

Tanya Ury - PRESS & ARTICLES - FOLIO (with images) - 1993-2013

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**Robin Arthur (Forced Entertainment), Hybrid Magazine
(GB), June 1993**

„... (an) extraordinary and very different work... Tanya Ury's *Kölnisch Wasser*... video images in a corridor outside a shower unit convey the performer negotiating with an increasingly worried German tattoo artist for a number to be placed on her leg, whilst another monitor relays the live action of the artist herself going boredly through a pornographic routine in the shower-room. Some viewers found this piece ill-considered and intellectually flawed. For myself, the gaps between the issues and their vivid depictions were fertile and liberating.“

Ury has herself tattooed with the number 4711, by a Cologne artist, in memory of relatives, who had been transported to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. This process and a rambling conversation are to be seen being screened on a monitor - a striptease in Loreley costume on two more and the fourth is directed at the public, who can observe themselves watching. This performance that ripped open questions on the German handling of history and a woman's skin as an expressive site of this history, seemed in its complexity to have been lost on the public. No one expected to have to be thinking of the Holocaust at the opening of the Feminale (Film Festival).

Veronika Rall in the Frankfurter Rundschau Newspaper (D) 1994
(Translation Tanya Ury)

I want to embrace being German now
STADTREVUE (City Revue) Cologne 5/95
 English translation of German interview by Tanya Ury

Tanya Ury was born in 1951 in England, into a German-Jewish family. She had lived in England for over forty years, working amongst other things as a cook, and in more recent years as an artist. Two years ago she moved to Cologne and presented, the video- performance "Kölnisch Wasser", amongst places, at Feminale (the women's film festival). Karin Jurschick spoke to her.

STADTREVUE: *Tanya, you were born in England, lived and worked there for a long time. Two years ago you moved to Cologne. What connects you with this country?*

TANYA URY: My family came from Germany; most of them were from Cologne. The connection was so strong that apart from the relatives died, most of them returned after the war. My great-grandparents survived Theresienstadt and then lived in an old people's home in Cologne. Both my parents were also born in Germany.

S.R.: *Do you have a German passport?*

T.U.: Yes, I decided to get it two years ago and now have dual nationality, which is very uncommon in Germany. When I first decided to make art, the whole Jewish theme came up for me and my roots are of course also in Germany. I want to embrace being German now. I want to understand all of this history.

S.R.: *What does being German mean to you?*

T.U.: I don't know! I just try to see what it means to the people here. And what I see are people trying to avoid being German. This is an American culture, not German... For some reason it's difficult for the Germans, to be German; they always have to be directing their gaze else somewhere.

S.R.: *Isn't it a contradiction, when you say that you're looking for your German roots? It's as though you were simultaneously having to look for an oppressor's identity?*

T.U.: It's crazy, if I were really honest, if I hadn't been Jewish, I might easily also have become a perpetrator. My great-grandfather fought in the First World War and even won a military decoration; my grandfather was an army doctor. I know that these people were nationalists, true Germans, who later couldn't grasp their terrible fate.

S.R.: *Would you describe yourself as a Jew?*

T.U.: Yes, now I would, even if I have no particular affinity to the Jewish religion, and although I have experienced being Jewish in a very negative way because the connection has more to do with the Holocaust than anything else. In all truth, the whole of Jewish history has to be seen as a Holocaust. Diaspora belongs to Jewish history. But that's just one definition. There are others, which are more positive. Amongst the Jewish people there are many comedians, actors, and writers. It is a very rich culture.

S.R.: *Do you relate to that all as an artist? What does it mean to you, Jewish culture?*

T.U.: I first thought about becoming an artist because I knew that there had been other artists in my family. It was even an integral part of being Jewish; amongst the Jewish people there are many philosophers and poets, who take on all aspects of life in their art. I think there is a feeling that it is an honour and a duty, if one is privileged, and I am that because I was not born into the war generation, to make something of one's life.

S.R.: This process, of finding your Jewish-German identity, do you feel it was something that was forced onto you?

T.U.: It is complicated, it was an inner process but also an external one. I look quite Middle Eastern; I'm dark. Everywhere I go, whether it's England or Germany, people ask me where I come from? If I answer Germany, that's no explanation. Even though I always wanted to fit in, it was never possible. When I started making art, the feminist movement was happening in England; there was an atmosphere that encouraged women to talk, not just about being a woman but also about their roots. There were many women artists who were making art about being Indian for instance, or about their Afro-Caribbean roots. Then I came upon some artists making work about the Holocaust even though they had no direct connection to it. That really made an impression, because up till that point it had not been an issue for me.

S.R.: To approach and re-invent specific traditions is a very positive process, rather like a re-animation. You got yourself tattooed for your last performance...

T.U.: That was for me, closely connected to my Jewish identity.

S.R.: But in a negative way; it's a concentration camp number that you had tattooed onto your body.

T.U.: Yes, the number "4711"; it was black humour. And of course it has a lot to do with Cologne, but also with the perfume (Eau de Cologne) that my mother and grandmother always used.

S.R.: In your performance you re-stigmatise yourself. You re-enact this process.

T.U.: I wanted to show people: actually, this is who I am. The number on my skin is a statement: every other cell of my body is similarly encoded and inscribed as Jewish. It was something I previously had tried to deny; the history was so dreadful. But I wasn't the only person in denial; in the 70's nobody talked about it. We invented utopian philosophies; we were concerned with the ecology of the planet, but you were not allowed to look over your shoulder. Regardless of whether you were Jewish or anything else, if you turned to look back, like Lot's wife in the bible, you feared the consequences. Eventually it became clear to me that I couldn't avoid the fact any longer. I am what I am. The tattoo is an affirmation, a sign that I have now accepted it.

S.R.: We keep hearing from Jewish survivors, that there were contradictory feelings about having survived. It wasn't liberating but rather a shameful, painful feeling to be alive, where others had died. Is that something that affects you as part of the so-called 'second generation'?

T.U.: Yes, it's true. But I have also felt ashamed of these feelings because, after all, I did not suffer the fate of the last generation. One has the good fortune to be born into a decent family, and I was, and yet somehow you feel completely useless, superfluous. And if you do look back over your shoulder, nothing makes any sense. I do what I do, because I have such a keen sense of frustration; I have to do something really powerful, perhaps even extreme. There is a great anger in me. It is anger about history, and I suffer from it daily. And it is also anger over the violent nature of human relationships.

S.R.: Have you ever been confronted with racism or anti-Semitism here in Germany?

T.U.: Yes, but I must say that more often than not, I have been met with the wish of others to be friendly and open towards me;

sometimes I've actually been suspicious about that, because people have been so nice to me, maybe because they feel guilty, but I can't complain because I get exactly what I need. I need to be loved. If that need is fulfilled by the German people I meet here it becomes an act of healing and maybe it is important for Germans to experience that also.

S.R.: Have you noticed the renewed interest in Jewish culture here? Or, how would you judge this phenomenon, the sudden popularity of Klesmer music?

T.U.: That has nothing to do with the politics of contemporary life. There is no Jewish feminist culture here, now for instance. Why is that? There was an open discussion after the Feminale programme, during which myself and three other Anglo/Jewish women artists presented artwork. But nobody in the audience wanted to say anything. There was a difficult silence. In the end one woman said: 'It's very difficult for me to talk to you, I've never in my life seen a Jew before; I don't know how to deal with you.' It was a shock for us. But we had to accept it as fact. There is no Jewish culture here any more.

The exhibition: "Coincidence - the coming together of 6 artists from 6 nations, in Cologne" 12.5 to 7.7.1995, features a new video by Tanya Ury (with Doris Frohnappel). Location: IGNIS cultural centre, Elsa Brandström Strasse 6. Tue 10-15, Thur 14-20 O'clock and by arrangement Tel: 72 51 05

Photo-portrait of Tanya Ury, by Manfred Wegener

TANYA URY IN ARTILLERIE a short crit: Art
Jurgen Kisters Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger (Cologne City Gazette) 18th April
1996

Keep your eyes shut, not open for Tanya Ury's art at Artillerie. But first, you should put on headphones and switch on the walkman, because the play is a mixture of radio play, language course, relaxation therapy and an art-collage rollercoaster.

Talk is about: the risk of being hypnotized while driving, the meditative worlds of sunbathing and the difficulties in learning a language (while lying). The artist's clear voice flow (in English) drives virtual sound realities through the imagination like peas tumbling over steps.

(Translation Tanya Ury)

**Introductory Text for the Installation *Golden Showers*
Tanya Ury - City Library Münster**

I have known Tanya Ury and her work since late last year. She took part in a group exhibition with the image of humanity in the coming century as its theme. Her work was the most radical in that exhibition. Her works are not to be measured by aesthetic standards; neither form, colour or elements of style stand in the foreground or are points of departure. What counts are personal, historical and social happenings. Tanya Ury is a Jewess, an artist and a feminist. Her works are not however palliative - they reflect marginalisation, discrimination and violence. Not being about beautiful photography, a technically perfect video, or a sophisticated script, neither are they about being politically correct art, but are about moments of terror, of pain and of genocide. Tanya Ury's parents fled to England before World War 2. Her grandmother died in Auschwitz. This cruel and pointless death, representing for her a whole people, has driven Tanya Ury to desperation and anger. Born in 1951, she travelled to Germany with her parents often, until she finally left England in 1993, to live in Germany. She observes this country, its history, its people, and keeps coming up against recollections of the Holocaust. Her works demonstrate that under a seemingly smooth, unspectacular surface, the oppressive picture of reality often expresses a latent existing readiness for anti-Semitism. Tanya Ury unearths general and individual signs, structures and statements. She condenses to the associative, superficial deconstructivist assertions. She moves closer to language, storytelling and image. Resisting appropriation, she defends the text as an independent corresponding element; preserving the unpretentious context of her performance, she gives the event its space without formalising or manipulating, thereby enabling images that remain connected to the theme in their visual origin. The performance is the interface of several forms of expression. In it she breaks through borders and gives us the possibility to project; she makes herself available, exposes herself, makes herself assailable and vulnerable. In the same way that Sylvia Plath searches for the physical presence of the victim in her suicide, Ury does likewise it in her artwork. She accepts the assignment to uncover the bottom line, thereby shedding a light on pain. It is a fact that post war Germany is regarded as a democracy, that the excesses and acts of violence on asylum seekers' homes and rightwing declarations, are thought of as "exceptions" and a book like Daniel Goldhagen "The Germans - Hitler's Willing Executioners" is considered "contentious". In a television programme discussion that was governed by public law, the author was not only accused of presenting a one-sided view, but also of defaming the German people. We have still not developed the consciousness or speech, to debate without resorting to the use of violent and anti-Semitic vocabulary. The Jewish culture is most widely unknown, destroyed wasteland. Turkish people are being denied German nationality; people from war zones and famine areas are denied the right of residence; economic refugees are only valuable to major corporations; asylum seekers are detained in containers or other sorts of ghettos and racism against Africans and Asians is lived out on the streets, as it is in state institutions. Women are at the bottom rung of this "hierarchy". So too is the question of gender relationships threading through Tanya Ury's work that appears all the stronger when she uncovers the subtle instincts of men, who view

women as objects of their sexual fantasies, and the fears women have, to be themselves. Being a woman today is still a balancing act between the desire to be close to a man without losing one's identity, and the fear of physical and emotional abuse.

Golden Showers, the performance of 1997, being shown today is as it were, source, surface and metaphor, to which Tanya Ury allocates concepts, making levels of the work's content transparent: greed, paranoia, history, sexuality, transformation and illumination. To be seen is the gold make-up being applied - as a gold covering. The environment is impersonal, a workspace. A make-up artist covers Tanya Ury's body with strips of gold. It is a clear procedure, unspectacular and marked by the trust between the two actors. While the body is being covered by ever more gold, we become aware of a variety of face and body images. The power of an ageless woman is tangible. In the procedure itself there is nothing repellent or violent. But the images obtrude: images of women who have been tortured and whose lives have been stolen from them; feelings ranging from human dignity to abuse, shift to unease and impotence. The monitor is surrounded by plastic curtains, sewn from countless little plastic bags that all contain tufts of the artist's hair. Tanya Ury collects her hair daily, bags it up and archives it. Hair falls out, is cut, thrown away, put away as a keepsake, or as it occurred in the extermination lagers, is torn from the living and the dead to make into mattresses. The vision is veiled and clouded by the horror of the reminder made real, in the manifestation of the artist's daily remembrance. Nazis robbed the Jews of all their assets, extracted tooth gold and wedding rings, melted millions down and invested this booty in Swiss bank accounts. Victims had also brought their liquid assets to what they thought was a safe Switzerland. It is not for the first time that surviving dependants have been involved trying to claim family money back. For years they have been forced into a corner and humiliated with requests for death certificates and written authorisation. Swiss banks have knowingly allowed themselves to accrue gain from Nazi gold and the accounts of the murdered. Those responsible have become caught up in obvious inconsistencies and it has only been after massive pressure from England and the United States that gradually mistakes are being admitted. The heirs of the original account owners have to this day not had returned to them what had been taken. Gas chambers, the cessation of all human form, a cold floor, cold walls, clothing having been taken, living and dead skeletons... A six-year-old girl is found breathing after the gassing. Other prisoners are perplexed. They hold her in their arms and give her something to eat. The victim is mentally absent, confused, not understanding - but she has escaped a room from which no living person has ever escaped. She hasn't understood, but she has seen. She has become a person made visible, separate from the anonymous mass. The body talks about history - markings become wounds. A tattoo of the number 4711 is exposed, lying uncovered next to flaking away gold leaves. Kafka's girlfriend Milena bore the concentration camp number 4714. Her fellow prisoners called her 4711 and "Zarewa", the sovereign. With the gilding she becomes immortal and gains the power to overcome her body. At the end, when we see the artist, we see all the world's women, freed from religion, age or continent. A light comes out from behind the shadow and we become aware of the artist's nascent hope that finds its own power, consolation and belief reaching out beyond

death. In the things, in life, in space at a higher level. The direction remains open, religions exist without reigning. The debris of pain is transformed into moments of illumination and comfort. The transformation of death into life. The alchemy of the spirit is the transformation of life by art.

Born in Germany 1962, brought up in the Evangelical faith, and after years of silence at home, I was confronted by the Nazi era, at school. It was there that I first heard about concentration camps and the German enforcement of anti-Semitic thinking. At home they talked about escaping the Russians and the loss of the homeland. My grandmother, who went insane 40 years after the end of the war, would run through the house berating the Russians, as the worst evil of this world. Not a word fell about the Holocaust. As light was not only being shed on sexuality at school, I started asking questions. I was always confronted by the same evasiveness: "We didn't know anything about that, and don't think that you would have behaved any different." I overstepped limits with my father, fought against the lies, against the weakening of my backbone, against appropriation and control over me as person, and as a woman. In all this, I forgot about my mother. She's an old woman now and I am shocked by her hard-heartedness. She's become like her mother and I am her daughter. Marginalisation, discrimination, displacement, torture, calculated mass murder. The Germans carry the responsibility for the exactly planned and implemented murder of the Jewish people. Over 6 million Jews died. When parents and their families become victims, their children and their children remain victims. Victims of the victims. The perpetrators are everywhere. This is an intergenerational victim chain reaction. The traumas aren't effaced - they are passed on and one can come to terms with them, but they may never be forgotten. When parents and families become perpetrators, the children and their children remain perpetrators. The guilt remains. It is the perpetrator legacy. It must lead to a sensitised awareness of ostracism - it must resist every form of anti-Semitism. It must continually be shaken up - enlightened with spirit and heart, and the great ineradicable guilt of anti-Semitism must never again be permitted. Both sides lead to the debate between struggle and silence. The wish to become closer. To be close.

Marianne Lindow 9/9/1997 (English translation Tanya Ury)

Muenster Feuilleton Westfalian News
 Thursday 11th September 1997

Artist in Goldrush

Tanya Ury presents a video installation in the City Library

Not all that shines is gold. Even if the artist Tanya Ury works with the same material. Far more, it forces the viewer of her video installation, which is still to be seen in the Mediatheque of the City Library until the 30th September, to feel uneasy - a sentiment that nobody, in the first instance, would identify with the precious metal.

Tanya Ury is English, a feminist and Jewish: the fabric from which her work emerges. For, after discovering that several of her family members were murdered during the Holocaust, she decided to make anti-Semitism her subject matter. A video is accordingly being presented in the City Library, in which Tanya Ury is seen being covered in gold. The viewer's direct view of the screen is however obstructed by transparent plastic bags that Tanya Ury has sewn into four long banners. In the bags, meticulously archived with date label is the artist's hair she has collected over a four-year period.

Ury: "I developed the idea for this work already some time ago but with the current discussion on Nazi gold in Switzerland, this work has gained in contemporaneity." The artist who has been living in Cologne over the last four years does not wish to give more information, however. She would rather that people come to their own conclusions regarding her work. One thing that is important to her though, as regards the video installation in the City Library: parallel to all possible negative interpretations, there are also the positive associations of transformation and alchemy.

The curator Marion Boeker of the Autonomous Women's Research Post "Black Widow" likes the intensity of Tanya Ury's works. What Ury wants to express with her works, whether pain or unbearable cruelty, is for the viewer quite palpable. Further works by the artist can be seen on the following weekend in Cuba, Achtermannstraße. *Simone Hoffmann*

TANYA URY MENSCH 2000 - PERSON 2000
 Bunker, Cologne Ehrenfeld 1997 (catalogue information)

Marginalisation, discrimination, forced migration, torture, calculated mass extermination. The Holocaust claimed millions of dead. The Germans, who voted for Hitler, who actively and passively supported his regime, carry the responsibility for the precisely planned and executed murder of the Jewish people. More than 6 Million Jews died in German concentration camps and as a direct consequence of the camps.

After halting clarification in the 50ies and 60ies - in the 70ies and 80ies there followed a slow start of debate on the subject of National Socialism and the eradication of the Jewish people. At that time former National Socialists still held office in business and politics. In the 90ies one thought that reprocessing was done, that reconciliation was thinkable and in 1995 "50 years after the end of the Nazi regime" was being celebrated. At the same time a burgeoning anti-Semitism was emerging. As though, as soon as one had purged one kind of guilt, another was again permissible. The realisation that one can never free oneself from this guilt would be the first step in the right direction. Nothing can free one from the guilt of mass extermination. It is the duty of the Germans to accept this - to acknowledge the great inerascable guilt and with this in mind, never again to allow anti-Semitism - to fight against every sign of it. It is alarming when one notices the renewed rising of open and closet anti-Semitism. In the discussions around Daniel Goldhagen's book "The Germans - Hitler's Willing Executioners" it has become clear that across all strata of society it is thought: "we didn't know anything about mass murder" and "not every German was a murderer and there are also many bad Jews". These and other dangerous examples of stupidity are also broadcast on German television.

In her work as an artist and Jewess with dual-nationality - the German and the English - Tanya Ury traces concrete and veiled discrimination. Her video, performance work and literary scripts are narrative descriptions of contemporary relationships between people in the face of the Holocaust and her own Jewish identity. In every physical, as with emotionally violent relationship, the core of anti-Semitism is to be found. Women are not excepted in this regard. Tanya Ury has now been living in Germany for four years. She observes this land, its people and is repeatedly confronted with generalised and more personal recollections of the Holocaust. Under a seemingly smooth, unspectacular surface, her works demonstrate an oppressive picture of reality that, entangled with the Holocaust, expresses a latent existing disposition to anti-Semitism.

Marianne Lindow 1997.

Introduction (unpublished) by Marion Böker, for *Golden Showers*, exhibition, City Library Münster (D) 1997

Tanya Ury was born in London, received a degree in Fine Art at Exeter College of Art in 1988, and a Masters degree at Reading University in 1990. She taught at Sheffield Hallam University as guest lecturer during her year of the Colin Walker Fellowship in Fine Art, from 1991-92. After acquiring German dual nationality in 1993, she moved to Cologne where she now lives. Since 1988: video, performance and lectures for exhibitions, festivals and universities in Europe and Canada. Tanya Ury has produced photographic and holographic art, audio-texts and installation. She is also active as a

The artist Tanya Ury immerses her work in the re-appropriation of history and existence in the land of the Holocaust.

In her performance and videos work she conjures up a visual and symbolic language that has long been rendered invisible through repression. She develops it to the point where it also becomes a palpable experience for the spectator.

The gaze focuses on signs that manifest visually and audibly, that tell of past wrongs, unbearable cruelty and a continuing sense of incomprehensibility, as well as sadness. It is the wrong and the sadness, the guilt and the responsibility that all people in Germany carry with them today.

The routine logic of discrimination, in the exclusion of minorities, anti-Semitism and racism, is something that the Cologne artist, Jewess and dual-national (German and English) investigates intensively. She visualises, she contextualises, she celebrates it through and through, using her body as a medium. The body becomes a screen for projections and a sound-box, the skin is a film, the videotape a second thin skin.

Marion Böker 1997

(Translation from German by Tanya Ury)

City of Cologne, Wednesday 14th April 1999

Parallel exhibition opens of four Cologne artists to the German Army Exhibition

Perpetrators and Victims "like you and me"

Mona Yahia provokes. She made postcards of concentration camps. The series "KZ-Tours" (Concentration Camp Tours), with the ovens in high gloss included, expresses the discomfort that the Jewish artist felt when she decided to visit the Lagers: "It is strange that we travel there as tourists." She doesn't know of a different way of commemorating however.

How art should deal with this horror was a dilemma made clear in the exhibition "2Menschen wie Du und Ich" (People like You and Me) that opened in the City Museum yesterday and runs until the 24th May. Four Cologne artists present seven artworks that are spread about in the permanent exhibition as a statement to the German Army exhibition. The perpetrators and victims of National Socialism are referred to in the title "People like You and Me": "We have to ask ourselves how we might have conducted ourselves," explains the initiator Tanya Ury. She doesn't actually have to ask herself, because she is Jewish. "Golden Showers" is the title of her video installation, suggestive of "another kind of shower in Auschwitz, in which my grandmother died". The extermination allowed for the accumulation of the Nazi gold that is being talked about so much today - in the video, Ury is seen being covered in gold leaf. All around the television monitors hang shower curtains made of an immeasurable amount of small plastic bags sewn together containing tufts of hair. Each bag with the artist's hair gathered from natural hair loss has a date label.

However crass you may find the works of Ury and Yahia, with Doris Frohnapfel's artworks, the connection to the German Army Exhibition is unclear. They deal with the subject of exclusion and repression in general: a photo of slave chains is combined with text and a self-portrait of the artist in blackface with the Wilhelmstraße in Berlin, where the controversial Holocaust Memorial will be built; this hangs next to the portrayal of a neck contour with Star of David necklace. The video "Unter Menschen" (Subhuman) presents old photos of black people and Native Americans, who like the Jews, were defamed with the title "Untermenschen" (inferior people).

Bettina Flitner photographed a completely different group for the exhibition: she presents slides of young men, who describe themselves as Right-Wing. The inserted explanations make clear that for some on the "Right" it is more a matter of style and group identification, although some openly declare themselves open to National Socialist ideas: their statements range from "My shoelaces are tied German, that is, parallel" to "I read 'Mein Kampf' so that I know which opinions to have" - from unintentionally funny to frightening.

Baer

Artistic Ploy against Forgetting

Petra Löffler Stadtrevue (City Revue) Cologne 5/99

Parallel to the German Army exhibition, Bettina Flitner, Doris Frohnappel, Mona Yahia and Tanya Ury delve into the unconscious components of contemporary history.

Even in the Rhine metropolis tempers were raised before the documentation "Extermination War. Crimes of the German Army 1941 to 1944" could be shown at the Cologne City Museum. Exhibition makers and museum directors came under ideological fire not only from conservative politicians, but also the Right Wing, who wanted to stop the German Army exhibition being shown at all costs. The documentation not only serves to correct a myth. The aggressive rejection betrays moreover, how acute racist motivated violence still is today.

This is the point taken up by the exhibition „Menschen wie Du und Ich“ (People like You and Me). The initiative came from Tanya Ury, the artist who lives in Cologne. Parallel to the German Army exhibition Bettina Flitner, Doris Frohnappel, Mona Yahia and Tanya Ury present works on Holocaust and racist-related themes, in the rooms of the City Museum's permanent collection. The four artists have placed path markers among the very localised history exhibits that not only assert themselves in the museum context but also make interesting connections with the historical exhibition pieces. Bettina Flitner erected her photo series „Was ist rechts?“ (What is Right?), presented as slide projection installation, in such a way that the portraits of Rightwing youths were projected onto the wall exactly above a vitrine, containing a Hitler youth uniform with dagger and all. Flitner's slide projection portraits appear most bizarre in this environment - the youths' statements sound so very like Nazi propaganda.

Mona Yahia's vitrine objects also merge imperceptibly into the museum landscape. But her multiples are far from being harmless souvenirs. Commemorating the subsequent company celebrations of the aryanisation of Jewish firms the word "Jubiläum" (Jubilee) has been printed in blood red with Nazi typescript on traditional beer-mats - on the back however, are photos of Jews being humiliated. The idyll of the photo series "KZ-Tours" (Concentration Camp Tours) is also deceptive: The leaflet shows flowery views of concentration camps that make demands on the familiar picture postcard views of the same locations of horror. The artist uncovers suppressed history by means of these household objects.

Mona Yahia reveals the shocking ignorance exposed in routine dealings with everyday things. Accordingly, she produced a piece of soap in 1987 with a text from a commemorative plaque in the Berlin goods train station Grunewald that commemorated Jews deported by the Deutsche Reichsbahn (the former German Railway under the Nazis), and which was also repeatedly desecrated. During the exhibition "Die Reise nach Berlin" (The Journey to Berlin) the multiple was placed, as an ordinary piece of soap for visitors to use in the museum washrooms - an artistic ploy against forgetting.

Doris Frohnappel also focuses in, with a talent for location. Even more so than with the photo series "Race-Make-Up" that comments on political showcases such as Checkpoint Charlie with

the agency of self-portrait and masquerade, the piece "Unter Menschen" (Among the People) references the ubiquity of racism. The artist presents a series of amateur photos from the 30's in slow succession on a monitor: half-timbered houses decorated with swastika flags, a family standing in front of an ocean liner, New York street chasms, American First Nation folklore - it is not clear whether the images speak of an emigrant fate, or are merely nostalgic tourist photos. The ambivalence of the private photograph is demonstrated with this coincidental rubbish tip find, which even when unintended always remains as piece of period document. The title of the work "Unter Menschen" (Among the People) is therefore ambiguous and can quickly be misread as „Untermenschen“ (the German Nazi term for "Inferior Person").

Tanya Ury's is the most conspicuous of the artworks. You come upon her video installation as soon as you enter the exhibition. Tent-like constructions hang from the ceiling made out of thousands of small plastic bags like an over-dimensional shower curtain. The bags contain the artist's hair, from hair loss, collected daily, each bag dated from 1993 on. This installation revives the visual memory of concentration camp cruelties towards the Jews in an unnerving manner - of shorn heads and poisoned showers. Tanya Ury has arranged three monitors presenting her performance „Golden Showers“ as a video installation under the plastic tent. The artist had an art restorer coat her body with gold leaf, as a second protective skin - the process was filmed. The layer of gold leaf covers the body with a protective shield suggesting its inviolability as an icon.

For Tanya Ury and Mona Yahia the Holocaust is a part of their biography, the memory of the fates of their families in Nazi Germany. Tanya Ury makes this particularly clear with „Die Gehängten“ (Hung Up) that consists of a walkman with noose. In a cassette recording she tells of her family. The connection with the painting "Die Gehängten" (The Hanged Ones) by the Cologne artist Bert May, part of the City Museums collection, is not coincidental. He painted it in 1945, to commemorate the death of forced labourers that the Gestapo had publicly hanged a year earlier. The four artists' confrontation with the Holocaust and racism makes this more than an accompanying exhibition to the German Army exhibition. The artistic positioning goes further than merely presenting facts and documentary images; it probes into unconscious components and the way we relate to history today. (English translation Tanya Ury)

„Menschen wie Du und Ich - Vier Künstlerinnen zur Ausstellung ‚Vernichtungskrieg‘“ (People Like You and Me - Four Artists comment on the exhibition 'Extermination War'), Kölnisches Stadtmuseum (Cologne City Museum), Zeughausstr. 1-3, Thur 10-20, Wed-Fri 10-17, Sat/Sun 11-17 hours, until 24.5.1999

In Focus - Animated Feelings - The Last Part of the Trilogy "the Woman's Gaze"

The third part of the Trilogy "the Woman's Gaze" confronts Anna Halm-Schudel (CH) and Tanya Ury (UK/D). Part of the attraction of this double exhibition lies in the varied use of photographic media, with which the common theme/trauma is interpreted. The formulation of feminine identity, whether as introspective, very personal self-questioning (Anna Halm-Schudel), or as an exploration of mainstream cultural form (Tanya Ury), are both expressions of an animated emotional state verging on extremes.

Anna Halm-Schudel seeks certainty with calm, and formally balanced, very disciplined, meditative images. The introspective expression of these black and white photos have a quite obsessive melancholy - the unsparing confrontation with the self, is represented as a painful process. An inner landscape is mirrored in this uneasy space: depressing hotel rooms, hospital rooms, empty beaches. The sad atmosphere is shattered by almost clown-like impulses, with which she attempts to create a certain distance, in a most touching manner.

Compared to the fragile uncertainty regarding personal identity expressed by Anna Halm-Schudel, Tanya Ury's contribution appears to be very self-confident. The woman is situated here within the sphere of eroticism and desire. Several levels of image and text, also a perfume, convey something of Tanya Ury's multimedia working practice. "Ô d'Oriane", the title of this cycle of photos, refers not only to Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray", but also to the "The Story of O" and Kleist's "The Marquise of O". But many other meanings are inherent in this word construction - the American spelling "odor" for "odour", or the French word "or" for gold. In particular, the o with a circumflex, short for eau = water, is to be found in the name of the perfume "O de Lancôme".

"Ô d'Oriane", dedicated to the sense of smell, is the third part of a series on the senses that Tanya Ury is working on at the present. The images imitate fashion photography to be found in chic lifestyle and fashion magazines. English quotations from Primo Levi's "The Mnemogogues" and Italo Calvino's "The Name, the Nose" have been incorporated into these. And then one also notices the small perfumed sponges, which are attached to the frames. The game between seduction and being seduced, looking and being looked at is governed by a multiplicity of rules that can also cancel each other out. "O" also stands for opening.

Sabine Müller, Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger 6.4.2000 (translation from German Tanya Ury)

Tanya Ury - Artist's Portrait

Lale Konuk WDR (West German Radio) Interview transcript 5.7.2000

Tanya Ury is a Jewish artist, from a German background, who was born in England and who would like to liberate herself from the Holocaust theme. Her extended Jewish family experienced the Holocaust in all its dramatic facets. Some of the family was murdered in the the Nazi regime's concentration camps, some fled abroad. Her grandparents immigrated to England. Tanya Ury was born in England six years after the end of the war and lived there for over 40 years, until she came to Cologne six years ago.

U: ...My parents were both German and I thought I would like to research into this side of my identity - get to know it, because I've actually spent my entire life in England.

K: Tanya Ury's family maintained close contact with Germany, even after the war.

U: My great-grandparents... returned to Cologne after the war and lived in a Jewish old people's home ... my grandparents and the extended family took part in the rebuilding of a Jewish-Christian community, here in Cologne and ties between the British and German communities.

K: Although the Holocaust was never taboo in her family, Tanya Ury first came to confront her Jewish-German identity, when she started to make art on the subject, in her mid thirties. It was then that she studied fine art, and over the last 12 years she has produced video films, installation and performance - she writes, photographs and makes holograms. In spite of her age, the 50-year-old appears youthful, radiating beauty. Although she seems to be rather shy and vulnerable, she is nonetheless, very provocative in her art.

U: I realised that if you are going to take risks in art, you might as well go as far as you can. If you are exhibiting in any case, then you might as well break taboos. Why not? If you take the trouble and I try to do that. You might say that that my art is sensational. Maybe it is. But I try to express myself in the only way I can. Sometimes you have to shout out loud.

K: Her cries leave behind traces, of what she has carried around with her all her life.

U: Yes, before I moved to Germany for example, well in the same year actually, I had a number tattooed onto my leg - not on my arm. But it was the number 4711 and that is quite provocative, I would say. It was also a joke. Black humour...

K: The number 4711 was Tanya Ury's connection to Cologne, to her mother and grandmother, who always used Eau de Cologne in her childhood. She was often unsure whether she should do this until she saw a documentary about Milena Jesenskà, an impressive Czech personage, a resistance fighter and newspaper editor.

U: In the documentary film they mentioned that in the concentration camp Ravensbrück Milena Jesenskà had a number. And it was 4714. But her friends called her 4711, Eau de Cologne. I discovered that only a day after receiving the tattoo and it was quite a blow... Well friends had said to me that I shouldn't even get the tattoo, because it would be such a negative body decoration and although I also had my doubts, I felt impelled to do this. And then that's how it all turned out - on the very next day, this connection to history became clear. It was a strange sign, somehow, a weird sign, something was telling me that what I'd done wasn't wrong.

K: In *Golden Showers*, an earlier performance and video documentation of hers, the dark and curly-haired woman had her entire body covered in gold leaf. With *Golden Showers* - remembering the concentration camp, Tanya Ury deals with her Jewish-German identity, in a most personal manner.

U: For *Golden Showers*, I made a curtain - in fact I am still involved in that production. Every day I collect hair that falls out naturally and collect it in little plastic bags with date labels, which I sew together - I've been doing that for more than 7 years now. This artwork is truly part of my body.

K: Tanya Ury is going through important changes. She would like to liberate herself from the Holocaust theme and also working with her body.

U: I don't count it out that I'll be working with my body again, but this year I want to work together with other people, That is a step, it's also a change of direction and it's good to be trying something new.

K: For Tanya Ury one thing that won't change is that she wants to stay in Cologne.

U: Well, I love Cologne. It's a wonderful city. It's friendly. There's lot going on and I feel good and at home here... I have family here, but more importantly, my roots are here. I am looking for traces. I'm also trying to understand what happened then. I want to get to know people here and now, in order to come to terms with myself, so that I can understand history better.

Peter V. Brinkemper 2000

The Art of Disturbance

Tanya Ury: Jack the Ladder (unpublished)

Tanya Ury's hybrid post-feminist universe turns around the transgression of a public art form that in such a way enriches her medial self-representation, by referencing cultural tradition and social reality so much so that the autonomy of her own aesthetic form becomes unstable. And it won't remain secure, because she problematises form and content. Ury's art based on the model of a public space, in which various voices and signs from art and culture intersect - chaotically and reluctantly, form and content are so much suspended from their former proportions and history, as a factor of deformation and erosion in this presentation, that you can sense the effect. Sacred wailing walls and worldly graffiti exist side by side. The traditional image of the saint, the rapture and the meditation, acts like an Echo - in any case it is unhinged and overlaid with overloud messages of profane distortion and brute force. The promises of salvation are closely entangled with threatening calamity. With utmost pleasure Ury stages a holy-unholy apocalypse, in which spirituality and striptease, noble revelations and routine nudity, absurdly come together.

The abstract-concrete innuendo richness of Ury's work permeates "Jack the Ladder". A 21-piece photo series in the form of 7 three-piece step elements of a visual ladder, which is over 3,5 metres in height - or seen otherwise, it is a wall of the same height with a central axis of blank spaces, in which visible and not visible human parts and figurative detail alternate and close-up photos, in and out of focus are massed together.

Naked female skin, torn nylon stockings, iron nails and painted fingernails, knife games and acid text are united as allegorical elements of an aesthetic political configuration, in which the female gaze and its half-naked body are abandoned to a play of light and shadow, and a possible victim clings to martial tools and weapons. The confusion of the images, the fluctuation of detail and close-up pictures, the heterogeneity of the warm and sensitive corporeality and the cold metal, unrhymes the piece - it destroys and makes of the chaotic upward aspiring geometry of the "Jacob's ladder", a convoluted image-trail, a victim's cloister, the injuries and suppression that lie on the ideal road to progress, but that are erased from official history books. It looks rather more like an angel lying at the base of a broken, or not yet erected ladder.

Ury has expressed the engineering of the iconographic disturbance in the innuendo-rich title "Jack the Ladder". "Jack", the ambiguous male forename, a cunning, smooth customer, rogue of a figure, a jack-of-all-trades, including the Ripper, murderer of women. "Ladder", the ladder, the stair, the way upward, but also a run in the stockings, an unevenness, which has developed by the destruction and fraying of the fabric. The disturbance, inversion and distortion of the order of things, the exposure of apparently incidental and interstitial elements that with a distorted vista, the displacement and the destruction of a reality that has opened up, becomes clarified in the title's components. Since the 80's, the debate

around female writing and female art has subversively surrounded the concept of the disturbance of poststructuralism, as a discourse on the metonymy of the horizontal, syntagmatic level of signs, circumventing the traditional male dominated vertical paradigm. (1) The repetitious but nevertheless motivic, displaced close-up photos, lend all elements equal significance, give them however ever varying meaning. The antique mother of pearl knives that are also to be seen as a collection, draped on the red-coloured oriental carpet, appear thereby as a readily available object of welcome aggression. The nails, spread ominously about the carpet, as though after an assassination attempt, are piled up in metallic stacks, under the fixed, even magnetic gaze of the young Chinese woman, as though the curse of the cowardly bomber, mesmerised and eye to eye, might also always be admonishingly brought to mind. The mechanical scratch marks on the tights interrupted by the red nail-varnish "tears", attain an almost soulful semantic. The gaze of the female appears ultimately, on the one hand as a lifeless, inanimate fact in the images, on the other, it returns the gaze of the spectator from the picture, as a living subject, and challenges with its searching, recognisable look, as though trying to understand the disfigurement of humanity in the allegorical order of things.

Ury expands on the suggestively rich title and the artwork with literary and political reflections, commentaries and stories. The close-up photographs, which no less than self-destructively subvert the ladder concept, paradoxically comply with "far-reaching meaning", a semantic echo effect, or in the language of the modernist music of Debussy, Mahler and as far as Ligeti, the Lontano effect. "Jack the Ladder" is primarily an artistic work, but is also caught up with culturally historical comments on a violent civilisation. With literary appendixes to the installation, Ury references the dream vision of Jacob's Ladder, the climbing up and down of the cherubim, the later wrestling with the angel, then the grim staged murders of Jack the Ripper in London, towards the end of the 19th Century, and the contemporary (nail) bomb attacks of the New Right in London against blacks, immigrants from Bangladesh and gays, as well as the attack against Jewish citizens in Düsseldorf, with the supporting global network, the distribution of bomb construction manuals and revisionist propaganda in the Internet that pervert the utopia of international digital communication with false nationalism, as well as ambivalent violence in the formal language of the cultural modern times. A wide global spectrum that would not be easy to synthesise, even in a literary work, let alone in an artwork. But with "Jack the Ladder", Ury doesn't try to achieve a homogenous synthesis, she wishes to consciously comprehend the electronic fragmentation of the public space and the public consciousness and thereby invoke the complexity and dispersion of non-simultaneous time references.

