

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND ART GALLERY

Video in The Atrium

CRISTINA LUCAS

VITA
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Cristina Lucas, Still from *The People That Is Missing*, 2019.
Video, 8:03 minutes. Courtesy tegenboschvanvreden Amsterdam.



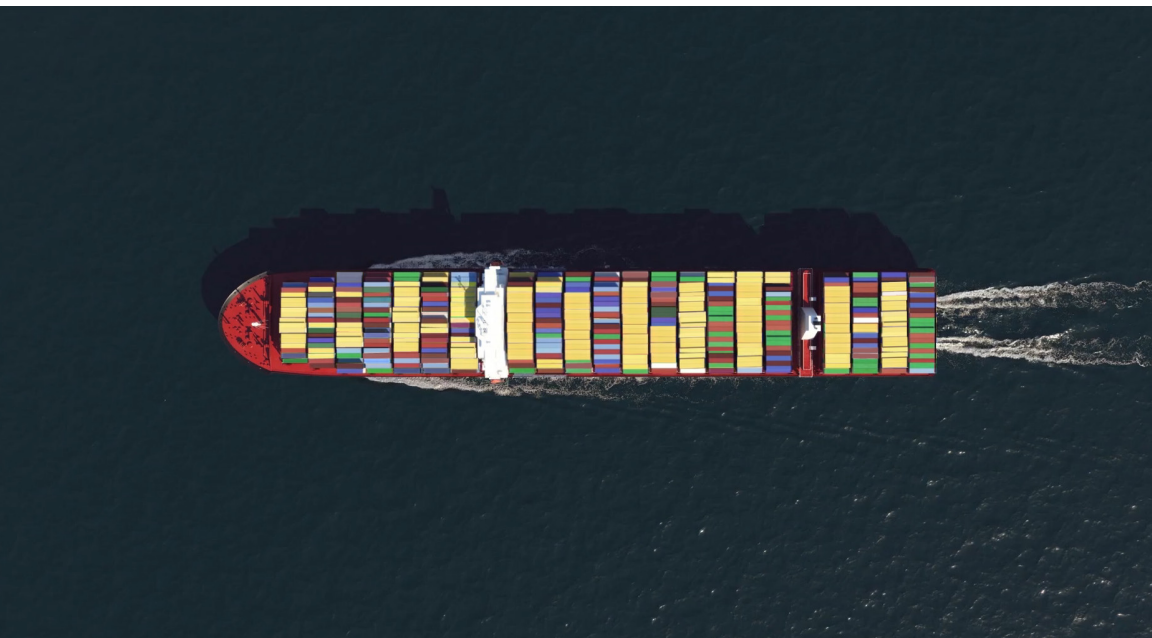
Cristina Lucas, Still from *The People That Is Missing*, 2019.
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Video in The Atrium: Cristina Lucas

Cristina Lucas (b. 1973, Jaén, Spain) explores the interrelations of global phenomena in an artistic practice that spans video, performance, photography, and installation. Her work seeks to make tangible immaterial flows of capital, information, and language across an increasingly interconnected planet. In 2019, she participated in an artist residency program in Svalbard, Norway, one of the northernmost inhabited places on the planet. One outcome of that residency program was the video *The People That Is Missing* (2019), the subject of the first in the University of Maryland Art Gallery's new Video in The Atrium series. The video features cinematic footage of the archipelago's incredible natural beauty as well as the industry that both links it to the rest of the world and, ultimately, alters the landscape itself—Svalbard's rapidly melting glaciers are early indicators of accelerating sea level rise brought on by climate change.

Lucas has been committed to illuminating the intangible elements of globalism and militarism and their lived effects for many years. *Unending Lightning* (2015–ongoing) is a three-channel video installation and a live data set that maps the sites of aerial bombings that resulted in civilian casualties. These bombings began in 1911, only eight years after the Wright Brothers' first flight, and continue to the present day. The project is continuously updated as new strikes occur all over the world. The installation includes raw data about each event in the form of a list of the perpetrators of each aerial bombardment as well as known casualties. It also features a map onto which an animation of the names of cities that suffered a bombing appear to fall. Displayed alongside the data and map is a photograph, taken by either a journalist or a local resident of the site, showing the devastation of this violence from the ground.¹ The format of *Unending Lightning* proposes several alternatives for ways to convey information about this unique form of violence, one in which perpetrator and victim are intentionally distanced. The work proposes connections between cities across the world that have suffered air raids and challenges how they are represented.

1. Frédéric Bußmann and Sabine Maria Schmidt, eds., *Cristina Lucas - Maschine Im Stillstand (Cristina Lucas - Immobile Engine)* (Chemnitz, Germany: Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, 2021), 36.



