

Vigil



Vigil

Installation view

Vigil

'I am fascinated by the intersections and interpolations of historic events and the myths that inform them or sprout around them, the interstices in the narratives of the world where fact and fiction inform one another, our imaginations leap from stone to stone with time dutifully misting it all over. The idea that there was once a "before", and a "before" before that, and one before that. How "origin" slips just out of our reach all the time, rendering us all strange/estranged. And looking back, trying to create some sort of chronology by lining up what we know or think we know about that which came before, every mythology offering its own order and logic of how the universe fits together and how things fall apart: picture each as a disk, and these disks as lenses in a telescope, turning, aligning, refocusing, distorting, exploring.'

- Minnette Vári, 2007

Minnette Vári's video projection, *Vigil*, begins with the stirring of a subterranean presence, which proceeds to make its way upwards through the earth's rich strata to the surface. Its purpose seems to be to witness the unfolding of a great span of southern African history. The gateway it opens functions as Vári's constantly turning lens, and is framed with a mapmaker's cartouche that features, among its embellishments, surveillance cameras which maintain their own watchful vigil.

Through this portal we glimpse a circling landscape of telegraph poles, pylons, a Ferris wheel, billboards alongside a highway ... footage shot by Vári driving out of and back into the eastern side of Johannesburg, past malls and mine dumps. This twilight scene is overlaid with another: a gathering 'in a tree-framed knoll', Vári says, 'of all the people who in more or less significant ways shaped this region as we know it, be it by edict or by foot'. These are characters real and

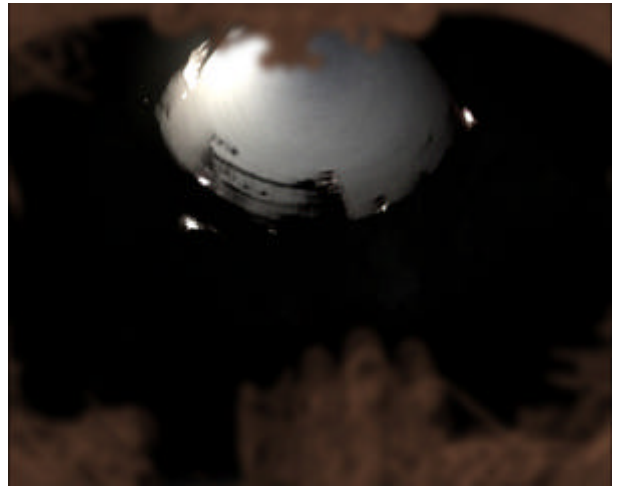
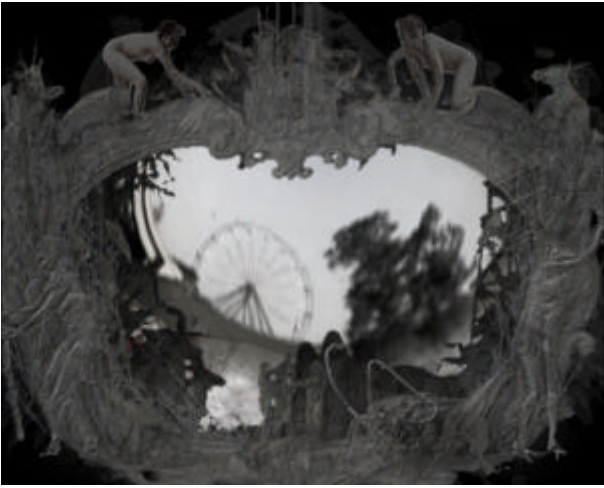
imaginary, drawn from history and legend, including explorers, chiefs, queens, assassins, visionaries ...

We are invited to imagine their interactions as they change places and move in and out of our field of vision. We are tempted also to try and identify the subterranean 'presence' as one of the protagonists: the flame-haired ape-woman bearing a lantern, perhaps, or her skittishly seductive consorts.

The pace and pitch of this exchange become increasingly frenetic until time collapses in on itself, and we are sucked into a vortex. In this black hole are dotted lights like stars that suggest an expanse of time and space compared to which the breadth of human history passes in an instant.

Sophie Perryer

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Vigil | © Minnette Vári 2007 | DVD | Single-Channel Video Installation | Duration: Video and Stereo Audio 3mins 45secs, looped indefinitely