"Jack the Ladder" operates with cultural and political associations and patterns of inquiry and rejection - it plays with the clichés of the dominant culture, its dangerous ideological repression and the equally fierce re-emergence of intolerance and violence. George Grosz' politically satirical language form is part of the commentary on the male adversary in the female dialogue with modernism. Cubism and Expressionism dismantled the homogenous geometric image space that had been won during the Renaissance. Within these parameters,

opposing each other as object and subject, the woman was regarded as a Venus-like natural, with a model's body and the man with his rational and artistic gaze. Cubist modernity fragmented the human body into abstract segments, set in motion towards each other in dialectic dynamic movement, in a relativist process, which forever continued to spiritualise and medially continued to renew and generalise vision. The image became a total construct of thought and an emotionally laden diagram. Ury's position adheres to the premise of feminist criticism of contemporary art, which as the abstract gaze of art still remains the male gaze. Realism and objectivity in Grosz' metropolis caricatures and paintings are held in balance, on the one hand with an Expressionist and Cubist transformation, on the other with belligerence. Not only the subjects of exploitation and orgy, prostitution and alcoholism, greed for power and moral decline arise in Grosz' satire: the exaggeration of a content-related metropolis subject; they also result in the grotesque deformation of realistic elements with the intersections of Cubism and the dynamism of Expressionist hyper-gestures. The clichéd representation of a woman, the stereotype of the made-up, curvaceous sexuality and unconscious sensuality (in "The Lady Killer, 1918), stylised with brutalised and repressed masculinity, as Jack the Ripper, in his obsessive attack, is not an unreflecting end in itself. It is the reminiscence of a concrete sensual experience, an intimate bodily self-confidence that with the Modernist capacity for abstraction and with aggressive industrialisation and urbanisation has indeed been lost. Only forms of replacement, the film pin-up and fashionable advertisements were still to be seen ubiquitously, in the public sphere. Jack the Ripper is not only a pathological single person, but also the ironic signature of the self-alienated culture of Modernity, whom Grosz perceived as the vicious pocket book version of a modern iconoclast and breaker of values - all apparent in Ury's work, where also the opposite might be said.

From her interest in a historically critical reconstruction, Tanya Ury reverses the classical modernist principle of Cubist dissolution and deformation of realist image parts and its conflation, to become an achievement of abstraction of the newest art of that time. With the use of self-explanatory literary quotations, through developing narratives and the cautiously disintegrated image collage of the photo series, which also moves the optic edges and side motifs, step by step back into a "wandering centre", the aesthetic material and the literary and vivid creative elements are in no way purely abstract image statements - condensed or destroyed, but with their jigsaw-puzzle-like character, they stand still, are set free as historical artefacts, documents and traces, in their cultural elbowroom of meaning. They pervade a formal framework as ambiguous symbols, disharmonious sounds and strange melodies, in the service of the most militant discourse on a modernism, free of violence, which, with its emancipatory and destructive potential in politics and art, should be addressed with more sovereignty and more honesty.

Comments

Compare also with "Metonymie versus Metapher": Peter Brinkemper,; *Der Fall Franza als Paradigma weiblicher Ästhetik*. In: *Modern Austrian Literature*, Vol. 18, Numbers 3/4, University of California Los Angeles UCLA 1985. P. 147-182. ("Metonymy versus Metaphor" in "The Case of Franza as Paradigm of the Female Aesthetic" in "Modern Austrian Literature")

<http://209.85.129.104/search?q=cache:eBZtmHk2C4oJ:www.uni-bremen.de/campus/campuspress/highlights/highlights7.pdf+Tanya+Ury&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=202>

2001

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 And the region for the enrichment of cultural life

Emmerich is currently working with a group of PhD students on the theme "Jewish Culture and Literature in Germany Today". The background to this is the somewhat surprising fact that even after the murder and expulsion of Jews from Germany and Austria there is now a revival of intellectual life and an incredibly stimulating cultural production by Jews in the two countries - especially following Unification in 1989 which has led to an influx of Jews from Eastern Europe. The focus of research in this field is less on the "greats" of the old generation like Bloch, Adorno, Horkheimer, Heym or Reich-Ranicki. The Bremen research scientists prefer to direct their attention towards young writers like Maxim Biller, Esther Dischereit, Barbara Honigmann, Robert Menasse, Doron Rabinovici and Rafael Seligmann, the historian Dan Diner and such talented exponents of the plastic arts as **Tanya Ury**. "Those artists and intellectuals belong to the generation comprising the sons and daughters of survivors of the holocaust", says Emmerich. "Many of them first set foot in Germany during their childhood and youth, or came via the USA, Russia and Israel." They often live in contradiction to the experiences and identity of their parents. The writers among them relate grotesque, ironic, parodical stories which illustrate this double-edged formation of identity: "They are still identified via the holocaust with their parents' and grandparents' generations, but now they live surrounded by paradox in a country inhabited by the former murderers of Jews and they use the German language", muses Emmerich.

Between the Lines or the Three Rs, by Tanya Ury, a short story (English) for Rolf Steiner's: *Die weite Welt* (The Wide World) (unpublished)

Concept und design: Rolf Steiner, Cologne
 Manufacture of box carton: Ute Grünwald, Krefeld
 Printing of the text pages: Paul Heimbach, Cologne

<i>SEGUR DE CALAFELL</i>	Norbert Prangenberg
<i>NEW YORK</i>	Horst Münch
<i>TANGER</i>	Hella Berent
<i>BARCELONA</i>	Tanya Ury
<i>PARIS</i>	Peter Schmersal
<i>LAVAU DELBOS</i>	Christine & Irene Hohenbüch
<i>VARANASI</i>	Georg Ettl
<i>JOHANNESBURG</i>	Claudia Shneider

Nine places, nine texts, each in A3 format. The texts have been printed in water-soluble ink. Each of the nine text sheets were then worked on by the above named artists in an edition of thirty, so that each sheet is an original. The texts that have sometimes become unreadable because of the overlaid artistic works, are again presented here as a book, the essays being about the exciting relationship between foreign lands and home. The nine signed sheets and book are housed in a numbered box carton (44 x 31 x 3cm) with a light blue cover and a photo on the lid. The entire edition (820 Euros) consists of 20 box cartons and 10 artists' works.

Rolf Steiner Lindenstr.67 50674, Cologne, Tel.: 0221 243918

Presentation

Between the Lines or the Three Rs, Rolf Steiner's *Die weite Welt* (The Wide World):

2001 (5.11.-19.12.) Literaturhaus Köln (Literature House, Cologne (D) (reading 16 Uhr 12 Dez.)
 2001 (30.11.-4.11.) Rupert Walser at Art Cologne (D)
 2002 (27.12.2001-11.1.) Claus Bittner bookshop, Cologne (D)
 2002 (April/Mai) Rodenkirchen Kirche (Rodenkirchen Church) (D)
 2002 (21.3.-27.4.) Studio Dumont, Cologne (D)
 2004 (13.3.-16.5.) *Die weite Welt* (The Wide World), Museum Ludwig, Cologne (D)
 2013 (11.7.-7.9) "Righting the Image" - The Literature Collection in Cologne (LiK) and the Cologne City Library, (D)

The short story ***Between the Lines or The Three Rs*** (Tanya Ury 2001), written for Rolf Steiner's edition ***Die weite Welt*** (The Wide World) shares some common ground with Steiner's ***Barcelona***; both anecdotes take place in Spain. Where Steiner's German account is of the author's lonely search for something to write about, Ury's English text in letterform concerns itself with the animated adventures of the pseudonymous Hermé. Ury's letter, which addresses R, has been photocopied onto four transparent plastic sheets; these have been stapled together and placed over Steiner's text, to create an illegible amalgam. Only

when the texts are taken in the hand and the pages separated, can one read everything, of both stories.

Tanya Ury was born in 1951 in London. Her mother's family came from Cologne and were persecuted by the Nazis. It wasn't until she was her mid thirties that she began to study art and engage with her Jewish-German identity. Since 1988 she has been writing, making video, audio texts, installation, photography, and performance.

"The idea is paramount, it prescribes the medium. Ideas come in different ways; they can develop over years or suddenly turn up. Recently I had a dream about a chain mail curtain that had an electric current running through it... The expression "a jack of all trades and master of none" describes my working practice very well. I allow myself to work with a very wide range of materials; my own body is often included. That is high risk, as is any kind of exposure. It's all about the process of revelation, disclosure of past wrongs, cruelty and discrimination, that's why I'm against the separation of the private from the public."

An important thread in her work is the Holocaust and re-appropriation of that historical epoch. The video installation "Golden Showers" (1997) comprises of a tent-like construction, a kind of shower curtain, made of over a thousand small plastic bags that have been sewn together. "Every day I collect my hair, that falls out naturally, and stick it into a bag, together with a date ticket; then I sew them all together." Within the curtains (in the Cologne City Museum exhibition 1999) are three video monitors, which demonstrate an art restorer covering the artist's body in gold leaf.

The two "Blue Danaé" photos (1998) were made a year later. The artist is seated on blue velvet; close-up pictures portray her labia minora and clitoris covered in gold leaf. Zeus impregnated Danaé, when he appeared to her in the form of gold rain. In recent years, writing has become an important part of her work. Tanya Ury has been living in Cologne, Germany since 1993.

Rolf Steiner, Köln 2001
(English Translation Tanya Ury)

Author Cornelia Gerner
 Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin 2002
<http://www.culturebase.net/artist.php?72>



Tanya Ury, photo Hripsimé Visser

Tanya Ury was born in London in 1951. Since 1993 she has been living in Cologne, where part of the family lived before being persecuted and having to flee, because of their Jewish origins. In her art Tanya Ury works with her German-Jewish identity, themes of the Holocaust, rediscovering this historical epoch, racism and the role of women in this historical context of lost humanity.

Tanya Ury lives in Cologne. She recalls that her grandmother and her mother both used 4711, Eau de Cologne. In 1993 she had the number 4711 tattooed onto her thigh. When she later heard that the resistance fighter Milena Jesenskà was given the number 4714 in the Ravensbrück concentration camp and was consequently nicknamed "4711 - Eau de Cologne", she knew that the number and the tattoo were right for her. Tanya Ury is Jewish.

The video performance "Kölnisch Wasser" (Eau de Cologne), which the artist first presented in 1993, documents the execution of this tattoo. During the procedure, Tanya Ury and the tattoo artist talk about the history of National Socialism, about Germany and about the city of Cologne. On the second track of the video, the artist's voice can be heard. She sings the Loreley song and various carnival pieces. Two additional monitors show Tanya Ury doing a striptease. The dark-haired artist wears a long blond wig and is clad in leather. She also simulates taking a shower. The striptease is filmed by two cameramen, who also film each other. A fourth monitor shows the members of the public as they watch the striptease and the tattooing procedure.

In the video recording of the "Golden Showers" performance of 1997, the artist allows herself to be covered in gold leaf, in a test of patience that takes hours. Piece by piece the restorer lays the gold leaf onto the naked body until it is finally enveloped as if by a protective cloak. This painstaking process, laying the gold, leaf by leaf onto the skin, has something very soothing about it, like the treating of wounds that may finally be allowed to heal. In the end only the number 4711 remains

exposed. The video is soundless. "Sometimes you have to shout out loud", Tanya said in an interview with Radio Köln in April 2000, when was asked about the provocative aspect of her art. Her voice, which in many of her works compels one to listen, is in fact soft and gentle.

Tanya Ury concerns herself with her Jewish history, with her history as a Jewish woman, but also with exclusion and racism towards other minorities. In many of her works sexuality plays an ambivalent role with many nuances of meaning. The artist often confronts the viewer with her body and their own voyeurism. The observer becomes a voyeur because the artist wants it that way and makes voyeurism part of the performance. Although her striptease in "Kölnisch Wasser" is live, it nevertheless does not take place directly in front of the public. Tanya Ury is in a different room from the public. The camera provides the insight.

In a number of works Tanya Ury combines the themes of Holocaust and pornography. Two photos, which emerged in connection with "Golden Showers", are entitled "Blue Danaé". They show the artist's genitals covered in gold leaf. In the photo work "Triptych for a Jewish Princess Second Generation" of 1996 she wears nothing but a leather, German, air force coat. The photo's centrepiece is accompanied by a short text collage with the artist's own, and other sentences, some of which are very provocative - on the topics of family, Holocaust and fascism. The Sylvia Plath quote: "Every woman adores a Fascist. The boot in the face, the brute" is one of these sentences. "Eroticism and sensuousness are abused in our society; sex is divorced from love," says Tanya Ury. "People do not meet to make love but to have sex." Her video work "Hotel Chelsea - Köln" of 1995, circles around this theme in many variations.

Tanya Ury's works are full of allusions and images. A 21-part photo series produced in 2000 is called "Jack the Ladder". The photos are hung in seven rows of three, symbolising the rungs of a 3.5 metre-high ladder. In the play of light, the image fragments show a young Chinese woman against a red oriental carpet. The black tights emphasize her nakedness. Broken glass and nails are visible, and knives; ladders in the tights are painted with red nail varnish. Jack the lad's behaviour is "laddish"; he's up to no good; "ladder" implies both the structure used for climbing and the damage in the tights. And of course, "Jack the Ladder" is reminiscent of "Jack the Ripper".

This work emerged in the context of various bomb attacks directed against minorities in London 1999 and in Germany. In 2000 a nail bomb exploded at a bus stop in Düsseldorf, at which a group of Russian Jews would wait at the same time every week.

Furthermore "Jack the Ladder" can also be seen as an allusion to the story of Jacob's Ladder, a theme with which Tanya Ury has been working on for many years. Jacob, who wanted to trick his elder brother out of his birthright as the firstborn, had to flee, and while in exile dreamed of a ladder with angels that reached up to heaven. In a second encounter with God he fights

with an angel for a blessing from God. The artist does not agree with the story's philosophy: "I have a problem with this kind of behaviour," Tanya Ury says "with fighting, trying to get a blessing by such means." What would be the right way? "I think that with prayer and patience would be better," is her simple reply. In autumn 2002 "Jacob's Ladder" was presented at the Hochbunker in Cologne. Tanya Ury has written an article "*Transcending the Ladder*" about the development of this exhibition in: 'From Work to Word' Korridor Verlag (D) 2002 ISBN 3-9804354-8-2



Franco and Elke J. 2002

BIOGRAPHY

Tanya ury was born in 1951 in London. After completing school she worked in a variety of professions, amongst others as a cook and a health carer. Between 1985 and 1988 she studied Fine Art in Exeter (GB), followed by a term in Cologne in 1989. In 1988 she presented her work in public for the first time. In 1990 she completed her studies with a Masters in Fine Art at Reading University. 1991-92 Tanya Ury was awarded the Colin Walker Fellowship in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University.



Title photo by TANYA URY from the photo series "Ô d'Oriane"

The photo series "Ô d'Oriane", by the artist Tanya Ury, who lives in Cologne and London, derives its aesthetic from fashion photography and advertising imagery - women present various articles of clothing. What is special about these photos is that they have been perfumed with Chanel No. 5. "The sense of smell, sensuality and death" make up the framework of associations, of this artwork. Tanya Ury presents these perfumed photos together with the photo series "Sonata in Sea" and "Hermes Insensed" at the Hotel Seehof, Zürich until 30th September 2001.

Kunstforum International Volume 155 June - July 2001
(English translation by Tanya Ury)

(Cologne Culture 30 Association)**A Share in Art, by Gabriele Breun 10.8.2002**

The cutting of costs in cultural politics demands new and unconventional thinking - that is what the organisers of the Ehrenfeld initiative, Cologne Culture 30 Association, who are experienced in matters of exhibitions and cultural work, thought. To be precise: art lovers or companies should buy "share certificates" of 450 Euros, at certain exhibitions. So that sponsors can get an impression of the planned show and also have something in hand for their money, the artists will present a taster that can be bought with the aforementioned 450 Euros. At the present a photo series by Tanya Ury is the project being shown in the Association's gallery rooms.

The Jewish artist (51 year's old), who grew up in Great Britain and has been living in Cologne since 1993, has concerned herself for some time and quite subtly, with the themes of human encounter - the complications and the development. In her work Ury always relates back to her personal history. Such meetings are documented by staged, sometimes provocative, video and photo works.

Depicted are hurried, fast encounters between a man and a woman in a hotel - rushed love scenes in a hotel room that might just as quickly take a violent turn - with disturbing details, like the close-up of a number tattooed onto skin - not just any number, but of all things: 4711. The associations that are repeated continuously are deliberate. Tanya Ury admits she has a "wicked sense of humour" that unsettles her works, because it demands a response of clear positioning.

The sale of the 21 colour prints (43 x 68) originating from Ury's video "Hotel Chelsea - Köln", should finance a complex exhibition by the artist, in the autumn.

Körner Strasse 9. - 15. August, Tue - Fri 13-18 hours

The universal language in the ceremonial, simple hand-kiss that Tanya Ury portrays in her humorous colour photos is multi-layered. Unlike her six colleagues in the exhibition „Ambivalenzen“ (Frauen Museum Bonn & Galerie Münsterland Emsdetten (D) 2002), Ury, who was born in London and now lives in Cologne, concerns herself intensively with the people around her. The extensive Photo and Text series (*Hermes Insensed*) points to a close interweaving of her personal and artistic life: she asked friends and colleagues to greet one another with a “hand kiss”, to court and to reconcile themselves with one another; then she photographed them. It was up to those invited how they represented themselves - whether it was with a sense of irony, frankness, sarcasm or masochism. Tanya Ury has additionally written and presented fictitious letters, or diary notes that throw a wholly new and independent light on the photographed situations.

Schayan

(Translation from German Tanya Ury) ‘Deutschland’ Oct-Nov 2002

Jürgen Kisters, Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger (Gazette)

In the biblical Chapter of Moses, Jacob dreamt of a ladder which rested on the ground with its top reaching to heaven and angels of God going up and down it. Twenty years later he again had a vision. He wrestled with an angel and would not let him go; as dawn was breaking he said: "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The image of the ladder to heaven and the fight with the angel were the frame of reference for a six-year project that the artist Tanya Ury is now presenting in the above ground bunker, Körner Strasse, Ehrenfeld. Themes are a Roman Svastika in an antique shop vitrine, Neo-Nazis, traffic street signs covered in graffiti, misconceptions, erogenous zones and the English board game Snakes and Ladders.

Most importantly, it's about the actualisation of the past with memory and the recognition, that in personal, as in collective history, nothing really goes missing. "Can you get away from the identity that you were born with?" asks the artist who was born in London, 1951 to German Jewish emigrants. It wasn't until she was 37 years old that she felt she could develop her own voice as an artist. Since then, in telling her own personal history she has managed to free herself from the problems of fixed and given parameters. That means allowing one's memory to be jogged, looking for leads everywhere in the everyday and looking out for signs that will allow you a cautious (re)-interpretation.

Those are little swastikas and Stars of David you see as graffiti on the traffic signs along a street in Mallorca, which is being widened, if nothing else, then in the interests of German tourists. Against the background of the forced labour compensation issue, this is a glance at the hidden fashion continuity of the clothing empire Hugo Boss, who still put their money on the look of the "dark angel" and the robes of intimidation that brought them so much success as a fashion concept during the imperial state of the Third Reich, when they were the contracted producers of SA (Storm Trooper) and SS uniforms. And that is the bringing together of the image of a Spanish Peseta coin, (a swastika has been carved into the portrait of General Franco) and a press photo of a disabled German teenager who scored a swastika design onto her own cheek, and then claimed that she had been attacked by skinheads. The stifling atmosphere aroused by the intellectual clarity of this ensemble of photographs, videos, neon-sign writing and newspaper articles is inevitable. The feeling is heightened by the atmosphere of the bunker, where the fear and oppression of the National Socialist past is still a palpable, almost bodily presence.

Hochbunker, Körner Strasse 101, Fri - Sun 15-19 PM, till 10.11.2002

(Translation from German, Tanya Ury)

Jacob's Ladder Tanya Ury

http://www.kulturkoeln30.de/Galerie/tanya-ury/tanya_ury.pdf

The politically provocative historical and contemporary images and texts are an ensemble of photographs, video, neon signs, newspaper cuttings and other material, collated together by the artist Tanya Ury in Germany and Mallorca over a period of six years. The title 'Jacob's Ladder' refers to Jacob of the Old Testament.

Tanya Ury's article *Transcending the Ladder* appears in 'From Work to Word' edited and published by Doris Frohnappel, Professor of Photography at the Bergen Art Academy, Korridor Verlag, 2002 (D) ISBN 3-9804354-8-2

"He dreamt that he saw a ladder, which rested on the ground with its top reaching to heaven, and angels of God were going up and down it." New English Bible, Genesis 28 (12)

Twenty years later Jacob again had a vision; this time he wrestled with an angel.

"The man said, 'Let me go for day is breaking', but Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' New English Bible Genesis 31 (26)

Jacob's biblical fight with the angel and the ladder to heaven, are the original sources of inspiration for the various art works contained within the exhibition.



Swastikas and Stars #2 1999

Swastikas and Stars

10 photographs sealed under plexiglass and mounted (63cm x 94.5cm), Deià, Mallorca, no. 3-10 1996, no. 1-2 1999

These photographs are mainly of roadwork signs that display graffiti of swastikas and Stars of David, signifiers that are loaded with symbolical weight. The country lane, on which the street signs have been photographed, is being widened. In Mallorca, where much of the rural landscape is being cultivated as a building site for largely German purchasers, feelings run high among the natural inhabitants. Mallorca is still recovering from the repressions of a fascist dictatorship that ended only a quarter of a century ago; under Franco even the Catalan language was forbidden. Now the Mallorquin people are trying to cope with a tourist industry that has taken on colonial proportions. Although the trade guarantees incoming wealth, the foreign interest is for the Balearic location, not for the culture. Given this context, the meaning of the graffiti becomes complicated and less easy to encode.



Franco and Elke J. 2002

Franco and Elke J.

A photograph sealed under plexiglass and mounted, (63cm x 94.5cm) 2002

This double-profile-portrait combines the image of a Spanish 25 peseta coin from 1957 and a cutting from a German magazine in 1994. On the left, into the cheek of General Franco's face, a swastika has been carved. Opposite Francisco is the photographic image of Elke J. a disabled German teenager who claimed that skinheads had attacked her and scratched a swastika onto her cheek. The scarification turned out to be self-inflicted. In the press photo her identity has been protected; a black line covers her eyes making her appear anonymous or blinkered. (Text: Tanya Ury)

Dr. Béatrice Roschanzamir
 Ambivalence Exhibition Catalogue 2002



Holding the Baby 1 (Peter Zadek), 2002

Duality is the central theme of Tanya Ury's video "Hotel Chelsea - Köln", which was produced on the 50ieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps. In this multi-layered work, full of symbols, associations and intimations on a historical past, two rival figures play various roles, which all display similar attributes however: the inability to communicate and brutality within human "relationships", as a metaphor for violence in society and politics: perpetrators become victims and conversely (victims become perpetrators). A spoken narrative, which has no direct connection to the visual scenes match the images in their expressivity - here you discover background details, necessary to understand these scenes.

In "German-Jewish Literature of the nineties: The Generation after the Shoah", Dr. Cathy S. Gelbin writes: "Through the medium of her own body, the artist also exposes the voyeuristic infliction of the female body, which functions in postwar culture as a central signifier of the Jews' victimisation during the Shoah. The aesthetic strategy of reworking already mediated images of the genocide reflects the ways in which members of the postwar Jewish generation can rely only on pre-mediated images in order to position themselves vis-à-vis Jewish history and identity. At the same time, Ury's re-appropriation of the signifiers of anti-Semitism and sexism proposes the utopian self-determination of the body afflicted by the histories of oppression and annihilation."

A static camera underpins the oppressive atmosphere of a closed space, in which one's gaze has been trapped. It is only right at the start of the video that one sees a mirror

reflecting a horizon in the background, allowing the viewer to see the anonymity of everyday life on the street, while the actors are eating a meal. Long drawn-out meals bring to mind the dreams of female concentration camp prisoners, who would talk about food extensively, exchanging recipes, and inviting each other out to fictive meals in order to distract themselves from their hunger. But images of Jewish “utility” women, being raped, prostituted or humiliated by concentration camp authorities also weigh upon the memory. And importantly, by means of the number 4711 tattooed onto her thigh - the only image that appears in colour - Tanya Ury identifies with members of her family, who fled the Nazis from Cologne but also the town itself, in which she has decided to live.



Hermes Insensed 59, 2000-2001

In contrast to “Hotel Chelsea - Köln“, with “Hermes Insensed“, Tanya Ury presents us with a life-affirming artwork. These photographs are of couples enjoying themselves, lovingly, sensually or playfully giving a kiss on the hand - the hand-kiss, being an old-fashioned ritual that displays a distanced and formal intimacy. Each photo is accompanied by handwritten chronicles: impressions, memories or the artist’s fantasies - letters addressed to a fictitious or mythical Jack. She signs her self-addressed letters „Her/me“: “Her-mes In/sensed“, a sensual messenger of the gods.

About this piece Tanya Ury herself says “Hermes Insensed is nostalgia in a digital age. (...) The texts are quite simply a discourse on several levels: on the socio-political, the private and the personal. (...) Hermes Insensed is about me, my social environment, what moves me, the people I know and what I find fascinating about them, the things I remember from conversations.

It’s about the Diaspora and a world in which people travel, and deal with politics, racism, violence etc. It is about my daily life as a Jewess here and now and what motivates me, including the past.”

(Translation Tanya Ury)

Cathy S. Gelbin

2002 Plath, Hitchcock und die Metaphorik der Shoah: zur Vermitteltheit von Geschichte und Identität in der Kunst Tanya Urys, Dr Cathy S. Gelbin in *Deutsch-jüdische Literatur der neunziger Jahre: Die Generation nach der Shoah* (Plath, Hitchcock and Metaphors of the Shoah: the Mediation of History and Identity in the Art of Tanya Ury), by Dr Cathy S. Gelbin, *German-Jewish Literature of the nineties: The Generation after the Shoah*, publ. Erich Schmidt Verlag ISBN 3-503-06125-8 (D)

2003 Metaphern des Genozids Die Repräsentation von Geschichte und Identität in der Kunst Tanya Urys von Dr Cathy S. Gelbin in *Gesellschaftstheorie und Postcoloniale Kritik* (Metaphors of Genocide, The Staging of History and Identity in the Art of Tanya Ury), by Dr Cathy S. Gelbin in *Social Theory und Post-Colonial Critique*, publ. Unrast Verlag ISBN 3-89771-425-6 (D)

Metaphors of Genocide: The Staging of Jewish History and Identity in the Art of Tanya Ury - in Performance and Performativity in German Cultural Studies, Carolin Duttlinger, Lucia Ruprecht, Andres Webber (eds) 2003, publ. Peter Lang

In recent years, scholarship in the field of cultural studies has focussed on the ways in which the body has been constructed as the site of the inscription and fixation of identity. Drawing on this work, the following article will consider how Tanya Ury's artwork configures the female body and its Jewish implications after the Shoah. Tanya Ury, the daughter of German-Jewish immigrants, was born in London in 1951 and moved to Cologne in 1993, where she lives and works today. Ury's performances and photographic artwork since the mid-1990s stage the gendered, sexualised and racialised fixations of the discursively and historically injured body, positing yet ultimately suspending its utopian liberation from these inscriptions.¹

In Ury's work, the notions of performance as an art form and as the re-enactment of socially and culturally constructed identities, defined by religion, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, overlap. The postmodern view of identity as performative has sought to undo the essentialising link between individual personality and the gendered, sexualised and racialised body as one of the legacies of modernity. Katrin Sieg developed her concept of ethnic drag on the basis of Judith Butler's and others' theories on gender drag.² According to Sieg, ethnic drag maps ethnicised characteristics and codes onto the body of an Other, rather than essentialising that body in biological or psychological terms.³ While literary texts frequently essentialise identity through the body, the latter functions as a central and indispensable mediator of human

¹ According to Edith Almhofer, these aesthetic elements also characterise performance art in general. As Almhofer points out, the multi-dimensional and trans-aesthetic, avantgardist approach of this art form challenges virtually all categories of bourgeois notions of art. See Edith Almhofer, *Performance Art: Die Kunst zu leben* (Vienna: Böhlau Nachfolger, 1986), p. 7.

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

³ See Katrin Sieg, 'Ethnic Drag and National Identity: Multicultural Crisis, Crossings, and Interventions', in *The Imperialist Imagination*, ed. By Sarah Friedrichsmeyer et al. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp.295-319

experience as both essential and transient in performance art.⁴ As Marina Abramovic, one of the leading international performance artists, asserts:

All through my life, whatever I talk about I have experienced. (...) For me, knowledge doesn't come from books. It comes from experience. I call this kind of experience 'liquid knowledge'. It is liquid. It is something that runs through your system. It goes through the body.⁵

Ury's art must be contextualised within the aesthetic features of performance art as they have been shaped by Abramovic and others since the 1970s. As RoseLee Goldberg has shown, performance art in the 1970s turned increasingly towards the emotional and personal in order to undermine existing sexual and social taboos. This artistic strategy frequently displayed strong masochistic and narcissistic tendencies with a cathartic gesture.⁶ Ury's aesthetic choices are additionally influenced by the developments in performance art since Laurie Anderson's performances and publications during the 1980s, which led to the broad employment of modern mass media by live artists.

As early as the 1960s, artists such as Yves Klein and Carolee Schneemann had insisted on the body as the central mediator of their art. During the 1990s, this primacy of the body became increasingly politicised, with live artists thematising social problems, such as AIDS and sexual violence. At the same time, performance artists developed the masquerade as their most important aesthetic means.⁷ Ury's live modification of her body in her performance *Kölnisch Wasser*, during which she had the number 4711 tattooed onto her thigh, anticipates the recent trend towards physical mutilation in the highly controversial 'carnal art' of Tracey Emin, Orlan, Mark Quinn and others.⁸

In drawing on the dynamic means of performance, masquerade and physical modification, Ury attempts to release the postwar 'Jewish' body from its discursive over-determination through images of suffering and death, re-enabling it to signify beyond the implications of its Jewishness. Her art consistently evokes and reworks Holocaust imagery from other artefacts of postwar culture, such as the writings of Sylvia Plath, Primo Levi and Italo Calvino, and the films of Liliana Cavani and Alfred Hitchcock. Through the medium of her own body, the artist also exposes the voyeuristic infliction of the female body, which functions in postwar culture as a central signifier of the Jews'

⁴ I am indebted to Steve Dixon for valuable insights into the function of the body in performance art, which I received from his talk 'The Virtual Body in Performance', given at the University of Manchester on 22 February 2001.

⁵ See Marina Abramovic, *Unfinished business*, ed. By Hannes M. Mahler (Cologne: Salon Verlag, 1999), no page numbers. Abramovic received international acclaim through her performances 'Cleaning the Mirror' and 'Balkan Baroque' in New York (1995) and Venice (1997), during which she scrubbed blood-covered bones as a metaphor for the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. These performances are documented in Rose Lee Goldberg: *Performance: Live Art since the 60s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), p. 114.

⁶ Goldberg, p.23

⁷ Goldberg, 99.27 and 95-99.

⁸ The archetypal quality of the symbols featuring in Ury's work becomes apparent in comparison with the equally politicised art of memory by non-Jewish German artist Beate Passow. In 1993, Passow created a public fashion display with the coat of a political concentration camp victim marked with the number 17411. For a discussion of Passow's work, see 'Beate Passow, "Nicht Vergangenheitsbewältigung, sondern Gegenwartsbewältigung": Ein Gespräch mit Alexander Braun', *Die Zukunft des Körpers*, *Kunstforum*, 132 (1996), 290-301.

victimisation during the Shoah.⁹ The aesthetic strategy of reworking already mediated images of the genocide reflects the ways in which members of the postwar Jewish generation can rely only on pre-mediated images in order to position themselves vis-à-vis Jewish history and identity. At the same time, Ury's re-appropriation of the signifiers of anti-Semitism and sexism proposes the utopian self-determination of the body afflicted by the histories of oppression and annihilation.

The title of Ury's Triptych for a *Jewish Princess Second Generation* draws the cliché of the rich and spoilt Jewish woman and places it into the context of the Shoah.¹⁰



Plate 9. Tanya Ury, *Triptych for a Jewish Princess Second Generation* (1996)
Reproduced by courtesy of the artist.

The pose of the naked artist in a German Luftwaffe coat evokes the sado-masochistic configuration of Nazi perpetrators and their victims in the 'S&M' scene, which has espoused the eroticization of Nazi symbols. This imagery has increasingly entered mainstream visual culture since approximately the 1970s, Lina Wertmüller's film *Seven Beauties* (Italy 1975) being a prominent example. However, in contrast to Liliana Cavani's film *Night Porter* (Italy 1974), which particularly inspired Ury,¹¹ the *Triptych* does not allow for voyeuristic pleasure as an end to itself. Here, the exhibition of Nazi regalia does not merely further a sexual economy that eventually equates the victims with their perpetrators. Where Cavani employs Nazi regalia to empower sexually the female body, Ury exposes its vulnerability, together with its sexual connotations, underneath the scant protection of the coat. Unlike SS regalia as the archetypal symbol of the perpetrators, the creased Luftwaffe coat, marked by long wear by its individual bearer, is also the sign of the defeated enemy. Ury's staging of the body in the coat represents a victorious gesture that does not efface the body's underlying vulnerability. The *Triptych* thus ultimately questions the

⁹ For the construction of the female body as metaphor of the alleged passivity of Jewish victims during the Shoah, see Judith Doneson, 'The Jew as a Female Figure in Holocaust Film', *Shoah* 1/1. See also Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.81.

¹⁰ The medium of performed photography, i.e. the *Triptych*, is related to performance or live art, from which it takes its techniques (see Goldberg, p.98).

¹¹ Tanya Ury related this information to me in personal conversation.

possibility of reversing or attaching pleasure to the constellation of perpetrators and victims during the Shoah.

In her article 'Taking on the Mantle',¹² Ury relates how her father, a German-Jewish refugee, returned to his native Ulm in a GI jacket in order to search for his mother. A previous acquaintance of the family recognised him in the street and remarked that his mother would turn in her grave if she could see him this way, in enemy uniform. Later, during the Vietnam war, the GI's daughter wore the now fashionable jacket without considering its transformation from a symbol of liberation to a symbol of oppression in the intervening years. Some twenty years later, Ury's *Triptych* both cites and criticises the prevailing fascination with uniforms and Nazi symbols in the 'S&M' scene and in mass culture. The artist's pose in the coat implicated with Nazi history, a particularly provocative act in the German-Jewish context, opens up the question of the ambivalent and productive potential of such reconfigurations. In her reverse symbolism of her father's appearance in enemy uniform she re-appropriates the German part of her personal history, reclaiming her share in the German context despite the Nazis' anti-Semitism and prevailing anti-German sentiments in Britain.

Ury's dedication of the *Triptych* to her father and her insertion of fragments from Sylvia Plath's poem 'Daddy' demonstrates the complex ways in which the artist explores the tensions between 'Germans' and 'Jews', first and second generation, women and men to open up multiple layers and overlappings of meaning. The reworking of Plath's Holocaust images into fragments of Ury's own story occurs through the figure of the father as the lyrical addressee and in the ambiguous references to 'Sylvia'. For Tanya Ury's mother shared this first name with the poet Sylvia Plath, who committed suicide by gassing herself in a kitchen oven in 1963. As the artist related in 'Taking on the Mantle', Sylvia Ury unsuccessfully attempted to commit suicide in the same way only a few years after Plath. 'It seemed to me horrifyingly paradoxical that my mother had chosen to imitate the way in which her aunts had been murdered in Germany', Ury writes in her article.¹³ These overlapping constellations appear in the text of *Triptych*:

Sylvia, I was ten when
they buried you.
(...)

Sylvia put her head
in the gas oven
to put out the pain
trying to get back,
get back
getting back what is Jew (Triptych)

By using Plath's Holocaust metaphors to construct a Holocaust-related meaning in her own text, Ury indirectly dismisses the

¹² Tanya Ury, 'Taking on the Mantle', in *AufBrüche: Kulturelle Produktionen von Migrantinnen, Schwarzen und jüdischen Frauen im kulturellen Diskurs Deutschlands*, ed. By Cathy S. Gelbin et al. (Königstein/Ts.: Helmer Verlag 1999), pp.253-79

¹³ Ury, p.256

accusation of Plath's Holocaust imagery as inappropriate.¹⁴ One of the more recent though modified examples of this criticism is found in James Young's assertion that Plath privatised the Shoah for the lyrical representation of her personal pain, therefore not adequately accounting for the genocide as a collective experience of Jews. At the same time, Young argues, that Plath did not simply exploit the victims of the Shoah through her employment of Holocaust metaphors. Instead, the latter had become part of the wider arsenal of language shaped by the images of the genocide circulating in news reports and the mass media since the 1961 Eichmann Trial.¹⁵

Born and raised in the British postwar context, Ury adopts Plath's gesture of appropriation in her own grasp for meaning. The historically forged constellations of victims and perpetrators, Jews' and Germans', appear as the stuff of individual appropriation through the postwar Jewish generation, whose understanding of the Shoah is necessarily mediated through others' accounts. Ury's pose in the Luftwaffe coat ultimately parallels Plath's adoption of the metaphors of Jewish victimisation, for as Ury implicitly suggests through the fragment from Plath's text cited below, identities are acquired rather than inherent. At the same time the artist contextualises these identities within historically shaped discourses. By evoking the stereotype of the satanic Jews in her image of the Jewish Princess, she exposes this cliché of the Jewish woman as saturated with anti-Semitism.¹⁶ The *Triptych* thus undoes the notion that an arbitrary play with identities and the symbols associated with them is possible. Through the interplay of Plath's text and her own, Ury instead portrays the staging of identities as inseparable from their historic specificities, which profoundly implicate the individual:

'I began to talk
like a Jew.
I think I may well
Be a Jew.'
Yid-id-identity
primitive instincts
Princess of Darkness
go back home (*Triptych*)¹⁷

In contrast to Plath, however, Ury does not evoke the genocide as a central metaphor for private pain. Rather, the body bears the multiple imprints of individual experience with its personal and historical dimensions, as well as of the formations of personal identity within the wider social discourse on Jews. At the same time, Ury exposes the ways in which the body functions as the site of the enactment of sexist domination through the means of sexual violence and pornography.

¹⁴ For this critical discourse on Plath, see Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 'Exploiting Atrocity', in *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), especially pp. 175-82.

¹⁵ James E. Yong, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 117-33.

¹⁶ The notion of the Jewish woman as rich and spoilt has become particularly prominent in the U.S. context, which has developed the term JAP (Jewish American Princess) with its both anti-Semitic and anti-Japanese connotations.

¹⁷ Sylvia Plath, 'Daddy', in *Selected Poems*, ed. By Ted Hughes (London: faber and faber, 1985), pp. 60-62 (p. 61).

While the pose of the naked, sexually aroused body in the Luftwaffe coat can be read as an act of self-determination, its dedication to Ury's father reflects the incestuous dimension to the father-daughter relationship also present in Plath's poem: 'The vampire who said he was you / And drank my blood for a year / Seven years, if you want to know.'¹⁸ Plath's poem ostentatiously reduces the dichotomy of Fascist and Jew to a signifier of the indicated sexual abuse of the daughter by her father. In Ury's *Triptych*, however, the dichotomies resulting from German-Jewish history, as well as from gender and generational troubles, do not function simply as ciphers that ultimately efface each other. In contrast, the complex interplay of these manifold dichotomies appears to have a profound bearing on the formation of identity among the second generation.

Ury's strategy of re-appropriating the images associated with German and Jewish positionalities, as well as with the visual exploitation of the female body, represents a postmodern gesture releasing the body from essentialising and one-dimensional meanings. The artist's striving for heterogeneity is also reflected in the different background colours of the *Triptych*, which suggests that any reading of the presented body depends on its specific context. The artwork stages symbols attached to historic positionalities, such as the Luftwaffe coat, through the body rather than inscribing these positionalities into it, thus pointing to the ways in which symbols both effect identity and inherently undermine its stability.

By exploring the impact of these charged symbols on the individual, Ury rejects the arbitrariness often associated with postmodernism. The performing of German-Jewish dichotomies serves as a strategy to liberate the body from its historical and discursive injuries, and opens up the possibility of its self-determined reconfiguration. Ury's art insists both on the precarious human drive for pleasure and the painful weight of history. It disturbs by continually resisting the forging of a coherent narrative that would resolve the conflict between historical responsibility and individual need, and between the dichotomies represented.

