

Lucile Bertrand

Do you remember?

04

Do you remember?

The question implies a work of memories, re-collections and revelations. It occurs graciously, as in a game when despite the rules and tricks the sequel has something unpredictable. However, in this work of remembrance, the sequel is "the" war lived either 20 years ago or right now, from which some have survived, and is thus known and recognized by all. However, these experiences are so vile that memory evacuates them collectively and repeatedly.

From the century that separates us from the so-called "Great" or First World War, Lucile Bertrand has selected a series of wars (of aggression, attrition, or nuclear) and contemporary genocides. These serious and destabilizing themes have been conveyed regularly in her visual art for several decades. Using objects, sculptures, drawings and installations – characterized by textual references, delicate materials and spatial agility – the artist consciously conveys the materialization and interrogation of terror and dignity denied in and by society.

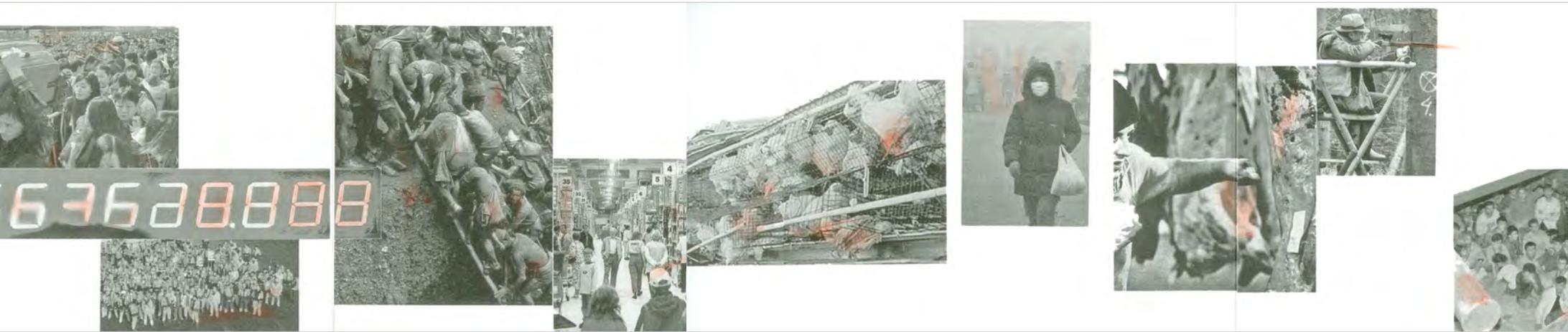
In 2014, for *Do you remember?* Lucile Bertrand turns to video, exploiting the informative and emotional potential of this medium. On one side of a split screen, a succession of speakers systematically confront each other through the same question: *Do you remember?* and the same answer, sincere or not: *No, I don't*. On the other side of the screen, a dancer-witness collapses every time a negation falls. However, this visual allegory of memory becomes constitutive when one of the speakers explains, reads or tells a part of the history of the 20th or 21st century that had been freshly erased or suppressed while the dancer painfully picks herself up.

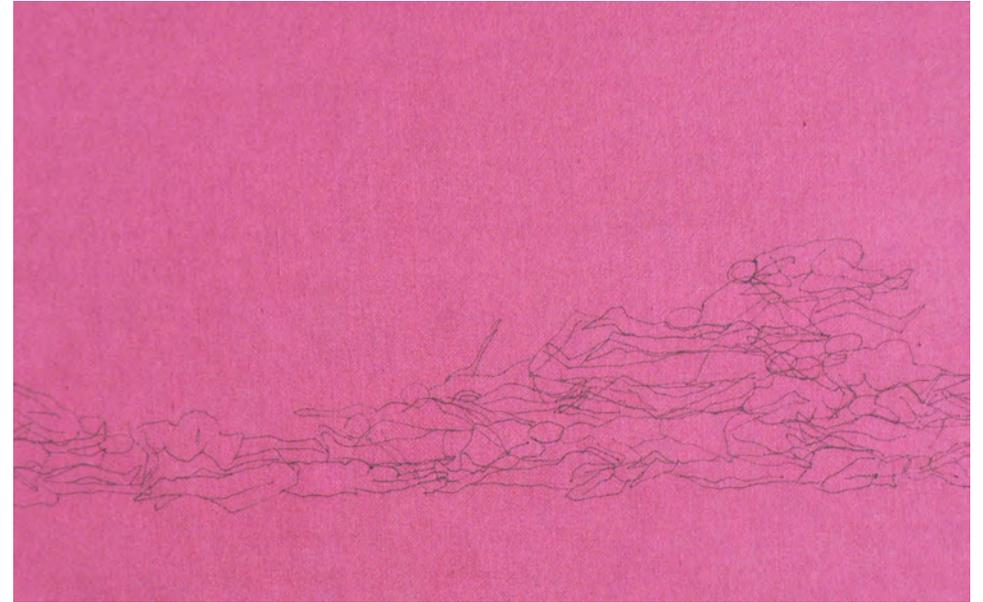
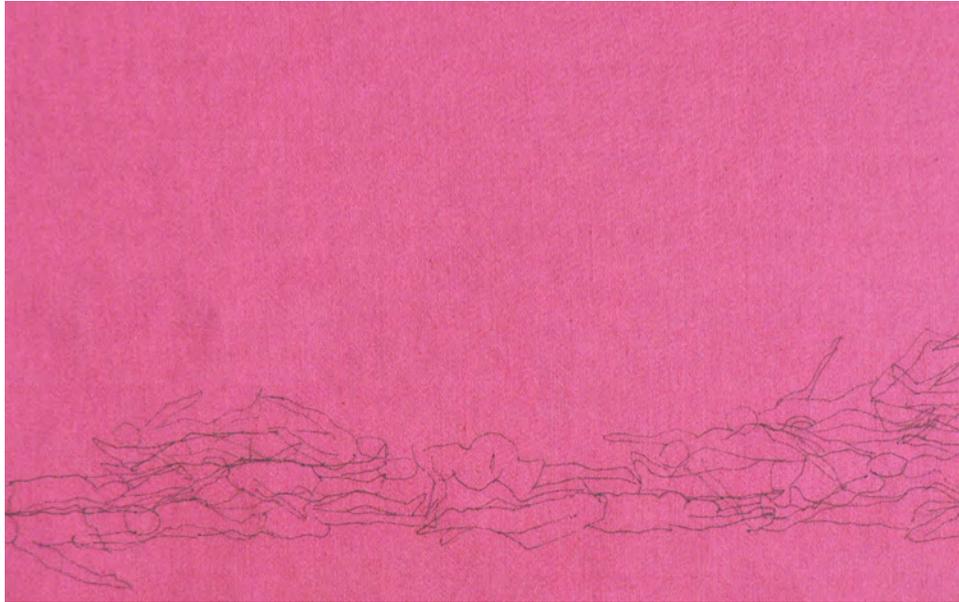
In order to evoke as closely as possible the remembrance of these conflicts, their scars forming or their wounds still open – in Rwanda, Greece, Turkey, former Yugoslavia, Syria, Russia, South Africa, Cambodia, among American Indians and the nuclear disaster in Japan – Lucile draws on contemporary literature. Poems and literary excerpts are spoken or read aloud in their original language (twelve different ones). The words' vibrations, flowing through the transmitting body and the receiving body, revive bruised civilizations while evoking what is beyond the sensitive and the intelligible.

