

Educator's Guide with Self-Guided Materials for School Groups



Dias & Riedweg. *Funk Staden*, 2007. Video installation. 10 x 46 x 46 ft. Image courtesy of Galeria Vermelho, São Paulo.

Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt

and

Empire

Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt is organized by the Dahesh Museum of Art, New York and coordinated for the Frye Art Museum by Robin Held, chief curator and director of exhibitions and collections. *Empire* is curated by Robin Held, the Frye's chief curator and director of exhibitions and collections.

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FRYE ART MUSEUM

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GETTING STARTED

This educator's guide includes a variety of materials designed to help prepare your class for a visit to the exhibitions *Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt* and *Empire*. The first section, titled "Pre-Visit Information," should be read before visiting the museum. The second section, "Gallery Activities," can be printed out to use in the galleries. The third section, "Post-Visit Discussion," should be read after visiting the exhibitions.

The goal of this guide is to challenge learners to think critically about what they see and to engage them in the process of discussing art. It is intended to facilitate students' personal discoveries about art and is aimed at strengthening the skills that allow them to view art independently. The gallery activities should be explored in groups, and are meant to encourage dialogue.

We hope this guide will help students to:

- Understand the historical impacts of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign
- Connect the concepts of globalization and Orientalism to historical and contemporary works of art
- Explore the positive and negative impacts of globalization on cultures around the world

PRE-VISIT INFORMATION

About *Napoleon the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt*

In the summer of 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte embarked for Egypt with the intent to colonize the country and expand the French empire. Napoleon's stated goals in Egypt were to rescue Egyptians from the supposed tyrannical and corrupt rule of the Mameluke government, to improve Egypt's economic and social conditions by spreading the ideals of liberty, and to reveal to the world the wonders of ancient Egypt.

Accompanying him on this expedition, in addition to 35,000 soldiers, was a group of 150 *savants* (French for "learned" or "lettered"). These scientists, architects, engineers, and artists were hired by Napoleon to study and describe every aspect of ancient and modern Egypt. Protected by the French army, they worked in the field, taking notes, charting maps, and gathering and recording artifacts and natural history specimens.

Although France enjoyed an early victory at the Battle of the Pyramids against the Mamelukes, Napoleon's army was soon defeated by the British navy. Admiral Horatio Nelson captured the French fleet of ships, effectively trapping the French forces in Egypt and cutting them off from Europe. After more military defeats and illnesses sweeping through the army, Napoleon abandoned 30,000 French troops in Egypt and returned home, embarking on other military campaigns in Europe.

While the military expedition in Egypt resulted in failure for France, the work of the *savants* was an unprecedented scholarly achievement. Their written descriptions and engravings of monuments, natural life, contemporary Egyptians, topography of the land, and hieroglyphics resulted in the *Description de l'Égypte (Description of Egypt)*, a collection of ten volumes of text and thirteen volumes of engraved plates. Its first publication in 1809 laid the foundation for Egyptology and prompted the start of Orientalism and Egyptomania in Europe.

Organized by the Dahesh Museum of New York, *Napoleon on the Nile* includes military maps, archival letters, documents, and official bulletins of Napoleon's campaign, as well as Orientalist paintings and decorative objects that demonstrate how the *Description's* scientific vision was transformed into an artistic one.

About *Empire*

Empire is an exhibition of projected art, both metaphorical and documentary, that examines the mechanisms of empire building and destruction, as well as modernity and its discontents. Most of these videos and multimedia installations make their U.S. premier at the Frye.

Empire is organized around a question that colonial projects such as the *Description de l'Égypte* raise for contemporary artists: How does one create art today without re-inscribing colonial patterns of domination? The projected art here offers complex, even contradictory, portrayals of difference; provisional notions of identity; mingled pasts and presents; and shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion as possible responses to this question.

IMPORTANT VOCABULARY AND IDEAS

The Other

The exhibitions *Napoleon on the Nile* and *Empire* feature art spanning three centuries. Together they offer an opportunity to look closely at the strategies for constructing and representing “other” cultures—mechanisms at work in any colonial enterprise, historical or contemporary. Post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak write about how the separation of “Us” from “Them” has long been inscribed into master discourses such as anthropology, history, and art history. “They” occupy a time and space “out there,” which “we” must re-create, stage, or represent for an audience “in here.” Filmmaker and theorist Trinh Minh-ha describes this separation in predatory terms: “I” as sovereign territory advancing on the “other” out there in the sphere of acquisition. She extends this metaphor of stalking, seizure, and mastery to dominant modes of representation in (ethnographic) film, calling them modes of “all-owning spectatorship.”

Although Napoleon and his savants would never have used the term, “all-owning spectatorship” is a concept central to their ambitious print project, the *Description de l'Égypte*, which was created during Napoleon’s Egyptian Campaign, from 1798–1801. Each of the *Description’s* volumes, variously devoted to ancient Egypt, the modern state, and natural history, served France’s colonial aim of mapping all of Egypt’s resources and of making the Near East useful to the French Empire. *Empire* features contemporary projected art selected for its engagement of the question of how to create art now without re-inscribing historical patterns of domination.

Globalization

Globalization is the process of interaction and integration of local or regional phenomena into global ones among people, companies, and governments of different nations. The term can describe a process by which people of the world are unified in a single society and function together. Globalization has occurred for centuries and is often driven by international trade. For example, the Silk Road trade system allowed for the exchange of goods and ideas between Asia and Europe beginning more than 2,000 years ago. Globalization in the era since World War II is largely the result of proponents such as economists, businesses, and politicians who recognized the costs associated with protectionism and declining international economic integration. Critics of the current wave of economic globalization look at the erosion of traditional cultures, which occurs as a result of the economic transformations related to globalization.

Orient, Oriental, and Orientalism

Orient is a term that means “east.” It originated in Western Asia to describe the cultures and countries that are now considered the Middle East. As awareness of other Asian countries grew in European consciousness, the term often signified South Asia, Southeast Asian, and East Asia. By the late nineteenth century, the term usually referred to China, Japan, Korean, and sometimes to India. The terms *Orient* and *Oriental* are used throughout this guide in historical and art-historical contexts. However, these politically and ideologically charged words are no longer acceptable in contemporary situations. Instead of using the adjective Oriental, more specific descriptions such as Chinese, Turkish, Egyptian, or Korean are preferred in most circumstances.

The Orient has exerted its allure on Western artists’ imaginations for centuries. Prior to Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt, European artists had minimal contact with the Orient. When the *Description de l’Égypte* was published and circulated in Europe, it became the most influential scientific and artistic documentation of Egypt. This publication had a profound effect on European art in the nineteenth century, and spawned a style of visual art, fashion, architecture, and literature called Orientalism. This term refers to the imitation or depiction of aspects of Eastern cultures in the West by writers, musicians, designers, and artists.

Some Orientalist art was intended as propaganda in support of French imperialism, depicting the East as a place of backwardness, lawlessness, and barbarism that was tamed by French rule. Other Orientalist paintings used Egypt as a backdrop for biblical scenes. The most popular Orientalist theme was the harem scene. Beyond their erotic nature, harem scenes evoked a sense of beauty and pampered isolation to which many Europeans aspired.

Orientalism was given new meaning by Edward Said in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. He used the term to describe an academic and artistic tradition of hostile and critical views

of the East by the West, shaped by European imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Contemporary Art

Contemporary art is the art of today. It is both a mirror of contemporary society and a window through which we view and deepen our understanding of the world and ourselves. Much like a visual history book, contemporary art engages what is happening in the world around us. Contemporary art draws upon viewers' personal connection to a work of art, but also acknowledges the possibilities for dialogue with others.

Curiosity, acceptance that viewers can apply their own ideas to art, and open discussion are the most important tools you will need to appreciate contemporary art. Unfortunately, many art viewers assume that they should be able to immediately understand what they see before them, and if not, they may walk away feeling confused or frustrated.