This strategy also marks the multi-media installation *Golden Showers*, which was displayed at the Stadtbibliothek Münster in 1997. Two years later, the installation was shown at the Kölnisches Stadtmuseum in 1999 as part of the exhibit 'Menschen wie du und ich', which accompanied the controversial exhibit on the Wehrmacht crimes. In similar ways to the *Triptych*, *Golden Showers* disrupts stable modes of interpretation through its intermediality and its overlapping historical, cultural and sexualised associations. Through this strategy of producing heterogeneous interpretations, Ury's artwork effects the consequences of the Shoah for cultural production but also for the postwar Jewish generation's grasp on cultural and historical symbols. For its working through of the tensions produced by the interplay of individual and collective experience, the Second Generation can only draw on overlapping and often contradictory, always already mediated images. While the seemingly inappropriate multiplicity of meanings renders any 'authentic'

¹⁸ Plath, p.62.

grasp on identity and history impossible, it also opens up the potential of unlimited creativity.



Plate 10. Tanya Ury, Plastic shower curtain, from Golden Showers (1997).
Reproduced by courtesy of the artist.

The 1997 installation of *Golden Showers* reprinted here featured four plastic curtains assembled out of small plastic bags (Plate 10), which contain Ury's hair from natural hair loss collected during the last years. Simultaneously, a two-hour video recording of a performance is shown, in which the artist has German art restorer Wolfgang Sasmannshausen coat her body in gold leaf. Only the number 4711, engraved on Ury's thigh by a German tattoo artist in her 1993 performance *Kölnisch Wasser*, remains uncovered (Plate 11).¹⁹



Plate 11. Tanya Ury. The number 4711 surrounded by gold leaf, from *Golden Showers* (1997). Reproduced by courtesy of the artist.

The number signifies the artist's symbolic re-inscription into the German-Jewish context, for it evokes both the tattooing of inmates at Auschwitz and the affiliation with the city of Cologne, from which members of Ury's family were deported to their deaths or driven into exile.

In her article 'Taking on the Mantle', Ury mentions Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho* as a central inspiration for *Golden Showers*. As Ury suggests, *Psycho*, portraying the shocking murder of a naked woman in a shower, evokes the configuration of the shower bath as a death chamber as an archetypal image of the Shoah. Ury reads the presence of this Holocaust metonymy in *Psycho* through Hitchcock's advisory function for the production of *Memory of the Camps*, a 1945 British documentary shot at

¹⁹ For Ury, the tattoo does not represent a permanent marking of the body, for tattoos can be removed. See Tanya Ury, *Kölnisch Wasser*, Cologne 1993.

Bergen-Belsen immediately after the liberation of the camp.²⁰ In fact, the association of Hitchcock's *Psycho* with the Shoah is by no means arbitrary. Hitchcock based his film on Robert Bloch's 1959 novel of the same title with its protagonist Norman Bates, a motel owner and serial killer of women.²¹ Bloch in turn drew inspiration for his novel from the gruesome crimes of the odd-jobs man and serial killer Ed Gein from Plainfield, Wisconsin, whose 1957 discovery had shocked the U.S. public in ways comparable to the Jeffrey Dahmer case in the 1990s. A collector of sensationalist articles on the Nazis' crimes,²² Ed Gein's quasi-technical interest in 'how things work' had led him to skin dissect and preserve the corpses of his exclusively female victims.²³ Taxidermy was also practised in Nazi camps such as Buchenwald, where the SS collected prisoners' heads and made lampshades from human skin. Bloch's novel reflected Ed Gein's obvious inspiration by the Nazis' crimes by renaming him Norman, a name of Germanic origin, and by setting the murder in the workplace shower – the author's free invention – in a barracks, ending with the woman's decapitation.

Whereas Bloch, however, portrays Bates in terms of the insane, the atavistic and the occult, Hitchcock represents the murderer as partaking in Western classical culture. Where the bookshelves of Bloch's protagonist include books on the witch-cult, 'abnormal psychology, occultism, theosophy',²⁴ the record collection in the room of Hitchcock's Bates, surveyed by the victim's sister Lila, includes Beethoven's 'Eroica', one of the symphonic works particularly favoured by the Nazis.²⁵ In extermination camps such as Auschwitz, the SS were known to relax over classical music presented by the prisoners' orchestra during or after a day's work of killing.²⁶

Hitchcock's visualisation of the material strengthens the thematic and textual associations with the Shoah already present in the original story and Bloch's novel. His shooting of the taxidermist's crime in a clinically clean white-tiled bathroom recaptures the Nazi's notion of the gas chambers as bath houses. In fact, air and breathing feature prominently in relation to the crime, hinting at the notion of suffocation. Upon showing his victim-to-be her motel room, Bates complains about the stuffy air while omitting the word 'bathroom', thus indicating that this facility may not be quite what it appears to be.

Later, seated in the office parlour below his preserved bird, he ponders about the danger of traps, anticipating the end of his unsuspecting victim: 'We're all in our private traps,

²⁰ For an exploration of the history of this documentary, see Elizabeth Sussex, 'The Fate of F 3080', in *Sight & Sound: International Film Quarterly*, 53.2 (Spring 1984), 92-97.

²¹ See Robert Bloch, *Psycho* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999).

²² See Janet Leigh with Cristophr Nickens, *Psycho: Behind the Scenes of the Classic Thriller* (London: Pavilion, 1995), p.10.

²³ See Stephen Rebello, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of Psycho* (London: Boyars Publishers, 1998), p.4, for this quote from Gein.

²⁴ Bloch, p. 136

²⁵ On the role of Beethoven's music during the Third Reich, see Heribert Schröder, 'Beethoven im Dritten Reich: Eine Materialsammlung', in: *Beethoven und die Nachwelt: Materialien zur Wirkungsgeschichte Beethovens*, ed. By Helmut Loos (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1986).

²⁶ This practice was already documented during the Nuremberg Trials. A survivor reported that 'while shipments of innocent people went into the ovens, the orchestra played loud music on the other side of the street.' See the documentation used for the Nuremberg Trials and first published in French in 1946, translated as *Inside the Concentration Camps: Eyewitness Accounts of Life in Hitler's Death Camps*, compiled by Eugene Aroneanu (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publisher, 1996), p. 123.

clamped in them, and none of us can ever get out. We scratch and (...) and claws (...) but only at the air, only at each other'. During the shower scene, the camera focuses on the victim's neck, an effect that is reinforced by her rubbing of her throat. Filmed from below, the water aggressively shoots down towards the camera and then, in another take, into the victim's opened mouth and against her throat. Bernard Herrmann's film music not only traces the woman's last heartbeats, but also her last intakes of breath.

The shower scene inspired Hitchcock to make this film.²⁷ Overtly portraying an act of physical and moral cleansing paradoxically leading to the woman's death, the scene seems to communicate an additional meaning surpassing what is manifest in the images and dialogue.²⁸ In the sequence following the murderer's cleanup of the crime scene, an elderly woman enquires in a hardware store whether insecticides really do kill painlessly: 'They tell you what its ingredients are and how it's guaranteed to exterminate any insect in the world, but they do not tell you whether or not it's painless. For I say insect or man, death should always be painless.' While the murderer's aforementioned ponderings recall witnesses' reports of the bodies of gas chamber victims locked together, having fought against each other for the last remains of oxygen, the woman's last sentence in the hardware store echoes the Nazis' cynical lie about insecticides a 'humane' means of annihilation.²⁹ This is not to argue that *Psycho* is a film about the Shoah, but rather that the underlying imagery of the Shoah functions as a cipher of total horror precisely because it remains implicit.³⁰ In contrast to Plath, however, Hitchcock can be credited with at least a certain political agenda. The latter is evident in his films made during World War II, but also in his refusal to accept any fee for his collaboration in *Memory of the Camps*.³¹

²⁷ See François Truffaut, with the collaboration of Helen G. Scott, *Hitchcock*, rev. edn (London: Paladin Books 1986), p. 263.

²⁸ Truffaut has described this ambiguity as typical of Hitchcock's works: 'for the past forty years, each of his pictures features several such scenes in which the rule of counterpoint between dialogue and image achieves a dramatic effect by purely visual means.' (Truffaut, p. 9). Hitchcock's aesthetic realisation of the horror, which relied on the primacy of the technical, should also be noted here. As the director remarked in conversation with Truffaut, he was not interested in *Psycho* because of its plot or protagonists. What he cared about instead were 'the pieces of film and the photography and the sound track and all the technical ingredients that made the audience scream.' (Truffaut, p. 434).

²⁹ The insecticide Zyklon B was used in the Nazi extermination camps for the allegedly pain-free and 'humane' annihilation of inmates deemed 'subhuman'. Nazi propaganda represented Jews in particular as vermin. As was testified during the Nuremberg Trials, 'The dead all had terrible scratches on them. In their wild desperation and frantic battle with death, the gouged out their own eyes and lacerated their own flesh. (...) The bodies were intertwined with each other, so tightly were they squeezed together. It was next to impossible to disentangle them' (*Inside the Concentration Camps*, p. 131).

³⁰ The evocation of the Shoah as a cipher of horror in postwar cinema has remained under-examined by recent critics, who have instead focussed on the dangers of atomic war and the persecutions of the McCarthy era. See, for example, Mark Jancovich's essential study on *Rational fears: American Horror in the 1950s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

³¹ For an exploration of the director's work from this period, see Ina Rae Hark: "'We Might Even Get in the Newsreels": The Press and Democracy in Hitchcock's World War II Anti-Fascist Films', in *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays*, ed. By Richard Allen and S. Ishii-Gonzales (London: British Film Institute, 1999) pp. 333-47. A comment made by Hitchcock during a 1947 press conference further supports the detection of a moralistic or ethical dimension in his films: 'I aim to provide the public with beneficial shocks. Civilization has become so protective that we're no longer able to get our goose bumps instinctively. The only way to remove the numbness and revive our moral equilibrium is to use artificial means to bring about the shock. The best way to achieve that. Seems to me, is through a movie.' (Truffaut, p. 295).

The torn shower curtain at the end of the shower sequence in *Psycho* symbolises the murder of the main protagonist after the first half of the film. This rupture of narrative convention continues to shock viewers of the film today. Ury's *Golden Showers* too creates a disrupted narrative through the employment of various media. The shower curtain with the enclosed hair, marked by numbers, points to the genocide, but also to remembrance as an everyday individual act evoking the traditional Jewish imperative of *yiskor*.³² In the context of the Shoah, the possibility of deriving visual and sexual pleasure from the naked female body, related to its cultural coding as an object of beauty and of the voyeuristic gaze, must appear inappropriate. Hitchcock's camera, following Bates' gaze upon his undressing victim through a peephole, aligning the lens with the human eye, seems to cite both the voyeuristic gaze of the Nazi perpetrators on their enclosed victims and that of the documentary camera in *Memory of the Camps*.

Meanwhile on screen, the artist has her own body restored and aestheticized without effacing the inscription of other symbols on it. By employing modern media such as video, and artificial materials such as the plastic shower curtain, and by drawing on artefacts of mass culture such as Cavani's *Night Porter* and Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Ury foregrounds the present rather than the past. The artist does not aim to represent the annihilation of human life in the gas chambers with the means of realism. Rather, she tests the way in which contemporary aesthetic means and materials, including those associated with pop or trash culture, could lend themselves to signify both the historical event of the Shoah and the subjective process of understanding it in the present.

In *Hotel Chelsea - Köln*, another work of video art, Ury postulates the impossibility of drawing on the aesthetic traditions of high culture after Auschwitz: 'He was an artist. He was using such expressions as "Kultureller Fortschritt", cultural progress. And "hohe ästhetische Qualität". She wondered after Auschwitz, what this could possibly mean - High Culture.' Ury's work addresses the problem of representation, while insisting through the visual beauty of her work that art on and after Auschwitz is possible: even with the means of 'trash', perhaps a metaphor for the human life that was rendered cheap and dispensable. Her plastic shower curtain refers, metonymically to the gas chamber, yet forecloses the possibility of an image of the dying that took place in it. The afflicted body does not appear, death is not acted out through the medium of another body in the present, for the living cannot assume the role of the dead. The experience of the annihilated cannot be mediated; their bodies remain lost both in physical reality and for representation.

By having her own body aestheticised and symbolically restored on a separate video screen, Ury points to the genealogical, experiential, cultural, and aesthetic ruptures caused by the

³² *Yizkor*: Ritual remembrance of the dead, practised on the annual day of death of the deceased, as well as on high holidays such as Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The impetus to remember the history of the Jewish people is deeply engrained in Jewish tradition and self-understanding, as for example reflected in the telling of the Passover Haggadah.

Shoah. The gold leaf evokes the ancient Egyptian custom of coating mummies with gold, with its associations of death and transcendence. Together with the surrounding images, the process restores the ability of the postwar body to signify beyond its historical 'Jewish' codings, to incorporate multiple meanings, including those of death and life, of historical suffering, but also of physical beauty and pleasure. These connotations appear in the multiple meanings of the term 'Golden Showers' itself, connoting the sexual practice of urination in 'S&M'. The artist visually encourages a heterogeneous reading of her work through the presence of posters surrounding the installation. Nazi gold was melted from the possessions of the murdered and is re-appropriated symbolically in the gilding of Ury's body. Zeus' appearance in the form of golden showers to seduce Danae is the stuff of ancient Greek myth, but also of modern German culture.

In one of her follow-up works, entitled *Ô d'Oriane*, Ury draws on the sleek aesthetic of fashion photography to expose the voyeuristic exploitation of the female body and the workings of every-day artefacts in the construction of memory (Plate 7).



Plate 7. Tanya Ury, Claudia Stauch in *Ô d'Oriane* (2000).
Reproduced by courtesy of the artist.

Signifiers of the Shoah appear in *Ô d'Oriane* like subtle traces of scent evoking faint memory, understandable only in the context of Ury's previous works and her literary references. Each of the thirteen scented and sepia-tinted photographs, taken in 1997 and arranged anti-clockwise in the 2000 artwork, is complemented by quotes from Primo Levi's 'The Mnemogogues' (1966) and Italo Calvino's 'The Name, the Nose' (1972).³³ Both stories concern themselves with the central function of scent in constructing memory. However, the attempts of both stories' protagonists to preserve memories through the odours connected to them fail, as scent is as elusive and fading, but also as individually marked as memory. Where Levi's protagonist Morandi identifies in a substance 'the smell of a barracks',³⁴ his counterpart Montesanto is reminded of his childhood days in schoolrooms. And while carbolic acid, used as a germicide in the past, evokes the antiseptic environment of hospitals as sites of disease and death, it also summons up happy memories of Montesanto's youth.

In Calvino's story, each of the three male narrators, one an ape, one a noble Frenchman and one a young musician in contemporary London, is attracted by the scent of a female whom he finds dead at the end of the story, possibly murdered by a male competitor. Following the scent of his female object, Calvino's musician is confronted with a locked room with a gas stove 'you can smell gasping through the cracks in the door'.³⁵ From this room filled with gas from top to bottom he perceives her long, outstretched body, an image reflected in the eleventh photograph of Ury's series, which shows the slender, oddly twisted body of a woman sleeping, perhaps, on a bed.

Ury's photographs of German fashion stylist Claudia Stauch contrast the sleek and eternally young world of fashion photography with the disjointed body and assorted shoes, both traces of the destruction process in the Nazi concentration camps. The recent preference for sepia tints in fashion photography suggests the fashionable appeal of this past itself, a notion which Ury's use of sepia to reinforce the presence of death and decay undermines. In contrast to the *Triptych* and *Golden Showers*, however, the traces of the Shoah in this work seem uncertain and remote. They are distanced further through the featuring of a younger model rather than Ury's employment of her own ageing and physically marked body.

From the powerful working through of her personal history in her performance art since the early 1990s, Ury has turned to less immediate art forms and broader questions around aestheticisation and commemoration. Perhaps this strategy too can be read as a cathartic move within the artist's oeuvre, a gesture of release from an unbearable history whose signifiers nonetheless remain vaguely present. As even Calvino's *élégant* would admit, 'the perfumes of memory evaporate: each new scent that I was made to sniff, as it imposed its diversity, its own powerful presence, made still vaguer the recollection of that absent perfume, reduced it to a shadow'.³⁶

³³ Primo Levi, 'The Mnemogogues', in *The Sixth Day* (London: Abacus, 2001), pp. 9-17, and Italo Calvino, 'The Name, the Nose', in *Under the Jaguar Sun* (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 67-83.

³⁴ Levi, p.14.

³⁵ Calvino, P. 82.

³⁶ Calvino, p. 71.



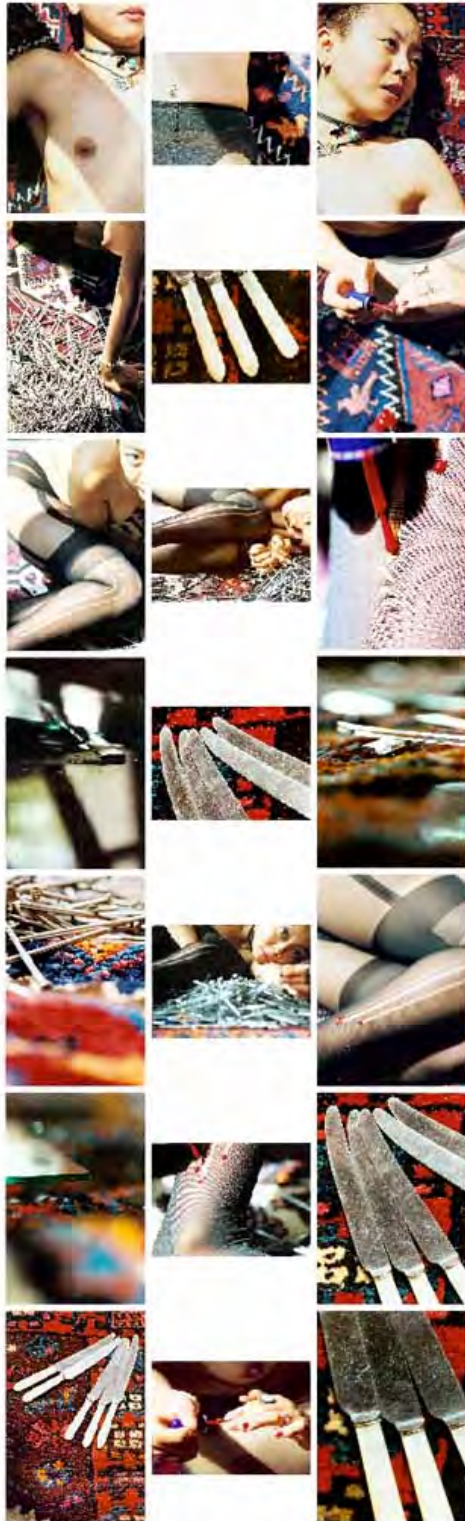
lesser is me more or less, 2003

**The Right of the Image,
 Jewish Perspectives in Modern Art
 Hans Günter Golinski, Sepp Hiekisch (D)(Hg.) 2003
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Hans Günter Golinski: To the Themes in an Exhibition, Page 25:

Somewhere in between taking sides and distancing themselves from a life in public. The paradoxical situation of artists from a Jewish background, which ranges from normal to being a special case, furnishes them with a sharpened consciousness that distances them to society at large and makes them aware of the conditions of minorities. Closely connected with the above aforementioned traditions and the practice of political wakefulness in their artistic creativity, artists like Leon Golub and Nancy Spero express an unmistakable social-political credo in their works, in that they bring home injustices with commitment, thereby forcing the spectator to position themselves and act. The same goes for representatives of a younger generation such as Komar & Melamit, Maxim Kantor, Moshe Gershuni, Menashe Kadishman, Penny Yassour, Roe Rosen or Tanya Ury.

(Translation from German TU)



Jack the Ladder, 2000

Dr. Christoph Kivelitz, Page 276-277:

Tanya Ury looks to portray historical, cultural and semantic connections in images and texts with the closest care to detail, in order to create a complex tableau, employing various media.

'Jack the Ladder' (2000), a 21-piece photo series by Tanya Ury is presented in the form of a 3.5 meter-high ladder with seven steps. The basic form of the ladder consists of a montage of fragmented images, that from various angles convey the portrait of a young Chinese woman, Echo Ho, here also as a figure for the artist's projection. The woman raises herself up from an oriental carpet that is principally red. Apart from black tights, she is completely naked and engaged in painting her fingernails red. Her nylons have runs. There is over and above the basic superficial form, a connection to the title, for instead of utilizing the word "run" - "ladder", a far more vivid (English) word is employed here. She tries to fix them (the tights) with the application of nail varnish, thereby also awakening the impression of dripping blood. On some of the photos one can see steel nails, on others a set of five antique fruit knives with mother of pearl handles. These strengthen the association of wounding, or to be precise, of traces of violence. Accordingly an arc of tension is enfolded: the motif of the oriental carpet and the Chinese woman are to be interpreted as romantic, transfigured exoticism, as projections for fantasies of freedom and nomadic independence. The disorderliness of the pictures transmits a feeling of insecurity to the observer, and an ambiguity in the sense of surrealism or the 'Carceri' by Piranesi, hereby making imagined scenarios of fear and violence apparent. The black stockings, the nail varnish and the atmosphere of the space bring with them a sense of the erotic, so that the thematic of the used and abused woman, whose wounds, inflicted by the monster Jack the Ripper, can hereby also be read as the stages of a female Passion. The work is presented alongside a group of cited images and text commentaries that recall victims of contemporary and past racist and sexual intolerance: the nail bomb attack in London of 1999 and the Jack the Ripper murders a hundred years earlier. The image of the young woman transports the viewer into the milieu of saleable love that, with these associations gains a concrete background. Diverse layers of meaning are woven together here. The motif of the Jacob's Ladder makes reference to the biblical lines: "He dreamt that he saw a ladder, which rested on the ground with its top reaching to heaven, and angels of God were going up and down it." New English Bible, Genesis 28 (12).³⁷ Beyond this the ladder also recalls traumatic memories and stories. The artist dreamt of the ladder motif repeatedly in childhood: "In those dreams, menacingly deep escalators tumbled and slid the traveller into an underworld, from turned-up-level steps. There were also shaky elevator constructions made of bare planks on building sites of Babel proportions."³⁸ For the artist, a descendant of the Berlin painter Lesser Ury, according to her own assertion, it is all about escaping the prescribed identity of her personal biography, more exactly the fact of her German-

³⁷ Quoted in Angela Melitopoulos' introduction of 11.10.2002 to Tanya Ury's exhibition 'Jacob's Ladder'. Unpublished manuscript; also: Tanya Ury, Transcending the Ladder, in: Doris Frohnapfel (editor.), From Work to Word, Bergen 2002, S. 98- 111

³⁸ Ibid

Jewish ancestors, who experienced the Holocaust first hand. She strives to confront this history, without shutting out her memory. "Signs", according to Ury "are not only part of the collective unconscious, they also belong to a value system and are therefore symbols of a hierarchy, and a ladder..."³⁹ Even the outward form dictates the rule of principal; the pictures themselves appear disordered, with alternately detail and close-up photos, with the tension between emotional effect and the cold, metal surface. The upward striving geometry of the Ladder to Heaven is brought to life, destroyed and with its winding image path and reference to the victim, wounding and repression, gains the dimensions of a labyrinth. The ladder, the stairs and the path upward stand in direct conflict with the run in the nylons, the destruction and the chaotic fringes of fabric. Apart from the ladder, the figure of Jack the Ripper is also the central connecting link. The notorious women murderer embodies the self-alienated culture of the Modern that from the perspective of National Socialist and other reactionary powers was defamed as "degenerate" and could be integrated into anti-Semitic smear campaigns. George Grosz saw the modern iconoclast and destroyer of values in this pathological figure, and with the knowledge of the fate and the flight of the Ury family, the Shoah might also be seen as a similar warning sign. In accordance with the diversely layered interpretations of the Talmud, the sequences of this photo cycle are explained by the already mentioned images of the placards with their literary quotations and narratives. In this way, historical artefacts, documents and tracks are uncovered in their cultural spectrum of meaning, in order to allow the very multiplicity of meaning, disharmony and unusualness to be made visible. The questioning of personal identity and history connects itself with the valiant discourse around a two-faced modernity, whose potential in politics, art and society, can appear as much emancipated as destructive. (Translation from German TU)

³⁹ Ibid

Against Media Idolization

Peter V. Brinkemper, Telepolis 4.1.2004

The Right of the Image – Modern Jewish Perspectives

The Right of the Image, Jewish Perspectives in Modern Art, an exhibition in Bochum, makes the contributions of Jewish artist from the development of modern fine art until the present, distinct. In an impressive array, presenting 111 artists from between 1800 and today, the relevance of the Jewish Civilisation for Western Modernism is clear. The exhibition also poses definitive questions on the relationship between religion and art.

And all that in an era, in which the autonomy and obstinacy of art in its content, form and function, was being mastered, step by step leading to various statements and directions, from the traditional and future-oriented, realism and abstraction, engagement, to art for art's sake. What is especially compelling, as with the previous exhibition "Zen and Western Art" is that the interactions between religion, better still, religiosity and the arts are in no way merely to be understood as the secularisation and emancipation of art.

Separating and redistributing the image flood

Religion doesn't only provide a troublesome tradition but with its principle "You shall not make for yourself a carved image" of neither God, person nor any other earthly beings – precisely this is the essential premise for a reflective handling of images and vividness. The commandment to avoid, even oppose any kind of idolatry and image cult, is a challenge to maintain a conscious distance, a sovereign skepticism towards earlier and contemporary floods of imagery, a challenge to self-imposed exile in the midst of totalitarian media worlds that in their slavish immanence, no longer have the opportunity to appear to advance a "transcendent" stance on freedom, dignity, openness and the power of judgment.

In the words of Horkheimer and Adorno: "The right of the image is saved in the faithful implementation of its prohibition." Therein exists the Jewish contribution, its merit but also its painful sacrifice to a modernity, in which it doesn't subjugate itself in art or in the media, to the freely available image or perception of content, but actively, procedurally and aggressively deals with the problematic, in the services of a healthy self-expression

Heralds of Modernism

The list of exhibited names is headed by the heralds of modernist painting, music, literature and photography, for instance Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman (abstract expressionism), Lesser Ury and Max Liebermann (impressionism), Arnold Schoenberg's expressionist painting, Else Lasker-Schüler's Graphics, Ludwig Meidner's explosive expressionism,

somewhere between self-portrait and metropolis apocalypse, El Lissitzky's and Man Ray's constructivist experiments with the photographic medium, the quaint psychogram of Angst by Felix Nussbaum (1941/43), the poetic figuration of a Marc Chagall or an Amedeo Modigliani.

The Tensions between Modernity and Orthodoxy

Insights into Jewish life and the practice of the Jewish faith, which didn't either adapt to a civilian imperative or a secular modernity, nor was it relegated to oblivion, proffer less well-known or till now unnoticed works of named authors, genre pictures by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, Isidor Kaufmann, as well as the biblical "illustrations" of Lesser Ury, Jacob Kramer or the art nouveau vignettes by Morris Rosenfeld, to the songs of the ghetto.

The intensity of the presentation is especially strongly felt by the spectator in the melancholy portraits by Hermann Struck and Moshe Elazar Castel, whereby the contrast between the modernity of the language of form and the "iconic orthodoxy" of some of the themes, assume an impossibly poignant inflection. Biblical situations like the murderous rivalry between Cain and Abel, devilish seductions and prophetic ecstasies in the desert are expressed in thrilling motifs, as in Jakob Steinhardt's and Reuven Rubin's work.

The Politicisation of Fine Art

Painting or photomontage was already being politicised in advance of the First World War, in the art of Ludwig Meidner, David Bomberg, Arthur Segal, Erich Comeriner and John Heartfield, and increasingly in the 20ies and 30ies. Peer pressure on the individual in society is a theme - Lea Grundig, Felix Nussbaum and Marc Chagall bring the escalating anti-Semitism and the Holocaust as the grotesque face of a social madness, or a formula of the individual and religious suffering, into the picture. Ecce Homo, Christ on the cross, experiences a reassessment. A discourse between criminal forensics and postmodern parody - the smug Pilate-icons of world powers: Truman, Churchill, Stalin - was taken up in the postwar era by internationally known artists such as Daniel Spoerri and the Moscow Duo Komar & Melamid.

Fragile Identity, virtual Victims and Bloody Reality

A central theme, the reassurance of a fragile minority identity and high mobility seems to be developing amongst contemporary, mostly younger artists. It is formulated in the most varied medial models and intercultural life forms: Rivka Rinn, who was born in Tel Aviv and now lives in Austria, consolidates photo and video motifs in stroboscopic particles of awareness, so as to "evaporate" her life in a nomadic movement of journeying. With her reduced, freeze-like roundelay figures, the New York artist Nancy Spero tries to reconstruct a repressed feminine script with impressions of official historical body ornamentation.

Tanya Ury, the Anglo/German artist, who lives in Cologne, operates from poles between a media conscious present and the art historical archaic. She connects up biblical situations and modern art speak with contemporary social/political and explosive news about bomb attacks from London to Jerusalem. 21 photographs are put together in a "Ladder to Heaven" motif with seven steps, in "Jack the Ladder" (2000). It recalls Jacob's vision of the Old Testament:

"He dreamt that he saw a ladder, which rested on the ground with its top reaching to heaven, and angels of God were going up and down it." Genesis 28 (12)

The message of the visual fragments is everything other than heavenly however; the ladder collapses into a labyrinth of global suffering; the model and alter ego of the work, the young Chinese Echo Ho is a fallen angel, unclothed, unprotected and who, trapped between intimacy and terror, life and death, is a subject that in and for art, has become a victim of a virtual world, which can at any moment turn into bloody reality.

Links

[1] <http://www.bochum.de/museum/museum2.htm>

Telepolis Artikel-URL:

<http://www.telepolis.de/deutsch/special/med/16440/1.html>

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Heise Zeitschriften Verlag, Hannover

(Translation from German Tanya Ury)

Zeitschrift für KulturAustausch Nr.04/04 (Periodical for Cultural Exchange)

Thorn in the side



Image of *Art Prize* No. 4, 2004

Interview with Tanya Ury

Tanya Ury, who was born in London in 1951, has been living in Cologne since 1993. Her art throws light on how, under the surface of every day culture in Germany, traces of National Socialism have been carried forward. In her most recent work that can be seen from January the 28th 2005, in the ifa Gallery, Linienstraße 139/140, Berlin, in an exhibition entitled „Stets gern für Sie beschäftigt...“ (“Always glad to be of service...”), together with artists like Yael Katz Ben Shalom and Uriel Orlow, she makes the Nazi past of the Hugo Boss Company that employed Forced Labourers in its Metzingen production workshops, her central theme.

Zeitschrift für KulturAustausch: Ms. Ury, in your works you alienate the Hugo Boss advertising posters. What exactly does that mean?

Tanya Ury: There are two kinds of alienation - firstly, of the latest advertising campaign “Your fragrance your rules“. One sees a young man holding his hand up to the camera to show his palm, onto which “Your Rules“ has been written. My artwork has two parts, which I bring together in a digital collage: this newest advertisement and then my own hand into which I sew the word “Boss“. Then there is “Fashion Victim“; I bring two different elements together there also: an ad for the men’s cologne “Dark Blue“ with the logo “The darker side of Hugo“, in which a man gazes out of the picture with quite a “satanic” expression on his face; I brought that together digitally with an article on the history of Boss. Here you see uniforms too. “The darker side of Hugo“ - whether it was deliberately done or not, the slogan is terribly cynical. A gallery owner I know was rather outraged when he saw this work and asked: “What do you want? Are you taking some kind of revenge?“ It’s not about taking revenge - it’s about reappraisal. I come from a Jewish German family who suffered greatly at the time of the Third Reich - unsurprisingly, so did the following generations - it doesn’t just “go away“.

KulturAustausch: In Germany more than ever, there has been intensive reappraisal and debate on the history going on for quite a while now - what do you still hope to achieve?

Ury: One should never stop remembering! At the end of the war everything was swept under the carpet, in particular the involvement of industry. People, who had been part of the Nazi machinery, just carried on working. Much of this is only just becoming apparent. I see it as my obligation to be "a thorn in the side" on these issues. My Boss work is concerned with the fact that nobody is aware how the fashion industry made uniforms with the employment of forced labourers - who didn't even receive compensation later. In December 2004 I took part in a protest action against the Flick Collection. Hugo Boss engaged "only" 150 forced labourers, while in the Flick arms industry it was 50.000! Christian Friedrich Flick, the grandson, attempts to "make good" in his own particular way by lending his art collection (to the Berlin state) for seven years - it is not a gift. And the former forced labourers don't see any of his money.

KulturAustausch: In some of your staging you make use of German mythology: the Loreley, Schubert's Heideröslein. What does this saga heritage mean to you?

Ury: I grew up with these things - although we lived in Great Britain. My father was a composer and music critic; we listened to German music regularly - and we also took trips to the Loreley...

KulturAustausch: You like to stage your art in a trashy way...

Ury: Of course, it is absolute kitsch! But it's accepted more over here than in England. That really surprised me. I'm producing some T-shirts at the moment for the artwork "Boss Rune", on which the double "S" in the Boss logo is replaced by the SS Symbol. The people in the copy shop where I am having the T-shirts made were very friendly, when I discussed all the details. But when I left I thought: "Nobody said anything against the motif, and actually it's forbidden". I'm advertising it on my website already. I wonder whether I will get any orders - and if so from whom?

Interview Amin Farzanefer (English translation Tanya Ury)

tip - Berlin Magazine No. 05/05 - Outstanding, by kbn.

The contributions of Tanya Ury, Uriel Orlow, Yael Katz Ben Shalom, Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock are all backed up by concrete research and question how historical research and personal action can successfully be brought together. The form always has to be reinvented; this exhibition is very out of the ordinary, if only for that reason.

(English translation Tanya Ury)

Coalition of Forgetting

A Follow up on the Flick Collection by Matthias Reichelt

On Thursday "Heil dich doch selbst" - Heil Yourself, one of the many activist alliance organised events on the Flick Collection took place in Berlin. An opposition has expressed itself in a long overdue manner regarding the epochal historical piecing together of the big head metropolis city capital of German snobs. Author Peter Kessen started the evening with a well-researched lecture on the subject of his recently published book "Von der Kunst des Erbens. Die Flick-Collection und die Berliner Republik" (About the Art of Inheritance. The Flick Collection and the Berlin Republic). After Thomas Kuczynski - whose talk was documented in the weekend Junge Welt newspaper - academics and artists including Gertrude Koch, Diedrich Diederichsen and Tanya Ury took over with spoken and film contributions, projections and performances. One had to wait till the end for a pointed assessment of the state ceremony around the Flick Collection, however. While many of the previous speakers processed Flick and the curator of the Hamburger Bahnhof Eugen Blume's prescribed concept on the conciliatory effect of art, Sophia Schmitz and Raul Zelik, in a combined and recited talk, reserved the right to comment on the political personal that the reconstruction of the federal republic, which included radical social dismantlement, was responsible for. Schmitz and Zelik reminded that most of the accountable representatives of the Berlin Republic, like Schröder, Weiss, Fischer stemmed from a rather enlightened and moderate left, emanating from the Greens, Social Democrats and APO (the extra-parliamentary opposition) and had most likely never thought that what they now represent would ever be possible. With audacity they have managed what Christian Democrats together with the FDP (Free Democratic Party) could not have achieved, where their personnel would have evoked quite different protest and opposition, also on behalf of the current ruling parties, but admittedly only for tactical reasons.

The consequences of a "modern" state and social reform - in the sense of capital - is also the break with history. Conciliation instead of remembering, forgetting instead of re-processing, concrete Holocaust memorials as a final chord instead of living and procedural remembering of victims and perpetrators.

At various stages you may still hear quite different undertones - Fischer justified the preventative war against Yugoslavia with a reference to Auschwitz, thereby precisely misappropriating the implication of the pledge (Never again Auschwitz, never again war!)

A large projection of a well-practised speech by Gerhard Schröder from the German Bundestag debate during the Flick tax scandal in the 80ies made the 180° about turn quite clear. He attacked the arrogance of capital that believes it can buy anything off. One would know how to prevent this happening.

20.12.2004: Koalition des Vergessens (Coalition of Forgetting)
(Tageszeitung junge Welt - Daily Newspaper: Young World)

**Wolfgang Alber, Schwäbisches Tagblatt,
Saturday the 12th June 2004**

What academic studies can't move people to take note of, art can, symbolically at least. Four years ago there was public debate about the Hugo Boss company and its treatment of forced labourers, during the Nazi era. The cultural studies academic Dr. Elisabeth Timm from Tübingen, was employed by the elegant tailors of Metzingen to undertake the research "Hugo Ferdinand Boss (1885-1948) and the company Hugo Boss". Her plainly explosive and highly rated study was never published by the Boss successors. In the meantime it has been brought out in the Internet, together with Henning Kober's piece "Der Umgang mit Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen (The Treatment of Forced Labourers in Metzingen)" (www.metzingen-zwangsarbeit.de).

*

Tanya Ury reappraised the theme in quite a different way. The English artist, who grew up in a German-Jewish family and now lives in Cologne, has produced a man's coat, German size 56, made of small plastic bags; the sachets contain samples of the artist's hair. The design is similar to that of a leather, Lufwaffe Coat but also closely resembles the Boss leather coats of the 1998-99 winter collection. This exhibit is being shown in an exhibition entitled "Dresscodes" at the former supermarket in Neuhausen/Fildern until the 27th June. The "Hair Shirt" might be interpreted as a sign of atonement, on the other hand it points to the fact that the Nazis sheared and filled mattresses with the hair of female concentration camp inmates. "Who's Boss" asks Tanya Ury, and thus provokingly reflects on the relationships between fashion and the military, fashion and politics.

(English translation Tanya Ury)



Image: *Who's Boss: Röslein Sprach...2004*

Ticket - Das Magazin für die Stadt (The Magazine for the City), Berlin 27.01.2005

Gains by horrific means -
Holocaust: "Always glad to be of service..." (rit.)

"...Tanya Ury, also showing with the six exhibiting artists, has taken on the Hugo Boss company. Until 1997 it wasn't generally known that this company gained its success by making SA, SS and Hitler Youth uniforms. Ury sews the word "Boss" into her hand (photo) and so parodies the pose of a Boss model presenting his hand, with the words "Your Rules" written on it, to the spectator."

(English translation by Tanya Ury)

Berliner Zeitung (Newspaper) (D) 27.1.2005

Who wears the Hair Shirt

"...And Tanya Ury concerns herself (see large photo) with the company Hugo Boss and its involvement with National Socialism. The fashion tailored SA (Storm Trooper), SS and Hitler Youth Uniforms. Ury has produced a hair shirt, an ironic symbol for making good and repentance: it wasn't until the year 2000 that the Hugo Boss AG company paid out into a fund for the compensation of forced labourers - and then only the minimum was paid..."

Part of the article by BLZ (English translation Tanya Ury)

Neues Deutschland (New Germany) Newspaper, Berlin
01.02.2005

**Horror - but not at first sight
ifa Gallery's theme is the link between industry and
Nazi crimes**

"...With the ifa Gallery's exhibition „Stets gerne für sie beschäftigt“ ("Always glad to be of service..."), the central motif is the role that industry played during the era of German Fascism. The gallery succeeds in performing its work on memory without being too screamingly overt. To recognise the horror under the surface takes time.

On entering the gallery one's gaze is immediately held by four framed pictures that one spontaneously imagines are out-of-the-ordinary advertisements for Hugo Boss - one first only sees the aesthetics. Tanya Ury's pictures - each containing Boss advertisements, a portrait of the artist and a kitschy postcard image from the Franco era in Spain, concern themselves with the disparity between trivialisation and deadly seriousness. The Boss industry (clothing for the Storm Troopers) employed forced labour. A video shows a woman (Tanya Ury) sewing the name Boss into her hand, with a needle and thread, while the song "Röslein auf der Heide" (Rose on the Heath, Schubert) is heard. It is an imposing sequence that has something perverse about it. But it clarifies how a perverse environment and situation will provoke perverse actions..."

