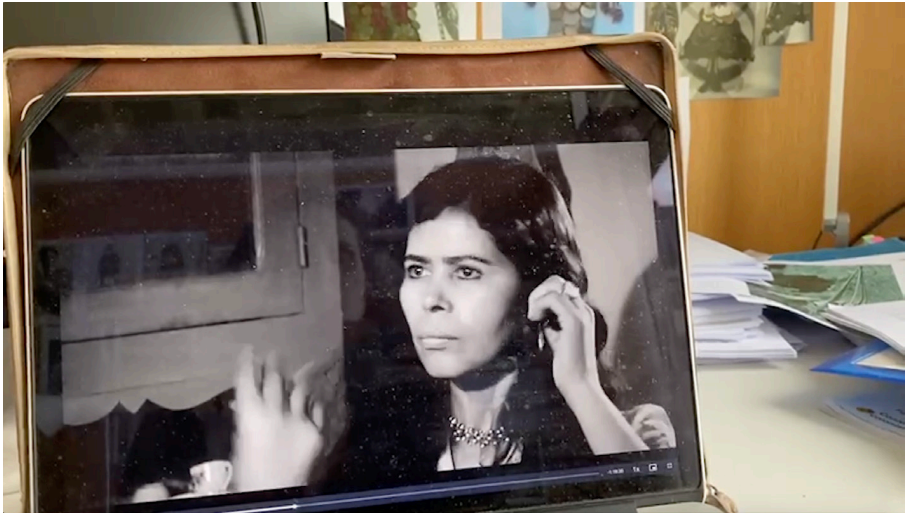


Ariella Aïsha Azoulay: the world like a jewel in the hand—unlearning imperial plunder ii



March 29, 2023
6:30—8:00 pm

Presented by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics
Kellen Auditorium, Sheila C. Johnson Design Center
Parsons School of Design, The New School
66 Fifth Avenue, New York

Film Credits

Writer and Director: Ariella Aïsha Azoulay
Camera: Bona Manga Bell, Adel Ben Bella
Voice and Music: Nadia Ammour
Editing: Juna Suleiman
Production: Eyal Vexler
Sound Recorder and Editor: Ziad Fayed
Sound Recorder: Rinka
Graphics: Haitham Haddad

Director's Statement

“This film is the second in a trilogy of films dealing with plundered objects, stolen identities, and the imprint of the wretched world imperialism created in books, photographs and objects. Speaking as an Algerian Jew, I use the camera to reject the way Algerian Jews, like other Jews who live(d) in other Muslim countries, were transformed into an extinct species whose objects are displayed in museums as artifacts of a bygone world. The film turns these objects, usually conceived and displayed as specimens of an irretrievable ‘past,’ into calls to refuse the impositions of imperialism and racial capitalism—including the imposition of ‘History.’ Speaking as a Palestinian Jew, I connect the destruction of Palestine by Zionists to the imperial destruction of the Jewish Muslim world to imagine a way out of the imperial wretched world. The film rejects the imperial triumph declared in books, photographs, postcards, archival documents, assumed as sealed, or in objects assumed as pieces of art and relics of ‘history,’ and presents them as invitations to resistance, reinterpretation, and reclamation of a world deemed ‘lost.’”

Image credit: Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *the world like a jewel in the hand—unlearning imperial plunder ii*, 2022 (film still). Single-channel digital video, color, sound, 58 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

Program

The world like a jewel in the hand—unlearning imperial plunder ii (2022) travels over open books, looted objects and postcards to look for the imperial foundations of the world in which we live. Within this wide landscape it focuses on the destruction of the Jewish Muslim world that existed in North Africa, making it imaginable and inhabitable again. Narrated in the first person, by an Algerian Jew and a Palestinian Jew, the film refuses imperial histories of those places.

