

Unmasked: A Marathon of Artists' Videos and Films Contesting Systems of Rule

Organized by Elise Youn and programmed by Carlos Motta as part of the New Museum's Museum as Hub project

Unmasked: A Marathon of Artists' Videos and Films Contesting Systems of Rule is a two-day screening of recent film and video works that employ conceptual documentary filmmaking strategies to question and critique policies of oppression, discrimination, and violence. Programmed by artist Carlos Motta, the screening includes work by **Dario Azzellini** and **Oliver Ressler**, **Petra Bauer**, **François Bucher**, **Jim Finn**, **Ashley Hunt**, **Tellervo Kalleinen** and **Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen**, **Lin + Lam**, **John Menick**, **Jenny Perlin**, and **Dmitry Vilensky**. The marathon also includes "Charged in the Name of Terror," a short program by **Paul Chan** featuring works by **Mary Billyou** and **Annelisse Fifi**, **Paul Chan**, **Jim Fetterley** and **Angie Waller**, and **Susan Youssef**.

The film and video works of *Unmasked* bring attention to the role of the artist as a political agent—contesting hegemonic state structures; interrogating strategies of class, gender, and racial segregation; and exposing discrimination against minorities in globalized urban centers. The works also engage with documentary filmmaking as a form, challenging the distinction between reality and fiction to unearth hidden and repressed histories, examine the use and manipulation of ideologies, and propose alternative tactics for collective action.

Both Saturday and Sunday programs will be followed by discussions with screening organizers Elise Youn and Carlos Motta.

Carlos Motta (b. Bogotá, Colombia, 1978) is an artist based in New York. His experimental documentary project, *The Good Life*, investigates the regional history, perception, and effects of U.S. interventionist policies in Latin America, and is currently on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Philadelphia.

Elise Youn is the Hub Fellow at the New Museum. *Unmasked: A Marathon of Artists' Videos and Films Contesting Systems of Rule* is part of a series of informal events organized by Youn for the Museum as Hub inaugural presentation.

SCHEDULE AND PROGRAM NOTES

Saturday, February 23, 2008

12:15 - 1:36 PM

Dario Azzellini & Oliver Ressler

5 Factories-Worker Control in Venezuela (81 min, 2006)

The stories of five Venezuelan factories—a textile manufacturer, an aluminum works, a tomato factory, a cocoa factory, and a paper plant—demonstrate the recent evolution of the country's productive sphere towards cooperative ownership and management. In each case, the workers are struggling towards different forms of co- or self-management, while supported by credits from the government. The film's protagonists—from assembly line workers to managers—offer insights into methods of alternative organizing and worker control of the production process. The five factories each follow different strategies of cooperative management, production, and community involvement, but all share a common search for better models of collective production, community relations, and individual fulfillment.

http://www.ressler.at/content/view/93/lang,en_GB/

Dario Azzellini is a political analyst and filmmaker based in Berlin and Caracas. www.azzellini.net

Oliver Ressler is an artist based in Vienna who organizes theme-specific exhibitions, projects in public space, and videos on issues such as global capitalism, forms of resistance, and social alternatives. www.ressler.at

1:50 - 2:22 PM

François Bucher

***White Balance (to think is for forget differences)* (32 min, 2002)**

White Balance (to think is for forget differences) is an effort to uncover the geographies of power and the frontiers of privilege. In photography, the term “white balance” refers to the optic adjustment the brain makes to compensate for changes in the environment, ensuring that a white object always appears white despite the color of the lighting around it. *White Balance (to think is for forget differences)* examines how this process may operate in society. Movie clips, internet footage, and images of downtown Manhattan before and after the September 11th attacks are juxtaposed with speeches, soundtracks, and interviews to show how the accumulation of audiovisual media produces and distorts reality, creating short circuits of meaning. The video also refers back to a larger ethical question, which Yvonne Rainer asked in her film *Privilege*: “...is ‘permanent recovering racists’ the most we can ever be?” For Bucher, offering a meta-narrative that attempts to describe the issues at stake is in some ways a failure to understand the layers of unspeakability that lie hidden in the concept of “whiteness.” *White Balance (to think is for forget differences)* uses a poetic language to engage this concept, concentrating on the openings within audiovisual experience and the short-lived moment of the in-between.

http://www.mediarights.org/film/white_balance_to_think_is_to_forget_differences.php

François Bucher is an artist from Colombia who is based in Berlin.

2:35 - 3:02 PM

Dmitry Vilensky

***Protest Match* (28 min, 2006)**

In July 2006, the Russian Social Forum ran parallel to the G8 Summit taking place in Saint Petersburg. This film documents the paradoxical situation facing the participants of the Forum: although the authorities permitted the event to happen, they made every attempt to intimidate delegates and contain their activities. Even before the Forum began, the Russian Federal Security Service had launched “Operation Barrier,” in which more than two hundred delegates from across Russia were detained on their way to the event or blackmailed against taking part in protests. Those who made it to the Forum were free to convene as they wished, but only within an easily isolatable site—a dilapidated former football stadium—and under close surveillance by the police. Outside of the stadium, print shops refused to print information about the Forum, activists were arrested for handing out leaflets, and protests were quickly suppressed. *Protest Match* covers these conditions through a series of interviews with Russian political activists, revealing the paradoxical situation of leftist activism in Russia today.

http://www.chtodelat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=404&Itemid=173

Dmitry Vilensky is an artist based in St. Petersburg and member of the group Chto Delat.

