

KUNSTHAAL

ONBORG



Jeannette Ehlers

Archives in the Tongue: A Litany of Freedoms

11 Jun – 7 Aug 2022

Introduktion

Soloudstillingen med Jeannette Ehlers præsenterer nye, store installationer samt eksisterende værker og sammenstiller film, performance, fotografi og installation. Ehlers fremmaner med sine taktile værker et spirituelt rum, der har til hensigt at belyse afro-caribiske minder og relationer.

Udstillingens titel *Archives in the Tongue: A Litany of Freedoms* fremhæver den mundtlige fortælletradition, der er helt central for overleveringen af afro-diasporiske historiefortællinger. Hinsides vestlig vidensproduktion ses det mundtlige som et arkiv, hvor liv og frihed genopfindes og genskabes.

Som med mange af Ehlers' tidligere værker binder udstillingen forskellige spor af historier sammen. Udstillingen kredser om temaer som sorthedens repræsentationer og grænser og byder på refleksioner over kolonitidens arv, slægtskab og solidaritet. Hendes arbejde har ikke til formål at give svar, men udforsker, føler, og berører derimod sporene og sammenføjningerne.

Netop denne tilgang gennemsyrrer kunstnerens generelle praksis. I udstillingen fremkaldes krydsningerne gennem et væld af samarbejder i forbindelse med produktionen af værkerne. I samarbejde med en lang række fagfolk udveksles tankestrømme og arbejdende hænder i en betydningsfuld flerstemmighed, der former et intimt fællesskab på tværs af kulturer og kontinenter. Flerstemmigheden er en vigtig del af værkerne, som ikke altid er synlig, men som er med til at give værkerne sjæl og energi. Flygtige fortællinger og fingerstrøg ophobes i materialerne og lagres mellem mennesker.

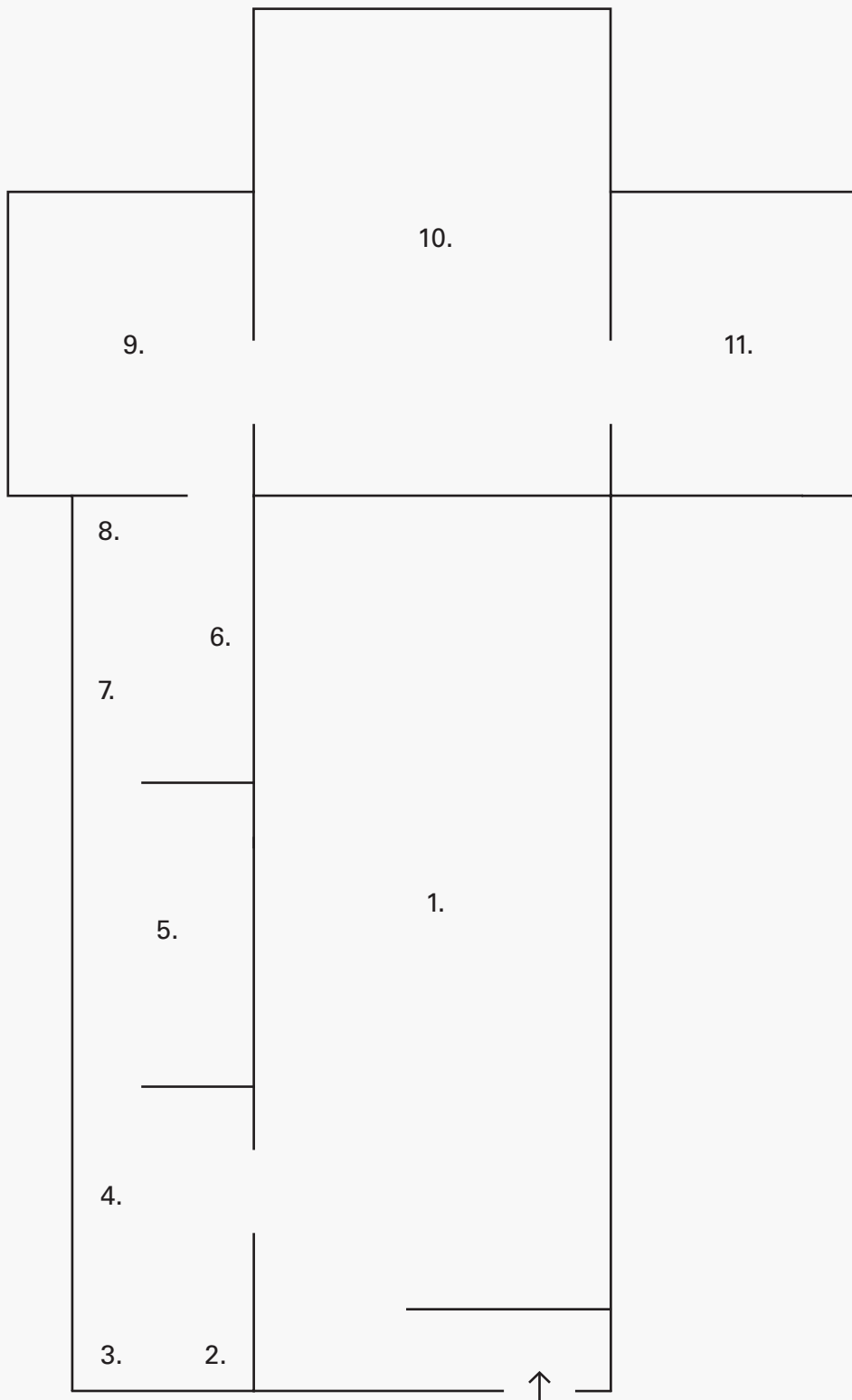
Introduction

The solo exhibition by Jeannette Ehlers presents new, large-scale installations alongside existing works, juxtaposing film, performance, photography and installation. With her tactile works, Ehlers evokes a spiritual space that strives to shed light on Afro-Caribbean memories and relations.

