

SAM DURANT

Working Drawing for Nonaligned Research

Last Tango is pleased to present a timeline and working drawings by American artist Sam Durant. Since the 90s Durant's artistic pursuits have proven broad, having eclectically sampled from rock-and-roll history, minimalist/post minimalist art, 1960s social activism, modern dance, Japanese garden design, mid-century modern design and self-help literature.¹ His source materials, originally presented in the No. 3 issue of *Torrent* magazine, take form as large-scale collages rich with notation and Xeroxed pages from books and the Internet.²

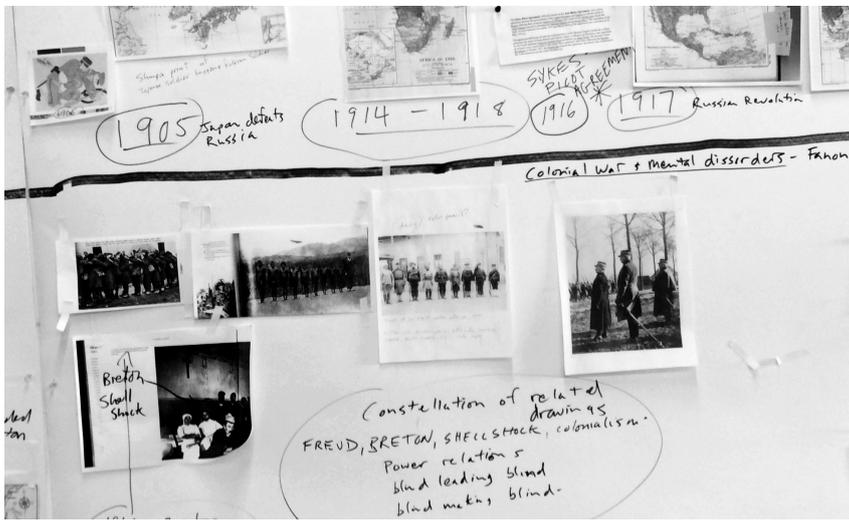
Durant, engrossed in questions of politics of memory, has of recent date been focusing on obscure and lesser-known moments and figures in history. This is especially the case of the timeline which features a chronology of Surrealism, including instances in the life of André Breton, a photo of Meret Oppenheim's 1983 *The Spiral Column* in Bern, and a quote by Comte de Lautreamont ("Poetry must be made by all and not by one.") According to Durant the timeline "was an ongoing, almost daily changing mindmap... It was a two-dimensional space to map historical breadth and depth, to try and get at a multi-layered three-dimensional space."³

With the timeline spanning from 1621 when the Dutch West India Company was founded to 1979 with the Iranian Revolution, Eurocentric history is revised. Mapping out events in an asynchronous manner we discover moments such as the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. A vital precursor to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement the conference was the first of its kind to omit the participation of the Western

nations, and had in its agenda to create strong solidarity-economy networks.⁴ Twenty-nine leaders, ranging from the heads of newly independent states to totalitarian states, gathered under the nervous and watchful eye of the West. It was even alleged that the U.S. considered sabotaging the conference before its start.

Art historian and critic Hal Foster having written in his 2004 article *An Archival Impulse* stated that Durant's "'bad connections' also serve to 'offer space for associative interpretation,'" and they suggest that, even in an apparent condition of entropic collapse, new connections can be made."⁵ We see this manifest here, with the insertion of materials on Trench art. Trench art as physical links to the battlefield, perhaps portraying how creativity came about in highly unexpected places and made by the unknown, usually by soldiers. Other materials denote the psychological effects of imperialism and artists' vigorous struggles for beauty and freedom.

This research was important for the realization of his 2014 exhibition *Invisible Surrealists* at Paula Cooper, New York, and as the exhibition title implies puts to the fore some of the more unfamiliar protagonists of the Surrealist movement from the French-speaking colonies such as Aimé and Suzanne Césaire.⁶ The globe, a reoccurring image in the timeline, appears in sketches whereupon a spiraling pupil is placed onto a globe, in a printout of the drawing *Fuck the World* (1976) by artist Tom of Finland, and two-dimensionally through maps of the Global South. Durant also draws a connection to its use in the Asian-African Conference:



Sam Durant, *Working Drawing for Nonaligned Research* (detail), 2013-ongoing, mixed media collage, 3 parts: 132.1 x 152.4cm; 132.1 x 154.94cm; 132.1 x 485.14cm. Copyright: © 2017 the artist

"The globe is a familiar motif in the Bandung Conference materials. Another world is being imagined and theorized, a heterogeneous, cooperative world in refusal of the bi-polar authority of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. What future might it have delivered if things had turned out differently?" Durant's "what-if?" ponderings on alternative histories are pertinent today in a backdrop of uncertainty gripping the world whereupon art's transformative dimension and function helps to remind us of our common humanity.⁷

It is Durant's first time exhibiting in Zurich since his 2001 large-scale site specific installation *Consciousness Raising Historical Analysis, Pain plus Time Separated and Ordered with Emphasis on Reflection* at the Kunsthof Zürich.

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Sam Durant lives and works in Los Angeles. Considered to be an artist's artist, his work has been exhibited extensively around the world including in recent solo exhibitions at Sadie Coles HQ, London, UK (2017); Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA (2017); Art and the Landscape, The Old Manse, Concord, MA (2016); Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2015); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA (2014); Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome, Italy (2013); dOCUMENTA (13), Karlsaue Park, Kassel, Germany (2013); Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA (2006); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2003); and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2002). His work is featured in public and private collections internationally including: the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia; Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris, France; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Project Row Houses, Houston, TX; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium; and the Tate Modern, London, UK.

1 Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110, Fall 2004, 17.

2 *Torrent* is a magazine focusing on source materials by artists, edited by Daniel Kurjakovic and Linda Jensen. It is distributed by Idea Books, Amsterdam.

3 Quote taken from written exchange with Sam Durant in May 2015. *Torrent: Magazine for Source Material by Artists*, Issue No. 3, 2015, 64.

4 "The conference reflected the five sponsors' [Indonesia, Myanmar (Burma), Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, and Pakistan] dissatisfaction with what they regarded as a reluctance by the Western powers to consult with them on decisions affecting Asia; their concern over tension between the People's Republic of China and the United States; their desire to lay firmer foundations for China's peaceful relations with themselves and the West; their opposition to colonialism, especially French influence in North Africa; and Indonesia's desire to promote its case in the dispute with the Netherlands over western New Guinea (Irian Jaya)." <https://www.britannica.com/event/Bandung-Conference> (accessed February 8, 2017)

5 Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110, Fall 2004, 20.

6 Various of the key dates were later annotated into the work *There's No Such Thing as a Time Line* (2014). The collage shows indication of how that work was physically to unfold as a scroll.

7 *Torrent: Magazine for Source Material by Artists*, Issue No. 3, 2015, 76.