This commemorative exhibition is produced and hosted by the Maison des Arts de Schaerbeek, in Brussels. By investing the original functionality of the site, the artist invites viewers to be conscious "at home" of extreme situations. *Tea Time* broadcasts its zest of colonial exploitation in the dining room. The pink lounge's piano and chandelier, bundled against possible bombings, suggest the possibility of a local war, while the precious wall-coverings in fuchsia



silk are decorated with a frieze of corpses. In the library, the video pays tribute to the poets. And finally, in the beige lounge, Lucile's latest book, *Entitled*, is presented suspended, recalling a mountain range, a natural boundary upon and for which some people would fight, while others would attempt to cross it to escape destruction, with as unique baggage, memory and hope.

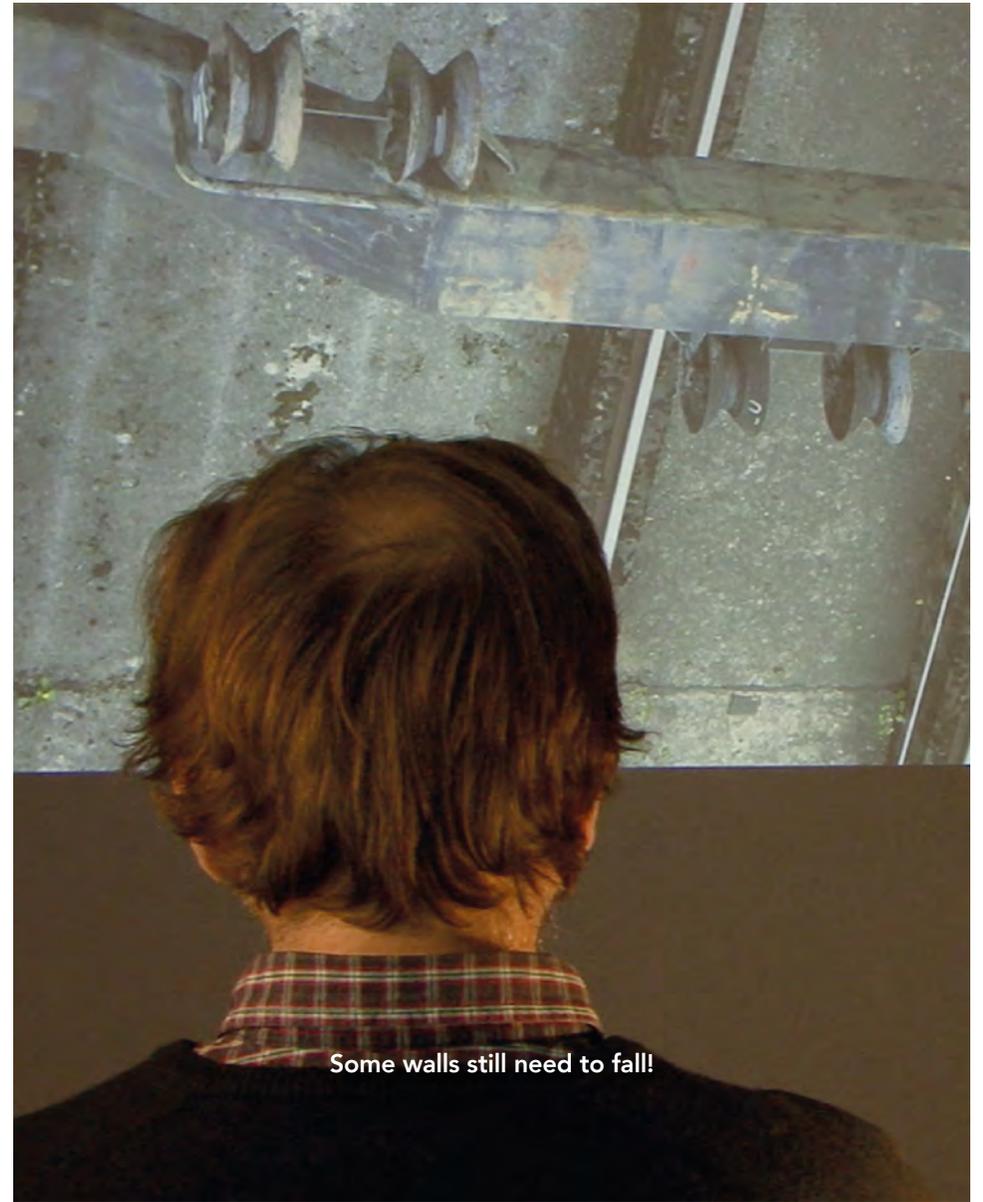




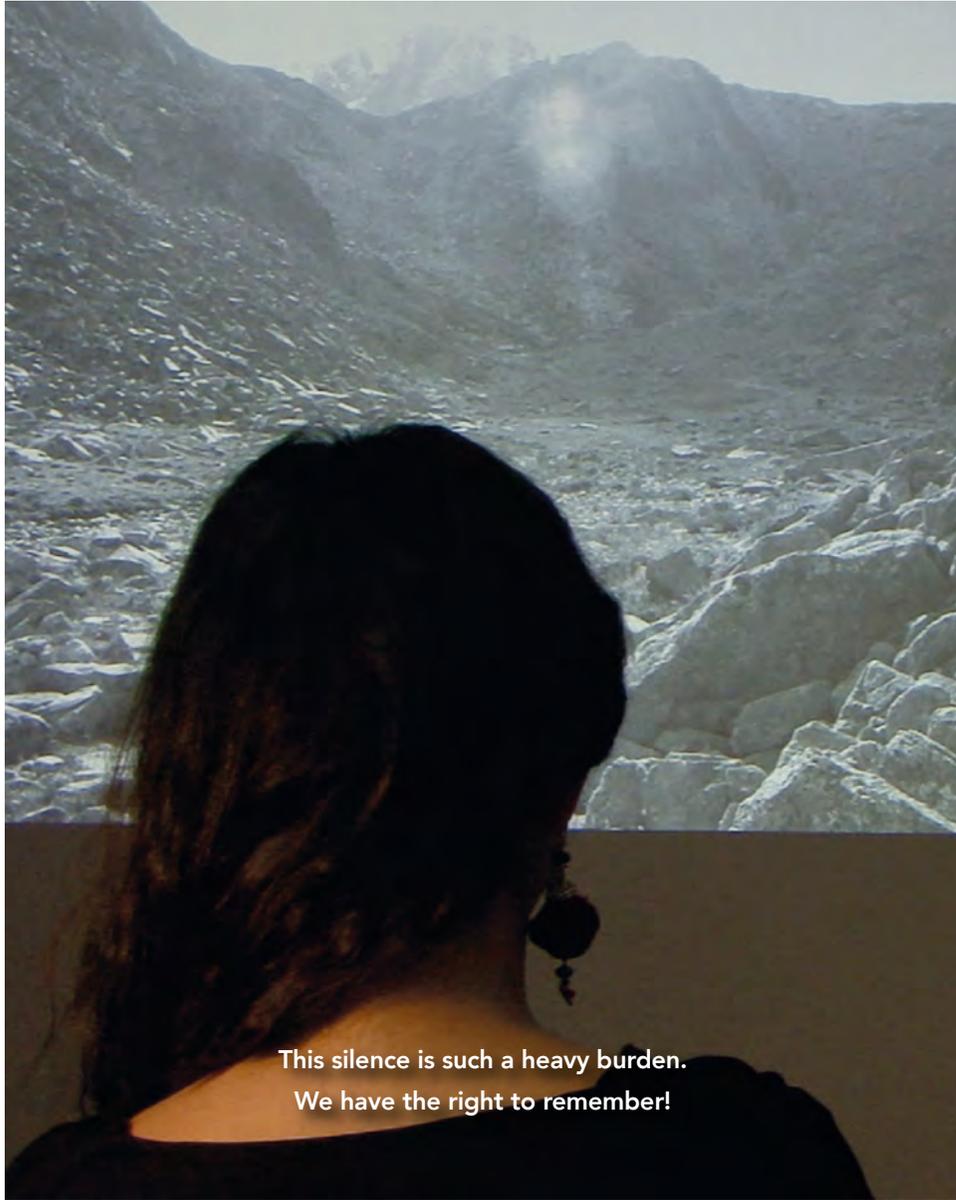
“Force [...] transforms a man into a thing
in the most literal sense, as it transforms it
into a corpse. There was someone, and,
a moment later, there is no one.”

