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## The Refrain

### Angela Melitopoulos

2015, 4-channel video installation, color, 65 min., Korean, Japanese, English. **Producer** Angela Melitopoulos (Berlin, Germany). **Commissioned by** Asia Culture Center. **Directed by** Angela Melitopoulos **in collaboration with** Angela Anderson, Maurizio Lazzarato, Aya Hanabusa **Text** Maurizio Lazzarato, Angela Melitopoulos. **Director of photography** Angela Melitopoulos, Angela Anderson. **Sound** Angela Melitopoulos, Angela Anderson. **Editor** Sebastian Bodirsky, Angela Anderson, Angela Melitopoulos. **Translation** Juri Cho, Jyung-ah Ku, Kim Sungeon, Erica Kim, Miya Yoshida, Angela Anderson. **Research** Felia Gram-Hansen, Selini Halvadaki, Arendse Krabbe, Claus Spangsborg Christiansen.

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A refrain consists of sound, words, gestures, signs, images which return on themselves, restart themselves, repeat themselves, and through their repetition capture, intensify, and give consistency to the forces and affects of the cosmos.

The islands of Okinawa (Japan) and Jeju (Korea) are two important points on a strategic curve of the 'military umbrella'. They are occupied by US bases, or – as it is now defined – shared Japanese/US and Korean/US bases. The post-war history of Okinawa and Jeju triggered a strong anti-war and peace movement in the East Chinese Sea, pleading for de-militarization and calling for a trans-national protest against the current intensification of an industrialized militarization of the archipelago. Protests including musical performances take place every day in front of the heavily guarded military bases.

In 15 "refrains" recorded on Jeju Island, in Paju, Seoul, and Uijeongbu city in Korea and on Okinawa and Iwai Island in Japan, *The Refrain* focuses on these performances and the social function of music in the islander societies. Memory and collectivity is constructed in songs sung when working the land, farming, and harvesting by reactivating pre-modern cosmologies. But it is also an important factor in decolonization.

"The Cosmos is an immense de-territorialized refrain." (1)

*The Refrain* is a video installation composed by four projections. The "Refrain" is translated from the French "ritournelle" and from the Italian "ritorno" and means "return" or "small tune which repeats itself."

"The refrain delineates a space, a territory to inhabit which simultaneously protects the forces of expression as they are constituting themselves and operates as a filter which borrows something from the external chaos." (1)

A refrain consists of sound, words, gestures, signs, images which return on themselves, restart themselves, repeat themselves, and through their repetition capture, intensify, and give consistency to the forces and affects of the cosmos.

The installation identifies underground solidarities between the Ryuku Islands and Jeju Island, and their respective histories of violence and resistance. The sea horizons between Okinawa (Japan) and Jeju Island (Korea) connect two most important points on a strategic curve of the 'military umbrella'. They are islands occupied by US bases, or – as it is now defined - shared Japanese/US and Korean/US bases. The postwar history of Okinawa and Jeju Island triggered the strongest anti-war and peace movement in the East Chinese Sea, pleading for de-militarization and calling for a trans-national protest movement against the current intensification of an industrialized militarization of the archipelago. In Jeju and in Okinawa protests, including musical performances, take place every day in front of the heavily guarded entry of the US / Korean military base.

Capitalism's military-industrial pact is thus interrupted by remembering and resisting bodies, by a living, non-assimilable, and non-virtual continuity that collectively constructs a new cartography. The anti-militarist resistance in Korean and in Japan and its creative expression perform in the face of the territorial markings of a traumatizing military reality.

The installation piece is composed of 14 "refrains" recorded on Jeju Island, Paju, Seoul, and Uijeongbu city in Korea and in Okinawa and Iwaishima Island in Japan.

They connect Korea with Japan along the Ryuku Islands and mirror the Southern Chinese coast. Okinawa was ravaged in the final battles of WW2 and colonized by US forces until 1972. Since then nearly half of the island is a US military base. Over 70% of the Okinawans voted in a referendum against the presence of these bases. The brutal post-war history on Jeju Island is marked by the so-called 'April 43 incident'. Under the shield of the US government over 30,000 islanders were killed between 1947 and 1949 who were suspected of being communist sympathizers and part of a movement rising up against the newly established right-wing Korean government. The massacre was silenced for over 50 years. The Jeju massacre was processed through cultures of mourning and recreation, including shamanistic rituals. The refrains in rituals and songs mediated information rather than giving it out and recalled forms of secret coding in communication.

The diverse cultures of the archipelago share a cultural heritage that conceptualizes sound and music alike and understands music as a medium with an integrative, social function. The protest songs echo with these functions of the refrain.

The cultural transmission or the trans-medial function of the refrain entangles the expression of a land. It is, as Deleuze & Guattari wrote, "a melodic formula that seeks recognition and remains the bedrock or ground of polyphony." The refrain always carries earth with it. The social function of music in islander societies is a main motif of the Refrain. Memory and collectivity is constructed in songs sung when working the land, farming, and harvesting by reactivating pre-modern cosmologies. But it is also an important factor of decolonization.