The title of the exhibition, *Archives in the Tongue: A Litany of Freedoms*, highlights the oral storytelling traditions so central to the passing down of Afro-diasporic narratives. Reaching beyond Western knowledge production, oral lore is seen as an archive in which life and freedom are reinvented and recreated.

Like many of Ehlers' earlier works, the exhibition forges links between different histories and narratives. The exhibition revolves around themes such as the representations and boundaries of Blackness, offering reflections on kinship, solidarity and the colonial era's legacies. Her work is not intended to provide answers; rather, it explores, feels and touches upon the various traces and joints.

This approach also permeates the artist's overall practice. In the exhibition, the crossings and overlaps are called forth through a wealth of collaborations on the production of the works. Working with a wide range of professionals, currents of thoughts are exchanged and working hands come together in a poignant pluralism of multiple voices, forming an intimate sense of community across cultures and continents. Such polyphony is an important part of the works: while not always immediately visible, it provides them with a distinctive soul and energy. Ephemeral narratives and light touches of fingers accumulate in the materials and become embedded in the people involved.



1. *Moko is Future*, 2022

Jeannette Ehlers' nye videoværk *Moko is Future* er skudt i højformat og viser en stiltedanser i en farverig dragt, der tidligt om morgenen bevæger sig gennem mennesketomme gader i gamle københavnske bydele. Værket tager udgangspunkt i den mytiske figur Moko Jumbie fra afro-caribisk folkløse, der ifølge sagnet krydsede Atlanten fra Vestafrika til Caribien for at passe på sit folk. *Moko* betyder healer og *Jumbie* ånd, og i karnevalstraditionen går Moko Jumbie på stiltyer gennem gaderne for at beskytte byen mod ondt. I et forsøg på at belyse Københavns historiske skygger er Moko Jumbie bragt hertil for at sprede kærlighed, healing og omsorg.

Karnevalskulturen i Caribien stammer fra 1700-tallet, hvor kolonimagterne arrangerede årlige maskerader, som de slavegjorte afrikanere ikke måtte deltage i. De udviklede i stedet deres egne karneval og tog guder og religioner med sig fra deres hjemlande. Modsat mange religioner, hvor det sakrale står i modsætning til det sekulære, anså disse religioner at det hellige var til stede i det mondæne. Ved at dække sig til, tage maske på og lade sig transformere fremmaner stiltedanseren Moko Jumbies ånd. Kunst, magi og religion overlapper og er til stede samtidig i alt.

Shot in a vertical format, Jeannette Ehlers' new video work *Moko is Future* shows a colourfully dressed stilt dancer moving through Copenhagen's old and empty streets early in the morning. The work takes its starting point in the mythical figure Moko Jumbie from Afro-Caribbean folklore, who according to legend crossed the Atlantic from West Africa to the Caribbean to care for its people. *Moko* means 'healer' and *Jumbie* means 'spirit', and in the carnival tradition, Moko Jumbie walks on stilts through the streets to protect the city from evil. In an effort

to shed light on the shadowy aspects of Copenhagen history, Moko Jumbie has been brought here to spread love, healing and care.

Caribbean carnival culture dates back to the eighteenth century, when the colonial authorities arranged annual masquerades in which the enslaved Africans were not allowed to participate. Instead, they developed their own carnival, incorporating gods and religions from their homelands. Unlike many belief systems where the holy is distinct from and opposed to the secular, these religions considered the sacred to be present in the mundane. By covering up, putting on a mask and letting themselves be transformed, stilt dancers conjure the spirit of Moko Jumbie. Art, magic and religion overlap and coexist in everything at the same time.

2. *Secret Pathways to Freedom*, 2021

Værket består af flettet, syntetisk hår og forskellige *charms* og er lavet i samarbejde med den afroamerikanske kunstner Halima Cassells samt lokale indbyggere fra Detroit. Jeannette Ehlers har i flere værker gjort brug af hår som en vigtig identitetsmarkør indenfor den afrikanske diaspora. Hun har undersøgt kolonitidens undertrykkelsesmekanismer, som stadig har indflydelse på mennesker af afrikansk afstamning. Ligeledes har hun arbejdet med afroen som et tilbagevendende symbol på frigørelse inden for sort modkultur især fremført af 1960'ernes panafrikanske borgerrettighedsbevægelser.

I *Secret Pathways to Freedom* er de mange håndflader og fingre, der har flettet håret, en vigtig om end usynlig del af værket. Fletningerne hænger som et tungt gardin og kunne skjule en hemmelig dør, der som titlen indikerer måske er en portal til frihed. Friheden udtrykkes dog også gennem

det konkrete håndarbejde, de flettende udfører, og i mødet mellem dem, hvor nye fællesskaber opstår.

Made of braided, synthetic hair and various charms, this work was created in collaboration with African American artist Halima Cassells and local residents from Detroit. In several works, Jeannette Ehlers uses hair as an important identity marker within the African diaspora. She has engaged with colonial-era repression mechanisms that continue to influence people of African descent. Similarly, she has worked with the Afro as a recurring symbol of liberation within Black counterculture, especially as promoted by the Pan-African civil rights movements of the 1960s.

In *Secret Pathways to Freedom*, the many palms and fingers that have braided the hair are an important albeit invisible part of the work. Hanging like a heavy curtain, the braids might hide a secret door that, as the title indicates, may be a gateway to freedom. However, the idea of freedom is also expressed through the specific handiwork carried out by the braiders, and in the meetings between them, giving rise to new communities.