With contemporary art, great importance is attached to the role of the viewer. The viewer becomes an active participant in the process of creating meaning. The viewer needs to give himself or herself "permission" to really look at the artwork and derive his or her own meaning from it. Art is influenced by the world around us, and more often than not, the viewer will assume some of the same ideas about the art and its importance as does the artist.

ABOUT THE ART AND ARTISTS IN NAPOLEON ON THE NILE



Michel-Ange Lancret

Karnak: Elevation of the South Gate

From the *Description de l'Égypte, Antiquités, Vol. III, Pl. 51*

ca. 1809–30

Engraving, 47 ¼" x 38 ¼"

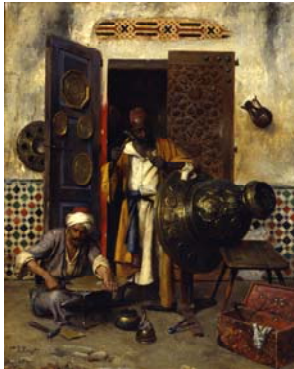
Dahesh Museum of Art, 2006.1.45

Many of the Napoleon's *savants* were trained as architects and engineers, and their drawings of temples, tombs, and architectural details are often as precise as blueprints. They paid particular attention to the many hieroglyphics they saw on temple and tomb walls and copied them as faithfully as possible. The *savants* also created scenes of how they envisioned ancient Egyptians interacted with these monuments. Later in the nineteenth century, Orientalist painters used these detailed engravings to aid their own visions of ancient and modern Egypt.

This engraving shows the cloudless Egyptian sky that the *savants* encountered in Egypt. Faithfully depicting what they saw, the *savants* had to make the sky appear dark at the top of the image and gradually fade as it neared the horizon. The *savants* accomplished this by varying the width of the engraved lines and the space between them. A single engraved plate could have hundreds of these lines that needed to be uniform across the entire image, which could take up to six months to complete with traditional methods.

Nicolas Conté, one of the *savants*, invented an engraving machine to speed up the engraving process for such images. The work of engraving the Egyptian skies and vast amounts of sand was then completed in two to three days instead of many months. The hundreds of lines could also be made perfectly uniform, which was nearly impossible by hand. The *Description de l'Égypte* may never have been completed without Conté's machine,

This image re-creates a triumphant Theban king passing through the gateway, accompanied by musicians and his retinue and followed by his prisoners, with priests and other subjects looking on. The costumes, weapons, chariots, and other accessories were adapted from painted wall reliefs and sculptures that the *savants* found elsewhere in Karnak, a temple complex.



Rudolf Ernst
The Metal Workers
ca. 1888
Oil on panel, 33" x 28 5/16"
Dahesh Museum of Art, 1996.16

Rudolf Ernst was an Austrian Orientalist painter who focused on harem scenes and images of daily life in the Orient. Sketches from his travels to Morocco and Turkey served as inspiration for his work, as did photographs and prints. Ernst often combined architecture, artifacts, and dress of many different cultures into one painting in order to create extremely exotic images for his European audience.



Lawrence Alma Tadema
Joseph, Overseer of Pharaoh's Granaries
1874
Oil on panel, 23 7/8" x 28 1/4"
Dahesh Museum of Art, 2002.38

Alma Tadema was a Dutch painter who gained an interest in the Orientalist theme after a trip to Italy in 1863, and he became one of the greatest painters of classical genre scenes. His paintings of domestic scenes and daily life were quite popular with his nineteenth-century European audience. Tadema specialized in scenes from ancient Greece and Rome, but he also painted a few Egyptian scenes. This painting is drawn from the Old Testament Book of Genesis, with the Egyptian details based on actual artifacts and images. For example, the wall painting is from the tomb of "Nabamun," now located in the British Museum, and the hieroglyphs on Joseph's throne are from Tutmosis II, who ruled Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty, the period that nineteenth-century scholars believed coincided with biblical Egypt. The wig that Joseph wears is based on a wig found in a tomb in Thebes, although scholars believe that it was worn by a woman, not a man.

