

November 3, 2016, 8pm

#100YrsOfNow

Dictionary of Now

Kader Attia & Françoise Vergès: Body

INTRODUCTION

Bernd Scherer, Director Haus der Kulturen der Welt

OPENING STATEMENT

Kader Attia

Trauma, Phantom Pain, Gender Identity, and the Politics of Repair

FILM PREMIERE

Réfléchir la Mémoire / Reflecting Memory

(by Kader Attia, 2016, Video HD, 45 min, original version
with English subtitles, courtesy: Kader Attia and
Galerie Nagel Draxler, Berlin / Cologne)

LECTURE

Françoise Vergès

The Postcolonial Self

DISCUSSION / Q&A

Moderated by Bernd Scherer

The lecture and discussion will be held in English.
The anatomical exhibitions are open from 7pm to 11pm, admission free.

The ravaged bodies of the two world wars have played a decisive role in the advance of aesthetic surgery over the last hundred years. In his works, the artist Kader Attia addresses the concept of “repair” as a constant in life. In one of the oldest and largest anatomy lecture halls at Berlin’s Charité, he analyzes repair not only as a process of healing but also of fracturing. His method is to draw analogies between the physical body and collective memory. Which aspects of repair play a role when it comes to reparation and reconciliation? What connections are there between global history and individual conceptions of the body?

In an opening statement, Kader Attia introduces his reflections of loss, trauma and phantom pain on the individual level and in society as a whole.

A second fragment will be the German premiere of Kader Attia’s award-winning film *Réfléchir la Mémoire / Reflecting Memory*.

In a third contribution, the political scientist Françoise Vergès directs her attention to the structure of the self in the “postcolonial body” and questions the political dimensions of body perceptions.

Anatomical collection in the Waldeyer Building of the Charité, Berlin

The Institute of Anatomy has an extensive inventory of human and animal preparations as well as a larger collection of anthropological skulls and skeletons, some of which were collected during the colonial period. The anatomist Wilhelm Waldeyer (1836–1921) was instrumental in forming this collection of skulls and skeletons from all over the world during the nineteenth century in order to pursue anthropological research. Today, the public collection, exhibited on the ground floor of the Waldeyer Building, is arranged thematically to focus on different areas (e.g. on bone growth or movement apparatus). The collection contains body parts of murdered Herero from Namibia, a former colony of Germany, as well as prisoners who were executed during the Third Reich in Plötzensee prison in Berlin. The history and the ethical implications of this collection have been investigated by the DFG-funded *Charité Human Remains Project*, which made it possible to initiate a number of repatriations and burials of human remains.

Trauma, Phantom Pain, Gender Identity, and the Politics of Repair Kader Attia

For several years, Kader Attia's research has focused on the concept of "repair" as a constant in human nature and a concept on which the modern Western mind and traditional extra-Occidental thought have always held opposite visions. Whether from culture to nature, gender to architecture, or from science to philosophy, all systems of life are in an infinite process of repair. Repair for Kader Attia is similar to an act of reparation in both theoretical and practical terms: "The issue of reparation is far more than just simply putting and gluing things back together once they're broken. As I understand it, it covers improvements, translations, and always the shift from one space-time to another that sublimates, surpasses, and creates the conditions for development. Reparation is life."

In his film essay *Réfléchir la Mémoire / Reflecting Memory* (2016), he assembles a series of interviews with surgeons, historians, philosophers, psychoanalysts, and traumatized people on the questions of the phantom limb trauma, its psychosocial implications, and its metaphorical connection to political repression or exclusion.

KADER ATTIA grew up in Algeria and in the suburbs of Paris. In his work, the experience of being part of two cultures forms the starting point for a dynamic praxis that sets out to reflect on aesthetic and ethical issues situated between Western thought and non-Western cultures. He investigates the identity politics of the historical and colonial eras, pointing out perpetual elements of tradition within modernity until today, in the light of our globalized world.

His many exhibitions include: *Sacrifice and Harmony*, a solo show at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main; *Contre Nature*, a solo show at the Beirut Art Center; and *Continuum of Repair: The Light of Jacob's Ladder*, a solo show at the Whitechapel Gallery, London. Recently he was awarded the 2016 Prix Marcel Duchamp.

The Postcolonial Self Françoise Vergès

Do we live in a post-racial era or are we facing a proliferation of racism with the worldwide rise of the political Right? Françoise Vergès shows that it is neither the one nor the other: instead she points out the historical continuities of racial narratives forced onto bodies. Starting from the political and economic dimensions of the black body in the context of the transatlantic slave trade during colonialism, she analyzes the structure of the self in the "post-colonial body." She especially focuses on the reduction of the body to physical appearance and connects racist implications of global capitalism to historical mechanisms of the commodification of the black body, its deprivation, and its transformation into a "thing".

FRANÇOISE VERGÈS holds the Chair *Global South(s)*, at the Collège d'études mondiales, Fondation maison des sciences de l'homme, Paris. She received her PhD in Political Theory from the University of California, Berkeley, and writes on vernacular practices, memories of colonial slavery and colonialism, psychoanalysis, museums, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, on the

processes of Indian-Oceanic creolization, and decolonial feminism. Between 2009 and 2012, she was president of France's National Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery. Collaborating with filmmakers and artists, she also works as an independent curator and participates in anti-racist politics.

Over the last hundred years the sciences—and the technologies they have generated—have shaped our conception of reality, our thought, and our language. In the context of *100 Years of Now*, the *Dictionary of Now* reflects on language's capacity to both depict and create reality. The dictionary focuses on the omnipresent terms that are central to the description of the deep-rooted changes of the present—but which in their current usage are no longer able to grasp them.

What varieties and shifts of meaning lie at the root of these terms, what readings and subtexts do they harbor? What social, political, and cultural processes of transformation can be read from them? And how can they be sharpened and adjusted in order to generate scope for linguistic action? In a series of twelve discussions through 2015 to 2018, distinguished representatives from the sciences and the arts, from theory and praxis, question the established meanings of selected terms, updating them against the background of their respective expertise.

A publication to be released in 2018 will bring together the key words and participants from the individual discussions in the series, establishing connections and allowing new, dynamic constellations of knowledge production to emerge.

→ hkw.de/dictionary

Part of *100 Years of Now*.



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