Imaginary Frontiers
Villa Empain, Brussels
Curator: Louma Salamé
From 23 February to 30 April 2017

The Boghossian Foundation’s mission is to bring people together through culture. In this respect, it is presenting Imaginary Frontiers, an exhibition dedicated to the theme of borders, both real and imaginary, visible and invisible, curated by Louma Salamé.

Modern world cartography was developed in 1648, at the time of the Peace of Westphalia treaty. The border which helps distinguish states takes two forms: a so-called natural line, demarcated by maritime or terrestrial topology (river, sea, mountain) and a so-called artificial line, usually straight and man-made.

It was at the same time, in 1656, that one of the first mental maps became famous: an engraving called the Map of Tendre designed by François Chauveau, which lists invisible and imaginary frontiers. In a publication titled Clélie, different states of love are illustrated and take the shape of a territory.

Even though the size and number of nations were historically determined by the war and colonial empires, the fact is that the number of states has been multiplied by five since 1900. Political, historical, cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic facts either support or contradict these new borders.

This exhibition is built around two parts. The first offers a political version of frontiers, presenting works by artists from infinitely diverse backgrounds but whose inspiration is driven by exile and a quest for identity, the body of which is resolutely political, in the manner of Mekhitar Garabedian’s neon unequivocally titled Les autres (The Others), or Barthélémy Toguo’s India ink watercolours.

Nowadays border zones are susceptible to every fear. In order to control access to their territory, certain countries are closing their borders, which are then materialised by walls. The issue of a border’s physicality and the suffering which migrants and refugees are exposed is embodied in the world maps developed by Mona Hatoum.
The second part of the exhibition offers works representing cognitive, emotive worlds. Artist Grayson Perry creates the imaginary topology of his dreams and fears in Map of an Englishman, in which we discover a sea titled Dementia, a river takes the name Ambition and a lake is called Conscience. On the opposite wall, Öyvind Fahlström’s definition of the American territory or Zhu Rixin’s Silver Canyon are the representation of very personal views on existing territories.

The Foundation is also pleased to present in situ work created by the Villa’s artists in residence: an interactive sculpture by Aurélie Godard examines the scale and the blueprints of the Villa Empain, Chloé Dugit-Gros created a series of secret cave paintings, as well as a piece by Dong Dawei, which questions the painting’s border.

Artists

Imaginary Frontiers brings together works by several contemporary artists in the Villa Empain’s Project Space, including: Dong Dawei, Chloé Dugit-Gros, Öyvind Fahlström, Mekhitar Garabedian, Aurélie Godard, Mona Hatoum, Walter Leblanc, Grayson Perry, Zhu Rixin, Barthélémy Toguo, Jorinde Voigt and Ji Zhu.

Exhibition

Project Space of the Boghossian Foundation - Villa Empain
From 23 February to 30 April 2017
From Tuesday to Sunday, from 11 am to 6 pm

Image

Ji Zhou, Map No.4, 2014
About Louma Salamé


After a first position at the Guggenheim’s curatorial department in New York in 2007, she went on to work at the Mudam collections in Luxembourg in 2009. From 2009 to 2013, she dedicated herself to the Louvre Abu Dhabi’s Franco-Emirian/Emerati project and then went on to join the Muthaf in Doha in 2013. Back in Europe in 2015, she was able to continue her mission of bringing together eastern and western cultures at the Arab World Institute in Paris.

She most notably curated Chemins de Traverse (6b, St Denis) in 2015 and Mental Map (Paris) in 2012.

Since January 2016, she has been the General Manager of the Boghossian Foundation – Villa Empain in Brussels.

About the Boghossian Foundation

The Boghossian Foundation was created in 1992 by Robert Boghossian and his sons, Jean and Albert, Lebanese jewelers of Armenian origin. The Foundation realizes social and educational projects in Armenia, Belgium, Lebanon, and Switzerland. In 2006 they began restoring Brussels’ historic Art Deco masterpiece, the Villa Empain. In 2010 the Foundation opened the Villa to the public as a center for art and dialogue between East and West. Since December 2015, its team has been led by Ralph Boghossian, Louma Salamé (General Director) and Asad Raza (Artistic Director).

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