



Radio On

Sława Harasymowicz
17th June – 30th July 2016
Private view 17th June, 6-8pm

Radio On is the second 'chapter' in a three-part multi-disciplinary exhibition by artist Sława Harasymowicz. Conceived as a fluid interrogation, the series exposes the inherent tensions between images, words and historical records in invoking hidden, inconvenient or unwanted memory. Harasymowicz frequently harnesses archive, as a starting point for enquiry, a strategy and a cognitive tool to pose questions around the validity of recollection, the ambiguity of reconstruction, political representation and autobiography.

Begun at Centrala Gallery in Birmingham in 2015 with a final evocation at the Poetry Library in London later this year, the project fuses biography, newly commissioned writing and documentary records to explore one of the biggest WWII maritime disasters. The event – obscured in history and clouded in ambiguity – operates for Harasymowicz as a springboard to challenge political and cultural amnesia. Oscillating between drawing, installation, performance, sound and video, the artist uses abstracted form and aural soundscape in order to challenge and antagonise visual strategies that deal with 'personal memory' and 'collective history'.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a new sound installation in the form of a radio broadcast, dramatising real activity that took place in a German concentration camp towards the end of the WWII. During the nights, a group of prisoners would engage in clandestine and prohibited collaboration to create fictitious 'radio programmes' using the structure of real broadcasts – including news bulletins, weather forecasts, sport

commentary and reportage – as a way of blocking out the surrounding reality of war, incarceration, displacement and the terror of the unknown.

As a way of exploring the impact of this action, and as a test for the potentiality of new narrations when they start circulating through her artworks, the artist has re-imagined these ‘broadcasts’ by recording a live performance in Sigmund Freud’s former study at the Freud Museum, North London. It presents an aural collage of performed testimonials, fiction, poetry, scientific research, experimental writing and sound distortions. The competing conflicting narratives reverberate and overlap, honing in and out of the war prisoners’ ordeal whilst further interconnecting the artist’s (hidden) family history and continuing a serious political enquiry into buried events.

Additionally, the installation in the front room of the gallery evokes an echo chamber of sorts in which attenuation, absorption, scattering and signal degradation are executed in nonfigurative forms as almost theatrical props in a warped transmitting-receiving activity.

Both the timed, hourly broadcasts as well as the omnipresent sonic landscape form the pulse of this richly textured installation, which foregrounds the spatial and temporal nature of sound and utilises sound waves and its frequencies as a particular form of reenactment – an archive endlessly insisting on its present and relevance.

Curated by Dominik Czechowski

In partnership with Centrala Gallery, Birmingham and the Poetry Library, Southbank Centre.

With special thanks to Freud Museum, London.

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About the Artist

Sława Harasymowicz is a visual artist and a PhD candidate at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Her work in progress includes a project in collaboration with BWA Gallery in Tarnów, Poland (2017), supported by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Forthcoming exhibitions include *Layered Narratives: Collage/Photomontage/Print*, l’etrangere, London (June-July 2016). Recent solo exhibitions include *H.N.5 515*, Centrala, Birmingham (2015), *Ersatz*, Ethnographic Museum, Kraków (2014), and *Wolf Man*, Freud Museum, London (2012), following the publication of a graphic novel *Wolf Man* (Self Made Hero, 2012). Her publishing collaborations have included Penguin Books, The Guardian, Le Gun and Modern Poetry in Translation. Harasymowicz is a recipient of a number of awards for published work including V&A Illustration Awards and the Arts Foundation Fellowship. Her work is held in the V&A Permanent Prints and Drawings Collection, National Museum in Poznań, and other collections internationally.

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