

GESTURES OF HORIZON -

- follows Maria Reiche's traces into the Peruvian desert. We let us be taken into the past, when mountains of clothes and highways began threatening to draw new lines into the landscape, and erase the ancient scratchings they superimpose today. We collect some of these materials that are cluttering the Atacama region, to bring back to sight what is hidden underneath them. Clearing the view for a future in which desolate emptiness might once again return to the deserts of Nasca and Atacama. A state which will eventually provoke that it will not be experienceable by the human gaze trying to instate it. Not a small task to accomplish. But by re-functioning tools and materials, these can be used to reconstruct what they once destroyed. Blank carpenter-rules provide the only scale on which to measure the extension our actions take.

Maria Reiche initially did not receive proper recognition or adequate remuneration for her research. This did not have any effect on Reiche's dedication, even though it impacted her living conditions considerably. Over the course of several years, she lived in a small hut with no water supply - but in close proximity to the desert and the drawings she investigated day in and day out. She later acquired a small VW Beetle, which became her mobile research - and living hub.

The few objects she was surrounded by, were thus both tools and constructive elements of her site of work and living. Used to measure the Nasca drawings, these objects also shaped her view on the Peruvian desert.

When tools were lacking, because they were too expensive or had not yet been developed, her own body became a device to relate to the landscape's vastness.

Tape measures, childhood memories, and somatic perception intertwine with the scientific representations she retrieves of the the desert drawings.

Maria Reiche emigrated to Peru in the early 1930s. As a child she already dreamt of discovering remote worlds - an undertaking that was denied to her, given the political situation in Germany at the time. Reiche's career is therefor also a feminist narrative of a woman who defied social expectations. Her life should not however, be reduced to a single narrative.

Like the German sponsors, Peruvian society also showed little interest in her endeavors of exploring the desert drawings.

Although her research was crucial for their preservation, the methods she employed proved partly detrimental to the sediments from a modern scientific perspective.

Partly because of the precarious financial support, but also because of scientific conventions at the time, she damaged traces that today would allow more detailed information about the origin and motivation behind the drawings. Her life's work can therefore not be dissociated from (de)colonization debates.

Her biography raises question about the power of narration, about human intervention in the desert, and climate justice.

These questions call for an urgent rethinking of how objects are related to.

Traces with topographical dimensions, that are in fact man-made drawings in the desert; urging to be looked at from above, from a perspective unknown to the human eye: These are the lines of Nasca.

But today the desert landscape is also marked by mountains of garbage.

The fast-paced European fashion industry dumps tons of clothing in the Chilean (formerly also Peruvian and Bolivian) Atacama region.

Telling Maria Reiche's story from s European perspective, consequently implies the responsibility of referencing the international relations that shape the appearance of the region she worked in.

The materials and objects used in *Gestures of Horizon* belonged to Maria Reiche's working equipment. But the quantity, size and type we chose, take on planetary dimensions.

The floor is covered with **300 square meters of sandpaper**. It is an industrially used product and was given to us as a donation. Because of a manufacturing error, it was not suitable for retail but still found a use in our performance.

The scraping sounds made by walking on it and scratching its surface reminds of the formation of the drawings. They were made by scraping off the upper layer of the desert soil, and revealing the darker sediment underneath.

Chilean blankets that are spread in the room invite the visitors to dwell in the installation. Ecocitex, a Chilean company, has initiated a project to recycle the clothing that arrives in South America and produce new useable items from them. They sell for example blankets that are manufactured from rags that are collected from the dumps in the desert. Ecocitex was very forthcoming to ship our order to Germany, although this caused considerable extra work.

Despite being overly enthusiastic about this project, I don't think there can be a single solution to the complex problems that make up the reality of the fashion waste industry. The garment dumps in the Atacama have to be searched to find usable remnants among toxic and easily combustible materials. Economies build around gangs asserting territorial claims.

Old Clothes Costumes

Via a documentary on textile recycling, I came across "Vintage Fiasco". The company buys clothes from intermediary distributors, before they are shipped to South America, Eastern Europe or Africa. Many times there are still valuable vintage items lost between the rags that are sent to the wastelands.

We went to "Vintage Fiasco's" storage in Andernach, to buy the costumes that were used in our performance. The transportation routes we had to travel to obtain the materials used in *Gestures of Horizon* are relatively short, compared to the distances clothing or raw materials usually travel to be produced or recycled.

The routes that led up to the presentation of the project can be seen as a sample to exemplify global correlations. Just like animal figures among inestimable lines can only be discerned, when the drawings of Nasca are seen as miniatures.

400m folding rules corresponding to the difference in altitude, between Leipzig (113m above sea level) and Nasca (520m above sea level).

Handling these rules performatively, becomes a subversive practice eluding the ordering norm measures and scales usually inflict.

Laundry racks and climbing aids for flowers have a symbolic meaning in Reiche's biography. Laundry racks may evoke domestic associations that correspond to traditional gender division. Thanks to Reiche's candid perspective on the world, she was able to reinterpret objects without being impaired by social precepts.

"She liked to play in the tailor shop of a friend of her mother's. She liked the smell of freshly ironed clothes, laundry starch, and sewing machine oil. Even a few years before her death, Maria Reiche remembered with joy how she discovered the principle of the lever by experimenting with the devices." (*Bilderbuch der Wüste*, p.25)

There is a small rose garden next to the school Maria Reiche attended. It is told that it was her favorite spot. Perhaps she spent her time observing how the flowers reacted to changes in the weather. Which later influenced her interpretation of the desert drawings: one hypothesis assumes that the drawings are gigantic solar chronicles.

Laundry racks, climbing aids, folding rules: these objects all seem to predefine their mode of operation. Using them performatively presents a challenge, because entrenched movements and habits are easily reproduced, leaving little room for putting conventions into question.

But it is this implausibility precisely, that brings forth the proximities between the seemingly familiar and the subtly alienated.

The objects structure a space of intersecting lines of instruments that conduct the score inducing their sound.

Presentations at *Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig* on

May 6th, 2023 (Premiere)

May 7th, 2023

concept · direction · composition · instruments Hang Su

space conception · costumes Nina DeLudemann

choreography Katja Cheraneva

outside eye Ksenia Ravvina

lighting design Fabian Bleisch

photography Oliver Espace

with

MAM.manufaktur für aktuelle musik

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