

PRESS RELEASE

Strike Anywhere

Screening of a new video by Benj Gerdes and Jennifer Hayashida
(2009, 32 minutes, English without subtitles)

An event organised in cooperation with Art Laboratory Berlin

Wednesday, 22 July 2009, at 9 pm

Introduction by Christian de Lutz, Art Laboratory Berlin

Followed by a discussion with the artists

artillerie and Art Laboratory Berlin are pleased to present *Strike Anywhere* for the first time to a Berlin audience, following screenings at the Luleå Art Biennial in Sweden and the Kran>>Film Space in Brussels. The latest collaborative work by the experimental filmmaker Benj Gerdes and the poet Jennifer Hayashida, *Strike Anywhere* is a video essay that takes as its point of departure Swedish “Match King” Ivar Kreuger, whose privatization of financial crisis management strategies bears a direct relation to late-twentieth century policies implemented by the IMF and WTO.

Between 1917 and 1932, Kreuger capitalised on shifts in global financial markets to control over 200 companies and establish matchstick monopolies in at least 34 countries. At the height of his success, Ivar Kreuger was worth approximately 30 million Swedish kronor (the equivalent of 100 billion USD today). The project is both a prehistory of neoliberal economics and an allegory about social relations and desire in the wake of global capitalist expansion and excess.

Visually, *Strike Anywhere* incorporates previously unseen archival photographs, corporate charts and documents, and documentary sequences staged for the camera or observed during research and everyday life. The sequence of the piece is organised loosely as a passage between different spaces and the conflictual meanings these spaces produce—including the Swedish National Archives, the former company headquarters (still known today as the “Match Palace”), and two match factories continuously in operation since the early 1900s. The project juxtaposes footage of these factories with interviews with two Kreuger researchers. Both men espouse views, accumulated over years of unrecognised research, that differ from the popular histories of Kreuger in Sweden or the United States. Through a juxtaposition of these interviews with the present-day match manufacturing process, the film depicts the extant factories as carryovers from an older form of industrial capitalism. The factories have persisted while the world around them has shifted, in part due to financiers similar to Kreuger.

Conceptually, *Strike Anywhere* is a spatio-temporal diagram where visual and linguistic articulations of power point to the instability between archival document and event, iconography and cultural memory, present tense and historical remove. These structures of depicting and interpreting the world – charts, testimonies, and photographs alike – stand as subjective, deliberate, and equally susceptible to attempts at ideological revision. In realizing the layered structure of *Strike Anywhere*, Gerdes and Hayashida are interested in provoking a counter-historical dialogue about collective rethinking of economic and political possibilities in the present.

artillerie

exerzierstraße 10 | 13357 berlin
www.artillerie-projekte.org
info@artillerie-projekte.org

Benj Gerdes is an artist and activist who frequently works in collaboration, including as a member of 16 Beaver Group. His work focuses on the affective and social consequences of economic and state regimes, utilising historical research and reenactment, dialogue, and participatory or aleatory formalizations. He currently teaches in the Department of Cinema, State University of New York at Binghamton, and as a faculty member in video at The Cooper Union School of Art.

Jennifer Hayashida is a poet and translator whose work investigates how national identity and dislocation interact with language and narrative. Her text-based work has been widely published and included in exhibitions in the U.S. and internationally. She was most recently a 2008-2009 Writer-in-Residence through the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace Program, and is currently a 2009 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow.

Art Laboratory Berlin, a non-profit organisation, was established as a platform for international projects concentrating on the border between visual arts and related artistic and scholarly fields.

artillerie is an interdisciplinary arts venue committed to experimentation in visual arts, performance, film, literature and music. Located in Berlin's gritty yet vibrant Wedding district, artillerie is a project run by a non-profit group of art activists and volunteers.

artillerie

exerzierstraße 10 | 13357 berlin
www.artillerie-projekte.org
info@artillerie-projekte.org