

Still now is then forever

Andy Broadey | Frances Richardson with text by Suzana Milevska

The Rust, the Crack and the Wound, or Simply, the Ruin

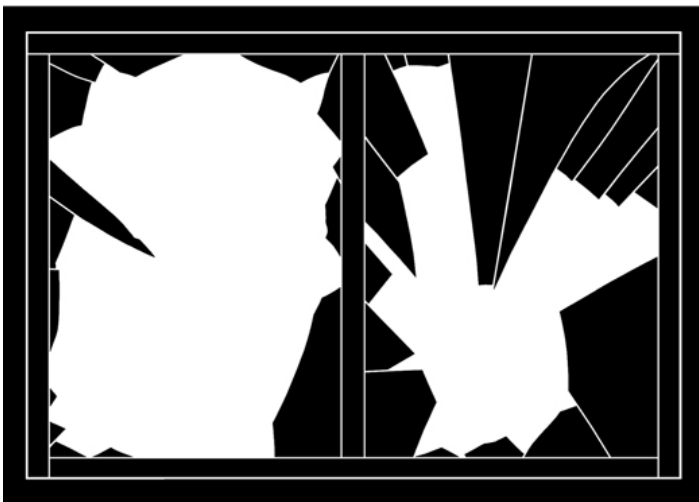
'...the hiatus of a wound whose lips will never close together...'

Jacques Derrida.

The series of photographs entitled *Still* is a palimpsest that, according to Andy Broadey, uses the photographic documentation to exhibit "the sedimentation of historical time in architectural form". Photography here works as an artistic take on the psychoanalytic "mystic writing pad" of Sigmund Freud¹, an apparatus that aims to visualise the always already fragmented recalling and re-reading of the historical past.

Vis-à-vis the work *Still*, Frances Richardson installs her *Now is then forever*, which consists of "simulated" cracks in the new gallery's windows. This stylised drawing, once installed, prompts an examination of certain complex clandestine ethical and ideological implications of "haunting of forgetting with and by remembering" (Gil Anidjar)². The obstructed window-views and the "staged" deterioration emphasise the fragile cognitive capacity of human vision for grasping both the past and the future, while the work puts in a complex and slightly ironic co-relation to the materiality of "now" and the imaginary of "forever".

Therefore while the work *Still* offers a complex socio-political and cultural context, the work *Now is then forever* offers the mnemonic metaphoric frame; while *Still* deals with representation of ideology, *Now is then forever* is almost iconoclastic; however both works reflect on the incapability of the present to encompass the past, the impossibility of representation to "restore" the cracks in the matter and memory and the anticipation of the "cracks", or gaps, in the utopian vision of future.



Still is a rotating visual meditation on the ruin of a building, specifically Guéorguy Stoilov's Memorial House for the Bulgarian Communist Party (designed in 1981). This late socialist-modernist monument located in the Buzludzha National Park, Central Bulgaria, is already a certain kind of historic palimpsest: it was supposed to commemorate both the 1868 battle with Ottoman armies and the Buzludzha Congress in 1891 (the founding meeting of the Bulgarian Socialist Party).³

The photographic series that processually cycles the building's "wounded body" opens a "crack" in the meaning of the word "still", and questions the political vision that the building was supposed to "embody" (Richardson's work enables this reading, too). Namely, in *Still* Broadey correlates the country's 1989 rejection of communism with the abandonment and deterioration of this building, which according to the artist is treated as a "left-over ideological construct of an unrealised – or unrealisable – political vision". Even the outside and inside of the site in terms of spatiality could be interpreted as metaphors of the intertwined and looped times: the surrounding landscape is looked at from a series of large curved windows (set in the outer wall), and on the inner wall a series of tiled mosaics depict scenes from Bulgarian history.

The building wreckage is a self-standing "wound". However, it's important to emphasise that the acts of theft and vandalism, the refuse left by the visitors and the forces of nature (that also degraded the Buzludzha historical mosaics), are not unique to a post-socialist context. Architectural "cracks" and "wounds" give way to the rampant neo-liberal calls for re-generational development policies and therefore different historic and cultural memories are put in competition during each period of urban development. The outcomes of such rivalry are determined again by the power of the ideological arguments and positions that reveal the fragility of the construct of historic and collective memory, which particularly after traumatic losses, is contaminated by nostalgia and false memories.

Derrida's warning that "memory is constructed on the wound, the disjointed, the heterogeneous" points to the "cracks" that are always already inscribed even in the newly erected buildings (such as the Hanover Project Gallery) and their readiness to be "filled" with new meanings.

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Frances Richardson's works engage in the relationship between embodied cognition of architecture / objects and human agency. She lives and works in London. In 2009 the British Council funded an installed work in the exhibition *Present*, curated by J. Murphy at H P Garcia Gallery, NY. Richardson's solo exhibition *Ideas in the Making: drawing structure* at Trinity Contemporary, 2011, was accompanied by a catalogue including a biography by Jeremy Cooper and interview by Luce Garrigues. www.francesrichardson.co.uk

1. Sigmund Freud (1925) "A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'", in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XIX (1923-1925) The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1978), 225-232.

2. Gil Anidjar, "Once More, Once More: Derrida: The Arab, the Jew" in *Introduction to Act of Religion*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 14.

3. The artist went so far to use two Russian rangefinder cameras (a Zorki 4 and a FED 4, from the 1980s). He put them in relation to one another by circumnavigating the site several times. While repositioning and moving the cameras for twenty-four hours eighty exposures were produced.

Andy Broadey appropriates sites of artistic production and display in order to re-examine historical representations of socialism. He completed his PhD at the University of Leeds and lives and works in Manchester. He produced *Still* as part of Water Tower Art Fest, Bulgaria. He has exhibited in Amsterdam, Birmingham, Larroque (France), Leeds, London, Manchester, Sofia, Sheffield. His photo series *Sight Seeing* is part of the art collection of the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in London. www.facebook.com/andy.broadey.artist