ABOUT THE ART AND ARTISTS IN *EMPIRE*



Dias & Riedweg

Funk Staden

2007

3-channel video installation

Courtesy of the artists

In the mid-1500s, the German soldier and mariner Hans Staden was captured by the Tupinambá, an alleged cannibalistic people who lived in what is now Brazil, when he intruded upon their community. The Tupinambá could have murdered Staden, but the elders found him too cowardly to consider eating. After his release, Staden published an illustrated book about his captivity, *True Story and Description of a Country of Wild, Naked, Grim, Man-eating People in the New World, America* that perpetuated stereotypes of indigenous South Americans throughout Europe.

In *Funk Staden*, Dias & Riedweg (Mauricio Dias and Walter Riedweg) reinterpret Staden's story 450 years later, situating it in the contemporary funk culture of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*, or slums. Three video cameras mounted at the top of a wooden stake, inspired by the ritual club used by the Tupinambá to bludgeon to death their enemy, provides the video's perspective. Passed hand-to-hand and spun, this apparatus provides an all-encompassing view of a Rio funk rave and a rooftop barbecue, in which dancers re-enact nine woodcuts from the original edition of Staden's book.

Rio funk is almost solely locally produced and more often than not includes two young, working-class *funkeiros* with an inexpensive, preprogrammed beat box. This homemade funk can be seen as a microcosm of Brazilian life and history, and it provides the soundtrack for the deconstruction of the power relationships between the colonizer and the colonized. With its multiple projections and enveloping installation, *Funk Staden* extends the *funkeiros'* critique to its viewers.

Dias and Riedweg have worked together since 1993, developing politically engaged visual art and performances with a wide array of participants, including street children in Rio de Janeiro, janitors of São Paulo apartment buildings, dog-handlers patrolling the U.S./Mexico border, and male sex workers in Barcelona. In each project, their subjects are active collaborators, playing a vital role in the process, the scope of interaction, and the resulting artwork.

Dias was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1964 and Riedweg in Lucerne, Switzerland in 1955. Both currently live and work in Rio. Recent exhibitions of their work have been organized by Vleeshal Middleburg, Rotterdam Film Festival, Holland (2008); Kunsthal Oslo, Norway (2008); and Serralves Museum, Oporto, Portugal (2008).

For a preview of *Funk Staden* visit: http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=_CsgehcE_To

Alternately, visit <http://uk.youtube.com> and search for “funkstaden.”



Norbert Szirmai and János Révész

Fradi [FTC, Hungary] is better

2002

DVD, 15 min, 37 sec.

Courtesy of the artists and Black Box Foundation, Budapest

Roma (also known as Gypsy) communities are dispersed far and wide across Europe, creating discontinuous diasporas. Although estimated at between eight and twelve million people—and thus sometimes referred to as Europe’s “first nation”—reliable demographic data on the Roma is unavailable. Their rights and identities are contingent on the discretion of individual states, and many European governments refuse to acknowledge them as a legitimate category for census purposes.

The 2002 documentary film *Fradi is better* shows ardent fans of the Hungarian football team Ferencvárosi Torna Club (FTC). These fans are infamous for their anti-Semitic and anti-Roma chants performed during matches. Many Roma count themselves as Fradi fans and return to every game despite the fact that Roma have been attacked during matches. The film focuses not on the game itself, but on the rituals in the stands, as fans cheer on their team and chant the racist slogans between plays. Interviews held with Roma FTC fans, along with analysis by scholars, create a complex portrait of assimilation, contestation, group identity, and contemporary life.

János Révész, the cameraman of *Fradi is better*, was born in 1984 in Budapest, where he still lives and works. When he was sixteen, Révész founded the Black Box Roma Media School, a special initiative of Hungary’s Black Box Foundation, which offers free training in video art for Roma youth. He currently works as a director for Hungarian television.

