

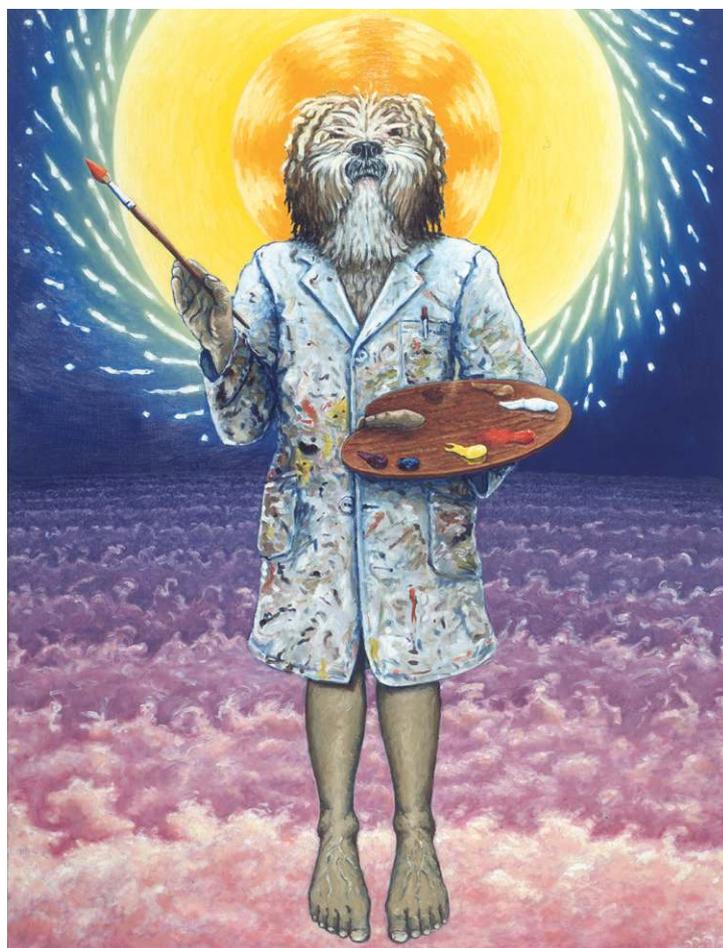
A Few Things I Cannot Leave Behind

Curated by
Andrea Bellini

With
Yervant Gianikian
& Angela Ricci Lucchi
Zoe Leonard
Marinella Pirelli
Rirkrit Tiravanija
Jean-Frédéric Schnyder

27/2-21/4/2019

Opening
26/2/2019



A Few Things I Cannot Leave Behind is a very personal show. It refrains from any attempt to trace a speculative kind of narrative or any universal theory of politics, life, or art. As the title states, it is about the few things I do not want to leave out: things that keep coming back to mind. It features four installations and a series of paintings. It is a proposed journey through time across the dark side of History: colonialism, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and violence. But it is also a playlist for a spaceship, an attempt to leave the darkness behind by virtue of poetry, humanity, and art itself. I invite visitors to walk through the show, to become *flâneurs* in Walter Benjamin's sense of the word—lazy wanderers, amateur detectives, and investigators of meaning. I encourage them to get lost and to waste time, to enter a certain state of mind, and let themselves be struck by different temporalities and media.

Yervant Gianikian & Angela Ricci Lucchi

The first work that viewers will encounter is *La Marcia dell'Uomo* (2001), spread out over 500 square meters on the second floor. It is a seminal piece by the duo Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi. The artists' signature style involves manipulating rare footage by re-photographing, re-editing, selectively hand-tinting, and altering the speed of the film. They have been doing unique work with the language of cinematography, focusing on its smallest unit of measurement: the frame. Each frame is colored and re-filmed by their "analytical" camera, becoming the source of their cinema.

This striking and highly evocative process reveals profound implications, nuances, and visual metaphors. *La Marcia dell'Uomo* is presented here as a three-channel video projection. Projected on the first screen are images that Etienne-Jules Marey (a figure who influenced the duo with his studies on the decomposition of movement and on animated photography) and Felix Régnault shot in 1895. They show African people and are the very first film footage of an ethnographic nature. Here, one can see an interest in scientific knowledge and a feeling of hope about the upcoming scientific revolution, as well as a gaze that is not yet xenophobic or racist.

On the second screen, we see a group of "savages" upon whom pseudo ethnographers have imposed Western "tools" such as forks, top hats, and laces. The film was shot in West Africa in the early twentieth century. Now we see the camera deforming and distorting local customs, treating the indigenous population with contempt and a feeling of superiority.

The third one, dates back to the '60s and was filmed by an anonymous Western tourist: a group of bare-breasted women pose before him. This work engages

with the gaze of colonialism and tourism, which eroticizes and reifies the Other.

In this room, visitors will also find twenty watercolors and two drawings by Angela Ricci Lucchi. Her watercolors should not be seen as a storyboard in the classic sense, but as a sort of visual paradigm related to the filmmaking process. This was a practice that always accompanied the duo's trips, work with archival materials, and exploration of the topics related to their films. As the artists themselves once said: "We travel as we catalogue, we catalogue as we travel through the films that we re-shoot."

Zoe Leonard

The second work in the exhibition is Zoe Leonard's *I want a president* on the third floor. Zoe Leonard is a New York City-based artist, feminist, and activist. Her poem was inspired by Eileen Myles's announcement that she was entering the 1992 race as an "openly female" candidate for president of the United States. A poet and activist herself, Myles is a gay woman and comes from a community directly affected by both poverty and AIDS. Zoe Leonard's document opens with the sentence "I want a dyke for president," and continues with a series of "I want..." statements describing the kinds of people she would like to see as leaders. In her vision, only those who have been *excluded* from the society in whose name the president governs should represent the people.

