

S A B R I N A A M R A N I

*Unrest*  
Sabrina Amrani

Art Basel OVR Portals  
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## Joël Andrianomearisoa (Madagascar, 1977)

### *Ausência, 2017*

Textiles. 460 x 240 cm.

*Ausência*, (Absence), is at first glimpse the absence of black in an Andrianomearisoa's work. On the wall, white shapes, folded cloth panels that no wind agitates, and whose proximity, without hindsight, oppresses and seduces at the same time. The play of light on these books hanging on blank pages folded on themselves. The artist evokes the superimposed layers of white cloth that are the shrouds of the Malagasy dead.

### *Last year in Antananarivo, 2016*

Inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper. 28 x 326 cm. Edition 3/3

Joël Andrianomearisoa researched and found an image from the French colonial period of a Malagasy ball, with the Malagasy people dressed like the French, as a "civilized people". Then decided to manipulate this image, cut it to create a new scenario to tell a new story, from a kind of fantasy, of French people. It's a manipulation of this idea of the colonization. It's why they are divided in four parts. From this screenplay, you can feel that there are two important elements: the dresses because we are in a ball; and the objects, with the chandelier, the carpets, the curtains and more.

So in the artworks, its possible to feel the colorful textiles on the wall, a tribute to these dresses and the women that wore them. The black objects on the floor are imprints of the architectural objects from the ball. The show is like a memory from Madagascar with your imagination.

Andrianomearisoa works based in his interest in in black and white. The black reflects the light, and the white reveals the black. These images are of the Malagasy culture, even though these people are Malagasy but behaving as French.

### *Last year in Antananarivo, 2018*

Neon. 20 x 280 cm. Edition of 2

This neon piece is inspired in the artworks made for 'Last Year in Antananarivo', a series of photographs of a ball held by the French colonials in 1900 in Antananarivo which Andrianomearisoa found in FTM archives in Madagascar. This discovery set the artist on a journey, exploring the relationship between memory, pain and identity. In the images the Malagasy are dressed by the French in elaborate costumes to reflect the colonialists' idea of a 'civilized' people. Andrianomearisoa plays on the inherent duality – the colonized and the colonizer, the past versus the present, pain and pleasure, the subjectivity of identity and the notion of 'civilization'.

### *White Suprematism/Black Suprematism, 2016*

Cotton thread, cardboard and wood. 22x160 x4 cm.

*"I have always refused the definition that black and white are not colors, or better, that they are "non-colors." I've never understood that. Actually, to create black you need to use many colors. And for a pure white is the same. So at first it was an aesthetic challenge for me to use that forbidden color, that "no-color" that, as I say, for me are not. I also like the ambiguity."*

Joël Andrianomearisoa

## Ayesha Jatoi (Pakistan, 1979)

### *Residue, 2016*

Clothes.

*Residue*, features piles of white garments lying conspicuously in the exhibition space. The piles begin to slowly disappear as the artist Ayesha Jatoi takes each piece of clothing and folds and stacks it across the room. White is the colour of mourning worn to funerals in many cultures of South Asia, and this performance is a metaphorically burdened act in uncertain times of putting away the remnants of love, of longing, of trying to make sense of the senseless: of what, or who, has been lost.

### *Residue (performance)*

A big mound of white clothes encounters the audience. The presence of the artist is still not noticed until the pile begins to disappear slowly, revealing the artist behind the mound taking one piece of cloth at a time from the mound; and folding and stacking all of them in the gallery space. The clothes are of all sizes and shapes; from the old, young, male and female, but they are all white: The color of mourning in Pakistan, that is worn to funerals. This performance is an act of putting away the remnants of love, of longing; trying to make sense of the senseless: Of what has been lost.

### *Places & Total, 2016*

Ink on paper, Diptych. 42 × 59.4 cm.

This artwork collects a series of dates stamped on paper. These are the days when terrorist attacks took place in Pakistan, the country in which the artist Ayesha Jatoi lives and works. In cases, where the dates are repeated, the fact that two or three attacks took place on the same day is emphasized. The target of these attacks were such harmless places as schools, hospitals, courts, markets, parks, etc.

The diptych *'Places & Total'* (2016), shows in which sites the terrorists took place and total number of deaths stamped on paper.

## Paloma Polo (Spain, 1983)

### *A Fleeting Moment of Dissidence Becomes Fossilised and Lifeless After The Moment has Passed II, 2015*

Inkjet prints on cotton paper. Framing glass including serigraphy. 51.5 34.5 cm.  
Edition 2/3

The series of images presented are derived from a collaborative research undertaken by Polo in dialogue with Naty Merindo, an 85-year-old Agta woman living in the Peninsula of San Ildefonso, Casiguran, Philippines. The research also involved the support and collaboration of Ulysses Ferreras, a Filipino botanist whose knowledge of taxonomy was essential for the undertaking. Each plant presented is accompanied by its local name, as indicated by Naty Merindo, and the scientific name provided by Ulysses Ferreras.

