

ARTFORUM

"But Still Tomorrow Builds into My Face"

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In today's volatile context, we witness the disappearance of heritage through hegemonic and even violent processes of decay, shifting contemporary artistic and curatorial practices toward the tension between destruction and preservation. Sensitive curated by Nat Muller, this exhibition builds a dialogue between cultural, environmental, material, and performative concerns, distinguishing itself from other timely curatorial attempts to interrogate the nineteenth-century concept of conservation.

Combing humor and criticality, Taus Makhacheva's heavy hitter *Tightrope* (all works cited, 2015) presents an extreme-sports and art-handling mash-up performance wherein a fifth-generation tightrope walker moves sixty-one Dagestani modernist artworks to

a precarious open-air storage space over a Caucasian canyon. "The Day We Saw Nothing in Front of Us," Yazan Khalili's series of futuristic photographs of a Palestinian landscape that initially looks like a serene Alpine scene, demonstrates the interplay between erasure and image-making, as he has scratched Israeli settlements out.

Stranded Present, a video by Persijn Broersen and Margit Lukács, and pieces from Pia Rönicke's "The Pages of Day and Night," a semi-scientific display of fourteen photogravures of plants, similarly draw from colonial history. Initially developed just before ISIS took over ancient archeological sites in Syria, the duo's video transforms an architectural fragment from antiquarian Robert Wood's eighteenth-century illustration of Palmyra into a 3-D digital arch melting in slow motion and is projected on two corner walls. Cross-referencing the Danish Arabia Expedition's records with those of plants recently shipped from a gene bank in Aleppo to the Global Seed Vault, Rönicke's prints borrow their title from Adonis's poem about time's overruling power. Despite the curatorial encoding of artworks as acts of preservation, we are still left pondering vulnerability and resilience.



Taus Makhacheva, *Tightrope*, 2015, 4K video, color, sound, 73 minutes 3 seconds.

— L. İpek Ulusoy Akgül

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