3:10 - 4:08 PM

Ashley Hunt

***Corrections* (58 min, 2001)**

With almost 2.2 million people in U.S. prisons, 7.5 times more than in 1970, the United States finds itself in a crisis of having too few state-owned prisons to accommodate the vast number of inmates. *Corrections* explores one response to this crisis: the revival of private prisons, where politically savvy entrepreneurs and depopulating rural towns invest in building private prisons, speculating on their profit based on the growing number of prisoners. The film mines this revival as an intersection of histories—where failures in the judicial system and “tough on crime” policies meet the destruction of the social welfare system, and where the legacies of racism and poverty find themselves embedded in new political languages of corporate management and market governance.

<http://www.correctionsproject.com/index.html>

Ashley Hunt is a Los Angeles-based artist, activist, and writer.

4:20 - 5:18 PM

***Charged in the name of terror* (59 min, 2006-2007)**

A program by Paul Chan

Charged in the name of terror is an ongoing series curated and produced by artist Paul Chan. It features video portraits of activists, lawyers, artists, and people simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, accused by the U.S. government of being or aiding terrorists. *Charged in the name of terror* was an official selection of the 2007 Sundance Film Festival.

<http://www.nationalphilistine.com/charged/>

Paul Chan

***Untitled Video on Lynne Stewart and Her Conviction, The Law and Poetry* (18 min, 2006)**

This video is a simple and moving portrait of Lynne F. Stewart, the New York lawyer convicted in 2005 of aiding Islamic terrorism by smuggling messages out of jail from a client she was defending, Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman. Now disbarred, Ms. Stewart faces a thirty-year jail sentence. In the portrait, Stewart talks about her life as an elementary school librarian, activist, and lawyer, and recites poetry by Blake, Brecht, and Ashbury.

Paul Chan is an artist who lives and works in New York.

Jim Fetterley and Angie Waller

***Steve Kurtz Waiting* (16 min, 2006)**

On May 11 2004, Steve Kurtz phoned 911 to report that Hope, his wife of twenty years, was unresponsive. When paramedics came to his house, one of them noticed that Kurtz had laboratory equipment, which he used in his art exhibits. The paramedics reported this finding to the police and the FBI subsequently sealed off his house. *Steve Kurtz Waiting* is a video portrait of Kurtz during a moment of uncertainty and anticipation as court litigations continue. Through a series of casual interviews, Kurtz reveals an admirable calmness, a spirited humor, and a strong will to continue his role as an artist despite months of close surveillance, black vans, and continued government scrutiny—all notably taking place in addition to the mourning of his close partner.

Jim Fetterley is a Los Angeles-based artist. www.animalcharm.com

Angie Waller is a New York-based artist. couchprojects.com

Susan Youssef

***For the Least* (7 min, 2007)**

For the Least is a short documentary about American Catholics who marched to the Guantánamo Bay detention camp to bring spiritual comfort to the prisoners and an end to the torture they endure.

Susan Youssef is a Brooklyn, New York-based filmmaker.

Mary Billyou and Annelisse Fifi, *Mohamed Yousry: A Life Stands Still* (20 min, 2006)

Mohamed Yousry: A Life Stands Still is a documentary about Mohamed Yousry, a naturalized American citizen whose life changed radically after September 11th, 2001. Yousry immigrated to the United States from Egypt in 1980. For the next twenty years, he developed a full and happy life—as a husband, father, academic, and translator. On September 13th, 2001, Yousry was approached by the FBI on his doorstep in Queens, New York. Currently, Yousry is appealing his prison sentence and waiting to find out what his fate will bring.

Mary Billyou and Annelisse Fifi are artists who live and work in New York.

5:20 PM

Informal discussion with Elise Youn and Carlos Motta

Sunday, February 24, 2008

12:15 - 1:15 PM

Tellervo Kalleinen and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen, *The Making of Utopia* (60 min, 2006)

This film portrays four utopian communities in Australia: Bodhi Farm, Dharmananda, Equilibrium Inc., and Moora Moora. Australia has a long history of utopian communities dating back into the 19th century. A large number of communities were established in the aftermath of the Aquarius festival—the Australian version of Woodstock—held in the rural area of Nimbin in 1973. Some of the festival-goers stayed in the area turning land-sharing fantasies into reality. While most of the post-Aquarius communities have disintegrated, the protagonists of *The Making of Utopia* have managed to sustain a communal lifestyle for over thirty years and became role models for similar experiments. The only exception is Equilibrium Inc.—a group of people just in the planning stage of setting up an intentional community near Sydney. Kalleinen and Kochta-Kalleinen sent an open letter to the communities inviting them to join a workshop and write a fictional film about themselves. The main questions the artists posed to the communities related to the ongoing conflict between utopian vision and communal reality. Each of the four screenplays were filmed in the community environments and acted by community members.

