

EN Roger Cremers, Mark Aerial Waller & Runa Islam

Counterpoint

curated by Roger Cremers

3 September—8 October, 2016



Roger Cremers, *The reader....*, 2016, acrylic, ash and ink on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

“(...)‘History does not exist’ means that there is no grand all-encompassing narrative guaranteeing the sense of history (either its meaning or direction).”

Slavoj Žižek on Alain Badiou in *Living in the End Times*

The transformation of fact, alternative histories, and subjectivity are apparent themes in the exhibition *Counterpoint*. Roger Cremers (NL) steps up as the curator of his own show, presenting carefully selected work by befriended artists Mark Aerial Waller (UK) and Runa Islam (BD/UK) next to his new series of paintings. Though very different in approach, the artists share a deep interest in challenging the course of chronology through visual language, historic research, and scientific fact, which all three of them use as the main material for their work. In effect, the conjunction of their voices hit a striking conceptual counterpoint.

The oeuvre of Mark Aerial Waller is imbued with a consistent question of ideas around the transmission and interpretation of culture across time. Integrating objects, video and live performance he offers immersive imagery defined by spatial and situational terms. The spectator, art object and their relative position in space and time become an interdisciplinary experience that transcends the regular, familiar traits of these media combined. For *Counterpoint*, Mark Aerial Waller has installed his work *SO-LA*. The shifting decor assembles a faux-ethnographic bronze tableau – a replica of the Louvre’s *Sit-Shamshi* (‘the only three dimensional depiction of a ritual sun ceremony in Western Asiatic art’), a large screen showing NASA film data of the burning orb of the sun, and sliding geometric solids repeatedly exposing and eclipsing the sun’s fierce glow. Together, a ritual event is staged that harmonises the mystical aura of the ancient Elamite figures with scientific effort to prove ‘the existence of history’. Technology and mystery seamlessly interlock, presenting heliocentricity as a determinative force for shaping human culture in relation to infinite time and space.

Runa Islam’s work explores the syntax, tangibility and histories of visual representation in cinematographic material. Her investigative manner and experiments question (ir)-reproducibility, mass distribution, place and displacement, often through a visual language

so reduced it is at times almost abstracted. In *Counterpoint*, she presents her 16 mm film *Meroë*, depicting the bronze head of the Roman emperor Augustus discovered during an archaeological dig in Sudan over a century ago. Using the early cinematographic technique of multiple exposure, Runa Islam overlays images of the antique with a plaster cast replica. The original and duplicate merge and diverge ever so subtly, evoking a sense of synchronicity and questioning the deferment of artistic control. *Meroë* is flanked by two 'instruments' from Runa Islam's *Anatomical Studies*, an ongoing research into the visual mechanisms and material properties of the film medium. Reclaiming the silver from exposed celluloid, she uses it as material for delicate sculptures instead: a small projector lens, a pencil. Through a process of material alchemy, old techniques and materials yield new forms.

The representation of the world in documentary imagery is an endless resource for Roger Cremers. Aware of the determinative quality of such images, shaping our thoughts and perception of history as a result of a selection process we call observation, his work revolves around this very acceptance of an image as 'truth'. He is driven by a desire to find 'mirrors' of our present time in images from the past. In this context, the verity of the (photographic) medium, the depicted scenes and the spectator all become an accomplice in constructing a presumed reality. In *Counterpoint*, Roger Cremers presents a new series of collage paintings. Mixing snippets of historical photographs with new media snapshots, ink and pencil drawings with freely painted backdrops, his multilayered canvasses become an abstract landscape that read almost like a graphic novel, but are strangely out of joint with linear time. Some paintings are dabbed with the ashes from his fire place, which seems to hint at Waller's burning sun and Islam's re-appropriation of celluloid. But it is especially Cremers' interest in the incoherence of time and space, prone to human curiosity and interpretation, that makes his choice to present the work of Runa Islam and Mark Aerial Waller next to his own a compelling one. In *Counterpoint*, their personal take on image and imagination, stories and histories becomes attentively entwined, establishing a contemplative place out of time (or time out of place).

Mark Aerial Waller (1969, High Wycombe, United Kingdom) studied Film and Video with Sculpture at St. Martins School of Art. International exhibitions include: Athens Biennale 8, Museo D'arte Contemporanea Donnaregina (MADRE), Naples, Musée d'Art Modern de la Ville de Paris, France, and the South London Gallery. Alongside his studio practice, Waller founded The Wayward Canon (2001-onwards), as an artist-led platform for event-based interventions in cinematic practices. A recent work, 'Live From the Crucible' (2014) commissioned by the ICA for Channel 4 television, explores the interpretation of a 12th century BC artifact from western Iran, held in the Louvre. Recent presentations include *Yoga Horror* at Tate Britain (2014) and *Projection Apprentice* at Mindaugas Triennial, the 11th Baltic Triennial of International Art, CAC Vilnius, Lithuania (2012) and *Kafe Pittoresk- L'Experience du Monde Visionnaire* (with Giles Round), Serpentine Gallery, London. Translations of his works exist in French, Italian, Spanish, Lithuanian, Turkish, Korean & Mandarin. Mark Aerial Waller lives and works in London.

Runa Islam (1970, Dhaka, Bangladesh) completed residency at the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (1998). Solo exhibitions include *Dogs Devouring Horses/The Move*, Arter, Istanbul (2012); *Projects 95: Runa Islam* MOMA, New York (2011); *Runa Islam*, Site Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico (2011); *Runa Islam*, Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal (2010) and *Museum of Contemporary Art*, Sydney (2010); *The Restless Subject*, Kunsthaus Zurich and Museum Folkwang, Essen (2008); *Empty The Pond To Get The Fish*, MUMOK, Vienna (2008); *UCLA Hammer Museum*, Los Angeles (2005). She has participated in many group exhibitions, including the 6th Asia Pacific Triennale, Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane (2009); *The Cinema Effect*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington (2008); *Brave New Worlds*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2007); the 51st International Venice Biennale (2005); and 8th International Istanbul Biennial (2003). In 2008, Runa Islam was nominated for the Turner Prize. She lives and works in London.

Roger Cremers (1972, Susteren, the Netherlands) studied at the Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Maastricht and at the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (1997). His work has been exhibited at the Tate Modern (2013), AKINCI, Amsterdam (2010), Galerie van Wijngaarden Hakkens, Amsterdam (2006), the Stadsgalerij Heerlen (2001), *Domaine de Kerguehennec* (1998/99), *Bonnefantenmuseum* (1997), and *De Appel* (1997). He participated in group exhibitions at GEM, Den Haag (2005), *Bregenzer Kunstverein* (2005), the *Sharjah Biennial* (2003), *Documenta 11*, Kassel with Meshac Gaba (2002), and the Tate Modern, London (2001). Cremers' work is to be found in various collections in the Netherlands and other countries, including ABN Amro, the former Peter Stuyvesant collection and a variety of private collections. He lives and works in Amsterdam.