

# Capitain Petzel

Yael Bartana

*The Graveyard*

September 14 – November 9, 2019

Openings: Friday, September 13, 6-9pm

& Saturday, September 14, 2-8pm

Taking her public performance *Bury Our Weapons, Not Our Bodies!* in Philadelphia in 2018 as a point of departure, Yael Bartana's second solo exhibition at Capitain Petzel features her latest film together with a group of prints and objects. The show marks the Berlin debut of *The Undertaker*, in which Bartana staged and filmed a public collective funeral in the streets of Philadelphia, the birthplace of American democracy.

*The Undertaker* follows an obscure figure as she leads her swarm of armed followers in a ceremonial march on the way to perform a mass burial ritual. Carrying a variety of weapons from different historical contexts, the choreographed group strides through numerous historically charged locations in the city center of Philadelphia, eventually being guided by their leader to the burial site in Laurel Hill cemetery in which they dispose of the weapons they possess. Rather than a memorial to the dead, the group creates a human monument for the living, linked up with ghosts of the past. Addressing notions of militarism, nationhood, belonging, and memory, *The Undertaker* blurs the lines between fact and fiction and calls attention to the function of weapons in the perpetuation of our systems of violence, repression, and displacement.

In recent years Bartana has been experimenting with different mediums and expanding her body of work with sculptures, prints and collective performances. For this exhibition the artist has simulated a series of fossilized weapons. A reference to the guns carried by the armed followers in *The Undertaker*, Bartana imagines with this group of works a future society where weapons rather than bodies have been entombed. By excavating the apparatus of killing, the artist questions the imaginary possibility of having overcome the war and violence of past societies. Recurring in her practice, she creates an alternative reality—one which in this case, alluding to notions of museology and institutionalization, she honors on a pedestal and invites us to relish in from a distance.

Surrounding the fossilized weapons is a display of prints illustrating masked figures — the undertakers. Again a reference to the new work *The Undertaker* and to her performance *Bury Our Weapons, Not Our Bodies!*, her figures rendered in a large format hold up their masks and operate as an accompanying choir. They are not armed but are merely shielding themselves, witnessing and silently commenting the state of events. A selection of these individual masks is exhibited on the balcony. Bartana has taken them away from her protagonists — she has isolated them in a symbolic attempt to dismantle all traces of violence in her perpetual construction of an alternative fictional reality.

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During the openings, a performance based on "War Dances" by Israeli dance composer Noa Eshkol (1924-2007) will take place once every hour.

Yael Bartana (born Israel, 1970, lives and works in Amsterdam and Berlin) has dealt with the impact of war, military rituals and threats on every-day life throughout her artistic practice. Between 2006 and 2011, she created the trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned*, a project on the history of Polish-Jewish relations and its influence on the contemporary Polish identity. The trilogy represented Poland in the 54th International Art Exhibition in Venice (2011). Her work has been shown across a number of important institutions, such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2018); the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2017); the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2014); the Secession, Vienna (2012); and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk (2012). In 2020, Yael Bartana will hold solo show at the Jewish Museum Berlin with a new commissioned work for the museum, *The Redemption*.

Contact | Capitain Petzel

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Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 11 am – 6 pm