Simone Weil, *The Iliad or the Poem of Force*, 1941

Drawing on fabric. Installation detail, Maison des Arts de Schaerbeek, Brussels, Lucile Bertrand, 2014



Excerpts from the video *Amnesia*, Lucile Bertrand, 2014, for this page and all the following

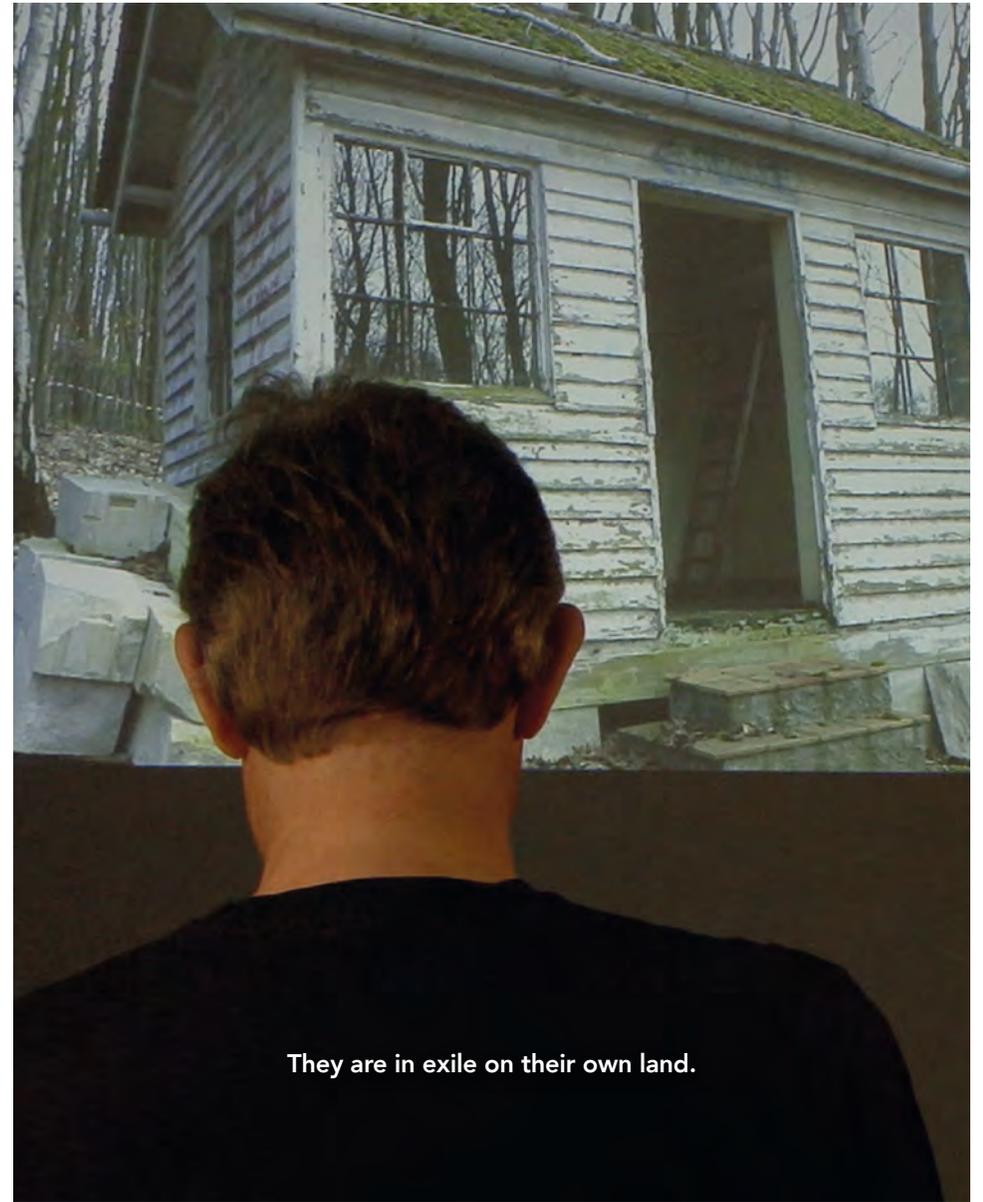


This silence is such a heavy burden.
We have the right to remember!

