

# Their movements retain the light of the sun

## Beatriz Santiago Muñoz

ST PAUL St Gallery One

13 April - 26 May 2017

*A language is like a net you throw into the world, and according to the mesh of the net and where and how it is thrown and pulled back in, different fish turn up. A language is what brings back certain kinds of fish, a certain kind of world.* Barbara Cassin<sup>1</sup>

"Is this the way language is supposed to work? The same reflection for everyone?" asks one of the women in Beatriz Santiago Muñoz's film, *That which identifies them, like the eye of the cyclops* (2016). The work deals with language and its limits, with translation and that which is untranslatable outside a specific culture or place. Here, language is not restricted to that which is written or spoken; it also exists as colour, in the silences and gaps in a conversation, as a form of intimacy, and is physically embodied in movement and gesture.

Beatriz Santiago Muñoz is a filmmaker based in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Her work combines observation and documentary conventions with elements of improvisation and imagined reality. She makes work with people she knows, typically over a long duration. Throughout her practice, Santiago Muñoz has concentrated on labour, political transformation, and ideas of recognition: the recognition of daily work, collectivity and autonomy, and different ways of knowing and imagining places.

The title of the exhibition is from Monique Wittig's 1969 experimental novel, *Les Guérillères*. Wittig's text imagines a world taken over by women, where the patriarchy has fallen. Santiago Muñoz has described her film *That which identifies them, like the eye of the cyclops* as a contemporary analogue to the book. The three-channel video documents the work of a group of women Santiago Muñoz has known for over a decade—including a goat farmer; a popular singer and performer, Macha Colón / Gisela Rosario Ramos; a union organiser and teacher, Eva Ayala; and two artists, Ivelisse Jiménez and Marién Velez—who live in real places, including bankrupted cities and coastal towns, and a farm in Puerto Rico. Together, these women develop a system of coloured signs for communication—good news, bad news, the future, victory. The script draws on their performances, along with loosely traced narrative and direct quotation from Wittig's novel. Each channel of the video refers to a different theme from the novel: One/Song, Two/Strategy and Three/Signs.

*Post-Military Cinema* (2014) was shot in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, in a cinema that formerly part of the Roosevelt Roads US Naval Base. The base was established in 1944 during the Second World War, when the United States, under President Roosevelt, decided that an airbase in the Caribbean was necessary. Although Puerto Rico is a commonwealth, the United States holds 'territorial rights' which allowed the American government to build the base there. The base provided employment and was home to hundreds of military personnel and their families, until it was decommissioned and relocated to Florida in 2004. The cinema now sits empty and is largely submerged by the regrown forest. A beekeeper now manages bees nearby, and these are part of the work's soundtrack. For 45 minutes to an hour each day, the afternoon light enters through the door of theatre, which becomes for that time a pinhole camera. Images of the forest that has grown in the years since the closing of the base are projected inside, temporarily reactivating the theatre.

In both of these works, elements of documentary are used to think through the possibilities of visual and spoken language which is not bound to carry meaning as if it were universally accessible. We won't be able to know, see or read everything that is present. Santiago Muñoz has written, "Puerto Rico is the place where I grew up, and it's the place that I'm most interested in. There are things that are possible to think about some places that are impossible to think in other places. So when you are in a place that used to be a military base for 60 years and was bombed... you can get to certain thoughts and ideas that you can't get elsewhere. There are possible thoughts attached to places. If you swim you will see lobsters and seashells living on missiles. If you don't, then you see nothing—just the ocean."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Cassin, 'More than one language', *e-flux* #80, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Santiago Muñoz, interview with Ionit Behar, *Artslant*, 2016.

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*A language is like a net you throw into the world, and according to the mesh of the net and where and how it is thrown and pulled back in, different fish turn up. A language is what brings back certain kinds of fish, a certain kind of world.* Barbara Cassin<sup>1</sup>

“Koinei te āhuatanga o te reo? Kotahi anō te whakaaro o te katoa?” ka pātai tētahi wahine i te kiriata a Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, ko *That which identifies them, like the eye of the cyclops* (2016). E hāngai ana ngā mahi i tēnei whakaaturanga ki te reo me ōna here ā-whakamāori, ā, ko ētahi āhuatanga nōhea e taea te whakawhiti mai ki waho o tētahi ahurea, o tētahi wāhi rānei. I roto tēnei mahi, kāore te reo e herea ki te kōrero, ki te tuhituhi noa iho rānei, engari he reo anō i ngā waha ngūtanga o te kōrero, he āhuatanga tē taea e te kupu te whakapuaki e puta kē mai ana i te ngā nekeneke o te tinana.

