

“Not Propaganda”

A Curatorial Staging on the Aesthetic-Political Continuities Between the Liberation Struggles in Lusophone Africa and the Portuguese Revolution

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Abstract

“Not Propaganda” is part of a curatorial research project on the aesthetic-political continuities between the struggle for independence in Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Angola against the Portuguese colonial occupation (1961–1974) and the Portuguese revolution (1974). More than historicising the events, this work draws on critical translation theory and moving image to delve into the crisis of the colonial memory regimes in Portugal and the underrepresented contribution of the African liberation movements to the revolution, despite it having been key. Moreover, it proposes a continuity between the African revolutionary movements and the revolution outside of the colonial difference of ontological binaries. It does this by conceptualising translation beyond the ontological binary and equivalence of linguistic translation; instead, in this work, translation is enacted as a site of semiotic struggle and opacity.

In “Not Propaganda”, the curatorial staging juxtaposes text, images and sound from the work of film-maker Sarah Maldoror, film-maker Flora Gomes, artist Filipa Cesar, revolutionary leader Amílcar Cabral, decolonial theorist Rolando Vazquez and curator Irit Rogoff, among others. The video is a curatorial staging of the investigative process, as a making-public of the constellation of ideas and materials advancing the research. The investigative process is seen as having curatorial qualities and producing new knowledge through new juxtapositions. The video enables the relationships between seemingly unrelated materials being put to work as curatorial propositions in their making-public.

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Introduction

“Not Propaganda” is part of a curatorial research project on the aesthetic-political continuities between the struggle for independence in Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Angola (against Portuguese colonial occupation, 1961-1974), and the Portuguese revolution (1974). More than historicising the events, this work draws on critical translation theory and moving image to delve into the crisis of the colonial memory regimes in Portugal and the underrepresented contribution of the African liberation movements to the revolution, despite it having been key.^[1] Moreover, it proposes a continuity between the African revolutionary movements and the revolution outside of the “colonial difference” of ontological binaries.^[2] It does this by conceptualising translation beyond the ontological binary and equivalence of linguistic translation; instead, in this work, translation is enacted as a site of semiotic struggle and generative opacity.

The semiotic function of translation has been the site of tensions between the drive for clarity and its role in the establishment of Western epistemic superiority. A number of postcolonial theorists, including philosopher Édouard Glissant and sociologist Rolando Vázquez, have written about the epistemic violence implied in translation and how the imperative of clarity and transparency preserves one world view to which others would have to make themselves translatable if they are to resist erasure.^[3] “Not Propaganda” focuses on the conceptualisation of the in-between spaces of translation as a site of semiotic struggle and opacity. This struggle is inscribed and enacted in the radical impossibility of a neutral equivalence between semiotic codes, in the struggle against the instrumentality of meanings and in the struggle for a subjectivity otherwise.^[4]

In “Not Propaganda”, the curatorial staging juxtaposes text, images and sound from the work of film-maker Sarah Maldoror, film-maker Flora Gomes, artist Filipa Cesar, revolutionary leader Amílcar Cabral, decolonial theorist Rolando Vázquez and curator Irit Rogoff, among others. The video is a curatorial staging of the investigative process, as a making-public of the constellation of ideas and materials formed throughout its process. The investigative process is seen as having curatorial qualities and producing new knowledge through new juxtapositions. The video enables the dialogues and relationships between seemingly unrelated materials put to work as curatorial propositions in their making-public.

Footnotes

Tomás, António. “Introduction: Decolonising the ‘Undecolonisable’? Portugal and the Independence of Lusophone Africa’. *Social Dynamics*. Vol. 42. No. 1 January 2016. pp. 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2016.1164956>.

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Muñoz, David. "Aesthetic Praxis in Translation—Introduction and Translation of Alberto Hajar Serrano's Aesthetic Praxis: The Aesthetic Dimension of Liberation". Doctoral Thesis. Aalto University, Helsinki. 2020.

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