Part of an article by Robert Meyer (English translation Tanya Ury)

TAZ 16.2.2005

Die Tageszeitung, Berlin

Es fährt ein Bus nach Sachsenhausen

Die dunkle Seite von Hugo Boss: Eine Ausstellung in der ifa-Galerie zeigt, wie unterschiedlich sich Künstler der Erinnerung an den Holocaust nähern

(There's a bus driving to Sachsenhausen - the dark side of Hugo boss), TAZ the daily newspaper (D) 16.2.2005

"...Alongside works like Uriel Orlows research at the Wiener Library and at a synagogue that was converted into swimming baths by the Nazis in Poznan, or alongside Heidi Stern's successful translation into three dimensional scenic images modelled in clay, from the documentary film "The Photograph", by Dariusz Jablonski, Tanya Ury's examination of the fashion firm Hugo Boss' past is the weakest project of the exhibition. While her "Boss Rune No. 1" in taking up the deconstruction of the SS typography, is not without humour, her posing in an old leather Luftwaffe coat that she montages together with Boss advertisements and extremely sugary comic illustrations from the Franco era, is less convincing.

From 1940 on, the Hugo Boss firm in Metzingen also employed Forced Labour for their production work. Over and above this, the Clothing firm owes its success entirely to its close contacts with the National Socialist Party - the owner Hugo Ferdinand Boss had become a member already before 1933. The company made uniforms not only for the Party, but also for the SA (Storm Troopers), SS and HJ (Hitler Youth) until the end of the war. The last order was to make uniforms for the SS leadership. Today, from 1996 on to be exact, the firm has adorned itself with an internationally renowned prize for contemporary art that the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation presents every two years in New York. There seems to be a fateful affinity between the German love for contemporary art and the profits from Forced Labour.

In the meantime, the company Hugo Boss need fear no conflict over their prize, like Flick. In the year 2000 they paid into the Funding initiative, and two years later the board of directors apologised to former Forced Labourers, who had been invited to the city of Metzingen.

In the light of this, the firm's advertising campaign for a perfume in 2002, that announces "The Darker Side of Hugo" is stupid, if not provocative and cynical. Here Tanya Ury succeeds in her placing together of a newspaper article about the firm during the Nazi period and the advertising image - it is a strong image admittedly. But her claim that the company's past "raises profound questions surrounding the relationships between fashion and military fashion, fashion and politics" explains this work just as little as it does the work "Who's Boss: Your Rules", 2004. Here, alongside the Boss model who has the words "Your Rules" written on the palm of his hand, she has sewn the name Boss into the palm of her hand, analogous to the works of

Daniel Buetti. The Swiss artist became well known with his images of advertising beauties into whose skin he had apparently cut various company logos, when in fact he had only engraved the photographs. Buetti's vastly overrated art works intend to present a critical approach to consumer aesthetics; in reality, they serve themselves in a most parasitical manner, with the aura of beauty and advertising. To cite Buetti, of all things, as an artistic reference, does not imply profound questioning..."

Part of an article by Brigitte Werneburg (English translation by Tanya Ury)

**Skin Stitches - ifa-Gallery: In Search of Holocaust
Traces - Tagesspiegel (newspaper), Berlin 18.02.2005**

“...The collages and videos of Tanya Ury send off (more) aesthetic sparks. They are more explosive because this daughter of German-Jewish emigrants attacks a company that still exists and flourishes today. The fashion producer “Hugo Boss” first tailored SS, SA (Storm Trooper) and Hitler Youth uniforms, delayed its compensation for former forced labourers. The artist suggests their fate in a video performance, in which she sews the “Boss” letters into the palm of her hand. It gets quite literally under your skin.

Part of an article by Jens Hinrichsen (English translation by Tanya Ury)

**Netzzeitung (Net Newspaper) Voice of Germany
25th February (2005)**

Hugo's darker side

Striking: Tanya Ury's work on Hugo Boss

ifa-Galerie, central Berlin - the exhibition "Always glad to be of service..." shows art on the role of industry in the Holocaust. It is also a commentary on the Flick Collection.

By Martin Conrads

"There were two projects that above all others tried to trap the nerve of the debate in a well-reflected manner at the opening of the 'Friedrich Christian Flick Collection'. Firstly the initiative of the artist couple Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock, who demanded 'Free Entry for Former Forced Labourers' on posters close to the Hamburger Bahnhof, then the controversial action, an invitation to Hermann Goering's property in the Schorfheide, north of Berlin. The conductor Christian von Borries and the curator Inke Arns distributed flyers with the slogan 'In Times when a Flick Collection is Acceptable, a Goering Collection Should be Inexpensive!'. Invited guests at the Flick opening, were animated to visit a fictitious 'Göring Collection'.



Photo: part of Tanya Ury's "Who's Boss: Art Prize Nr. 4"
ifa gallery, Berlin-Mitte

(...) After that, several hundreds of spectators collected together in mid December for the event "Heil yourself! The Flick-Collection is closed" in the Berlin "Hau 1" Theatre, to listen to several hours of artistic and theoretical discourse. These were pointedly positioned against the official sanctioning of the collection, while at the same time Friedrich Christian Flick was refusing to pay into the Forced Labour fund. It was at this function that criticism of cultural production and producers of culture first gained a position that was beyond mere marginal commentary..."

(...) The above mentioned engagement against the Berlin presentation of the "Flick Collection" is something that Stih and Schnock have in common with the artist Tanya Ury, who lives in Cologne. Her work, presented in the ifa gallery is concerned amongst other things, with the ascent of the "Hugo Boss AG" company due to the production of Nazi uniforms from 1933 onwards

that were manufactured by, amongst others, forced labourers. Ury combines a newspaper article about the company's upturn together with an advertisement for men's cologne by the same company in 2002, with the completely unconcerned adage: "The Darker Side of Hugo".

In another of her artworks, one sees the artist sewing the company's name into the palm of her hand. With this work Ury is referring to the role of the forced labour seamstresses, in another, she parodies a further poster in the perfume series, featuring a young man with the words "Your Rules" written on his hand. In spite of the not uninteresting effort to analyse contemporary image campaigns, critically and historically, Ury's works often unfortunately get lost in the eye-catching.

(Netzzeitung (Net newspaper) Voice of Germany - Hugo's dark side 25. Feb 07:31, added to 07:35, (eye-catching: Tanya Ury's work on Hugo Boss), ifa-Galerie Berlin the exhibition <Glad to be of Service...> shows art on the role of industry in the Holocaust and can be regarded as a commentary on the Flick Collection.

Parts of the article by Martin Conrads (English translation Tanya Ury)

Neue Literatur - Palästina Journal (New Literature - Palestine Journal) No. 61 März 2005,

"...Tanya Ury examines the connection between fashion and politics, between fashion and uniforms, by taking the fashion company Hugo Boss as an example. In the placing of Boss advertisements together with, for example, a newspaper article about forced labourers in Metzingen, where Boss produced SA (Storm Trooper), SS and Hitler Youth uniforms during the Third Reich, not only does the slogan "The darker side of Hugo" advertising a men's cologne, gain a whole new meaning, but with this knowledge, the military-type flagon of Boss' first Eau de Toilette has to be seen in a quite different light..."

Part of an article by Thea Geinitz (English translation Tanya Ury)

IN Gedenken - Kunst zu Zwangsarbeit und Holocaust (In memory of - Art about Forced Labour and the Holocaust) Zitty magazine, Berlin 03.03.-16.03.

"...Stih und Schnock, who protested against the *Flick Collection* with a poster action in October, have the same engagement in common with Tanya Ury, who lives in Cologne. She had already presented her work at the event *Heil dich doch selbst! Die 'Flick-Collection' wird geschlossen* vorstellte (Heil yourself! The Flick-Collection is closed) and concerns herself with the role of Hugo Boss AG, whose success from 1993 onwards is owed to the work of forced labourers who tailored Nazi uniforms for Boss..."

Part of an article by Martin Conrads (English translation by Tanya Ury)

Article 07.03.2005 Tageszeitung junge Welt Newspaper



Photo: video still *Röslein sprach...*

Feuilleton

Matthias Reichelt

Geld stinkt eben doch

Voll waren die Auftragsbücher zu Nazizeit: Eine Ausstellung in der ifa-Galerie Berlin erinnert an Profiteure des Massenmords

Article with photo still *Röslein sprach...*, (Money stinks after all – the order books were full during the Nazi times: an exhibition in the ifa Gallery remembers those who profited from mass murder) Jungle World & Junge Welt newspapers, Berlin (D)

Boss & SS

“...The British artist Tanya Ury, who now lives in Cologne, has taken Hugo Boss AG on, most well known for its highly advertised gentleman’s collection. Ury recalls the early history of the Metzingen industrialist, who soon after his becoming a member of the German National Socialist Party in 1931, received large orders to complete SA (Storm Trooper), SS and Hitler Youth Uniforms. As Elisabeth Timm discovered from her research work, commissioned by Hugo Boss AG, but since its completion in 1999, still unpublished, the firm advertised themselves as “Contract Firm for National Socialist Party Uniforms from 1924”...”

“...Ury undertook a certain correction of the Boss logo and produced a “BoSS” T-Shirt. The painful process of remembering the Forced Labourers, above all in the 1940’s, when the company went to Poland expressively, to seek them out, is made most perceptible in the artist’s performance. She sews the Boss logo into her hand with many stitches. The soundtrack is “Sah ein Knab ein Röslein stehen” (A Boy once saw a rosebud rare, Goethe/Schubert).

In a photo series, Ury presents her body, spartanly covered in a Nazi Luftwaffe leather coat, alongside Boss advertisements and together with the naïve illustrations from Spanish postcards of the Franco era, that aim to lend an erotic aura to the already social attractiveness of the soldier...”

Part of an article by Matthias Reichelt (English translation
Tanya Ury)

scheinschlag Nr.05/05**Criminal Companies**

While the building of the Holocaust Memorial has nearly been completed, an exhibition at the ifa Gallery presents artistic responses to the role of industry in the Holocaust. Yael Katz Ben Shalom documents the industrial practices of the firm J.A. Topf & Sons in Erfurt, where ovens for the death lagers were developed. Tanya Ury deals provocatively with the fashion company Hugo Boss that once earned its money by tailoring SS, SA (Storm Trooper) and Hitler Youth uniforms. The unusual design for a Holocaust Memorial in the form of a bus station, with the destinations Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz etc, is presented in the exhibition.

Always Glad to be of Service - Art and Forced Labour in the Documentation Centre, Prora, **Andreas Küstermann, Ruegen Newspaper (D) 30.5.2005**

Prora. Ifa now has a completely different meaning in Prora, in short the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (not the hotel chain). A new exhibition "Always Glad to be of Service" at the Prora Documentation Centre presents six artists who have made work on the subject of forced labour and the history of industry. Heidi Stern and Tanya Ury made a personal appearance at Prora, together with the curator Barbara Barsch for the opening of the exhibition on Saturday.

Even after 60 years, as in the case of Ernst Heinckel, only recently uncovered here in Germany, buried facts are still being thrown up with the history of industry big names from 1933 to 1945. Forced labour employed by Hugo Boss in Baden-Wuerttemberg to produce SS, SA (Storm Trooper) and Hitler Youth uniforms is a subject that Tanya Ury, who lives in Cologne, takes on with her "sewn object" and installation work. The Hair Shirt awakens associations: it is made out of small plastic bags containing her own hair, collected from natural hair loss with little date tags that have been sewn together. And above all Ury works with the kind of associations that without forewarning the spectator would have to make an effort to open up to.

Heidi Stern, the daughter of Holocaust survivors was first inspired to make work about the Holocaust after seeing a film by the Polish director Dariusz Jablonski. Jablonski found slides of a long forgotten era on a Polish flea market: an SS officer at the time had made propaganda, for the German Army with the latest photographic technology. Jablonski's film „The Photographer“ came out of this. Stern models predominantly men's faces and works them into scenes that depict forced labour and war.

Ifa curator Barbara Barsch considers Prora to be a significant place where this kind of exhibition should be shown. "It is an authentic location and much that one could not afford to present in regional areas can be brought there." On being questioned, Barbara Barsch also confirmed she could very well see Prora being made use of more frequently to present exhibitions on the social history of Fascism.

(English translation by Tanya Ury)

COLOGNE: HOTEL CHELSEA

Dr. Werner Peters runs his "Hotel Chelsea" in Cologne as an artists' hostel. Martin Kippenberger used to be a regular at the café next door, so now you can spend the night in a Martin Kippenberger suite at this location. Artists use other rooms as studios in the framework of a year long "Artist in Residence" programme. The media artist Tanya Ury has made a film about this hotel, which is being presented in the "Women make Waves" festival, Taipeh in October 2005 and which will be toured throughout 20 cities in Taiwan until December 2005.

Kunstforum International Volume 178 November 2005 - January 2006
(English translation by Tanya Ury)

e-mail interview with Tanya Ury (England-Germany) for the Book publication and edition „Border Horizons" - Photographs from Europe, Doris Frohnappel (2003-2005)

Dear Tanya,

in 1992 you were showing your film "False Premises" and I was showing my photo installation "The Red Wig" at the 6th International Women Film Festival in Cologne. In 1994 you were there again with the programme "Don't call me erotic", you have moved to Cologne and since then we have contributed to each others projects like your video "Hotel Chelsea Köln", your exhibition project "Menschen wie Du und Ich", or my book "From Work to Word". Did you move to Germany with the idea staying for such a long time?

Tanya Ury:

In fact, I had already shown a previously made video, completed in Cologne, *Incommunicado* at the Feminale festival in 1990. As part of my Masters in Fine Art degree I was able to attend the Institute of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at the University of Cologne for a semester, with an Erasmus grant; more importantly I wished to continue my mature student investigations into the Shoah - the family had been dramatically affected by it and ultimately the Holocaust determined my preoccupations.

My grandfather was still alive and I lived with him for some months on arriving in Cologne to make *Incommunicado*. It was not my first visit to Germany, but it was the first time I was making artwork about German-Jewish history, in Germany, which made absolute sense. My work was also later to strike a resonance with German spectators in a manner that I hadn't experienced in Britain; British viewers have often been perplexed or offended by the emotional and confrontational nature of some of my video work.

In 1993 after making the performance/video *Kölnisch Wasser* in Cologne, I discovered that I felt more at home here than in the UK and moved within the same year. By the time I curated the opening programme 'Don't Call Me Erotic' in 1994 for the Feminale International Women's Film Festival, I had already decided to stay. The day before my performance all my worldly goods arrived by van in boxes, from the UK.

With the video *Hotel Chelsea - Köln* 1995, people were often more interested in the erotic element of the Chelsea scenes than my reasons for making the art work, which was to understand better how the people of Cologne only 50 years before could simply ignore their Jewish neighbours, friends and lovers and let them go to their deaths without a word of protest.

DF:

I am curious what the reason was that you "felt more at home here than in the UK"?

It's not easy to imagine that German audience is always open to be confronted with your work. What is the positive side of this confrontation? And/or the negative?

TU:

I don't know whether you have experienced the same phenomenon in Bergen, but sometimes when one is a stranger in a foreign land the locals can be especially generous and are more attentive. It is very pleasant to be on the receiving end of this shower of good will.

Of course I have experienced anti-Semitism here but I have been witness to it outside Germany also. In Germany, because of the recent history, the issue of racism is taken very seriously - The Shoah and contemporary racism is a matter that is debated daily in the media.

In England a very insidious kind of anti-Semitism is apparent; although there are far more Jewish citizens and therefore arguably more Jewish artists, the art is less readily exhibited, especially if it is Holocaust art; the English still fail to understand that the results of the Nazi acts of inhumanity were something that they are partially responsible for. Their main concern at the time was their island safety - the concept of making war did not include stopping the torture and mass murder in German concentration camps, which were never bomb targets. Now, possibly from a sense of shame, or denial, another kind of repression occurs when the type of confrontational Holocaust artwork I make is simply ignored. In the UK with the economic upturn of the nineties and the Brit Art pop culture, art that makes historical and social comment tends generally to be neglected.

DF:

I guess one could pick up on a lot of the themes you have mentioned: the Holocaust, racism, anti-Semitism, Jewish/German history etc. but I am interested in your choices or your preferences, the art work you have made about Nazi-Gold, or the Hugo-Boss case, for instance.

TU:

It is such a long time ago Doris, I can't remember exactly how the idea to have my body covered in gold leaf came about. I think it was a process of evolvement rather than sudden inspiration and was born out of *Kölnisch Wasser* 1993, body art observed through camera lens.

Goldfinger was a film about Nazi gold. In having my own naked body re-covered with gold for the video/performance *Golden Showers* 1997, I hoped to demonstrate that a healing process may take place gradually (the covering took several hours). Each small square that the German art restorer Wolfgang Sassmanshausen carefully placed onto my oiled body created a protective layer, like a second skin but very fragile - as soon as I moved, cracks appeared in the facade.

By making use of gold, I was obviously referring to the Nazi-gold scandals. But other elements were also suggested - the metaphors were mixed; an erotic constituent has often been

present in my body art - hence the title *Golden Showers*, which describes urination as a sexual act.

My interest in Hugo Boss was awakened in 1998, when my brother told me he had heard of their fascist past. But it wasn't till January 2000, when a friend gave me a newspaper article about Dr. Elisabeth Timm's research into the Boss history, that I started to engage with the subject. I chose the Boss story, although many other German companies profited during the war years by exploitation, because Boss was a clothing manufacturer; the notion that dressing also encompasses the component of disguise, intrigued me. Hugo Ferdinand Boss' company made gentleman's suits in Metzingen, until 1931. Later, as a Nazi party member, his firm made uniforms, employing a slave labour force that will probably never receive compensation. Today the privatised fashion empire creates contemporary fashion with conformingly uniform designs.

If I am perfectly honest, my taking on various protective mantles is not just about awareness of social responsibility but is also about addressing personal wounds: I was maltreated as a child. When I was 24 I was scalded on a train in England: a third of my body received third degree burns, which turned septic after a laundry strike in the hospital. I only recovered after getting skin grafts. As an adult I again suffered domestic violence within marriage and experienced another kind of violence when a botched surgical contraceptive procedure caused infection and infertility. To correspond with the clothing metaphor I am coming out of the closet here. Some of the brutal encounters were accidental, but I am sure the family dysfunction, has a lot to do with the lived and genetic memory of pogrom, and Diaspora.

DF:

I am jumping now a bit, there is a lot to discuss, but limited time and space, so I would like to come back to the topic of crossing borders, nations and nationalities You have dual-nationality and you also took this theme up in one of your pieces. I think it's not easy to get dual-nationality in Germany!?

Today or for the future do you have dreams or wishes to move back to England or somewhere else?

TU:

In Germany, correct me if I'm wrong Doris, because the laws keep changing, children may have dual nationality, that is German nationality and that of their non-German parents', until the offspring are 18 years old; then they have to choose between one or the other. The regulations for adults originating from another land are always draconian - they don't have the child's privilege of choice (I took the subject up in the art work *Dual(national)ity*, 2000).

My parents were both German but I was not required to surrender my English nationality when I acquired German citizenship in 1992, probably because of our special history; the photocopies of my mother's first German passport that I brought to the

German embassy in London, as evidence of her nationality, displayed the swastika stamp - on my father's birth certificate furthermore, the name Israel was added to his given name Hans-Peter.

On re-checking my documents, I just discovered a German embassy communication, which I hadn't bothered to read at the time, informing that if it came to requiring diplomatic protection from one country, I would, after all, have to forego citizenship of the other.

Actually having German nationality has afforded me no advantages per se; I acquired it on principle, so to speak. It was a 'statement' along with all my other art activities and was ultimately about coming to terms with the 'German' side of my identity, although it upset my mother at the time. But my grandmother's words of advice to me in childhood, demonstrating the fugitive mentality that is my heritage, were:

"Several passports are better than one, for you never know..."

I never met my father's parents Ury and Ullmann from Ulm, who fell victim to the Nazis. I have no sense of loyalty, any nationalistic feelings or nostalgia towards one or another place. One great-grandmother came from Russia; England was just another stop en route. I am where I am, because of the Jewish Diaspora, no more and no less.

Although I make efforts to maintain contacts, I have only been able to show my work in the UK twice in the last six years. This has led to a certain sense of resentment. I was born, studied and spent 41 years of my life in England and would like to show the work that I make here, over there.

As far as moving away from Germany, who knows where future paths will lead... I remain open.



Art Prize Nr. 4., 2004

Corrected article - Haaretz, Israel

'...But the festival (c.sides, Jerusalem 29.8.-31.8) will provide more than rigid electronic sounds; the visual arts on offer include the works of German and Israeli artists. One of them is Tanya Ury, the daughter of German Jewish refugees who immigrated to London, where Ury was born in 1951. In 1993 she decided to move to Cologne, where parts of her family had lived before the Holocaust, and work there as an artist. Most of her work deals with the Holocaust; one, which created an uproar in Germany and which will be shown at the festival, relates to the Hugo Boss clothing factory, which manufactured SS uniforms. Ury prepared fake company ads using Nazi elements and symbols. She sewed the word "Boss" into the palm of her hand for a video, and manufactured a large coat made of plastic bags containing her hair. This will be the first time she will be exhibiting in Israel, where she has family.

"The work on Hugo Boss," she says, "is related to the fact that it was only first in 1996 that the German government decided that factories and companies, which had employed forced labour, must compensate them by paying a minimal sum into a fund, from which former forced labourers could apply for compensation. I was frustrated. Hugo Boss presents itself as modern, divorced from the past. But the owner, Hugo Ferdinand Boss, was a member of the Nazi Party, and his company used slave labour to produce SS uniforms. They know about my work, but they have decided to ignore it, and not to respond."

Is Germany a homeland for you?

"Germany is my home. For me it's the Promised Land. I am able to communicate with the people there. Only there do I have the opportunity to show my work; in England it didn't interest anyone. Not many local artists (in Germany) have confronted the Holocaust. Young people want to move ahead. But life is a result of the past, and I have a need to research, to discover and to expose."

And where is Israel in this equation?

“My mother came here, fought in 1948 and even got engaged to a pilot. His plane was shot down in the war of Independence, he died and she returned to London. Today I come to Israel as a visitor. One of my works in the festival deals with Bezalel Ben Uri, who was chosen by Moses to design the Tabernacle (the Bezalel art academy is named after him). In my video I imagine that he was also the one who created the Golden Calf. My second work is a series of photographs from Prora, the Nazi holiday resort, where 20,000 used to take their holidays. After the war it became a military base, and now the German government, which is embarrassed by this memory, is selling parts of it to private individuals who are not interested in preserving its history. Art is supposed to halt the process of forgetting and repressing.”

Alon Hadar, Friday August 25th 2006

Who is the Boss here?

An Exhibition at the Kulturmagazin Lothringen takes a closer look at the Nazi past of Hugo Boss

Gerthe. What has the Hugo Boss company got to do with art? Reluctantly for them at the moment, rather a lot. For the artist Tanya Ury, who was born in London and has lived in Cologne since 1993, demonstrates this connection in her current exhibition. The historical context on which the exhibited works are based and that should be known to understand the them, also lies close to her heart, for personal reasons.

Ury comes from a German-Jewish family, her parents fled to London from the Nazis. "My artistic work concerns itself mainly with the subject matter of the Holocaust", states Ury. She came to Germany 13 years ago, because of the great interest in her work here.

A Nazi Past

With the present exhibition "Who's Boss", she reminds of the Nazi-polluted past of the Metzingen business that tailored National Socialist uniforms and occupied a team of 150 forced labourers. In a large format photograph she combines the image from a Boss commercial for perfume, advertising "the darker side of Hugo" together with an article, which proffers detailed information of this "darker side" that is to say, the Nazi past.

In digital photo collages Ury combines 3 elements. Next to Boss advertisements from past winter collections that demonstrate leather coats in German air force-style, she poses naked in an original Nazi air force coat. Spanish postcards from the Franco era that in a naïve manner display doll-like girls and soldier boys, serve as the third component.

Apart from Ury's photos, a video and an object of clothing, are to be seen. The Boss logo itself is also alienated by her in that the "ss" is replaced by the SS rune. Her exactingly researched artwork aims to provoke and inform.

And it poses the question how much Nazi potential continues to have an effect going unnoticed, why it is that a large industrial business concern can't openly deal with its past and how being in uniform finds its expression in daily life.

herb Ruhr Nachrichten (News) 3.11.2006

The Power of Femininity - Hubertus Wunschik has assembled an enormous range of art for a group exhibition of international artists in the Alten Museum (Old Museum). The exhibition "Connected" combines the works of Jewish and non-Jewish provenance.

By Dirk Richerdt - Saturday 10th March 2007 RHEINISCHE POST

"A glance from directly inside the entrance to the bourgeois town house falls onto the photo montages of Tanya Ury. The 55 year-old Jewish artist, born in London and living in Cologne since 1993, has created a series of dialogic self-portraits: one sees Ury together with antecedents, including the German impressionist painter Lesser Ury and the German Jewish writer Else Sara Ury. And then Albert Einstein turns up. Although she is not related to the scientist, Tanya Ury's picture of the pipe-smoking researcher together with the artist, holding a (pipe) in the same manner, has a bizarre aura.

A humorous edge flashes up directly with the seriously intended representation of personal history. And so Tanya Ury's photos sealed under plexiglass lend the exhibition a certain relief from serious themes..."

(Translation from German T.U.)



Du bist Einstein, 2007

“...Tanya Ury’s photographs „Du bist Einstein“ and „or else“ insistently, but at the same time with humour, are concerned with questions of identity. With these images, she positions recreated photographs next to the originals...”

A persuasive yes to art - A tour in the Städtischen Galerie (City Gallery) through the Jahresausstellung des Kunstvereins Rosenheim (Rosenheim Art Centre's Yearly Exhibition), by Raimund Feichtner (with an image of "Du bist Einstein", 23.4.2007 Kultur in der Region (Culture in the Region), Verlagshaus (Publishing House) Rosenheim (D)

(Translation from German T.U.)



PROMISED LAND - a Film by Tanya Ury

Florian Krautkrämer and Tanya Ury in conversation during the 1st AnaDoma Festival in Braunschweig - 25th - 27.1.2008. The discussion took place after the screening of Tanya Ury's film *Promised Land*. The artist, born 1951, in London, has been living in Cologne since 1993. Part of her family fled Nazi Germany, where they were persecuted because of their Jewish origins. In her art Tanya Ury concerns herself with, amongst other things, her Jewish-German identity and with the history of the Holocaust. She often works with her own body and performance, to plumb the depth of history's re-appropriation strategies. In *Promised Land* she critically confronts the history of Israel, particularly regarding the question of expulsion and return. She tells the story from two perspectives of two generations, the present and the biblical.

Florian Krautkrämer: The images you see in the video are in part photos that you have already exhibited. But you also conceived texts, presented in handwriting, as written narratives, for an exhibition, is that right?

Tanya Ury: Yes, but there has actually never been an exhibition. In 2005 Shaheen Merali invited me to make something for the Israel Film Festival at the House of World Cultures. My first reaction was: why, I'm not Israeli. Then I realised the challenge would be interesting, because up till then I had only been engaged in matters of the Diaspora. It was originally planned as an exhibition piece, but finally "moving images" were to be shown. I subsequently developed the ideas, photos and

stories in video form, but one could still make an exhibition of these.

We'll talk about the idea of presenting texts in film form again later. I would first like to talk about the points of view expressed in the video. Four different perspectives, each told in the "I" form are presented one after another. The spectators have to make a connection between the stories for themselves because these are not taken up again. Tell us briefly about the various perspectives.

They are four short stories, the first being told from my perspective; the second is my mother's. She is no longer alive - I imagined her story. The third is about Bezalel Ben-Uri and dates back to biblical times. Bezalel Ben-Uri is well known as the Jewish people's first artist; his father tells the fourth story - I based these texts on biblical verses, but also invented a lot.

So, each is told from the perspective of two generations. It starts with you, continues with your mother and at a second level you hear the son's and then the father's story. Two women, two men and each time the child-parent perspective. I had difficulty in understanding the narrative that is your mother's perspective. Your own viewpoint is clearer, also because you start with an introduction making out political conditions of the time - additionally one sees newspaper articles about Israel/Palestine. I would be interested to hear your mother's story again briefly.

My mother was circa 18 years old when the War of Independence was being fought in Israel - Palestine at the time. She had left Nazi Germany with her parents. Not all of the family could get out, but they did. My mother then grew up in England as a bilingual. She could speak a perfect German, better than mine. She was six years old when she came to England and spent her school years there. She completed an O-Level exam from under her desk, during a bomb attack in London. It was trigonometry, which can't have been easy. In 1948 she went on holiday with her mother to Israel, where two of her sisters, who had emigrated earlier, were living. I wanted to convey stories she had told me.

I find the points where the various stories overlap, particularly interesting. I have a picture in my mind, in which each story is represented by a quarter of a circle, but this circle is not merely round, the quarters shift around and intersect. Maybe you could say something about the overlapping of these quarter sections, if I might take up this image. The previous generations, for instance, those about Bezalel and his father Hur and how they relate to yours and your mother's.

Both periods are about times of war. The bible tells of an exodus. The Jews had to leave, in order to escape slavery. One

can, to a degree, compare the circumstances with those of Nazi Germany and Europe. Another exodus, from which some escaped. Another comparison concerns the question of the artists' ethical and moral standpoint, something, which I have covered in other works. That is why I chose Bezalel. In the bible it describes how he built the Ark of the Covenant. He is an important historical figure - he was chosen to make this Ark because of his divine qualities. The idea of him building the Golden Calf is my invention (he wants to prove himself and be admired). It is only a presumption, but if it were true, one would have to call him into question.

Right at the beginning you make it clear that you are not an Israeli but that you are nevertheless constantly asked to comment on the situation in Israel. In this way you distance yourself from the subject. At the same time you tell the four histories from a subjective point of view that lacks any form of distance. I noticed that the father in the second part however, tells much more about his son - is more informative and conveys more emotions than your mother does about you. She talks more about herself than about her child, about you.

I didn't think about that. Maybe it has to do with the fact that my mother died ten years ago. There is a separation. We didn't get on very well during her lifetime. I tried to think myself into her situation but her story ends at my birth, that's why she couldn't talk about me. I don't think she would agree with my art, but I don't know that for sure.

Which would again present a parallel to the father-son story, because Bezalel's father is also critical of his son's art.

Benjamin Cölle (in the audience): In your research, did you find any concrete grounds to believe it was the same person who might have created both the Ark of the Covenant and the Golden Calf?

No, I didn't read anything of the sort. It is my thesis. I read Freud's "Moses and Monotheism". He maintains that Moses was an Egyptian, not a Jew. I don't know which gods the Jewish people prayed to at the time, but it will have been many. What happened in the desert resulted in the development of monotheism. I found that all very interesting. I believe that these biblical stories are somehow quite open to interpretation, so I allowed myself an invention. "Moses als Magier", an article by Andreas Kilcher, also inspired me to this piece.

There are still two things I would like to talk about. Firstly, regarding the imagery, in particular the pomegranate, also the image of you as Bezalel, in one hand holding the Ark of the Covenant, in the other, the Golden Calf. The Ark is actually a box of matches and there are other images in which matches are being struck.

The title of the second story is *Pomegrenade*. That is wordplay combining the words "pomegranate" and "hand grenade". The backdrop of the picture is not the Red Sea. It is the beach at Binz, on the Island of Rügen. My Promised Land is here in Germany. The Ark is taken from the image of an English box of matches. I altered the design by doubling the swan to represent the two angels on the Ark of the Covenant. The Golden Calf is from a picture of a calf artefact of that period and location that I found in a book.

Finally, I would like to respond to the text parts. They are mostly written by hand. At the start you see several printed texts, but these are lines reproduced from newspaper articles, replicated news reports. The handwritten texts correspond with the spoken story. They appear parallel to the voice-over being told. Why did you decide to repeat what was spoken with a projected script?

In some ways it is more than doubled, because I made two versions, an English and a German one. I wrote and narrated everything twice. The concept had to do with the taboo of the graven image and Moses' ten commandments. One sees the entire story in handwriting and is therefore reminded of the fact that the story was at first an *oral history* handed down by word of mouth. It was only later that it was written down. I wanted to recall and remind how history was established.

(Translation from German TU)

<http://www.westropolis.de/nadine.albach/stories/28578/>



Photo: Franz Luthé

Westropolis Nadine Albach 14.2.2008

Künstlerhaus Dortmund

The Nostrils of Frau von der Leyen

Ursula von der Leyen has dark black nostrils and dirty ears. Peer Steinbrück's vampire teeth shine. And Wolfgang Schäuble looks like an alien. This happens when artists turn to the subject of politics.

Or more to the point, when Daniel Behrendt concerns himself with the subject. Behrendt, from Hanover, made portraits of the government officials and had his mother embroider these onto German Democratic Republic handkerchiefs. The caricature-like results hang on washing lines in the Künstlerhaus Dortmund - at any time replaceable - fleeting glimpses on the rotary clothes-drier of power.

"I wanted to create a bridge of tension between the abstract, the more concrete and poetic positions", says the curator Patrick Borchers. The exhibition "politics" with all its fine formalism makes its point, to show how art and politics can come together.

There are not many artworks but those that "take up the concept" are profound: The video "Trains" by the British Tanya Ury has its premiere (in Germany). Inspired by the "Train of Memory", she confronts the history of German Rail. Postcards of trains hit hard against the conscience, as they roll on rails that were most likely Nazi deportation routes. Till Rohmann has created a sinister soundtrack from ambient sound recorded at the concentration camp Maidanek.

Also to be seen for the first time in Germany is "what would it mean to win?" a documentary video by Oliver Ressler and Zanny Begg, of the protest demonstrations against the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm. And Myriam Thyges takes up the complex construction of the EU nations with her flag metamorphoses.

Stefan Moersch and Stefano Giuriati sound out the areas of tension between national borders and power relations in a very different manner: Moersch has created reproductions of Lebanese state security border huts that, while maintaining the essential feature of the flag, the exact design varies arbitrarily: red and white slanting, horizontal, vertical. That could never happen in Germany...

Concurrently Giuriati with his friend Giannotti realise an almost banal but wide-reaching concept: the two of them disguise themselves as Italian Carabinieri, walking around Munich for 14 days. And what do you know - in spite of the erroneous context the "badge" of uniformed power worked. Both were accepted as custodians of order.

And added to that:

In what way can art be political? And what effect can political art necessarily have? A wide field of discussion manifests itself here.

How contentious this subject is, not just for the observer, made itself apparent on the press round: The artists Tanya Ury and Stefan Moersch got into each other's hair. This is a "pitiful debate" says Moersch - leaning casually against the doorframe. "Art can't be political."

The Englishwoman, who has dealt with German history in her work, looked at him distraught: "I don't share your opinion at all", she declared, exasperated. "Since the Second World War, as an artist there has been a lot do. And it has been very important."

Words were flying in all directions - voices were being raised. Well - if that isn't a good start!

(Translation from German Tanya Ury)
www.kuenstlerhaus-dortmund.de

Article with photos by Simon Hoegsberg, Samvirke magazine, Denmark, March 2008
http://www.simonhoegsberg.com/a_laborious_romance/project.htm

Avant-garde dating. Two women meet. One week. A gallery. Berlin. Powerlessness. Frustration. Big art. And departure.

Those are the ingredients in the following article. It is about a date that went well and turned sour.

The project

In Berlin Mitte lies a gallery. The gallery is called New Life Shop and is owned by two Danes, Martin Rosengaard and Sixten Kai Nielsen. On their website (wooloo.org) in March 2007 the two Danes encouraged artists from all countries to participate in a project which they, Martin and Sixten, wanted to realise. The name of the project being: Avant-garde dating.

The idea behind the project was to match artists who wanted a partner to engage with, either professionally, romantically, or both. The only condition for participating in the project was that each artist would make a profile on wooloo.org. The profile should state the artist's gender, age, artistic means of expression, and sexual orientation. Everyone who made a profile would get a partner. The biggest reward, however, for participating in the avant-garde dating project was to be chosen to come to Berlin and live, sleep, eat, and make art with one's partner for a week in New Life Shop. The gallery would be open to the public that week.

150 artists from 30 countries made a profile on wooloo.org. Two artists were chosen and invited to come to Berlin. They are Tanya Ury (56) from Germany and Laurel Jay Carpenter (39) from the US.

Laurel

I meet Laurel at a café in Berlin in the morning of the first day that she and Tanya will be living together in New Life Shop. Laurel has arrived in Berlin two days earlier, but she hasn't met Tanya yet. The deal is that they won't meet each other until seven o'clock the same evening in the gallery at the opening that Martin and Sixten have organised to officially welcome the two women and kick start the week.

Laurel works as a teacher of fine art at Alfred University in the village of Alfred 500 kilometres from New York City. During the last five years she has made a number of art performances of which at least six are documented on video. One of them is 'Lick' from 2004.

In 'Lick', Laurel lies on her stomach for seven hours without a break, licking every tile in a six-meter wide and 40-meter long tile-covered corridor in the college where she was studying at the time of the performance. Laurel made 'Lick' to express her unconditional belief in the power of art after seeing artworks made by a Buddhist mentor at her college whom she had a crush on.

Laurel is bisexual, single and childless. She hasn't had many partners in her life. I ask her: What made you make a profile on wooloo.org?

"Personally I've always had bad luck with partnership. Even in New York I felt I had never quite met the right person. And then I saw the ad for Avant-Garde Dating on the Internet, and I thought ok, this is interesting. I liked the idea that the Wooloo-guys were reaching towards an international community. So I set up my account, I was really honest in my application, I said, I've always been very skilled at art and the business behind it, I'm organised, I'm ambitious, I always had good luck with work. But I was always terrible, terrible, terrible at love. I couldn't make eye contact, I could never read the signals, and I don't know what's going on. That's what I said in my application - it's perfectly meant for me, this combination of work and love."

The first disagreement

Laurel is a big and emotionally generous woman with long, carrot-coloured hair and an optimistic personality that is difficult not to like. When she speaks, she speaks with conviction. When she laughs, she laughs hard. She is cheerful and loud and very straightforward.

But this morning she is nervous. During the two months preceding the opening she and Tanya have been in frequent contact via email. The purpose: to get to know each other and to find the best way to approach the week. Along the way they have discovered that they have a lot of things in common. But their correspondence is not without problems. Laurel has reasons to be worried.

Tanya's mails to Laurel show that Tanya is very nervous about living publicly. She has always felt vulnerable in front of an audience, and it makes her anxious not to know what is expected of her during her stay in Berlin. In an attempt to calm herself she sends Laurel a great number of mails with suggestions as to how they can fill time during their stay in New Life Shop.

Laurel acknowledges Tanya's anxiety but the thought of planning their date in advance fills her with regret. Laurel is used to working site-specifically and wants to wait until they meet and

have a chance to see the gallery before they make decisions about how to spend their week.

When Laurel talks about Tanya, she does it in a very diplomatic tone. But the message is clear: Tanya wants her ideas to exist, and one had better comply with her.

The phone conversation

The night before, Laurel had a phone conversation with Tanya that made Laurel so nervous she couldn't fall asleep. The conversation was about how they should contribute to the opening.

Laurel: "She seemed set, when I was still trying to figure things out. I was waiting to collaborate, but it still seems like she wants her ideas to exist, and then whatever my ideas are, whatever. You know, do it or not."

Tanya wants to show a lengthy video of her work at the opening, and insists that the light be turned off in the gallery while the film is on. Laurel disapproves of the idea.

