

**Recent Documentary**  
**Light Captured/Divisions Recorded**  
Wednesday, October 6 at 7:30 pm — Artists' Television Access  
presented in association with 3<sup>rd</sup> i

Brad Butler and Karen Mirza's *The Exception and the Rule* is both a complex outsider's portrait of Karachi, Pakistan and a radical interrogation of the documentary form. They write: "The scars of colonialism, partition and subsequent post-colonialist ventures of improvement run deep in Karachi. Representations of Pakistan by Western media portray a rogue state, suffering from conflict, extremism, natural disasters and sporadic martial law, made more fearsome by its nuclear status. [We] seek to discover the patterns of everyday life, and how to represent them in this environment." Equally incisive—if less reverent—in its questioning of the representation of "otherness," Steve Reinke's *The Mendi*, views a CBC ethnographic doc through the eyes of a sullen '70s teenager. Also screening is Jonathan Schwartz' drifting yet troubled travelogue *Nothing is Over Nothing*, described by Schwartz as "a series of portraits, gestures, light captured, divisions recorded and lines collected in Jerusalem." (Steve Polta)

***The Mendi*** (2006) by Steve Reinke; digital video, color, sound, 11 minutes, tape from Video Data Bank

"The latest missive from Canadian vid genius Reinke finds him recovering an errant CBC documentary and finding a new way to look at it by working on the soundtrack. He sees with his ears, with his mouth. He applies his mouth to this footage, he gives it mouth to mouth, so now it can be seen again. This movie is very much in the tradition of Trinh T. Minh-ha, especially her early, interventionist, meta-anthropological work like *Reassemblage* [1982]. His fearlessness makes me wonder: how could he? How does he dare?" (Mike Hoolboom)

***Nothing Is Over Nothing*** (2008) by Jonathan Schwartz; 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes, print from the maker

"There were other places where the lord fell, and others where he rested; but one of the most curious landmarks of ancient history we found, on this morning walk through the crooked lanes toward Calvary, was a certain stone built into a house—a stone that was so seemed and scarred that it bore a sort of grotesque resemblance to the human face. The projections that answered for cheeks were worn smooth by the passionate kisses of generations of pilgrims from distant lands.

"We asked 'Why?' The guide said that it was because this was one of 'the very stones of Jerusalem' that Christ mentioned when he reproved for permitting the people to cry 'Hosannah!' when he made his memorable entry into the city upon an ass. One of the pilgrims said, 'But there is no evidence that the stones did cry out—Christ said that if the people stopped from shouting Hosannah, the very stones would do it.' The guide was perfectly serene. He said calmly, 'This is one of the stones that would have cried out.'" (Mark Twain: *The Innocents Abroad*)

***The Exception and the Rule*** (2009) by Brad Butler and Karen Mirza; digital video, color, sound, 37 minutes, digital file from LUX

“In Algeria, Islamic fundamentalists and the French ministry (unbeknown to each other) have found consensus. Islamic fundamentalist groups have begun to refer to satellite dishes (*antennes paraboliques* in French) as *antennas para dia boliques* (‘devils’ dishes) because these dishes allow Algerian residents to view the outside world. Yet in France the same satellite dishes are now the symbol of immigrants an alien cultural presence, threatening the integrity of French national identity. Replicating the pun of the Algerian Fundamentalists these dishes are also referred to as *antenne paradiabolique*—signifiers of trouble (or evil) by the French. In the words of a French Ministry of Social Affairs report: ‘We risk those with satellite receivers being manipulated by foreign powers, all the more so in that the number of dishes is constantly growing, particularly in the banlieues. In addition, the various channels are broadcast in Arabic, which could undermine years of literacy classes and other efforts at Gallicising these people. Moreover the religious content of certain programmes will probably increase the Islamisation of the banlieues.’

“Every morning in Karachi we read the local newspapers. This became a pattern. The front pages of the International and Local news told us how our day might go. In these troubled times news headlines had direct impact on our sense of freedom around the city. The distance we were prepared to go from home. Most articles were lucid, intelligent, balanced and current, but as the days and opinion cycled past so our interest in these articles waned. After all, even a cursory look at a map would raise an eyebrow as to the complexity of Pakistan’s neighbors. This is a country where so many (geo-) political points converge that their tides are directly played out in people’s everyday. The pace of daily change piled thoughts on top of one another. When we put this to a learned friend active in Pakistan he laughed and told us that ‘to understand Pakistan you must first understand that you cannot rationalize the non rational.’

“Experiences of cities like Karachi are played out globally through inexhaustible layers of mediation. If we had time, we could interrogate every representation, every word and every image. But we do not have time; instead we are all constantly in the process of making ideological decisions to curtail such discussions, in the interests of getting things done. To put it in a nutshell, we all have the feeling that we are being colonized but we don’t exactly know who by. The enemy is not easily identifiable and one can venture to suggest that this feeling now exists globally.” (Brad Butler and Karen Mirza)

“*The Exception and the Rule* is part of Mirza and Butler’s... *The Museum of Non Participation*, [...] developed after two residencies at Vasl Artists Association in Karachi. Vasl is an artist-led residency and project programme that is part of the Triangle Arts Trust’s South Asia Network, a network that also includes Khoj in India and Britto in Bangladesh. In Karachi, the *Museum...* was a museum of gesture constituted by workshops, a newspaper, street interventions and public events. In London, it occupied a space behind a barber’s shop on the Bethnal Green Road. *The Exception and the Rule* was shown in the space, along with a newspaper, a library and a running programme of events, language classes and public seminars. The film, shot in Pakistan, India and the UK, is more than a document of the journeys that were undertaken throughout this project. Throughout [...], its very organs of narrative, production and material are thrown into question, particularly through text and speech, and its own system of editing and structure. Beginning and ending in London, the film is punctuated by an ‘Intermission’ that involves footage of the daily India–Pakistan Wagah border ceremony. The narrative of film is characterized by succession and interruption; often sounds or phrases are repeated at an almost grating level of echo, but there is never a point of recurrence or return within the work at large. A scene or event is never visited twice, and so the film becomes a cumulative assembly of voice, image, citation, actor, participant and situation. (Gemma Sharpe: *Afterall Online*. [www.afterall.org/online/artists-at-work-karen-mirza-and-brad-butler](http://www.afterall.org/online/artists-at-work-karen-mirza-and-brad-butler))