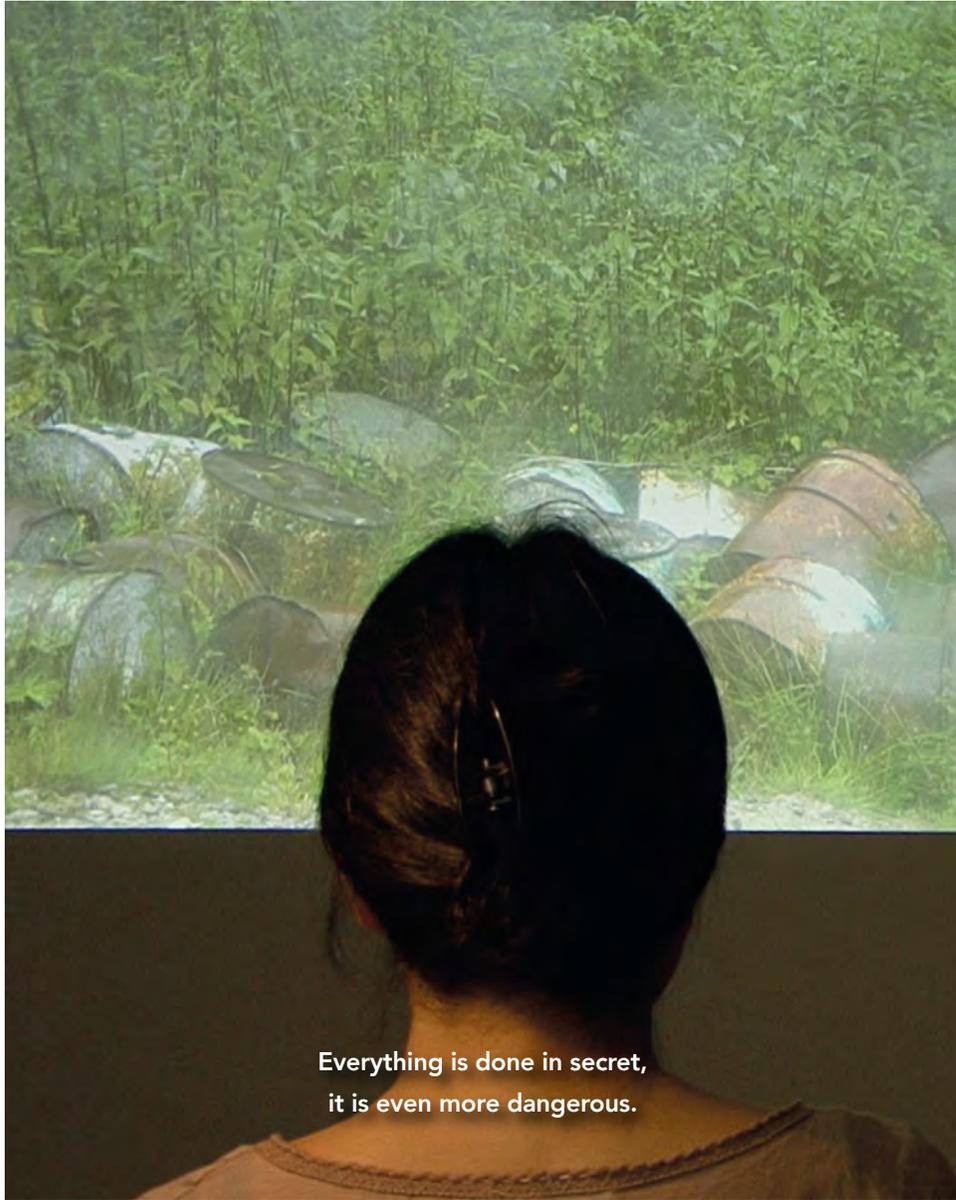


“Red soil. I wonder:
where is this color coming from?”

Excerpt from the poem *Red Soil*, Daniel Varoujan (1884-1915)



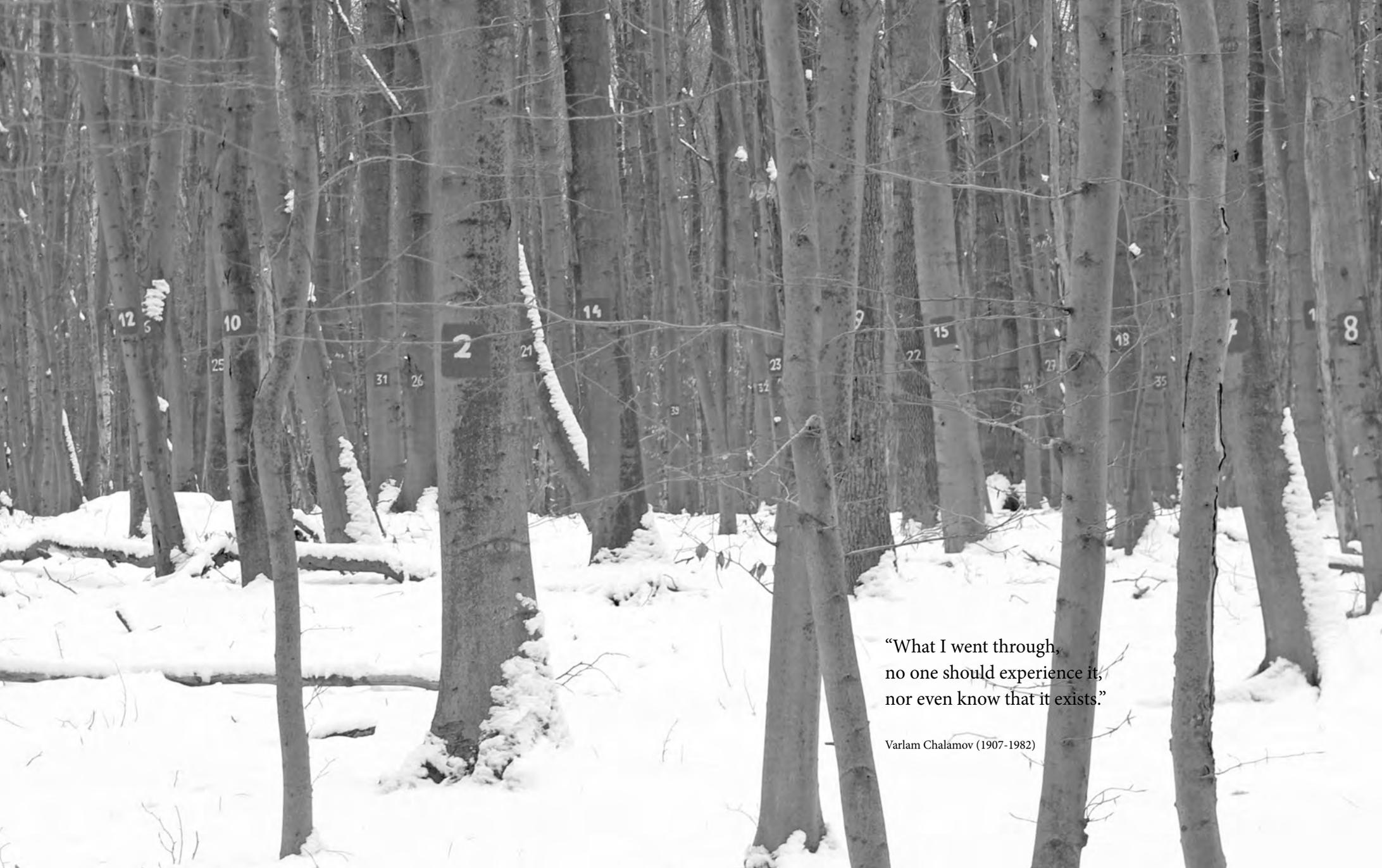
They are in exile on their own land.