3. *Until the Lion*, 2021

“Until the lion has their historian, the hunter will always be a hero” står der bøjet i pink neon. Teksten er et afrikansk ordsprog, der er blevet *tagget* på ruinerne af Fort Prinzenstein, et gammelt dansk fort i Ghana; nærmere bestemt i det fangehul, hvor slavegjorte afrikanere blev placeret, inden de skulle fragtes videre til Jomfruøerne. Teksten reflekterer over hvem der dominerer historieskrivningen, hvilket er et centralt emne i Ehlers’ praksis.

Ehlers tog et fotografi af ordsproget på en rejse til Ghana i 2008 og kopierede det senere over på væggen i Vestindisk Pakhus i København i forbindelse med en udstilling. Skriften på væggen

fra Vestindisk Pakhus blev sidenhen kopieret over på et flag udstillet i Nuuk, og neonværket her er formet efter teksten på flaget og oprindeligt skabt til en soloudstilling i industribyen Detroit. På den måde forsøger Ehlers med gentagne aftryk og reproduktioner at sammenføre Ghana, Grønland, Danmark, USA og de tidligere danske Jomfruøer.

‘Until the lion has their historian, the hunter will always be a hero’. Spelled out in pink neon, these words are an African proverb tagged onto the ruins of Fort Prinzenstein, a former Danish fort in Ghana. More specifically, they are written in the dungeon where enslaved Africans were placed before being transported to the Virgin Islands. The text reflects on who determines how history is written, a central theme in Ehlers practice.

Ehlers took a photograph of the proverb on a trip to Ghana in 2008 and later copied it onto the wall of the West India Warehouse in Copenhagen in connection with an exhibition. The writing on the wall from the West India Warehouse was later copied onto a flag exhibited in Nuuk, and the neon work on display here is shaped after the text on the flag and was originally created for a solo exhibition in the industrial city of Detroit. With these repeated imprints, repetitions and reproductions, Ehlers strives to forge connections between Ghana, Greenland, Denmark, the USA and the former Danish West Indies.

4. *Gle*, 2022

Masken er en ivoriansk *Dan* maske, der er blevet brugt i spirituelle ritualer. Spirituelt er masken den mest magtfulde inkarnation af åndelige kræfter. I Dan-kulturen er "Gle" et udtryk, der både refererer til den fysiske maske og den individuelle ånd, som masken menes at legemliggøre. Gle bor i den tætte, mørke skov og længes efter at deltage i landsbyens liv. Masken

er købt i Puerto Rico af kunstneren tidligere i år og repræsenterer med sine store, runde øjne vågenhed og opmærksomhed, som ræsonnerer med Ehlers’ arbejde med at skabe historisk bevidsthed.

The mask is an Ivorian *Dan* mask used in spiritual rituals, where the mask is regarded as the most powerful incarnation of spiritual forces. In Dan culture, ‘Gle’ is a term referring partly to the physical mask and partly to the individual spirit it is thought to embody. Gle lives in the dense, dark forest and longs to be part of the vibrant life of the village. Purchased in Puerto Rico by the artist earlier this year, the wide-eyed mask represents alertness and attention, qualities that resonate with Ehlers efforts to promote historical awareness.

5. *In the Time of Ongoing War, Can We Flee into Each Other?*, 2022

Installationen består af to fotostater fra samme serie og en pisk fremstillet af reb, bananblade, indigostof og syntetisk hår, der hænger ned fra væggen. Pisken er et tilbagevendende motiv i Ehlers’ praksis, der repræsenterer volden i det koloniale system, men også rummer et frigørende potentiale. Disse to måder at anskue pisken på er også til stede i karnevals-kulturen i Caribien, hvor performere indenfor *jab jab* traditionen bruger piske som et spirituelt redskab. Denne gengivelse af vold kan anses som en måde at bearbejde traumer, der stammer tilbage fra kolonitiden. Pisken er produceret i Trinidad i samarbejde med *whip master* Ronald Alfred og designer Robert Young.

Fotografierne på væggen af en hånd, der rækker mod et træ og en knyttet hånd med samme baggrund, er en reference til *marronage*. Ordet *maron* blev brugt om bortløbne og rebelske slavegjorte i Dansk

Vestindien. *Marronage* betyder organiseret opløb eller modstand. Fotografierne repræsenterer livet udenfor plantagesystemet, hvor skoven er et bogstaveligt og symbolsk frirum, og fællesskabet en nødvendighed. Dengang som nu.

The installation consists of two photostats from the same series and a whip made of rope, banana leaves, indigo fabric and synthetic hair hanging from the wall. The whip is a recurring motif in Ehlers’ practice: it represents the violence inherent in the colonial system, but also holds a liberating potential. These dual ways of looking at the whip are similarly present in the carnival culture of the Caribbean, where performers within the *jab jab* tradition use whips as a tool for spiritual enlightenment. Such depictions of violence can be seen as a way of processing traumas dating back to colonial times. The whip was made in Trinidad in collaboration with whip master Ronald Alfred and designer Robert Young.

Showing a hand reaching for a tree and a clenched fist against the same background, the photographs on the wall are a reference to *marronage*. The term *maron* (maroon) was used about runaway and rebellious slaves in the Danish West Indies. *Marronage* means organised riot or resistance. The photographs represent life outside the plantation system, where the forest is a literal and symbolic sanctuary and the community a fundamental necessity. Then as now.

6. *Uden titel (Mulatten, 4. akt, 8. scene. HCA)*, 2015

“Sover Du, Mulat?” Sådan starter teksten, der i gotiske bogstaver vokser ud af væggen. Teksten er en dialog mellem to slavegjorte mænd i 1800-tallets Martinique, hvor den ene med færrest privilegier forsøger at overtale den anden til at deltage i oprørskampen mod plantageejerne. Uddraget af teksten er fra den

oprindelige version af teaterstykket *Mulatten* af H. C. Andersen skrevet i 1840.

