

Disasters of Peace

Volume 4

*Special Program at the
56th Ann Arbor Film Festival*



March 22nd, 7pm

Featuring:

**Richard Ashrowan, Gabriela Golder,
Sam Jury/Sarah Golstein, Jazra Khaleed,
Bryan Konefsky, Kamila Kuc, Lynne Marsh,
Eliza Newman-Saul.**

**Michigan Theater Screening Room,
603 E. Liberty St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104**

Image courtesy of Lynne Marsh

Disasters of Peace

Curated by Sam Jury and Kamila Kuc

A distinguishing feature of our age is the seismic shifts that have arisen from the after-burn of the 20th century: the end of the Cold War, the failed colonial projects giving rise to civil war and mass migration, the unfettered consumption that is slowly destroying the planet, the shifts towards political extremes, and the defiance of the rule of law through mass surveillance. In Western Democracies, we consider ourselves to be in the longest period of peace, but we increasingly fear the other. Paranoia and anxiety infuse our media. We are beset by dis-ease and forebodings of disaster, yet major disasters have already happened: the genocides of indigenous populations, Chernobyl and Fukushima, the Syrian refugee crises, Hurricane Harvey (Texas), Hurricane Maria (Puerto Rico), to name but a few. How then can we represent these caustic aftermaths to expose the slow violence they continue to enact? What languages can transform the legacy of recent histories into a constructive future view? This touring programme draws together artist filmmakers who in a myriad of ways, challenge the prevalent representations of disaster, beyond the apparatus of spectacle. *Running time: 79 minutes*

The Bad Event

Eliza Newman-Saul

Dublin, Ireland | 2009 | 16 | DV

In *The Bad Event*, by Eliza Newman-Saul, a disconnected and unnamed male and female narrator retell the story of disaster through a series of non-sequential monologues, skimming across time and geographical location. Glimpses of place and protagonist are flickered across screen as a slide show akin to fragmented memory. As the eponymous bad event heads towards its denouement, the film escalates its visual rhythm, yet both cause and effect are left unsaid. Ultimately, we never see the long awaited event, which remains firmly in the realm of the imagined.

Cubiculum Umbrae

Richard Ashrowan

Svalbard, Norway; Hawick, Scotland | 2013 | 8 | HDV

Ashrowan's somewhat claustrophobic *Cubiculum umbrae* is a critique of surveillance in contemporary society. Filmed in Svalbard/Spitzbergen, this haunting film seems to point to the fact that even in the depths of the arctic we cannot escape mediated images. Shot on 16mm, the film questions the impact of cultural tourism in the high Arctic. Implicit is an argument about the inevitability of changing lifestyles, and the threat to ways of life in the arctic.

Batum

Kamila Kuc

Batumi, Georgia; London, UK | 2016 | 08:20 | HDV

Auto-ethnographic in nature, *Batum* is a poetic evocation of prosthetic memories acquired through cultural knowledge (as exemplified here by the poems of Osip Mandelstam and Joseph Stalin), as well as personal impressions of the seaside town of Batumi. Once filmed, memories become fictions. Such fictions reveal ways in which the complex relationships between personal and collective rememberings subvert the dominant political narratives and identity constructions.

Gone is Syria, gone

Jazra Khaleed

Athens, Greece | 2016 | 8 | HDV

From a Chechnya-born Greek poet Jazra Khaleed, *Gone is Syria, gone* is a delicate yet powerful visual lament on the recent Syrian refugee crisis. Here Syria is embodied female, and through the words of a narrator, recalls her memories in melodic Greek. Syria remembers body mutilations, shootings and various scenes of torture. She leaves her home because 'her body could not bear any more deaths.' This gentle meditation on the contemporary world in crisis is made even more powerful by the filmmaker's own experience of living in the country where there is 'one grave for every thousand corpses, one shadow for every thousand survivors.'

Tierra Quemada

Gabriela Golder

Buenos Aires, Argentina; Valparaiso, Chile | 2015 | 9 | HDV

Gabriella Golder's *Tierra quemada* (Burnt Land) is a slowly unfolding vignette that reveals a small part of Valparaíso, one of Argentina's poorest cities, in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophic forest fire. Drawn in by what is ostensibly a beautiful bucolic scene, the viewer as witness must slowly accept and confront the horror of a completely different image, one that literally clears before their eyes. Underscoring these final frames, voices of children, speaking off-camera, convey small but potent stories of loss. In *Tierra quemada* there are no spectacular shots of fire, nor images of crisis. Here the emphasis is aftermath and the suggestion of the thousands of personal traumas caught up in it.

Popehelm

Sam Jury and Sarah Goldstein

London, UK | 2016-17 | 15 | HDV

In *Sam Jury and Sarah Goldstein's Popehelm* both history and event are left suspended, as the camera maps a journey from a vast, empty landscape to the intimate details of unused objects in abandoned institutional interiors. These are accompanied by the monologues of three women that chart a more personal journey from loss to obsession. Although *Popehelm* holds no definitive narrative, the texts, soundscape, and filming are woven together to suggest not only an aftermath of unexplained calamity, but also the post-traumatic repetition of narrative that exist around such events.

Stadium

Lynne Marsh

Berlin, Germany | 2008 | 10 | HDV

In *Stadium* an avatar like figure clad in full white training apparel systematically traverses the empty stands of an ostensibly modern stadium. Yet this is in fact the famous Olympiastadion in Berlin, site of Leni Riefenstahl's film on the 1936 Olympic Games. Here Marsh's avatar walks us through time conflated, evoking both a catastrophic Nazi-era past and a future devoid of humanity – reminding us that disastrous events of the past are not the isolated occurrences of a bygone era, but exist on a continuum of our own making.

Have It Your Way: An Exercise in Domestic Terrorism

Bryan Konefsky

Albuquerque, USA | 2017 | 4 | HDV

Bryan Konefsky returns to themes of food and ritual as a pair of ominous black gloved hands, akin to a magician, yet alluding to a forensic scientist, seductively unmask the secrets held within the wrapped products of fast-food giants. Underpinning this seductive event, a sound-score oscillates between an Islamic call to prayer and the popular commercial, the eponymous *Have It Your Way*. Both witty and disturbing, *Have It Your Way* creates the ultimate bookend for *Disasters of Peace* – the proposition that the quest for freedom and choice can ultimately lead to the destruction of both.

Biographical Notes

SAM JURY

www.samjury.com

Sam Jury is an artist working with video, sound and installation. Her work investigates the psychological impact of moving image and societal narratives of trauma. Recent projects include *To Be Here* (2012 – 16) a series of film installations depicting the suspended trauma of mass displacement of Sahrawi refugees living in the Sahara Desert, commissioned by the Broad Art Museum/MSU, USA (2016) and *All Things Being Equal*, video installation at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Ireland (2015). For more information see: www.samjury.com

KAMILA KUC

www.kamilakuc.com

Kamila Kuc, PhD, is a filmmaker, writer and curator. Her work, which deals with complex relationships between personal and collective memories, has been shown in various festivals and venues from ICA and BFI (London), to Montreal Underground Film Festival (Canada) and is held in the artinCINEMA archives in Budapest. She is the author of many articles and books on experimental media practice, most recently, *Visions of Avant-Garde Film* (Indiana University Press, 2016).