

292 Karangahape Road
Tāmaki Makaurau
Aotearoa New Zealand

Artspace Aotearoa

artspace-aotearoa.nz

CINEMA PROGRAMME

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay



Un-Documented: UNLEARNING IMPERIAL PLUNDER

Script and Director:
Ariella Aïsha Azoulay

Camera:
Bona Manga Bell

Voice & music composed & performed
by Edoheart, Awori & Moor Mother

27 FEBRUARY

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10 APRIL 2021

As our second programme in our new Cinema, we are showing *Un-Documented: Unlearning Imperial Plunder*, the most recent film by theorist, filmmaker and author Ariella Aïsha Azoulay.

Un-Documented: Unlearning Imperial Plunder is committed to show that statutes do not die as Alain Resnais and Chris Marker claimed in their film *Statues also Die*. It's true, that those who plundered millions of objects and forced them to exist isolated in museums' showcases ought to be charged with attempted murder, but the objects themselves survived, and stand alert in glass cases (and imperial archives) awaiting reunion with their people, here or there. Plundered objects were uprooted from the communities in which they were made; they were forced to leave the people with whom they shared a world. Their forced migration is not separated from the force migration of people who refuse to recognise the legitimacy of imperial borders and seek their place in places where their objects are preserved. Since the exile of these objects, their people have become endangered. Not that they ceased to produce objects as part of their life, but under the imperial regime, their new objects stood for no objects, which made them objectless of a sort, exposed to different types of violence.

On their quests to ensure their unavoidable reunion with their objects, they are often deemed "undocumented" by a different regime, the one that takes care of people at the borders. As "undocumented" they are denied movement in the world and unduly criminalized for attempts to cross internationally imposed borders. Focusing on plundered objects in European museums and listening to the call of asylum seekers to enter European countries, their former colonising powers, the film defends the idea that formerly colonised people's rights are inscribed in these objects, that are kept well-documented all these years.

The film is based on the assumption that there is a strong connection between two trajectories of forced migration that are thought as unrelated and are studied separately by scholars from different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The first migration is of objects that generated professional care, scrupulous documentation, generous hospitality in museums and archives, and occasional public display. The second migration of people who do not have, never had, or are unable to obtain the documents without which they are banned from access to most kinds of care and hospitality, and from rebuilding their homes and worlds. These objects are those peoples' documents.

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Ariella Azoulay (born 1962), Professor of Modern Culture and Media and the Department of Comparative Literature, Brown University.

Her books include: *Potential History – Unlearning Imperialism* (Verso, 2019); *Civil Imagination: The Political Ontology of Photography* (Verso, 2012); *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Zone Books, 2008); *Aïm Deüelle Lüski and Horizontal Photography*, Leuven University Press and Cornell University Press, 2013; *From Palestine to Israel: A Photographic Record of Destruction and State Formation, 1947-1950*, (Pluto Press, 2011); co-author with Adi Ophir. *The One State Condition: Occupation and Democracy between the Sea and the River*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

Among her potential histories, archives and curatorial work were shown in different places. Among her films: *Errata* (Tapiès Foundation, 2019, HKW, Berlin, 2020), *Enough! The Natural Violence of New World Order*, (F/Stop photography festival, Leipzig, 2016), *Act of State 1967-2007*, (Centre Pompidou, 2016, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa Fotografico, 2020); *Enough! The Natural Violence of the New World Order* (F/ Stop festival, Leipzig, 2016); “*The Natural History of Rape*” (Pembroke Hall, Brown University, 2015); *The Body Politic* [in Really Useful Knowledge, curated by *What, How & for Whom / WHW*], Reina Sofia, Madrid; *When The Body Politic Ceases To Be An Idea*, *Exhibition Room - Manifesta Journal Around Curatorial Practices No 16 Potential History* (2012, Stuk / Artefact, Louven), *Untaken Photographs* (2010, Igor Zabel Award, The Moderna galerija, Lubliana; Zochrot, Tel Aviv), *Architecture of Destruction* (Zochrot, Tel Aviv), *Everything Could Be Seen* (Um El Fahem Gallery of Art).

Among her film essays: *Un-documented: Undoing Imperial Plunder* (2019); *Civil Alliances, Palestine, 47-48* (2012); *I Also Dwell Among Your Own People: Conversations with Azmi Bishara* (2004) & *The Food Chain* (2004).

<http://cargocollective.com/ariellaazoulay>