Laurel: "When I think of video at an opening I think a film on a loop that you can pay attention to or not, but she (Tanya) really wants people to concentrate for half an hour, so then I thought that we might lose people, because that's not going to be expected. So we were just trying to talk that out, and she didn't seem to really want to... I didn't feel heard - for whatever reason that is, whether it's from me projecting or whether she was in an atmosphere where she couldn't actually hear well. I do feel a little like I'm giving in, but I think I felt that all along and didn't mind." Laurel and me walk down to the gallery. She is going to hang part of her and Tanya's 150 pages email correspondence on the wall before the opening. Tanya and me meet and go to a café.

Tanya

Tanya Ury was born in England as the child of German-Jewish parents. Many people were killed during the Second World War, and some managed to escape. Because Tanya's parents went to England, they survived. But at least four members of her family were murdered in German concentration camps.

Tanya has always felt connected to Germany. Her identity is German; she knows the culture well and speaks the language fluently. But then there is the Holocaust. Just the name makes her visibly embittered. In 1993 she left England for Cologne (Germany) and started to make art about the Holocaust and the way Germany today relates to its own history. In one of her projects - Who's Boss (from 2004) - she makes the clothing company Hugo Boss the target of her political indignation. The

title covers many artworks that in different ways deal with the fact that the founder of the clothing company, Hugo Ferdinand Boss, made money producing SS uniforms for the Nazis during the Second World War.

Tanya deals with Hugo Boss - not only because the clothing company profited economically by having prisoners of war make uniforms for the Nazis, but because the company never compensated the (former) prisoners and their families sufficiently. Tanya has long, grey hair and a pleasantly soft voice. She is gentle, almost meek - attentive and slightly self-deprecating. This is at least true until she speaks her mind. Physically she seems slightly nervous as if a lack of human intimacy or past pain has settled in her bones and become part of her being. She is bisexual and has had many lovers. I ask her: Why did you make a profile on wooloo.org?

Tanya: "As a woman in her early fifties the whole dating-thing completely changes. Sometimes just for fun I look at ads in magazines, and unless it's a new age magazine the women in the ads are always women under 50. As a woman over 50 you're not catered for at all. Older men are always looking for younger women. And younger men are not interested in older women, so it's all a bit problematic. I made a profile at Wooloo, and I didn't in a 100 years expect to be chosen. They said every applicant gets a partner. That's all I was looking for, actually. You know, an address from somebody, say in Australia, and maybe we could just email and talk, that was it."

The meeting

The opening in New Life Shop the same evening goes well. Laurel and Tanya meet for the first time, and there is a positive, excited energy between them. The small gallery is half full of people who patiently watch Tanya's half hour video from start to finish and who politely applaud Tanya and Laurel for the performance they do at nine.

After the opening, Laurel spends the night in New Life Shop. She has decided to sleep in the gallery every night of the week. There is no shower in the gallery, and it's important for Tanya to have a place where she can freshen up and be alone. Because of this, before coming to Berlin she has booked a room in a hotel close to the gallery. During the week in Berlin, she spends four nights at the hotel and three nights in the gallery.

The planning

On the morning after the opening, Tanya and Laurel meet and go to a café next to the hotel and have breakfast. After breakfast the two women start to discuss which of the ideas exchanged via email they want to realise during the week. This is an excerpt from their discussion:

Laurel: "I like the idea of doing something new every day, but I also think that we don't have to make all these decisions at this breakfast. Let's say we wake up on Tuesday and say: Ah, let's just read stories to each other all day, or, no, let's go out and get some feather boas and be art whores."

Tanya: "I seriously have a feeling that there is an expectation from other people that we're going to do heavy sex and nudity."

Laurel: "Really?"

Tanya: "I think so."

Laurel: "Where did you get the idea that there are these expectations?"

Tanya: "Probably from inside my own head."

The first performance

The week offers no hard sex, and only a little nudity. Nevertheless, the two women make three big performances that are exciting. The first performance they call 'List of Lovers'. Both women make a list with the names of the lovers that they have had over the years. Then Laurel gets Tanya's list, and Tanya gets Laurel's list, and for one hour they take turns talking for five minutes each about the lover that the other partner wants to hear about. Every fifth minute someone cries 'time', and no matter if the person talking is in the middle of a sentence, she stops and lets the other partner begin her story. Laurel goes "berserk". She is an excellent storyteller. Her life is paved with broken hearts - first and foremost her own.

But performance number two is the one that leaves the biggest impression. In this performance, Tanya is lying on a sofa in the gallery in a white dress, telling stories for one and a half hours non-stop about the many scars she has on her body. Meanwhile, Laurel is sitting on a chair with a red water-based pen illustrating Tanya's stories on her own skin. One of the stories that Tanya is telling is about the tattoo she has on her right thigh. The tattoo shows the number 4711, and above the number: lines like in a barcode.



Photo of Tanya Ury Simon Hoegsberg

Tanya's story

In 1993 Tanya decided that she wanted a tattoo. The tattoo must be a number-tattoo like the one her father's cousin, her grandmother, and her grandfather's two sisters got in the German concentration camps before they were murdered. The number Tanya wanted to have tattooed on her skin was 4711. The number comes from '4711 Kölnisch Wasser' - the eau-de-Cologne that she remembers from her childhood. The number 4711 has a history that goes back to the Napoleonic era. When the French occupied Cologne, they changed all of the city's street names and numbers. The Muehlen company that produced the Kölnisch Wasser perfume received the house number 4711, and today the company promotes this perfume with the slogan '4711 - Die Zahl der Welt' - The number of the world.

As a child, every year Tanya went with her parents from England to Germany by car to visit her great-grandparents who lived in Cologne. Tanya often got car sick during this trip, and when she vomited in the car, her mother always cleared up the vomit with '4711 Kölnisch Wasser'.

Tanya: "It's an important number. I mean there are numbers that nobody forgets - like 007. I chose the number 4711 because the number represents Cologne where a lot of my family is from, and to me it represents Germany."

Milena

When Tanya realises that she wants the tattoo she is living in England. To add a layer of symbolic meaning to her decision she decides to have the tattoo made in Cologne.

Before leaving for Cologne she sets her video to record a documentary film that is running on television while she is away. The film is about Milena Jesenská - a Czech woman who, had a romantic relationship with Franz Kafka, for two years from

1920.

Tanya: "I knew about her because I had read Kafka's 'Letters to Milena'. I thought, she must have been a pretty wonderful woman for Kafka to have written all those beautiful love letters to. And then there was this documentary film about her on television, and I thought: Now I will find out what she was like. That's why I recorded the film."

Milena Jesenská was the first person to translate Kafka's books into Czechoslovakian. She came from Prague. Later in life she became a journalist and a freedom fighter publishing a number of anti-fascist articles in Czech newspapers and magazines.

When the Nazis occupied Prague, Milena helped a lot of people get out of the city. And because of her activities the Nazis sent her to Ravensbrück, a concentration camp for women.

Milena died in the camp in 1944.

Message from the beyond

Tanya gets the tattoo in Cologne on February 6. Two days later she is back in England. The same evening she turns on the television and starts watching the documentary about Milena Jesenská that the video has recorded while she was away. Five minutes into the film something strange happens. Tanya learns that Milena's number in Ravensbrück was 4714, and that this number was so close to 4711 that all her friends in the camp called her '4711 Kölnisch Wasser'.

Tanya: "I discovered this two days after I got my tattoo. All of a sudden I knew it was right what I was doing. There was no mistake. No mistake at all. Suddenly I was connected up with the great dimensions of history. It was really quite extraordinary."

The thrill

Tanya and Laurel's first performance - List of Lovers - took place on day three. The moment the performance ended, both women broke into laughter, clapping their hands and embracing each other to express how excited they felt that their first performance together had come out so well.

The previous day Laurel had told Tanya that she believed there was a mother/daughter element in their relationship, and that the Wooloo-boys by choosing to match her and Tanya consciously or unconsciously plugged into a connection between them that had existed since the dawn of time. She said: "Where this women energy comes from I don't know. I just think that this project offered an opportunity for larger things to take place. And I love that place."

The seven-year itch

When performance number two ends – this is on day five – the relationship between the two women is significantly tenser. Tanya is not easy. Her tendency to rigidly insist on the value of planning and her reluctance to act spontaneously make Laurel frustrated and to some degree resigned. In their third and last performance – day seven – Laurel and Tanya illustrate with a needle and a red thread just how unconstructive their collaboration has become.

The setting: a square table covered with a tablecloth is placed in the middle of New Life Shop. Laurel and Tanya sit next to each other at the table, without speaking. Laurel sticks the threaded needle up and down through the tablecloth. As her sewing progresses both women are slowly moving around the table. Laurel is sewing a circle, but the circle never becomes full because just as fast as she sews, Tanya is pulling the thread just as fast out of the tablecloth. Half way around the table the two women change places so that Tanya is now working the needle and Laurel is undoing Tanya's work.

If days were years, Tanya and Laurel have on this day reached the seven-year itch phase of their relationship. Their date has been enriching – a laborious romance. But now it is over. When they get up from the table they do it without pleasure and with the knowledge that it takes more than a needle and a thread to patch up their relationship.

An hour later, Tanya says goodbye to Laurel and me and goes out for dinner with friends. My bus to Copenhagen is leaving two hours later. Laurel and me go to an Indian restaurant before the departure. This is the last I see of the two sympathetic and very different women.

Tanya Ury - Limmud Statement (Jewish Alfresco - Limmud: Teaching and Learning at Werbellinsee, by Hartmut Bomhoff) for the Jüdischer Zeitung (Jewish Newspaper, Germany), No. 6 (34), June 2008

In text-form and image collage, Tanya Ury (Cologne) presented her artistic reassessment of the fashion house Hugo Boss's Nazi past that engaged forced labour to produce uniforms during the Second World War. Her thoughts on Limmud: Giant trees on lake Grimnitzsee at Werbellinsee have hearts and names carved into them, dated 1924 with SS-signs and Marion's benches in Dresden are: 'For Arians Only'."

"Damp socks, no hot coffee on Shabbat (even for the Rabbi); sweet, Kosher wine, Kosher Vodka, Manger Yiddish & Mendy; Rabbi Rothschild's sternness, compassion with wordplay – Rabbi Milgrom's strong humility between rocks and questions thrown in distant hard places: to see and to do is to be... "

“I wanted to embrace being German”

**The artist Tanya Ury and her very personal
re-appropriation of memory**

by Hartmut Bomhoff, Jüdische Zeitung (Jewish monthly) no. 11
(39) November 2008 (Translation from German TU) <http://www.j-zeit.de/archiv/artikel.1552.html>

“Berlin has always been very good to me”, says Tanya Ury at our rendezvous in the Kant Strasse, Charlottenburg. The artist, born in London 1951, has been living in Germany for the last 15 years. London, that’s about family; but the centre of her life has been in Cologne, for a long time already. “A coincidence”, she says. “But there are no coincidences.” Cologne has always been more than merely the university town where in 1989, having completed her studies in Fine Art at Exeter College of Art she spent a semester at the Institute for Theatre, Film and Television Studies. “My family came from Germany, most of them from Cologne. The connection was so strong that, apart from those who died, they all returned after the war. My great-grandparents survived Theresienstadt and then moved into an old people’s home in Cologne. My parents were both born in Germany.” During her semester in 1989 she lived with her grandfather Alfred Unger, for some months. After she had completed her Masters in Fine Arts at Reading, Tanya Ury was guest lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University and moved to Cologne in 1993. Her dual nationality has a certain symbolic significance: “I wanted to embrace being German, understand the whole story,” precisely also the German aspect of her Jewish family.

Berlin is to a greater extent more than Cologne, the epitome of her German-Jewish dilemma. Exactly ten years ago, in November 1998, Tanya Ury took part in the exhibition “Davka: Jüdische Visionen in Berlin“ (Jewish Visions in Berlin), and organised by the artists’ group “Meshulash”, in the empty rooms of the former Jewish children’s’ home in August Strasse. Her contribution was a life-size self-portrait: “Triptych for a Jewish Princess Second Generation“, in the central image of which, demonstratively naked, she protectively pulls a German Luftwaffe leather coat over her body. Around the image are texts - extracts from the poem “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath, to which she adds her own verses. They speak of anger and the over-identification with the role of the Jewess as victim. They are also about the difficult relationship with Germany, the fatherland and the German language itself. “I have a discontent that is difficult to explain to those who might think it’s time to move on. I am not more objective, not having lived through Shoah; but I feel it in my bones. Although I never had children, I am left firmly holding the baby.” “Holding the Baby” is also the title of a short story from 2002, which tells of a reunion with the theatre director Peter Zadek, who in younger days was a close friend of her father, Peter Ury; both were Jewish refugees from Germany and wrote a children’s opera together.

Berlin and the forgotten children’s home in the August Strasse are sources of friction and areas for projection, places in

which there are no empty spaces, no lack of history. Ury hears the voices in Cologne also. "...there are traces everywhere, indications of crimes of the past. Every November, I attend Art Cologne, the big art fair in the Deutzer Messe and think about Grete and Ella Unger, two of my grandfather's sisters, who were deported from there and were never seen again." Ury's art is always personal, always political and in every way ruthless. In 1993 she got herself tattooed with the number 4711, to commemorate the transportation of her Cologne relatives. "Kölnisch Wasser" (Eau de Cologne) as re-appropriation of history. She refuses to take up a defensive position towards history, belongs to the engaged group opposition of the Flick Collection exhibition in Berlin and criticised the historical film "Downfall" for its unremitting denial of the victims' position. "I have always had the feeling that I owe something to the generation that died in the Holocaust - quite simply time, which I can now dedicate to this re-examination."

Last summer, almost 10 years after the exhibition in the "Ahawah" building in Berlin centre, we met again at an educational weekend workshop run by Limmud at Werbellinsee on the outskirts of Berlin. Tanya Ury is part of the programme with a talk on the previous Nazi history of the company Hugo Boss. "Not many of the 300 festival visitors came to the lecture, probably because, as somebody explains, a talk on sexuality in the Torah was taking place concurrently. At any rate, the 9 who did come demonstrated real interest by putting the right questions, whether Boss have reacted to my work, and whether I will continue with it... I have been giving similar seminars over the years, mainly in Germany, at universities and in galleries. The journeys to and from the seminars are always welcome opportunities to distance myself - I usually read or think things over - sometimes write."

The artist has examined the Hugo Boss fashion company and its involvement in National Socialism, for many years. After it was made public that the founder of the firm had secured his fashion empire with the tailoring of SS, SA (Storm Trooper) and Hitler Youth uniforms, employing a workforce that included forced labour, she began to explore the relationship between fashion and politics, fashion and military fashion. Her artwork "Who's Boss" consists of many pieces that stand in relationship to one another. And so, she has collected her own hair in small plastic bags, which she labels with a date tag daily. For "Who's Boss: Hair Shirt" she sewed the plastic bags together to create a coat similar in design to the Luftwaffe leather coat that also resembled a Hugo Boss AG coat design, in the winter season of 1998/99. This hair shirt, is a sarcastic representation of penitence and reparation: in 1946 Hugo Boss was called upon to compensate the forced labour employees with 100,000 Reich's Mark, the sum had however not been remunerated at the time of his death in 1948. In the year 2000 Hugo Boss AG finally paid an absolute minimum into the compensation fund for forced labour. The video performance "Who's Boss: Röslein Sprach..." is penetrating and at the same time drastic: Ury sews the logo "Boss" into the palm of her hand. The reference is to an

advertisement for a Hugo Boss men's cologne in which a young man is seen, with the inscription "your rules" on his hand.

Tanya Ury is not just a Cassandra figure. With all her decisiveness in the grieving process, she has maintained a sense of humour and joie de vivre, maybe gained it anew - she is someone who needs to keep her feet on the ground. "Half a year ago I decided on 2 things: to continue with the meditation that I have neglected over the last 10 years, but also to become a member of the Liberal Jewish Community already, established ten years ago. These decisions throw up a lot of questions for me. I started practising Guru Maharaj Ji's Meditation 35 years ago and stopped, not because it didn't work - but because I was alarmed by the infinite doors to other worlds that were being opened up." Now she wears a Star of David.



doo bee doo, 2007

Another work that at first glance appears to be funny, Ury's double portrait "doo bee doo" of 2007, in dialogue with Albert Einstein, is at closer perusal a lesson in history and reaction

to the “Du bist Deutschland“ (You are Germany) initiative coordinated by the Bertelsmann group 2005/2006, which with its TV spots, posters and a budget of ca 30 million Euros intended to awaken a feel-good effect in the country. In this work Ury places a self-portrait under the image of an Albert Einstein double from the media campaign (who, according to Ury hardly resembles Einstein) - she mimics the Einstein pose and poster design, by leaning her furrowed brow into her left hand. But the humorous edge that the press spoke of is a misconception. You only have to glance at the text below that reads: “I am Albert Einstein. Am I slow? Now they're advertising German patriotism in my name. Not funny. I may have been a Nobel Prize winner but back then I had to flee the country, for my life. You really don't need to understand what $E=mc^2$ means. But one thing you should know is your history. Don't be starry-eyed about false respect and poorly researched spin. Du bist Deutschland? doo, bee, doo, bee, doo.“ “Doo bee doo” is the sound made by bored people to fill a silence. Albert Einstein was born in Ulm, as were Sigmar and Hedwig (née Ullmann Tanya Ury’s grandparents, both victims of the Nazis. After 1945, the Nobel Peace Winner, celebrated in Germany of 2005 with its Albert Einstein year, didn't want to have anything to do with the land of his origin.

“lesser is me more or less“ (2003) and “or else“ (2007) belong to the discursive series of double portraits. The latter portrays the artist together with the writer Else Ury - in the former, separated by the representation of scar tissue, she faces her great-grand uncle Lesser Ury in his “Self-Portrait with Dark Hat” from the year 1914. At the time of his self-Portrait the well-known Impressionist was 53 and at the height of his powers; in this double portrait both Urys are more or less the same age. Lesser Ury, who died in 1931, was quickly forgotten in National Socialist Germany. Tanya Ury first came across a painting by her great-grand uncle as a child, in the parent’s house of a friend. In recent years, bit-by-bit: “Tentatively and in recent years, Jewish artists have been returning to live and work in Germany,” she summarises. “Whether the reanimation of a Jewish culture in Germany is possible now, and whether this attempt is Frankensteinian and bound to fail, are questions that ‘lesser is me more or less’ pose.”

Tanya Ury’s art, whether in photography, video, performance or short story form, always concerns itself with questions of ageing, memory, sexuality and identity, but also Diaspora, in the widest sense. One of her most recent works, “Sibling Rivalry“ of 2008, is a photo portrait of the sisters Elà and Leylà Ury, who live in London. Their parents are Tanya’s brother David Ury, a British Jew of German origin and Deniz Engin, a Turkish Muslim. Both allow their children to live out a choice among several cultural and religious hybrids. In the photo, one is wearing a Kefiyah, the Palestinian scarf, the other a Star of David. It’s a short step from the subject of sibling rivalry to that of the Promised Land. “Promised Land” encompasses art works and biographies that scrutinise Israel's history: 2 perspectives from 2 generations of different eras, the contemporary view and the biblical.



Promised Land: Beelzebularin, 2004

“Beelzebularin“ is a photographic portrait of Tanya Ury dressed as the biblical Bezalel ben Uri, the artist who constructed the holy objects for Moses' new monotheist God, after he had formed an alliance with Moses. Bezalel stands in front of a beach and sea view that is not the Red Sea but Binz, on the Baltic Sea, Germany, not far from Prora: in his right hand he holds a golden calf, in the other a Swan Vestas English matchbox, representing the Ark of the Covenant, which for Ury represents a kind of Pandora's tinderbox; the matchbox has been altered so that the logo shows not one swan but two symbolising the two winged Cherubim facing each other on the Ark of the Covenant, although the taboo of the graven image had just been initiated. Bezalel means: in the shadow of God. “Beelzebularin“ is an anagram of the name "Bezalel ben Uri" suggesting the word "Beelzebub", a god of the Philistines, literally: "lord of flies". The concerns here are the responsibility of the artist, ethics in art and the eternal question “which direction to choose?” “There isn't a Jewish culture here any more, no connection to political life”, Ury complains. She is the exception, one would like to counter with, but exceptions prove the rule, so they say. “Not everyone can afford to show resistance”, says Tanya Ury with regard to her life and work in Germany. “I want to give back.”

Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger (City Gazette) – No. 286 – Saturday/Sunday,
6./7. December 2008



(Photo (Rakoczy): Tanya Ury. Title: Tanya Ury brings new facets to Jewish cultural life in Cologne with video presentations, readings and photos.)

PEOPLE IN COLOGNE

Relevance with Palestinian Scarf and Star of David

Multimedia Artist Tanya Ury would like to see a Jewish culture with international character, in Cologne.

In her appearance at the Arkadas Theatre the versatile woman touches on her Cologne roots.

BY BEATRIX LAMPE

A beautifully decorated stone pitcher, with which her grandmother brought beer to her chess-playing father, when she was a girl in Cologne, stands in the kitchen on a sideboard – two seven-branched candelabras adorn the window ledge. Typically German and typically Jewish reminiscences – both belong to Tanya Ury's family history and play a large part in her art. Tanya Ury, who grew up in London and has been at home in Cologne since 1993, explores Cologne and Jewish history with images, stories and art actions, in public. She wants to work towards bringing about the awareness of a Jewish culture with its independent stamp that had such a firm footing here before the Holocaust,

With this end in mind, the woman, who found her vocation in artistic creativity, having studied in Great Britain and working as a cook and carer for many years, employs many disciplines. "I always love to pursue many projects and ideas concurrently – the choice of material is what best suits the subject", says the experiment-happy woman.

15 years ago, she caused a stir with an art action commemorating her murdered relatives, by getting herself tattooed with the "Eau de Cologne" number, 4711. Performances resulted, in which Tanya Ury drew correlations between the parallel worlds of Holocaust and pornography.

The artist first got to know Cologne as a young girl in the 50's, her grandfather being one of the first to be engaged in building a new cooperative spirit between the Christian and Jewish communities. She is now at home in the city. "When the Jewish Museum and moreover the "House of World Cultures" have been built in Cologne, something important and new might happen here, making this city a place that will attract artists", she hopes.

Till then, step by small step, Tanya Ury is working towards a Jewish culture in Cologne that can also be experienced as something contemporary but also forward-looking. On Sunday she will be presenting at the Arkadas Theatre. With photography, for example, she demonstrates the rivalries and attempts at rapprochement between enemy cultures, here revealed in the jewellery and fashion styles worn by her two nieces - one wears a Palestinian scarf, the other a Star of David. And with short stories accompanied by photographic images, the artist, amongst other themes, resurrects the myth of a fabled Golem, with humour, in Cologne.

Arkadas Theatre/ Bühne der Kulturen (Stages of Diverse Cultures), Platen Strasse 32, Sunday, 7. December, 18 hours. Entrance 12/reduced 10 Euros. (I)
<http://www.arkadastheater.de/pages/de/inszenierungen/396.htm>

<http://web.ubc.ca/okanagan/publicaffairs/mediareleases/2009/mr-09-031.html>

Media Release | March 17, 2009

UBC OKANAGAN PRESENTS TANYA URY'S *AVANT GARDE DATING* AND ARTISTIC LECTURE ON JEWISH AND FEMALE IDENTITY

Celebrated English-Jewish artist Tanya Ury will give two presentations at UBC Okanagan this March.

On March 25, Ury presents a video about her *Avant Garde Dating* art project, with discussion to follow. On March 26, Ury will present her artistic lecture *Self-portrait of a Self-hating Jew*. Referencing her own self-portraiture on themes of Jewish and female identity, Ury discusses taboo zones and censorship in Great Britain and Germany.

An active curator and author, Ury has produced video, performance and lectures for exhibitions, festivals, and universities. She has made photographic and holographic art, created objects, audio texts and installation, showing her work extensively around the world in more than a dozen countries.

"Tanya Ury deals extensively with forms of Jewish identity and self-representation, but communicates it from an artist's perspective - not an academic perspective - which is quite unique, because she reverses the trend of exile from Germany," says Claude Desmarais, Reichwald Professor in Germanic Studies. "She's very current and quite political, addressing many issues through her work - yet the politics don't overtake the art."

Ury's *Avant Garde Dating* is the result of a week-long, Internet-matched collaborative performance and residency with Laurel Jay Carpenter, a performance and installation artist and assistant professor of fine arts at Alfred University in New York.

On March 26, Ury will present her artistic lecture *Self-portrait of a Self-hating Jew*. Referencing her own self-portraiture on themes of Jewish and female identity, Ury discusses taboo zones and censorship in Great Britain and Germany. Parallels are drawn between the Jewish school quota of Britain in the 1960s and the female artist quota today regarding exhibition representation. Comparisons are also made between England and Germany in their representation of Jewish culture in relation to Jewish cultural days, Jewish museums and exhibitions on Jewish themes.

"Anyone who is in the artistic community or is interested in Jewish identity and the questions surrounding it should come out and see these presentations," says Desmarais.

Avant Garde Dating takes place at 6 p.m. in the Student Service Centre theatre, room SSC 026. *Self-portrait of a Self-hating Jew* will be held at 3:30 p.m. in the Arts Building ART 203. Presented by Creative and Critical Studies at UBC Okanagan, both events are free and open to the public.

Musrara Mix art festival: German artists, Europe and Jerusalem

Wednesday, July 1 2009 By pbmarkin

<http://spaceandculturebeyondtheeu.cafebabel.com/en/post/2009/07/15/Co-Mix-Multimedia-Party-at-the-International-Film-Festival-in-Jerusalem>

<http://www.goethe.de/ins/il/jer/ver/de4524048v.htm>

The ninth edition of the international festival for video art, photography, installation and performance of the Musrara photography, new media and music school took place between 25 and 27 May 2009.



Photo (Silke Helmerdig) of Dual(national)ity on Queen Heleni Street, Jerusalem

The last two decades has seen the cultural borders of Europe change in a flux of the enlargement of the European Union. A new geography of cultural exchanges has, thus, emerged, questioning with it the relations between culture and space. Linking the fluid borders of the European Union with global cultural initiatives of the UNESCO, Musrara Mix festival for video art, photography, installation and performance took place for a ninth time in Jerusalem. It ties this city, lying 34 miles away from the Mediterranean coast, and what its artists, musicians and intellectuals have to say to Europe. The festival poses the question: Is Europe more than the sum of its parts?
(...)



Photo (Silke Helmerdig) of Dual(national)ity on Queen Heleni Street, Jerusalem

Within this larger framework of events, an exhibition of German contemporary photography took place. Its curator, **Silke Helmerdig**, received her education in photographic design and fine arts. She is involved in projects of photographic documentation and architectural, industrial and exhibition design. Teaching artistic design in architecture, urban planning and landscape design at Kassel University, Germany, she collaborates with art museums and organisations on exhibition design. For her Musrara Mix exhibitions she borrows Vilém Flusser's notion that "the guest worker is a strange kind of guest." She writes that "the foreigner is a stranger to the other, but sometimes we are, like Julia Kristeva wrote, strangers to ourselves". Her mission as a curator is defined by an open question of whether "to be a foreigner **is** not the most attractive position, as we can rediscover the world from new perspectives" with the aid of artistic representation of otherness, labour, and migration.



Photo (Silke Helmerdig) of Dual(national)ity on Queen Heleni Street, Jerusalem

That was the question posed by German artists such as **Wolfgang Zuborn**, **British-born Tanya Ury**, **Elke Reinhuber** and **Samuel Henne**. They deconstruct the notions of 'foreigner', 'guest', 'home', 'labour' and 'citizenship' through their photography. Zuborn's photography works, **LUsionen** discover unexpected and foreign sides to his home town Ludwigshafen. **Ury's photography cycle Dual Nationality** present a critical and subversive take on the construction of citizenship and its representation in the advertisement campaign that German government launched to promote German citizenship for foreigners. (...)

FDP-Köln - 07.12.2009, 19:37 Uhr
 URL: <http://www.fdp-koeln.de/index.php?l1=9&l2=0&l3=1&aid=6163>
 17.08.2009
 Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger (Cologne City Gazette)
 Press Review
 Reading for buried works
 Gerhart R. Baum

'Authors remember lost works of their colleagues after the collapse of the Archives. In her role as estate depositor of her father Peter Ury's and her grandfather Alfred Unger's works, the British-German author Tanya Ury massively criticised the city, "We've known for a long time now that severe damage in the building had been reported before its collapse. Our confidence has been completely shattered."' © FDP-Köln 2009 All rights reserved
 (Translation Tanya Ury)

Kunstforum International

Family Legacy

Familiennachlass

Many family members of the Jewish artist and writer Tanya Ury were forced to leave Cologne in the 1930ies and emigrated to Great Britain. Others were deported and murdered. Some of these emigrants returned to Cologne from exile, the translator and dramaturg Alfred H. Unger, for instance, and his brother the theatre critic Wilhelm Unger.

Tanya Ury took a long time thinking it over but finally decided to leave the family legacy of many generations to the Historical City Archives; "it was a bold step... Should the remaining effects - letters, manuscripts, tape recordings, photographs, books, and other records - be brought back and specifically here?" When the archive building collapsed in Mach 2009, the inheritance lost "at least for the moment" lost, and for the artist it was, "as though her family died for a second time". Tanya Ury will report on "The Souls of my Dead Relatives", in the Cologne Nazi Documentation Centre, on 10th December 2009 (7 pm, Appellhofplatz 23-25). (Jürgen Raap)
(Translation TU)

<http://www.kunstforum.de/aktuell.asp?session=&r=10&s=54>

They are living amongst us - to a greater degree unnoticed by the Jewish public, in as far as they are defined by an official, Jewish, cultural and reporting press: Jewish artists, who have put up their tents in Germany to creatively generate a dialogue somewhere in between art and life-stories and to work against cultural ossification. For, as a result of the omnipresent politically correct word rituals and mock battles carried out specifically by Jewish representatives and their helpers, a constructive debate on Jews and society, Jewish artists and politics, is in effect being prevented. By placing Jewish and Israel-related themes in dialogue with political questioning, Tanya Ury demonstrates that a different approach is possible. The artist, who was born 1951, in London, who amongst other things, is related to Lesser Ury, moved to Cologne in 1993, a place where several of her antecedents had been active. She has enriched the cultural life of the Rhine capital. In 1998, after the death of her mother Sylvia, neé Unger, she decided, what's more, to leave the family archive material of several generations, to the Cologne City Archives. Whether giving and taking are here to be perceived in any kind of decent ratio is doubtful, for the Cathedral City and its representatives have proved to be miserable administrators for the Ury and other Jewish families who, with absolute faith left their legacies to the City of Cologne: it is a bitter irony that this inheritance, including documents belonging to her grandfather have, through the loss of the Historical City Archives, gone missing - Alfred H. Unger had been actively involved in the "German Pen in Exile" together with Thomas Mann. The damaging after-effects were, not only massive mistakes made during the underground train construction but also, above all, an indifference demonstrated by the City of Cologne cliques' sedated managers. With the burial of Jewish estates, Nazi obliteration manoeuvres seem to have been carried out; Tanya Ury recognises in this the persistent and continual invisible making of a Jewish presence, of the Jewish body. In her projects she reflects upon the disappearance of this Jewish presence and the resistance to the memory of the victims, with irony and a consistency that in every way gets under the spectator's skin:

In "Kölnisch Wasser" (Eau de Cologne) 1993, in which she remembers her murdered family, she gets a "4711" number tattoo.

Aspects in the coming together of Palestinians and Israelis are the subject matter of "Promised Land". "Right of Return" 2005, takes on the right of return debate surrounding hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, driven out in the 1948 and 1967 Israeli-Arab wars, who wish to return to their former homeland.



Promised Land: Beelzebularin, 2005

In “Beelzebularin” (2005) she is disguised as Bezalel (meaning “In the shadow of God”) ben Uri, the biblical artist and fellow traveller of Moses. In “Calving Trouble” she demonstrates the contradictory behaviour of Moses, the bearer of the Tablets of the Law, when he sanctioned the colonisation of the foreign “promised Land”.

In the exhibition organised by the Berlin artists’ group “Meshulash” she turns up naked in a German Air Force leather coat. The involvement of fashion in politics is something that she points to in her project “Who’s Boss” (2002-), in that she exposes the Swabian fashion designer Boss, whose company founder Hugo Boss produced SS, SA (Storm Trooper) and Hitler Youth uniforms – she confronts them with a “Hair Shirt” made with her own hair that brings to mind the concentration camp hair mountains and the fact that in 1946, Hugo Boss did not comply with the Allied Forces requirement to compensate his former forced labour employees with a symbolical payment – a minimal amount was only paid (by the Hugo Boss AG) into the Forced Labour fund in the year 2000. Ury takes these facts and a Hugo Boss advertising campaign as motivation for a video-performance, in which she sews the letters “Boss” into the palm of her hand.

With her double portraits in dialogue form, Ury takes on the furtive and glossed over casting out of Jewish artists and scientists, within historical positioning; in 2003 with “lesser is me more or less” and “or else” (2007), and in a double portrait with Albert Einstein (“doo bee doo”), that references the monopolization of Albert Einstein within the Bertelsmann Group promoted advertising campaign “Du bist Deutschland” (You

are Germany). "Now they're advertising German patriotism in my name. (...) but back then I had to flee the country, for my life." In "Sibling Rivalry" (2008) she presents Elà and Leylà Ury, her brother's children, whose mother is a Muslim - one wears a Kefiyah, the other a Star of David. The rich diversity of her themes, her courage and humour is convincing. In her text "Self-portrait of a Self-hating Jew" (2009), which Tanya Ury reads in combination with her performance "Touch me Not", she explains what Jewish culture is: making taboo zones and censures visible; she wishes to do justice to a cultural heritage and a family that produced painters and writers. Tanya Ury's path has by no means been straightforward - the tracks were absolutely bourgeois until she found the courage, with (literally) body and soul, to live the life of an artist. And, in that unlike many of her colleagues, she has never sold any of her works, as she often reminds, she hints at the status of contemporary art: it has to be capable of establishing a majority interest, not be political, or politically correct and should suit customer interest. But more than ever today art does not measure itself by its saleability, its spectator or readership figures. And thus one is reminded of the once unappreciated, or now well-known (dead) artists. Or, as Karl Valentin put it: "Art comes from being 'able' to and not from 'wanting' to" otherwise one would have to call it "wart". It is also a particularly appropriate comment on the works of Jewish artists. Only those who avoid taboo zones, whose current work is easily digested, will surely find a majority interest; this is a position that Tanya Ury in the future will probably also not be prepared to take on board.

Article: artist's portrait by Hanna Rheinz in "Der Semit - Unabhängige Jüdische Periodical" (The Semite - Independent Jewish Newspaper) No. 6, December 2009 - January 2010 edition, ISSN 1869-0416 (D). Translation from German T.U.

Köln News
The Online-News Magazine for Cologne

Art and Remembering
 (Part of an article)



I had the good feeling that everything
 was secure, at least.

Video still from *Fury*, 2009

Tanya Ury brought a suitcase to Cologne. © NS-Doc

The story has a bitter punchline. Tanya Ury, the granddaughter of the Jewish writer Alfred H. Unger, who fled the Nazis from Cologne and immigrated to England, donated her grandfather's estate to the Cologne City Archives - against initial resistance from the family. It was meant to be seen as a token of reconciliation and trust towards Germany. With the collapse of the Archives two years ago, the estate has also gone missing, for the moment that is.

And so the artist (from London) made a video, of herself travelling (in) Cologne, with the suitcase and reading a text from the suitcase's contents. This can be seen in the exhibition "Art and Remembering" at the Nazi Documentation Centre. Alongside Ury, 12 Artists from Cologne also present work that recollects National Socialist crimes and the consequences. (English translation Tanya Ury)

**Cologne Review - "Art and Remembering":
A Multi-faceted Show at the Nazi Documentation Centre**
Katharina Hamacher

"Tanya Ury captured a difficult rite of passage in a video documentary. She made a pilgrimage to the place where the Cologne City Archives had collapsed, with a suitcase full of scripts and articles, written by her grandfather Alfred H. Unger, in order to read extracts from what was left of his legacy.

The rest of the bequest of her Jewish forbears was buried in the ruins: 'It was as if my family had been wiped out for a second time,' declared the artist."

(English translation Tanya Ury)

Exhibition

Cologne Artists get to grips with National Socialism -
 Start page - Cathedral City - Culture - Art City Cologne
 17.3.2011

The Nazi Documentation Centre, at EL-DE-Haus is not only a museum for historical exhibitions. Artists are also regularly given the opportunity to deal with the subjects of persecution and repression and the memory of all that. On Thursday, the 10th exhibition so far, on the theme "Art and Remembering" was opened. 12 Cologne artists and a guest from London present their work.

Photos, videos, paintings, installations, sculpture, activist art - the wide range demonstrates very different but always impressive ways to deal with Fascism, its crimes and consequences. The artists are Ingeborg Drews, Marcel Odenbach, Marita Maisey, Gunther Demnig Jürgen Knabe, Ulrike Oeter, Sigmar Polke, Barbara Riege, Ralf Maria Koller, Julia Scher, Grigory Berstein, Rolf Steiner and Tanya Ury.

Photo: Tanya Ury with the inherited suitcase in Cologne

A very particular fate connects the last of these with Cologne. The artist (originating from London) is the granddaughter of Alfred H. Unger, the writer who, like his brother, the Cologne theatre critic Wilhelm Unger, fled the Nazis to England. (Long) After the death of her grandfather and after hefty discussion in the family, she bequeathed the estate to the Cologne City Archives. The artist meant this to be a gesture of reconciliation and trust. After the collapse of the archives she was left solely with a suitcase full of scripts that were mistakenly delivered to here address. In her video „Fury“ she reads an Unger text about Cologne, from 1948, at the hole - the location of collapsed archives. (js)

"Art and Remembering" until 26.6., at The Nazi Documentation Centre of the City of Cologne, EL-DE-Haus, Appelhofplatz 23-25, 50667 Köln, Tel. 0221 22 12-63 32, E-Mail: nsdok@stadt-koeln.de, Opening times: Tue, Wed, Fri 10-16 hours, Thur 10-18 hours, Sat, Sun 11-16 hours, every first Thursday in the month open till 22 hours. Entrance 4,20/1,80 Euro
 (English translation Tanya Ury)

Nazi Documentation Centre "Art and Remembering" - a
Peephole into the past - report-k.de
Cologne, 17.3.2011, 13.15 hours

The Period of National Socialism is still a dominating
inspiration for artists in Cologne. Contemporary works
are being shown in the Nazi Documentation Centre's
exhibition "Art and Remembering". The show runs from 18th
March to 26th June 2011

'"It was as if my family had been wiped out for a second
time"

The collapse of the Cologne City Archives was to become a very
personal experience for Tanya Ury. For, after the death of her
mother, she brought the whole family estate over to the Cologne
City Archives, in 1999. This was because much of her family had
originated from Cologne. With the collapse, on March 3rd, family
letters, photos and memories also went down with the piles of
rubble. Till this day she doesn't know if anything of the legacy
has been recovered. "It was as if my family had been wiped out
for a second time", said Ury today. A video-performance, in
which she processes her anger and grief over the loss of this
memorabilia, may be seen in the exhibition. In it she appears as
one of the three Furies, returning to the spot, where the City
Archives once stood, as a Goddess of revenge. And there she
reads an article about Cologne from 1948, written by her
grandfather Alfred H. Unger. Because years ago, only a single
suitcase, full of scripts and articles had mistakenly been
delivered to her address, instead of to the City Archives. She
decided to keep it.'

(Part of an article - English translation Tanya Ury)

Upright Bunker Körnerstraße: A Special Place for

Special Art Posted by admin in Ehrenfeld, Startpage,

Veedel By Jürgen Brock-Mildenberger

<http://4veedel.de/?p=118>

With the advent of art and culture moving into the Upright Bunker building in Körner Strasse, an admonition against war and violent rulership ran like a red thread through the numerous exhibitions and presentations.