<http://www.ykon.org/kochta-kalleinen/utopia.html>

Tellervo Kalleinen and **Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen** organize events, make films, and create performances and lectures. Their collaborative practice is based in Helsinki.

1:25- 2:20 PM

Petra Bauer, *Rana* (55 min, 2007)

On January 10th, 2003, the artist read an article in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* about a 13-year-old Muslim girl from Sweden who married and had a child with an 18-year-old man from Lebanon. Though the article (entitled, “Married Man Found Guilty of Having Sex with His Wife”) presented a fragmentary picture of what happened, the description of the event can be seen as part of a larger contemporary public debate about culture, Islam, and general social values—one that is currently taking place nearly everywhere in Sweden. After reading the article, the artist wondered whose voice and story were actually being represented—was it really the voice of the girl, or was it the opinion of the prosecutor, the social welfare secretary, the imam, or even the journalist that came through instead? By incorporating interviews and creating a fictionalized version of the story, *Rana* tries to draw a more complex picture of the situation than what was originally presented in the article, examining who might have had the power to construct a story like this one and how and why it was done.

<http://www.arsbaltictriennial.org/4th/artists/petra-bauer>

Petra Bauer explores how certain public stories are constructed, presented, and represented in mass media and moving images. She lives and works in Stockholm.

2:30 - 3:00 PM

Lin + Lam, *Unidentified Vietnam No. 18* (30 min, 2007)

In 1975, after the fall of Saigon, the Library of Congress acquired a collection of films from the South Vietnamese Embassy dating from the 1950s through the 1970s. *Unidentified Vietnam No. 18* is a successor to the seventeen films in the collection labeled only as “Unidentified Vietnam, #1-17.” *Unidentified Vietnam No. 18* examines the contested relationship between Vietnam and the U.S., between history and propaganda, between democracy and nation building. Situated in the present, an archivist, film scholar, and South Vietnamese-in-exile speculate about the intention of the war-era films. The protagonists mine the material artifacts of the archive, fingering deteriorating film labels, paging through catalogue lists, and inhabiting the past by re-enacting

propagandistic gestures. Spectral images salvaged from a now non-existent republic haunt mausoleum-like hallways, reminding us of what remains unidentifiable in the process of recovery. Through these actions of retrieval and remembrance, the film ponders how U.S. intervention has failed, and considers the dangers of its repetition.

<http://linpluslam.com/projects.htm>

Lin + Lam (Lana Lin and H. Lan Thao Lam) produce multidisciplinary projects—including photography, installation, film, and writing—that examine the ramifications of the past for the current socio-political moment. Lin + Lam are based in New York. www.linpluslam.com

3:05 - 3:27 PM

Jenny Perlin, *View from Elsewhere* (22 min, 2002)

Migration, prejudice, intolerance, and violence have been seen as inevitable consequences of global culture. *View from Elsewhere* reminds us that border closings, deportations, and visa restrictions all have real, tangible effects on individual lives. Stitching together fragments of stories about immigration in the U.S. and Switzerland, the film presents moments in which memory, imagination, and communication connect us to each other—instants where past and present meet.

Jenny Perlin is an artist based in Brooklyn, New York. <http://www.nilrep.net/view-from-elsewhere/>

3:35 - 3:56 PM

John Menick, *Occupation* (21 min, 2006)

Occupation is a short narrative portrait of Malik, a homeless Senegalese postcard salesman living in Aubervilliers, France. Living out of his car, Malik follows a circular routine of urban exploration by night and selling his self-made postcards by day. The cards are the result of his travels through the peripheral spaces of Aubervilliers. Avoiding typical touristic cityscapes, Malik's postcards focus on highway overpasses, disused factories, and housing projects. The film shows a day and a night in Malik's life—a life that is both deeply entangled with the city and permanently pushed to its margins.

<http://www.johnmenick.com/project/occupation>

John Menick is an artist, filmmaker, and writer living in Brooklyn, New York.

4:05 - 5:05 PM

Jim Finn, *La Trinchera Luminosa del Presidente Gonzalo* (60 min, 2007)

La Trinchera Luminosa del Presidente Gonzalo is the recreation of one day at the Canto Grande prison in Peru, following women guerrillas from the Maoist Shining Path movement from their morning marches to their evening chants. Kept isolated in their own cellblocks, the guerrillas refused to acknowledge that were imprisoned. Their cellblocks were merely another front, or "shining trenches of combat," in the People's War. This film shows the intense indoctrination and belief system of this Latin American insurgent movement.

http://www.jimfinn.org/trinchera/trinchera_main.html

Jim Finn is a New York-based artist whose films and videos use humor and historical fiction to examine communist and capitalist ideologies as well as revolutionary art practices.

5:10 PM

Discussion with **Jim Finn, Lin + Lam, John Menick, Carlos Motta, Jenny Perlin, and Elise Youn**