

Video Installation Description:

untitled

'untitled' is an ongoing multi-channel video installation continuing my series of projects addressing social and political realities and representations, manifestations, and enunciations, focusing on borders/nationalisms/ movements (shifts, transitions, and interstitial space/time) and subjectivity and the conditions of living between polarities of culture, geography, history, and ideology.

The installation is not modeled on the viewing of art (i.e. painting) but on an approach to research or reading, an active living archive. It can be presented with 3 to 7 distinct videotapes looped for continuous play. Each tape is projected onto it's own screen/image area (c. 5 feet x 7 feet/1.5m x 2m) or has an assigned monitor size. For parts 2 & appendix i, the projection screens are butted side by side on the same wall with projectors ceiling mounted. Part 1 is projected on the wall opposite these. Both have sofas (or comfortable chairs placed in front of the projections). The audio from all tapes with sound are heard with headphones while sitting on a sofa chairs. Appendix ii is shown on a medium size monitor hanging from the ceiling facing the entrance to the gallery like an airport arrival/departure display. The appendix iii monitor sits on the floor facing those leaving the space. Appendix i, ii & iii are silent. An atmosphere of visual collision, collaboration, contextualization, critical interference or mutual existence emanates from the tapes themselves and the viewing of the material. The screens play off of each other creating an imagistic experience of the physical/visceral and of the underlying subjectivity experienced through the body, as crisis, nation, and metaphor, or in transition and shift, and in the recounting or enunciatory nature of the interstitial site.

The dialectical relationship of the speaker and the spoken is highlighted, the speech laid bare and layered between the story, the fields of images, the suggested frames and the butted fictive and documentary process. Difference is articulated in the literal and metaphorical spaces of displacement and dwelling, the constitution of this being viewed as cultural meanings rather than only as an extension of (an)other locale/space or subjective relationship. This work also investigates what types of freedom allow people to stay home and what types of powers force people to move and vice versa. Histories of movement are examined along gender, class and race lines, taking into consideration legacies of empire, conflict and capital, and the contested and conflicted notions of homeland, nation, diaspora, exile, travel, assimilation, refuge, native and other in an attempt to challenge our realities and perceptions and in doing so, reclaim and reconstruct an agency that is complex and self determining.

Versions of this installation were exhibited at Eurovision2000, Prague; World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam; MoneyNations2, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna ~ (2000); Santa Monica Museum of Art, California; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade ~ (2001); The Museum of Civilization, Hull, Québec (2001-02; YYY Gallery, Toronto (2002); and upcoming at Dazibao Galerie, Montréal (2003).

part 1: everything and nothing

40:40, audio headphones, (Arabic and French with English subtitles), video projection or large screen

An intimate dialogue that weaves back and forth between representations of a figure (of resistance) and subject with Soha Bechara ex-Lebanese National Resistance fighter in her Paris dorm room after release from captivity in El-Khiam torture and interrogation centre (S. Lebanon)

where she had been detained for 10 years, 6 years in isolation. Revising notions of resistance, survival and will, recounting to death, separation and closeness; the overexposed image and body of a surviving martyr speaking quietly and directly into the camera juxtaposed against her self and image, not speaking of the torture but of the distance between the subject and the loss, of what is left behind and what remains.

Soha Bechara is a heroine in Lebanon, pictures of her are seen in many houses in the South and posters of her were seen all around downtown Beirut when I was working there in the early 90's. She was captured for trying to assassinate the general of the SLA, Antoine Lahaad. I didn't ask her anything specifically about the torture she underwent or the trauma of detention, she is being interviewed to death by the European and Arab press over the details of her captivity and the minutiae of her surviving it and the conditions in El-Khiam and the detainees and the resistance. I went to her small dorm room (she is presently studying international law at the Sorbonne), not much bigger than her cell except it had one big window at the end and she sat on her bed and I asked her about the distance lived between Khiam and Paris, and Beirut and Paris, and what she left in Khiam and what she brought with her, a story about flowers and how she never puts them in water, how it felt for her now to be under such demand, and who she was, and what the title of the tape should be, and a few other things. This video material that I recorded of the time spent with her is not precious, just time, and a conversation, and intense intimacy at a close and unbreachable distance.

part 2: beauty and the east

55:00, audio amplified, video projection opposite part 1 screen

Addressing issues of transition, alienation, refusal, identities, ethno-fascism, body as object & metaphor, agents, monsters, abjectness, subjective affinities, and objective trusts with material taped predominately while moving through Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Skopje, the subjects conversing come from a range of constituencies; migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, residents (permanent and transient), students, workers, and cultural producers recounting experience, locating sites, shifts, events, and the theorizing and accounting of the issues at stake, and associated ambient imagery forming specific histories of locations, and locations of histories at the intersection of cultures in this/these particular place(s) and time(s). The speakers are framed closely, creating a complicity with and acknowledgement of the ongoing framing/mediation. Boris Buden, Marina Grzinic, Eda Cufer, Renata Salecl, Dunja Blazevic, Zarana Papic, Slavica Indzevska, Mihajlo Acimovic, Ella Shohat, Ammiel Alcalay, and Carmen Aguirre amongst others are featured. Abstract moving landscapes and cityscapes are used to materialize the verbal and localize the discourse through levels of physicality, materiality and immateriality.

part 3a: occupied territories.. /part 3b: (as if) beauty never ends..

(working title, work in progress, 2 tapes, monitor & projector)

23:00 & 11:22, headphones, (Arabic w/English subtitles), perpendicular to tape 1 & 2 axis

Currently a two tape section. The main monitor (3a) featuring excerpts from two conversations, one with Nameh Hussein Suleiman (in Baddawi camp), and the other with Abdel Majid Fadl Ali Hassan (in Bourg al Barajinah Camp), two elder Palestinians that have been living in refugee camps in Lebanon since 1948. Nameh recounts her journey of exile and the present situation of her life. Abdel Majid discusses issues of dispossession, and recites an eloquent poem told by the ruins of his house in Palestine where once he was allowed visit after his first 30 years of being displaced.

The second videotape (3b) is projected on the (3a) monitor wall displaying a variety of visual material and ambient sound including orchids blooming and plants growing superimposed over raw footage from post massacre filmings of the 1982 massacre at Sabra and Shatilla refugee

camps in Lebanon. Cloud footage, Hubbell space imagery, the visible body crosscuts, and abstract shots of slow motion water, add to this reflection of the past, its present context and forbearance.

The part 3 tapes work together to create an essay on dystopia in contemporary times. A elegiac response working directly, viscerally, and metaphorically while commenting on the condition of permanent temporariness.

appendix i: **lands**

20:00, silent, video projection adjoining part 2 screen

These images of land and city shot from bus/train rides are juxtaposed with the tape 2 projection screen to alternatively collide and run parallel to the literal and metaphorical references of the subject/speakers. From very close croppings zoomed into detailed edges and shapes to distant views contextualizing the scenes and revealing patterns of colour and form these location shots work by setting up environments for the stories/accounts as well as providing other types of associative imagery, cityscapes and landscapes: ribbons of rivers, disheveled fields and arrays of forests, rolling hills and valleys blanketed in heavy fog where only occasional glimpses of ephemeral objects and homes/houses pierce through.

appendix ii: **clouds**

18:00, silent, ca. 21" monitor ceiling mounted

Cloud formations recorded from airplane windows, distant shots and close views, disintegrating forms and substantive yet fleeting shapes floating on grounds and/or space(s).

appendix iii: **other**

6:00, silent, monitor on floor

Interior and static exterior night scenes, rooms lived in/traveled through, dustball/small objects.