

“Do you remember?” i

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The question implies a work of memories, re-collections and revelations. It occurs graciously, as in a game when despite the rules and tricks the sequel has something unpredictable. However, in this work of remembrance, the sequel is “the” war lived either 20 years ago or right now, from which some have survived, and is thus known and recognized by all. However, these experiences are so vile that memory evacuates them collectively and repeatedly.

From the century that separates us from the so-called “Great” or First World War, Lucile Bertrand has selected a series of wars (of aggression, attrition, or nuclear) and contemporary genocides. These serious and destabilizing themes have been conveyed regularly in her visual art for several decades. Using objects, sculptures, drawings and installations –characterized by textual references, delicate materials and spatial agility– the artist consciously conveys the materialization and interrogation of terror and dignity denied in and by the society.

In 2014, for *Do you remember?* Lucile Bertrand turns to video, exploiting the informative and emotional potential of this medium. On one side of a split screen, a succession of speakers systematically confronts each other through the same question: *Do you remember?* and the same answer, sincere or not: *No, I don’t*. On the other side of the screen, a dancer-witness collapses every time a negation falls. However, this visual allegory of memory becomes constitutive when one of the speakers explains, reads or tells a part of the history of the 20th or 21st century that had been freshly erased or suppressed while the dancer painfully picks herself up.

In order to evoke as closely as possible the remembrance of these conflicts, their scars forming or their wounds still open –in Rwanda, Greece, Turkey, former Yugoslavia, Syria, Russia, South Africa, Cambodia, among American Indians and the nuclear disaster in Japan– Lucile draws on contemporary literature. Poems and literary excerpts are spoken or read aloud in their original language (twelve different ones). The words’ vibrations, flowing through the transmitting body and the receiving body, revives bruised civilizations while evoking what is beyond the sensitive and the intelligible.

This commemorative exhibition is produced and hosted by the Maison des Arts de Schaerbeek, in Brussels. By investing the original functionality of the site, the artist invites viewers to be conscious “at home” of extreme situations. *Tea Time* broadcasts its zest of colonial exploitation in the dining room. The pink lounge’s piano and chandelier, bundled against possible bombings, suggest the possibility of a local war, while the precious wall-coverings in fuchsia silk are decorated with a frieze of corpses. In the library, the video pays tribute to the poets. And finally, in the beige lounge, Lucile’s latest book, *Entitled*, is presented suspended, recalling a mountain range, a natural boundary upon and for which some people would fight, while others would attempt to cross it to escape destruction, with as unique baggage, memory and hope.

- Véronique Danneels