H. C. Andersens forfatterskab bliver som regel ikke forbundet med koloniale og raciale problematikker, men i hans samtid fik *Mulatten* stor opmærksomhed. Det var hans gennembrud som dramatiker, og stykket blev spillet for fulde huse på Det Kgl. Teater samt turnerede i Danmark og i Sverige.

Hovedkarakteren Horatio er en ung slavegjort "mulat", der nyder flere privilegier. Paléme derimod er *maroon*, som betegner en bortløben slave og kommer fra det spanske ord *cimarrón*, der betyder vild og utæmnet. Paléme forsøger at overtale Horatio til at brænde det hele ned, men Horatio bakker ud og mener ikke, at problemer skal løses gennem voldelige opstande. H. C. Andersen illustrerer en tematik, der også er relevant i dag.

‘Are you sleeping, mulatto?’ So begins the text emerging out of the wall, written in Gothic lettering. The text is a dialogue between two enslaved men in nineteenth-century Martinique: the man with the fewest privileges tries to persuade the other to take part in a rebellion against the plantation owners. The excerpt is from the original version of the play *The Mulatto* by Hans Christian Andersen, written in 1840.

Hans Christian Andersen’s writing is not usually associated with colonial and racial issues, but in his own day *The Mulatto* attracted a great deal of attention. Marking his breakthrough as a playwright, the play was performed to full houses at the Royal Danish Theatre and toured Denmark and Sweden.

The main protagonist, Horatio, is a young enslaved ‘mulatto’ who enjoys several privileges. Paléme, on the other hand, is a *maroon*, a term which here denotes

a runaway slave and comes from the Spanish word *cimarrón*, meaning wild and untamed. Paléme tries to persuade Horatio to burn everything to the ground, but Horatio backs out as he does not believe that problems should be solved through violent uprisings. Hans Christian Andersen illustrates a theme that remains relevant today.

7. *Because of the Spirits*, 2015

På gulvet ligger en rulle brunt pakkepapir med en minutiøst håndskrevet tekst, hvor Ehlers gentager et fiktivt interview mellem rapperne Tupac Shakur og Kendrick Lamar fra Lamars sang "Mortal Man" fra 2015. "Because the spirits, we ain't even really rappin', we just letting our dead homies tell stories for us," siger Shakur. Lamar svarer afdøde Shakur i sin fiktive dialog "I wanted to read one last thing to you (...)" og tager Shakurs refleksion omkring at være talerør for afdøde venner og slavegjorte forfædre som præmis for sin sang.

Ehlers har udvalgt denne bid af interviewet som titel på sit værk, da citatet afspejler hendes egen tilgang i sin kunstneriske praksis. Ligesom Shakur og Lamar ser Ehlers kunst som en mulighed for at have indflydelse på sin samtid, binde historier sammen og skabe social forandring.

On the floor is a roll of brown wrapping paper covered in a meticulously handwritten text which sees Ehlers repeat a fictional interview between rappers Tupac Shakur and Kendrick Lamar from Lamar’s song ‘Mortal Man’ from 2015: ‘Because the spirits, we ain't even really rappin', we just letting our dead homies tell stories for us,’ proclaims Shakur. Lamar responds to the late Shakur in his fictional dialogue: ‘I wanted to read one last thing to you (...)’, taking Shakur’s reflection on being a mouthpiece for deceased friends and enslaved ancestors as the foundation of his song.

Paléme (reiser sit hoved):
Sover Du, Mulat!

Horatio:
Hvordan? Paléme!

Paléme:
Du efter Frihed længes?
Den bringer jeg!

Horatio:
Du her i denne Nat!

Paléme:
Lidt vaad og kold er veien ind til Eder.
En dyb Cloak
(han træder lidt frem)
See saa! Nu er jeg her!
Jeg kjender, kan I troe, til disse Steder
Saa godt som til min hyttes Palmetrær.

Horatio:
Hvad vover Du! Rundt om der passes paa,

Paléme:
Men jeg har Venner, hvor man mindst det tænker.
Kom! I med mig den samme Vei maa gaa;
De stolte Bjerger Eder Frihed skjænker!
Horatio.

Mig vil du frelse!

Paléme:
Der, tag denne kniv!
Selv har jeg een. Vi kjæmpe for vort Liv,
Hvis En os standse tør i dristigt Møde,
Saa maae vi Kniven i hans Hjerter støde.
Den er Døds-Englens blanke Vingefjer,
Med Blod den skriver: han er Døden viet,
Afsted! Før Dagen gryer, er I befriet!

Horatio:
Hvad har jeg gjort for Dig! Du vover Alt,
Dit Liv, din Frihed-

Paléme:
Villien er vor Vælde!

Saa Lidt af Godt i Verden mig tilfaldt,
At hvad jeg fik jeg sagtens kan gjengjelde.
I var mig god!- See saa, nu har vi talt,
Nu maa der handles!

Horatio:
O, dybt ind i Sjælen
Har Du mig rørt! Hav Tak! Du er saa brav!

Men jeg vil blive, jeg mit Løfte gav-

Paléme:
I blive vil i denne aabne Grav!
Tro ei den Hvides Stemme! sød og kjælen
Kan Quinden hvisle! - Følg mig! Husk paa Pælen,
Som Slaven bindes tidt til uden Brøde.
Kjend Rebelliere! Viid, hvad Du gaaer imøde!
Hos Dig vil meer end Ryg og Skuldre bløde,
Dit Hjerte bløde vil, som engang mit.
Vee Dig, Du lide skal, som jeg har lidt!

Horatio:
Farvel! Sin rige Løn Dig Gud vil give.
Min Villie den er fast: jeg her vil blive!

Paléme:
I bliver! Hvor I viser Taab'lighed.

Horatio:
O skynd Dig bort! Minuterne de haste!

