

# Fonds Kwadraat in gesprek met...

## Aram Lee

In april begon Fonds Kwadraat met de interviewreeks 'Fonds Kwadraat in gesprek met...'. Deze keer vroegen we kunstenaar Aram Lee waar zij nu mee bezig is en wat haar plannen zijn. Het interview is in het Engels.

Aram Lee (Seoul, 1986) woont en werkt in Amsterdam. In 2018 en 2019 was Aram Lee artist in residence aan de Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. Lee onderzoekt en herinterpreteert aspecten en elementen van instellingen en instituties, en ontwikkelt performances, video- en filminstallaties om schijnbaar vaststaande patronen een nieuwe dimensie te geven. Zo bevraagt zij voortdurend het collectieve geheugen.

Aram Lee 's werk was (en is) onder andere te zien bij De Appel en Framer Framed in Amsterdam, het Zuiderzeemuseum in Enkhuizen, Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlijn en de Kölnischer Kunstverein en La friche la belle de Mai in Marseille.



Aram Lee

### **What kind of project(s) are you currently working on?**

I am currently researching on the single Narva-Narva-Joesuu-Hiiemetsa road, which is located in Narva, Estonia. The project is developing collectively. This 14km long road not only runs parallel to the Estonian-Russian border but also contains multiple monuments and graveyards of the many nations that occupied the city.

The road is along the edge of Europe, with five different national monuments, each with their own history, map and ideologies: a Swedish lion commemorating the Scandinavian period of the city, a Tsarist-era monument for the death of the Great Northern War, a World War II Nazi German military cemetery, a White Russian military cemetery, a Jewish cemetery and a Soviet memorial. The existence of all of these histories, different narrations of memory and society co-exist in one spot. It exposes the diasporic sculptures and fragmented images of the 'nationalizing' state.

By doing research I realized this site is a vacuum of identity, which has been occupied by many state 'plots'. The political intensity of the border is also demonstrated in the capacity of its dwellers to reinforce, resist or undermine state power almost simultaneously in their everyday actions. A context like this can provide me with a rich research ground for proposing a prototype of the future of nationalism in Europe. Is the identity of Narva a relic of the past or a novel model for the future? This borderland is as relevant as ever, and understanding its mechanics, sensitivities and tensions will allow me to push the debate further.

In this project, I focus on the in-between state of Narva. Especially it's Post-national scenography that is tangled with 5 different contexts of nations. The research will be translated into performance as a spatial scenography, which mediates between these multiple 'nations', each with their own history, map and language enabling what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak called an 'erotic's of translation'.



WWII Nazi German military cemetery; Tsarist-era monument to the dead of the Great Northern War (Google Road View)

### **How did you use the interest free loan of Fonds Kwadraat?**

This project is still an ongoing process. I will use the loan mainly for a performance that makes a scenography of the Narva-Narva-Joesuu-Hiiemetsa road. The exhibition space will host remotely – or 'outer-spaces' – from the road by transforming and transposing their spatial features. This research will be performatively materialized as architectural installations in a space. The road will be continuously performing as a transforming shape in the exhibition space.

### **What did it mean for you to receive an interest free loan and what was the result?**

Receiving an interest-free loan from Fonds Kwadraat allowed me to do field research and visualize the project. The loan was crucial because this is a long term research and project, which requires field research in Narva. Without the funding of

Fonds Kwadraat the project would have to be scaled back to a small project made over an extended period of time, making it difficult to experiment in large scale.



Still cut from Film (work in a process), 'SINGLE NARVA-NARVA-JOESUU-HIEMETSA ROAD' by Aram Lee

### Where can we see your work, either online or offline?

The project will be shown on my website and it will be exhibited as a performance and film installation on 9, 10, and 11 October 2020 during Art Oost, in the project space When site lost the plot in Amsterdam. Art Oost is an art festival in public space that takes place at various locations between Amsterdam east and west, including Bureau Postjesweg, When site lost the plot (Westerdok) and Museum Perron Oost.

### What are your plans for the future?



I am currently having an exhibition at Framer Framed in Amsterdam (To Pluto and Back, until 16 August, 2020). It is part of Unlocked/Reconnected. The project To Pluto and Back is a journey through a diaspora of archived digital images and people of North Korea; where reality

proved to be a mix of fact and fiction. To Pluto and Back asks for an enlargement of what it means to be 'cut off'. The tensions between presented images and a closed world outside us forms an intangible situation, both in North Korea and worldwide. In this way, the work creates connections with today's society in which everyone is to some greater or lesser extent, disconnected. From September I will work on a new collective project called Parasite Dinner, a long-term performance and public event hosted at the M4gastatelier in Amsterdam.

### Do you have a tip for young artists?

My discipline as an artist is building up a good relationship with my art; take and give pleasure, be motivated in a relationship, be enthusiastic and generous,

obsessive or nonchalant, productive or unproductive, confront the conflict with them, having an honest dialogue and think about its sustainability.