

A PLACE OF MEMORY: CONTEXTS OF EXISTENCE

A Place of Memory: Contexts of Existence is an exhibition that reflects on what a context is, what it means, and how it creates the conditions for artists to manifest new views of the world we live in. A context is both a physical, geographically located place and a series of emotional, social, and political events that occur at a specific moment in time. It is a spatial and temporal coordinate in the collective memory where an individual's story merges, for a moment, with history writ large.

The Latin etymology of the word *context* means to weave together or to weave within. Taking Jean Paul Riopelle's life contexts as a point of departure, the exhibition looks at travelling as the primary means through which different contexts are connected and memories woven. By blending the memories of where we come from with those of where we go or land, travelling allows us to temporarily experience new ways of living and to hold onto these memory for the future.

Because as humans "we chart our lives by everything we remember," being "born and [hav]ing our being in a place of memory," as the African American author bell hooks wrote in her book *Belonging*, weaving memories is essential to creating context. For centuries, artists have been among the most mobile subjects in societies, able to travel the globe and cross-pollinate various cultural contexts with thoughts, ideas, and views of the world. Riopelle was one of these artists; like many of his peers, he lived in a Western context between the world wars. Born in Montreal, he lived in Paris, Vétheuil and Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies before returning to Canada to settle in L'Isle-aux-Grues, Quebec. He grew up experiencing the aftermaths of modernism and embraced travelling as a natural way to belong somewhere else. Riopelle was the first known Canadian artist to create a professional network in Europe, something that became pivotal for his career.

Now, it is certainly challenging for an exhibition to add new perspectives on the work of one of Canada's most renowned artists, but it is not impossible to take inspiration from his life, work, and reflections to engage in new journeys. To honour the centenary of Riopelle's birth, the Musée d'art de Joliette, with the support of the Audain Foundation and the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation, celebrates the legacy of one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, whose work and life have had an impact both locally and internationally. Taking a step forward from modernism and from mobility

as being directly connected to the modernist ideas of progress, evolution, and growth, the show explores what moving across different contexts means for an artist today. In our globalized world, awash in feminism, queerness, postcolonialism, the aftermath of Arab Springs, Black Lives Matter, and the pandemic, mobility is a necessity, rather than just a trend.

A Place of Memory: Contexts of Existence reflects on how a context – a place defined by specific geopolitical, social, and temporal factors – can shape an artist’s work and practice. Whereas travelling, living abroad, and being mobile were unconventional practices for early-twentieth-century artists, by the twenty-first century living in two countries seems a *sine qua non* for any artist who wants to build a career. Rather than comparing how views on artists’ mobility have differed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the exhibition holds a mirror up to the present and introduces what modernist art history has overlooked for decades: the voices of female and nonbinary artists. Looking into their experience, the show takes us across the many contexts that they come from, pass through, and inhabit.

The participating contemporary artists – Jane Jin Kaisen, Linda Lamignan, Dala Nasser, Silvia Rosi and Samara Sallam – were born, raised in, currently live in, or are emotionally attached to non-Western-influenced geographies. Through their work, travelling is presented at a distance from the Western European experience and given another meaning in relation to moving across contexts, labelled differently – mobility or migration – depending on who is moving.

Mobility is a feature of the twenty-first-century lifestyle and has become almost a form of nomadism that shortens geographical and cultural distances, and that also reflects the generational desire (or anxiety) to not set down roots in any specific context or mentality. Mobile people live and work across different countries and shape hybrid identities for themselves. Migration, instead, is a process marked by detachment, whether physically imposed or chosen, in which the birthplace is missed as if it were a phantom limb.

The exhibition is built around a wall symbolizing a temporal line, which, like a benchmark, divides artworks testifying to modern mobility from those informing us about today’s global migration movements. Using this display device, the show traces an emotional cartography in which the places in the artists’ memories are included in broader history.

Irene Campolmi, guest curator

Presented as part of the Riopelle centenary celebrations thanks to the generous support of the Audain Foundation, in collaboration with the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation. We also thank the Italian Institute of Culture in Montreal and the Danish Arts Foundation.

1. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Montréal, Québec, 1923 – Isle-aux-Grues, Québec, 2002

Été indien

[Indian Summer]

Work produced in Paris (France) in 1969

Lithograph, 149.2 x 114.7 cm

Musée d'art de Joliette, gift of Dr. Jacques Toupin

Riopelle's Contexts of Existence

Although Riopelle is known mainly for his abstract paintings, the show displays a selection of his collages to present a body of work whose primary medium – patching – consists of interweaving different materials. Looking at each layer as a piece of the artist's memory, these collages function as a preface to the layered work of the other participating artists, who collect and assemble the material memories of different contexts. Whether Riopelle was a traveller, a mobile subject, or a migrant is still an open question. He was an artist searching for a context to absorb, and to which he could anchor his career. Born in Montreal, where he spent his youth, Riopelle was inspired by many of the places where he took root, including New York and Paris, Vétheuil and Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies, not to mention his native Quebec. Although he eventually settled in L'Isle-aux-Grues, Quebec, where he spent the last part of his life, Riopelle retained a deep attachment to France, where he lived for some forty years.

2. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Montréal, Québec, 1923 – Isle-aux-Grues, Québec, 2002

Panneaux pour *Le Paravent*

[Panels for *Le Paravent*]

Work produced in Paris (France) in 1969

Lithograph on silk, 161.3 x 301.5 cm

Marc K. Bellemare Collection

3. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Montréal, Québec, 1923 – Isle-aux-Grues, Québec, 2002

Entre la rivière

[Between the River]

Work produced in Vanves (France) in 1967

Litho-collage, 195.6 x 129.6 cm

Loan from Galerie Alexandre Motulsky-Falardeau

4. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Montréal, Québec, 1923 – Isle-aux-Grues, Québec, 2002

Sans titre

[Untitled]

Work produced in Vanves (France) in 1967

Litho-collage mounted on canvas, 130 x 162 cm

Private collection

5. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Montréal, Québec, 1923 – Isle-aux-Grues, Québec, 2002

Sur les hauts tréteaux

[On the High Trestles]

Work produced in Vanves (France) in 1967

Collage on paper mounted on linen, 164.4 x 129.5 cm

Marc Bellemare Collection

6. DALA NASSER

Tyre, Lebanon, 1990

Red in Tooth, 2020-2022

Discarded fabric, ash, charcoal, rainwater, buried underground for 2 weeks to 3 months, 200 x 150 cm and 194.5 x 164 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Deborah Schamoni

The artist Dala Nasser was born and raised in South Lebanon and currently lives in Beirut. Throughout her career, Nasser has developed processes to make visible, even if abstractly, the historical and cultural layers that mark the interactions among people, nature, and architecture in the land where she was born and raised and currently lives. Nasser identifies herself as a material and process-based artist working through abstraction to make alternative forms of existing images. In her practice, she examines human and nonhuman entanglements in the constantly deteriorating environmental, historical, and political conditions that result from extraction practices and generations of colonial erasure.

Red in Tooth combines moving image and material gestures of mapping, witnessing, and sensing the territory. The works trace the course of the Wazzani River, Nasser's context of birth, which flows through southern Lebanon into Occupied Palestine. Along this splintered journey, Nasser is forced to abandon state road infrastructures, which are built to keep us in their lanes, and follow the soil and its colour and smell, the burble of water, and other inhabitants of these lands, the animals, through vast virgin terrains of southern Lebanon that lead to the border-defying Wazzani. This frontier, which breeds wildlife in its natural resources, is only partially accessible to a few families who live in the immediate area – and under difficult conditions.

The trial of bearing witness to ongoing slow violence, dispossession, and other colonial practices under constantly shifting, changing, and morphing conditions is (nearly) impossible. Nasser's insistence on being guided by other environmental signifiers in her ongoing exercise to consider other possible social and political imaginaries begs the question of how we listen to more-than-human ecological knowledges around us. How do we recalibrate our relationship with the land and its wildlife and other beings, to find a way to listen to their unuttered testimonies? How can we learn from them to navigate the cracks of rigid colonial structures – both those that are material and those of collective memory (memories), history (histories), and archives?

7. DALA NASSER

Tyre, Lebanon, 1990

Red in Tooth, 2021-2022

Video, 21 min 30 s

Courtesy of the artist and Deborah Schamoni

Film credits

Dala Nasser: Director

Jad Youssef: Cinematographer and editor

Mhamad Safa: Sound producer

Jawad Al Amine: Guide and trap cam operator

Sabine Saba: Animator

Toni Geitani: Equipment

Marina Tebecherani: Colour corrector

Rayyan Abdelkhalek: Translator

Leen Charafeddine: Title designer

8. SILVIA ROSI

Scandiano, Italy, 1992

ABC VLISCO 7100/41, 2022

ABC VLISCO 14/0017, 2022

Ink jet prints on cotton paper, 102 x 102 cm each, exhibition copies

Part of the series *Teacher Don't Teach Me Nonsense*

Property of the artist

Produced with the support of the MAXXI Foundation and BVLGARI

Vlisco is the name of a Dutch textile company that has produced African-inspired fabrics since 1846. On its website, the company boasts of its unique ability to interweave the personal stories of the makers into the material, openly envisioning the possibility of collecting these stories online to create a public library of the fabrics and their contexts. Silvia Rosi, born in Italy to

Togolese parents and currently based in London, uses these fabrics as the background (or, rather, the “context”) to stage a few of the photographs from the series *Teacher Don’t Teach Me Nonsense*, a collection of visual artworks that retraces her personal family history drawing on her Togolese heritage and the idea of origins. Rosi explored the theme of family history in a previous photographic work called *Encounter*, in which she took portraits of herself playing her mother and father, while narrating their experience of migration from Togo to Italy.

