

GALLERIA RAFFAELLA CORTESE

PRESS RELEASE

Yael BARTANA



Yael Bartana
William E. Jones

via a.stradella 1-4
via a.stradella 7

opening reception february 19 7.00 | 9.00 pm
february 19, 2015 | april 03, 2015
tuesday - saturday 10.00-1.00 pm | 3.00-7.30 pm

Raffaella Cortese is proud to present a second solo show by the artist Yael Bartana, internationally renowned for the video trilogy *And Europe will be Stunned* presented at the Polish Pavilion during the 54th Venice Biennial.

Central to Bartana's work are meanings implied by terms like "Homeland", "Return" and "Belonging". Bartana investigates these through the ceremonies, public rituals and social diversions that are intended to reaffirm the collective identity of the nation state. In her earlier projects, Bartana dealt with the impact of war, military rituals and a sense of threat on everyday life.

For the Milan exhibition Bartana presents the video *Pardes (Orchard)*, 2014, where she takes a very personal look at how Westerners seek personal enlightenment by appropriating traditional rituals. In *Pardes (Orchard)* she documents the journey of her close friend Michael – an Israeli artist – who, on the one hand, skeptically rejects all organized religion, but on the other hand, is on a constant search for deeper understanding, investigating Kabbalah as well as the cults of the Amazon. Under the guidance of the Brazilian shaman Dona Francisca (Francisquinha) from the Xawandawa tribe Michael undergoes the Ayahuasca ritual, taking the psychedelic brew that is said to lead to deep spiritual revelations about the universe and one's own personality, a feeling described as an experience of rebirth, enlightenment or – in the worst case – as one of the worst trips possible.

What used to happen hidden from the eyes of the world has become accessible or even a touristic activity – for some out of curiosity, for others out of longing for strong spiritual experiences or even healing. But even the shaman herself represents a mix of cultural influences: the 52-year-old Dona Francisca, who recites the "Ave Maria" just as well as traditional tribal songs, is one of the *abuelas* (Grandmothers) of the earth and a member of Santo Daime, a syncretic spiritual practice founded in the 1930s that mixes elements of several spiritual traditions including folk Catholicism, Kardecist spiritism, animism and indigenous shamanism. The once very specific and local ritual becomes an inclusive performance, open for very different needs and cultural backgrounds.

The Hebrew word "Pardes" literally means "orchard". It shares its origins with both the Persian and English words for paradise. With regard to the proper understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures in their proper context, including the "New Testament" books, there are in fact "levels" of interpretation that must be taken into consideration. This was the method used to write and interpret Scripture by the authors themselves as well as the audience of their time and culture. The four levels of interpretation are called: Parshat, Remez, D'rash & Sod ("simple meaning", "hint", "inquire" and "secret"). The first letter of each word P-R-D-S is taken, and vowels are added for pronunciation, giving the word PARDES (meaning "garden" or "orchard"). Each layer is deeper and more intense than the last.

The work also marks a departure from the style of her previous video works. This is evident mostly through Bartana's intimate camera work, which gives the work a special intensity.

Together with the video, projected in the space of via Stradella 4, on show at number 1 are also a set of photographs by Yael Bartana and a series of drawings by Michael Kessus Gedalyovich, inspired by his Ayahuasca experience.

Yael Bartana (1970, Kfar-Yehezkel, Israel) studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem; the School of Visual Arts, New York; and the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam. Her solo exhibitions include the Moderna Museet, Malmö; PS1/MoMA, New York; The Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; the Kunstverein Hamburg; and Secession, Vienna, among others. Most recently, Bartana's work has been exhibited at the Pérez Art Museum Miami; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 2014 Sydney Biennial; Carnegie International; and Sao Paulo Biennial. Her artworks are included in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; the National Gallery of Canada, Ontario; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Tate Modern, London; and the GAM – Galleria civica d'Arte Moderna e contemporanea, Turin.

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