

Mukenge/Schellhammer, Mohsen Hazrati, Alain Polo Nzuzi

Fiction is never innocent

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New Viewings is a virtual space, a space in-between the real and the unreal. It has no restrictions and allows for the realization of everything and anything. It provides a controlled environment, which allows for experimentation without the constraints of the physical realm. The exhibition series New Viewings was initiated during the pandemic, when cultural institutions and galleries were closed down. Barbara Thumm invited artists and curators to overcome these obstacles and make use of her virtual gallery. In that sense her gallery offered not only a digital platform for artists and their projects, but also protected surroundings for the development of new ideas in very uncomfortable times. Almost ironically, this site comes in the shape of an interior space, with a floor, walls and a roof as elementary components, assuming that this rendition of an architectural construction was sufficient for a virtual exhibition.

„The colonial enterprise was declined as fiction, just like the novel, the theater, or poetry. For a long time, the African space was the object of numerous dreams and fantasies and was considered an empty terrain on which to write a new narrative – the geography and texts about the continent are abundant in this regard.“
(Fiston Mwanza Mujila)

In their often violent desire and technological capability to become real, European regimes of fantasy and imagination have shaped the world, probably like no other force in the history of mankind, colonialism being only one extreme of this ongoing expansion and design process that reshapes whatever it finds into whatever it believes it has found or was looking for (next station Mars!). „Fiction is a technique, an instrument, a practice, a medium, an interface to work and rework collective and personal imagination as well as the world itself. Fiction is never innocent.“
(Marian Kaiser).

But fiction can also be employed to speculate about possible futures, develop alternatives to fixed identity categories, confuse gender-specific or racializing attributions and established normative categories. In that regard, the group exhibition “Fiction is never innocent” is itself not innocent. Its participants engage in reworking past, present and future images to produce individual and collective fantasies. Future is not understood here as temporality or a moment in time, but as an accumulation of possibilities that transgress easy separations and deflate ruling time regimes; fiction as a way to not only explore these possibilities, but to reappropriate, redo and reshape the conditions under which we imagine and fantasize.

The exhibition brings together four artists who employ various forms of fictionality to develop experimental, alternative future visions and images:

Mukenge/Schellhammer explores the fictional potential of contemporary depictions of otherness. Mohsen Hazrati generates the future by combining AI with an Iranian tradition of fortune telling. Alain Polo plays with current binary conceptions of Gender and proposes a tender vision of a utopian city.