

Workshop-Series „Postcoloniale Deconstruction: Artistic Intervention in the context of an multilayered monument. What kind of artistic intervention is possible, necessary and appropriate? (16.09.2021)

Author: Thomas Tode

Event: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg – Behörde für Kultur und Medien, Referat für Museen

We propose a film projection on the body of the iron chancellor himself. In the Monument-related public space the art form of "expanded cinema" has hardly been used so far. Our demand: regular evening film projections on the monument! Don't be afraid of projecting! With films changing every 1st of the month, open to everyone to participate with a 3 minute short film.

One of our goals is: „Bismarck zu entpreußen“, déprussifier Bismarck, in other words, to make him appear less rigid and militarised. Contemporaries did that already. Here we show an archive film which is mocking the state-supporting figure of the Wilhelmine policeman. They are jumping around like crazy.

It is important to tell the story differently. Do not say that the monument stands – for one and all times – for militarism and colonialism, but rededicate it and tell a critical story of colonialism. To produce overlays and palimpsests, like in a manuscript page, from which the text has been washed off so that the page can be reused for another comment.

We can set Bismarck on fire with flames all over his body, and thereby pay attention to the heated dispute. It is a highly polarised debate. We shouldn't always claim that everything we do is right and everything that the others do is wrong. Finally we want to get along in the neighborhood! The specific advantage of this format is, that the projection is immaterial. It does not touch the monument, but it has the ability to put it into political contexts.

With night projections the monument would remain unchanged during the day. We therefore suggest a combination with a museum, or pavilions, and writing boards. But every night, when it gets dark, we will respond with a slogan campaign: During the day, the monument embodies Dr. Jekyll, but at night it becomes Mr. Hyde. „I by day and you by night“.

The size of the statue is enormous, like the Colossus of Rhodes. The dispute can not only end in a small size counter-monument, for ex. a small african elephant. This would not be appropriate. We use Bismarck as a giant projection screen. This is an appropriation of the existing monument. Conversion as a political act.

We have to anchor the monument back in the neighborhood. The evening film screenings can be combined with city tours in the districts of St. Pauli and Neustadt or on colonial history, whether as a stopover of the tour or as an end point.

The colonial history of Hamburg has to be projected onto Bismarck's body! Only on this ground can it be seen how colonialism grew out of the Prussian primer. Therefore we have asked artists from Peru and Namibia to send short films, to be included in our projections.

A teacher from a Hamburg school class has contacted us. They deal with the colonial history of Wilhelmsburg as part of the “Decolonizing Storylines” project. Their starting point is the monument. We propose that can contribute a film to the projection. Schoolchildren today know very well how to make a film. With reduced means, no sound, only images and subtitles.

It should no longer remain an elitist discussion. But large film frames can be seen and understood by everyone, are not only addressing the circles of elites. Transparency is an

important asset. Furthermore: everyone can join in – with a three minute film – and give his opinion.

To sum it up: An advantage of the format is that every short film expresses its author. The films can reflect diversified opinions, from an activist background, from an artistic one, humoristic, satirical or serious interventions. They can include polemics, agitation, performance, scientific contextualisation, poetic imaginary, poems, dada and haiku slogans – or just a question mark.

The members of our group have different opinions about whether we should get rid of the monument. But we agreed: As long as the monument is upright, we will project and exchange our diverse opinions. This could also be a model for mediating the process in society.