Looted objects held captive in museums and archives represent only a fraction of the mass colonial plunder of Africa. Substantial wealth has been accumulated through the extraction of raw materials, labor, knowledge, and skills throughout the continent, including the co-option of what acclaimed author, art curator, and filmmaker Ariella Aïsha Azoulay has labeled “visual wealth” attained by putting people in front of the colonizers’ cameras.

This long and enduring ransack cannot be addressed through the discourse or act of restitution alone, especially when arguments are only made in support of the return of individual objects. Rather, we must question the imperial structures of the world in which we live. Within the wide landscape opened by this questioning, Azoulay’s new film, *the world like a jewel in the hand*, focuses on the destruction of the Jewish Muslim world that existed in North Africa. The film insists on making it imaginable and inhabitable again.

Participant Biographies

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay is an author, art curator, filmmaker, and theorist of photography and visual culture. She is a professor of Modern Culture and Media and Comparative Literature at Brown University and an independent curator of archives and exhibitions. Most recently, her work *The Natural History of Rape* was shown at the Berlin Biennale 2022, and *Errata* at Tapiès Foundation, 2019 and HKW, Berlin, 2020. Her most recent book, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, was published by Verso Books in 2019. *The world like a jewel in the hand* is her fifth film. Her other films include *Un-documented: Undoing Imperial Plunder* (2019); *Civil Alliances, Palestine, 47-48* (2012); *I Also Dwell Among Your Own People: Conversations with Azmi Bishara* (2004), and *The Food Chain* (2004). Her books include *Civil Imagination: The Political Ontology of Photography* (Verso, 2012). Her forthcoming book *The Jewelers of the Ummah* will be published by Verso in 2024.

Carin Kuoni is a curator, writer, and arts administrator whose work examines how contemporary artistic practices reflect and inform social, political, and cultural conditions. She is the Senior Director and Chief Curator of the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School and Assistant Professor of Visual Studies at the university. Kuoni is editor and co-editor of ten anthologies, among them with Kareem Estefan and Laura Raicovich *Assuming Boycott: Resistance, Agency, and Cultural Production*, published by OR Books.

Vera List Center for Art and Politics

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics is a non-profit research center at The New School in New York. Through its dynamic interdisciplinary programs, conferences, artist fellowships, residencies, publications, and exhibitions, the VLC imagines and supports new forms of politically engaged art, research, public scholarship, and community around the world.

The 2022–2024 Vera List Center Focus Theme *Correction** and the programs, fellowship projects, publications, and exhibitions dedicated to it explore the tension, discomfort, potential, and sociopolitical implications of “correction.”

All programs and events of the Vera List Center are free for all to attend, in person and online.

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UPCOMING

EXHIBITION

C& Center of Unfinished Business

April 1–May 26, 2023

Social Justice Hub, University Center, The New School

SEMINAR

Correction* Seminar 5: Lupus as an Operating System

With poet Cyrée Jarelle Johnson

Monday, April 10, 2023, 6–7:30 pm EDT

Online

READING

New School New Books: A Reading Series

Friday, April 21, 2023, 11 am –4:30 pm EDT

Social Justice Hub, University Center, The New School

PANEL

**Libraries as Correctives: C& Center of Unfinished Business,
Keleketla! Library, and Sister Library with Asia Art Archive**

Monday, April 24, 2023, 10–11:30 am EDT

Online

SEMINAR

**Correction* Seminar 6: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization:
Rematriation and Preservation**

Convened by Borderlands Curatorial Fellow Larissa Nez

Monday, May 1, 2023, 6–7:30 pm EDT

Online

PANEL

Libraries in Practice: Tending Toward Liberation

Thursday, May 18, 6:30–8 pm EDT

Social Justice Hub, University Center, The New School

PUBLICATION

Maria Thereza Alves: Seeds of Change

Edited by Carin Kuoni and Wilma Lukatsch

Co-published by the Vera List Center and Amherst College Press

March 2023

PUBLICATION

Breaking Protocol

Edited by Maria Hupfield

Co-published by the Vera List Center and Inventory Press

May 2023

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*Correction**