

AIMÉE ZITO LEMA

Several Forms of Friendship

Curated by Violeta Janeiro

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The forces of production precipitate historic events which the human being is then forced to react against. The mass media deliberately obfuscate any attempt to get a clear grasp on an event, and history books advance an interpretation of the facts which leaves itself open to question by means of an exercise in abstraction. Expanding an insignificant event, isolating a sudden movement, choosing an affective gesture and zeroing in on it until we lose ourselves in the sounds it emits, the grain of the photo or the word that names it, furnishes us with a chance to reinterpret the events as they are presented to us, and of understanding history from new perspectives.

Aimée Zito Lema grounds her practice in this premise. Based on a process of selection and appropriation, Zito Lema zooms in on the detail of gestures in archive images taken of working class demonstrations or counter-cultural movements in The Netherlands and Argentina—the artist was born in Amsterdam and grew up in Buenos Aires. This motif, once enlarged almost to the point of abstraction, brings to mind the mechanism that enables cooperation and development within a community, or a movement, or an affective structure than bonds a group or a family. It is revealed to us in her work, just as a tiny detail can give rise to a community spirit and all that this brings with it. Her artistic practice structures the narrative around the process, triggering a dynamic that, taken together, lends meaning to the work. The idea leads to an expression, act or performance which is carried out together with a group of local people. This work in turn gives rise to the object that, inasmuch as a metaphor, returns us to the expression from which it came, only to be recycled and give birth to new possibilities.

Several Forms of Friendship features three bodies of work revolving around collaborative acts and expressions in pursuit of social influence. Each one of the actions is circumscribed to a specific political event within the local context. Underlying all the works is the idea of movement captured in images that uncover a force able to activate the necessary stimuli of reaction and support for the constitution of the local community. Structures that are at once both support and content connect the symbolism of the image with the physicality of the wood support, thus constructing its meaning, and revealing the absent body through its gravity.

The works on view in the first space are based on various acts of protest held in Argentina and Holland in recent history. They are detailed photos in which the artist undertakes a subtle symbolic analysis of acts of resistance against repressive structures that strive to quash any kind of activity.

The work *De la serie de gestos - El cuerpo subversivo-* (2016) is based on archive images of demonstrations in the 1960s and 70s. Printed at large scale, they rest on two pinewood boards, affecting the intensity that something so minimal could attain in contrast with the corporeity of the wood, taking abstraction almost to the limits of the conceptual

Sin Título (Maximiliano Kosteki y Darío Santillán, asesinados por la Policía en la estación de trenes de Avellaneda, Provincia de Buenos Aires, 26 de Junio de 2002) (2016) shows a detail of the feet of Maximiliano Kosteki, an Argentinian activist who died alongside his colleague Darío Santillán during the Avellaneda massacre, which was triggered by the political crisis in Argentina at that time, in which the police charged against demonstrators who were demanding benefits for the poorest levels of society. The police, unaware of the symbol it had created with the death of two innocent people, placed the body of Maximiliano in the form of an upside down cross, as if he were a martyr.

The work *Rond de Jambe*¹ (2016) consists of a silk-screened photo of acts of protest held in Amsterdam between 1979 and 1986 by countercultural movements protesting against the construction of the Stopera building complex which currently houses the city hall and an art centre for ballet, theatre and opera. Zito Lema establishes a connection between a political protest movement and the movement of the body through a performance created in collaboration with a dancer and an audience, in which the latter harmonically assimilate the movements of resistance. An ideology and a political sentiment are transmitted through the body. The photos on view superimpose archive images of demonstrations with images of dancers performing choreographies of the very same acts.

The work *De la serie de gestos -Categorías-* (2015) consists of a number of 10 x 15 cm photos arranged within the same frame. They are all images of affect and resistance that speak to any revolution, to any act of opposition or protest, as something indivisible that is inconceivable separately.

The work *Several Forms of Friendship* (2016) also lends it name to the exhibition as a whole. It comprises an installation of ceramic pieces and a projection. The ceramics are casts taken from the joints of the artist's friends and family, and are presented unfinished as if pieces in development, in the midst of the process. Once again, the gesture is what really matters, to which another gesture is added, this time a symbolic gesture which is created from the pieces of clay that the artist's daughter incorporates into the ceramics, turning her into the thread running through both pieces. Her print runs through the structures that respond to a classic canon in projection, or else they run through the real body of a friend or family transferred to the ceramics. In recognising the dimensions, textures and temperature of these sculptures, the structures of learning that give us the measure of things begin to take form, and from there we can begin to form a critical gaze.

The exhibition plays with the distance of the beholder, in such a way that the concrete becomes abstract and vice versa. Only in this way can we gain sufficient perspective to analyse and reconstruct events narrated from empowering affect.

Violeta Janeiro

Aimée Zito Lema (1982) is an Argentinian-Dutch artist currently in residence at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Her work is based on cooperation projects integrating communities from different social strata. She studied at the Universidad de las Artes in Buenos Aires, the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam, and in the MAR (Master Artistic Research) programme at the Royal Academy of Art The Hague (2009 - 2011). Her work has been seen in 2016 at the 11th Gwangju Biennial, the Dorothea von Stetten Art Award at Kunstmuseum Bonn, and in the group show *L'art de la Revolte - Hors Pistes* at Centre Pompidou in Paris. She has developed various works at Casco - Office for Art, Design and Theory in Utrecht (2013-2014) involving group dynamics, such as *Furniture for Conversation*, *Warp and Weft* and *Body at Work - Rehearsing Cooperation*.

Violeta Janeiro Alfageme (1982) is a curator and researcher. Her work centres primarily on collaborative art practices, politics of knowledge and alternative forms of production, reception and channelling art. She has worked at the 52nd Venice Biennale, at the Guggenheim Museum New York (Curatorial Fellow) and at the Spanish Consulate in Shanghai. Among her curatorships are: *Continente y contenido: Centros Españoles de Arte Contemporáneo*, Tongji University and Instituto Cervantes in Shanghai (2009), *Influencias: un recorrido a través de las órbitas culturales europeas*, EU Pavilion at EXPO Shanghai (2010). She is currently preparing her doctoral thesis at USC on collaborative art in Spain in the 1990s and she is also preparing an exhibition called *Movimiento Continuo* at Hangar, Artistic Research Centre, Lisbon.

¹ *Rond de jambe par terre* is a ballet step in which the leg sweeps around in a circle while remaining on the ground