

Five Works by Daniel Gustav Cramer
at Verksmiðjan, Hjalteyri, Iceland
17 June to 2 July 2017

Space and Time fragmented
João Mourão and Luís Silva

Scene I: Campo do Gerês, Portugal, June 2017.
Mountainous national park on the northern border with Spain.

Late Spring, though it feels like mid Summer. Two men sit outside facing the mountains, while writing a text for an exhibition they will never see. Each artwork in the exhibition, as well as the exhibition itself, exist only, in their minds, as a narrative. They think of Iceland, the city of Akureyri and of an old, decommissioned fish processing plant outlooking the fjord. They think of an endless mass of water and of Summer Solstice's nightless skies. They think of these while facing barren, sun-scorched mountain tops and a computer screen filled with words. Despite having received several images and videos from the artist, the experience of these places can only be imagined. That, in itself, can be very liberating, they think. They continue typing. The notion that not everything needs to be visible in order to be present, of a certain performative displacement becomes important for the text they are writing. The works in the exhibition seem to be bringing together things that are not, have not been and will never be together, because they belong to and occupy different spaces and different times (they don't exist simultaneously except as narratives). The two men continue bouncing some ideas back and forth and they agree the relation between narrative and object-hood, or between narrative and sculpture to be more accurate is important for the way they are thinking about the exhibition. They're not thinking about this binary in terms of a cause-effect relation (is it the narrative that creates a sculpture or is the sculpture creating a narrative?) so much as they are thinking of a more complex form of connection. Such connection can be understood in terms of a mutual belonging, which implies that, in this specific instance, one cannot exist without the other. Despite the distance and the physical absence of the exhibition, the two cannot help feeling they are inextricably connected to it.

Scene II: Katherine, Australia, June 2009.
Campground site near the city, located on the country's Northern Territory

Nighttime, scent of eucalyptus. An unremarkable scene unfolds several times as if stranded in a narrative loop. With every start, however, something fundamental changes. Perspective and point of view differ every time, allowing the scene to get more detailed with each repetition. Time also changes, with flashbacks and flash-forwards expanding the scene little by little. The narrative flow, both the space and the time of the action, appears to be fragmented, disjointed and perhaps incomplete. Narrative is a raw material being molded and given tangible form with each repetition.

Scene III: Strovolos, Cyprus, August 2009.

Mountains near Nicosia.

A summertime evening on a Mediterranean island. Crickets chirp all around the pitch dark mountains overlooking a moonlit sea. The sound is unmistakably clear and could not be taken for anything else.

Scene IV: Akureyri, Iceland, June 2017.

Several locations in and around the city and the fjord.

One same gesture is enacted one hundred times. The apparently obvious repetition hides the complexity, length and nuance of what has taken place. One hundred iron sticks, average human height, were placed around the city and on both sides of the fjord, in the landscape, leaning against walls. They were placed outdoors, leaning against both private houses and public buildings and indoors, leaning against living rooms, bedrooms, bakeries, the city's library, an exhibition room in the city museum, the mayor's office and many, many others. While apparently very straightforward this gesture entailed a dialogue with people as to how and why an iron stick should be positioned leaning against their walls. The cityscape produced this way and superimposed on the already existing scape, despite its large scale, ambition and materiality (iron, of all materials!), is for its most part invisible. It is a humble addition to the city and its surroundings and it will exist mostly, and live on as a narrative: that Summer when a hundred iron sticks were everywhere in the city and around it, inside and out, in people's homes and on the street. One could have dinner, or watch tv or even go to sleep in the company of one of them as well as walk one's dog, go for a run, buy bread, have a meeting with the mayor of the city or even take a plane somewhere and find oneself in the presence of another.

Scene V: Carrara, Italy, October 2015.

In and around the marble extraction region.

A quarry is a harsh environment. It embodies the violence of extracting a material from the inside of the earth. Cutting stone is also a violent endeavor. The materiality of the stone, its hardness subdued by force alone. Water against marble. Marble behind glass. Sleeplessness and darkness. Recurring dreams of endlessly playing the same two notes on a piano, over and over again.

Scene VI: Mediterranean Sea, September 2014. Off the coast of Cyprus.

During eighteen minutes a camera takes seventy two shots of Mediterranean seawater. The camera lens is looking down on the water from a height of roughly thirty meters above average sea level.