Everything is done in secret,
it is even more dangerous.



Our government stubbornly continues
in the same direction, and lies,
as though nothing had happened...



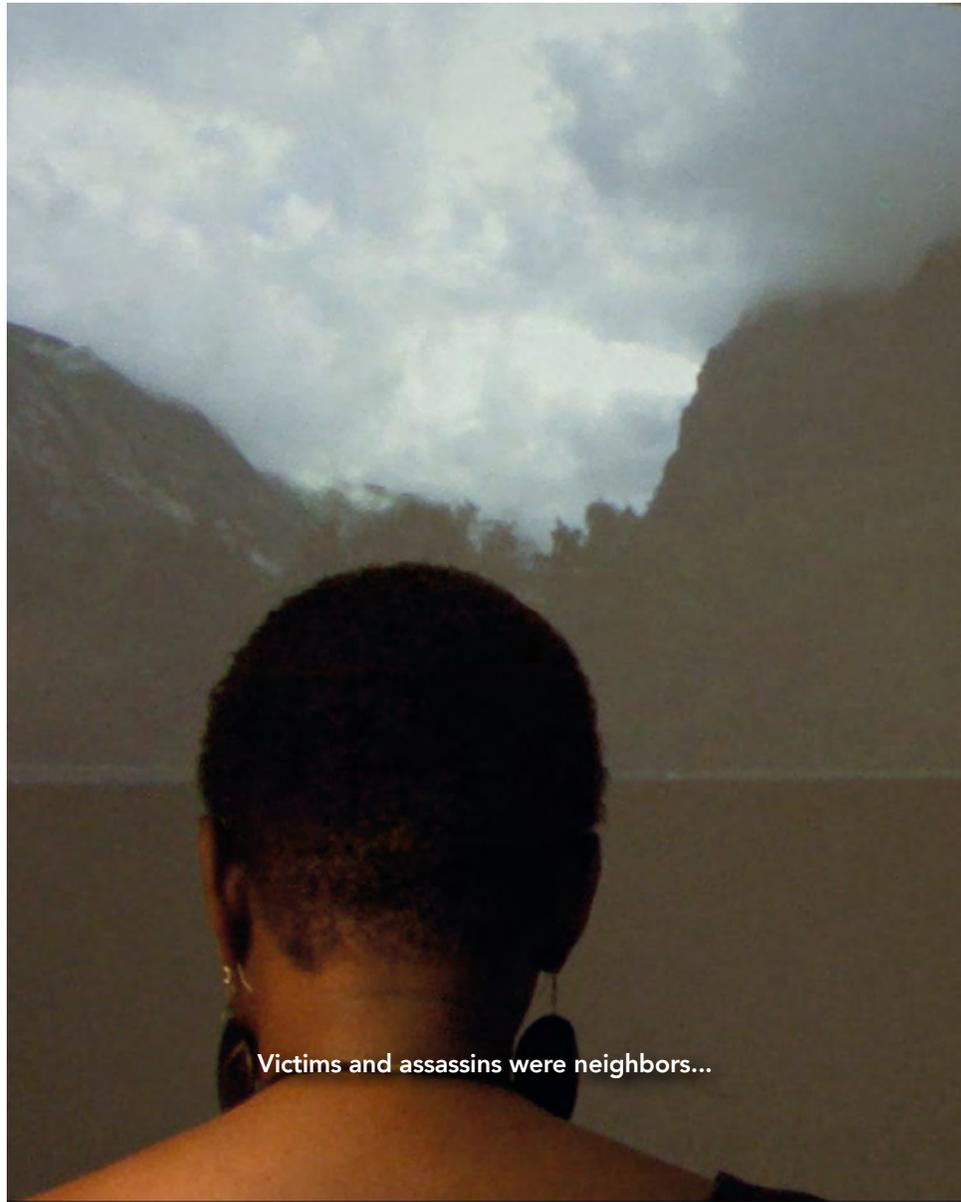
“What I went through,
no one should experience it,
nor even know that it exists.”

Varlam Chalamov (1907-1982)



