

Clarissa Thieme's artistic research background

Clarissa Thieme, a German filmmaker and artist based in Berlin, connects a long-term artistic collaboration with the Library Hamdija Kreševljaković Video Arhiv Sarajevo, a collection of video testimonies recorded by the citizens of the besieged city of Sarajevo, Bosnia, and Herzegovina (1992–1996). In response to the aggression, friends around siblings Nihad, Sead Kreševljaković, and Nedim Alikadić began documenting their everyday lives as they drew on their pre-existing video practice. They produced essayistic film commentaries and fictional miniatures that critically examined their situation. Subsequently, they created a video archive and a space to share and discuss this material. More than ten years passed from Thieme's first visit to her first artistic collaboration with the Video Arhiv Sarajevo.

At some point, Nihad Kreševljaković and Clarissa Thieme chose the term “archival forum” to describe the Video Arhiv, referring to the artistic archival practice, the kind of exchange, and the resulting constant editing and collaging. Or as the writer Chris Keulemans describes it: “Every evening around midnight, they would descend into the basement to view material, select fragments and do rough edits. The only problem was: they never systematically ordered all those tapes, and dreamers as they were, they didn't care. Which meant that they would more or less start all over again every night. At first, I thought this was traumatized madness, even though they approached their work with cheerful, boundless energy. Every time I visited, they would proudly take me down to the basement, tell me that they had – again – barely made any progress – and laugh their irresistible laughs as if this was the best joke in the world.” (Chris Keulemans from an introductory address at the 2019 Kairos Prize Awards, which Nihad Kreševljaković was awarded for his long-standing role in theatre and cultural projects in Sarajevo. 28 April 2019, Hamburg, Germany.)

The idea of such an archival forum goes far beyond a collection. Its inherent qualities, the processual approach, and openness for exchange made Thieme and Kreševljaković consider starting the initiative *Izmedju nas / Between Us* in 2016 (back then together with artist and scholar Jasmina Gavrankapetanović), an open archive project inviting others beyond the sworn founding group to the Video Arhiv Sarajevo. “The initiative *Izmedju nas / Between Us*, my artistic collaboration with Nihad Kreševljaković and Nedim Alikadić in particular, was enabled by the idea of the “archival forum”. It allowed their “message in a bottle” from Sarajevo under siege to be found in multiple ways. My artistic and political interest in archival practice is entangled with the idea of “archival forum” as common. No one knows what will speak to someone else, but there is a chance of response and mutual responsibility through time. I am unsure whether I would call that accidental, but it can not be mapped out precisely. It differs fundamentally from understanding a forum centered around forensic testimony and proof. The “archival forum” is a space of possible connections, not certainties. It calls for trust and openness to be touched, the willingness to fail, and still care about this shared space and dialogue.” (Clarissa Thieme in an interview with film scholar Asja Makarević for the publication *Accidental Archivism, Archival Assembly #2*).

Since 2018, an ongoing series of works by Thieme in collaboration with the Video Arhiv Sarajevo has emerged, which so far includes the following: Sjećaš li se Sarajeva (Do You remember Sarajevo) – Multitude (with Nihad Kreševljaković, Installation, Archival Assembly #1 2021), Can't you see them? – Repeat. (with Nedim Alikadić, Film, Installation, Berlinale 2019), CYST #0-6 (Motion Tracking Metadata, Video stills, prints, 2019), Today Is 11th June 1993 (Film, Berlinale 2018), Vremeplov I Time Machine 1993 I 2003 I 20XX I 2037 I 2320 I 2572 (Installation, Performance, HKW 2018).

As part of her lecture, Thieme will screen her film “Can't You See Them? - Repeat.” (7 Min, 2019), which she worked on closely with Video Arhiv Sarajevo member Nedim Alikadić.

Thieme's long-term collaboration with the Video Arhiv Sarajevo and the aspiration to further develop the idea of the "archival forum" led her together with Nihad Kreševljaković to join forces with Armina Pilav (UnWar Space Lab) to build archipelago, a site-specific archival platform for public space in the Post- Yugoslav context that brings together war document collections in multi-directional ways.



(1) Video 8 footage by Nedim Alikadić shot from his apartment in Sarajevo, Grbavica, May 2, 1992, Library Hamdija Kreševljaković Video Arhiv Sarajevo; (2) CYST #1, AluDibond print; Motion Tracking of archival Video 8 material by Nedim Alikadić, part of the installation CAN'T YOU SEE THEM? – REPEAT., Film, 7 Min, 2019 © Clarissa Thieme in collaboration with Library Hamdija Kreševljaković Video Arhiv Sarajevo and Nedim Alikadić; (3) Video footage by Nedim Alikadić shot from his apartment in Sarajevo, Grbavica, May 2, 1992, Library Hamdija Kreševljaković Video Arhiv Sarajevo; (4) Film still, TODAY IS 11th 1993, Film, 13 Min, 2018 © Clarissa Thieme in collaboration with the Library Hamdija Kreševljaković Video Arhiv Sarajevo, performer Grace Sungeun Kim translating archival footage from the Video Arhiv.

Further links

Can't you see them? – Repeat. (with Nedim Alikadić, Film, Installation, Berlinale 2019)

<https://vimeo.com/831985133/b119950a48>

Today Is 11th June 1993 (Film, Berlinale 2018)

<https://vimeo.com/832029359/4d7af02fca>

Izmedju Nas / Between Us – An Open Archive Initiative, founding text

<https://www.clarissathieme.com/#/izmedu-nas-between-us/>

Presentation Nihad Kreševljaković and Clarissa Thieme at Berlinale Forum Expanded,
Think:Film 4, Visionary Archives 2, 2016

https://vimeo.com/253227211/3125160b1c?embedded=true&source=video_title&owner=3824405

About the “Feeling of Being in Transition” – Performing the Archive: A Conversation with
Clarissa Thieme about her Film “Today Is 11th June 1993”, Jana Seehusen, Temporary Art
Review 2018

<https://temporaryartreview.com/about-the-feeling-of-being-in-transition-performing-the-archive-a-conversation-with-clarissa-thieme-about-her-film-today-is-11th-june-1993/>