Paléme:
Ifald I pines! Da min hævn jeg veed.
En antændt Spaan jeg vil paa Marken kaste,
Hvor Sukkerrøret groer, og Vindens Vift
Skal løfte Flammen. Jeg har kraftig Gift,
Den blander jeg i Vandet, som de drikke,
Saa dør hans Viv, hans Slægt, hans hele Huus!

Horatio:
Paléme! Ved Himlens Gud! Nei, gjør det ikke!

Paléme:
Den rige Pragt skal styrte ned i Gruus!
Hvad jeg har forudsagt, det snart vil hænde,
De Sorte Oprørsfanen plante vil!
Plantagerne som Glædesblus vi tænde,
Og gaaer endnu der Dag og Uger til,
Jeg kan saa længe ei Feber gløde,
La Rebelliere jeg vide skal at møde,
Nu er han undsaugt! Han for mig skal bløde!
I bliver her?

Horatio:
Jeg bliver!
(kaster sig ned på Bænken)

Paléme:
Som I vil!
Jeg har gjort Mit og gjort det uden Nytte.
(stiger ned hvorfra han kom)

Horatio:
Guds Moder Dig ledsage og beskytte!
(han Blik hviler et Øjeblik paa det Sted, hvor Paléme
forsvinder)
Hvis jeg ham fulgte, og man greb os sammen,
Det hed: jeg havde blæst til Oprørsflammen;
Jeg bliver!- jeg en sød Fortrøstning veed.
Der er en Gud, og der er - Kjærlighed.

H.C. Andersen: *The Mulatto*,
Act 4, Scene 8 (1840)

Paléme (lifts his head):
Are you sleeping, mulatto?

Horatio:
How can this be? Paléme?

Paléme:
You long for freedom?
I shall bring it to you!

Horatio:
You? On this very night?

Paléme:
A little wet and cold was the road to get to you.
A deep drain.
(He steps out to full view)
Look! Now I am here!
Let me say, I know about these places as well as I do the
palm trees
Of my cabin.

Horatio:
Dare you to take such a risk?
There are watchmen everywhere!

Paléme:
But I have friends at places least expected, come!
You must follow me on the same road.
The proud mountains shall grant you
Your freedom.

Horatio:
You wish to save me?

Paléme:
There, take this knife!
I myself have one. We'll fight for our lives,
should anyone dare to stop us in an
audacious encounter,
then shall we simply stab the knife
in his heart.
It is the bright wing feather of the
Angel of death
With blood it does
Write: he is married to death!
Be gone! Before the dawn of day shall you be free!

Horatio:
What have I done for you?
You risk all, your life, your freedom.

Paléme:
Volition is our power!
So little goodness fell to me
That what I was given I easily can repay.
You were good to me!
Look here, we have now spoken,
But must act hastily.

Horatio:
Oh, you have moved me
Deep within my soul. I do
Thank you, how honest you are!
But I must stay, I have made a promise.

Paléme:
You wish to stay in this open grave?
Do not believe the voice of the whites.
Follow me. Remember the post that the slave is tied to
At no fault of his own, know Rebellière!
Know what you are up against!
More than your back and shoulder shall bleed,
Your heart will as well, as did mine.
Take heed! You will suffer just like me!

Horatio:
So long! God shall grant you his rich reward.
My will stands firm. I shall remain here!

Paléme:
And by so doing shall you suffer!
My revenge is already planned.
I shall fling an ignited shingle across the field
Where the sugar canes grow and
Wind's waft
Shall lift the flame.
I have a powerful poison which I shall
Blend in the water
That they drink,
Then shall his wife perish, as well as his family,
His whole household!

Horatio:
Paléme! For heaven's sake!
Do not do so!

Paléme:
All the splendor of the rich shall fall into ruins!

What I have foretold shall occur,
The blacks will plant the standard of rebellion!
The plantations will ignite like bonfires,
And if yet more days and weeks must pass,
Well then, my fever's glow will not last at such lengths.
I know, I shall encounter La Rebelliére,
The gauntlet is now cast! He shall bleed for me!

You will remain here?

Horatio:
I shall remain!
(flings himself on the bench)

Paléme:
As you please!
I have done what I could without much good!
(goes back to where he came from)

Horatio:
May the Virgin Mary guide and protect you!
(his eyes resting on the place from which Paléme disappeared)
Had I followed him and had we been captured
Together, it would have been said that I had fanned the
Flame of rebellion.
I shall stay! I have sweet confidence in the existence of
both God and love.

Ehlers has selected this part of the interview as the title of her work because the quote reflects her own approach in her artistic practice. Like Shakur and Lamar, Ehlers sees art as a way of influencing one's contemporaries, tying stories together and creating social change.

8. *There is Nothing More Dangerous*, 2015

En tv-skærm i hjørnet på gulvet viser en videocollage med lyden af Martin Luther Kings stemme: "There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of people in that society who feel that they have no stake in it; who feel that they have nothing to lose. People who have a stake in their society protect that society, but when they don't have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it."

Der er ikke noget farligere end at opbygge et samfund med et stort segment af mennesker, der føler, at de ikke har nogen andel i samfundet; som føler, at de ikke har noget at tabe. Folk, der har en andel i deres samfund, beskytter samfundet, men når de ikke har en andel, ønsker de ubevidst at ødelægge det.

A TV screen placed on the floor in one corner shows a video collage accompanied by the sound of Martin Luther King's voice: 'There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of people in that society who feel that they have no stake in it; who feel that they have nothing to lose. People who have a stake in their society protect that society, but when they don't have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it.'

9. *Jumbie Tree: The Flesh of Tree. The Flesh of Skin*, 2022

25 par overdimensionerede stylter står lænet op ad væggen som reference til caribiske stiltetraditioner og fortællinger om Moko Jumbie.

