

**28/10/2017 – 16/12/2017**

## **Where History Begins**

**Kader Attia | Duncan Campbell | Ali Cherri | Christodoulos Panayiotou |**

*Where History Begins*, explores the complex relationship between material culture and historical truth. The development of archaeology in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century is closely associated with the categorisation of material culture, preoccupied with the construction of a timeline through which artefacts determine the culture of a society in a space and time. These materials have become indexes within the field of research and when placed within a museum context have become valuable evidence or artefacts evoking a history. This interest in history or preservation has been traced back by historians to ancient art collections that predate the museum at the end of the third century B.C. The museum as collector or preserver of culture has become a contested site for artefacts. The collection of these pieces is often associated with the colonial project, the construction of the Nation State and a symbol of capitalism.

The nature of culture is to be dynamic and constantly shifting, with a multiplicity of histories. This exhibition questions how we construct historical narratives, how there is no one historical truth, and in what way histories have been constructed through the colonial project and particular ideological contexts. The writer Édouard Glissant observed that museums have become more like continents and that they should be more like an 'archipelago', he called for a global dialogue that does not erase local cultures but finds the commonality in difference.

Artefacts that demonstrate the complex history of Derry City and its surrounding area, from the early Neolithic period (c.4000 – 3500 BC) to the Ulster plantation period of the 17<sup>th</sup> century are exhibited with national and international contemporary artists revealing comparative histories with other cultures. The artists address the difficult relationship between destruction, conservation, appropriation and collective memory.

Ali Cherri's film work *Petrified* (2015) questions the fetishisation of historical artefacts, by looking at the value we place on provenance and authenticity. The current prevalence of looting and the trafficking of artefacts, especially in conflict zones in the Middle East, open a timely debate on the reconstruction and restoration of demolished heritage. How does this alter the notion of authenticity? What historical traces are deemed valuable and why? Filmed between Sharjah's Arabian Wildlife Centre and an excavation site in Northern Sudan, *Petrified* takes a journey into the life of dead objects.

Christodoulos Panayiotou, *Real Fakes* (2015) questions this notion of authenticity, and what becomes part of the historical lexicon. The work is made from stones that were discarded from archaeological excavations in Cyprus; they become ready made, sculptures that are formed through a process of creation and destruction. Within the act

of digging in archaeology there is the act of revealing and hiding, as often times the site is covered over once excavated and in its becoming it dies returning again to this idea of the dead objects.

Duncan Campbells, *It For Others* (2013) is an essay film that examines how we understand certain histories through objects and how we assign value on material goods. The piece takes as its starting point the 1953 film by Alan Resnais and Chris Marker called *Statues Also Die*, which asserts that colonialism is responsible for the demystification and commercialisation of traditional art from African culture. The film moves from the appropriation of traditional art from Western Africa, to the death of purpose of these objects from the colonial classes from here Campbell moves to popular culture and the construction of historical narratives through images and objects.

Kader Attia's film *Reflecting Memory* (2016) splices interviews with academics and medical professionals with footage of individuals engaged in solitary pursuits: contemplating nature, sitting in a church pew, and admiring urban monuments. The subject discussed is the phantom limb pain experienced by amputees. This pain is aligned to cultural trauma, the history of colonialism and the appropriation of territories, people and objects and the repairing of the past pains or traumas of colonies. In film theory 'suture' refers to the phenomenon by which the mind produces a narrative whole from the fragments combined through cinematic cuts, creating a semblance of totality even when we should know better than to expect one. Attia's film deftly exposes how the desire to perceive a whole subject can itself operate as an act of erasure.

The works reflect on regimes of knowledge both past and present. Questioning perceived notions and casting a critical eye on accepted canons. Where does one position oneself when looking at an artefact, what does it reveal, what does it have in common with other contemporary propositions in the world? In Glissant's theory of relation, what brings things together is first of all the connection between differences, as they meet one after the other. The basis for which cause ideas, identities and intuitions to meet, revealing to us the common grounds that we share. It is within this commonality that one finds the universal and where history begins.