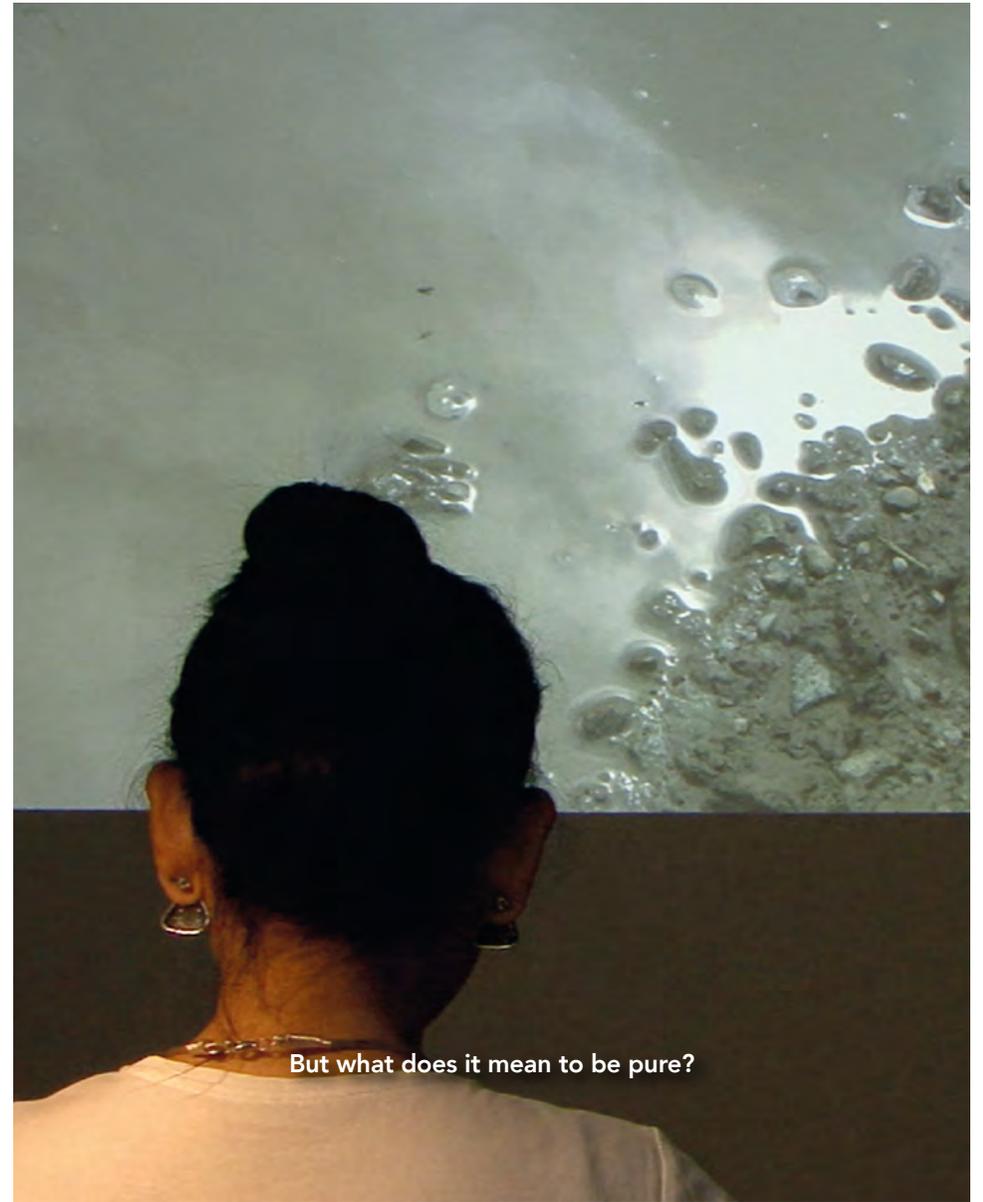
“No, it’s not me who suffers,
it is someone else.
I could not have.”

Excerpt from the poem *Requiem*, Anna Akhmatova, 1939

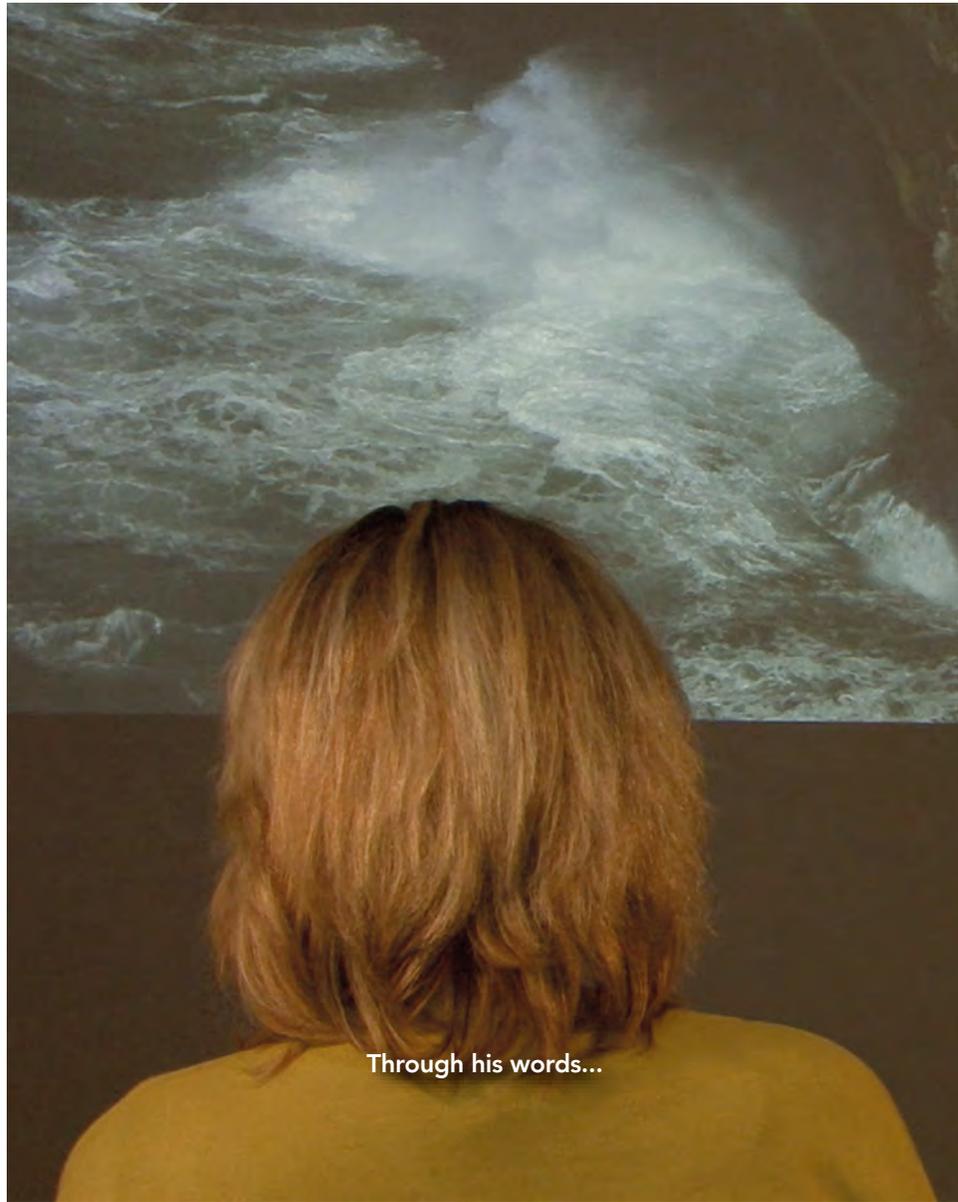


Victims and assassins were neighbors...

