

PRESS RELEASE

**Yael Bartana***The Undertakers*

November 22, 2019 – January 11, 2020

Opening November 22, 5 - 7 pm

Annet Gelink Gallery proudly presents *The Undertakers*, Yael Bartana's (1970, Kfar-Yehzekel, Israel) sixth solo exhibition at the gallery.

Bartana's latest video work, *The Undertaker*, forms the central point to the exhibition. Interlinked with Bartana's performance *Bury our weapons, not our bodies!*, performed in conjunction with her solo show at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, *The Undertaker* explores a parallel reality in which the rallying cry to eliminate systemic violence and repression is met with action. Amplified by setting the film in Philadelphia, city of brotherly love and the birthplace of American democracy, the film's "historical pre-enactment" – a methodology conceived by Bartana – lays bare the destructive, displacing current of violence that runs through our history and present.

*The Undertaker*, still, 2019

Calling to mind military aesthetics and rituals that celebrate war, *The Undertaker* assumes these militaristic expressions to call for an end to violence. The film follows an enigmatic figure leading an armed procession through the city centre of Philadelphia. The procession culminates in a ritualistic weapon burial at Laurel Hill cemetery that interweaves elements of Israeli movement-composer Noa Eshkol's (1924-2007) 1953 choreography to commemorate the Holocaust. Eshkol's work evokes military choreography, whilst focusing on life, loss and the attempt to move through grief. Non-narrative and without dialogue, *The Undertaker* firmly focuses on the bodily and physical. The procession, ritualistic burial and choreography meld together to form a monument to the living, built on the ghosts of the past.

The show also presents the progression in Bartana's recent work which explores political movements and actions and tackles an array of possible scenarios through performance. Showing parallels to Bartana's trilogy *And Europe will be stunned* (2007-2011), *The Undertaker* also lifts elements and characters from her 2017 performance *What if Women Ruled the World*. The often public enactments link her various projects together in their investigation of potential future outcomes and historical realities and sum up the "historical pre-enactment": experiments that make present seemingly impossible futures.

For the exhibition the film is flanked by a number of physical works that refer back to the film and the *Bury our weapons, not our bodies!* performance. The film, prints and fossilised weapons present a vision for an alternate historical telling. Ostensibly fossilised weapons and a selection of masks are presented as historical artefacts, whilst life-sized prints portraying masked figures - the undertakers - silently bear witness. In *The Undertakers* Bartana posits a communal experiment to expand our political imagination and foster hope for future beyond our current social perimeters.

Yael Bartana's work also features in the current exhibition *Modest Fashion* at Stedelijk Museum Schiedam. Similarly to *The Undertakers*, the work on view - a neon titled *Patriarchy is History* - signals potential futures or alternate realities. It also highlights the current reassessment of historical social constructs and furthers the push against the mechanisms that shape our past and present. As such, the work does not merely portray a hoped for reality, but lights the way forward.

Her work is currently on view in the solo show *Cast Off* at Fondazione Modena Art Visive until April 13, 2020.

Known for her films, photographs and installations, Bartana's work has been shown in numerous leading museums and biennial with a large retrospective show at the Jewish Museum Berlin scheduled for 2020: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2018); the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2017); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek (2015); the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2014); 31<sup>st</sup> Sao Paulo Biennial (2014), 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Sydney, PAMM (2013) Walker Art Center (2013), Carnegie International (2013), Van Abbemuseum (2012), Secession Vienna (2012), 7th Berlin Biennale (2012); 54th Venice Biennale (Polish Pavilion, 2011).

Her work is part of the collection of a.o.: van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, NL); Centre Pompidou (Paris, FR); Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (The Hague, NL); Guggenheim Museum (New York, US); The Jewish Museum (New York, US); Kadist (Paris, FR); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen (Rotterdam, NL); Museum of Modern Art (New York, US); Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (Amsterdam, NL); Tate Modern (London, UK); Tel Aviv Museum of Art (Tel Aviv, IL); Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, US); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Humlebaek, DK); Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, US); Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, US); Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts (Lausanne, CH).