*Anselm Franke, Angela Melitopoulos*

(1) Reworked citations in the video installation "The Refrain" of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*

### The Refrains

- #1: Response by Aya Hanabusa, Anti-nuclear power movement on Iwaishima Island, Japan, 2010, 5.41 min.
- #2 : The Sea-women's Refrain sung by Kang Deungja (courtesy of the Haenyeo Museum in Gujwa-eup), Jeju, Korea, 3.41 min.
- #3: 100 Bows, Gangjeong village, naval base entrance, Gangjeong village, Jeju, Korea, (2014), 7.46 min. realized on a study trip with students of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen
- #4: Article 9, Now is the time, Sit Down Here by the women's protest chorus, Henoko Beach, Okinawa, (2015), 7.22 min.
- #5: Watshoi, Friday Demonstration, Camp Schwab, Henoko Beach, Okinawa, (2015), 4.32 min.
- #6: Our Sea, naval base entrance, Gangjeong village, Jeju, Korea, (2015), 3.41 min.
- #7: Explode our Anger, Henoko Beach, Okinawa, (2015), 2.51 min.
- #8: There is No Way it's Ok by activists from Tokyo, Henoko Beach, Okinawa, (2015), 5.10 min.
- #9: The Sleepless South by Ahn Chi-hwan, sung by Kim Miryang, naval base entrance, Gangjeong village, Jeju, Korea, (2015), 2.07 min.
- #10: The Partisan's Refrain, lyrics and performance by Choi Sangdon, 4.3 memorial site, Jeju, Korea, 5.45 min.
- #11: The Execution, War Museum, archival photographs, Seoul (2015), 3.13 min.
- #12: My Sister's Place (Durebang), Uijeongbu city, Korea, 5.02 min.
- #13: The Gardener's Refrain, Paju, Korea, 5.43 min.
- #14: The Refrain of the Refrain, text excerpts from "A Thousand Plateaus" by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari arranged by Maurizio Lazzarato and Angela Melitopoulos

**Angela Melitopoulos**, born in 1961 in Munich, is an artist in time-based arts, produces video essays, installations, documentaries, photographs, and sound-works. Her work engages with issues of duration, mobility, memory, mnemotechniques, and micropolitics. The combination of montage, archive, and performance is central and seeks to realize new, experimental formats. Melitopoulos curates artspaces, exhibitions, and workshops and publishes articles. She teaches at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Her work has been awarded and shown in many international festivals, exhibitions, and museums.

## Films

1986: *Aqua Sua* (12 min.). 1989: *My Best Friend* (co-directed by Ricardo Perez-Wende, 30 min.). 1990: *It's Politics* (4 min.), *Voyages aux Pays de la Peuge* (in collaboration with Maurizio Lazzarato, Raffaele Ventura, Samir Abdallah, 80 min.). 1991: *Avez-vous vu la guerre* (45 min.), *Transfer* (91 min.). 1992: *WDR Experimente* (45 min.). 1993: *Midi a Quatorze Heure* (in collaboration with Maurizio Lazzarato, 45 min.), *YVARAL. Kunst und Computer* (40 min.). 1994: *Kriks Kriks* (3 min.). 1995: *Scratch TV* (4 min.), *Evidence* (co-directed by Godfrey Reggio, 4 min.). 1996: *Black Pompei* (3 min.). 1999: *Passing Drama* (66 min.). 2006: *The Cell. Antonio Negri and the Prison* (124 min.), *Timescapes/Corridor X* (film installation, 123 min.). 2007: *The Language of Things* (33 min.). 2010: *Assemblages* (62 min.). 2011: *Déconnage* (video installation, 100 min.). 2012: *The Life of Particles I* (82 min.), *Two Maps* (video installation, 45 min.), *The Life of Particles II* (video installation, 45 min.). 2013: *Postscript to an Unfinished Journey* (Unearthing Disaster I, 33 min.). 2015: *The Refrain*.

**Maurizio Lazzarato** is an independent sociologist and philosopher who researches on immaterial work, ontology of work, cognitive capitalism, and "postsocialist" movements. He also writes on cinema, video, and new production technologies for images, and is also co-founder of the magazine *Multitudes*. Since 1989 he has been working with Angela Melitopoulos on films, media art projects, and various publications.

**Angela Anderson**, born in Peshtigo, USA, lives and works in Berlin. She has worked in video art and film since 2006, producing multi-channel installations, sound pieces, and film works which trespass the borders of fiction and documentary, both for and in collaboration with other artists. Her work focuses on the fields of economics, ecology, migration, and feminist/queer theories of power and violence, as well as the potential of audio-visual media to open up new lines of flight.

**Aya Hanabusa** is a film director. In 2010, her first film *Houri no shima* (*Holy Island*) was released. It describes the people in Iwaishima, Yamaguchi who have been resisting the construction of the Kaminoseki Nuclear Power Station for 30 years. In 2013, she directed her second work *Tale of a Butcher Shop*, a documentary that shows the everyday life of one butcher shop, Kitade Family, living in Osaka. She established her own company, Yashiho film company, in 2014.