Installationen er et hybridprojekt, hvor delelementer stammer fra Trinidad, hvor Ehlers også har rødder, mens selve stiltedelen er produceret i Danmark. Moko Jumbie-figuren bruger altid stylter og repræsenterer med sin høje statur det overnaturlige. Man mener, at denne figur er inspireret af Mandinka, Mende, og andre grupper i Vestafrika, hvor man har tradition for at bruge stylter i forbindelse med religiøse fejring.

Stylterne i installationen er formgivet efter stiltetraditionen i Trinidad og Jomfruøerne. Her er stylterne oftest lavet af træ, og højden på dem indikerer ens erfaring med stiltedans. Man starter med lave stylter og lærer i starten at falde korrekt. Når stylterne får en vis højde, kan man ikke længere danse med dem på, og i stedet går man med dem. Overdelen, hvor fødderne spændes fast, er bygget i samarbejde med den anerkendte stiltetperformer Glen "Dragon" De Souza, der driver stilteskolen Keylemanjahro i Trinidad. Han startede skolen for 38 år siden for, med hans egne ord, "at holde børnene i hans kvarter beskæftigede". Under karnevallet bliver børnene og de unge fra skolen guder og gudinder for en dag på deres stylter, og socialt arbejde blander sig med det spirituelle.

Twenty-five pairs of oversized stilts are leaning up against the wall as a reference to the Caribbean stilt traditions and the tales of Moko Jumbie. The installation is a hybrid project in which some elements originate from Trinidad, where Ehlers also has roots, while the stilt part itself was produced in Denmark. The Moko Jumbie figure always wears stilts, its towering tallness representing the supernatural. It is believed that this figure is inspired by the practices of the Mandinka, Mendé, and other peoples across West Africa, where there is a tradition of using stilts in connection with religious celebrations.

The stilts in the installation were made in accordance with the stilt tradition in

Trinidad and the Virgin Islands. Here, stilts are most often made of wood, and their height indicates the wearer's experience with stilt dancing. You start out with low stilts, first learning to fall safely. When the stilts reach a certain height, you can no longer use them to dance, but walk instead. The upper part, where the feet are fastened, was constructed in collaboration with the renowned stilt performer Glen 'Dragon' De Souza, who runs the stilt-walking school Keylemanjahro in Trinidad. He first launched the school 38 years ago in order to, as he puts it, 'keep the kids in the neighbourhood busy'. During the carnival, the children and young people from the school become gods and goddesses for a day on their stilts, blending social work with the spiritual realm.

10. *We're Magic. We're Real #3 (Channeling Re-existence into Hallowed Grounds of Healing), 2022*

Sorte og brune fletninger vokser ud af væggene i rummet ligesom på Charlottenborgs facade. Fletningerne er lavet af afrikanske frisører og på fletworkshops for BIPOCs afholdt i april med det formål at legemliggøre og dele traditioner om sort hår og dets historie.

Ehlers arbejder ofte med spøgelser i sine videoværker som et billede på den historie, der er til stede, men som vi i større omfang ikke taler om. I dette værk, hvor sorte fletninger penetrerer bygningen, antyder hun, at der er en række skjulte historier, der stadig påvirker vores verdensbillede i dag. Fletningerne, der vokser ud af bygningen, er et forsøg på at åbne vores øjne og nuancere vores blik til at inkludere "minoritetsfortællinger" i de store fortællinger. En insisteren på at mange fortællinger kan være til stede samtidig.

Black and brown braids grow out of the walls of the room, just like on the façade

of Charlottenborg. The braids were made by Afro-Danish hairdressers and at braiding workshops for BIPOCs held in April with the aim of embodying and sharing traditions about Black hair and its history.

Ehlers often incorporates ghosts in her video works as symbols of the history that is ever-present, but which we never widely speak about. By letting Black braids penetrate the building, she suggests that hidden stories still affect our worldview today. The braids growing out of the building represent an effort to open our eyes and inject greater nuance to our outlook, prompting us to include 'minority narratives' in the big narratives. An insistence that many different narratives can coexist.

11. *Coil: The Sensuous Way of Knowing, 2022*

Installationen er lavet specifikt til udstillingen og udspringer af en idé om at genskabe et alter fra en spirituel *mafa* ceremoni på en strand i San Francisco, som Ehlers deltog i i 2019. Gulvet er dækket af folietæpper, der blandt andet bliver uddelt til flygtninge, der forgæves forsøger at krydse Middelhavet. På gulvet står lysende mobiltelefoner som en form for alterlys og mindemærker. Skærmene viser filmsekvenser fra YouTube af brande i forbindelse med historiske og nutidige politiske oprør rundt om i verden, blandt andet protesterne i Rhodesia mod det britiske styres apartheidpolitik i 1972, demonstrationer for Mozambiques selvstændighed i 1975, protesterne mod politivolden mod Rodney King i 1991 i Californien, Black Lives Matter oprør i Paris samt politimordet på George Floyd i Minneapolis i 2020.

I forlængelse heraf undersøger Ehlers forbindelserne mellem oprør og frihed i et nyt, meditativt videoværk. Her ses et close-up af hår, der bliver flettet mens en voice-over fabulerer over, hvordan

slavegjorte kvinder i Sydamerika og Caribien brugte cornrows som kort over flugtruter, til at skjule ris og frø og sende hemmelige beskeder. Installationen afsøger krydsningerne mellem to politiske rum: på den ene side symbolikken af sort hår, og på den anden side socio-politiske forhold, der knytter sig til koloniseringens nutidige spor. Som i mange af Ehlers' værker får det sorgfulde ikke lov til at stå alene. Der er altid håb gennem repræsentationer af oprør, fællesskaber og healing.