The repetition of this action, one photo every fifteen seconds, tells of the passage of time, of stillness and change. All the photos look the same, as a group, it is impossible to tell them apart, yet each of them is a document of a single, unrepeatable moment of the sea. Light changes with the passage of time, wind causes ripples and waves never to repeat themselves for the camera.

Scene IV: Akureyri, Iceland, June 2017.

Contemporary art exhibition by Berlin-based artist Daniel Gustav Cramer in a decommissioned fish processing plant.

The abandoned fish processing unit has been used as an improvised contemporary art center, founded by a group of artists about ten years ago and since then directed by Gústav Geir Bollason. Currently on view is a solo exhibition by German artist Daniel Gustav Cramer, titled Five Works. When entering one is immediately made aware of its scale, structure and, most importantly, symmetry: two large rooms are cut by an architectural structure that houses smaller rooms on the ground level and a mezzanine one can climb to. *XXX (2017)* is the first work one encounters when entering the exhibition. Actually, what one encounters is not the work itself, which is located outside the exhibition space, in and around the city and the fjord. What one encounters is a framed text describing an action that took place at the same time the exhibition was being installed and an index with coordinates, names of places and times of the action. The time of the exhibition and the time of this piece will never align themselves. It is an either/or situation. Only one work is displayed in the two large twin rooms: *Katherine, Australia, 2009 (2017)*. Each of the nine paper stacks that take up the largest portion of the exhibition area contain one text describing a nocturnal scene taking place on a campground site near the city of Katherine, in Northern Australia, in 2009. Each text presents a different account of the same scene, and as one moves from stack to stack, across the immensity of the two main rooms, two very different spatialities and temporalities (*Australia and Iceland, 2009 and 2017*) seem to come together through the fragmented properties of this fictional account as well as the path it leads one to follow. Either pausing halfway through this piece or coming back from the second large room after its conclusion, one comes across the first of the small rooms under the mezzanine. The room is completely empty and in the wall opposite the entrance one finds two large windows facing the fjord. Upon entering, the sound of crickets chirping becomes evident. It is *Strovolos at Night (2009)*, a sound installation in which a nightless place surrounded by water is juxtaposed with another place (literally) surrounded by the sea. The outcome is an overlapping of day and night, of hot Summer nights and Cool Summer days, of north and south and how these are interconnected through water. The film *19 October 2015 (2016)* is located on the second low-ceiling room. It brings together narratives of Carrara, in Italy, sleepness and the memory of a song. These narratives run parallel throughout the duration of the film and become entangled as they reach their conclusion. Going up the steep wooden stairs that lead to the mezzanine, one can now have a bird's-eye view of how the nine stacks of paper making up *Katherine, Australia, 2009* inhabit the two large rooms in their entirety. Here on the mezzanine there is also only one work, a framed photo, titled *01-72 (2014)*. This photo is part of a series of 72 elements, and originally installed in the private homes of the people living in the building where the exhibition space was located. This single photo is now a fragment, it is deprived of the narrative tension created by the entire series. It

depicts the surface of seawater, taken somewhere near the coast in the Mediterranean Sea. Seawater functions here as a narrative device simultaneously bringing together and articulating the impossibility of connecting different times and spaces. From the mezzanine another set of steep wooden stairs leads to the top floor. There are water puddles on the ground and daylight coming from four windows which face the fjord. In the middle of the room a white plinth holds *Objects* (2010), a soft cover book on its top. The book contains a list of all celestial objects belonging to the solar system, listed in alphabetical order.

Joao Mourao and Luis Silva are Co-Directors of Kunsthalle Lissabon. A selection of recent shows they curated includes solos by Céline Condorelli (2016), Jacopo Miliari (2016), Iman Issa (2016), Katja Novitskova (2015), and Marwa Arsanios (2015). They are the curators of ZONA MACO SUR, the solo projects section of Mexico City's contemporary art fair. They are also co-editors of the ongoing book series Performing the Institution(al), published by Kunsthalle Lissabon and addressing recent developments in institutional practice.

Daniel Gustav Cramer was born in Neuss, Germany. He studied at the Royal College of Art in London. Exhibitions include Documenta 13, Kassel, Kunsthhaus Glarus, Switzerland, Cuenca Biennale, Ecuador, MNMN Monaco, Kunsthalle Mulhouse, France, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Portugal, Kunstverein Nürnberg, Germany. Later this year his works will be shown at Entree in Bergen, Greynoise in Dubai and Sies + Höke in Düsseldorf.

Thank you for the generous support: The 100 individuals, companies and families that allowed us to place the sticks for the duration of the exhibition.