Rirkrit Tiravanija

With this letter in hand, which they are invited to take home, visitors enter a room that has been transformed into a cinema. In this space the audience is asked to lie down and watch *Karl's Perfect Day*, a memorable portrait of artist and poet Karl Holmqvist by Rirkrit Tiravanija. The film is a collage of tiny moments, whispered words, near-nothings: there is no room for the spectacular and the extravagant, just a slow flow of hours, from the moment Karl wakes up until the time he goes back to bed. The poet's daily routine seems to be made up of small pleasures and rituals: a bike ride around Berlin, a chat with friends, a visit to Hannah Höch's house, some vocal exercises, a performance. It is a very mindful way to live, to find meaning without actually "doing" anything, without talking out loud. This film is made out of nothing at all, and at the same time tells you everything you need to know about the relationship between art and life.

Jean-Frédéric Schnyder

Jean-Frédéric Schnyder's perfect day includes painting *en plein air*. Since the early 1980s, this former conceptual artist has been depicting odd, seductive elements from his surroundings and from his native Switzerland:

motorways, chalets, mountain landscapes, clothes, still lifes, dogs, soft toys, etc. While Karl Holmqvist's daily routine is tinged with poetic significance, Schnyder transforms what is ordinary and trivial into something alluring, oblique, and slightly deviant. In the astonishing Swiss mountains, Schnyder does not look for the sublime: his paintings are aggressively vernacular, slightly kitsch yet monumental, clichéd and epic at the same time. His small, uncanny paintings are a celebration of the commonplace, carried out in a very cerebral and disconcerting way.

Marinella Pirelli

Schnyder's tribute to an awkward reality leads us to *Bruciare* (1971), the last work on the third floor, by Italian artist Marinella Pirelli (1925-2009). A former painter herself and a leading experimental filmmaker, Pirelli was one of the few Italian woman artists to work with immersive environments using kinetic light and the moving image. Pirelli's experiments with the cinematic apparatus are often connected to themes like the human gaze and the relationship between the body and the technology, as well as gender-related and feminist issues. *Bruciare* is certainly one of her most enigmatic films. Critics have seen this work as expressing Pirelli's interest in the theme of violence and patriarchy. The camera zooms out to show a beautiful, peaceful garden, before zooming in on a male hand (belonging to a friend of the artist's) burning the petals on a flower with a cigarette, one by one. As symbols of beauty, of a paradise lost, of fragility, this garden's flowers are brutalized for no apparent reason, in a loop that offers no way out. In several frames, the artist's own hand burns the petals. Given the visual effect, the work could be also seen as stemming from Pirelli's experimentation with color and light, her main subject in the decade from 1962 to 1973. One of the most interesting aspects of this film indeed seems to be its own ambiguity, its ability to play with our cultural assumptions and the collective subconscious.

Homage to Angela Ricci Lucchi

Upstairs in the Project Space on the fourth floor, we are presenting an homage to Angela Ricci Lucchi (1942–2018) with an important series of watercolors, drawings, sketches, and diaries related to the work *Dal polo all'Equatore* (1986), a film produced with material from the Luca Comerio archive. The frames used here by the duo are from a 1929 Fascist documentary, which they have transformed into a critique leveled at the representation of power. This remarkable and influential documentary will be screened alongside the film *I diari di Angela - Noi due cineasti* (2018), which retraces the work of the Ricci Lucchi/Gianikian duo on April 16 and 17, 2019 at

Cinema Dynamo with Yervant Gianikian present.

Another film, *Ghiro Ghiro Tondo* (2007), will be shown throughout the course of exhibition. In this film, 10,000 children's toys found in the Dolomites, in a village that belonged to Austria until World War I, are paraded before us as if in a catalogue. These dented objects survived childhoods torn apart by two world wars and become a basis for reflection on the meaning—on the ethical and aesthetic value—of contemporary cinema. In the view of these artists, the key is simplicity and subjective research, without overlooking the imperative quest for the truth of things, of matter, of reality.

Andrea Bellini

List of works

2nd floor

Yervant Gianikian & Angela Ricci Lucchi

La Marcia dell'Uomo

2001

3-channel video, 35 mm, 4'30"

Series of 20 watercolors

Two big watercolors

3rd floor

Zoe Leonard

I want a president

1991

Typewritten text on paper

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Karl's Perfect Day

2017

Film 16mm, 93'

Jean-Frédéric Schnyder

Kernkraftwerk Gösgen VIII-IX

1990

Oils on canvas

Jean-Frédéric Schnyder

Dritchi III-VIII

1986-1986

Oils on canvas

Marinella Pirelli

Bruciare

1971

Film 16 mm transferred to HD, 4'

4th floor

Project Space

Yervant Gianikian & Angela Ricci Lucchi

Dal Polo all'Equatore

1984-1986

Watercolor on paper roll

Drawings

Cinema Dynamo

Yervant Gianikian & Angela Ricci Lucchi

Ghiro Ghiro Tondo

2007

H8 color film, 70'

Activities & rendez-vous

Screening

Tuesday April 16, 2019, 7pm, Cinéma Spoutnik

I Diari di Angela - Noi Due Cineasti with Yervant Gianikian followed by a conversation between the artist, Jean Perret and Adelina von Fürstenberg.

Boussoles

Every Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays, 3–5pm

The “boussoles” (compasses), exhibition guides specialized in contemporary art, are at your disposal to bring you through our exhibitions.

Akadéminis

Wednesdays March 6, 20 and April 3, 17 as well as the Sundays March 17, 31 and April 14, 3.30–5pm

Family visits with original and creative activities for children aged 4 to 7 accompanied by an adult

Information and reservation: publics@centre.ch