

Commemorating Amnesia

7 April – 20 May 2022

With works by
Mona Benyamin
Omer Fast
Johannes Gierlinger
Hiwa K
Eva Kořátková

Curated by
Eleni Riga &
Olympia Tzortzi



calli
rrhoë

Kallirrois 122

Athina 117 41

Thu–Sat 4–8 pm

and upon request

hello@callirrhoe.info

www.callirrhoe.info

Remembering and forgetting, linking the past with the present, memory, abeyance and oblivion are the result of processes of re-interpretation of the past – the past as it is remembered and commemorated. But what if memory – our memory – fails us? Personal memories are recorded through the filter of our collective and social experiences. The act of remembering as well as (intentionally) forgetting different narrations and versions of its story, constitute the activation and deactivation of our knowledge and given information along with a live tracing of a memory scape. Memory glitches have been linked to overwhelming traumatic events such as war, abuse, accidents or disasters. Under these circumstances, the body develops coping mechanisms for its own self-perseverance. As the definition states, dissociative amnesia is a condition in which a person cannot remember important information about their life – information limited to specific areas or a great part of someone's life. Often “forgetting curves” is being used; a model that calculates the decline in memory retention over time. It is a curve that helps visualize the average time in which humans forget things if they do not actively try to recall them. Rememory definition refers to those moments that have been forgotten and repressed, moments that are not familiar anymore, because they have been buried for a significant period of time. Rememory also addresses their recollection. The relationship between memory and amnesia, memory and history is one of continuous reassessment, ranging from identification and polarization to various forms of integration or coexistence. Through this process, it is not clear whether history is remembered as it was or whether it is reconstructed from fragments of real and fabricated memories. So are we rewriting memory every time that we are describing reminiscence?

The main protagonists of the film by Mona Benyamin *Trouble in Paradise* are her parents, who do not speak English and read jokes from transliterated title cards. As Benyamin herself explains, the work is a dysfunctional sitcom set out to explore humor as a mechanism for coping with trauma, pain, and taboos in relation to the Nakba and the Israeli occupation, by posing three sets of jokes ranging from the classical misogynistic genre to anti-jokes and culturally specific humor; in order to examine why Nakba jokes never fully evolved as a genre and entered the Palestinian mainstream. Both her parents have gone through the Nakba (1948) and the Naksa (1967), but they never shared the memories of these major events of displacement from the perspective of the Palestinian population. They do not transmit their memory and personal experience directly but through the use of imaginaries from the realm of comedy, they re-enact inappropriate representations to communicate their personal trauma.

5000 Feet is the Best, the film by Omer Fast recounts the memories of a U.S. Predator drone operator. While the on-camera drone operator avoids discussing his experience as such and is focusing on anecdotes about crimes in and around Las Vegas, the off-camera operator describes detailed technical aspects of the job and deadly incidents with militants and civilians involved. The on-camera drone operator, assumingly an actor, seems to be affected by the traumatic memories of the off-camera operator and uses medication and avoidance to cope with reality. Despite his attempt to downplay the dubious morality of other 'occupations', he cannot escape the impact of the memories he appropriates. The two operators, on and off camera are intertwined. The film skillfully weaves together reality and fiction giving prominence to the vulnerabilities of memory mechanisms and requires its viewer to step into ethically and politically ambivalent crossfire by bringing the personal to the sociopolitical.

The film journey of Johannes Gierlinger *Remapping the origins* is about the Polish city of Bialystok – a once pluralistic and revolutionary town, a former working-class city with its large share of Jewish population; is now considered a place in Europe where the political pressure of the right wing is one of the most obvious. The film itself is a reflection on how to deal with history and memory. As memory unfolds into a form of resistance and Gierlinger records current political trends and raises social issues, it becomes a contemplation on the reading of historical events within collective historiography and the culture of commemoration. He uses the city as a metaphor for Europe and attempts to expose the inconsistency between nationalism and multiculturalism, reflecting on historical narratives in order to make prospects of the future tangible. It is an attempt to balance between loss, continuity and progression. The work seems to be driven by the question of how we influence history and history influences us.

This Lemon Tastes of Apple by Hiwa K draws a connection between two events: the chemical attack in Halabja in 1988 by Saddam's forces and a conflict between citizens and militants on April 17th 2011 in Sulaimani during the civil protests for transparency, participation and equal access to the country's wealth. The first event is not directly experienced by the artist, it is a traumatic family memory told by relatives who survived the attack. But, the second one comes from the artist's immediate experience as this work occurred within the protest. The physical experience of remembering through the senses and especially the smell is highlighted. In 1988, the chemicals smelled like apples while in 2011 a distinct lemon smell infused the air as protesters used them to ease the pain of their eyes from the teargas. While in the video, we witness the 2011 attack, we are led to construct a memory from an event that neither the majority of the exhibition's visitors nor the artist has directly experienced. This work operates in the space between memory and amnesia, memory and history, reconstruction from fragments of real and of fabricated memories. Hiwa K inhales the teargas through the harmonica playing the song by Ennio Morricone from the spaghetti western *Once upon a time in the West*. One of the film's main characters is called Harmonica and seeks revenge against an outlaw.

Eva Kořátková through her five Exercises – *Hanging, Mound, Sitting, Standing and Home Reconstruction* – attempts an exploration of the 'memoriescape' capturing the complexities of remembering and assigning meaning to practices through the thorough examination and rearrangement of discarded household items. As the individuals appearing in the video go through the pile of objects, they remember the meaning attached to them, undertake actions for their reparation and reconfigure a new space. During this process, the memory sometimes fails despite the detailed knowledge of all that is familiar, they can no longer identify the missing parts, name them, or correctly put them back together again. They have to start anew following, a phenomenological approach: how the solidity, pliability, softness or warmth of these objects feels in relation to our body. Kořátková researches the scope of deeply rooted patterns and rules, which either influences or determine our behavior, this work is an exploration of "familiar surroundings" and the meaning "to be at home".