



## ANACHRONISM BRUSSELS

"The time is out of joint; O cursed spite! That ever I was born to set it right!" once wrote Shakespeare for his morose Danish Prince Hamlet. This old sense that time is out of joint seems to have recently hit artists and curators—maybe harder than before 1989. With the proclamation of the end of history upon the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Bush Administration's reckless march back to the era of the Crusades, and the Documenta 12 curators pondering modernity as our antiquity, it is no surprise that temporal halts, twists, and reversals define the here and now. *Anachronism*, a group exhibition organized by independent curator Elena Filipovic, enters the fray, without trying to set time right [Argos; March 24–May 26, 2007]. Rather, the exhibition heightens our perception that time is out of joint, claiming revolutionary potential for this operation. This provocation deserves closer attention, especially since this is Filipovic's second show on the theme this year—after *Let Everything Be Temporary*, or *When is the Exhibition* at New York's Apexart in January–February 2007. As such, her commitment to changing chronos is more than fleeting.

Filipovic, co-editor of *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art*, which is perhaps the definitive tome on post-Wall art in Europe, has just been named co-curator of the upcoming 5th Berlin Biennale. It will be interesting to see how her research into time's disjointedness figures in an exhibition sited in the city that seems to be the phenomenon's epicenter. The Argos project is not a survey, but rather a show built around a sense of a commonality of drives, which benefits from the knowledge of someone who knows the field. Many of the artists—seven of the eighteen—hail from the Eastern Bloc or its borderlands, and most if not all somehow respond to the newly reunified Europe through a deft manipulation of their recent past—a history that has been geographically redefined and rendered newly available to hard scrutiny.

A key exception, and both the oldest and last work one encounters in the exhibition, is Chris Marker's filmed

photo-novel *La Jetée*, 1962. Projected at the farthest end of Argos' long and lofty ground floor, the film plays continually inside a makeshift cinema constructed especially for the occasion by Slovenian artist Tobias Putrih. As Filipovic succinctly describes in the compact exhibition booklet, the cinema "looks at once futuristic and indeterminately old." This fusion of Marker's filmic journey back to the future with Putrih's architect-chronics fulfills the promise of a nimble and confusing time, with perhaps the greatest complexity of any work in the exhibition. And yet, while it takes pride of place, *La Jetée* sits apart from the other works, with its Cold War conspiratorial whispers, its Sixties authenticity, and its weird self-possession as an artwork that insists on its presentation of an altogether *new* and revolutionary structure and film aesthetic.

Filipovic's choice to travel in time, to insert this cipher from the Sixties within her selection of works by more contemporary European artists, casts a crisp light on the specific temporalities that animate current art production. In *2 p.m.: Die Hütte*, 2007, Boris Belay and Sophie Nys both project footage of Heidegger's hut, using to different effects the same satirical voice-over from Thomas Bernhard's *Old Masters* about the much maligned philosopher. Paulina Ołowska re-presents the provincial modernism of her native Sopot in *Functional Collage [Club Spatif]*, 2004, which embodies the optimistic didacticism of constructivist collage. Deimantas Narkevicius' video *Once in this XX Century*, 2005, literally reverses history's march by screening the applauded removal of a Lenin sculpture in his native Vilnius in reverse. In *Awaiting Enacted*, 2003, Roman Ondák recalls the waiting game that was the Eastern Bloc by inserting photographs of people queuing into a free newspaper assembled out of the pages of sixteen others from his native Slovakia, where such representations were once banned. Aneta Grzeszykowska erases herself from her family history by removing her image from their photo album. David Claerbout synthesizes the photo-

graphed time of a shot-down U.S. bomber near Duc Pho, Vietnam, with a contemporary film of the same site into the single still/moving image projection *Vietnam, 1967—Near Duc Pho (Reconstruction after Hiromichi Mine)*, 2001. Martha Rosler's Vietnam War-era photomontage *Tron (Amputee)*, from the *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* series 1967–1972, acts as eerie déjà vu when juxtaposed with her recent *Hooded Captives* from the *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* series 2004, a photomontage of images from the current U.S.-led war in Iraq. When considering these works, it becomes evident that none of the artists in the show has a sense of, or desire to deal with, the future. Even Putrih's cinema consciously looks like yesterday's version of tomorrow. This disappearing future is perhaps partly presaged in Marker's grainy, black-and-white fantasy of time travel, but in *La Jetée* he seems to have tried to grasp the world's direction more than its provenance. He was less a historical revisionist than an inventor—of time, place, and persona.

I note this because, for all the temporal disruption delivered by the works on view, they may be said to remain history-bound. The great opportunity sensed here is that artists can operate and are operating in post-Wall Europe and beyond as some of the most creative historians around. History's proclaimed end was just their beginning. Yet, a telling refusal of this exhibition, signaled by Filipovic's conspicuously titled catalogue essay "This is Tomorrow [and Other Modernist Myths]" is that, in all this talk of time, not much is ventured about tomorrow. Surely, the futuristic overdrive of many a modernist project led people straight and fast to their graves, and this is no plea for a return to futurism. Yet, the reticence of the artists in *Anachronism* to look forward as disruptively as they look back is perplexing, and perhaps a missed opportunity when so many politicians today are clamoring to take tomorrow, define it, and quite literally "set it right."

—Monika Szewczyk

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: **Paulina Ołowska**, *Functional Collage [Club Spatif]*, 2004, 2 offset prints in one frame, framed: 126 x 90 x 4.5 cm (courtesy of the artist and Daniel Buchholz Gallery, Cologne); **Tobias Putrih**, *Sketches for a Functional Cinema (Argos)*, 2007, studies for a cinema structure of plywood and cardboard (courtesy of the artist and Almine Rech, Brussels) and **Chris Marker**, *La Jetée*, 1962, 35 mm film, black and white, sound, 29 minutes (courtesy of Argos Films, Paris)