



The Unfamiliar and the Others

Selected Works from
the **MOMENTUM** Collection

The Unfamiliar and the Others

Curated by

Jeni Fulton for MOMENTUM

Featuring

Eric Bridgeman

Nezaket Ekici

Theo Eshetu

Amir Fattal

Gülsün Karamufa

Tracey Moffatt

Martin Sexton

Sumugan Sivanesan

2 – 5 July 2015

At Millerntor Gallery, Hamburg



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Eric Bridgeman

Nezaket Ekici

Gülsün Karamustafa

Tracey Moffatt

Martin Sexton

Sumugan Sivanesan

Introduction

The 'Unfamiliar' is a central concept in contemporary art, referring to ideas of otherness and alienation in cultural and sociological practice. From Gauguin's paintings of Tahitian women and Picasso's use of African figuration, Western culture has had a long fascination with the 'Other'. Often cast as Primitivism, Western artists appropriated stylistic and formal devices from the Global South, without crediting or entering into an active dialogue with the artists themselves. They thus "interweave racial and sexual fantasies and power both colonial and patriarchal", as the art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau noted. The original work was either treated as anthropological device, and the cultural practices as objects of spectacularist fascination or clichéd sentimentalism, with the classical example being the role of 'the Native' in literature or film.

The works by artists from its Collection which MOMENTUM has selected for this exhibition at Millerntor Gallery, question this approach, either by exposing just how hackneyed Western media representation of 'foreign' cultural practices are, or by deconstructing this notion of the 'other', and thus rendering the unfamiliar as familiar.

In his work *The Fight*, The Papuan artist Eric Bridgeman films two groups of men from his own clan, the Yuri. Through acting out Western stereotypes of tribal war, *The Fight* parodies the history of representation and the subsequent impact on the national and cultural identity of Papua New Guinea. Similarly, in *Other*, the artists Tracey Moffatt and Gary Hillberg splice found film footage, depicting colonial warfare and sexual attraction between races.

In Nezaket Ekici's performance video, *Veiling and Reveiling*, the Turkish-born artist laboriously dons a wig, make-up, bag, bra, dress, tights, jewelry, shoes and artificial eyelashes over a full chador, questioning how streamlined notions of feminine beauty intersect with a headscarf's political and religious references.

Providing a counterpoint to cultural notions of Otherness, Martin Sexton's *Bloodspell* is a scrolling first-person narrative describing a remote Mayan temple controlled by the cosmos. In the final, absurdist sequence, the UFO lands atop the temple, pointing out that we are all, in some way, Others.

Jeni Fulton, April 2015

Eric Bridgeman



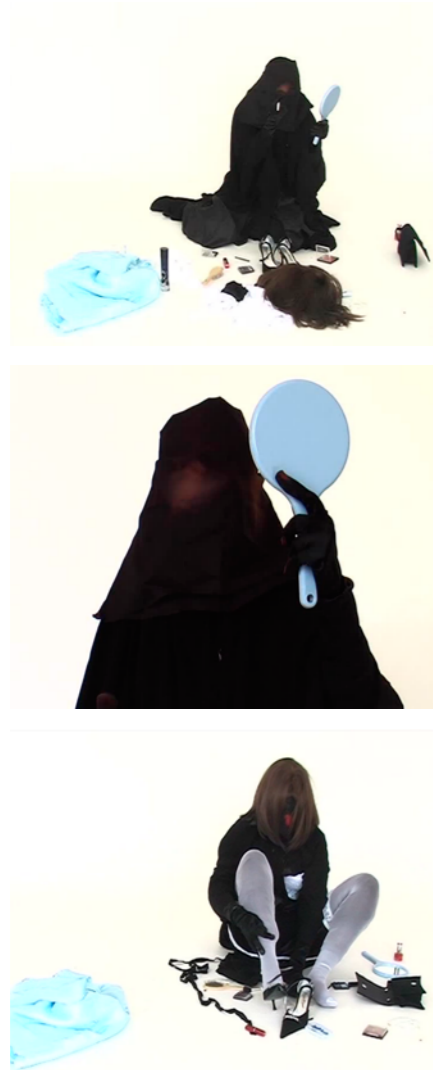
Eric Bridgeman is a multi-disciplinary artist born in Papua New Guinea and currently based in Brisbane, Australia. Bridgeman commenced his Bachelor of Photography at the Queensland College of Art in 2005, majoring in Art Practice under the guidance of Ray Cook, Marian Drew and Jay Younger. He spent his final year in 2008 experimenting in Interdisciplinary Sculpture, which saw the beginnings of his works for *The Sport and Fair Play of Aussie Rules (2008/09)*. In 2008, the Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane) selected this work for inclusion in *The New Fresh Cut*, giving Bridgeman the exposure and support to further the two-year long project. From this breakthrough opportunity, Bridgeman's work attracted support and opportunities from organizations and institutions such as Next Wave Festival (Melbourne), Gallery 4A (Sydney), Australia Council for the Arts, Australian Centre for Photography (Sydney) and the University of Queensland Art Museum (Brisbane).

The Fight

In 2009, Bridgeman traveled through remote parts of the Chimbu Province, his mother country, in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. As he was born in Australia, he became increasingly conscious of his own "white" Australian presence. *The Fight* is based on ethnographic conventions, from National Geographic to Irving Penn, which once aided in the promotion and consumption of PNG as Australia's next frontier. Bridgeman filmed two groups of men from his own clan, the Yuri. Through acting out Western stereotypes of tribal war, *The Fight* parodies the history of representation and the subsequent impact on the national and cultural identity of Papua New Guinea. [Josephine English Cook]

Year: 2010
Medium: HD Video
Duration: 8 min

Nezaket Ekici



Nezaket Ekici was born in Kirsehir, Turkey in 1970 and studied art pedagogics, sculpture and performance in Munich and Braunschweig, Germany. She then began working with performance and completed a master's degree in Performance Art with Marina Abramovic. Ekici frequently uses her own Turkish origins and education as a subject of tension, pitting her background against her living environment in present-day Germany. Cultural, geographic and individual boundaries, transgressions, gender, cross-border connections and authorial bodies are central to Ekici's works. She has exhibited internationally, with a total of more than 120 different performances on 4 continents in more than 100 cities and 30 countries. She currently lives and works in Berlin and Stuttgart.

Year: 2009
Medium: Video Performance
Duration: 24 min 17 sec

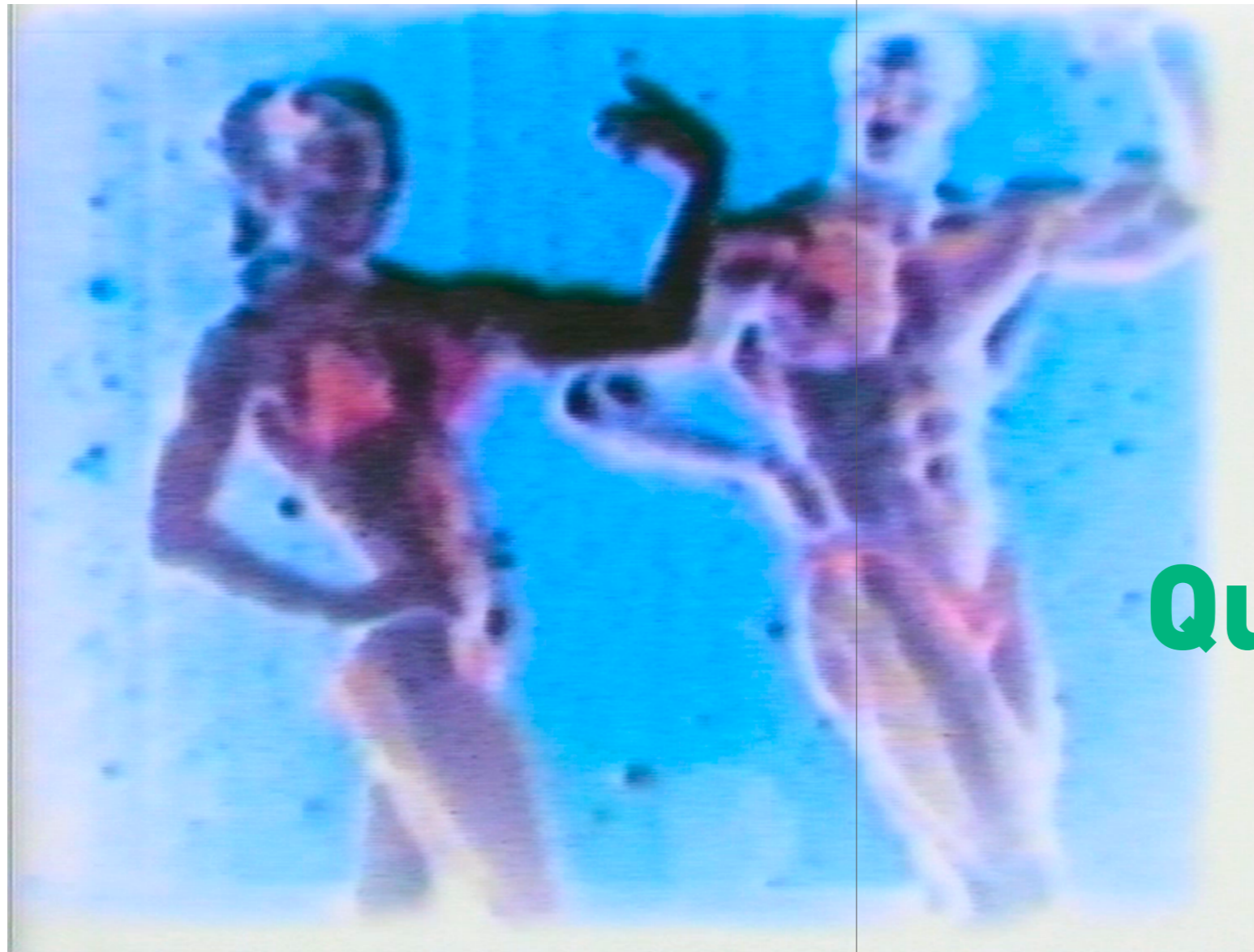


Veiling and Reveiling

Whether in Germany or in the artist's native Turkey, the question of the Tschador's meaning and effects remains controversial. How do streamlined notions of feminine beauty intersect with a headscarf's political and religious references? For Ekici, stories of Turkish students donning wigs to conceal their forbidden headscarves at university, or methods of transporting beauty goods beneath the veil, have led her to question if women can ever truly wear head coverings out of free will. In the video performance *Veiling and Reveiling*, Ekici wears a

Tschador in which various items are concealed: a wig, make-up, bag, bra, dress, tights, jewelry, shoes, artificial eyelashes. The video begins when the individual pieces are produced from the pockets of the Tschador and concludes when the veil has been fully redecorated, a willful inversion of public and private space. Following an exhibition of another of Ekici's works, *Atropos*, at MOMENTUM Sydney in 2010, the artist donated *Veiling and Reveiling* to the MOMENTUM's permanent collection. [Josephine English Cook]

Theo Eshetu



Both Resignation and Affirmation, this early experimental video work by Theo Eshetu faces the inherently racist quality of television head-on, transforming it into a celebratory Anthem of Black pride. Part biographic expression of interracial conflicts, the artist seeks an understanding of a video poetic through ritual, make-up, gestures, postures and dances, clothes, nudity and the blurry pixels of the video signal. This work aims to both destroy and celebrate the possibilities of an Art for Television : QUESTA E' VITA (which synonymously in Italian sound like Questa e' Video, This is Video,) explores new forms of video-making and the artist's search for a new video language by going back to his African roots. Following the form of American Jazz musicians experimenting with new sound by going back to their African roots and the early cut-up method of hip Hop musicians, *Questa è Vita* is a Pop Video to Art Blakey's drum solo in "Orgy in Rhythm". [Theo Eshetu]

Whereas Theo Eshetu is a contributing artist to the MOMENTUM Collection, *Questa è vita* is not represented in the Collection.

Questa è vita [That's Life]

Theo Eshetu was born in London 1958, and grew up in Addis Ababa, Dakar, Belgrade and Rome. He now lives and works in Berlin. Forging a hybrid language to merge practices of video art and documentary filmmaking, Eshetu explores perception, identity, and notions of the sacred through electronic time-based media and optical devices and effects. He draws from anthropology, art history, scientific research, and religion — Catholic, African, Muslim, Buddhist — to explore clashes and harmonies of human subjectivity between world cultures in the global context. Though essentially conceptual, Eshetu's work is often focused on cultural displacement, and is always grounded in compelling aesthetic components, often achieved through fractal repetition, such as kaleidoscopic mirroring, multi-screen projections, or mosaic-like patterning of images.

Year: 1986

Medium: Video

Duration: 12 min 17 sec





Amir Fattal

Amir Fattal was born in Israel in 1978, and is currently based in Berlin. Fattal graduated from Universität der Künste, Berlin, in 2009, and is a conceptual artist whose practice is one of historical reflection grounded in the history of aesthetics and cultural schisms. Fattal's overarching concerns are the cultural connections between Germany and Israel—countries inexorably linked through their history, memory, culture, architecture, and the geographical diaspora which resulted in mass migrations, transposing cultures to new and different nations.

The video installation *Atara* is dealing with different layers of the concept of resurrection in the context of German history. It combines together a reversed version of the Liebestod song from the opera "Tristan und Isolde" by Richard Wagner— that Fattal previously recorded together with an orchestra at the Berliner Funkhaus— together with a video taken at the workshop of the Berliner Stadtschloss in Spandau, where the new Baroque-style stone facade of the Stadtschloss is currently being rebuilt.

The word *Atara* in Hebrew means crown, which is used in a famous Talmud expression meaning "restore to it's former glory". The video is dealing with a process that is taking place 'out of time' or 'out of space', in this case, breaking the historical narrative of creation and destruction in the context of two buildings that used to stand at the same place in Berlin: the Berliner Stadtschloss and the Palast der Republik. Their story brings together different epochs in the political history of Berlin and their aesthetics reflect the changing ideologies that they used to represent. It is asking the question: what does it mean to build a Baroque style palace in the year 2015 in a state with no monarchy? [Amir Fattal]

Whereas Amir Fattal is a contributing artist to the MOMENTUM Collection, *Atara* is not represented in the Collection.

Atara

Year: 2015
Medium: HD Video
Duration: 8 min 52 sec



Gülsün Karamustafa



Gülsün Karamustafa was born in 1946 in Ankara, Turkey. She lives and works in Istanbul, where she is recognized as one of the most important and pioneering Turkish contemporary artists. Her work addresses questions of migration, displacement and military dictatorship (during the 1970s she was imprisoned by the Turkish military). She was refused a passport for sixteen years until the mid-80s and, unlike other Turkish artists, could not emigrate or travel. This enforced isolation led her to an analysis of her own situation and context: the city of Istanbul, interior migration and nomadism within Turkey, and the ideological and psychological ramifications of identity. Like a sociologist or anthropologist, Gülsün Karamustafa explores the historical and social connections of oriental cultures in her works, often using materials that express the hybrid character of different cultures and religions.

Ostensibly reverting to historical lore, Karamustafa's artistic comments oscillate actually between sensual meta-narratives and ironic-critical stories about the present situation, addressing themes of identity and migration, cultural difference and acculturation within the contexts of orientalism and post-colonialism. Since the end of the late 1990s, she has often used already existing materials and images of oriental or occidental origin that she fragments, dismantles and reassembles in order to contrast 'private' with 'public' by referring to every-day life, culture, art history, and the media.

This work came into the MOMENTUM Collection having been shown in the 'Fragments of Empires' exhibition (7 November 2014–1 February 2015) at MOMENTUM, Berlin.

The video and sound installation *Personal Time Quartet* is designed as an ever-changing soundscape to accompany continually repeating images of a never-ending childhood. The sound was composed especially for this work by Slovak rock musician, Peter Mahadic. Comprised of various sound-samples (some of which are from rock concerts), each track was made to activate one of the four channels of moving image. The work is installed in such a way that each time the work is turned on anew, the four channels never synchronize, instead producing each time a new quartet to accompany the looping images.

Following text from *Gülsün Karamustafa. My Roses My Reveries*, by Barbara Heinrich, for Yapi Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık A.Ş., Istanbul, 2007:

The four-part video *Personal Time Quartet* is concerned with the point of intersection between the artist's own personal biography and the history of her home country. Having been invited to an exhibition of German domestic interiors from various periods in the twentieth century at the Historical Museum in Hanover, Karamustafa was inspired by what she saw there to take a closer look at the similarities between her own childhood reminiscences and these museological German living spaces. The timeframe (or 'personal time') covered by these four video's begins in the year of her father's birth and ends in the early days of her own childhood. A video screen placed in each of the rooms shows the same young girl—the artist's alter ego—engaged in various activities. We see her skipping with a skipping rope (dining room, 1906), sorting and folding laundry (kitchen, around 1913), opening cupboards and drawers (living room and parents' bedroom, around 1930) and painting her nails (room from the 1950s).

The films themselves, however, were not shot inside the museum, but rather in her apartment in Istanbul. Viewing them therefore gives rise to the most diverse associations. The girl skipping suggests a carefree childhood, the nail-painting a concern with the artist's own femininity, the folding of laundry could be read as preparation for her future role of housewife, while opening cupboards and drawers is a way of discovering the hidden secrets and stories that are so much a part of our recollections of childhood and adolescence. In this installation, therefore, Karamustafa not only debunks the local or national specificity of certain styles, but at the same time exposes just how similar the evolution of (female) identity can be, even in very disparate cultures.

Personal Time Quartet

Year: 2000
Medium: 4-Channel Video Installation
Duration: 2 min 39 sec



Other

**A Tracey Moffatt and
Gary Hilberg video collaboration**
Year: 2009
Medium: Video
Duration: 7 min

Other is a fast paced montage of film clips depicting attraction between races. Marlon Brando looks at Tahitian girls and Samantha from Sex and the City ogles an African American football player in the men's locker room. Seven minutes of gazing and touching and exploding volcanoes. Very funny, very hot.

— Tracey Moffatt

Tracey Moffatt

Tracey Moffatt is one of Australia's leading contemporary artists of international renown. Moffatt first gained significant critical acclaim when her short film *Night Cries* was selected for official competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival. Her first feature film, *Bedevil*, was also selected for Cannes in 1993. Having begun her career as an experimental filmmaker and as a producer of music videos, Moffatt eventually focused on filmmaking and cross-media practices after gaining acclaim as a photographer. Her investigation of power relations, which by the late 1990s often revolved around the relationship between Australian Aborigines and white colonial settlers, more recently engages contemporary media and the nature of celebrity. Known for her non-realist narratives reconstructed from pre-existing sources, Moffatt uses experimental cinema devices such as audio field recordings and low tones to provide playfully ironic commentary on the subjects of her found footage. Tracey Moffatt was the recipient of the 2007 Infinity Award for art by the International Center of Photography, New York.

As one of the founding donations to the MOMENTUM Collection, *Other* incorporates film techniques—splicing film clips, combining chronologies, creating and dissolving narratives—that parallel MOMENTUM's questioning of time-based art. [Josephine English Cook]





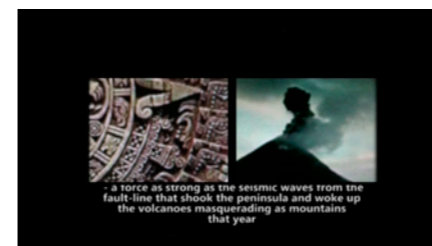
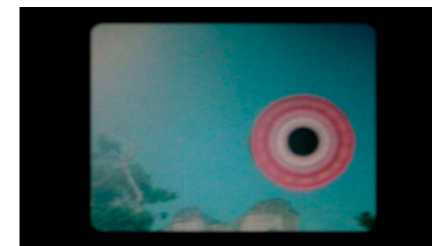
Bloodspell (Mexican Ufo)

Year: 1973–2012
Medium: Video
Duration: 10 min 46 sec

With its low-fi analogue aesthetic and jerky zoom shots, *Bloodspell* (1973–2012) begins like your parents' home travel videos. Characteristically of Sexton's videos, however, our cameraman himself does not appear. Instead, a scrolling first-person narrative describes a remote Mayan temple controlled by the cosmos. The lasting enigma of "Bloodspell" comes towards the video's end, as the camera transitions from its documentary role into a tool of abstraction and mysticism. As the music swells and kaleidoscope-like patterns drift across the screen, we watch a flying saucer land on top of a Mayan temple. Without comment or guidance from the narrator, Sexton leaves us to probe our own potential for belief or disbelief. [Josephine English Cook]

Martin Sexton is a London-based artist and writer who began his career as a science-fiction writer. Without a formal background in fine art, Sexton considers his point of view to be more akin to that of a writer. Or as John-Paul Pryor of *DAZED* Digital has described, Sexton is "a raconteur of both constructed and real mythologies." Sexton calls his works 'futures,' a portmanteau alternatively evoking the terms future, critique, and antique. Sexton's futures are filmed in the past, screened in the present, and bear portents from the future. The layering of multiple temporalities in Sexton's videos, along with his narrative strategies (primarily scrolling first-person text) lend them

an ambivalent presence: who, or what, exactly can we consider the author? Sexton's first encounter with MOMENTUM was at MOMENTUM Sydney in 2010, where curator James Putnam included *Bloodspell (Mexican UFO)* (1972–2012) as part of The Putnam Selection, a program of seven films by British artists. In 2012, Sexton donated *Bloodspell (Mexican UFO)* and *Indestructible Truth (Tibet UFO)* (1958–59) to the MOMENTUM Collection. When the MOMENTUM Collection was shown at the Musraramix Festival in Jerusalem in May 2012, Sexton traveled to Jerusalem to represent the artists in the collection.



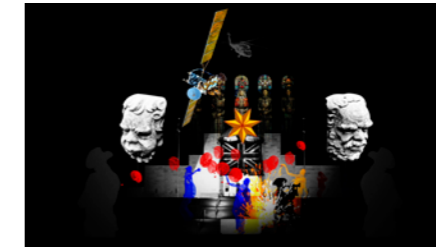
With my writing practice I somehow feel the books or poems I want to read do not yet exist, so somehow like the fabulist of old—I have to write them in order to read them. The same conditions apply to the art that I create—with this one exception—that if they do exist in poetry or literature but NOT in art—then I must create them. Sometimes my practice converges and takes the form of say a sculptural poem or an invocation or play. I have to confess that the notions of Time & Love play powerfully within me and inhabits much if not all of my explorations''.

— Martin Sexton

Martin Sexton

Sumugan Sivanesan

Sumugan Sivanesan is a self-described 'anti-disciplinary' artist and a transcultural radical. His eclectic practice is concerned with the legacies of colonialism, the experience of cultural difference, and diaspora. Sivanesan often engages with the theory of 'necropolitics' coined by the Cameroonian philosopher and political scientist Achille Mbembe. Building upon and going beyond the Foucauldian notion of biopower, the domain of life over which power has taken control, 'necropolitics' asserts that contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death has reconfigured the relationships between resistance, sacrifice, and terror. Sivanesan's first collaboration with MOMENTUM was during MOMENTUM Sydney in 2010, where he performed *What's Eating Gilberto Gil* (2010), a performance/lecture exploring our common history of cannibalism and its contemporary legacies. In February 2012, Sivanesan proposed to perform a new work, "The Anticolonials" (2012) at MOMENTUM Berlin. *The Anticolonials* traced the past and present of anti-colonial politics. Along with his new performance/lecture, MOMENTUM exhibited a retrospective of Sivanesan's video works.



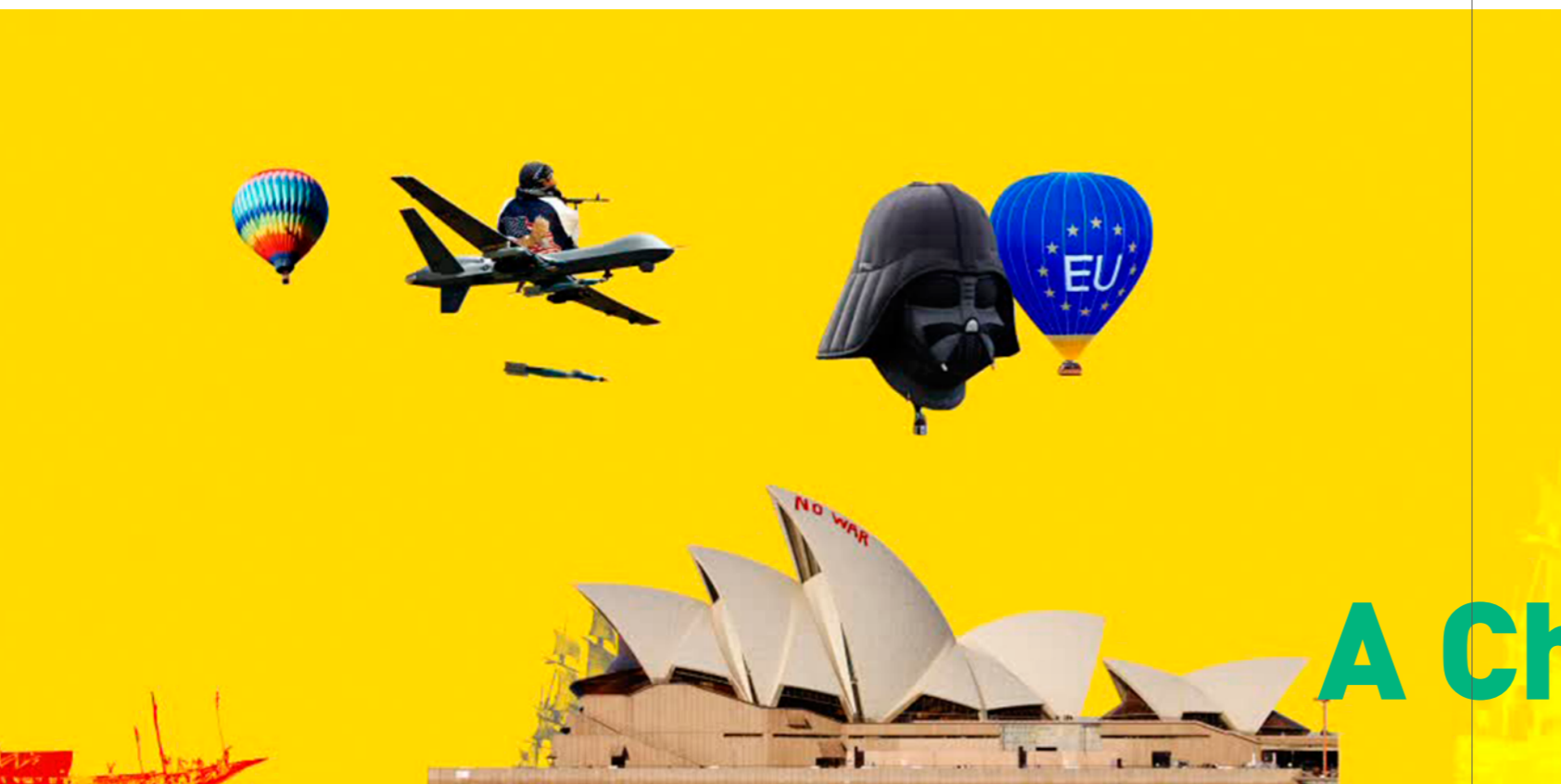
Year: 2010

Medium: Video Animation

Duration: 1 min 45 sec

With an accompanying text by Sumugan Sivanesan

The immediate impact of *A Children's Book of War* lies, perhaps, in its jarring conjunction of war, sovereignty, and violence with a format usually reserved for much more lighthearted topics. With its dominant color palette of black and bright yellow, *A Children's Book of War* incorporates iconography as diverse as Julian Assange, the Sydney Opera House, and the frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. In the accompanying text to the work, Sivanesan draws upon Giorgio Agamben's notion of the "state of exception" to discuss 9/11, Australia entering the Iraq War in 2003, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, and the first fateful contact that Captain Cook made in Australia. The "state of exception," in short, is the temporary suspension of the rule of law in the name of a greater force—whether that be a defense against insurrectionary forces or the preservation of the very constitution of a sovereignty. With its haunting last paragraph, Sivanesan reminds us that the sovereignty of Australia rests on the suspension of indigenous rights—indeed, that everywhere in the Western world our lives are made possible by suspensions that are felt and suffered always elsewhere: "When Captain Cook first made contact, 18 years before Governor Phillip and the First Fleet arrived an act of violence pre-empted the war that was to follow. It's a war that a lack of recognition of Indigenous Sovereignty helps to perpetuate. A war that the civic revolt at Redfern revealed. A war not likely to end any time soon." [Jenny Tang]



A Children's Book of War

About MOMENTUM



MOMENTUM [www.momentumworldwide.org] is a Gallery, a Project Space, a Collection, an Archive, a Residency, a Public Art Initiative, a Salon, and a Network active worldwide since 2010. MOMENTUM is a non-profit and non-commercial platform for time-based art, with headquarters in Berlin at the Kunstquartier Bethanien. Through our program of Exhibitions, Education, Public Video Art Initiatives, Residencies, and the Collection and Performance Archive, we are dedicated to providing a platform for exceptional artists working with time-based practices. MOMENTUM's mission is to continuously reassess the growing diversity and relevance of time-based practices, always seeking innovative answers to the question, 'What is time-based art?'. By enabling exhibition, discussion, collection, creation, and exchange, MOMENTUM is a platform which challenges the notion of time-based art, in the context of both historical and technological development. As the world speeds up, and time itself seems to flow faster, MOMENTUM seeks to explore how time-based art reflects the digitization of our societies and the resulting cultural change. Positioned as both a local and global platform with a vast international network, MOMENTUM serves as a bridge joining professional art communities, irrespective of institutional and national borders. The key ideas driving MOMENTUM are: Collaboration, Exchange, Education, Innovation, and Inspiration. With a non-exclusive and non-elitist view, MOMENTUM believes ART IS FOR EVERYONE.

About Millerntor Gallery



The Millerntor Gallery is the international urban arts, music and culture festival for creative engagement. Initiated by Viva con Agua and the FC Sankt Pauli, it is both a social art gallery and a cultural festival in the Millerntor stadium. Various target groups are addressed and motivated to engage themselves socially, through the universal languages of art, music and football. For 5 days a year, the Millerntor stadium is transformed into a platform for dialogue and exchange, locally, internationally as well as at an intercultural level. By means of trans-genre art works, film presentations and a diverse musical, cultural and educational programme, it aims to address the question of how a positive change to the world can be instigated. Thereby, opportunities of interaction and participation turn the audience into participants, and create a meaningful community, even beyond the event itself. The profits generated by the art sales are donated to Viva con Agua e.V., in order to improve the worldwide water and sanitary supply.

Colophon

This catalogue is published on the occasion
of the exhibition

The Unfamiliar and the Others

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The global platform for time-based art