Born in 1981 in Hódmezővásárhely, Hungary, Norbert Szirmai—the film’s director—lives and works in Budapest. A commercial radio and television journalist and editor, Szirmai created *Fradi is better*, his first film, as a student at the Black Box Roma Media School.

PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

To prepare students for visiting the exhibitions, we recommend the following questions and activities:

- Read the Pre-Visit Information section of this guide. In small groups, discuss the materials and create a list of questions about the artwork.
- Discuss the concept of the Other. What are some “us versus them” situations in your life, the news, literature, and popular culture?
- Discuss how globalization has impacted your life. What types of products do you own and what ideas do you have because of globalization?

GALLERY ACTIVITIES

Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt



Michel-Ange Lancret

Karnak: Elevation of the South Gate

From the *Description de l'Égypte, Antiquités, Vol. III, Pl. 51*

ca. 1809–30

Engraving, 47 ¼" x 38 ¼"

Dahesh Museum of Art, 2006.1.45

- Why might this print have been made? Think about artistic, scientific, geographic, and political purposes.
- In some of the engravings in the *Description de l'Égypte*, the savants chose to depict contemporary Egyptians alongside temples and monuments. In other images, they imagined ancient Egyptians interacting with the architecture. In this engraving, the depicted people are adapted from painted wall reliefs and sculptures at Karnak, an ancient temple complex.
 - How does this image portray ancient Egyptians?
- Look closely at the lines that depict the sky. This engraving is an example of how Nicolas Conté's engraving machine allowed images such as this one to be accomplished quickly and consistently.
 - Find another print in the exhibition that uses this printing process.



Rudolf Ernst

The Metal Workers

ca. 1888

Oil on panel, 33" x 28 5/16"

Dahesh Museum of Art, 1996.16

- What is going on in this painting?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- Images such as this one led to stereotypes of a romanticized Orient, but they also enticed more Westerners to travel to the East.
 - Can you think of examples that you see today of people stereotyping and romanticizing other cultures?



Lawrence Alma Tadema
Joseph, Overseer of Pharaoh's Granaries
1874
Oil on panel, 23 7/8" x 28 1/4"
Daheh Museum of Art, 2002.38

- Orientalist painters such as Alma Tadema often used the engravings from the *Description de l'Égypte* to add "scientific" details to their artistic images.
 - Compare this painting with the engraving next to it. What details can you find that both works share? What are the differences?
 - What are the similarities and differences in your reactions to these two artworks?
 - What do you think are some similarities and differences in the artists' intentions when they created these works?
- Alma Tadema took artifacts and images from various sources and incorporated them into a new, singular work of art.
 - Can you think of contemporary examples in music, video, and visual art where artists employ this same technique?

Empire



Dias & Riedweg

Funk Staden

2007

3-channel video installation

Courtesy of the artists

- What is your personal response to this work?
- What questions does this artwork raise for you?
- Think about the reasons that the youth in this video chose to re-enact Hans Staden's story.
 - Is there a book, movie, television show, album, or other piece of popular culture that you relate to in a similar way?
 - If you were to reenact it, how might you choose to do so?



Norbert Szirmai and János Révész

Fradi [FTC, Hungary] is better

2002

DVD, 15 min., 37 sec.