In the photographs presented at the MAJ, Rosi is seen posing immersed in an environment completely covered by Vlisco fabrics – to be precise, Vlisco 14/0017 and 7100/41, also the titles of the works. She chose these titles as a commentary on her own perspective onto her family’s history. Just as the Dutch textile company has had only indirect contact with the stories of these fabrics, Rosi has an indirect connection with the family stories that are part of her core identity. Even though she has looked away from this history, moving from Italy to study and live in London to shape her own story, she seems forced to deal with it and its indirect impact on her life.

9. SAMARA SALLAM

Damascus, Syria, 1991

***Floating Burial*, 2019**

Wood and leather, 62 x 170 cm, exhibition copy

Property of the artist

Floating Burial is a mobile grave for stateless people, or “those who don’t belong,” in the words of the artist. Samara Sallam, a stateless Palestinian born in Damascus in 1991, has trained as a visual artist, a journalist, and a hypnotherapist. In her life and career, she has found different forms of expression, including filmmaking, performance, herbalism, and coding, to translate the experience of rootlessness and to present the violence of political exclusion and the poetics of living, seeing, and feeling life beyond its denial.

Floating Burial deals, with sarcasm and a hint of irony, with one of the most tragic things in life: to die stateless, far from family and with no political acknowledgment of one’s right to burial. Conceived as a portable wooden

structure tailored to Sallam's dimensions, made as a single piece of wood with many laser cuts that refer to a wounded body that has undergone a long journey, the piece has a light, flexible structure and can float on water. It is accompanied by instructions that guide the floating burial's owner on how to die alone and by the water, and how to relax while enjoying this one last trip. The reference to water as a spiritual element is a constant in Sallam's work; here, it functions as a container of dreams, a way to finally heal and find peace. Although the instructions may draw a smile, they also provoke a sense of uneasiness, as they make it clear that this is the condition that many stateless human beings, denied a passport or a nationality, face today around the world. The work stands as a reminder that any context of existence, as difficult to acknowledge and legislate as it might be, should guarantee fundamental human rights.

10. LINDA LAMIGNAN

Stavanger, Norway, 1988

***THOSE WHO DO NOT TRAVEL NEVER ARRIVE: TOGETHER WE ARRIVED TO THE SHORE*, 2023**

8 sculptures, petroleum wax with pigment and LED lights

Property of the artist

Linda Lamignan is a non-gender-identified artist, born in Norway to a Nigerian family, and currently based in Denmark. Their practice unfolds through sculpture, performance, film, sound, and lyrics that they write, compose, and perform. As they look into how people, plants, fruits, and inorganic elements are frequently subject to being taken away from their place of origin and forced to recontextualize elsewhere, their work usually unfolds through several chapters that compose a more extensive body of work, usually titled after a poem, a lyric, or a book.

The video presented at MAJ belongs to a body of works whose title draws on a song written by Lamignan that quotes a poem called *Travel* by Chenjerai Hove, a Zimbabwean poet whom they met in Norway; Hove's book of poetry *Blind Moon* inspired the entire series. The poetry reflects on travelling to arrive somewhere as both a physical and a spiritual journey through which one shapes identity, changes form, and lives in a new state of mind and consciousness. Often using Afrofuturism as an aesthetic tool to imagine a different future

and criticize the present, Lamignan creates an immersive experience in which personal stories are sung, visualized, and performed as if they were universal.

The video installation also includes small sculptural lamps shaped in the form of the calabash, also known as bottle gourd, a fruit that may have been carried from Asia to Africa, Europe, and the Americas during human migrations in past centuries or by seeds floating across the oceans inside gourds. When not harvested young to be consumed as a vegetable, the calabash is harvested mature, dried, and turned into a utensil, container, or musical instrument. Lamignan compares human travellers to calabashes, which acquire a new form, function, use, or content depending on where, travelling on purpose or randomly, they finally land.

11. LINDA LAMIGNAN

Stavanger, Norway, 1988

***THOSE WHO DO NOT TRAVEL NEVER ARRIVE: I DID NOT COME ALONE*, 2021**

HD video, 11 min 4 s

Spoken word by Noella Birisawa, 3D landscapes by Kristoffer Amundsen, music produced in collaboration with Xenia Xanamek and Djavan Jami.

The work was included in the Kunstnernes Hus (Oslo) anniversary exhibition *100 YEARS OF CONVIVIALITY* and was created with support from Norsk Kulturåd.