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Lightning, Lucas makes tangible an invisible exchange, in this case between the influence of thinkers, theorists, and public figures and the shape and character of the landscape.

The titular line of the poem, “The People That Is Missing,” is a reference to a 1924 speech given by artist Paul Klee and appropriated by Gilles Deleuze in his discussion of cinema. Deleuze and Klee maintain that a work of modern art is not created for a people that already exist but should contribute to the creation of a people that is to come. This nascent audience is, in the end, necessary to complete the “final force” of the work.³ After addressing the viewer, “Let’s become ‘The People That Is Missing,’” the final two lines of the poem are: “The people that can make the revolution,/The revolution that is missing.” Lucas ends the video on a hopeful note, exhorting us to become a part of the revolution necessary to complete the work and create a more livable planet for the future. In showing connections between language and landscape, the work also implicitly argues for the importance of cultural production—art, literature, and music—in developing creative responses to global challenges. This presentation of the work, situated in the arts building of a college campus, perhaps provides an ideal audience for its messaging.

—Melanie Woody Nguyen

3. Paul Klee, *On Modern Art*, trans. Paul Findlay (London: Faber, 1966), 55. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 215–217.

The People That Is Missing

CRISTINA LUCAS

The people that is missing (Paul Klee)

Everything is alive (Alexander von Humboldt)

And life has to take charge of its environment and evolve with it. (James Lovelock)

Environment is us, (Istvan Kenyeres)

Nature and politics cannot be separated. (Bruno Latour)

We are here,

There is no Planet B (Vox populi)

Artificial boundaries,

Neither the wind nor the sea know them.

Our dreams of freedom put us against each other. (Isabelle Stengers)

A passion for abolition, (Gilles Deleuze)

Ecocide

Ecotoxic

Economic

Echoes of a world without us;

We are only apocalyptic when we hope to be wrong. (Günther Anders)

Man surpassed with stolid necessity for lifeless matter; (Viveiros de Castro & Danowski)

Back to the cave. (Bruno Latour)

Between the animal we were and the machine we will be,

We are geologic strength. (Dipesh Chakrabarty)

Time is overwhelmed in trying to understand the problem, (Deleuze & Guattari)

Earth is different than territory, (Chief Seattle)

And is full of the life of our ancestors.

Only the naked man shall understand. (Oswald de Andrade)

That money cannot be eaten. (Chief Seattle)

The world began without man, and it will end without him; (Claude Lévi-Strauss)

We are headed towards the unintelligibility of extinction. (Ray Brassier)

Do we have the duty to be optimists?

Do we have the duty to be pessimists? (Rachel Carson)

I have felt bound by a solemn obligation to do what I could

With the “Capitalocene” and its beasts In the jumble of growth (Jason W. Moore)

Stop to think

In re-civilizing modern practice. (Gerardo Mosquera)

No emissions

No pollution (Isabelle Stengers)

What are our modes of abstraction doing to us? (Alfred North Whitehead)

What are they blinding us against? (Alfred North Whitehead)

We are streams of the same water

And the sea has memory. (Raúl Zurita)

—I am not your commodity

—I am not just business (Greil Marcus)

The silence of the nihilist noise

Of mortal and deadly men

Inhabits strengths that seem eternal;

But everything that was solid falls apart in the sea. (Karl Marx)

Like the island of “I Don’t Believe it” (Donald Trump)

Of “Drill Baby Drill” (Michael Steele)

The island of “The Merchants of Doubt” (Naomi Oreskes)

And of “I’m Sure I Won’t Live to See That” (Vox populi)

Or of “Science Will Come up with Something” (Vox populi)

But science is slow. (Isabelle Stengers)

Dysphoria In the War of “Crisis as an Opportunity” (Naomi Oreskes)

Where we fight, liable before us against us.

A war without winners, (Isabelle Stengers)

The climate beast knows. (Bruno Latour)

Do we know what is happening and what needs to be done? (Andri Snær Magnason)

There’s no point in fighting, but in reconciliation. (Danowski & Viveiros de Castro)

Let’s become “The People That Is Missing” (Paul Klee)

A many people, deterritorialized, able to start a process of transformation (Félix Guattari)

And able to learn what it needs to re-inhabit what was devastated. (Isabelle Stengers)

The people that can make the revolution,

The revolution that is missing.



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Cover Image: Cristina Lucas, Still from *The People That Is Missing*, 2019. Video, 8:03 minutes. Courtesy tegenboschanvreden Amsterdam.