

Information for press

**Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary presents: *The Torn First Pages*
at Haus der Kunst in Munich from October 8th, 2008**

**A project by Amar Kanwar, co-commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary
and Public Press, New Delhi**

*„Imagine the formal presentation of poetry as evidence in a future war crimes tribunal. Imagine
nineteen sheets of paper floating forever in the wind...“* (Amar Kanwar)

The Torn First Pages is a 19-channel video installation in three parts by the Indian artist and filmmaker **Amar Kanwar** made between 2003-08 and premiered at Haus der Kunst in its recently completed form. Subsequently it will be shown in Vienna at Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary from November 19th, 2008 onwards.

The Torn First Pages is an ode to the thousands engaged in the struggle for democracy in Burma and presented in honor of the bookshop owner Ko Than Htay, who was imprisoned for ‘tearing out the first page’ of all books and journals that contained ideological slogans from the military regime. The twenty-channel video installation directly, elliptically and metaphorically encounters resistance and the struggle for a democratic society, contemporary forms of non-violence, political exile, memory and dislocation.

The Torn First Pages takes the viewer on a visual journey into the stories, lives and violent deaths of the protagonists of Burmese resistance virtually combining a poetic expressivity in image and language with the exploration of violence in its multifarious forms and its capacity of intruding the private, the personal, the home. With a penetrating, telescopic gaze Kanwar rescues and reanimates the image and its history in our collective memories. In Kanwar’s investigations, the image is the “presentation of poetry”, but is also being examined with reference to the question of “evidence”, the process of collecting, archiving and circulating material evidences of crime and political resistance.

The video ***Ma Win Maw Oo*** for instance revolves around a forgotten but very dramatic photograph of a high-school student who was shot dead by Burmese soldiers during the 1988 student protests. This photograph captured the moment when Win Maw Oo was being carried by two medical students just after she was shot. It gained worldwide publicity for a day as a news photograph before it disappeared from public memory. In picking the picture of Ma Win Maw Oo, bringing it into motion, blurring and even distorting it Amar Kanwar magically and uncannily revives a moment in history, a personal fate representing a collective trauma.

In ***The Face*** - another episode of ***The Torn First Pages*** - Kanwar juggles, dissects and accelerates a picture showing General Than Shwe, the supreme head of the Burmese military dictatorship as he tosses rose petals an extra time for the press photographers at the cremation memorial site of Gandhi in Delhi. Based on film footage secretly shot at the ceremony at Rajghat on the 25th of October 2004, Kanwar literally unveils The Face of military representation by zooming in on the features of the General who is known for the distance he keeps from cameras. The manic repetition of the general's pose in front of the media reveals the absurdity and ludicrousness of the act.

The Torn First Pages also follows the paths of Burmese activism into exile – in Oslo, Delhi, Fort Wayne (USA). Part 2 is about the diaspora in Fort Wayne and a road journey with a Burmese activist in the United States in search of the late Tin Moe, famous Burmese poet in exile to record him reciting one of his most famous haiku's that was found scribbled on the walls of prisons inside Burma. Part 3 revives old and new archival footage anonymously and secretly filmed inside Burma, from the time of the independence of Burma, the 8 /8/88 uprising through to the recent rebellion led by the monks.

Amar Kanwar lives and works in New Delhi where he was born in 1964. He had solo exhibitions in Whitechapel Art Gallery, London and Apeejay Media Gallery, New Delhi (2007), at the National Museum, Oslo (2006) and The Renaissance Society in Chicago (2004) amongst others. He has participated in various group exhibitions such as Documenta 11 (2003) and 12 (2007) in Kassel, Sydney Biennial 2006, Image War: Contesting Images Of Political Conflict, ISP Exhibition, Whitney Museum, New York, and Territories, Kunst-Werke Berlin KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin (2004).

The Lightning Testimonies by Amar Kanwar a co-production of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary with Documenta 12 is currently on view within the exhibition ***Other Than Yourself – An Investigation between Inner and Outer Space*** at Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, 2008.

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

Founded in Vienna in 2002 by Francesca von Habsburg, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary represents the fourth generation of the Thyssen family's dedication to the arts. T-B A21 is committed to supporting the presentation and production of contemporary art and is actively engaged in commissioning and disseminating unconventional projects that defy traditional disciplinary categorizations.

Amar Kanwar: *The Torn First Pages*
Haus der Kunst, Munich

Press Preview: October 7, 2008, 3 pm - 5 pm

Opening: October 7, 2008, 7 pm

Duration: October 8 - November 9, 2008

A Question of Evidence
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna

Opening: November 19, 2008

Duration: November 20, 2008 - April 5, 2009

Information:

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

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Haus der Kunst

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