Naty Merindo, the only indigenous healer living in the area, and could be the last one, claims knowledge on more than 200 plants endemic to her locality and the medicinal properties they are said to possess. Orally transmitted since ancestral times, this knowledge is now on the brink of extinction. The profit-oriented socialization of younger generations engendered by the long-term discrimination and disenfranchisement experienced by the community largely contributes to the threat to this tradition. Due to its practical necessity and applicability, indigenous medicinal knowledge functions in the area as a crucial alternative to the impossibly expensive, inaccessible, and inefficient health system provided by the local and national government. In the course of intermittent stays with Naty Merindo in the forest, Polo was able to collect and photograph a total of 80 plants the former could find. The uses of the plants including their medicinal preparations were likewise noted in the process. Each specimen was then labelled according to the methodology indicated by Ulysses Ferreras. They are currently kept in a herbarium in Manila where most of the plants have been identified. The several botanists and ethnopharmacologists additionally consulted stated that a scientific validation of the plants' medicinal properties would require verification from several informants including other healers in the region.

Initially conceived to concern the simple preservation of indigenous culture in tension with modern scientific processes, the artistic project developed in the direction of confronting the very presuppositions of knowledge itself. Knowledge ceases to become solely a matter of fact, but a matter of question. For to claim that knowledge corresponds in lockstep with the whole of Being, as is triumphantly asserted by much of contemporary discourse (scientific or otherwise) wishing to instate its authority, is to ground it on a fantasy of harmony that excludes the very condition of possibility of the age-old pair Being/Knowledge. Knowledge can only come to exist as a pursuit of some burning truth of Being if both are seen not as complementary, but as fundamentally disjunct. It is their disjunctive synthesis that allows one to see both the necessity of knowledge, its pulsating movement that jumps out of or cracks the stone on which it is etched, and the pretensions of the whole. Taken conjointly as a pair that includes a third space, being and knowledge are wrested from their common reductions to a frozen station and are thus injected the potential for engagement and transformation. The third space that sustains the potential for engagement and transformation was crucially encountered in the course of the artistic project at the moment of palpable conflict between the seemingly omniscient power of Capital and the struggle for survival of the community in Casiguran. Government discourse couches the idea of aligning the destiny of Casiguran and its inhabitants to the logic of "special economic zone" on the basis of what appears these days as anodyne and self-evident knowledge: economic development. Yet the deliberate destruction and violence brought upon the life-world of the community – and promisingly, the people's acts of resistance -- belie the illusion of neoliberal capitalism to construct a harmonious union between market interests and human existence.

### *What is Thought in the Thought of People, 2015*

Video HD. Editions 2, 3 of 3 + 1AP

The hour of the serpent descends on the land, echoes an old man's voice as he recalls a memory meandering between the mythic and real. Faceless, the testimony unfolds, unhurriedly. This is a tale

where both temporality and territory intertwine: a fragment of local oral history but also a signifying marker of unease and unrest, crossing over into the present time.

This found narrative from the Philippines is the locus of a collaboration between Paloma Polo (Madrid, 1983) and Leonilo Doloricon (Surigao del Sur; 1957). Here, aural testimony from the ground becomes the starting point of the retinal encounter.

The tale can be traced back to the hinterlands of Casiguran, Aurora province in northern Philippines, where indigenous peoples, settlers and fisherfolk face dispossession of their common lands and waters amidst plans to set up a freeport zone. An archipelago of more than 7,000 islands in maritime Southeast Asia, this country named after the Spanish monarch King Philip II embodies other larger paradoxes. It has a rich multicultural past as a historic node of trade, migration, and colonisation yet is also confronted by many present contradictions arising from shifting directions of nascent nationhood and the lingering links with global empires. The resulting interactions between the two artists distill how markers of economic integration and unification—so central to institutions of global modernity—surface and recede amidst the spectre of collapse and the reality of grassroots resistance.

A diversity of trajectories (and traditions) of visualizing inequity and resistance may be seen within the models of image-making interacting within the exhibition: ranging from the documentary qualities of film to the iconic character of illustration. Responding to the allegorical character of the elder's tale, Doloricon's employment of visual tropes and conventional iconography for the illustrations forms part of what he terms as "paggamit ng simbolong malapit sa karanasang masa, at ang pagsasalarawan sa kanila bilang mga bayani, at bilang mapagpasiyang bagay sa pagbabago ng lipunan" or "use of symbols close to the masses' experiences, and their portrayal as heroes and decisive forces in social change" (Doloricon, 216).

The collaboration also highlights how artists construct their relationships with social movements, within and beyond the art world. Polo's continuing immersion in the Philippines and in zones of unrest, for instance, unfolds as a long-term commitment towards emancipatory politics—rather than as a brief excursion or gesture of acquaintanceship—best seen in the openness to work with grassroots organizations and contexts. A separate interview with Doloricon, on the other hand, dwells on his formative years and principles as an artist associated with the tradition of Social Realism in the country, shedding light on the pragmatic and theoretical considerations of being a cultural worker embedded in the Philippine context.

Originating from different parameters of practice, their biographical dimensions jointly underscore how the artist, popularly construed as the isolated master or the eccentric creative, can assert a sense of critical reflection amidst the state of unrest: how artistic agency can help delineate the dimensions of destabilization unfolding all around.

Zones of destabilization - Lisa Ito