

NEWS, PREVIEWS, INTERVIEWS  
BY LYRA KILSTON & QUINN LATIMER

NORTH MIAMI

# Field Guide

## Anri Sala on space, sound, and choreographing the present



Anri Sala, Berlin, 2005.

BELOW: Anri Sala, *Answer Me*, 2008. HD video projection, stereo sound, 4 min 50 sec.

The young Albanian video artist Anri Sala makes slow, exacting videos that are beautiful haunting, and absurd in equal measure. His works—which have variously focused on an emaciated horse standing alongside the blur of a busy Tirana highway, Senegalese children hypnotically repeating words in a darkened room with moths fluttering about and a saxophonist playing sadly from the window of a German high-rise—raise questions of memory and modernity, and the impact of political turmoil on one's consciousness. The artist talked to *Modern Painters* as he prepared his first major US museum survey, at MoCA in North Miami. —QL

**Answer Me, the new film that you are premiering at your exhibition in Miami, was filmed in Berlin, where you are now based, right?**

Yes, it was shot in Teufelsberg, which means "Devil's Mountain" in German. It's a very singular place not only for its architectural qualities but also for where it's built: atop a hill made from the rubble of postwar Berlin. Another building, a military-technical college

the reception of it. If I attempted to divide music into audible and visible parts, perhaps rhythm would stand for the sound, while melody would imply the image. Because music has this gift to suggest imagery, I like the conflict between the imagery evoked by the music and the actual imagery that is in the film.

**You recently stated that your work is particularly "space-bound." Why, then, did you choose to work in film rather than sculpture, with its inherent three-dimensionality?**

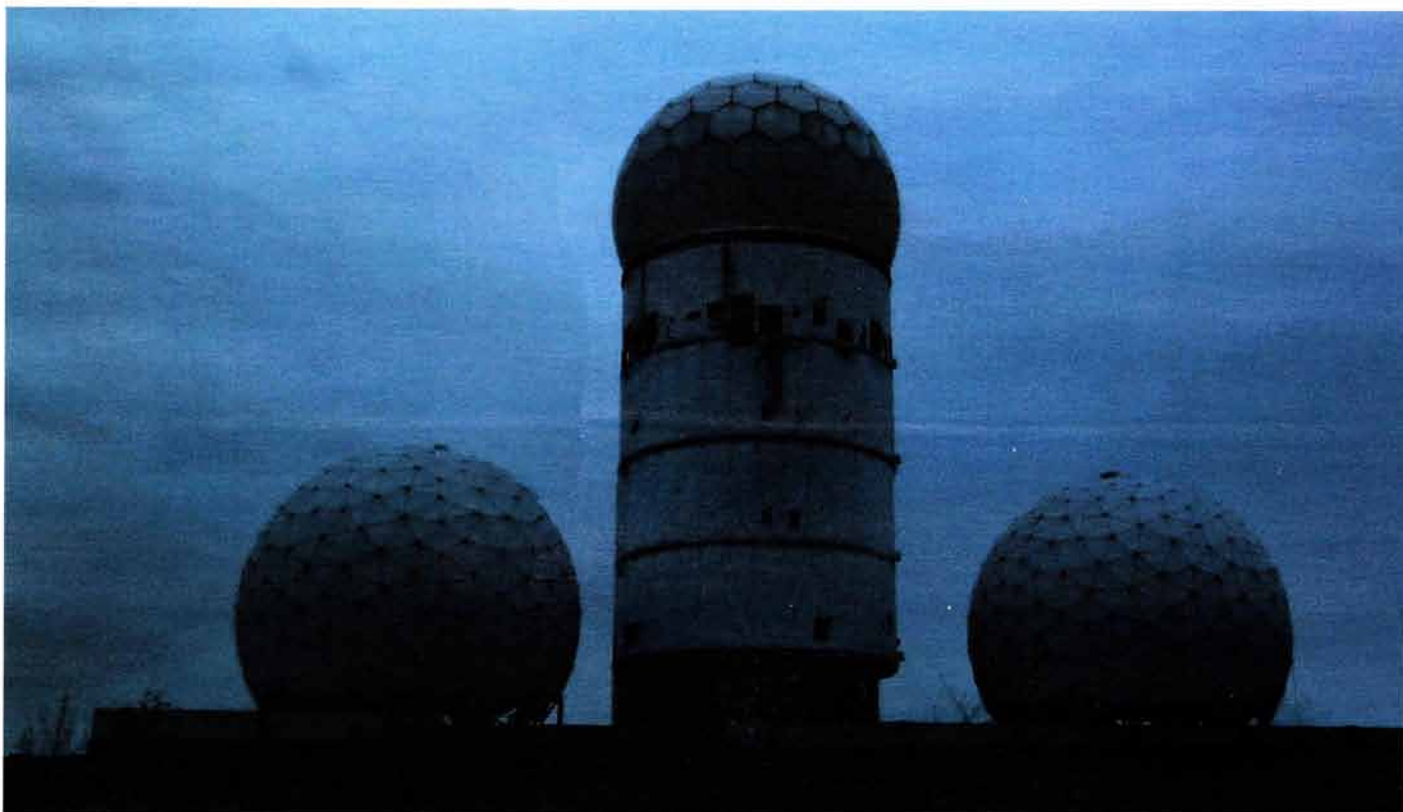
I'm not interested in using the inherent qualities of a medium but rather in the unproven potential they offer. Therefore, I like to see films as sculptures, in which the way you view the work is sequenced and time coded.

**Your videos are often projected in museums or galleries, as opposed to movie theaters, where the audience remains seated.**

**Does this make spatial concerns more of an issue for you?**

Making a show is not simply responding to a given venue. It's preparing the conditions for the different works to relate to one

another and the audience. The issue is how to translate the now and then of different films to the here and there in the exhibiting space. In a traditional theater, the environment and the film are not put in conversation, neither are the different films put in a relationship with one another. There is only one present—the present of the film—and the theater space is annulled. Whereas in an exhibition, as the visitor enters the space, there is a shifting between his/her present and the present of the film. For MoCA, I'm thinking of an exhibition where the present is choreographed. The films



designed by Albert Speer, is buried under the hill. Later on, the NSA built a listening station on top of the hill to monitor Soviet and East German communications. An artist friend, Nico Dockx, invited me to make a film there. The impressive length of the echoes in the main dome provoked my desire to stage it in a story, whose drama would come "under the influence" of the building. In the film, as a woman tries to end a relationship, her companion refuses to listen and plays the drums fiercely to silence her. Next to her, the drumsticks resting on a vacant drum play to the echo of his drumming.

**Sound seems to be increasingly significant to your videos.**

Seeing an image under the influence of different rhythms does affect

are programmed to turn on and off, inducing a presence that leads the audience through the exhibition space itself.

**Beauty, nostalgia, and absurdity seem to inevitably arise in your films, but beauty seems central. This recalls a quote by Jean-Luc Godard: "Beauty is composed of an eternal, invariable element whose quantity is extremely difficult to determine, and a relative element which might be, either by turns or all at once, period, fashion, moral, passion." Do you agree with him?**

Only 24 times a second.

"ANRI SALA: PURCHASE NOT BY MOONLIGHT," DEC. 3–MAR. 1, MOCA, NORTH MIAMI, MOCANOMI.ORG