He kaihanga kiriata a Beatriz Santiago Muñoz e noho ana i San Juan, Puerto Rico. E whai ana āna mahi i ngā tikanga pakipūmeka, mātakitaki anō hoki, kei roto anō hoki i āna mahi ētahi āhuatanga pakiwaitara, tene, pōhewa anō hoki. Mahi ai ia i te taha o te hunga e mōhio ana ia, ā, kua roa hoki e mōhio ana. I roto i āna mahi ka whai wāhi mai ngā whakaaro e pā ana ki te whakamihi, arā te whakamihi i ngā mahi o ia rā a te takitini me te takitahi me ngā whakaaro rerekē e pā ana ki te mōhio o te tangata ki ētahi wāhi.

I ahu mai te ingoa o te whakaaturanga i te pukapuka o *Les Guerilleres* nā Monique Wittig's, he mea tuhi i te tau 1969. Ka whakaahuatia mai e ngā tuhinga a Wittig tētahi ao e whakahaerehia ana e te wahine, kua hinga te whakahaere a te tāne. Hei tā Santiago Muñoz, e rite ana tana kiriata o *That which identifies them, like the eye of the cyclops* ki tēnei pukapuka. Whakaahuatia ai te ao o tētahi rōpū wāhine kua roa e mōhiohia ana e Santiago Muñoz - he kaupāmu nane-koti, he kaiwaiata rongonui, kaiwhakaari anō hoki, arā ko Macha Colón rāua ko Gisela Rosario Ramos; he kaiwhakahere uniana, kaiwhakaako hoki, arā ko Eva Ayala; he ringatoi, ko Ivelisse Jiménez raua ko Marién Velez. Ko ētahi e noho ana i ngā whenua pekerapū, i ngā tāone o uta me ngā tāone o tai, i runga hoki i te pāmu i Puerto Rico. Nā ngā wāhine nei i whakarite ētahi tohu tae hei whakawhitiwhiti kōrero mā rātou mō ngā take pai, kino, tūkinu, mō ngā wā kei te heke mai me ngā angitutanga. Ka puta

i te tuhinga ngā āhuatanga o tā rātou i whaakari mai ai me ētahi kōrero nō te pukapuka a Wittig. Kōrerotia ai e ia hōtaka o te ataata ētahi kaupapa rerekē o te pukapuka: Tahi/Waiata, Rua/Rautaki, ā, ko te Toru/Tohu.

I whakaahutia ai a *Post-Military Cinema* (2014) i Ceiba, i Puerto Rico i tētahi whare pikitia nō Roosevelt Roads US Naval Base. I whakatūria te Roosevelt Roads US Naval Base i te tau 1944 i te wā o te pakanga tuarua o te ao, ka whiriwhiri te a Tumuaki Roosevelt me whakatū he taunga waka rererangi i te Carribean. Ahakoa he hoa whenua a Puerto Rico, he mana tonu ō America i reira, nā reira i āhei ai te kāwanatanga o Amerika ki te whakatū i te taunga ki reira. He nui te hunga i mahi, i noho hoki i reira me ō rātou whānau, tae rawa atu ki te tau i wāhia ai te taunga, ā ka hūnukutia ki Florida i te tau 2004. Ināianei e tū kau noa ana te whare pikitia, ā, kua tupuria hoki te ngahere. Kāore e tawhiti i konei te pāmu pī a tētahi, ā, ka whai wāhi mai te tangi a ngā pī ki te ataata. Ia ahiahi mō te 45 meneti ki te kotahi hāora ka puta mai te rā ki roto i te whare pikitia, anō nei he kāmera. Kitea ai ngā rākau o te ngahere kua tupu mai i roto i ngā tau, ā, ka ora mai anō te whare pikitia mō te wā poto.