Documentaries like "The Short Life of the Jewess Felice Schragenheim" (1998), filmed under the title "Aimeé and Jaguar", installations on three levels like "Never Trust Biographies" (Andrea Morein, 2000) or "Jacob's Ladder" (Tanya Ury, 2002) consolidate(s) the reputation of the Bunker as a cultural location of exceptional quality, beyond the borders of Cologne. More than a thousand visitors were counted, on the Cologne museum's "Long Night" in the autumn of 2002. And a few days earlier Rupert Neudeck read out of Heinrich Böll's War Diary.

Then suddenly in 2002 it was all over because the fire brigade urgently needed storage space. And with the fire service came the building inspectors: events with people in the bunker - well that just wasn't on. Although the fire brigade ascertained that the storage idea wasn't so good, building inspectors then imposed restrictions: public only on the ground floor, modernisation of electrics and a second lockable toilet. With the assistance of the Ehrenfeld League for Work and Qualification, Ehrenfeld's regional representation managed to fulfil the requirements. Even so the whole action took some 5 years.

At the reopening in May 2007, with the very angry parodic title "60-Year Victory" by the Belarusian Marina Naprushkina, who dedicated the exhibition to "her dictator" Alexander Lukaschenko, she demonstrated that the subject of tyranny had lost nothing in its topicality. And even Esther Kusche and Rainer Kiel, whose most recent exhibition "Disposable World" dealing with global environmental destruction, referred in their flyer, to the "absurdity of this type of shelter, (...) an anachronistic relic".

What has above all come out of this resulting situation is the exacting of the artistic debate around the real function of the Bunker, from all those who wish to exhibit here. The uniqueness of this space lies precisely, in the first instance, in not allowing any other kind of usage - unlike in Köln-Mülheim, where a similar space has been expanded with catering facilities. And it should remain so, because the "light-Bunker" would be a step in the wrong direction. For a good overview of the previous exhibitions see: <http://www.kulturkoeln30.de>. (jbm) 4Veedel.de saying: The Upright Bunker in Körner Strasse should remain a location for commemoration and culture! 9.5.2011

<http://4veedel.de/>

(Translation Tanya Ury)

Written Into the Body – the Performance Video Art of

Tanya Ury, Juliette Brungs, University of Minnesota, in “Nexus: Essays in German Jewish Studies”, ISBN 9781571135018, Duke University, published by Camden House (USA), 15.11.2011
http://books.google.de/books?id=ygbQqC5K1YQC&pg=PA189&lpg=PA189&dq=juliette+brungs&source=bl&ots=IkDgvpSb66&sig=zbPlDRDZ7fjZwx7faImK9hK7Vb0&hl=de&sa=X&ei=UBolT_frDMiv0QWm6IXQAQ&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAzgK#v=onepage&q=juliette%20brungs&f=false

I am not a performance artist; performance is what I do, too.⁴⁰
 Tanya Ury, Interview with the artist, 2009

In this paper I discuss the performance art of Tanya Ury, a British artist born to German Jewish immigrants in the UK, who moved to Cologne, Germany in the early nineties. During the search for her family’s roots, Ury developed an artistic analysis of the Shoah’s aftermath. Ury began to promote a unique Jewish language of remembrance. I will present examples of Ury’s work, and discuss how the historical situation in Germany made the work for Jewish artists more difficult, slowed down its progress, and forced artists into a certain discourse about Germaness and Jewishness, differences in perspective, remembrance, and aftermaths of the annihilation of the European Jews. In confrontation with this development, Ury generated her work by drawing from Jewish tradition and feminist art. Ury also drew from the *In-Yer-Face-Theatre*, an early nineties British new vocal theater, often connected to the Artaudian Theater of Cruelty. Ury staged often shocking performances and confronted the German non-Jewish audience with the contemporary impact of historic events in the form of her unique artistic Jewish commentary.

The history of contemporary Jewish performative expressions leads back to the discovery of an inherited trauma of the annihilation of the European Jews for the descendants of survivors. Although manifested in the US as early as 1979 in Epstein’s American edition of a collection of interviews⁴¹, the acknowledgement of its legacy arrived late in Germany. It was only in the mid - eighties that Brumlik published his *Jewish Life in Germany since 1945*.⁴² This book was the beginning of a general search undertaken by the children of survivors in Germany, a search that advanced and developed to its full voice in art and academia as late as the mid - nineties. Ury’s decision to move her work to Germany was prompted by her personal search for family roots in the Cologne area and of her urge to participate in this developing art scene. Suddenly Jews of the later generations were appearing in the German public sphere. Their art was drawing from different sources: contemporary art, history, politics, family experience of traumatization, and the latest research in psychology and sociology.

⁴⁰ Interview with Tanya Ury. July 19/20th 2009. Cologne: “Ich bin keine Performeekünstlerin, Performance ist etwas, das ich auch mache.”

⁴¹ Epstein, Helen. *Children of the Holocaust*. 1979. The German edition was published in 1990.

⁴² Brumlik, Micha. *Juedisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1986.

The young British theater of the nineties, and here in particular Sarah Kane, revolutionized the female voice on stage by basing it on the theoretical feminist discourse of the time, following the desire to break through society's predetermined discourses. The following revival of the British theater was based mainly on a small movement, itself a reaction to the highly static atmosphere in the European intellectual scene of the time. It made a strong impression on theater groups and audiences all over Europe, while altering and annihilating stage concepts and audience's expectations. The shocking wave of confrontational theater in the early nineties supported Ury's entrance into the German performance scene and turned her appearance into an event. Ury, who combined rapidly developing video art of the time with an analysis of the aftermath of the Shoah, became quickly part of the Jewish art scene in Germany. She brought to stage elements of violence, fetishism, nudity, and sexuality in a pitiless way of displaying on stage the objectified status of her own body as a Jewish female artist within the German setting.

Ury uses her body as a projection surface that reflects back the audience's voyeurism while critically demonstrating how Jews are objectified in the German society. The naked Jewish body on stage and screen substitutes the perished Jewish bodies and corpses, and searches in the acting for a relationship to history and environment. The perceptibility of the performance is deceit and method, and crossed by a theatrical will for *confrontational cruelty* of disclosure while using the body as the instrument of expression.

Since the performance is a short-lived act of suddenness, and a framed artistic product that takes place in the present moment, it is an act of wasting rich resources for the sake of the momentary. These characteristics are of high interest for contemporary Jewish artists, because they contradict the character of irretrievable loss represented by the history of annihilation and its consequence of perpetuating memory. The wasting, where resources were eliminated, seems almost blasphemous and revolts the preservation of memory in the inherited and fixed form, and insofar functions as taboo breaking. The trauma reaches out of the past into the short-lived presence in an endless return; the tools of performance such as abruptness and perishability allow later generations to engage in a discourse with the testimonial inheritance while distinguishing the value of wasting knowledge against its fixed preservation. Therefore, breaking with the survivor's testimonial text becomes a crucial tool for the descendants to maintain the memory while opening spaces to develop their own voices.⁴³ While the act of wasting turns the performance, in a strict ontological sense, into a non-productive form, it is exactly its non-productivity that creates the open spaces that Jewish artists like Ury needed to explore the effects of the Shoah on their lives.

⁴³ Many studies have analyzed the impact of trauma on the following generations, and also discussed the difficulties for the children to "leave" their traumatized parents behind and live a life of their own. One example are the works by Kurt Gruenberg (Sigmund Freud Institute Frankfurt am Main).

Triptych for a Jewish Princess Second Generation

Ury developed the *Triptych for a Jewish Princess* in 1996, a set of three black and white photographs, as a dialogue with Sylvia Plath's poem *Daddy* on the inheritance of trauma, and combined it with her own text. Following Plath, whose poem also describes a tense bodily relationship toward her own father, Ury places the hidden but uncovered female body of the daughter in the center of her work. The shoe of Plath's poem - protecting, limiting and finally attacking the daughter - correlates with Ury's coat of the German Luftwaffe that symbolizes both the aspects of enclosure and aggression. The middle part presents the Jewish woman wrapped in the coat on black background and framed by the Plath poem as the work's center. Both outer parts reverse the relationship and present the female Jewish body posing, carrying history in form of a Luftwaffe coat, and framing the lines by Plath as well as the hidden and wrapped inner core of the identity. The change in background color and the apparent inversion of black and white, results in an irritating effect of photographic negative - positive - reversions. Likewise it divides the triptych and creates its classic three - part form.

In this intertextual work by Ury, voyeurism, violence, murder, and lust are reproduced from the very center outward. She quotes sadomasochistic configurations in Sontag's classic modern analysis of fascism,⁴⁴ as well as she relates her work to the naked bodies of Jewish women facing German uniforms and muzzles, well known from the photographs taken by SS soldiers during the mass executions of Jews. In addition Ury establishes an attempt to reject the victimization of the Jewish female body and turns against "the over identification with the role of the Jewess as victim."⁴⁵ The work obliges the spectator into the position of the voyeur, exposes one's own shame and the norms of the surrounding society, and obligates the spectator to face the bodily expressed pain of inherited trauma. Freddy Rokem describes this process: "Performances about the Holocaust insist on creating very direct and almost intimate relationships with spectators."⁴⁶ During this process of multiple mirroring the spectator is, consistently confronted with and thrown back to his/her own bodily experience, a method, which Ury uses repeatedly in other works. As a result of this complex and symbolic mirroring into the historic frame and beyond it, confusion emerges: who and how are we in our own bodies while experiencing and watching? Ury successfully manages to aggravate the reception through confrontation, to individualize the spectator, and to sabotage any withdrawal from the topic by her audience. Plath's poem stays embedded in the center of Ury's performance, and as an additional commentary, Ury includes her own poem, leading the recipient back into the spiral of inherited trauma and to the poet's final suicide:

⁴⁴ Such as Susan Sontag's *Fascinating Fascism* of 1974.

⁴⁵ Cp. www.tanyaury.com/trip/trip.htm .

⁴⁶ Rokem, Freddie. „On the fantastic in Holocaust performances“, in: *Staging the Holocaust: the Shoah in drama and performance*. Ed. by Claude Schumacher, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 44.

*Sylvia put her head
In the gas oven
To put out the pain
Trying to get back,
Get back,
Getting back what is Jew
(Tanya Ury, *Triptych for a Jewish Princess Second Generation*)*

With her poem, Ury emphasizes Plath's suicide as an active decision carried out by an individual. At the same time, the suicide represents a form of resistance: executing the self-killing is a rejection of the victim's role.

In the performance and photographic piece *Triptych*, Ury displays the symbol of virile masculinity, the trench coat, in connection to the historically defined leather coat and its sexual potential, while simultaneously absorbing and mocking its highly sexualized phallic meaning. The interconnections analyzed by Ury debate women's performance, women's art, and women's rights regarding their lives, physicalness, and corporalities with methods of critical feminist thinking, and result in a reflective commentary on Holocaust, genocide, violence, and sexuality. While playing with symbols, she criticizes definition and placement of the Jewish female body within the structures of family, community, and its usage as a pre-described element of a victim's collective. Hence, Ury's work has always been and still remains an almost extremist challenge, not only to her audience, but to a pre-defined way of approaching the Holocaust and its aftermath, either by the German society or the Jewish communities in Germany.

Kölnisch Wasser

Kölnisch Wasser exists in various stages produced in 1993, 1997, and 2003. The work can be understood as one of Ury's centerpieces that has been reworked, and rewritten over time, and finally resulted in a product with various layers. In addition the work unfolds in different contexts of Ury's general work since 1993, influencing the perception of other performances through the appearance of the tattooed number 4711, representing the famous Eau de Cologne. Ury recalls that it was often used by her mother and her grandmother, and insofar represents not only Ury's connection to the city but those of the female members in her family as well.⁴⁷ In the performance, the number 4711 is combined with a common product labeling barcode, an idea developed during discussion with the tattoo artist. The barcode represents the far more advanced modern technologies of cataloging human lives.

The split video screen of 2003 reflects the piece as a combination of different work stages and presents seven filmed performance acts. The original tattooing took place and was

⁴⁷ Women in Jewish families are seen as the first representatives of the Jewish tradition and insofar responsible to pass it to the children. Another example for the tattoo's appearance is the project *Hotel Chelsea - Köln* (1995/2005), cp. Video still photograph in this paper.

filmed in a tattoo studio in Cologne. Ury explains the latter production and performance setup, for which she used the original filmed material of the tattoo studio, as follows: “I never performed directly in front of people, only in front of two camera men and it was supposed to look very voyeuristic, but the people follow it on the monitors. It was meant to remind the viewers of the way in which media and press inform, and that one is so far detached from the actual facts, so one does not have any feelings anymore. And at this time, there was Kosovo and one could feel the parallels in this work. Also, the performance [“the blond wig performance” JB] was taking place in a different room in the same building but nobody knew about that. It could have been that the video material had been already recorded and was not performed live, so the audience did not necessarily know about it. But it was shown on four monitors, two showed the performance to the spectators, one in black/white and one in color. I had already recorded the tattooing and added a soundtrack with poems and songs. That was shown at the same time and the fourth monitor with a camera was directed toward the audience, so that they became part of the picture.”⁴⁸

Kölnisch Wasser consists of four main elements: the aforementioned recorded tattooing accompanied by a controversial discussion instigated by the tattoo artist, the various performances using the ‘blond wig,’ the filmed reactions of different audiences, and a voice over commenting and adding information on the artist’s discussion of history and individual memories. *Kölnisch Wasser* begins with a statement referring to Vayikra 19:28 (Lev.19:28): *Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor imprint any marks upon you: I am the LORD*⁴⁹. The statement in the work itself reads: “A tattoo is a religious taboo; a tattooed person would not be allowed a burial in a Jewish cemetery.” Referring to the tattooed numbering of Jewish inmates in Auschwitz, Ury’s statement is not correct; since rabbinical discussion on the tattoo as a religious taboo is still ongoing and controversial, and no evidence has been found that Jewish law forbids the burial of a tattooed person in a Jewish cemetery in general. Although still a misunderstanding of rabbinic interpretation, the definition of a tattoo as a taboo was (and is) widely accepted by the Jewish communities. Insofar Ury quotes a traditional position, she

⁴⁸ Interview with Tanya Ury. July 19/20th 2009. Cologne: “Wie Kölnisch Wasser gestaltet wurde: Ich habe nie die Performance vor Menschen aufgeführt, nur vor zwei Kameramännern und es sollte sehr voyeuristisch aussehen, aber die Menschen sehen das übertragen auf Monitore und es sollte daran erinnern wie Medien und Presse über etwas informieren und das man so weit entfernt von den Tatsachen ist, dass man keine Gefühle mehr hat. Und in dieser Zeit gab es auch Kosovo und da waren Parallelen zu spüren in dieser Arbeit. Also fand die Performance in einem anderen Raum im gleichen Gebäude statt, aber keiner wusste das. Es hätte auch sein können, dass es schon voraufgezeichnetes Material und nicht live war, das wussten die Zuschauer nicht nötiger Weise. Aber es lief am Anfang auf vier Monitoren, zwei auf der Performance (vor den Zuschauern), einer in schwarz/weiss, einer in Farbe. Ich hatte dann dieses Tätowieren aufgenommen schon im Voraus und eine Tonspur dazugesetzt mit Gedichten und Liedern, das lief dann gleichzeitig und der vierte Monitor mit Kamera war auf die Zuschauer gerichtet, damit sie auch im Bild sind.” (Translated from German JB).

⁴⁹ Cp. A Hebrew - English Bible. According to the Masoretic Text and the JPS 1917 Edition. <http://ww.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0319.htm>.

relates it to the conscious humiliation of the Jewish body by the German perpetrator.

The tattoo artist, who in the beginning rejects the project, finally engages in a discussion with Ury on the Holocaust, former Jewish life in Cologne, and anti-Semitic and neo - Nazi activities in the city. He understands himself as an original citizen of Cologne, and as such hesitates to see his hometown so closely connected to the annihilation of the Jews in an art work. Even though the Nazis drove Ury's ancestors out of Cologne in the thirties, the tattoo artist lectures Ury on the impact that high values of emancipation and equality had and still have on the self-understanding of Cologne's citizens. While Ury mostly avoids responding to his speech, the editing also reflects the tension of the deeply engaged audience: while watching all performance parts simultaneously (including their own reactions as they observe the discussion), spectators are motionless as their facial expressions show an increasing discomfort.

The narrator occasionally comments on the performance and often adds historic information about Jews in Cologne and Ury's family history. Hence, the audience perceives the narrator's commentary as an additional layer to the performed piece of video art. The narrator's comments go beyond the visual information, detach the audience from direct images, and provide the audience with a wider historical framework.

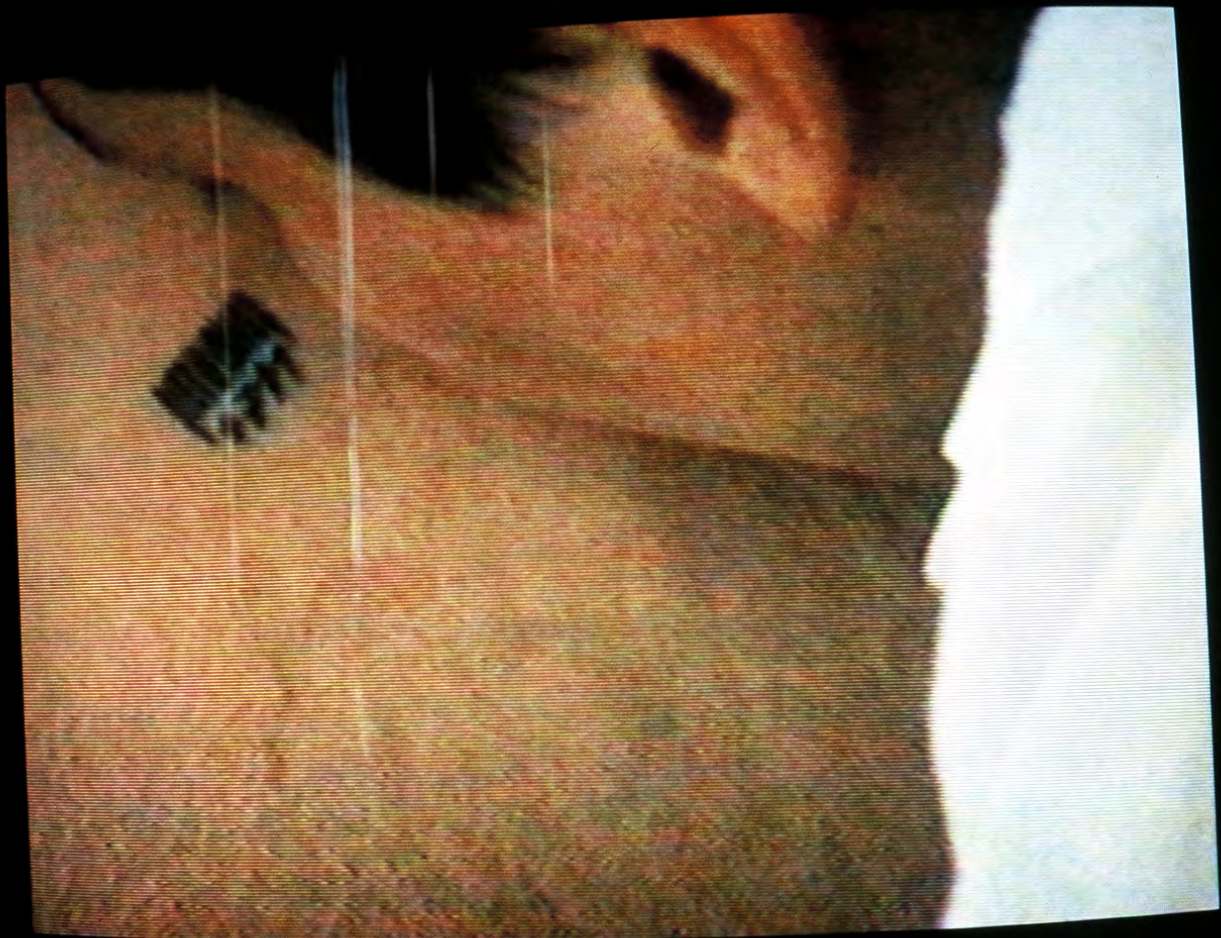
The live performances in black/white and color take place in cellar-like locations with naked stone walls and bare floors. Here and there a chair appears as the only prop. Ury begins the performance wearing leather clothes and a blond wig covering her dark hair. During the piece, she strips off her clothes completely, flirting with the camera and the cameramen, developing different poses in which the body language fluctuates from sexualized to anxious, stretching the body and crouching down. References to the people rounded up naked or people naked in the gas chambers become more evident as Ury steps into a shower and the camera catches the showerhead on the top. As a deeply ironic commentary, the artist begins to sing a carnival song, traditionally used during the Cologne carnival. The intertextuality of a blond wig, on one hand referring to the famous men - luring *Lorelei*, to the Aryan ideal of a female, and to the Jewish orthodox woman wearing a wig to cover her natural hair, result in a painful and shrill scream, expressing itself in the coordination of props, music and performance elements while forming the particularly strong statement of traumatic experience and pain.

The numbering tattoo is often seen on screen, and at one point the split screen is covered with frames that only show the tattoo from many different perspectives. As mentioned earlier, the tattoo grows into a self-referential symbol within the oeuvre of Tanya Ury, and it evolves as the thread that weaves Ury's works into one text, for which the artist's body becomes what Bourdieu calls a "storage medium of social and cultural

experience.”⁵⁰

In addition to its association with the Shoah, pain, and annihilation, the tattoo finally turns into a self-quotation, symbolizing the artist’s work, her body and her story, while metaphorically condensing Jewishness, tradition, family, history, scandal, and art work into one: “I wanted to show the people: actually, this is who I am. The number on my skin is a statement: every other cell of my body is similarly encoded and inscribed as Jewish.”⁵¹

The artist, the media, and the aftermath of the Holocaust



Hotel Chelsea - Köln (1995, video still)

⁵⁰ Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

⁵¹ English translation of an interview with Tanya Ury, translated by Tanya Ury. *I want to embrace being German now*, In: *Stadtrevue (City Revue)*: Cologne 5/95.



neonazi (2001, blue neon sign - photo documentation Doris Frohnappfel)

If it isn't personal, how can you be personally involved?
Tanya Ury, *Break the Silence*

Ury's work consists of three structural elements: text, video art, and performance. All of them provide different ways of approaching the central topic of memory. They represent a quest undertaken from various perspectives and linguistic systems, resulting in different layers of her reminiscential work that fluctuates between inherited trauma, history, and memory.

Texts play a major role in Ury's work: they appear as explanations accompanying her performance art, as an elaboration on the topic, as outside references, and in the form of additional commentaries. In the Derridian sense, Ury establishes herself as an artist undeviatingly searching for an archive, and the search for the archive "...is to burn with passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away (...) It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement."⁵²

Ury's archive does rely on an archive of women's knowledge, on a Jewish archive and most precisely on the family's archive in which she must inscribe herself. The problem that post-Shoah Jewish texts developed into a complex challenge for the children of survivors is: how could the children participate in that from which they became excluded, while still carrying the after effects. The long-lasting silence of the paternal survivor's generation, or its opposite, the extensive impartation of the traumatic experience, occupied inter-generational communication. These consequences of traumatization most often did not allow the descendants to create their own unique access to the archive due to diverse structural reasons. Among the first generation, the guilt of having survived was metonymically removed and eventually replaced by a strict conventional consensus of high respect for the dead. As a result of this spatial blocking process evoked by the annihilation of the Jews, the second generation was left without language, access to the traditional archive, and ways of expression. Trapped between the need to clarify the inherited trauma and the lack of a loophole, the children of survivors were threatened by suffocation, as they tried to transcend their parents' history without leaving it behind. Much research has been published on the different status of symbioses in survivor's families and while I will not discuss this extensively here, the most common bodily expressions among the children of survivors are anorexia nervosa, bulimia, extremist self-disciplinary attitudes, rigidity, and promiscuity, to mention only a few.

Even in her earlier works, Ury began to analyze the body and its relationship to the Shoah. One can interpret that the descendant generation's development of violent and self-destructive tendencies, is an expression of its frustration and inability to participate in the wider Jewish text after the Shoah. When their bodies started to revolt, the descendants began to push for expression and knowledge, "that we shall know, if it is all knowable".⁵³ In the palimpsest like process of building memory and remembrance, and on their way to vocalize their access to the archive the second generation reversed the Derridian phrase,

⁵² Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1998, 91.

⁵³ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1998, 71.

“what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way”⁵⁴ to their new interpretation “what is no longer lived in the same way is no longer archived in the same way.” Actively partaking in this process were artists like Tanya Ury, who in their artistic realization drew on contemporary and experimental ways of expression: in her case, performed video art.

Video, by its technical nature a linear medium, depends on vertical and horizontal synchronization. The image in video is a constant and uninterrupted flow of signals, not a coding of chemical substances as it is in film. Insofar as it is electronically recorded and constantly changing, it can be seen as a change in status for the image. In its history, video art has been deeply connected to analog computer applications, a style particularly associated with early experimental video art work of the seventies.

The attraction of the medium can be understood as a fascination with one of its main characteristics: the possibility of simultaneous recording and play-back. For the first time, artists were able to study a visual medium and test the result while still experimenting with the medium. As Spielmann recalls, “despite its poor image quality and limited applications, video was welcomed by experimental practitioners of performance, Happening, and Fluxus events, who were looking for new means of expression to transgress the vocabularies and territories of established institutions.”⁵⁵ Consequently, video was not fully accepted to the art market, and as it hardly appeared in museums or larger collections, it was barely shown at festivals.⁵⁶

Although video was marketed as a medium of lower value and options, it remained relatively inexpensive and as a result played an important role for political groups cut off from media or media expertise. Once the wall in Germany had fallen, the aforementioned factors of video art benefited the art scene of the early and mid nineties in Germany tremendously. Spielmann emphasizes: “Because of the diversity of these activities and their focus on the immediacy of the live medium, video until recently was not prone to institutionalization,”⁵⁷ and the situation only began to change with the arrival of digital video in the mid-nineties. Interestingly, this development led to an increase in video art in the nineties particularly as it was developed by artists who did not connect themselves to the medium’s history and made no use of the aforementioned medium’s specifics.

⁵⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1998, 18.

⁵⁵ Spielmann, Yvonne. Video: From Technology to Medium, In: *Art Journal*, Vol.65, No.3 (Fall, 2006): 62.

⁵⁶ One early exception may be the VideoFest Berlin, nowadays *transmediale*. The VideoFest - organizers concerned themselves already in 1990 with the history of the medium, presenting an extensive collection of video art produced 1968-1989. (I attended the festival 1990, 1991, 1992, and worked for it in 1993 myself).

⁵⁷ Spielmann, Yvonne. Video: From Technology to Medium, In: *Art Journal*, Vol.65, No.3 (Fall, 2006): 63.

This was the semiotic frame of the medium in the late eighties and early nineties, which was chosen by Ury when she decided to enter the field. Some of Ury's earliest works, *Break the Silence - a Video Diary* (1990) and *False Premises* (1992), still show the strong connection to the performance video art of the pre - digital period. In *Break the Silence*, the artist presents herself performing household duties while discussing her personal and emotional state, a clear reference to Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975). In *False Premises*, she follows and analyzes herself in the role of a wife as she builds a house with her husband, only to ultimately leave the marriage once it is time to move in. With these works, Ury positions herself as a female Jewish feminist video artist, who relates to the history of the medium and the history of video as an instrument for political expression and action. The feminist voice of Ury is established exactly in this context, which must be taken into consideration with her later work as well.

Ury decides to use video as the medium for her exploration of heritage, trauma, femininity, and Jewishness. As the method of expression she chooses the performed spectacle. The necessity for description and expression leads to the depictive rigor of Ury's work.⁵⁸ It is centered on the spectator and creates layers of transmission, while fully surrounding its audience. "Holocaust performances," Rokem explains, "literally place a representative of the spectators inside the fictional framework of the performance."⁵⁹ In Ury's case it is the artist herself, who simultaneously represents her Jewish *and* German heritage. One could go so far to claim that Ury's work becomes a testimony: inscribing the past visually into and onto her body. The forcefulness of Ury's performance art, its lucidity and its long-sightedness relate her work to the Artaudian theater of cruelty, as Derrida describes it: "The theater of cruelty thus would not be a theater of the unconscious. Almost the contrary. Cruelty is consciousness, is exposed lucidity."⁶⁰ Insisting on her existence determines Ury's request for a right of expression, while in the confrontational search for communication, the will to "restore 'existence' and 'flesh' emphasizes" in the artistic expression that "whatever can be said of the body can be said of the theater."⁶¹ "I do not," Ury states, "make my art out of complaisance; it provokes, it isn't always comfortable."⁶²

Ury describes her performance *Kölnisch Wasser* in relation to the theatrical method of cruelty: "And obviously this performance

⁵⁸ Cp. Derrida, Jacques. *The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation*, 301: "Thus, we can distinguish the sense of cruelty as *necessity* and *rigor*."

⁵⁹ Rokem, Freddie. L.c.

⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques. „The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation“: 306.

⁶¹ Derrida, Jacques. „The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation“: 293.

⁶² Interview with Tanya Ury. July 19/20th 2009. Cologne: "Meine Kunst mache ich nicht aus Gefälligkeit, es provoziert, es ist nicht immer angenehm."

was very crass, one does not do that, it is really distasteful what I did there, and sometimes I could see people leave. I understood it, no one wants to have that in the face, but to shake them up..."⁶³ The artist herself relates her work to the Derridian/Artaudian idea of cruelty as a method to disclose concealed topics and also emphasizes the understanding that "cruelty is always at work" in our daily life.⁶⁴ The liberation of the stage from the representational act allows a breakthrough of the medial layers of a daily over-informed audience and finally permeates spectator and performer: "[T]heater is not an external force acting on society, but a part of it. It's a reflection of the way people within that society view the world," as Sarah Kane has once pointed out.⁶⁵

Describing her audiences, Ury states: "Germans are forced to be interested; the Jewish audience is rather less so."⁶⁶ With this commentary, Ury touches on one of the most central questions regarding the remembrance of the Holocaust or the Shoah in Germany, that is, who owns memory? Jewish artists in Germany have to stand up to a society which is in a certain 'coming to terms'-mode. This mode persistently overwrites history and occupies social spaces with a German form of memory and remembrance. Jewish artists are persevering, trying to recapture social spaces to create the opportunity for an expression of Jewish memory on German soil. In this, the Jewish minority voice becomes subordinated. The lament for the victims in German culture absorbs the Jewish voices and results in self-representation of the perpetrators as new victims (for their part in history). These tendencies lead to an ongoing paradigm shift, in which perpetrator and victim are replaced and conversely exchanged. This exchange results in (already existing) strictly defined and standardized positions and statements in the field of foreign affairs, as well as to a detachment from confrontational analysis in the arena of internal affairs.

However, the question remains: how does one publicly express Jewishness in contemporary Germany? Why do so, if the only result is a public manifestation of Jewishness, an exposure of the individual's vulnerability? In her study *Unmarked*, Peggy Phelan refers to the illusion of empowerment through visibility, which did not result in a larger influence on society for women. The idea that visibility equals influence and power in a society has been proven to be false. In regard to the Jewish engagement in German culture, one could equally ask if Jewish visibility in German culture is still the trap that Phelan discusses in

⁶³ Interview with Tanya Ury. July 19/20th 2009. Cologne: "Und natürlich war diese Performance wirklich sehr krass, das tut man eigentlich nicht, dass ist wirklich geschmacklos was ich da gemacht habe und da konnte ich auch sehen wie manchmal Leute rausgingen. Ich konnte das auch nachvollziehen, das würde ja niemand im Gesicht haben wollen. Aber um wachzuschütteln..."

⁶⁴ Derrida, Jacques. „The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation“: 294.

⁶⁵ Sierz, Aleks. *In-Yer-Face-Theatre*, 39.

⁶⁶ Interview with Tanya Ury. July 19/20th 2009. Cologne: "Die Deutschen sind gezwungen interessiert zu sein, das Jüdische Publikum ist eher nicht so interessiert."

Unmarked: "Visibility is a trap (...); it summons surveillance and the law; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonialist/imperialist appetite for possession."⁶⁷ So the question remains, if German Jewish artists can succeed in increasing their influence and impact on the cultural debate in contemporary Germany.

Tanya Ury's work is one of the pioneering pieces of evidence for the urge to combine Jewish feminist video art with histories of women, media, Jews, and Germany. Ury performs her critique of the complacent German -- self-mirroring in its false and self-created image of history -- and indicates a socially accepted removal of critical historical discourse. Throughout she maintains awareness that she articulates her performance art through the female Jewish body and proves this fact when explaining how she follows the audience's reactions: "I could see how people reacted in the galleries, it is exactly what I wanted to achieve."⁶⁸ The appearance of Jewish self-referential works and discourses was delayed in Germany, and its development still suffers from the late consequences of Cold War and unification. Tanya Ury's work represents an important female and feminist voice in the continuing process of forming a contemporary expressiveness of Jewish self-confidence in Germany.

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⁶⁷ Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. 6.

⁶⁸ Interview with Tanya Ury. July 19/20th 2009. Cologne, discussing her work BOSS: "Ich konnte sehen wie die Leute reagieren in Galerien, das ist genau wie ich das wollte."

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Tanya Ury, photo Ingrid Strobl,
February 2011

Ingrid Strobl - Radio Interview: „A Short Story about...“
19.11.2011 <http://www.wdr5.de/sendungen/eine-kurze-geschichte-von.html>

Questions to Tanya Ury:

Is the home country a place for you?

What do you long for most of all?

What does memory mean to you?

Is the home country a place for you?

Home is for me no particular place – it’s more about feeling at home with people or like-minded people. And it’s also about the feeling that I have to take a path – and then in spite of difficulties, everything makes sense. But if there is a concrete place that I would call my home country, then it would be the place that I come from that I sometimes experience in meditation and to which I will eventually return to – the endless light.

What do you long for most of all?

Last year I read Leonard Cohen’s “Book of Longing” – it was about love, sensual and spiritual. Tarkovsky’s film “Nostalghia”, which he shot while in exile in Italy, was also about love – for his Russian homeland that was sometimes represented as lover, sometimes as his mother. And “Saudade” of the melancholy Portuguese Fado songs expresses a world weariness.

I long for passion and serenity on an equal basis.

What does memory mean to you?

Memory is for me a sensation that I must re-find, experience and decipher in order to understand the world in which I live. Memories are the only thing that remains for us from a lost reality; but they are only clues – a fragmented perception that is experienced similarly by millions of people. Memories only have any value when they are talked about in order to avoid abuse by others today and in the future.

(Translation Tanya Ury)

30-minute radio feature by Ingrid Strobl on Tanya Ury, in the radio series "Eine kurze Geschichte von..." (a short story about...), 19.11.2011, WDR5, Cologne (D)

Ingrid Strobl

A Short Story about...

... Tanya Ury and the Cologne Furies

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

I am Palestinian / I am Mulatto / I am Jew / I am Christian / I am Hindu /

Ich bin Palästinenserin / Ich bin Mulatto / Ich bin Jüdin / Ich bin Christ / Ich bin Hindu /

Author

Tanya Ury, artist: video, performance, photography.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

Forget me not / But / Touch me not / Ne me touche pas / Noli me tangere /

Vergiss mein nicht. / Aber / berühre mich nicht. / Ne me touche pas / Noli me tangere /

Autorin

Tanya Ury. Born 1951 in London. She left home aged 19, lived in an Indian guru's ashram, practised meditation, worked as a cook, married. Studies art in London and Reading, then gets separated from her husband. In 1993 she moves to Cologne, the city from which her family fled the the Nazis in the 30's. She decides to make her family history, the Holocaust and memory, a working theme.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Mal d'Archiv - London Walkabout*)

Here I am again. In Belsize Park, London. I'm taking a little walk into my past.

Film background noise (*Mal d'Archiv - London Walkabout*)

The Author

Tanya Ury walks with camera around the London neighbourhood, in which she grew up.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Mal d'Archiv - London Walkabout*)

Yes, I'm going this way, because Berthold Goldschmidt - a family friend - lived in this street. (...) And when I was a small child I used to go with my father to concerts that he conducted. He was the conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

This area is already Hampstead, but it's also Belsize Park. Lovely. Every house has a large garden (...). This is where my story starts, in this house.

Film background noise (Mal d'Archiv)

The Author

Tanya Ury. Daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter, great niece, great-grandniece of artists, composers, playwrights, dramaturges, journalists. The descendant of the Unger family from Cologne and the Ury family. She grew up with art and culture, Brothers Grimm fairy tales and in the shadow of the Holocaust.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Mal d'Archiv - London Walkabout*)

I think that because of the catastrophes, which the family experienced, the Holocaust - people lose... The awful stress... It resulted in most of our family becoming pretty neurotic.

OK, (...) Let's go this way (...) Down to Swiss Cottage. Well, in this little street that's two parallel to Daleham Gardens, where I grew up, is the Freud Clinic, (...) that Anna Freud was still running (...) I can still vaguely remember, when I was about five years old, (...) how I was actually introduced to her.

Author

Tanya's brother attended Anna Freud's kindergarten, her sister started psychoanalytical therapy at three years of age, she was sent to a therapist at the Anna Freud children's clinic, when she was nine.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Mal d'Archiv - London Walkabout*)

(...) I can only say it didn't help much, well it didn't help at all, in fact and as far as my memory serves me, it was because I wasn't allowed to draw. I loved drawing and used to spend most of the time drawing. This woman, if she'd supported that, I might have told her all sorts of things in illustrated form - but no, (...) I wasn't allowed to and I was very shut up inside myself, so we didn't get very far.

Background noise of the Popnoname presentation - Popnoname in the Kunstverein with passages of the author's texts.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

Cock tail party. Être peut être. Etepetete. Eat a potato. Psychotherapist: Why can't you just be happy?

Background noise of the Popnoname presentation Popnoname in the Kunstverein

I think this is all about the coming together of diverse people - the combination is amazing... The most diverse artists. (...) Amazing. TU: (*laughs*) - Oh, Heinrich Miess! - (...) *Laughs*.

Author

August 2010, in the Cologne Kunstverein. kjubh Gallery is celebrating its tenth anniversary. Jens Uwe Beyer is mixing music that no-one is listening to but he's happy about the mass of people crowding this space out. On the walls are record covers that have been designed by the artists, for his new album "Popnoname".

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

Coach potato. Couch philosopher. Psychologist Coach.

Autorin

One of these is Tanya Ury's. That's why she's here today. And because kjubh Gallery has already shown some of her other work. They'll be presenting her film "Fury" soon.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

Half dimensional poems. Semi detached.

Author

Her design cover displays the photograph of a book shelf combined with lines of poetry from her series "half dimensional poems".

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

The photo (...) was taken in my grandfather's flat, here in Cologne, some 20 years back. You can see two Stars of David and books on the shelf with Jewish and art historical themes: Golda Meir, Massada and Kurt Schwitters. (...) And there is also a Buddha. All these books and the Stars of David were in the City Archives. And are now of course, no where to be found. So this photo has become even more meaningful to me - thank goodness I took it then.

Author

The Cologne City Archives collapsed on 3rd March 2009, dumping amongst other things, hundreds of boxes of documents belonging to the family Ury and Unger into the mud.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

(...) It's such a dreadful feeling. (...) I've been unofficially informed that they have found some photos. (...) They've also said that it will take 30 years to sort everything out. I'm nearly 60 - I don't think I'll be here in thirty years. The next generation, my brother's children in England, for instance - they won't know who wrote what, who the people on the photos are, or in the super 8 films. (...) A lot will be lost, when you can't make connections.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

Where do you come from? / I mean, you look so different. / Where do your parents come from? / Can I touch your hair? / Is it real? Is it a wig? / It's like pubic hair.

