



Pori Art Museum

Wing & MEDIApoint

22 September 2017 to 25 February 2018

ANA TORFS – FIGMENTS & FRAGMENTS

For her first solo exhibition in the Nordic countries, Belgian visual artist Ana Torfs brings together two major installations: “The Parrot & the Nightingale, a Phantasmagoria” (2014) and “Legend” (2009). “Toast”, an iconic photograph she made in 2003, functions as a connecting element between the two installations. On the occasion of this exhibition, Torfs made a two-sided poster in collaboration with graphic designer Jurgen Persijn.

Since the early 1990s, Ana Torfs has been composing a unique, visually striking oeuvre, which addresses fundamental questions of representation and its narrative structures. The relation or tension between text and image plays a central role in her work, and with it all the related processes of visualization, interpretation, perception, manipulation and translation. Torfs enables a topical and authentic perception of the scattered fragments from our cultural and political history. Literary texts or historical documents often constitute the starting point of her works. These material remnants are then reworked into meticulously composed installations—with diverse reproducible media such as slide projections, sound, photography, film and video, to tapestries and silk screens—in which projections and allusions have free reign.

The Parrot & the Nightingale, a Phantasmagoria is based on Christopher Columbus diary of his first voyage to America. Since Columbus’s diary was lost, the Spanish transcription made by Bartolomé de las Casas in the 1530s is the source closest to the original. Torfs became fascinated years ago with Columbus’s journal. The first thing that struck her when she started reading it, is the constant repetition of words like ‘tree’, ‘cross’, ‘believe’, ‘nightingale’, ‘trade’, ‘parrot’, ‘danger’, ‘wonder’, ‘naked’ and ‘weapon’. The word that occurs most often—after ‘gold’—is ‘sign’: signs that have to be deciphered and translated. At sea, every piece of driftwood, bird or fish is a sign that land is near, and when they do eventually land in ‘India’, they see signs of the presence of gold and silver all the time. On three monitors, we see an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter signing carefully selected passages from the journal, while one of three Anglophone interpreters, each one fluent in a different sign language and alternating one another randomly, reinterprets the footage in spoken English. In the end we hear only echoes of the original source. All the while, the viewer encounters slowly dissolving black-and-white projections of a tropical forest.

For her photographic series Legend, Torfs travelled to La Gomera, the second smallest of the Canary Islands. Assigned to each of nine framed photographs are five engraved metal tags containing a variety of information about this archipelago. The work’s title refers both to the term’s meaning of a mythical tale, a story of undocumented veracity, and to the explanations of symbols in maps and explanatory remarks in illustrations and captions. The photographs suggest a view through a telescope, and the tags list historical, political, and economic facts; they also tell ‘legends’ in the sense of mythical reports. In Greek mythology, the Canaries were considered to be identical with Elysium, the island located at the western edge of the world, where the favourites of the Gods forgot their earthly sufferings forever. Columbus set sail from La Gomera when he sought a sea passage to India. Yet the history of the Canary Islands is also one of the suppression of its indigenous people, of waves of emigration, and of the terror of Franco’s dictatorship. With each ‘legend’, a different “(hi) story” is inscribed in this landscape, changing the way we see it. The web of associations creates a multilayered picture that, despite or in fact because of the variety of information, cannot be brought into focus.

Inquiries:

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Media preview to the exhibition on Thursday 21 September at 11 am.

Exhibition opening on Friday 22 September at 6 pm.

The artist is present at both of the events.

Ana Torfs, born in 1963, lives and works in Brussels. Among other solo exhibitions, she has shown at Centro de Arte Moderna, Gulbenkian, Lisbon (2016), WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2014), Generali Foundation, Vienna (2010), K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2010), Sprengel Museum, Hannover (2008), Argos centre for art and media, Brussels (2007), daadgalerie, Berlin (2006), GAK-Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen (2006) and Bozar, Brussels (2000). She has developed a web project for Dia Art Foundation, New York (2004).

Ana Torfs has participated in numerous international group exhibitions, including Contour Biennial 8, Mechelen (2017) Parasophia, Kyoto (2015), 1st International Biennial of Cartagena de Indias (2014), Sharjah Biennial 11 (2013), Manifesta 9, Genk (2012), Montreal Biennial 2 (2000), and Lyon Biennial 3 (1995). Her work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions in venues such as Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne, Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro, National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, Museion in Bolzano, Fotomuseum in Winterthur, and Mucsarnok Kunsthalle in Budapest.

The exhibition is supported by:



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