

apexart

2012-13 Unsolicited Program Project Proposal by
Natalie Musteata

Unrest

The intersection of art and social unrest is longstanding. From the critical writings and détournement strategies of Guy Debord and the Situationist International in the wake of the 1968 Paris uprisings to the video footage of the 1989 Romanian revolution featured in Harun Farocki's Videograms of a Revolution (1992), the relationship between creative practice and political activism has taken on many forms. At times this manifests itself as an instigative action, other times as a responsive gesture, and occasionally as an urgent awareness-raising exercise.

Unrest will present an international group of contemporary artists who tackle issues of inequality, conflict, and instability in recent history in distinct ways. The impetus for this exhibition begins not only with the wave of uprisings in Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco—to name but a few of the Arab Spring revolutions— but with the similarly heterogeneous growth of the Occupy Wall Street movements, which permeated and inflected streets, offices, schools, and cultural centers across the world.

Mircea Cantor's *The Landscape is Changing*, a 2003 video work shot in Tirana, Albania, captures an orderly demonstration—staged by Cantor—of a silent crowd marching with mirrored placards in lieu of usual handwritten slogans, which reflect, fragment, and destabilize the view of surrounding bustling streets, offering a disrupted and constantly changing view of a post-communist capital. In counterpoint, Slovakian artist Tomas Rafa documents the interaction between peripheries and centers, and the cacophony and aggression instigated by xenophobia in his ongoing video project *New Nationalism in the Heart of Europe* (2009-12). In addition to recording anti-Fascist protests in the Czech Republic, and the Occupy movement in New York, Rafa has also focused on anti-abortion rallies in Switzerland in *Marsch für s'Läbe ... 1000 crosses* (2011).

Shilpa Gupta also explores cultural divisions and the clashing of borders in her multimedia work, such as *In Our Times* (2008), a sculptural sound piece comprised of two microphones that swing like a seesaw from a single stand. The undulating microphones take turns broadcasting Gupta singing the respective speeches delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah in August 1947 to celebrate the independence of India and Pakistan. The changing audio evokes the long-running and still unresolved conflict between these two countries. Meanwhile, Moroccan activist artist Yto Barrada proffers an in-flux view of the world in *Tectonic* (2004-10), a global map constructed of wood in which viewers can shift and dislodge the position of the seven continents, creating a world where boundaries are dissolved and migration between lands is facilitated.

The exhibition will feature the work of nine artists—Saadane Afif, Kader Attia, Yto Barrada, Yael Bartana, Mircea Cantor, Mounir Fatmi, Shilpa Gupta, Tala Madani, and Tomas Rafa—alongside YouTube videos of contemporary events, news, and footage that will change over the course of the show; the constantly-flickering first-person news accounts of global unrest present the exhibition medium—space itself—as reflective of and engaged with everyday radical change.

291 church st. nyc, ny 10013
p: 212.431.5270 f: 646.827.2487
info@apexart.org; www.apexart.org