



microscope gallery

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**Peggy Ahwesh**

**CLEAVE**

May 17 - June 24, 2019

Opening Friday May 17, 6-9pm



From: Peggy Ahwesh, "Border Patrol", 2019, four-channel HD video, silent, 5 minutes 10 seconds  
Image courtesy of Matt Town and Microscope Gallery

Microscope is very pleased to present *CLEAVE*, the third solo exhibition at the gallery by Peggy Ahwesh featuring new multi-screen moving image works by the New York-based artist.

As suggested by the exhibition's title, the works on view are concerned with subjects that simultaneously sever and bind us, such as national borders, religious beliefs, identity, and environmental concerns, among others. The dialectic separation/connection is emphasized by Ahwesh's use of multiple channels in her video works and installations, set in configurations of two or four and in symbiotic conversations with one another.

The most direct and timely is "Border Control" (2019, 5 minutes 10 seconds), a four-channel video with four flat screens in a square formation, in which eight prototypes for Trump's wall stand in line on the San Diego border as shot by Ahwesh from the Mexican side. Unexpectedly, a man climbs over the current fence and disappears into the US, making the artist a "witness to a direct act of intention and desperation as well as to an act of optimism for the future". Mirror and kaleidoscopic effects transform the linearity of the wall into circular, moving mandalas, heightening the sense of absurdity of such man-made separations.

"Verily! the Blackest Sea, the Falling Sky" (2017, 9 minutes 22 seconds) is a two-channel video installation reworking animated news reports into a personal narrative grounded in actual events related to the Syrian refugee crisis and other catastrophes. Ahwesh, who is of Syrian descent, describes the work as "a poetic tour through the dense landscape of human foibles and crises increasingly out of alignment with the forces of nature". The piece proposes, on adjacent screens, the sky and the sea as broader settings for human tragedies, and amidst wider considerations on viability of oceans, climate change, airwaves and repercussions of living in a connected world.

"Re: The Operation" (2019, 8 minutes 2 seconds), a video installation of four stacked monitors, focuses on two conflicting narratives of the military operation that successfully "took out" Osama Bin Laden: the official

US version vs. that revealed through investigative reporting. Each story, reconstructed by the artist from 3D animation sequences culled from news sources online, plays on two monitors, with each pair at a 90-degree angle. The artist exposes the fine line between official history and myth making in one of the biggest news stories of the post 9-11 era, which triggered reactions and conspiracy theories worldwide. The work also contemplates the ways storytelling and video editing can serve as means to steer away from or approximate to the truth.

“Kansas Atlas” (2019, 14 minutes) is a four-channel video installation featuring original footage shot primarily from a bird’s eye view of the Kansas town known as the geographical center of the US as a way to reflect upon what the artist considers “a metonymy for the country as a whole”. Double-projection imagery of the aerial shots of this landscape — at times forming abstract and stereoscope-like compositions — become close-ups on grotesque monuments and sculptures as the camera descends to ground level. Additionally, two iPads both contained within glass domes each play a video of one of two houses that sit directly opposite each other in a residential Topeka neighborhood. One is the headquarters of the infamous Westboro Baptist Church with its anti-LGBTQ signs and other hate-filled rhetoric; the second is the “Equality House”, which was formed later as a direct response, with its rainbow colors and messages of peace and acceptance.

*CLEAVE* runs from May 17th through June 24th, with an opening reception on Friday May 17th from 6-9pm. For additional information please contact the gallery at [inquiries@microscopegallery.com](mailto:inquiries@microscopegallery.com) or by phone at 347.925.1433.

PEGGY AHWESH is a media artist who got her start in the 1970’s with feminism, punk and amateur Super 8 filmmaking. Her works have recently exhibited at The Kitchen, New York; Foxy Production, New York; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles; Maccarone, New York; Salon 94, New York; Murray Guy, New York; Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles, CA; Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, Berwick-upon-Tweed, UK; Gasworks, London, UK; and Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona, Spain; among others.

Her films and videos have been shown worldwide including at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; New Museum, New York; Film at Lincoln Center, New York; MoMA PS1, Queens, NY; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; The Tate Modern, London, UK; British Film Institute (BFI), London, UK; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain; among many other institutions. Ahwesh has received grants and awards including from the Jerome Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, Creative Capital, NYSCA and the Alpert Award in the Arts. She was born in Pittsburgh, PA and currently lives and works between Brooklyn, NY and the Catskills.



From: Peggy Ahwesh, “Verily! the Blackest Sea, the Falling Sky”, 2017, two-channel HD video, 9 minutes 22 seconds  
Images courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery