

#1.2 Remains or Reproductions

Kader Attia, Mekhitar Garabedian,
Ciprian Muresan, Jon Rafman
10.11 – 18.12 2016

EN

Remains or Reproductions is the second part of the three-part exhibition, where several artworks will be confronted with the installation *Bucharest City Model (fragment)* by the Romanian artist Ciprian Muresan (°1977, Dej). *Bucharest City Model* is an architectural cardboard model of a part of the Romanian capital, on a scale of 1:330. By placing the installation at the entrance of the exhibition space, the visitor is forced to walk on the scale model – and to destroy it – in order to see the other works in the exhibition. The choice for Bucharest does not only relate to the demolishing of numerous buildings in the city during the communist regime, but also refers to current issues regarding random urban development and the destruction of historic, architectural and cultural heritage. The critique Ciprian Muresan expresses through this work is universal and moreover puts forward a burning issue, which could set eyes upon current events like the recent demolition of historical sites in the Syrian cities of Aleppo and Palmyra.

During three exhibitions, in which *Bucharest City Model (fragment)* will be on permanent display, several aspects of the model will be exposed via works of national and international artists. In the second part the installation will be confronted with works by Kader Attia (°1970, Dugny), Mekhitar Garabedian (°1977, Aleppo) and Jon Rafman (°1981, Montreal). Taking the partly destroyed model of Ciprian Muresan as a starting point, the exhibition focuses on the ever-changing metropolis, both in architectural and demographic terms. Through a personal basis, the artists are examining the cultural heritage of their historic past, questioning the position of the individual and his identity

in contemporary society. By starting from existing (historical) sources, they attempt to close the individual disposition of the present and the past. The title of the exhibition, *Remains or Reproductions*, refers to a quote¹ in the film *Remember Carthage* (2013) by Jon Rafman.

In his work Mekhitar Garabedian considers his immigrant background – he was born in Syria, lives in Ghent and has Armenian roots – through references to and appropriation of (Western) literature, film, pop culture and (art) history. As such, *Back Cover (Gorky)* (2014) shows the famous painting *The Artist and His Mother* (1926-1935) by the Armenian-American painter Arshile Gorky (1904, Van – 1948, Connecticut). When the Armenian genocide was taking place vigorously, Gorky escaped his native country in 1915. He painted this portrait after an old picture of himself as a young man and his mother years later. Garabedian found this edited reproduction of the painting on the back cover of an exhibition catalogue of the work of Gorky in the Whitechapel Gallery in London. For *Distances* (2013-2014) the artist was inspired by an index of distances between the different Syrian cities that he found on a touristic map. Due to the recent events in his native country, these abstract data, which he copied by hand in an extremely careful manner, get a highly charged undertone. On the occasion of *Remains or Reproductions* Mekhitar Garabedian reinterpreted his existing installation *Asek Lerner, khosek Lerner (Speak Mountains, tell us Mountains)* (2008), which consists of a handwritten text and neon sculptures of the two national symbols of Armenia (the national flag and Mount Ararat). The text fragment is the chorus² of

the song *A Rush and a Push and The Land is Ours* (from the album *Strangeways, Here We Come*, 1987) by British pop-band The Smiths. With this song, lead-singer Morrissey, who has Irish roots, refers to the Irish struggle for independence in the beginning of the 20th century. In combination with the Armenian symbols, Mekhitar Garabedian relates the text fragment to the history of the Armenian people under the repressive dictatorship of the Turkish rulers in the Ottoman Empire. With the anonymous model of Ciprian Muresan in the background, the content of the refrain becomes universal by omitting the neon sculptures.

Born in an Algerian family in France, Kader Attia spent his childhood both in Paris and Algeria. This continuously traveling back and forth between the Christian West and the Islamic northwestern part of Africa left a deep impression on his artistic oeuvre. Via architecture, history, nature, culture, religion and the human body, Attia studies the relations between the Occident Thought and Extra-Occidental cultures. Not only he immerses himself in the migration issues between Europe and Africa, but he also analyses the mutual appropriation of cultural activities. The last few years the practice of Kader Attia mainly concentrates on the concept of 'repair'; a term, which in the Occident implies a return to the original state without the question of an injury. However, in more traditional communities, the opposite is true: repair cannot exist without a scar. In the installation *Untitled* (2014), which consists of a traditional Moroccan bowl and a

