
MIKE PARR

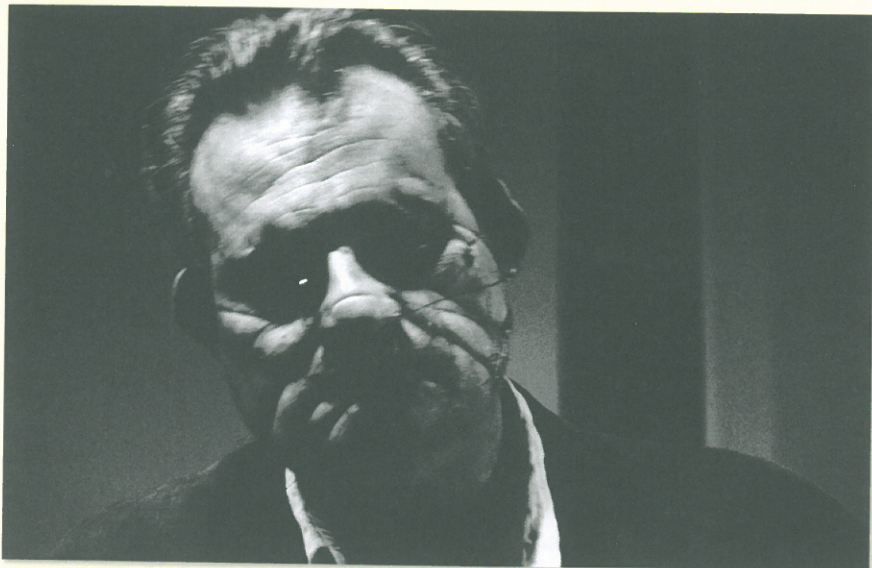
Kunsthalle Wien

Australia has long been under-recognized internationally as a seedbed of radical culture. Australians such as Sidney Nolan and Germaine Greer had to move abroad to garner significant attention. The continent's brutality, on the other hand, is famous. In 1966, Woody Allen boxed with a kangaroo on the British television show *Hippodrome*, enshrining violence as the *métier* even of the national emblem. And no other country has lost a prime minister: PM Harold Holt disappeared while swimming at Portsea Beach in 1967.

What of the Australian artists who never moved abroad? One such example is Mike Parr, whose work has been overlooked internationally until now. 'Edelweiss', which surveys more than 40 years of Parr's work, is the artist's first major solo exhibition in Europe – at the age of 67 after a 20-year reign at home as one of the most critically acclaimed and 'senior' Australian artists. Cleverly, as 'Edelweiss' attests, Parr has developed a twinned practice of performance/documentation and printmaking: one half supported institutionally; and the other by the market. Parr freely admits that the latter pays for the former, and that he deserves some comforts between performances. No wonder: the majority of them involve extreme pain via self-harm or privation. This tendency attracted the Kunsthalle's curators, who saw an affinity between Parr's performances and those of the Viennese Actionists.

Most explicit is Parr's connection to the *Wiener Gruppe* and the practices of Friedrich Achleitner, H.C. Artmann, Konrad Bayer and Gerhard Rühm during the mid-1950s through to the mid-60's. These artists had literary attachments and explored linguistic dialectics in their performances and texts. The parallel with Parr's practice is illustrated by the inclusion of the numerous artist books and manifestos he has published since 1970. In that year, Parr, with a group of Sydney friends, founded an artist-run space called *Inhibodress* as a haven for experimental language and performance art. Some of Parr's 150 'instructions', which he made between 1970 and '72, are reminiscent of concrete poetry, and his language experiments echo those of artists such as John Baldessari and Sol LeWitt. Parr's best known such experiment, made for *Inhibodress* in 1972, is *Let a friend bite into your shoulder until blood appears*. The instruction was performed on Parr by Peter Kennedy, who took him at his word, and in so doing revealed what makes Parr a *sui generis* post-object artist. Parr, as appears in numerous ways throughout the exhibition, is an amputee whose left arm is little more than a stump. Kennedy bit into the shoulder of Parr's good arm.

At the beginning of his career, Parr's performances – documented in 11 videos and six suites of photos within the exhibition – were conceptual and ironic. But, over time, they became more publicly attuned and politicized. The signal work of the →



early period, recorded in photographs, is *The Emetics (Primary Vomit)*; *I Am Sick of Art (Red, Yellow and Blue)* (1977), in which he ingested acrylic paint in Piet Mondrian's signature palette and, naturally enough, puked them back up again onto a canvas. The photograph *Emetics, Red* shows the canvas set on the floor in front of a blue chair and a painter's drop cloth, recalling Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965). Meanwhile, Parr's engagement with his amputation is engendered in his 'Rules and Displacements Series' (1977–83): in one performance from the series, recorded on video, he seems to chop off his left arm with an axe – Australian brutality brought to the fore. As an antidote, beginning in the 1980s, Parr started an ongoing series of 'Bride' performances, in which he dresses in full white regalia and make-up (two portraits from 2006 are included in 'Edelweiss') to feminize or de-brutalize his overall performative self, while punning on Marcel Duchamp.

In recent years, Australian immigration and asylum laws have become draconian, and populist culture and politics have turned rancorous towards Muslims and refugees. Parr has responded to this development in extreme performances that are truly mediatised (that is, regularly reported on national evening news). In the videos *UnAustralian* and *Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi (Democratic Torture)* (both 2003), Parr has his lips sewn shut and his face sewn into a fearful grimace, respectively, by an attending doctor. Each performance takes longer than the average person can bear to watch or listen to: Parr's guttural grunts are especially visceral and emblematic of the suppression of protest by the asylum seekers and the deafening silence of Australian voices raised on their behalf. As the political climate in Austria is making one of its cyclical swings to the right (and immigration and asylum policy along with it) Parr's work possesses empathetic force in this country, too.

SIMON REES

FILIPA CÉSAR

Jeu de Paume, Paris

In 1956, Amílcar Cabral, a Guinean agronomist trained in Lisbon, together with his half-brother Luis Cabral, founded the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) to fight for independence from Portugal. Many long years of war ensued, ending in 1974 with the independence of both African states. But Cabral was unable to celebrate the outcome, having been assassinated six months before. For him, film had been an ideal propaganda tool of the independence movement, which is why, in 1967, he dispatched Flora Gomes, Sana na N'Hada, Josefina Crato and José Balama Columba to learn filmmaking techniques at the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC). Guinean cinema came into being, therefore, as a result of this national liberation movement.

Thus begins the story of the rediscovery of the film material shot during the years of the struggle for independence. Since 2008, the Portuguese artist Filipa César has been researching the origins of cinema in Guinea-Bissau. In a conversation with Carlos Vaz, director of the Instituto Nacional do Cinema e Audiovisual (INCA) in Guinea-Bissau, she learned of the existence of an archive room where the film reels from that period had been held for decades at the mercy of *coups d'état*, civil wars and climatic vagaries. What wafted out of INCA's archive room when César first entered it was the strong smell of vinegar: a sign that the deterioration of the films was already underway.

For César it seemed like an obvious, even political, act that she should facilitate the dissemination of this material, which forms a whole swathe of Guinea's collective memory. In June 2012, she undertook the digitization of the 16mm films in Berlin, with the goal of sending the whole lot back to Guinea-Bissau six months later. To date, she has inventoried some 40 hours of imagery and 200 hours of sound, as well as topical films and some material left behind by Chris Marker in 1979 when he taught film in Bissau.

César's project attempts to resist what cultural theorist Stuart Hall calls the 'oblivion factory', even as she remains aware of the limits and paradoxes of preserving memory. Here the artist becomes the guarantor of the visibility of a