Property of the artist

12. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Montréal, Québec, 1923 – Isle-aux-Grues, Québec, 2002

Lumière traversant la vie

[Light Going Through Life]

Work produced in Sainte-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson (Canada) in 1976
Ink on paper mounted on canvas, triptych, 100 x 74.5 cm each
Musée d'art de Joliette, gift of Roland Dubeau

13. JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE

Montréal, Québec, 1923 – Isle-aux-Grues, Québec, 2002

Sucker Hole à Matagami

[Sucker Hole in Matagami]

Work produced in Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies (France) around 1973

Oil on canvas, 89.7 x 130.8 cm

Musée d'art de Joliette, gift of Paul Ivanier

A PLACE OF MEMORY: CONTEXTS OF EXISTENCE

Jane Jin Kaisen

Born in 1980 in Jeju, Republic of Korea, Jane Jin Kaisen moved to Denmark as a child; she is still based there, dividing her time between Copenhagen and Berlin. Nourished by a long and detailed research phase, ranging from the exploration of archives and literary texts to her own collection of images and sounds, Kaisen looks at rites as the wellspring from which collective and individual memory draw their source. In her work, she explores how the individual memory of lost stories intersects with the larger history of Korea, marked by war, migration, and battles on the border. Presented in the South Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019, the film installation *Community of Parting* brings into play past and present, the eternal and the temporal, creating a layered, performative, and multi-voiced work that explores the ancient shamanic myth of the abandoned princess Bari. Kaisen engages with female Korean shamanism as an ethics and aesthetics of memory and as mutual recognition across time and space.

Rooted in storytelling and embodied by female shamans, the myth of Bari – a child born as a girl and abandoned at birth – resonates with the story of many females, who in Korea were denied their identity and life because of their gender. According to the myth, Bari regains the community's acceptance after she revives the dead, and she is offered half the kingdom. Yet, she refuses to abide by human borders and chooses instead to become the goddess who mediates at the threshold of the living and the dead. Kaisen frames the myth as an initial story of gender transgression that transcends division logics, facilitating the experience of othering and loss at its core.

In this inter-subjective and deeply personal work, Kaisen treats the myth

of the abandoned girl as a gendered tale of migration, marginalization, and resilience told from a multi-vocal site. *Community of Parting* is actualized through a process of dissolution, revival, and becoming and proposes other ways of thinking and being with others, including relationships with nature and other life-forms.

Jane Jin Kaisen's work is presented as part of the group exhibition *A Place Of Memory: Contexts of Existence*, which starts on the first floor in room EBI.

14. JANE JIN KAISEN

Jeju, South Korea, 1980

Invocation, 2019

Video, 2 min 57 s

Courtesy of the artist and Martin Asbæk Gallery

15. JANE JIN KAISEN

Jeju, South Korea, 1980

Community Of Parting, 2019

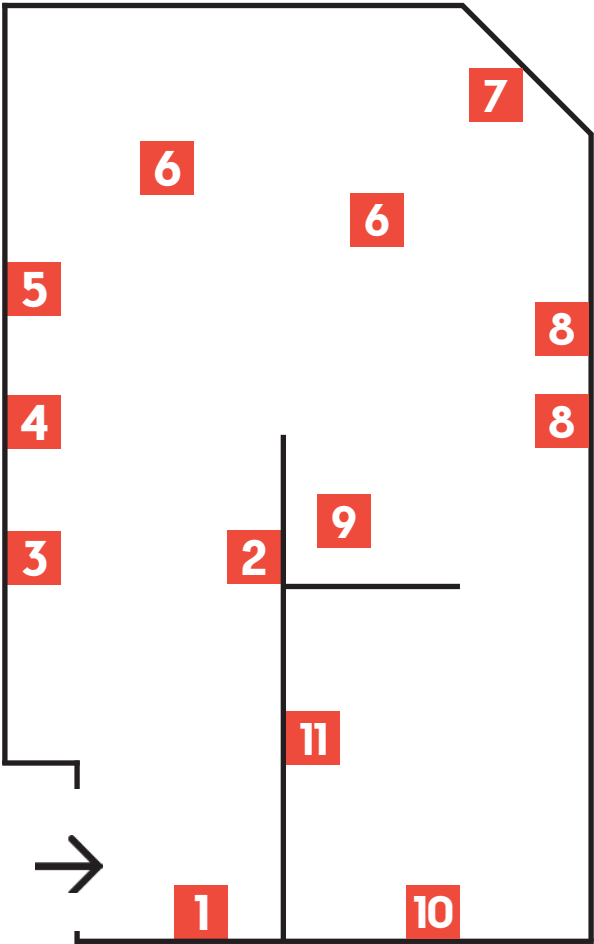
Video, 75 min 35 s

Courtesy of the artist and Martin Asbæk Gallery

FLOOR PLAN

1st floor

Salle EBI



FLOOR PLAN

2nd floor

Salle Harnois

