

Repatriation / Rückführung

In 2012 the South African government has repatriated the remains of a Khoisan man, Klaas Pienaar and his wife Trooi, from Austria. The Pienaars' bodies were illegally exhumed and shipped to Austria in 1909, where they became part of what is today described as racial "research" by Austrian scientist Rudolf Poch. ... Klaas and Trooi's remains were kept at the Academy of Science before they were moved to the Natural History Museum in Vienna.

<http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/remains-khoisan-couple-repatriated-sa-0>

20 April 2012

Austria's interior ministry has announced plans to repatriate 50,000 asylum seekers over the next three years. ... The list of designated safe countries, whose citizens are unlikely to be given refugee status, is to be expanded to include Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Ghana, Georgia and Mongolia.

<http://www.dw.com/en/austria-to-repatriate-50000-asylum-seekers-over-three-years/a-19013970>

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The Europe-Africa relationship has been dealing with the repatriation challenges for many centuries. In the last years this has become of more importance, not only in the movement of people and human remains, but through the return of cultural artifacts and artworks and natural resources that were collected in colonial strategies or stolen (such as the Jewish-owned artworks for example).

In response to these challenges in Austria, the proposed exhibition at Kunsthalle Exnergasse comprises of site-specific installations that reflect on the problematic of human displacement, identity, collection and repatriation.

The three artists, Walter Stach (Austrian; co-founder and active board member of the Anti-apartheid movement in Austria), Marcus Neustetter (South African born and raised/Austrian) and Bronwyn Lace (South African), have been in dialogue for the past 6 years about their perspectives and cultural relationships to the two countries and continental contexts. The practice of all three artists employ processes of collecting and translating these into artistic and museological and public statements.

Stach actively collects and disseminates media information in his everyday research, with particular interest not only in the current problematic, but with relevance to a historic trajectory of social and political confrontation in relation to art history and

contemporary artistic practice. His current research revolves around the migration and repatriation problematic in Austria and Europe.

Lace creates performances and installations with collections from the natural environment, mimicking life and drawing metaphorical references to the larger challenges of historic notions of collecting and museum practice. In parallel her socially engaged practice deals with the understanding of social inequalities in relation to contemporary development and scientific pursuit, such as for example the Khoi San (bushman) lost heritage in relation to current scientific projects in Southern Africa.

Neustetter's recent practice has been investigating historic explorers of Africa and African artifacts collections housed in other parts of the world. His process has been to "explore" these collections in their packaged and preserved state in store rooms rather than in researched exhibition environments. Drawing from these references and his interest in their relevance to the contemporary debate of cultural identity, authorship and ownership, this links closely to the current new colonial relationships through migration and economic investment, such as those between Africa and China or future Space-colonies. In his practice with Stephen Hobbs as The Trinity Session, his socially engaged practice also draws from the experience of a transforming Johannesburg context due to the immigrant influx in the post-apartheid South Africa and explores its presence in public space through temporary and permanent interventions.

While each artist is going to be working on an installation component for the exhibition, the group will be reflecting on presenting a 4th installation component that moves beyond the individual practices and is built on the basis of the thematic research leading up to the exhibition.

Bronwyn Lace and Marcus Neustetter will be on residency in Vienna from July – August 2016 during which time this exhibition and their work will be developed with Walter Stach and the Kunsthalle Exnergasse staff should the exhibition proposal be accepted. All artists plan to be present for the exhibition should it be awarded.