

Press release

October 18- November 22 2003

Yael Bartana

Annet Gelink Gallery is proud to present the first solo-exhibition of Yael Bartana (Israel, b. 1970). Bartana's video installations and photographs have been shown in many international group exhibitions and video festivals. Recently her work has been presented at Armour, Fort Asperen; Kaap Helder, Den Helder; Kerstin Engholm, Vienna; Kunstwerke, Berlin; P.S. 1, New York; and was included in the curated publication *Cream 3* (Phaidon), by selection of Charles Esche, director of the Rooseum in Malmö.

Bartana's work of the recent years investigates an image of Israel that is characterized by a familiar sense of proximity. Employing video and photography, her steady gaze is fixated on constant repetitions of actions that constitute the everyday life of her homeland, mostly unfamiliar to an international audience. Especially in the recent political climate, Bartana's careful analysis and critical work is enormously relevant - coming from within the Israeli community itself.

For her exhibition at the Annet Gelink Gallery Bartana focuses on one of the most festive of Jewish holidays, Purim. This yearly festival happening in the month of Adar (March) commemorates a time when Jews living in Persia were saved from extermination. The story of Purim (as told in the Biblical Book of Esther) is an ancient story of court intrigue with a foolish king, a queen, villains, a strong hero and one beautiful heroine. The story represents the eternal narrative of the Jew threatened in exile but also celebrates their final victory in a foreign land.

The central work of the exhibition will be a video-and sound installation, entitled *Purim Spiel*. The material was filmed during this year's Purim in the hasidic neighborhoods of Jerusalem and Bney-Brak. During this one-day, carnival-like celebration, Bartana followed random people dressed up as the characters of the biblical story. Using the video camera as a constantly moving, searching eye, the viewer is pulled into the experience of the 'outsider' witnessing the unfolding of the festival events, following characters and sometimes catching their gaze or engaging in a quick conversation. The festival as celebrated by this community orders to invert social structures and strict behavioral rules of hasidic life: excessive drinking, smoking, and eating are done until one cannot define between good and bad. For this one day of the year individuals are asked to cover themselves with a different identity. The video captures the very specific atmosphere that is resonating in the streets. An air of celebration is paired with a sensation of threat that seems to hover over the colorful chaotic commotion.

The exhibition itself will evoke this atmosphere. Besides *Purim Spiel* and two other videoworks, Bartana will present a sound piece: she has invited a composer to create a piece that, among other things, will translate the meaning of sound in the festival where claxoning, blowing on horns and hissing is done to exorcise evil.

Using *Purim* metaphorically, the examination of this national holiday offers Bartana the possibility to explore and challenge the meanings and implications of religious rituals in the constitution of national and social identity.

The Bakery: Becky Beasley

"Institute of N is a homestead for those with nowhere else to go. All rooms are to be found in recesses of the exterior walls, as thresholds. To go home is to be unable to cross the threshold, but to rest happily at its edges."

This quote is from the notes of British artist, writer and publisher Becky Beasley (b. 1975) on the *Institute of N*, her recent and ongoing project that she will present in the Bakery. Started with a photograph that Beasley took of a detail of the sign on a building, *Institute of N* consists of many manifestations: N Notes, N Things, N Blvd., N Movie, N Novel,

published and presented in different stages in different places. Mainly using photography as her visual medium, Beasley addresses the question of time: what is worth photographing, what should be remembered in the future? Her answer lies in the recesses of the exterior walls, in the thresholds. By choosing the unexpected, undervalued and overlooked, she questions the value of the 'objective', obsessive archiving of our contemporary society in an attempt to fight amnesia. Combining a documentary look with fictional writing, Beasley succeeds in making the viewer pause and, among other things, reflect upon our mechanism of memory. For the opening Beasley has invited British artist Robert Ellis to read from the N Novel.

Annet Gelink Gallery opening hours: Tues-Fridays 11 am – 6 pm, Saturdays 1 – 6 pm .For further information please contact Floor Wullems or Julia Schleyerbach +31.20-3302066 or info@annetgelink.com.