Courtesy of the artists and Black Box Foundation, Budapest

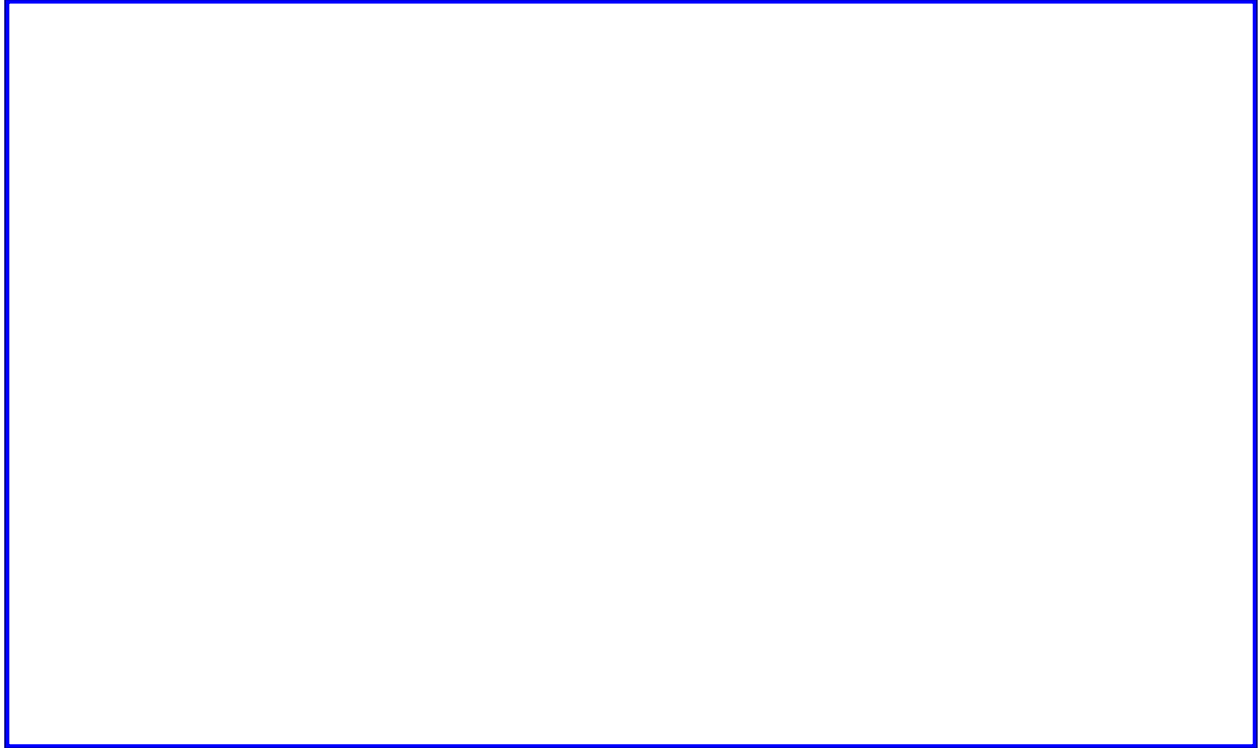
- What is your personal response to this work?
- What questions does this artwork raise for you?
- Why would the Roma people attend these soccer games with people who say racist things about them?
- Does this remind you of any experiences that you have had?

Continue towards the café to view the teen SHFT exhibition on geocaching and art in the public realm.

- How does this exhibition relate to the other exhibitions in the Museum?
- Find an artwork in this exhibition and describe how it connects to the idea of globalization.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE MUSEUM

Choose an artwork in the galleries that you would like to explore further and make a sketch or write a poem about it below.



Write down any questions you have about what you have seen today that you would like to explore further.

POST-VISIT DISCUSSION

Can you think of ways in which Westerners viewed the Orient during Napoleon's time that might differ from the ways in which Americans view people from another country today? What has remained the same?

Do you think that the portrayal of cultural traditions is more truthful when they are depicted by the people within that culture or by outsiders? What reasons do you have for answering that way?

Napoleon's goals in Egypt included freeing Egypt from what he viewed as the barbarous tyranny of the corrupt Mameluke regime and improving the social and physical conditions of all Egyptians by spreading the ideals of liberty. More recently, Western armed forces have invaded Eastern countries for similar reasons.

- What are some of the consequences of one society forcefully imposing its ideals on another? Consider repercussions and positive outcomes for both the invading presence and the native population.