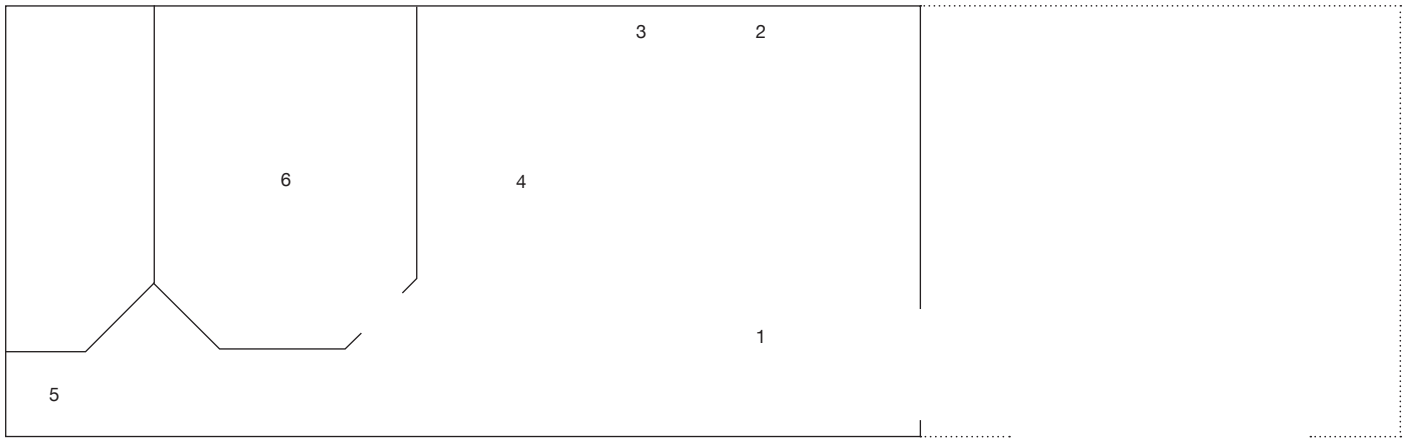
collage of archival footage from various indigenous tribes, the artist repaired the cracks in the wood by means of liquid tin.

Canadian artist, filmmaker and essayist Jon Rafman examines with his work the impact of contemporary technology on our consciousness. He is primarily known for his ongoing project *9-Eyes*; a collection of screenshots taken from bizarre scenes he found on Google Street View. *Remember Carthage* (2013) is an experimental short film that takes the viewer on a lonely quest for an abandoned resort in the Sahara desert. Like most of his films, *Remember Carthage* is composed by online found footage-material (here in the form of the online virtual world *Second Life* and *Playstation 3*-videogames). The film has a repetitive structure through the returning fragments, locations and text, alienating the viewer – and the protagonist together with him – by which he is no longer able to distinguish the original from the reproduction. Although he has only heard about it through the Internet, the voice-over talks with certain ease about the resort, illustrating the blurring of the boundaries between reality and simulations of the virtual world. In this way Rafman emphasizes how digital media makes history very accessible, but also quite estranging to the viewer.

¹ "I can not tell if what I perceive are the remains of an ancient civilization or their reproduction."

² "A rush and a push and the land that we stand on is ours
It has been before so it shall be again
And people who are uglier than you and I
They take what they need, and leave."

On the agenda: *Game Play: Artists playing Video Games* on Monday 14 november, from 8pm in Cinema OFFoff. Next to films by Harun Farocki, Peggy Ahwesh, Angela Washko and Brent Watanabe there will also be two films (*Kool-Aid in Second Life*, 2010 & *A Man Digging*, 2013) screened by Jon Rafman. More information: www.offoff.be / *Etcetera IV* on Saturday 26 november, from 7pm in the entrance hall of S.M.A.K. Next to videos and performances by amongst others Dara Birnbaum, Christian Jankowski, Oliver Laric & Laure Prouvost, there will also be the screening of the film *Still Life (Betamale)*, 2013 by Jon Rafman. / *Homeless Movies / In de stad*, until 15 January 2017 on 6 different locations in Ghent. With films by Mekhitar Garabedian, Eva Giolo, Katrin Kamrau, Jasper Rigole, Meggy Rustamova, Lisa Spilliaert. More information: www.huisvanalijn.be



1. Ciprian Muresan, 'Bucharest City Model (fragment)', 2015
1:330, cardboard, variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Plan B, Cluj/Berlin

2. Mekhitar Garabedian, 'Back Cover (Gorky)', 2014
Inkjet, diasec, 100 x 80 cm
Edition of 3
Courtesy Albert Baronian, Brussels

3. Mekhitar Garabedian, 'Distances', 2013-2014
Ink on paper, 100 x 69 cm

4. Kader Attia, 'Untitled', 2014
Sculpture and collage
Wood, metal, tin, cardboard and photographs,
variable dimensions

5. Mekhitar Garabedian, 'Library (The Smiths, A Rush and a Push, 1987)', 2016
Text with marker pen on wall, variable dimensions

6. Jon Rafman, 'Remember Carthage', 2013
Single channel video in loop, color, sound, 13'43"
Courtesy the artist

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