Created specifically for this exhibition, the installation arose out of an idea to recreate an altar from a spiritual *mafa* ceremony in which Ehlers participated on a beach in San Francisco in 2019. The floor is covered with foil thermal blankets of the kind distributed to disaster victims, including refugees who have tried in vain to cross the Mediterranean. On the floor are glowing mobile phones, reminiscent of altar candles and acting as commemorative markers. The screens show YouTube footage of fires associated with historical and contemporary political uprisings around the world, including protests in Rhodesia against the British regime's apartheid policy in 1972, rallies in aid of Mozambique's independence in 1975, the protests sparked by the 1991 police brutality against Rodney King in California, the Black Lives Matter uprising in Paris as well as the riots associated with the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020.

Building on this, Ehlers examines connections between rebellion and freedom in a new, meditative video work. It shows a close-up of hair being braided while a voice-over muses on how enslaved women in South America and the Caribbean used cornrows to form maps of escape routes, to hide rice and seeds and to send secret messages. The installation explores the intersections between two political spaces: on the one hand is the symbolism linked to Black hair, and on the other hand are the socio-political

conditions associated with the present-day legacy of colonisation. As in many of Ehlers' works, the sad and sorrowful aspects are not allowed to stand alone. There is always hope, expressed through representations of rebellion, community and healing.

Performance

Saturday 11 June, 12.00 -15.00

We're Magic. We're Real #3 (These Walls), 2021

Lørdag d. 11. juni kl. 12-15

Jeannette Ehlers begyndte sin værkserie *We're Magic. We're Real* i 2020. Den samlede værkserie gør brug af hår som en vigtig identitetsmarkør i den afrikanske diaspora, som en enkel, men kraftfuld gestus.

Performere med afrikanske rødder er via lange *cornrows* forbundet til Charlottenborgs facade, som voksede fletningerne ud af murene. Håret blander sig med facadens klatreplante og skaber en poetisk metafor for forholdet mellem kultur og natur, krop og landskab, historie og samtid.

Til lyden af Atlanterhavets brusen bevæger performerne sig langsomt frem og tilbage på pladsen foran bygningen. Tyst men insisterende påkalder de sig de forbipasserendes opmærksomhed. Lige dele sorg og styrke er til stede i den meditative performance, som udtrykker en længsel mod livet uden for plantagesystemet, og mod skoven som et bogstaveligt og symbolsk frirum.

We're Magic. We're Real #3 (These Walls) blev oprindeligt kommissioneret af Mads Nørgaard og opført i november 2021.

Jeannette Ehlers first began working on the series *We're Magic, We're Real* in 2020. The entire work series makes use of hair as an important identity marker among the African diaspora, as a simple yet powerful gesture.

Performers with African roots are connected to the façade of Charlottenborg by way of long cornrows, as if the braids were growing out of the walls. The hair blends in with the leaves of the climbers covering the façade, creating a poetic metaphor for the relationship between culture and nature, body and landscape, history and the present.

Accompanied by the sound of the roar of the Atlantic, the performers move slowly back and forth in the square in front of the building. Quietly but insistently, they attract the attention of passers-by. Grief and strength are present in equal measure in the meditative performance, which expresses a yearning for life outside the plantation system, and for the forest as a literal and symbolic sanctuary.

We're Magic. We're Real #3 (These Walls) was originally commissioned by Mads Nørgaard and first performed in November 2021.

Performance

Monday 13 June at 8.00-9.00

Friday 17 June at 8.00-9.00

Worksongs, 2021

Mandag d. 13. juni kl. 8-9

Fredag d. 17. juni kl. 8-9

Performancen *Worksongs* finder sted på Kgs. Nytorv i morgenmyldretiden, hvor mange københavnere transporterer sig til arbejde, studier, skole etc. Den interaktive performance adresserer arbejdslivets vilkår, hvor stress og udbændthed forårsaget af et stadigt større arbejdspress udgør et stigende folkesundhedsproblem.

Til en playliste, der udelukkende består af sange fra den sorte musikkultur, hvor ordet "work" indgår, bydes der op til dans inden arbejdsdagen går i gang. Mellem hver sang oplæser kunstneren tekster, der problematiserer arbejdsmarkedets vilkår, institutionel racisme og kapitalismens nedbrydende indvirkning på mennesket.

Performancen refererer slavegjorte afrikaneres sang, som tjente til at holde rytmen og modet oppe under det fysisk anstrengende arbejde, i tråd med afrikansk tradition. Musikken blev ofte improviseret under arbejdet, og syngemåden var tæt knyttet til talesproget.

Worksongs blev oprindeligt kommissioneret af Den Frie Morgen og opført i juni 2021.

The performance *Worksongs* will take place in the Kgs. Nytorv square during the morning rush hour, where many Copenhagen residents are on the way to work, studies, school, etc. The interactive performance addresses the conditions of present-day working life, where stress and burnout caused by ever-increasing pressures at work constitute a growing threat to public health.

To the sounds of a playlist consisting exclusively of songs from Black music culture which feature the word 'work', the performance offers a chance to dance before the working day begins. Between each song, the artist recites texts that address problematic issues concerning labour market conditions, institutional racism, and the destructive impact of capitalism on humankind.

The performance references the songs sung by enslaved Africans, which served to set a rhythm and keep the workers' courage up during the physically strenuous work, in line with African tradition. The music was often improvised, and the mode of singing veered close to spoken language.

Worksongs was originally commissioned by Den Frie Morgen and first performed in June 2021.

Film

Echoes in the Frame

15. juni – 7. august 2022

Som et supplement til udstillingen præsenterer Kunsthal Charlottenborg filmprogrammet *Echoes in the Frame*. Programmet er kurateret af Culture Art Society (CAS) og består af 13 udvalgte kortfilm af Jeannette Ehlers samt Nuotama Bodomo, Myriam Charles, Zeinabu Irene Davis, Ufuoma Essi og Barbara McCullough.

Filmprogrammet placerer Jeannette Ehlers' værker i dialog med fem eksperimentelle kortfilm af andre filmskabere af afrikansk herkomst, der ligeledes søger at omkalfatre positioner og belyse modhistorier, der forener vores fortid, nutid, og fremtid.