Reflecting Memory, 2016, video hd colour, 45:56mins

### **Kader Attia (DZ)**

Kader Attia (b. 1970, France), grew up in both Algeria and the suburbs of Paris, and uses this experience of living as a part of two cultures as a starting point to develop a dynamic practice that reflects on aesthetics and ethics of different cultures. He takes a poetic and symbolic approach to exploring the wide-ranging repercussions of Western modern cultural hegemony and colonialism on non-Western cultures, investigating identity politics of historical and colonial eras, from Tradition to Modernity, in the light of our globalized world, of which he creates a genealogy.

Attia's longstanding analysis of the themes of psychological and corporeal repair is essential to his practice. "From culture to nature, from gender to architecture, from science to philosophy – any system of life is an infinite process of repair," the artist said, describing his art.

In his installation at Void, Attia will expand on his long-term exploration of repair, both of the body and of society, and will probe the legacies of colonialism, slavery and xenophobia. Among its themes, the installation considers the "phantom limb" phenomenon, in which an amputee feels as if pain is emanating from a missing limb. In varying ways, the works draw parallels between this neurological sensation and traumatic historical memories that are passed on from generation to generation. Among the works on display will be the extended film-essay "Réfléchir la Mémoire, (Reflecting on Memory)," which was informed in part by Attia's research at Northwestern and which recently premiered at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris as part of the Marcel DuChamp Prix exhibition.

<http://kaderattia.de>



It for others, 2013, 16mm transferred to digital, 54 mins.

### **Duncan Campbell (Irl)**

Duncan Campbell (b. Dublin, 1972) won the 2014 Turner Prize for his contribution to Scotland's pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Responding to Chris Marker and Alan Resnais' 1953 film *Statues Also Die*, Campbell's *It for Others* included new work by choreographer Michael Clark.

Campbell makes films about controversial figures such as the Irish political activist Bernadette Devlin or the quixotic car manufacturer John DeLorean. By mixing archive footage and new material, he questions and challenges the documentary form.

Inspired by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais's 1953 film, "*Statues Also Die*," which was shown alongside "*It for Others*," Mr. Campbell mixed images of African artifacts, consumer items and a dance work by the British choreographer Michael Clark in which the performers trace words and equations from Marx's "*Das Kapital*" with their bodies. Mr. Campbell's film, like "*Statues Also Die*," tackles cultural imperialism: the appropriation of African artifacts by Western institutions. But the film, about an hour long, also suggests, in a section on an uprising during the Irish Troubles in the early 1970s, that the ownership and manipulation of images are not confined to the art world.

<https://lux.org.uk/artist/duncan-campbell>



Real-Fakes, 2015

### **Christodoulos Panayiotou (Cr)**

The context of memory and memorialization, history, its fragmentation, and its potential completion are explored in these sculptures. The works are made out of stones that were defined as debris during the archaeological excavation process. Together with earth that ends up on the spoil heap, they are removed from the archaeological sites and, unlike antiques, disposed of, often as a result of strict protocols tied to the stone's relationship to human interaction.

Panayiotou works with a different process, acquiring these rejected stones and transforming them into sculptures, while also making implicit references to the findings of soldier, diplomat, and amateur archaeologist Luigi Palma di Cesnola (United States Consul in Cyprus between 1865–1877, and later first director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art) on the island of Cyprus. Presented here, the objects end up forming a different kind of antiquity, seeking to critically explore the role of the readymade through the act of creation and destruction. The naming of these antique sculptures mirrors the labeling of each work in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from which Panayiotou has sculpted onto those disposed stones specific details. The collection allegedly contains fakes ordered to be made by traditional sculptors by Cesnola himself while in Cyprus. Here the question of hierarchy, value, and authenticity are critiqued.”

<https://christodoulospanayiotou.com/>



**SOMINCULUS**, 2017. Video HD, color, sound. 14'40'' - Coproduction : Jeu de Paume, Paris, Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques et CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux.

### **Ali Cheeri**

Cheeri is a video and visual artist based in Beirut and Paris.

His recent solo exhibitions include *Somniculus* at Jeu de Paume, Paris and CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2017); Tretyakov Gallery Moscow (Sep. 2017); Galerie Imane Farès (Oct. 2017); Jönköpings läns museum, Sweden (2017); Sursock Museum, Beirut (2016).

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<https://www.alicherri.com/>