ideological information is being provided by the author of the footage. In *Die Pferde des Rittmeisters, Artemovsk, Ohne Titel (Alles), Andenken* and *Against the Point of View*, the protagonists and victims of the war machine are presented centrally. Among them, horses, Wehrmacht soldiers, civilians and prisoners provide a rare and complex on-site overview of the motifs of the Second World War. The register changes with *Was man nicht sieht*, a conversation between Clemens von Wedemeyer himself and two scholars in which the historical footage is commented on by highlighting its ethnographic view within the given

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historical context. *Against the Point of View* goes a step further. It presents a single, isolated scene from the historic film footage and reconstructs it as a computer game environment to produce a *virtual battlefield*, which then enables alternative courses of the historic events to take place. By using such an unexpected visual medium, one that allows countless models to be made of how historical facts could have turned out differently, Von Wedemyer opens an in-depth reflection on one's own responsibility in contributing to the meaning of history. In this way, *P.O.V. (Point Of View)* becomes a philosophical inquiry into the nature of history. It is a work of art that interrogates our own capability to grasp its sense, values and ambiguities.

Works on View

P.O.V. (Point Of View), 2016

Multi-channel film and video installation

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris and KOW, Berlin. Supported by n.b.k., Berlin and Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg

YERVANT GIANIKIAN +ANGELA RICCI LUCCHI

Born in 1942 in Merano, Italy/ 1942, Lugo di Romagna, Italy.

Live and work in Milan.

Since the 1970s, forerunners of Italian and European experimental cinema Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi have developed a film practice that has centred on the appropriation of footage and visual fragments from twentieth century professional and amateur non-fiction films. By means of an analogical craft method arranged by themselves and known as 'analytical camera', the two artists work on selected film stills by colouring, cutting and cleaning them. These processes eventually slow down the speed of the presented scenes, allowing the original materials to be transfigured, giving rise to an unusual contemplative dimension. Their practice brings back to light, through an hermeneutical process, a world of meanings whose truths risk remaining neglected by the official historical canons.

At the core of their artistic practice lies an interest in the First World War, interpreted as an event that sparked the twentieth century's following devastations. From here, through their eyes, modern history is seen as a cluster of phantoms that loom large over the present, threatening to return in the form of fascism, colonialism, war, persecution and genocide. The protagonist of their work is thus Western modernity, a global catastrophe of oppression and violence, presented to the spectator through a set of dramatic film fragments. What matters to Gianikian and Lucchi is not appropriation as such, but rather an ethics of vision. It is more a moral rigour, able to give an unprecedented account of the twentieth century by giving space to the era's repressed ghosts; stories whose disappearance would otherwise coincide with the complete erasure of people, cultures and languages from history. Their art enters a lost world in which time-based stills are its surviving witnesses, and at the same time, are a critique of modernity that draws its motivations from the anguish of oblivion and the ethical imperative to remember. The main work at the Neue Galerie consists of five films presented as an installation, one of which was realised specifically for the exhibition. *Electrical Fragments n. 1 – Roma (Men)* (2002), *Sarajevo* (2015), *Electric Fragments n. 7 – Afghanistan before the Wars, 1978* (2012), *Electric Fragments n. 8* (2012) and the new *Santander – Bohemiens* (2017) are the outcomes of long-term research carried out by artists on the history of the Roma and the historical destiny of persecuted and exiled people during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From post-war Italy to Sarajevo in the Balkan wars of the 1990s; from Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion to India in the first half of the twentieth

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century, viewing the footage re-elaborated by Gianikian and Lucchi is a descent into worlds that have been effaced from both historical memory and geographic maps.

