Fall exhibition at Witte de With: In the Belly of the Whale

In the Belly of the Whale
9 September – 31 December 2016
Opening: Thursday 8 September 2016, 5 pm
Press preview: Thursday 8 September 2016, 4 pm

Government drilling of Tejadillo street in Old Havana, next to Tania Bruguera's home and site of her Opening Session of the foundational process of INSTAR Instituto de Activism Hannah Arendt, 2015. Photograph: Lucia Hinojosa, originally published by diSONARE and The Brooklyn Rail, to accompany an interview with Bruguera.

Participants: Advancing American Art (1946–47), Minia Biabiany, Tania Bruguera,

Drawing from the biblical story of Jonah and the Whale — in which the prophet’s resolve and message is galvanized whilst he meditates within the dark body of the great beast that has swallowed him whole — this exhibition brings together artworks and objects to trace various transformations of meaning, reception, and use over time. In the Belly of the Whale plays content against framing to question both how an artifact references a given historical moment and how different modes and moments of display affect signification. Or, to present these questions in another way: do artworks and artifacts indicate fixed meanings independent of their context, or are they inherently unstable, and tempered by situational and institutional inscription?

Foregrounding projection, reception, and provenance, artworks and their passage through time and narrative discourse are played off the figure of the cloud chamber — an early twentieth-century device that used water vapor to trace the movement of subatomic particles, laying the ground for the study of particle physics by photographing the patterns these movements produced. Alluding to the cloud chamber’s ability to trace movement and transformation, the works exhibited are ‘objects’ caught in motion, images whose trajectories operate to articulate power structures, official histories and legacies, and other forms of often hidden epistemological acts of violence.

Like fragments or links in a larger system, the collected works offer perspectives with which to bounce aesthetic concerns against the social environment in which they were birthed or later received. Several works question how artifacts reflect their settings by asking how an object is altered through its changing contexts of display, while others query how an object can alternatively affect reality itself. Eschewing a neat synthesis, this exhibition instead parallels the sense of investigation from within.

Curators: Natasha Hoare, Adam Kleinman
Support

WDW25+ is in part supported by J.E. Jurriaanse Stichting and the G. Ph. Verhagen-Foundation. Decorations is supported by the Flemish government.

About Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art

Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art is an international public institution with Rotterdam as its home base. Established in 1990, Witte de With explores developments in contemporary art worldwide. Witte de With has been commenting on the social and political predicament since its inception through the presentation of curated exhibitions, symposia, live events, educational programs, and a bold publishing arm.

Contact Witte de With

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