

# UNRECOUNTED

HISTORICAL AMNESIA IN GERMANY AND NAMIBIA

Artists shown . Christoph Schlingensiefel & Nicola Brandt

Artist and curator talk . Friday 8 May 2015 at 11:00am

Showing . 4 - 9 May 2015 / Times . 10:00 - 18:00

Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello . Palazzo Pisani  
Sestiere di San Marco 2810 Venezia . Nearest Vaporetto stop: Accademia or Giglio  
Directions to access: Campo St Stefano

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– What for? So that at last you will see  
what you did not see.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

**UNRECOUNTED** juxtaposes a screening of **Christoph Schlingensiefel's** film *The African Twin Towers* with **Nicola Brandt's** installation *Indifference*. Namibia, with its history of German colonization (1884-1915) and South African apartheid rule (up to 1990), is the setting for both works. In response to Okwui Enwezor's Venice biennale theme *All the World's Futures*, **UNRECOUNTED** shows two artists who have inherited the legacy of the colonizer. This is the first exhibition at the Biennale to be supported by the **National Art Gallery of Namibia**.

**Christoph Schlingensiefel's** *The African Twin Towers* (2005-09) is a non-linear documentary film relating Schlingensiefel's attempt to stage Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle* in Namibia. Arriving in Namibia, Schlingensiefel soon abandoned the feature film he initially envisaged. Instead, he invited the residents of the former German colonial town Lüderitz to participate in construction of new stories. A charged and fragmentary record of these events emerges. **Schlingensiefel** was posthumously awarded the Golden Lion for the display of his work at the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2011.

*Indifference* (2014) is a video installation by the German-Namibian artist **Nicola Brandt**. Brandt collaborated with Herero women in Namibia. In the work, a sixty-year-old Herero-Namibian and a ninety-year-old German-Namibian recall a day spent close to unmarked mass graves. The Herero woman narrates the atrocities committed by the colonizers on the Nama and Herero people in 1904-1908. The video plunges us into Namibian landscape, indifferent to human tragedy.

Both works foreground involuntary memory, and the way that unresolved trauma breaks out in everyday engagements. They show the extent to which German colonial guilt has not been dealt with by those who have inherited it. Through their work, each artist interrogates German historical memory and the Romantic tradition that sustains it.

The exhibition is curated by **Sarah Hegenbart**, **Vid Simoniti** and **Adina Drinceanu**, and produced by **Valorizzazioni Culturali**, in co-operation with the **National Art Gallery of Namibia** and **Filmgalerie 451**.



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## HISTORICAL AMNESIA IN GERMANY AND NAMIBIA

### LISTINGS INFORMATION

The exhibition shows Christoph Schlingensiefel's film *The African Twin Towers* (2005-09) and Nicola Brandt's video installation *Indifference* (2014). Namibia, with its history of German colonization (1884-1915) and South African apartheid rule (up to 1990), is the setting for both works. As cultural inheritors of the German colonial guilt, both artists interrogate German historical memory and the Romantic tradition that sustains it. A talk by the artist and the curators takes place on 8 May at 11 am.

### NOTES TO EDITORS

**Christoph Schlingensiefel** (1960, Oberhausen - 2010, Berlin) was a leading German filmmaker, theatre and opera director, performance and participatory artist with a long-standing interest in Africa, where he frequently worked throughout his life. His feature film *United Trash* (1996) was set in Zimbabwe. For *African Twin Towers* (2006), Schlingensiefel travelled with his animatograph to Namibia. His final project was the construction of an Opera Village in Burkina Faso, which his wife Aino Laberenz now sustains. Schlingensiefel had numerous exhibitions, among them two large scale retrospectives at KW (Berlin) and MoMA/PS1 (New York).

**Nicola Brandt** (b. 1983, Windhoek, Namibia) has exhibited in solo and group shows, including at the National Art Gallery of Namibia (2013 and 2014), *University of Westminster: Legacies of a Colonial Town* (2012), and the *International Photography Festival of Rome* (2011). *Indifference* is edited by Catherine Meyburgh, editor of William Kentridge's works; the musical score is by the Golden Globe nominee Rolfe Kent. Peter Katjavivi, Herero activist and the Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia, has supported the work.

**Sarah Hegenbart** is curator of art at Pembroke College, Oxford, and a PhD candidate at the Courtauld Institute of Art. She has curated several shows in the UK and Germany. Her current research examines Christoph Schlingensiefel's *Opera Village Africa* (2008-ongoing) in Burkina Faso.

**Vid Simoniti** has just completed his doctorate at Oxford University and is about to commence a Junior Research Fellowship at Cambridge University. He has curated several site-specific shows, as well as Nicola Brandt's exhibition at NAGN.

**Adina Drinceanu** is a critic and curator. She has curated different exhibitions in Italy, UK and Romania. Her research interests include post-colonial and post-socialist art. She is currently conducting research on conceptual art under the Romanian communist regime.

**Valorizzazioni Culturali** is a production team based in Venice: [www.valorizzazioniculturali.com](http://www.valorizzazioniculturali.com)