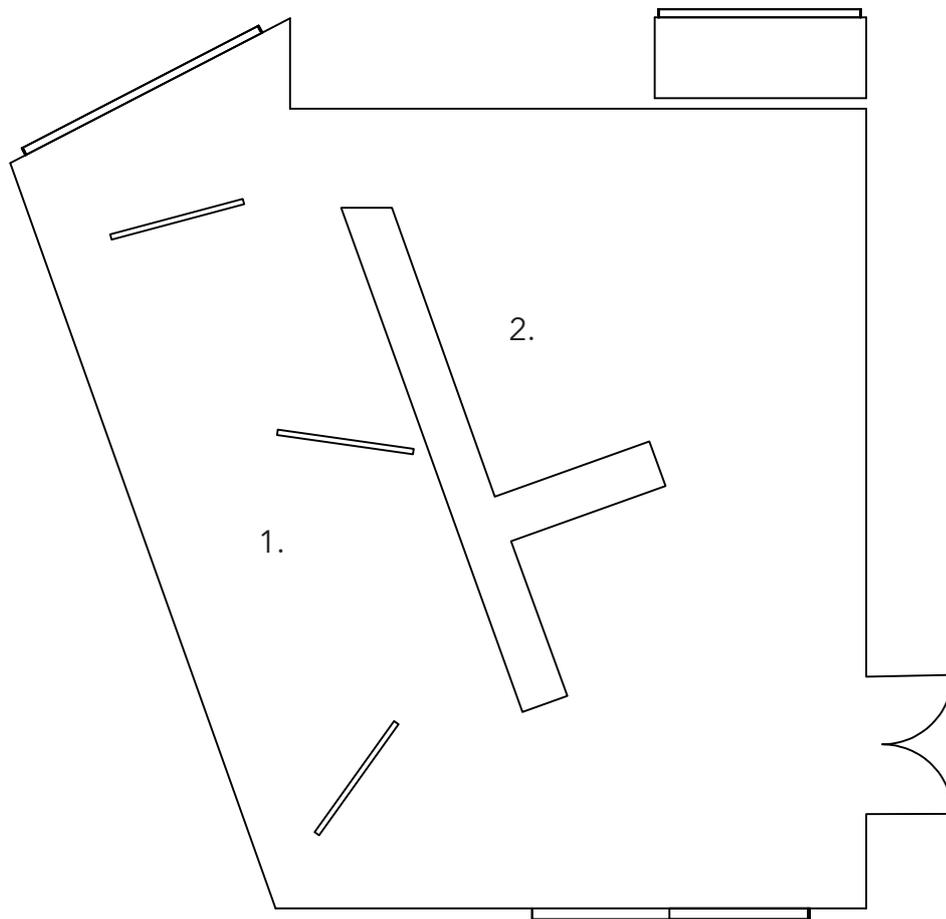
I ia mahi nei whakamahia ai ngā tikanga pakipūmeka. Mehemea kāore e kitea ana, e kore te tangata e kite, e pānui, e mōhio. Kua tuhia e Santiago Muñoz, “ko Puerto Rico te wāhi i tupu mai ai au, ā, koinei hoki te wāhi e pātata ana ki tōku ngākau. He iti noa iho ngā whakaahua kei konei, ā, he iti hoki ngā whakaaro me ngā tikanga e pā ana ki te whakaahua. I ētahi wāhi ka taea te whakaaro ētahi āhuatanga, i ētahi atu wāhi nōhea hoki e taea. Nō reira, i a koe i tētahi wāhi i whakamahia ai hei taunga hōia mō ngā tau e ono tekau, waihoki he mea pōhu, ka māmā te haramai o te whakaaro, kāore pea e pērā rawa te māmā i ētahi atu wāhi. Haere he wāhi, he whakaaro anō kei reira. Ki te ruku koe i te wai ka kite koe i te tini o Tangaroa e noho ana i runga rāketete. Ki te kore koe e ruku, kāore koe e kite, heoi anō tāu e kite ai ko te moana.”<sup>2</sup>

**Te Reo translation by Hēmi Kelly**

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Cassin, 'More than one language', *e-flux* #80, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Santiago Muñoz, interview with Ionit Behar, *Artslant*, 2016.

# Floorplan



## List of works

1. *That which identifies them, like the eye of the cyclops*, 2016  
three-channel HD video, audio  
10:10 mins, looped

2. *Post-Military Cinema*, 2014  
HD video, audio  
10:52 mins, looped

