

# Capitain Petzel

Yael Bartana

*The Graveyard*

September 14 – November 9, 2019

Openings: Friday, September 13, 6-9pm

& Saturday, September 14, 2-8pm

Taking her performances *What If Women Ruled the World* (2017-2018) and *Bury Our Weapons, Not Our Bodies!* (2018) as points of departure, Yael Bartana's second solo exhibition at Capitain Petzel features her latest film together with a group of prints and objects. The show marks the Berlin debut of *The Undertaker*, in which Bartana staged and filmed a public collective funeral of weapons in Philadelphia, the birthplace of American democracy.

*The Undertaker* follows an obscure figure as she leads her swarm of armed followers in a ceremonial march on the way to perform a mass burial ritual. Carrying a variety of weapons from different times, the choreographed group strides through numerous historical locations in the city center of Philadelphia, eventually being guided by their leader to the burial site in Laurel Hill cemetery in which they dispose of the weapons. Rather than a memorial to the dead, the group creates a human monument for the living, linked up with ghosts of the past. The performance is based on a choreography by the Israeli movement-composer Noa Eshkol (1924-2007) from 1953.

*The Graveyard* represents a crucial stage in the succession of Bartana's recent works. Recurring elements within projects lend an ongoing nature to her practice, making her an artist creating movements rather than mere individual artworks. In *What If Women Ruled the World*, Bartana imagines a hypothetical union of female governors and experts (defence advisers, soldiers, peace activists, humanitarians, politicians and leading thinkers) on a mission to avert impending disaster. In *The Undertaker*, the president of this fictional government appears again to lead the armed followers. Likewise, the claim "Bury Our Weapons! Not Our Bodies!" is an outcome of *What If Women Ruled the World* and lays the foundations for Bartana's Philadelphia performance as well as her show at Capitain Petzel.

For this exhibition the artist has simulated a series of fossilized weapons which are presented on pedestals in the ground floor of the gallery, accompanied by a display of prints illustrating masked figures — the undertakers. Her figures rendered in a large format hold up their masks and operate as an observing choir, witnessing and silently commenting the state of events. A selection of the individual masks is exhibited on the balcony. Addressing notions of militarism, nationhood, belonging, and memory, *The Graveyard* blurs the lines between fact and fiction and calls attention to the function of weapons in the perpetuation of our systems of violence, repression, and displacement.

On the occasion of the Berlin Art Week gallery openings, a performance based Noa Eshkol's *War Dances* will take place in the exhibition space.

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Yael Bartana (born Israel, 1970, lives and works in Amsterdam and Berlin) deals with the impact of war, collective rituals and national myths throughout her artistic practice. In 2011 she represented Poland in the Venice Biennale with the trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned*, depicting a fictional movement calling for the return of 3.3 million Jews to Poland. In recent years Bartana has been experimenting with different mediums and expanding her body of work with sculptures, prints and collective performances. Her work has been shown across a number of important institutions, such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2018); the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2017); the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2014); and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk (2012). In 2020, Yael Bartana will hold a comprehensive solo show at the Jewish Museum Berlin with a new commissioned work for the museum, *The Redemption*.

Contact | Capitain Petzel

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Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 11 am – 6 pm