

At the exhibition *Atlantic* Jeannette Ehlers ventures on a journey on the trail of the Triangular Trade – from Denmark to the coast of West-Africa to what was once the Danish West Indies. The Triangular Trade is a part of Ehlers' personal history, since she – as the daughter of a Danish mother and a West Indian father – has her roots planted directly in the slave trade that was going on for more than 200 years. *Atlantic* has its starting point in places in Ghana, the West Indies and Denmark that all have a historical connection to the Danish slave trade. The exhibition unites Jeannette Ehlers' two main artistic interests: the exploration of digital manipulation and an identity-seeking self-presentation. As an attempt to insinuate herself into her own history the artist herself appears in the works by means of digital manipulations of photographs and video.

In the video *Three steps of story*, which constitutes one of the sides of the large triangle in the center of the room, we can see Jeannette Ehlers waltz in a large mirrored hall where the colorful and rebellious Danish governor Peter von Scholten outraged the white citizenry by inviting “freed Negroes” to a party. It was also von Scholten, who in 1848 declared the slaves on Saint Croix free. This happened on the square in front of Fort Fredrik, which forms the basis for the video *Speed up that day*. Here the artist has filmed the fort from morning to night and added a heavily adapted sound track of Martin Luther King's legendary *I have a dream*-speech from 1963.

In the video *Black Magic at the White House* we see Ehlers perform a voodoo dance at Marienborg Castle, which is strongly connected to the Triangular Trade. Marienborg was built in 1744 as a summer residence for Counter Admiral Olfert Fischer, who later sold it to the merchant Peter Windt, who had also built up a large fortune by trading in slaves and sugar and who even brought slaves with him to his home in Denmark. Several of the other merchants from the period have owned and left their mark on Marienborg, and to this day the castle still plays an important role in Denmark because of its position as the official residence of the prime minister.

Shadows of people on walls, stairs and water surfaces can be seen in the photo series *Atlantic*, which, among other things, contains images of Fort Prinzenstein in Ghana that was built by the Danes and used to keep the slaves imprisoned before the journey across the Atlantic Ocean. The ocean plays an important role in the Triangular Trade and therefore also at the exhibition. Visually and aurally the rotunda is filled with rough waves from the mighty Atlantic Ocean.

The combination of shots from historically significant places and manipulated interpolations turns *Atlantic* into a discussion of historical empathy. To what extent is it possible to step into history, and how do we relate to the less pleasurable and repressed parts of the past? *Atlantic* gives no answers but uses the documentary as well as the manipulatory possibilities of photography to present a reflection on the Danish slave trade.

Jeannette Ehlers graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2006.