Transgenerational Corpographies of Memory
(Potsdam, 18–19 Nov 21)

Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF), Nov 18–19, 2021
Registration deadline: Nov 10, 2021

Ulrike Gerhardt

Transgenerational Corpographies of Memory
FHNW Academy of Art and Design, Basel

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 funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF))  
Ulrike Gerhardt (post-doc)

3:00–5:00pm Screenings of  
Marta Popivoda, "Landscapes of Resistance", 2021, 4K, color, stereo sound, 95 min.  

5:00–6:30pm Apéro (drinks and snacks)

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.

09:55–10:20am 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 Vesić
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 closeups – 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.

11:55am–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-embodies 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.

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 trans-generational 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. The number of participants is limited.

Project website
www.gbgk.ch

The event is part of the Images of History in Contemporary Art research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) in Bern, led by Melanie Franke, and takes place in cooperation with the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF) and the online portal Visual-History.de.

Reference: