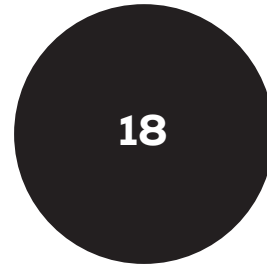




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Phantom Histories

Phantom histories: they seem not to exist, yet one feels them so intensely. They wake you up at night, disturb you during the day. They prosecute with images and sounds, shreds of unfinished conversations or "therapeutic sessions" – in professional practices, in lecture halls, at family tables. This troublesome absence is a condition of

persistent uncertainty. We are not sure whether the "war" has already ended, or whether we are still under fire. If there is such a thing as a common experience of the past, or even a common history, what is it and what does it look like? In the face of global transformations, can we say that we live in the post-war era and measure our time in the old way, adhering to such caesuras as 1945, 1968, or 1989? Today, we have a considerable, convenient toolbox for dealing theoretically and critically with what we call the troubled past, and the way in which it affects the no-less-difficult present. Artistic interventions in this common space of ideas about the past, facts and testimonies, prove not only the multiplicity of attitudes, experiences, and sensitivity to seemingly identical or similar events, but above all the fact that artistic language is not just an essential means of writing and expression, but also a politically and ethically important way of thinking about reality and intervening in its existing structures.

Proposing possible meetings in the field of expanded memory, which includes new heroines and new forms of recording, we want to approach the themes of conflict, memory, and trauma from another angle. We are interested in works and practices that allow us to explore the subject of the presence of the past in its various mediations. In our contemporary reflection on the dark heritage of modernity (including the genocide of European Jews, colonial crimes, economic abuses, etc.) we should broaden our field of vision and take a close look at what appears to fall



Sven Augustijnen, *Spectres*

outside of dominant historiography and historiophoty. Each category or concept loses its obvious meaning in this context; they demand constant reworking, questioning, and deconstruction.

The European post-war is not a condition without an exterior, for the epithet "European" indicates the perpetrator (Europeans, but also the modern project itself), not the locality – the ideas of rationalization and modernization with their aspiration for totality have made it so that there are no longer "unrelated matters." Adopting such an approach can result in two extremes: a paranoid conviction that everything is connected, and a vision of history as a heap in which events are related to one another accidentally, through proximity (in space, in time, in an archive). The density of associations and connections proposed by us, the various methods of extracting meaning from the (dis)order of things (such as inventions and popular transformations), or finally going beyond the determined chronological framework, are supposed to disturb the Manichaean logic that still binds too many historical periods. The clarity and strength of geopolitical divisions have long made many issues and areas too easily removable from the field of vision and reflection.

Personal transformations of political, social, or cultural history are important elements of collective work on the past – an action modifying what is public and political, problematizing what has become common by the force of consensus. That is why it is worth looking at these personal stories, at the stories of forgotten objects and invisible heroines, localities, and minorities, at visions and ideas that, at first glance, seem too insignificant or too daring to be taken into account. However, these are the ones that drive artistic activism and the unprecedented courage of the political imagination. We are interested in how artists weave themselves into narratives about the past and the past's narratives, how they become, on their own terms, historical protagonists, demanding the right to history, the right to create its true image, even if that were to be deformed, low or queer.

Invited by Magdalena Ziółkowska, director of the Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art in Kraków, the *View* team, together with invited artists, critics, and historians from Poland and abroad, had the opportunity to watch and discuss

for three semesters issues related to the crises caused by the recurring threads and unhealed wounds of the past, the unsettled injustices, and the silenced or erased narratives of the fate of characters who were not considered historical subjects.

In **Close-up**, we present four essays, which were conceived during the meetings and discussions of the first semester of the project (Autumn 2016) and are devoted to the artistic practices of Fiona Tan, Mirosław Bałka, Sven Augustijnen, and the duo Yervant Gianikian & Angela Ricci Lucchi. In **Panorama**, we present texts from the field of reflection on traumatic past themes that are not obvious, intertwining them with theories which in themselves constitute a kind of historical testimony. In **Perspectives**, Susan Schuppli, a British artist and theoretician, introduces the subject of forensic aesthetics, along with her own research interests and the projects she works on, while Michael Rothberg talks about his intellectual and civic engagements following the publication of *Multidirectional Memory* (2009). In **Viewpoint**, we present records of critical and artistic interventions from the second semester (Spring 2017) of performative lectures and discussions at the Bunkier Sztuki. The **Snapshots** provide some critical comments concerning both theoretical readings – as in the case of African American feminist scholar of visual culture Tina Campt, and political anthropologist Monika Bobako – and the cultural study of alternative ways of living in American culture, framed by Grzegorz Stępnik in queer time and space. We read, but we also look – this time at visual reflections on Félix Guattari's heritage in the works of the duo of Angela Melitopoulos & Maurizio Lazzarato, whose exhibition, curated by Joanna Sokołowska, has just closed at [the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź](#) (02.02 – 08.04.2018).

Editorial Team

Trauma and Revival. Postwar in the Art of the East and West.

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