15 June – 7 August 2022

As part of the exhibition Kunsthal Charlottenborg presents the film programme *Echoes in the Frame*. Curated by Culture Art Society (CAS) the programme consists of 13 selected short films by Jeannette Ehlers as well as Nuotama Bodomo, Myriam Charles, Zeinabu Irene Davis, Ufuoma Essi and Barbara McCullough.

The film programme positions Jeannette Ehlers' works in dialogue with five experimental short films by other moving image artists of African descent, who similarly seek to restructure positionalities and shed light on counter-histories that unite our past, present, and future.

Barbara McCullough:
Water Ritual #1: An Urban Rite of Purification, 1979
(6 min)

Zeinabu Irene Davis:
Cycles, 1989
(17 min)

Ufuoma Essi:
Bodies in Dissent, 2021
(6 min)

Myriam Charles:
Drei Atlas (Three Atlas), 2018
(7 min)

Nuotama Bodomo:
Boneshaker, 2013
(12 min)

Jeannette Ehlers:
Ventilate, 2007
(4 min)

Jeannette Ehlers:
Black Magic at the White House, 2009
(4 min)

Jeannette Ehlers:
Black Bullets, 2012
(5 min)

Jeannette Ehlers:
Speed Up that Day, 2014
(4 min)

Jeannette Ehlers:
How do you talk about three hundred years in four minutes, 2014
(5 min)

Jeannette Ehlers:
This Open Grave, 2016
(9 min)

Jeannette Ehlers:
The Gaze, 2020
(6 min)

Biografi

Jeannette Ehlers (f. 1973) er uddannet fra Det Kgl. Danske Kunstakademi i 2006. I 2010 modtog hun Statens Kunstfonds 3-årige arbejdslegat og i 2020 modtog hun Carl Nielsen og Anne Marie Carl-Nielsens Legat. Hun er især kendt for monumentet *I Am Queen Mary* (2018) skabt i samarbejde med La Vaughn Belle. Blandt hendes tidligere soloudstillinger er *Say It Loud!* i Nikolaj Kunsthal (2014), *Whip it Good: Spinning from History's Filthy Mind* på Autograph ABP i London (2015), *Take Root* på MOCAD i Detroit (2021) og *Every Monument Is a Citizen* sammen med La Vaughn Belle på Pública i Puerto Rico (2022). Derudover har Ehlers deltaget på udstillingen *Cool, Calm and Collected* på AroS (2017), i Kunsthal Charlottenborgs biennale *Poet Slash Artist* kurateret af Hans Ulrich Obrist og Lemn Sissay (2021) samt i gruppeudstillinger over hele verden. I 2021 blev hun nomineret til *The Windrush Generation Monument* på Waterloo Station i London. Jeannette Ehlers er udvalgsleder i Statens Kunstfonds Legatudvalg for Billedkunst (2020-23).

Biography

Jeannette Ehlers (b. 1973) is a graduate of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2006. In 2010 she received the Danish Art Foundation's three-year work grant and in 2020 she was awarded the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Scholarship. She is best known for the monument *I Am Queen Mary* (2018), created in collaboration with La Vaughn Belle. Her previous solo shows include *Say It Loud!* at Nikolaj Kunsthal (2014), *Whip it Good: Spinning from History's Filthy Mind* at Autograph ABP in London (2015), *Take Root* at MOCAD in Detroit (2021) and *Every Monument Is a Citizen* with La Vaughn Belle at Pública in Puerto Rico (2022). In addition, Ehlers has participated in the exhibition *Cool, Calm and Collected* at AroS (2017), in the Kunsthal Charlottenborg biennale *Poet Slash Artist* curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Lemn Sissay (2021), and in group exhibitions around the world. In 2021, she was nominated for *The Windrush Generation Monument* at Waterloo Station in London. Jeannette Ehlers is committee chair of the Danish Arts Foundation's Committee for Visual Arts (2020–23).

Kolofon / Colophon

Jeannette Ehlers
Archives in the Tongue: A Litany of Freedoms

Kunsthall Charlottenborg
11 Jun – 07 Aug 2022

Tekst / text: Awa Konaté, Lotte Løvholm
Oversættelse / translation: René Lauritsen
Design / Design: Andreas Peitersen

Udstillingen er kurateret af Awa Konaté og Lotte Løvholm og støttet af Augustinus Fonden, Axel Muusfeldts Fond, Beckett Fonden, Lemvig-Müller Fonden, Det Obelske Familiefond, Statens Kunstfond, Statens Værksteder for Kunst, William Demant Fonden.

The exhibition is curated by Awa Konaté and Lotte Løvholm and supported by the Augustinus Foundation, the Axel Muusfeldt Foundation, the Lemvig-Müller Foundation, the Obel Family Foundation, the Danish Arts Foundation, the Danish Art Workshops, the William Demant Foundation.

Kunsthall Charlottenborg
Kongens Nytorv 1
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Fiona Compton: *Coil* (2022)

Coil.

Every kink is a bend in my road.
The twisted coils of the ocean waves.
For snow skinned debts -I am owed.
As Yemoja whispers my name through the ship enclaves.

Oya raise me.

Carry me through the winds and through the sky,
Oshun I praise thee.
Upon my head, my mother's hands lie.

My road is winding as I coil round the sun,
my fruitful roots mother braided for me.
Through golden spindles my wool is spun,
as Mama guides me as I cross the sea.

In these hands are a language unspoken
tightly bound in rebellious manes.
Spirits secrets slept in every braid woven,
heard gently over the clanking chains.

Every Duafe that came to part my way,
every hand that blessed my roots with oil,
Mama gave me cartographies and maps they say,
as I placed my feet into the soil.