Woher kommst du? / Ich meine, du siehst so anders aus. / Woher kommen deine Eltern? / Darf ich deine Haare berühren? / Ist es (sic!) echt? Ist es eine Perücke? / Es ist wie Schamhaar.

Author

Tanya Ury and her siblings thought long about which institution they should hand over the Unger and Ury legacy to. The Leo Baeck Institute in London was one option. But then they decided on the Cologne City Archives, at Tanya's suggestion.

Original Soundtrack *Fury kjubh Galerie* / Original Soundtrack *shortly before the opening and Heinrich Miess' Introduction*

Original Soundtrack Heinrich Miess

We're showing Tanya Ury's film "Fury", today. The subject matter is her dealing with and the absorption of family history here in Cologne. Tanya Ury (...) came back to Cologne. She was in love with Cologne, somehow. - TU: No! - Heinrich Miess: No? - *Laughter* - (...) Well she fell in love with Cologne some 30 years ago and then - *Giggling*.

Author

In August of 2010 kjubh Gallery presented the whole, two-hour-long version of "Fury".

The opening credits can be seen: white letters on a black background.

Speaker

In "Fury", Tanya Ury takes on the role of one of the three furies, the goddesses of revenge, from the ancient world. Her task is to hear complaints brought by mortals against householders or city councils to suppliants - and to punish such crimes by hounding the culprits relentlessly.

Author

Tanya Ury is sitting in the last row and is scrutinising the public. People of all ages, friends, acquaintances, people she's never met before. The Archive collapse shook many Cologne inhabitants. Anger and sorrow have not yet faded.

Speaker

These Erinnyes are crones, with snakes for hair, dogs' heads, coal black bodies, bats' wings, and bloodshot eyes. In their hands they carry brass-studded scourges, and their victims die in torment. It is unwise to mention them by name in conversation; hence they are usually styled the Eumenides, which means 'The Kindly Ones'...

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (in "Fury" the short version)

I'm on a mission to the "hole", where the City Archives once stood, with the suitcase that I should have taken there some years ago. (*laughs*)

Original Soundtrack from "Fury" (short version)

Footsteps

Author

On the 3rd of October 2009, Tanya Ury makes her way to the site of where the Archives collapsed. She is accompanied by Sigrid Hombach, camerawoman. The suitcase she's carrying, used to belong to her brother, but was accidentally delivered to her door. And because she failed to hand it over to the City Archives, she has been able to preserve it.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury *(from Fury part 1 and 2)*

Teil 1 (...) My grandfather's scripts - I found out that he was the UFA film studios' Head Scriptwriter in the thirties, till they fired him, because he was Jewish.

Author

She puts the suitcase down, opens it and looks through the documents. Yellowing manuscripts, notes, envelopes, photos...

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury *(from "Fury" part 1 and 2)*

Teil 2 Well - the suitcase... (...) These are mostly my grandfather's things (...) (*Rustling*) I imagine that my mother must have written this, when she was a child. Address book... (*sighs*). It's all jumbled together. (...) I ask myself when this dates from? Rabin - that was - my grandmother's sister... Sylvia, that was my mother. Oh, all sorts of things. Oh dear, just looking at all of this is giving me a crisis...

Original Soundtrack *(Kölnisch Wasser)* **Tanya Ury sings the Loreley song against the background of her conversation with Andy Wolf, and the creaking of his chair.**

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

Yes well, Kölnisch Wasser...

Original Soundtrack Author and Tanya Ury

TU: Okay, now it's starting.

(Conversation between her and Andy Wolf in the video)

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

A: Where are you exactly? With someone who does tattoos? TU:

Yes, a tattoo artist. Andy Wolf.

Original Soundtrack: the Video, running in the background.

Author

In 1993, Tanya Ury received a number 4711 tattoo on her upper thigh. Gesa Marten, editor and dramaturge shot the action of video. Tanya calls the performance "Kölnisch Wasser" (Eau de Cologne).

Original Soundtracks from the Video "Kölnisch Wasser" (with Original Soundtrack beforehand)

Andy Wolf: Right - is that OK? TU: Uh...

Author plus Original Soundtrack

Andy Wolf has stuck the tattoo pattern onto Tanya Ury's thigh. She raises her leg, in order to see it better.

Original Soundtracks from the Video "Kölnisch Wasser"

(...) Andy Wolf: Don't touch it, please! - TU: Oh... Yes, I think... - Andy Wolf: You can go up to the front and look at yourself in the big mirror, or here, in this one. Because you said you wanted it a bit more at an angle? - TU: I'll go and take a look at it. - Andy Wolf: Yes. It'll never go away - think it over carefully. - TU: Yes.

Author

The Film „Kölnisch Wasser“, which Tanya Ury played back over her DVD recorder for me, is a compilation of seven performances presented as split-screen video.

From the video Kölnisch Wasser

Andy Wolf: Watch out please! *He lowers the back of the seat. And then put your leg over here. Tanya starts singing the Loreley song (sings Loreley for a long time, way into the author's next text.)*

Autorin

That is to say: on the screen are two, four, up to 16 windows with various activities to be seen concurrently: the process of the tattooing, the public watching the tattooing scene, Tanya Ury as a stripper, in a long-haired blonde wig, undressing slowly, spectators watching this performance on a monitor, while the act of the tattooing takes place on another monitor...

From the video Kölnisch Wasser

Male voice: She said, if your mother could see you now, she would turn in her grave! - Tanya Ury sings against the background sound of the working tattoo equipment: "Es war einmal ein treuer Husar, er liebte sein Mädels ein ganzes Jahr, ein ganzes Jahr, und noch viel mehr...".

(There once was a faithful Hussar,
He loved his girl for a whole year,
For a whole year, and so many more,
It was a never ending love affair.)

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (Original Soundtrack: *Kölnisch Wasser*)

I took on this role, a mixture of Loreley, that's why I wore a blonde wig, and seductress - I was dressed in black leather, well, fetish clothing. And conducted the performance as though I were performing a pornographic routine.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury continues singing "Es war einmal ein treuer Husar..." (There once was a faithful Hussar)

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

In my opinion, everything that we see of the Holocaust, the reports, photography in particular, is pornographic. One sees naked bodies of people - the people who were to go to the gas chambers first had to undress - they were witnessed and also filmed.

Author

The expressions on the faces of the spectators are stunned, anxious, exasperated, petrified. One woman holds her hand over her mouth, another leans over, as if to get a better view this way.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

Yes, (*laughs*) I've been berated, (...) then I heard that someone had said the piece should be censored.

Author

Not long after, Tanya Ury saw a British documentary film about Milena Jesenska, the Czechoslovakian journalist and girl-friend of Franz Kafka.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

(...) **She wrote many anti-Fascist articles.** (...) And ended up in the concentration camp Ravensbrück. Her number there was 4714. But all her girlfriends called her 4711, Kölnisch Wasser; this is what I discovered only one day after I got the tattoo - it was so outrageous! (...) I was somehow connected to Milena, and that was quite fantastic.

Author

On her website Tanya Ury cites the Viennese author Doron Rabinovici with this statement:

Speaker

We, our entire generation, we were all born with a blue number on our arm! All of us! It may be invisible, but it has been tattooed into us, under our skin.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

It is a part of me. And part of my history.

Original Soundtrack Café**Author**

All the same. Can you say that? Many would say, no. In fact Tanya Ury has been included as "Jewish self-hater", in the "S.H.I.T.-List of self-hating Jews" that the rightwing Rabbi Meir Kahane initiated years ago and which has made the Internet rounds under several names since then. Amin Farzanefar, cultural journalist, curator **and editor of Tanya Ury's German texts**, disagrees:

Original Soundtrack Amin Farzanefar

(...) The themes that she picks, are all important and partially fall into a category where, because of falsely held political correctness or shame regarding some kind of constructed taboo, are therefore not taken up. (...) And I think we are living in times where, on the one hand provocation no longer enflames, because the breaking of taboos is played down. On the other hand there are still very clear boundaries when something unspoken turns up, however. And Tanya Ury always searches this borderline out and then transgresses it.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

I am English. I am not from here. / No, really. / My hair is Semitic.

Ich bin Engländerin. / Ich bin nicht von hier. / Nein, wirklich. / Meine Haare sind semitisch.

Author

Amin Farzanefar first met Tanya Ury some ten years ago in his favourite café in the city centre of Cologne.

Original Soundtrack Amin Farzanefar

Tanya (...) I first noticed her, what shall I say, because of her outward appearance, (...) which is something that she really doesn't like to hear, her striking grey curly hair. And then I always thought, who is this interesting, attractive woman? And I think we must both have been sitting drinking our lattes in the same place for years, before we were eventually introduced to each other.

Author

Since then they have become friends. Amin Farzanefar helps Tanya Ury, with her English to German text translations. And repeatedly witnesses how her art is misunderstood as being something offensive.

Original Soundtrack Amin Farzanefar

Well, as far as this acting with one's own body is concerned, something which Tanya often involves herself with – the body becomes a projection surface, an area for representation, the body is an archive, the body is an interface. And her female body is often in the foreground, challenging, disallowing, provoking, shocking. I don't think that if it were properly received that there could possibly be any kind of ambiguity, (...) but of course it always lies in the eye of the beholder. How far he can open up to such a differentiated point of view, or whether he has already shut down and says, that's going to far.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

Can I touch your hair? / Is it real? / No, you can't. / Why not? / Because I am not a child. / I am not animal. /

Darf ich deine Haare berühren? Ist es echt? / Nein, du darfst nicht. / Warum denn nicht? / Weil ich kein Kind bin. Und auch nicht tierisch. /

Original Soundtrack Amin Farzanefar

(...) She consistently refuses to better her German in that she doesn't really face up to it. (...) Well, I don't think she wants to appropriate the German language beyond a certain level or maybe re-appropriate it.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

Vergiss mein nicht. / Aber / berühre mich nicht. / Ne me touche pas / Noli me tangere / Touch me not.

Author

“Touch me not“ is a video-performance from 2009. Tanya Ury stands in a bare room, clothed in a black straightjacket. A man enters the room, ties the sleeves of the straightjacket (behind her back) and then leaves. Tanya Ury doesn't move, while her voice-over recites her poem “Touch me not“, “Berühre mich nicht“.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

But why can't I touch it? / I want to touch it. / No. / Oh, go on... / No. / But why? / You are a stranger. / But that way we would get closer. / No. /

Aber warum darf ich dich nicht berühren? Ich möchte dich berühren. / Nein. / Oh, lass mich doch! / Nein. / Aber warum? / Du bist ein Fremder. / Aber so würden wir uns näher kommen. /Nein. /

Author

The female body: time and again is the starting point, the material and theme of Tanya Ury' work. She has it covered in gold leaf, makes shower curtains out of small plastic bags filled with her fallen out hair, she disguises herself, poses in a wide variety of roles. Often taking the Holocaust as reference point. But not always. She creates photo series on camouflage fashion, of people who kiss each others' hands, the thread being "her/me". In her work there is hardness, provocation, pain. But also playfulness, irony, melancholia.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

I am German. / No. / I am Indian. / I am Iranian. / I am Spanish. / I am Italian. / I am French. / I am Turkish. / I am Egyptian. / Yes. / I am.

Ich bin Deutsche.../ Nein. / Ich bin Indianerin / Ich bin Iranerin / Ich bin Spanierin / Ich bin Italienerin / Ich bin Französin / Ich bin Türkin / Ich bin Ägypterin. / Ja. / Ich bin.

Author

In Tanya Ury's flat is a self-portrait of her great-grand uncle, the painter Lesser Ury. An older man with a gentle look, issuing from sad eyes.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

I did know that there was a famous artist in the family - my father had mentioned it, but only fleetingly. Then, when I moved to Germany I discovered more about Lesser Ury. (...) And I see it as a sort of heritage. (...)

Author

And she wants to accept this legacy. Lesser Ury died in 1933. Wilhelm Unger, Tanya Ury's great uncle, on her mother's side, fled, as did her grandparents, to London. But returned to Cologne, long before they did. Where Tanya met him. But only once - she doesn't know that much about him. And his documents are buried in the Cologne hole.

Original Soundtrack Peter Bussman

(...) To the question, why he returned to Germany, I can only say that there was a degree of longing, because that was his homeland, after all.

Author

The architect Peter Busmann gets to know Tanya Ury at an event related to the collapse of the Cologne City Archives. She gave a talk – and he introduced himself as having been a longstanding friend of Wilhelm Unger. She asked him to tell her more about him. A couple of weeks later they met.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury und Peter Busmann

(...) TU: How did you get to know him? - Busmann: (...) Well, he was the cultural editor of the Stadtanzeiger (City Gazette) and a theatre critic. (...) And I always read what he wrote. (...) And a friend, who was also interested, (...) said, "sometimes I meet up with friends of Wilhelm Unger – maybe you'd like to join us".

Author

That was in 1977. When Peter Busmann was already quite well known. Over the following years he constructed, amongst other buildings, the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the Cologne Philharmonia and the Old Synagogue Community Centre in Wuppertal – to which Wilhelm Unger indirectly contributed, he now tells Tanya Ury. Peter Busmann had designed a slab of black granite for the new building, as a memorial slab to the old synagogue that was destroyed in 1938.

Original Soundtrack Peter Busmann

(...) And I had a Martin Buber quotation engraved onto this granite slab (...) that I had learned from Wilhelm Unger.

Author

Who was one of the founders of the Cologne Germania Judaica and the academic Special Library on the history of German-speaking Jews, which he would gladly have named after the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. In answer to the question, Buber wanted to know what Unger's motive for the whole project was.

Original Soundtrack Peter Busmann

(...) He answered immediately, that of course after the dreadful events that had occurred in Germany, it would be about fighting fascism. Upon which Martin Buber regarded him -

Author

Peter Busmann pauses for a moment, smiling pensively. Tanya Ury looks at him questioningly.

Original Soundtrack Peter Busmann

Yes, I remember clearly, how Unger delineated it, (...) – he looked at him quietly but intensely and then said quite slowly: "In that case you can't reckon with my name." – TU: Oh! – And that deeply affected him.

Author

What Martin Buber meant by that, Wilhelm Unger first really grasped - Busmann continues to report - when he heard Buber's speech at the opening of the Germania Judaica. And within it the phrase that can now be read on the granite slab of the Old Synagogue in Wuppertal:

Speaker

Whoever fights, will be opposed. Whoever creates, draws deeply from the living. And where life grows, death is minimised.

Author

Tanya Ury still looks thoughtful, long after Peter Busmann has gone.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (half dimensional poems DVD)

Krebs crêpes

Krebs crabs

Crabs phthirius pubis

Kitsch lorraine

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

I've had a difficult year. (...) I'm much better now but I had breast cancer and had an operation.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (half dimensional poems DVD)

Der Körper ist der Weg

Der Körper ist weg

(The body is the goal

The body is gone)

Author

Since then a lot has changed in her life. But not the artistic involvement with the Holocaust, she stresses:

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

(...) Because this task has not yet been completed. But maybe I'll go about it a little differently. Well, not so aggressively and forcefully. When I started, that's how I approached the subject, because I couldn't do it any other way. (...) I didn't have a voice and in order to find a voice I suppose I had to work a little too forcefully.

Author

Human relations have become more important for her. She writes poetry, "half dimensional poems". And, she adds tentatively that she has taken up meditation again.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury

(...) I started meditation (...) when I was 21 and there's been a gap over the last 15 years. (That was during the time when I completed most of my work. I had to concentrate fully on that.) But it was always clear to me that at some time I must try to do everything parallel. (...) I mean it's one thing to be active in the world and another is your personal development. And that is very very important to me.

Original Soundtrack Tanya Ury (*Touch me not DVD English and German version*)

I collect my hair. / (was black, is transparent) / as a prayer /
the fallen out / residue of a body that is still mine; / the
evidence of / life ongoing / while / all the while / it is
dying. /

Ich sammle meine Haare (einst schwarz, jetzt durchsichtig) wie
ein Gebet, das ausgefallene Überbleibsel eines Körpers, das noch
mir gehört; Beweis des Lebenslaufes, während es restlos stirbt.

Absage:

A Short Story about...

Tanya Ury and the Cologne Hole

A feature by Ingrid Strobl

Redaktion: Annette Blaschke

A Westdeutschen Rundfunks production © (West German Radio) 2011.
(Translation Tanya Ury)

Babel - a literary forensic research into Cologne migration - by Marco Hasenkopf, 2011 <http://www.babel-koeln.de/70-0-Tanya-Ury-EnglischDeutsch-EnglandDeutschland.html>

I maintain that mankind is migratory. Is that true? And if so, why?

Tanya Ury:

Well, I don't know if every person would migrate; when I was still living in England - I lived in South-West Devon for a while and in this village, most of the people you got to know, had not even travelled further than the next large town, or that had at least been their greatest journey. That's why I couldn't say if all people really migrate.

Many have to migrate in order to find work, when there isn't much work in the locality. Or you have to flee, if you are in danger. That is something my family experienced in previous generations - they had to flee Nazi Germany to England. Well, some of them to England - others went to other places. My family is spread over the world, that's why... And yes, because my parents experienced that, we developed a family tradition, as a young family, in the 50ies and 60ies, of travelling a lot - something that other people I knew in England then didn't do at all. Well, we travelled to Europe twice a year. That was something quite usual for us. I have a question for you. Do you come from a migrant background?

No, actually I'm German. Of course in our family there is this background of being on the run. Well, my parents - my grandparents both fled Eastern Europe. That is, both pairs of grandparents.

Tanya Ury:

From Germany.

Yes, well one grandfather on my father's side - comes from Siebenbürgen in Romania - he was driven out there after the war, as a German, who had previously emigrated to there, so to speak; and the other grandparents come from East Germany, that's it. But I know I look rather Mediterranean.

Tanya Ury:

Yes, I didn't like to say it. I thought about it, but decided it better not to say anything. And then there's your name Marco - it might have been that your parents or grandparents had been Italian. Because you see, this is a very important question for me - when someone, who doesn't come from a migration background but wants to do this type of research or literary work, a certain voyeuristic interest might be the prime motive.

Oh yes, and why?

Tanya Ury:

Well, yes - we are fortunate that it has become an important debate in Germany at last, and that one no longer calls it

immigration, but migration - and that this country has a migration culture. In the meantime, in my sphere as an artist, there are now also exhibitions dealing with the subject. But I'm always a bit suspicious of this interest. Is it because one has to do it, because it's a problem, which one feels compelled to deal with? Or is there genuine interest? Or even, because it's become fashionable and so suddenly people develop this interest. I just had to say it - these were my thoughts when I first saw the publicity. But I was also very interested. And here again I must add that as a Jewess, I absolutely - it's very important for me to be part of this project - so often Jewish people, with the same very particular history that I have, are just left out of the field of research. I don't mean the Russian Jews - as you know, there has been a great wave of migration from Russia to Germany, over the last 10/15 years.

Yes, well - just for my own personal interest. I live in (Cologne-)Mühlheim and I regularly walk through Wiener Square and once, I had the idea to do this, after a particular encounter; that was quite a time back - probably some 3 or 4 years ago. The original idea was quite simply that I would go to this particular shop nearby, on the Frankfurter Strasse and post a sign saying that anybody might be interviewed and that I would put the interview online, as an archive, a contemporary witness archive, in fact. Because I just - how shall I say, I just wanted to document this diversity. That is still my... what interested me. So many people live here in Cologne, people from so many diverse nations live here in Cologne - I'll have to check how many it is - I've written it down. 184 nations officially, according to statistics. And in the world there are 6,900 various languages and a hundred - I'd better check again - 193 officially recognised countries - now it's 194, since South Sudan was recognised on Saturday. It means that in Cologne there are really a lot of nations represented, a large amount of kinds of cultures live here and that's really what I wanted to express with the question "What language are you?" and give it a kind of space. That's my background. And the question itself "What language are you?" is something that someone put to me on Wienerplatz. He wanted to give me some sort of Watchtower publicity but then asked: "What language are you?". That's more or less how it came about.

Tanya Ury:

Well, I must say that this concept is also very important to me, because I work with language a lot. I write and always try - well, my 2 languages are English and German - actually there are a couple of others, but I'm not that fluent in them - and I really always try (to write) parallel in both languages, sometimes mixing them up. Well, in poetry you can mix things up, but if you want to publish something in two languages, it can be a problem, even if these two particular languages are important.

Why do people like to settle?

Tanya Ury:

If things go well in a particular place, if you can live well, then you stay there for several generations and some people even develop nostalgia for a place. I keep hearing about it. I can't imagine why, but I do keep hearing it. In fact my grandmother came back to Germany, and even though so many family members had been exterminated, she still loved Germany. She once told me: "I want to be buried in the earth here". So there really seems to be a love for what one calls the homeland. Whether it's got anything to do with nation, I don't know, but people are creatures of habit - I think it has rather more to do with that fact.

Are there conflicts between migrants and settled peoples?

Tanya Ury:

Obviously. People who have stayed in one place over several generations develop the impression that this place belongs to them. It has to do with flag and banner and nationalism, something I just can't relate to, or rather don't want to. OK, I have dual nationality - it's an exception and if there were a war, I would probably have to choose between one or the other; but actually, yes - that's how the world is organised. I hope it will change over the next couple of hundred years. I think that the world should belong to everybody and not just to people who have lived in a particular place for a long time and have therefore earned the right to a passport for some reason, where others are excluded. People should not be excluded, no matter where they come from, or where they wish to go. That may sound rather utopic but I think this is the way that our world should develop in the future.

Imagine Cologne and how the city is at the present. What would your optimal place look like - the state of affairs - the society? Please describe your personal utopia!

Tanya Ury:

That's what I was just talking about, but I'd like to add a couple of things. I think that people should respect people, but also animals. Of course a human life is more important but as soon as we have fully realised that fact we should then also learn to respect the rights of all life forms. I've been living as a vegan for over a year now. Before that I had been vegetarian for most of my life. In fact it also makes sense for the global ecology, because too much cattle breeding has created the ozone hole. If one were to propagate cereal instead of cattle, there would also be enough (nourishment) for the whole world. One would have to rearrange oneself a little but I didn't find that difficult. People are creatures of habit... That doesn't just apply to where one lives but also to how one lives, and what you eat is part of the equation. But utopia... I know I'm an exception but actually it's not so hard to change things, so that we live an ecologically viable life. In the mean time it's become so dangerous that if we don't do something soon, or

rather now - there won't even be a world - because of the ozone hole. People will starve in parts of the world. You can't call that utopia - there have to be changes.

And the exact opposite - the worst-case scenario, a social apocalypse? How could things get even worse?

Tanya Ury:

It already is that bad. We are on the edge of destroying our planet and nobody wants to believe it. I don't mean everybody. I mean the people in government, who have power. We have arrived at that point and nobody wants to see it. You know we've just seen it at Fukushima - we've known about the likelihood for, I don't know... my generation has been talking about it for over 40 years - that nuclear energy has to be abandoned. And it's only when a terrible catastrophe occurs that people start to think the strategy over, but they don't react fast enough. It should be removed immediately, not in 10 years, or whatever. Actually the apocalypse is here and it's got nothing to do with terrorism.

Does migration exist in your home country? (Or is that a purely German phenomenon?)

Tanya Ury:

My home country is England. My God, of course - there is a long history of colonialism. It's different to German history. I've been away from England quite a while now, so I can't say exactly how things have developed (there) but I think migration comes in waves. The first ones, and I'm sure of this, was the history of colonial slavery - people came to England because they were brought over... OK, I haven't done the research, so I may be saying something false here.

There is no wrong or right here - for me; it's just the spontaneous answer that you came up with.

Tanya Ury:

Yes, but you know, I grew up in England in a truly multicultural society - that's what it was in London, at least. In villages and cities outside London, it's a different story. Although Liverpool is (for instance) also very multicultural. There were many immigrants for Germany, Jewish refugees, who came to England and other places; but I grew up in London in the middle of this refugee society, which no longer existed in Germany. It had been totally erased by murder. But, as I was saying... Now, I've forgotten the question...

Does migration exist in your home country?

Tanya Ury:

I think I've already answered that, in part at least.

Yes, I think so too, yes, that's OK.

What is the homeland and to whom does it belong?

Tanya Ury:

For me... That's the second time I've been asked that recently. I've just been interviewed for a radio programme about my work as an artist - so this won't be anonymous any more. I mean - yes... And for their website, it was one of three questions. Now I can't exactly remember what I answered then, but it was probably that homeland isn't a particular place for me. Homeland is a place where I feel good and where there are people I know. When I'm with friends that I love and who love me, then I feel at home. It's also about spirituality; you see I practise meditation and when I'm centred within myself, in my body - then I feel at home and feel well. What was the second half of the question?

To whom does a homeland belong - well "belong" being in inverted commas)?

Tanya Ury:

Well, that's difficult. We are a part of humankind and the earth and everything belongs... Humankind... It all belongs together and belongs to us all. That's how it should be. Another utopic vision but if humankind doesn't learn to understand and really learn - then that's it - we won't have a future.

Let's fantasise for a moment. In your opinion, how would the world look, if we hadn't been settlers?

Tanya Ury:

I don't think I can answer that, because you can't say "if" - that's how it happened. It couldn't have been any other way. It had to be that way.

Have you personally experienced flight and banishment?

Tanya Ury:

Well, my family was Jewish. There were a couple of Jews here in Cologne, who were married to non-Jews and didn't have to escape; only the others. And yes, some of them got away - I mean, it's difficult to say - I don't know the entire family history - only of the near family, somehow. I know that some were murdered - I would know more about them if they had lived and had had children (whatever). That's why it's difficult to talk about it. Some of them were hounded out of Cologne and it matters a lot to me. I didn't exactly suppress it but it didn't either interest me enough to deal with it until I was much older - when I was in my mid thirties. That's when I started doing it and it won't let goof me now. Here in Germany, there's a lot of talk that "it's all a long time ago - it's time to normalise." And so on, but I've noticed that the longer ago this period lies behind us, the closer it seems to me. It's only a small period within the whole history of mankind, it's really not so long ago, not at all and I find it very necessary to do this reprocessing and especially with the position as a non-German. Actually I am German, because I have dual nationality; but I find that the position as Jewess and artist should also be documented.

In which language do you dream? In particular, in which language do you think?

Tanya Ury:

I can answer that exactly - in both. I write poetry and it's become a sort of craze over the last year and a half. It's been literally flowing out of me; and I often hear sentences in my sleep. So I've always got paper and pencil next to my bed. Sometimes I wake up, having heard a phrase and can then write it down quickly; and that can also be in German, not only in English. Yes - both languages.

What language ARE you? Is there a connection for you, between language and identity?

Tanya Ury:

OK, I'm going to say something completely different now. In the bible it says that in the beginning was the word and that word has for me a quite different meaning, which doesn't necessarily have anything to do with language, but rather with the breath that gives us life - each word that one speaks is actually an exhalation. In my work, when I write poetry or other things, I try to get behind the meaning of the words and reflect - but if you consider it's about the body and not about the written word, then behind the word is breath and life energy.

Can you please say the sentence "mankind migrates," in your own language?

Tanya Ury:

People are on the move.

Can you please put the question "What language are you?" in your mother tongue?

Tanya Ury:

What language are you?

(English translation Tanya Ury)

2012 (15.6) Tanya Ury is the featured artist with new works in the June Tanya Ury skype interview, by Claude Desmarais, on Tuesday, February 7th, between Cologne, Germany, and Kelowna, in BC, Canada.

TANYA: Something really weird happened. It might be appropriate or not. I'll just quickly tell you. A couple of weeks ago, I was contacted by a theatre director in Ulm, which was the town my father came from. Basically, they told me about something that was already a fait accompli: a theatre production about the life of Rommel with a Jewish ghost, and they chose my grandmother Hedwig Ury to be the Jewish ghost. It was very, very weird because they told me this, like, a week before the premiere. I have to admit that it was a bit upsetting but anyway, on Sunday I'm going to go to Ulm to see the piece. Sort of strange - it was a bit like being visited by a ghost of the past.

CLAUDE: Do you know why they picked your grandmother?

TANYA: No. I don't know why. They didn't say why.

CLAUDE: What do you know about her?

TANYA: There is some documented material, and the strange thing is because I'm translating articles that I wrote for the book I'll be producing this year, I was looking at that article again. A woman called Resi Weglein, who came from Ulm, was a friend of the family. She was with my grandmother in Theresienstadt and she has written about all of the people that she knew in the camps she survived; she was a witness, so to speak, and wrote about everybody she knew including my grandmother. And this paragraph, which I read for the first time about 20 years ago about her and my grandmother in Theresienstadt was really very upsetting. It was about how she and another accompanied a wagon of corpses to the edge of the concentration camps with the rabbi, saying their prayers. And I know now that it made a picture of my grandmother very real although I had never really known anything about her before. Before she was sent to Theresienstadt, she went to a home where the Jewish people in Ulm were sent to before they were sent (on) to [the camps]. She looked after all the (old) people there before she was sent to Auschwitz. The place had previously been in Esslingen, a house where Rommel had lived. And that's why this theatre piece involves two aspects of what happened in the house. I thought you might be interested.

CLAUDE: No that's quite fascinating. If you think about it, now we're talking about quite a number of years since the war and the Holocaust, the Shoah, and yet these things are still so present in Germany, you know.

TANYA: Yes I know.

CLAUDE: I find it very interesting the discourse in North America is still very much about the Cold War, and Germany as part of the war has to do with the Second World War of course and the Cold War, but...um... around me and in all this area are

the First Nations. In fact, British Columbia is the place where the fewest treaties have been signed.

TANYA: What do you mean by treaties?

CLAUDE: Well, in the Eastern part of North America (and Canada) treaties were signed between the First Nations peoples of Canada and the colonisers, basically reducing indigenous people's land claims to reserves. But here in B.C., there are very few treaties, so that means that the claims of the First Nations to the land are still very much real. You can't just take the land, and not have a treaty and think that it's yours. And the thing is, we do not have the Shoah but we definitely had a genocide here [Editor's note: This is sometimes falsely reduced to a cultural genocide, whereas in reality this genocide involved many different reprehensible and criminal acts including murders] and the one large-scale event most discussed is the residential school system as an assimilationist tool to destroy the First Nations culture. Whereas in Germany it is part of the official discourse that this [the Shoah] happened, and then there's negotiating in that society. Here, there's part of the society that recognizes that, but the official discourse, apart from the few of the "Oh, we're sorry about what happened," there's really not anything as advanced as in Germany.

TANYA: That's disgraceful. Why is it? I don't understand that. I mean if you think about what's still going on in Turkey where the Armenian genocide is still being denied, and I mean, I know a Turkish writer here, Dogan Akhanli, who lives in Cologne. He actually has done a couple of prison terms in Turkey because he has publicly voiced his personal disapproval that the genocide is not being talked about and admitted to. Ignoring something completely is impossible. It's just so disrespectful to the people and the memory of the people in the following generations.

CLAUDE: Yes, well there's that moral imperative and I think it's sometimes in our world we have a really hard time making those moral imperatives valued; and there's another side to it, and that's simply that a society that doesn't look at its past critically and that doesn't deal with that is always going to be losing out. There's a very real loss, which isn't just one person, isn't the original victims, but it's all those cycles of victimhood, which are just perpetrated and re-perpetrated. I look around here, this is a beautiful area and I look at how the area is dealt with and I say to myself, this is because that whole colonial and I don't say colonial in the sense of all the people back then, I'm talking about this life right now, the colonial experience hasn't been worked through and Germany shows that this working through such things is almost always difficult—and then there is the continuing discrimination in Germany and all other countries—, but...

TANYA: —but it's possible—

CLAUDE: Oh yes, and Germany has gone through all sorts of stages and still needs to work through quite a few things though. But

back to your story, you are going to Ulm; they invited you to come to Ulm?

TANYA: That is incognito (laughs). I'm going incognito, on my own and in my own opinion...

CLAUDE: Did they invite you or did they tell you about it? Did they ask or did they say we'd like you to come?

TANYA: Yes, but I mean, personally, I would have preferred it if they'd been in touch a couple years ago when they started writing the project; that would have been respectful.

CLAUDE: And, what do you think kept them from being respectful? I think this might point to one of the dilemmas Germany is facing; before the Shoah and before WWII, Germany/Eastern Europe was full of vibrant Jewish-German communities. If you ever go to Yad Vashem you see all the communities that were destroyed in the genocides and for me, that was a more telling experience because it wasn't about a number, it was about all these communities that had been destroyed and-

TANYA: -and the culture.

CLAUDE: Yes of course, the culture. And the impoverishment of the culture -

TANYA: -the general culture.

CLAUDE: Yes, definitely. And the present state of Germany to be described by comparison as one where there are very few Jewish people living in Germany. And if you live outside of Berlin and Cologne...

TANYA: -there is a community in Munich.

CLAUDE: Yes, Munich and Frankfurt. There are communities, and I think once you start looking you will be surprised at how many Jewish communities there are in Germany, there's many more than one would think, right? Maybe it's surprising, but the day to day interaction with people who are of Jewish heritage, culture or religion - this is much less than it was prior to the war and the Shoah and so here comes my question, do you think that in Ulm they're just without contact to any people who are Jewish-Germans or Jewish and therefore they didn't think of it?

TANYA: Yes, and I will tell you what I feel and it's utterly unfair towards them but, I have my own emotional response before I've seen the piece. They just didn't think, and I wrote them an email saying they are privileged, belonging to the generation after an entire nation of criminals. And they have the privilege of choice, whether to deal with this subject matter or not, and I don't have that choice and I think that is why I felt rather upset. They have a choice and of course it's wonderful that they are dealing with this subject matter but they didn't really think about the implications and what it might mean to the families. It only occurred to them a week prior and it would have been so easy to have done some research. We know the former

head of the NS-Dokumentationszentrum der Stadt Ulm (National-Socialist Documentation Centre in Ulm), Silvester Lechner, who is now retired—he would have put them in touch with us and they would have just - you know, one email to the Documentation Centre ...

CLAUDE: Can I push you a bit on that point in two ways? One is that I would say, actually, although they might not be as personally implicated and - I'm not counteracting your idea that they have a choice because they're in the majority culture right? And they have all sorts of privileges attached to that, but in a way Germans don't really have a choice if one is looking at it from a point of view of their own well-being. Because if one looks to the so-called national liberated zone in Mecklenburg, I believe it is, where these people with the neo-Nazi ideology are trying to take over the schools and such things, they don't have a choice, because with this heritage there are two choices—you either work through this heritage in a critical way and try to go beyond it or it is going to come back and revisit you.

TANYA: Yes.

CLAUDE: So, would you -

TANYA: Okay, maybe they imagined that they have a choice (laughs).

CLAUDE: Okay (laughs), that's interesting. The other thing I would say is, they imagine they have a choice and the idea that Germans can live their lives in the main as part of the majority culture without really thinking about the minorities among them and this can be true about the Turks, the East Germans, Jewish-Germans—German-Jews whatever terminology one wants—and this creates a kind of blindness. I'll give a comparison here where I live in the Okanagan valley, you *could* possibly think about incorporating someone from the Silyx First Nation into a story or theatre piece without consulting with them, you could, but it would be pretty hard—

TANYA: Incorporate into what?

CLAUDE: I could imagine a play about some character from the past and I could incorporate a Sylix First Nation character without consulting that community; but it would be very hard [and wrong] for me to do [so], because they're quite present and it would be disrespectful in my view. So what I'm saying is in Ulm, is it possible that the Jewish community, the Jewish past is not present, because even in Munich and Frankfurt where there are Jewish communities, people can live their lives without any real interaction with that community?

TANYA: I can't really say, because I have nothing to do with Ulm, so I really can't answer. But I do know that in England, when I was living in England, this is going back twenty years or so, nobody then would have dreamt of writing a play without consulting a community because it wouldn't have been considered PC, whether it's really about people's feelings or not is

another matter, but it's sort of part of the culture now that you have to be politically correct and that means talking to the people before you write a play.

CLAUDE: Do you feel that speaks to a cultural difference in Germany or just a lack of awareness of what that kind of appropriation of a history does or can do, or the dangers behind it? [In other words,] is it a cultural difference between England and North America and Germany, or is it about not being aware of the tricky territory of appropriating cultural memory?

TANYA: I guess Great Britain has had longer to deal with their colonial history and the immigrants who came from Jamaica or Pakistan or India are very vocal and have been since the 60s and in Germany there wasn't a community to be vocal; all of the talk was going on outside Germany. I reckon because there's been less discourse about communicating and the Germans have done their re-appraisal (reprocessing) [Editor's note: in Germany, the term commonly used to describe this process of confronting this past has been *Aufarbeitung*], on their own more or less, because the Jewish communities are smaller, it often doesn't occur to people there might be a community there at all, or people who are relatives of those who were murdered in the Holocaust.

CLAUDE: So if you go and they invite you up to say a few words at the end...

TANYA: I'm going incognito. I would have loved to have done something if they had contacted me a year or two ago, but I feel very awkward, and actually I feel awkward now talking about this in the way that I am, because I should be showing more gratitude. It is really wonderful that my grandmother is being remembered in this way. But I think, you know she's not being insulted at all (laughs), but I am.

CLAUDE: Yes, it's a process. Tanya your appearance in a group announces your commitment to art right? If I'm in a group of people and I see you, I would say "Okay, this person is an artist" and I'm thinking of Ulm, the theatre crowd that's going to be there, people who know each other, right? And then there's going to be this artist person there, yourself, who people don't know and they have probably seen photos of you, right? The people who are organizing it—

TANYA: I'm not famous.

CLAUDE: I know, but still, people can go on the internet. So I'm just guessing they're going to know it's you, they're going to speak to you, they're going to thank you for coming, they're going to ask you how you feel about it, and they might ask you to talk. So, just saying this all happens and they do ask you to talk, what would you say to them?

TANYA: Well I wouldn't say what I've just said to you (laughs). Of course, I need to see the play first, but assuming that it's a good play and I'm sure it will be, because I looked on the Internet and the people who wrote it and the director have an interesting history behind them. [Editor's note: The play *Rommel*

- *Ein deutscher General*, by Stephan Suschke and Michael Sommer (director), first played January 25, 2012 at the Theater Ulm].

CLAUDE: Do you think it's going to be a good piece?

TANYA: I expect it will be a very interesting and well-written piece and I think if I were asked to make a comment I would express my gratitude. I'd talk about re-appraisal [reprocessing] in Ulm, that it's great that they're doing that. I'm really unsure because they did tell me in an email that the woman who is taking on the role of my grandmother, the Jewish ghost, has a double role and will also be playing Hitler.

CLAUDE: Will also be playing Hitler?

TANYA: Yes, I'm sort of confused and wondering how on earth that is going to work.

CLAUDE: That could be very interesting (laughs).

TANYA: I think at the moment it does upset me. I think I just want to go incognito and make my own mind up and maybe I'll get in touch with them afterwards.

CLAUDE: This might be a big jump, but it's something that wasn't covered in the questions, yet they are similar in some ways. The materials you've brought to the Cologne Archives—on the artistic or the German art scene—but all the documentation you brought to the Cologne Archives, it was a very conscious decision about preserving history and history being tied to its locality. Then what has happened there with the accident and I'm wondering—although I'm sure it's very fresh in your mind—, where your thinking is about all that right now and how that's maybe impacting your art and your work?

TANYA: The whole episode for people who don't know what happened here in Cologne, on the third of March 2009, the Historical Archives in the city of Cologne just collapsed. And this was a very important archive, one of the largest this side of the Alps, with documents which were up to 2000 years old and many documents from over the last hundred years of lots of artists, writers, people like Heinrich Böll, whose entire archive was there and I don't think they have recovered that yet, same with Günter Wallraff.