Increasing globalization during Europe's colonization of the American continent led to the interaction of African, European, and Amazonian cultures in Brazil. The result is a unique culture with unique artistic expressions, such as the Rio Funk heard in *Funk Staden*.

- Describe some additional examples of things created from the interaction of different cultures.

How did the different media used in the *Napoleon on the Nile* and *Empire* impact the way that you responded to the artworks?

Write a reflection on your visit to the Frye Art Museum.

MORE INFORMATION ON *EMPIRE*

Halil Altindere, *Dengbejs* 2007

Altindere's artistic strategies focus on resistance to repressive structures and marginalization within official systems of representation. In his single-channel DVD work *Dengbejs*, 2007, Altindere shows a fragile coexistence of the modern and the traditional in contemporary Turkey. The camera keeps in close-up storytellers (called *dengbejs* in Kurdish) sitting in a room lined with Mesopotamian carpets. In turn they intone stories in rich, textured singing voices, tales that form a part of oral tradition in Kurd culture. Wars are fought, dead are counted, enemies are denounced, heroes are proclaimed, the unheralded are given their due, and individual and collective experiences are chronicled.

Altindere was born in 1971 in Mardin, Turkey, and now resides in Istanbul. A multi-media artist who often works in the mediums of video and photography, Altindere is also the publisher and editor of *art-ist*, a Turkish contemporary art magazine. The artist's work has been included in *The Subject Now*, Adam Art Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand (2008); *Blind Spot*, Petach-Tikva Museum of Art, Israel (2008); *Documenta 12*, Kassel, Germany (2007); *Art, Life and Confusion*, October Salon, Belgrade, Serbia (2006); 9th International Istanbul Biennial (2005); and *Shake*, Halle für Kunst, Lüneberg, Germany (2004).

Runa Islam, *Be the First to See What You See As You See It*, 2004

Be The First To See What You See As You See It, 2004, is a 16mm film looped to repeat continuously. It features a young woman walking through a showroom of fine china displayed on pedestals. She carefully strokes and admires delicate plates, cups, saucers, and teapots, before sending these fragile objects off their stands to smash violently to the floor. Filmed in slow motion, Islam's film is based in part on the first slow motion test film, which showed a man shattering a jug of water and its aftermath. *Be the First...* is a filmic attempt to capture—again and again—the precise moment of rupture. This transformation of precious objects from wholeness to irreparable damage and loss provides a metaphor for the creation and dissolution of empires, as well as the study and analysis of their mechanisms.

Born in 1970 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Islam currently lives and works in London. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized by the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2005); Dunkers Kulturhus, Helsingborg, Sweden (2005); Camden Arts Centre, London (2005); Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona (2005); and MIT List Visual Arts Centre, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2003). In 2008 the artist was nominated for the Turner Prize, an annual award presented to a British visual artist under the age of fifty.

Paul Pfeiffer, *Empire*, 2004

Pfeiffer's groundbreaking work in video, sculpture, and photography uses recent computer technologies to dissect the role that mass media plays in shaping our consciousness. Pfeiffer is best known for a series of video works focused on

professional sports events in which he digitally removes the bodies of the players from the games, shifting the viewer's attention to the spectators, sports equipment, the arena of play, the trophies won. Although *Empire* looks very different from much of his better-known work, it employs similar strategies and concerns to create a meditation on the process of empire-building, through the direct observation of the production of a wasp nest in which the workers are for the most part unseen. Shot in and played in real time, *Empire* rewards viewers with a glimpse into the painstaking and methodical labor that goes into the creation of a realm.

Pfeiffer was born in Honolulu in 1966 and now lives and works in New York City. He earned his M.A. from Hunter College in 1994 and graduated from the Whitney Independent Study Program in 1998. In 2000 he received The Bucksbaum Award from the Whitney Museum of American Art, and, in 2002 was an artist-in-residence at both ArtPace in San Antonio and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge. Solo exhibitions of Pfeiffer's work include those organized by MIT List Visual Arts Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2003) and Duke University Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC (2000).

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