

ELKE MARHÖFER

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Elke Marhöfer's films cannot be ascribed to any established genre; the artist has developed her own very particular visual idiom. Her works contain neither linear narratives nor set protagonists. The stories Marhöfer seeks to tell might be seen as alternatives to anthropocentric blueprints for the world. She often examines specific ecological and cultural practices, choosing her own otherness as a point of departure. Another hallmark of her films is a constant awareness that images are never simple reflections, but always to some degree project a new reality.

In **Is there something else I've lost?**, 2011, Marhöfer considers the vegetable gardens on the outskirts of the megacity Wuhan (China), traditional examples of self-organisation. They will soon be sacrificed to the rapid advance of newbuild. The film experiments formally with the (a-)synchronicity of image and sound. This focuses attention on apparently trivial factors like everyday conversations between neighbours, illustrating the fast pace of change in urban China on a micro-level.

No, I Am Not A Toad, I Am A Turtle, 2012, addresses the Korean tradition of "pansori", a storytelling technique involving a singer and a drummer. Pansori is a collective, oral form of historiography, and might therefore be seen as an alternative form of knowledge alongside official framings. The film probes whether, by using symbols, narratives alter our relationship to the reality they describe. *No, I Am Not A Toad, I Am A Turtle* demonstrates, in particular, the variations between different attitudes to nature and landscape: on the one hand, the idea of a landscape as a static unit, and on the other, a scenario where non-humans are also subjects, and where plants, mountains or rocks play an active role in an ever-changing natural environment.

Nobody knows when it was made and why, 2015, is about the Mnemosyne Atlas by Aby Warburg. Warburg (1866-1929) was an art historian and cultural scholar. His pictorial atlas (named after the Greek goddess of memory) consists of a wooden framework with a wide variety of panels displaying images and photographs with a reference to Antiquity. The aim was to illustrate how Antiquity has lived on in different cultures. The atlas was a constantly evolving project. It could be adapted to particular needs – Warburg used it for lectures – and ultimately contained about 1500–2000 pictures.

Marhöfer was particularly interested in the open character of the Mnemosyne Atlas, and this is reflected in her choice of motifs: above all, we see pictures from Iran, Iraq, Syria and other Middle Eastern countries which these days are overshadowed by Greece when reference is made to Antiquity. Warburg draws no distinction between the northern and southern hemispheres or between the Ancient and Modern eras. He manages largely without captions or attributions and treats pictures from wide-ranging contexts equally. This means that his work is still relevant today and can be permanently updated to suit viewers and interpretations.

Prendas – ngangas – enquisos – machines {each part welcomes the other without saying}, 2014, was shot in Cuba, a part of the so-called "New World" colonised not only by Europeans, but also by the numerous exogenous animals they brought with them. The first horses, for instance, arrived on the American continent in 1540. These days, many animals – among them cows, goats and chickens – enjoy a status in Cuba similar to that of European pets. At the same time, they provide food and labour. The film explores how non-humans – flora and fauna – can be associated with postcolonial space without deepening existing scars. Nature is seen to influence but also reflect history. Moreover, nature can rewrite history as it constantly develops. Animals are a good example of this: they can exist under very different circumstances, even the total reversal of their colonial condition – becoming feral without human intervention or else totally domesticated.

Elke Marhöfer was born in Adenau in 1967. Her works have been shown at numerous exhibitions and festivals, including the Kiev Biennale, the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts in Taipei and the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe. Fellowships include the Swedish Research Council, Berlin Senate and Akademie Schloss Solitude. In 2016 she was awarded her doctorate by the University of Gothenburg for a dissertation on *Ecologies of Practices and Thinking*. Marhöfer currently lives and works in Berlin and Kyoto, Japan.