And we, in other circumstances,
would we be capable of becoming
monsters as well?



But what does it mean to be pure?



Through his words...

... he fought everything that hinders,
perverts or stifles voices...
be it from laziness, fear, stupidity,
or ideological blindness.

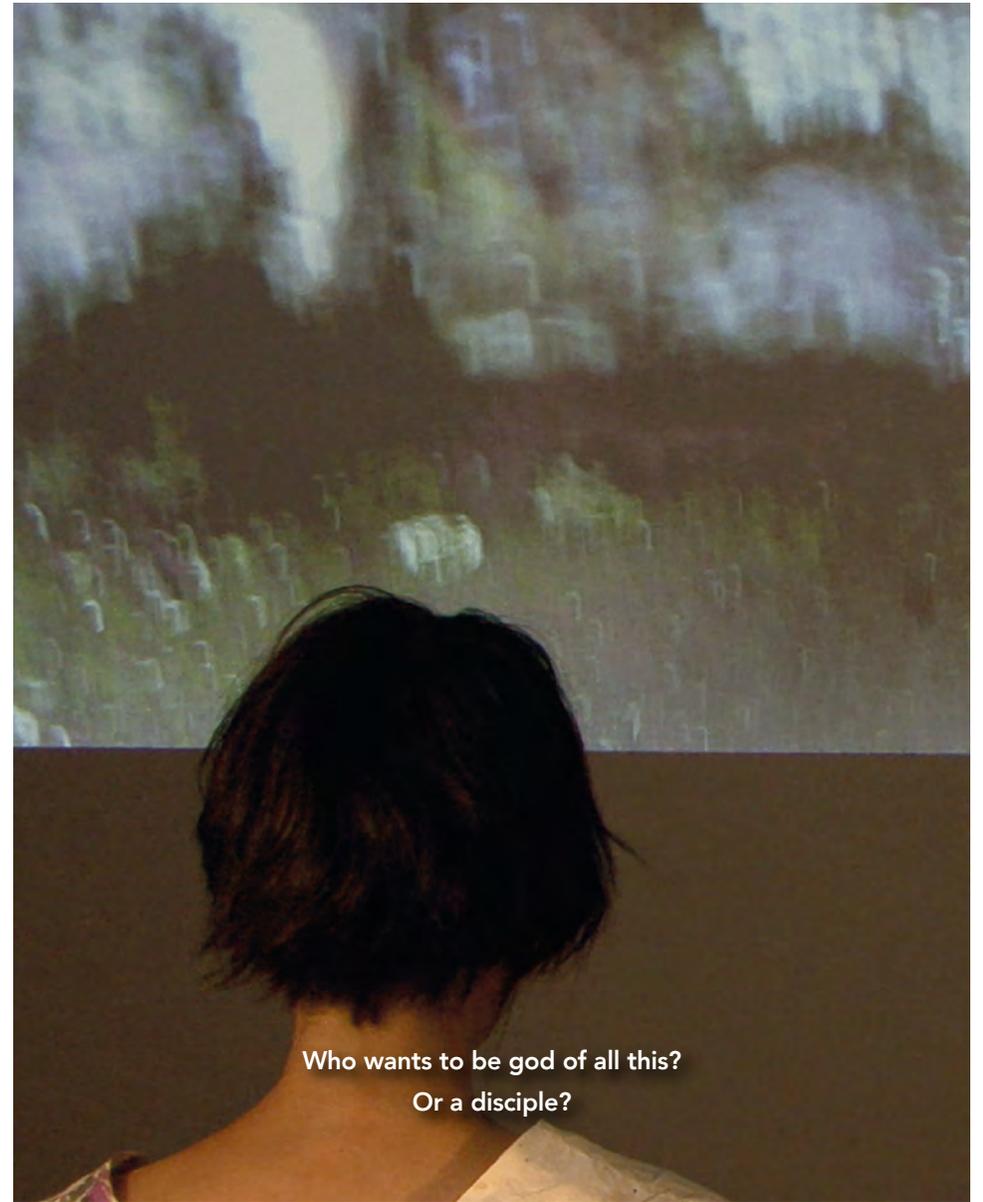
If he could see where we are today,
with the ghosts from the past coming back!



Ever since war exists,
the battlefield has extended
to the bodies of women.



Excerpt from the poem *The god of war*,
Rustum Kozain, 2013



Who wants to be god of all this?
Or a disciple?



His poetry seeks an impossible dialogue with the missing.



“No one
bears witness for the
witness.”

Excerpt from the poem *Aschenglorie*, Paul Celan, 1964



“TO STAND, in the shadow
of the stigmata in the air.
For-no-one-and-nothing-standing.”

Excerpt from the poem *Stehen*, Paul Celan, 1963

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Maison des Arts de Schaerbeek