CLAUDE: Those two writers give an idea of the importance of the archives.

TANYA: Peter Busmann, who is the architect of the Museum Ludwig Köln and the concert hall in Cologne, his archive was lost.

CLAUDE: Could you talk now a bit about the actual event and your personal interest.

TANYA: That is what happened, it collapsed. For me, it was an extremely emotional thing. I was very upset by this. It was the history of a Jewish family that had been exterminated. I had options but I decided they (the archival documents of various

family members) should all be together in Cologne, rather than [go] to the Leo Beck Institute in New York or the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Then to lose it was really dreadful and I became very active shortly after that, wrote four articles for a newspaper, I did a couple of television interviews. In the archive [were] a lot of photographs, super 8 films of my childhood but also (material) of my great uncle - photographs of his generation going back to before the war. My father had been a composer when he was a young man—he had worked together with Peter Zadek when they were young and in Great Britain before Zadek went back to Germany and became the most important theatre director in Germany, up to a couple of years ago when he died. But he and my father were friends in England in the 50s and my father wrote music for all of his productions in England—so all the original material was in the archive. And my grandfather was a writer, and also a scriptwriter for the Ufa (film) Studios, he was the *Chef Dramaturg* (Head Scriptwriter), so I'm talking about all of his material. A couple of months back the archive got in touch with me to say some material had been recovered.

CLAUDE: Oh okay, that's excellent. How did you feel when you heard that?

TANYA: I'm not sure if this should be in the interview but I'll leave that up to you. As I said the whole thing upset me so much and I actually decided to distance myself from the whole subject. I haven't actually gone to look at the material yet, I need to get on with my life and the work that I'm doing. So I've been overwhelmed with work and that's just one of the things that I have not dealt with yet.

CLAUDE: Well, I don't think you need to apologize for that. I think what you're saying about your own work is important I mean, if you look at your family, your grandfather and your father, they didn't have an impact by saying "Well I'm going to look at what my father did"; they did something. And by giving the materials to the Cologne archive, you gave it to specialists whose job it is to look after things.

TANYA: Exactly and they failed miserably.

CLAUDE: Yes so, I guess what you're saying is that if it does play a role in your work right now, it's not really something that you thought about at length or because you know, your work, if one contextualizes your work, you're an artist in Germany but you could also say you're an English artist in Germany, you're a Jewish artist in German, you're a German-Jewish-English artist in Germany; I don't know how that framework for interpretation has changed over the years, because you've now been in Germany for a number of years. So how long have you been in Germany and how have you seen the development now that you've lived in Germany for a longer time?

TANYA: Which development?

CLAUDE: Well just, how the context has changed from when you first arrived in Germany and where you are now.

TANYA: I've left Great Britain behind, you know. I'm there very rarely, maybe once a year just to see friends or my nieces or relatives. It doesn't interest me that much and I'm pretty well established here. In the last year a lot has happened for me in Cologne so I would say that I'm actually definitely established in Cologne. This is the place I belong to, though I would never say a place is my home or that I have a feeling about a country that it's my homeland; this is where I'm at home, my friends they're here, I have friends here, I have friends in Berlin too, I have friends in Canada.

CLAUDE: Yes (laughs) so are you a *Lokalpatriotin* (a patriot/supporter of the city you live in) or is that word just as anathema to you?

TANYA: Yes, I wouldn't want to use that kind of word (laughs). I'm a local matriarch, sorry.

CLAUDE: Yes, okay, a local matriarch. I can see that. How has your interaction and discourse with Germans and Germany and with art changed over the years. If you're asked to look back what do you see as a kind of development, what would you say if you were trying to create a grand narrative?

TANYA: My goodness. I think in the last twenty years I've said a lot of what I needed to say and then I got ill and I think I mentioned in the interview that there were a couple of projects that were quite important to me which I just stopped doing because it was too much. And now I'm doing this poetry which is almost like improvised poetry, but I'm also doing improvised poetry with musicians and although I don't do that more often than once every 3 weeks, that is a really big difference; it's completely new in that I've only been doing it for the last year. And I allow myself subject matter that can be anything. It can be really absurd, it can be funny, serious, and it can be any topic so it can include the serious topics that I used to handle. But it can also just be on absolutely anything and to be honest, it's a real relief to be able to do that. And I wouldn't say that I'm making poetry about silly love songs or anything like that; you can still try to achieve some sort of depth in the moment - that is also possible. And nevertheless, it is such a relief to let go of the very, very heavy subject matter that I have been dealing with for the last twenty years. Having said that, I'm not going to leave it behind at all, I'm going to be doing both parallel, so that is a difference, yes.

CLAUDE: So, this new sense of freedom and of not having this obligation to constantly deal with certain matters with the past, is what "feminination" is about?

TANYA: There are two versions, the other one is "femininity" and the reason it was called "femininity" was because there's "Nini" in the centre of it, and my sister's name is Nini, short for Ninette.

It's an initiation, it's about initiation.

CLAUDE: Okay yes. It also has "nation" in it.

TANYA: Yes.

CLAUDE: And if you think of the whole discourse about identity and the past, this whole idea of Germanness, which is still at work in Germany and other countries, this sort of ethno-racial fallacy, essentialism; inserting the feminine in nation is also an act of disrupting that essentialist identity construct, right? Because the national identity construct that's essentialist is predicated on excluding the feminine, the Other, etc. It uses those things as the Other, but doesn't include them in its construct. So, what I'm getting at is, here's the local matriarch, who has reclaimed the feminine, the womanly, whatever term we use, then it's about the nation being forced to really play a secondary role to that.

TANYA: Well, I can shout as loud as I want to, it usually gets ignored. I'm not really sure it's making any impact, at all. Still carry on.

CLAUDE: How do you find in Germany the openness to wide ranging discussions about the roles of women, the roles women can take or have in society, and the political discourses? Do you find it's quite progressive or do you find it's quite retrograde? I mean in terms of the whole discourse of women's rights and such things?

TANYA: My goodness...

CLAUDE: I'm asking this because I'm wondering how that inflects on your role as an artist.

TANYA: Well, what came to mind just then is a friend of mine who is a professor of Art History at The Hochschule für Bildende Künste (HBK) Braunschweig (Braunschweig University of Art), Katharina Sykora. The last time we met up for dinner in Berlin, she mentioned how privileged she was; she said the fact is that in Germany, only six percent of the professors are women, so that tells it all about the cultural scene. One would be blind to say equality is there. It's something that one has to fight for, even if young women would like to think that feminism is something that belonged to an era past. Unless everyone involves themselves in it, now as well, things are not going to improve.

CLAUDE: And how is the art world for you, in that sense?

TANYA: Similar. And I remember I was involved in a very large art exhibition some years ago, about 6 years ago, at the Museum Bochum. They decided to do a sort of retrospective of artists coming from a Jewish background and, now I don't have the statistics at hand, but there were many artists invited or represented from the past as well—I remember, I felt honoured to be part of the project and I then sort of added up all of the names and again it was this six percent. It just pops up, of women; from a marginalized group.

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<https://www.csj.ualberta.ca/imaginations/?p=2273>

Imaginations Interview with Tanya Ury

1. *Fading into the Foreground* depicts the everyday wear of camouflage; does this represent to you a decontextualization of war and violence? You spoke of your shock and horror witnessing the display of nationalism at the 2006 World Cup quarterfinal between Germany and Argentina, where fans were draped in the flag and singing the German national anthem. How did this affect you and the work you had just begun? What are your thoughts on German nationalism in our present age? How does this decontextualized use of camouflage influence movements like "Occupy"?

It's a long haul since the Beatles paraded colourful, military-style jackets emulating a past Victorian and colonial era in 1967, on their *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* record cover. Was the clothing worn in protest to the Vietnam War? Or was it some sort of glorification of the military? What will this statement have been telling the thirty-two million purchasers of the album? "We won the war," the phrase referring to the Second World War on fascism in Germany, was still being spoken on British lips, after the World Cup Final in 1966, when Great Britain won against Germany. The war was still being fought in fields of popular culture. I was a teenager at the time and can remember that it was fashionable to carry paper shopping bags flaunting the British flag. The military look and nationalism have, hand in hand, remained evergreen in fashion, but it is difficult to tell when this has been about parody.

Andy Warhol created many camouflage prints in 1987. In 2005, *DPM (Disruptive Pattern Material)* was published by Maharishi in London. It is a large, two-book, bound edition on camouflage patterns of the world, which was about army uniform and weaponry concealment design, but also on fashion and art that made use of the camouflage motif. It seems that the military fashion hasn't waned completely, although the heyday of a few years ago when it was seen represented by high fashion companies and on magazine covers, is past.

Army surplus, on the other hand, is an inexpensive way to dress and what's more, lends the wearer a look that suggests power and standing. I have photographed such clothing being worn on the streets internationally for the ongoing *Fading into the Foreground* series and it is often the marginalised, road workers, who wear camouflage, not as a fashion statement, but because it is durable and cheap to purchase. In each situation, the symbolic gesture of the dress code is about masquerade.

In some situations, when I have captured the moment on photographic film, the symbolism appears to be loaded. During the FIFA World Cup being held in Germany of 2006, (in which Germany finished third) for the first time a new generation of Germans allowed themselves the celebration of nationalism (draped in the veil of patriotism) that was previously considered to be in bad taste. It was in fact, the display of flags seen in Germany on such an overwhelming scale at the time

that prompted me to start the photographic series. So many people were waving flags and some of these were simultaneously wearing camouflage—it certainly caused me to question this incongruous display. I have lived in Germany for over twenty years and when I came here, I respected Germany's vigorous attempt to process and account for its National Socialist past. And then suddenly what had been absolutely taboo the day before, I mean the flaunting of the German flag, was being relished with relief the following day, on all German streets. I could understand a German need for a sense of pride—but cannot relate to nationalism of any sort.

A previous blow had been when Joschka Fischer of the Green Party announced that the German army would again be seen in action, even if primarily, merely as observers in Kosovo. The Green Party, which had made it to coalition rule in 1998 (Joschka Fischer became Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister of Germany), emerged in late 1970s Germany with a policy of pacifism (negotiation through peaceful discussion was to be attempted in preference to aggressive military action); it was clear that the peacekeeping role in Kosovo would become a slippery slope (which eventually led to real action supporting NATO manoeuvres in Kosovo and later Afghanistan in 2001).

I have taken over 1,600 photos for *Fading into the Foreground* (most of which, still have to be sorted). The most recent were made in Strasbourg at the Occupy demonstration in front of General Kléber's memorial in the central square, on 15th October 2011. In my experience, there will always be someone found in any crowd sporting camouflage fatigues (either civilians or army members on leave); in the context of Occupy, the wear attains its own particular symbolism—with the display of camouflage the civilian possibly betrays a desire to immerse her/himself in an unregimented army of the masses that by taking to the streets, to a demonstration, expresses people power, an as yet unharnessed vox populi.

2. In 2009 you were part of *Art of Emergency*, an exhibition with the mandate of “artists who care about the mutual tragedy of people in the Middle East.” How does this mandate inform or misinform people about your art? Are there still lasting effects upon your present work, or is your present work still informed in a meaningful way by that period of your life?

For *Art of Emergency* I presented a photograph of my two nieces, who live in London. *Sibling Rivalry*, depicts Elà on the left wearing a Kefiya (Arab) scarf and the younger Leylà on the right, wears a Star of David round her neck; their parents are Jewish and Turkish (Deniz, their mother is a non-practising Muslim). I feel that this image represents well the conflict still raging in Palestine, which might nevertheless be resolved if Israelis start to recognise the Palestinians as brothers and sisters living on the same plot of land, and who should be respected and granted equal rights as citizens.

In the *Emergency Room* exhibition of 2006, also in Berlin, I

presented sixteen photos from the *Fading into the Foreground* series of people wearing camouflage, on Cologne streets in Germany but also on the streets of Jerusalem. In Israel the significance was compounded because it was a war zone—the authentic members of the military seen there in uniform were on active duty; since more or less every citizen will have been a member of the army at some time in her/his life however, the distinctions were unclear—the casual wearer of camouflage on the street will also have actively been a soldier at some time, unless they were merely a tourist.

Germans have always spoken to me, as though I, a Diaspora Jew from England, was somehow responsible for the afflictions of Palestinians, under Israeli mandate in Palestine. My artist's scrutiny had been directed in the main to how Germany has dealt with its fascist past. More recently it has however, become clear to me that as a Jewish person, I do have a responsibility to at least voice my disagreement with the aggressive and unfair Israeli policies towards the Palestinian people, as publicly as possible. Activism can take several forms – I have made several more art works on these issues but importantly, am affiliated with activist groups in Great Britain and in Germany: JfJfP (Jews for Justice for Palestinians) and the Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost, EJJP Deutschland (Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East)—as a group our voice has a far more vigorous effect in public discourse.

3. Identity and nationality are key themes in part of your work. You have been identified as an English-Jewish and German-Jewish artist. Do these titles or descriptions hold power for, or over you? In postcolonial theory and discussions of globalization, hyphenated identity is a key term for understanding the modern or postmodern experience. In keeping with such discussions, does one identity hold sway over the other for you, or how would you describe the amalgam of identities that we all, hyphenated or not, carry within us?

I find it not possible to be an escapist artist. And like anybody, I get called all sorts of names; the legacies (British, German, Jewish, female, bi-sexual, older), accepted at least in part, can be deployed usefully as tools, when reflected back to a general spectatorship, as images of cliché, to demonstrate and underscore stereotypical thinking.

4. Some of your latest work, including the photographic collection of *Soul Brothers & Sisters* depicts artists, activists, and musicians sporting a shirt with your modified Hugo Boss logo. The models seem to deconstruct the conventional fashion magazines' advertisements; having them photographed in different locations in the world gives the work a global feel. Was this your goal? It reads like a public service piece of art, informing people of the troubled heritage of a massive clothing designer. How do people react to the news that Hugo Boss produced uniforms for the National-Socialists? Does the

reaction change when they learn that the 2008/9 Hugo Boss collection revisited the past, for example one full-length leather coat seemed to parody the German Luftwaffe uniform from the National-Socialist period? Is this collection another extension of your shift into works about and on the body, using the model's bodies to display your art?

I started with the multi-media series *Who's Boss*, 10 years ago. In conversation it still often occurs that people do not know of the connection between the contemporary Hugo Boss Company and Hugo Ferdinand Boss's original company, which produced Nazi uniforms in Germany, prior to and during WW2. I wanted to inform the public and had plenty of examples to choose from, within the extensive bounds of post-war German industry or from leaders in senior executive positions—the German heritage may be seen as the seamless continuation of a culture based on exploitation. And industry continues to gain in global power—this is the certainly case with the Hugo Boss Company, an international company.

I have had the good fortune to be able to travel and when I do, I take my work with me. Photographing other people in the *Soul Brothers and Sisters* series (wearing T-shirts with the subverted Boss logo, altered to include the SS rune) was also an extension of my artistic practice, so often expressed by my own body. The T-shirt, yet another kind of uniform, worn to protect or merely disguise the body, may become disruptive—when it is also seen to be making a statement, it becomes more than merely a fashion item. And it is great being part of a chorus—too often one stands alone as an artist.

5. *dark room* is a very personal, reflective multimedia piece done after your fight with cancer. How does this piece reflect the personal journey you undertook surviving your bout with the disease? Do you see your body—and to a larger extent, the entire physical body—any differently now?

The recording for the installation *dark room* is of all sound reduced to ambient atmosphere, around and including the body. You hear breathing and sounds in the room, over a prolonged time. But *dark room* is as much about meditation as anything. In meditation one goes within the body to the centre of life energy. I started with the practice of Guru Maharaji's meditation in 1973. During the discovery and immediate treatment for breast cancer in 2010, meditation became an even more profound experience for me—I was able to keep centred on a point of joy and relaxation, where my outside world seemed to be falling apart. *dark room* is the absolute reduction of an art work, which suggests more however, the sound of breathing and the title, point to activities in a sex club. Everybody's reaction to illness is individual. In my case and in spite of my age, it has been towards the celebration of the somatic, as well as the "spiritual". If my reflections on the body have altered at all, it is to focus on life and not on illness or infirmity.

6. The historical photograph in your work *Alibijude* likewise uses the personal as a starting point, as the photographs feature your great-grandparents as well as your grandparents. How do you feel about having an ancestor that the National-Socialists profited from?

In January this year (2012), my aunt Annette Pringle (née Felske) came over from the USA, after the death of her brother Gerd. They were both born before the war. She told me that she had found a copy of the very same photograph that I recently adopted to make an artwork of, amongst her brother's possessions, but was surprised at my interpretation of the image; living in Boston Annette had not yet heard of the Neven DuMont scandal some six years ago. In 2006, it had emerged that Kurt Neven DuMont, who ran the Cologne daily *Kölnische Zeitung*, before and until shortly after the end of the war, had Aryanised several houses, property belonging to Jewish people forced to sell well below value; this fact had been kept under covers by the DuMont family.

I entitled the press photo of my family in 1955, *Alibijude* (Alibi Jew); it reveals my grandparents and great-grandparents, survivors of Theresienstadt, being embraced by a young Alfred Neven DuMont, son and heir of the previous newspaper magnate; his paper was later renamed the *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*. My great uncle Wilhelm, who wrote a *Stadtanzeiger* feuilleton for his entire following working life, was also present at the scene. With the text I wrote to accompany the artwork, I expressed my ambiguous feelings regarding the family connection with the DuMonts—my grandfather Alfred together with Wilhelm had organised a new newspaper license for the DuMonts, from the American authorities, after the war.

In a conversation with Annette when she was here in January, she informed me that the Neven DuMonts had done much to assist family members who were in hiding in Cologne, during the war, something that I had not been aware of. So I must again review this complex, symbiotic relationship.

7. In some ways similar to *Alibijude*, the video *Intimacy* uses footage of yourself and another person. How do you see the interstices between personal and art in this piece? Is there a reason that much of your work includes the personal? For instance, do you have the feeling that parsing or leaving out the personal is dishonest or is it a barrier to artistic achievement? Or does it have to do with honesty about the source of your inspiration?

There is the case of Maxim Biller's novel *Esra*, which was banned shortly after its publication in 2003, after members of the family of a former lover he had described in the book (too closely for their comfort), sued for defamation. It was beyond my comprehension how courts in Germany could propagate this kind of censorship, when doubtless all literature is based on personal experience. How distanced from reality must literature be before its source becomes unrecognisable? This risk-free publishing culture, to my mind evokes a time not so long ago

when what the authorities considered to be degenerate literature was delegated to the bonfire.

With *Intimacy*, as with much of my self-portraiture, I decided to cut corners and use source material: personal footage from 1991 of the sexual act with a lover on video, but accompanied by very honest, literary texts, describing the carnal in human relationships (I employed quotations from *Intimacy* by Jean-Paul Sartre and *Intimacy* by Hanif Kureishi). The contrast between image and text, visual representations of the cerebral and the physical, leaves the viewer questioning which trajectory to follow—it is impossible to follow both, at the same time.

8. You state that you have created most of your work in English and German. Words and names carry so much weight and power. How important is it to you to have your work interpreted in these two languages? Have you ever made, or felt the need to make a linguistic nod to your Jewish heritage, say through the use of Yiddish?

German was the language that I first heard as a child. My parents and grandparents were German. I learned German alongside English in Great Britain in the early fifties. When visiting the family in Cologne as a child, a few Yiddish words may have fallen, but these will have been picked up from elsewhere—it was not our means of communication. My heritage, like klezmer music, is not folkloristic (my father was a composer; my grandfather was a writer, both in the classical tradition).

I find language whether visual or written a battleground—it doesn't come easy living in parallel universes, trapped between image and text, or the different meanings implied in the two languages; but the fact that I work so much with wordplay, an essential part of Kabbalist practice, is in fact a nod to a Jewish heritage.

9. Throughout your career you have been invited to give talks and presentations around the world. In our global age, how has globalization affected your work?

It has been by means of email and the Internet that I have often been informed of and been able to apply to conferences internationally. Networking has certainly become a very important aspect of artistic life. The same prejudices still apply in a market-oriented art (and literary) world: sexism, ageism, racism and political prejudice—even amongst activists there are fashionable and unfashionable causes, fighting for attention. I have experienced discrimination to the left and to the right. With the Internet one has a greater than ever means to connect on a democratic basis—websites, like messages in virtual space bottles, occasionally get discovered by others, with similar objectives.

I write and make art now with wider horizons in mind. Eight years ago I decided, rather than investing effort in publishing art catalogues, I would produce a website that should be constantly maintained and updated. For someone like me, working

on the outer edge of non-conformity, this publicity tool has been vital in the fight against invisibility.

My website has become a true labyrinth—an artwork in itself. There are ca. 800 pages of text descriptions of the work (in English and German), trailers to all my videos, images of most of the photographic and performance work; the articles, stories or poems are rarely presented in full, however.

I have also been invited to present work on academic and art websites in Berlin, the USA, and Canada and there is an interview online on a site in Norway and Cologne. Unusually, though it does happen, I have been contacted by people on the other side of the world, who have discovered my website online.

10. *concrete party* is a collection of misread and misunderstood texts; a juxtaposition of words and titles out of context. What made you decide to tackle this project? “Feminination,” for instance, is described as being shaped like a fan to represent the feminine body, but it could also be understood to represent a breast. How does this reading fit what you have been working on in the last few years, or your battle with breast cancer, and what has caused your shift to photographic art and concrete word poetry?

concrete party is a collection of misread, misheard and misunderstood texts—it also includes wordplay, concrete, absurd and some more traditionally considered verse; but mostly the poetry is the expression of thoughts that run around constantly, usually uncontrolled, through the mind. It is one of six editions of poetry (each including twenty-eight stanzas) that I have written over the last two years—a recording of *cement*, a similar work, is included on the *Imaginations* website (May 2012 edition).

Although I had previously written a small amount of poetry, it was during a depression at the end of 2009, followed shortly after by the cancer illness that I started writing poetry constantly—mostly in English, but some in German too. At the time, I was physically and mentally unable to continue making art, researching and writing—I actually had to cancel approximately five large projects, which I have still not returned to, but discovered that it was also impossible to shut the creative process down, completely.

In my situation I had become rather hyper; I needed to express myself immediately and concisely. Extraordinarily, I found myself able to locate a kind of collective thought wave, what musicians who practice improvisation call “the flow.” And it was during this period, that I was also by chance invited by musicians to improvise with them at sessions. It has become a regular activity over the last year, in Cologne and Düsseldorf: I perform with a pool of up to fifty musicians, every couple of weeks, in small groups for five to ten minutes before rotating. It is a fascinating and exhilarating experience and so different to anything I have previously known. Being a group activity it

contrasts to that of the writer/artist who, like the long distance runner, is lonely. These group projects require an absolute trust in the abilities of the other artists. Collectively we toss off our finest and then just let it go.

fächer
 fächer fächer
 fesch figur form fabulös
 fächer
 fähig flirt feurig flakon
 fokus feinsinn fließend frau
 fächer
 flüchtig flackern fantasie falken
 fächer
 falten fächer fransen fächer entfalten
 flatterhaft fibel fantastisch filigran
 fächer
 fächer füglich flagranti vergessene frucht
 fächer fieberhaft filz feder fächer flamme
 fächer fanatisch vorgeschmack füllig fabelhaft
 fächer voll fächer fleck fächer fehler verdacht
 fächer verboten fächer feuer phase fächer phrase
 fächer folgen fein fächer verwöhnt fühlen fördern
 fächer ficus feige feind freundin frieden verloren
 feminin pfeile fell fatalistisch fächer freifallen
 fächer falte fetisch pflaume fächer feucht fantasia
 fächer auffordern fächer fatal fern falsch verboten
 fächer vogel fächer fund viel frieren fließt fliegen
 fächer auffordern fächer fatal fern falsch verboten
 fächer falte fetisch pflaume fächer feucht fantasia
 feminin pfeile fell fatalistisch fächer freifallen
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 fähig flirt feurig flakon
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 fächer

Image: *femininiation* 2007

Where *femininiation* was written in the form of a fan (which you can print up and fold), *silly cone* (also on the *Imaginations* website under concrete poems) from *cross word* (an edition, which

I am still working on) was specifically designed in the form of a breast and also refers to cancer—the recent scare in December of 2011 to be precise, when it was discovered that many women in England and France had experienced silicone leakage from their breast implants. Although breast augmentation involves cosmetic surgery, it is not only conducted for the sake of a fashionable look. Several friends have had breast cancer and the initial tumour removal is often followed by reconstruction surgery. Fatty tissue may be taken from the stomach area, to replace removed breast tissue, but more often than not, silicone implants are utilised.

Regarding photographic work, it has in fact been part of my practice for the last fifteen years.

11. In the past, you have brought hidden historical facts back into the public conscious through your art. Your latest work now shifts into the contemporary and into issues of the body. What is the main force driving your art now?

When dealing with historical facts in past work, I have been careful to go beyond merely repeating documented facts—have always attempted to refer to contemporary dealings in context with the past. *Who's Boss* for instance, was not just about the company's Nazi history—in my texts accompanying the artworks (which are accessible on my website), I discuss Germany's most recent policies of compensation to former forced labour troupes: a fund was instituted into which industrial criminals were to pay at least a token recompense to their victims. The amounts were pathetic and the fund was instituted far too late, making a travesty of the venture. Hugo Boss was one of the companies that did not reward compensation, on its own initiative, but was finally forced to recompense the few surviving former forced labourers because of legal decisions handed down by the courts.

The body still remains a constant agenda for me, as it has done over the last twenty-five years. I guess what drives my art and writing now is not one force but a wider than ever range. The rapidity of the poetry writing especially enables me to tackle any issue with a one-liner commentary that may nevertheless, attain the depth of long-researched work. Illness has helped me to grasp the elusive nature of life but has also happily resulted in an explosion of activity. Although I am well, I will not be able to realise all my plans because there are just too many. In spite of all that, over the coming year, as well as continuing to write I hope to become more involved in spoken texts (written and improvised poetry), accompanied by musicians.

Tanya Ury, Cologne, February 2012

The interview questions and editing of the text was by Claude Desmarais, Reichwald Professor in Germanic Studies in the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies (FCCS), UBC, Okanagan campus. Rebecca Brady, my undergraduate research assistant, should also be thanked for her work on this project.

JERUSALEM *taz* | (Tageszeitung - Daily Newspaper)

Concentration Camp Tattoos in Israel The Horrifying Number

30. 10. 2012

SUSANNE KNAUL

Foreign correspondent in Israel

Young Israelis wish to respect the memory of their forebears. That is why they are being tattooed - with concentration camp numbers.

The concentration camp numbers tattooed onto the arms of young Israelis may seem disconcerting for some people. For at least a dozen descendants of Auschwitz survivors it is a token of solidarity and their contribution to keeping the memory of their grandmother or grandfather awake.

“At first I was also shocked“, admits Dana Doron, who has processed the phenomenon in a short film. Later on she was also able to see “the beauty of this personal symbolism“. In mid October the 31-year-old received the Silver Hugo, for her film “Numbered“ at the Chicago Film Festival, together with her cameraman Uriel Sinai.

The soon-to-be specialist doctor first encountered a concentration camp number at a hospital reception. Doron wanted to measure the blood pressure of an elderly female patient, and asked her whether she knew what the number meant. “It felt as though she had something of the ashes of Auschwitz in her“, Doron remembers the experience from two years previously.

The young people in her film unanimously declare that they acquired a tattoo on their arms out of a sense of respect and sympathy for relatives who had survived the Holocaust. And, in the full knowledge that this would provoke discussion.

“Couldn’t you do this in a different way?“, asks a blogger, who felt uneasy at the thought of a concentration camp number on the arm of a young Jew; and another asks what Elie Wiesel would have to say about it.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner, a survivor of Auschwitz himself, rejected the wearing of the Yellow Star for memorial purposes, because “Holocaust commemoration would be profaned“ in this way. Dana Doron, who is very conscious of the “misuse of the memory of Shoah for political reasons“, provoked exactly this kind of debate on the subject. “All that it proves is how stigmatised we all still are.“

(Readers comments)

(...)

KARL K Guest

31.10.2012, 09:11

The artist Tanya Ury has implemented this kind of - adaptation of the past - with Kölnisch Wasser, an action of 1993. She

allowed herself to be engraved with the number 4711 as part of a performance, in memory of the journalist Milena Jesenská who, although she wore the number 4714 in the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, was always called “4711” after Eau de Cologne. She was amongst others a close friend of Franz Kafka and Margarete Buber-Neumann. See (article by Robin Arthur in Hybrid Magazine (GB) and <http://books.google....brungs&f=false>

<http://www.taz.de/!5080621/>

Suspended Beliefs



Der Auftritt von Suspended Beliefs, einer Gruppe um die Kölner Autorin Tanya Ury (2. v. r.), bedeutete einen krassen Kontrast zur Folklore.

BILDE: MARTINA GÖPPEL

Wie eine hoffnungsfrohe Legende

LUTHERKIRCHE
Folklore und
Improvisation beim
Frühling der Kulturen

VON MARIANNE KIERSPEL

Innenstadt. Zum dritten Mal war die Lutherkirche Schauplatz für ein Musikfest, das sich auf das 3000 Jahre alte persische Frühlingsfest Norouz oder Nowruz bezieht. Die Unesco hat es 2009 in die Liste des immateriellen Erbes der Menschheit aufgenommen. Diesmal konnten die Organisatorinnen Lale Kortak und Sonja Gruppe sechs Ensembles ankündigen, von Katy Sedna und Rojan Delyar bis zur Hop Stop Banda, die dem Publikum mit ihrem schrägem Folk-Mix einheizen sollte.

Ein strammes Programm. Allein vier der Gruppen kamen aus Köln. Da die Stadt ihre Unterstützung

für das Musikfest eingestellt hatte, traten die Künstler fast ohne Gage auf, was in der vollen Kirche Extrarückfall hervorrief. Die uigurische Kulturgruppe Karwan (Karawane) aus München eröffnete das Fest mit Tänzen für zwei Frauen und einen Mann in rot-weiß-goldener Tracht. Da konnten sanfte Bewegungen und tanzende Hände Frühlingsgefühle wecken.

Eine Frau erzählte, wie uigurische Mädchen ihre Liebe erklärten, ohne Schrift, aber mit Federn, Tee, Steineben. Fremd wirkten zwei Legenden: Das Volk der Liguren, hieß es, sei entstanden durch die Heirat einer Kaisertochter mit einem Wolf, das Volk der Türken durch die Verbindung eines Knaben mit einer Löwin.



Auf die Folklore folgte ein krasser Kontrast, ein modernes, verrästeltes Experiment. Die Gruppe Suspended Beliefs, vier Musiker um die Kölner Autorin Tanya Ury, improvisierte superleise und superlangsam. Ury reihete unverbundene Satzesplitter über „Unterwelt“, „Sprache“ oder „Polaris-Kappen“ aneinander. Zu den Worttropfen spielten die Instrumentalisten entfärbte Töne und das Geräusch von plätscherndem Wasser.

Gut vertreten waren kurdische Lieder, allerdings für hiesige Ohren mit westlichem Instrumentarium zubereitet. Mit fein nuancierter Stimme entzückte die Wiener Kurdin Sakina, am Klavier begleitet von Anna Pogoyants aus Köln:

Eine Tänzerin der uigurischen Kulturgruppe Karwan

Sakina sang ihre Liebeslieder in gleich vier Sprachen – eine versöhnliche Geste.

Auch die Lutherkirche verbindet mit ihrem Fest eine Friedensbotschaft. Dabei beruft sie sich auf Kultur aus vorislamischer und vorchristlicher Zeit. Ob es ohne diese Religionen friedlicher zugeht?

■ Sakina sang ihre Liebeslieder in gleich vier Sprachen – eine versöhnliche Geste

Noch heute, so das Vorwort des Programms, begrüßten viele Menschen auf dem Balkan, am Schwarzen Meer, im Kaukasus, in Zentralasien und im Nahen Osten mit dem Frühlingsfest das neue Jahr. Wie eine hoffnungsfrohe Legende wirkte dabei die Idee, dass sie es einmal gemeinsam tun könnten. So wie die Musiker unterschiedlichster Herkunft.
www.lutherkirche-koeln.de

Photo: The appearance of Suspended Beliefs, a group with Cologne author Tanya Ury (2nd from the right), was a crass contrast to folklore.

Like a hopeful legend – Luther Church – Folklore and Improvisation at the Spring of Cultures

City Centre. For the third time, the Luther Church was the location of a music festival, inspired by the 3000-year-old Persian spring festival Norouz, or Nowruz - Unesco included it in its List of Intangible Heritage, 2009.

(...) After the folklore a modern, enigmatic experiment provided a crass contrast. The group "Suspended Beliefs", four musicians with the Cologne author Tanya Ury, improvised very softly and very slowly. Ury spun series of unconnected splinters of sentences together about "the underworld", "speech", or "polar ice caps". The instrumentalists played colourful sounds and the word outpourings were also accompanied by the sound of burbling

water. (...) Marianne Kierspel - Kölner Stadtanzeiger (journal)
2.4.2013, Cologne (D) (Translation TU)
Wednesday, 4th September 2013 Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger
(Cologne City Gazette)

<http://musermeku.hypotheses.org/482>

Part of a blog:

[“From Lesser to Tanya Ury: German-Jewish Artists 1890-2010” – A \(subjective\) Report](#)

[July 31, 2013](#)

By MusErMeKu Guest

In his report as guest, Oliver Sukrow presents an overview of the first part of the conference panel “From Lesser to Tanya Ury: German-Jewish Artists 1890-2010” that was held during the College Art Association Annual Meeting.



Image: lesser is me more or less, 2003, © Tanya Ury, 2013

Within the framework of this years' *College Art Association* meeting in New York, the panel “German-Jewish Artists 1890-2010”, under the supervision of PETER CHAMETZKY, was to especially feature fine artists of the 20ieth Century, who had previously not, or hardly ever been viewed as “German”, “Jewish” or respectively artists, in scholarly studies.

Put into question was, amongst other things, whether these artists had contributed to a specific German-Jewish art at the dawn of Modernism, and how far they were bound by their social, societal, aesthetic or ideological positions, towards other overriding categories beyond their German-Jewish background.

In his introduction, PETER CHAMETZKY (*University of South Carolina*) outlined the panel's historical dimensions, spanning from the beginning of the Kaiser Wilhelm II era, through the Weimar Republic, the time of National Socialism, the epoch of German partition, to most recent contemporary history. [The](#)

artistic periods of the Berlin Symbolist painter Lesser Ury (1861-1931) and his great-niece, Tanya Ury (born 1951), also an artist, served as a framework.

As differentiated as the historical periods in the era were, so too was the represented art, generated by German-Jewish artists. Because hardly any definition of exact leading themes in perhaps, genre, iconography, material or technique could be reconstructed, a practical approach to limiting the field of research was chosen: those artists, who were of Jewish “*ethnicity*” and German “*nationality*”, who lived and/or were active during the period of 1890 and 2010, were included. While this rather rough matrix obviously couldn’t capture some minor or secondary aspects, it accommodated the content, method and biography of the very multifaceted panel.

(...)

LSD

LSE

Ihr Juden und
Eure Monumente

I’ll be king if
you’ll be queer

Titus entitled

Böse Bosie

my thirst time

Ich krieg Dich
Krieg als letzte Option
Unter den Tisch kriechen

BABY LON

à cause de votre charme

CINC INAT TI
SYNCHRONICITY

Finanzjude

Funking Nazi sons

my German lover’s
mother

fleeing Dresden

he in belly

my British husband’s

father

rear bombardier

over Dresden

we believe in freedom

Image: weißer neger, (Filmstill Nr. 12), © Tanya Ury, 2013

A performance by TANYA URY (of *Leiden University*) gave the panel the possibility to experience another form of examination on the theme “German-Jewish artists of the 20th Century”, beyond art historical analysis. With Tanya Ury’s “weißer neger” (white nigger), a live performance combined with video installation that as interactive presentation incorporated the audience, the seminar expanded by not only critical contemporary art but was also a coherent conclusion, and furthermore formed the juxtaposition of Lesser and Tanya Ury, which was the starting point for reflection on German-Jewish art of the 20th Century.

Image 1: Tanya Ury: *lesser is me more or less*, 2003, A photograph sealed under plexiglass and mounted (MDF), height 64 cm x width 86,64 cm (edition of 7) © Tanya Ury, 2013

Image 2: Tanya Ury: *weißer neger*, (film still no. 12). Video-installation with live performance reading. Poems, design, Recording 1 Tanya Ury. Recording 2 Jules Desgoutte. Video edit Mirco Sanftleben, © Tanya Ury, 2013

MusErMeKu thanks the artist Tanya Ury for kindly transferring the images and allowing us to reproduce them here.
(Translation Tanya Ury)



Sonata in Sea 1999-2000 (flyer)

Playful Verse, Videos and Holograms

The Cologne Artist Tanya Ury exhibits 47 Visual Poems in the Central Library, on Josef-Haubrich-Hof

What is more appropriate for an art exhibition in a library than to engage oneself with letters and words. That's exactly what Tanya Ury is doing now at the Central Library. Visitors encounter her art, printed or handwritten, coloured or in black and white, on paper and on a screen, in the exhibition area in front of the Heinrich Böll Archive on the second floor, as a confusing mix of letters, words and photos. There, where the memory of Cologne's most well-known writer of the 20th Century has been cultivated, with books and along with tangible objects from his workspace - the artist, who has been living in Cologne

since 1993, presents 47 visual poems - concrete poetry that demonstrates how easily the certitude of an accustomed language can slip away and an abyss of ambiguity can open up before one.

Everyday Life and Fragments

In many of her long poems, Ury associatively gives expression to unexpected relationships between everyday terms and their connection to the unconscious. This artistic measure pointedly opposes a trusted order of language and its grammar, when single words are repeated often, or are fragmented into several components. Tanya Ury was born in London, to German Jews, who had migrated to London in 1936 and 1939 respectively, having fled from National Socialist persecution to England. Ury initially studied at Central School of Art & Design in London. In the mid 90s a course at the Institute for Theatre, Film and Television Studies, Cologne University followed. Further studies made of her a doctoral candidate in Cultural Studies, at the Dutch University of Leiden.

Her Jewish origins are unquestionably a central aspect of her artistic practice, which includes the production of video, performance and lectures, as well as the creation of photos, holograms, art objects, installation and audio-texts, the occupation of writer and exhibition curator. In the Central Library Ury shows amongst other things, staged photography - her self-portraiture alongside the German-Jewish painter Lesser Ury (1861 to 1931) and the German-Jewish writer Else Sara Ury (1887 to 1943). Simple details like the date 1943, or the artist's English-German language mix-up, bring the exhibition visitor right up against the experience of a person, who brings creatively playful lightness and a basic insecurity together.

by Jürgen Kisters
(Translation Tanya Ury)

Central Library, Josef-Haubrich-Hof, open Tue. and Thur. 10 to 20 hours, Wed. and Fri. 10 to 18 hours, Sat. 10 to 15 hours, till 7th September

**Statement on Tanya Ury's performance poetry
(unpublished), Dr. Michael Eldred, Cologne November 2013**

"The word that came to me when going home under the impression of your performance was 'evanescent'. It names the attunement that reached me. There are two other words that occurred to me today: 'tentative' and 'scarcely presencing'.

The carousel around the abyss comes to mind, for you seem to me to dance close to it.

(...)

Your verse performance itself is (...) fleeting, evoking an atmosphere, a freely floating attunement to something fragile and precarious, as signalled by your voice, posture and gestures.

Your poetry lives from the polysemy of the words that points in various directions. Language is wonderful in that way; it takes surprising turns and you end up somewhere unexpected. Akin to, but different from the thinking-paths of philosophy along which something simple and decisive comes into view. Another way of looking-at (Anschauung, intuition, theorein, nous)."