

MODIFICATIONS 2010

In 2010 the Aarhus Art Building takes the first step in the implementation of a whole new strategy, where each year the exhibition program will be planned on the basis of an overall theme. The chosen theme must be challenging and topical and lend a voice to central issues in the world of art right now. In 2010 the theme is *Modifications*.

Modifications is a reference to the Danish artist Asger Jorn's exhibition of the same name in Paris 50 years ago, where he presented a series of kitsch-paintings on top of which he had painted his own additions. With the exhibition Jorn attempted to once and for all dispel the notion of art as something sublime and autonomous. The members of the international artist group Situationist International, which Jorn along with the French theorist Guy Debord had founded a few years earlier, held a firm belief in the revolutionary potential of the artistic process. Art was seen as a possible way out of the meaningless and empty pseudo-society

that the members of the group referred to as the 'Society of the Spectacle'. Although the group ended up dissolving itself rather than art as such, contemporary art in many ways still stands on a similar bastion: between destruction and construction – or between partial displacement and pure action, one might also say. This state of the art, so to speak, within contemporary art, plus its historical source, forms the basis for the theme *Modifications*. It is the intention of the 2010 exhibition program to shed new light on the issue and to raise the question of whether art presents a way out of the all-encompassing grip of the Society of the Spectacle. A question that is just as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

Lara Baladi, Nandipha Mntambo,
Lucia Nimcova and Agnieszka Polska

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

6. FEB – 17. MAR 2010



This exhibition of a generation of four contemporary artists, Lara Baladi, Lucia Nimcova, Nandipha Mntambo and Agnieszka Polska, takes on the inevitable uncertainty that comes with addressing the past. Each artist presents a cluster of works relating to specific moments in collective memory through more "traditional" modes of production such as archival, domestic, and performance formats. From contrasting geographic positions, they each contest and transform territories of the post-colonial, the gendered, the post-socialist, and of mortality into the personal, but never the nostalgic. Showing that our own relationship with history cannot be dictated but constantly negotiated. Together, their cutting, pasting and reassembling of various narratives stage an interruption in the history lesson with an intimate urgency that propels us, not backwards, but forward. There is no return to the 'Good Old Days'.

The year's theme of Modifications at the Aarhus Kunstbygning provides a clean slate for a retrospective of a different kind, one that addresses broader art historical and ideological "truths" from the context of current questions. The work of these four artists results in a reclaiming of certain creative traditions that do not regurgitate age-old clichés, or hark after a past ideal. Instead, they contain a dynamism that connects and contradicts visions of the political in everyday practice.

Curator, Clare Butcher

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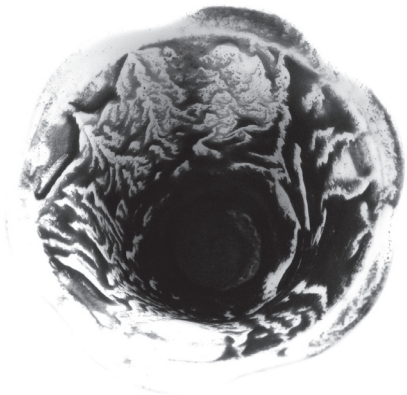
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ÅRHUS KUNSTBYGNING

J.M. MØRKS GADE 13 DK-8000 ÅRHUS C

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patterns of the coffee grounds left at the bottom of each cup have been scrutinized by the coffee cup reader who we hear in the space. Predicting a future and revealing the present. The future might be one thing today and something else tomorrow but the reading context is emotionally charged in the face of death.

LARA BALADI

Diary of the future, 2008 - 2010

Chronology

980 cm long x 220 cm high

Mapping Destinies

440 cm high x 420 cm width

Rose

400 cm diameter

Fragments

13mns

This deeply personal assembly of works makes up a series begun during the time of the artist's father's illness. Baladi embeds each sonic and photographic component in the age-old domestic Middle-Eastern practice of coffee-ground reading. In this case, she diarises the names, dates and destinies of family and friends who visited her father and were invited to drink a coffee. Her methodological approach gives an authority to the tradition, belief and fatalism of a popular everyday augury.

When seen from afar the large-scale images of countless coffee cups create a complexity resembling a stained glass window. The individual components form an interdependent narrative, inextricably linking the futures of this network of individuals to each other. The curved, poetic



NANDIPHA MNTAMBO

Ukungenisa, 2008

Digital video, sound, 2 mins 30 secs

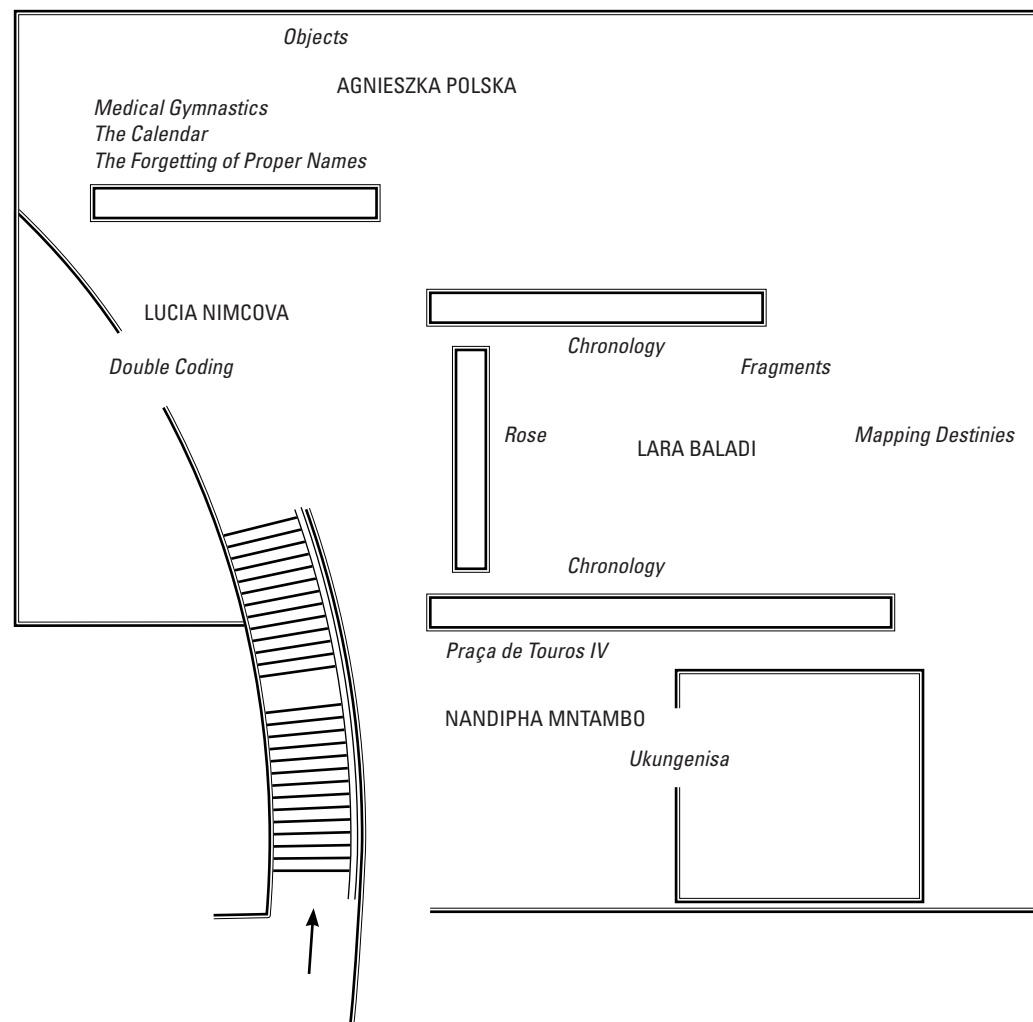
Praça de Touros IV (Triptych), 2008

Archival pigment ink on cotton rag paper

Triptych, Image size: 102 x 68cm each,

Paper size: 112 x 78cm each

"Tauromachy" is the technical term for bullfighting. Via various migrations, the sport has taken on many differing styles and techniques. In the Portuguese tradition, the *toureiros* is the individual who performs specific movements to subdue the bull and often the animal leaves the stadium alive, to be killed out of the sight of the public, or in exceptional cases, allowed to heal and graze.



Polska's most recent film piece is *The Forgetting of Proper Names*. In this film she incorporates a reading of Freud's essay by the same name with an animated build-up of structures, objects and printed matter from recent European and American art history in an empty white room. The layers themselves take on a life of their own, becoming more and more densely contained in the

space before being completely covered in earth as the reading continues. The short film ends with the introduction of a figure, hunched over an empty plinth, his finger anxiously twitching.