

What We Shared:
Towards the Politics of Empowerment
Dr Kamila Kuc

How do artists respond to events that shatter pre-existing ways of apprehending the world? Looking at *What We Shared*, a hybrid artist film set in a de facto state of Abkhazia, this paper argues that in this day and age it is precisely the embrace of feelings and emotions – the affective truth, that creates necessary conditions for participants and filmmakers to effectively process and offer valuable insights into the ‘unrepresentable’ events that contain multiple truths (war, ethnic conflict).

Informed by Ariella Aïsha Azoulay’s concept of potential history, Viktor Shklovsky’s *ostranenie*, as well as Jacques Rancière’s proposition that ‘the real’ is ‘an effect that is being produced, as opposed to a fact that needs to be understood’, this paper argues that engaging with archive, memory and trauma today requires experiential responses to testimony and that these responses challenge the rigidly defined categories of ‘objectivity’, ‘fact’ and ‘fiction.’ Kuc’s employment of Artificial Intelligence technologies to treat archival sources, as well as her method of ‘performative and experiential archiving’ will be explored in relation to more participatory ways of creating empowering systems of imagery that aim to address the potential exclusion and isolation that de facto states like Abkhazia entail.

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<https://vimeo.com/679225468/d68b33f426>

Biog

Kamila Kuc’s hybrid films explore the transformative potential of apparatuses, dreams and memories in the creation of societal myths and narratives. Recently, Kuc has employed diverse archival sources in conjunction with AI tools to examine notions of agency, belonging and identity while attempting to trace complex lineages of meaning and representation. She is a 2021 Jarman Award and IWC Schaffhausen Filmmaker Bursary Award in association with the BFI nominee. Her first feature film, *What We Shared* (2021), premiered at the 65th BFI London Film Festival and was described as one of ‘the finest examples of UK filmmaking’ by Festival Scope.