Kokoschka, la fiancée du vent (2015) is another installation on view, and is composed of drawings on paper as well as a film that revolves around the life of artist Oskar Kokoschka and the Austrian cultural milieu at the beginning of the twentieth century. The work recounts the youth of Kokoschka, his First World War years and his tragic love story with Alma Mahler, an obsession that ended up in the creation of life-sized doll of her that he had commissioned by a German costume designer. In the film, scenes depicting Mahler in South Tyrol, where Gustav Mahler composed the symphonic poem *Das Lied von der Erde* between 1908 and 1909, and where she met Kokoschka several times, alternate with images of the 1914-1918 wars. In the exhibition, *Kokoschka, la fiancée du vent* is set in dialogue with another film, *Prigionieri della guerra (Prisoners of the War)* (1995), made up of footage from the First World War that had been collected mainly from the archives of the Tsarist and Austro-Hungarian empires, with a few elements from Italy. Realised during the period of Croatian and Bosnian wars of 1992-95, the title of the piece (a quote from Elias Canetti) reflects the artists' unease in working on a film that dealt with First World War events while perceiving the anxiety of feeling prisoners of another war that unexpectedly broke out in the heart of Europe at the time of the production.

Works on View

Electric Fragments n. 1 - Roma (Men), 16mm film, 2002

Electric Fragments n. 7 - Afghanistan before the wars, 1978; Kuchis (Roma People) move toward Bamyan, 8mm film, 2012

Electric Fragments n. 8 - Shooting party from an undated notebook, circa 1935-1938, 16mm film 2012

Journal Africain, film, 1993

Santander – Bohemiens (2017)

Kokoschka, la fiancée du vent, 2015

Prigionieri della guerra (Prisoners of the War), 1995

Courtesy the artists

AIMÉE ZITO LEMA

Born in 1977 in Amsterdam. Lives and works in Amsterdam.

In her artistic practice, Aimée Zito Lema focuses on the material and immaterial legacy of protest and political activism. The physical actions of resistance and opposition are expressive moments that, for Zito Lema, concentrate within themselves a multiplicity of meanings and narratives that can be analysed for their political and civil significance, as well as for a grammar of the body of the antagonist in motion.

From the perspective of an Argentinian-Dutch artist raised in Buenos Aires and living in the Netherlands, Zito Lema has explored at length archival footage of both political demonstrations and guerrilla movements during the last dictatorship in Argentina between 1976 and 1984, as well as protest against the government in Amsterdam during the 1980s. This research was then translated into a number of sculptural and multimedia works, such as *Rond de Jambe* (2015-16), a three-channel video installation that takes the controversial construction of the Stopera building in Amsterdam as its starting point. Built between 1979 and 1986 to serve as a home for both the National Opera and Ballet and the City Hall, the Stopera brought strong opposition from left-wing movements in Amsterdam and the residents of the area. Claiming that the building was planned by the city without any historical or social awareness of the neighbourhood, as well as avoiding

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dealing with the traumatic WWII history of this old Jewish area of the city, the harsh protests against it lasted for years. The opposition had in fact envisioned using the space for social purposes and housing instead of fulfilling the cultural expectations of the city's upper classes. Zito Lema's work brings back to the fore this chapter of Amsterdam's recent history, aiming to juxtapose, in almost choreographic terms, two apparently distinct elements, i.e. the 'political body' and the 'dancing body'. She created *Rond de Jambe* by using archival images from those years of public demonstration, and working together with dancers, translated the gestures and movements of physical protest into dance. The outcome is a new hybrid narrative that reconsiders history from the perspective of the body representing a form of political agency.

A new version of a performance piece bearing the same title—*Rond de Jambe*— will be enacted on October 13 at 4pm in the space of the Neue Galerie, involving professional Dutch dancers and local amateurs of different ages from Graz.

Works on View

Rond de Jambe, 2015

3 channel video installation, 13 min. looped, color, ambient sound

Courtesy the artist and Wilfried Lentz Rotterdam

Rond de Jambe, 2017, Performance

13.10.2017, 16.00, Neue Galerie Graz

Choreography in collaboration with Marjolein Vogels.

Dancers: Marjolein Vogels, Ilmar Gerrits, Pauline Sen

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