The following texts on *Love Story* are included in this pdf:

**Texts in English:**


**Texts in German:**


**Online Viewing:**

Additionally, this pdf contains information regarding how additional footage from *Love Story* can be viewed online.
Love Story

[Texts in English]
Contingency, Iong, and Solidarity (1989), the American philosopher observes that “we-intentions” create interpersonal bonds: but at the same time facilitate immoral actions, as other groups are automatically excluded by the phrase, groups to whom this we-reference does not apply: “I claim that the force of ‘us’ is, typically, contrastive in the sense that it contrasts with a ‘they’ which is also made up of human beings— the wrong sort of human beings.”

It is possible to transfer this claim directly to the racist use of the slogan “we are the people” in Clausnitz. Rorty’s primary intention is to show how solidarity can be achieved more enduringly—a process that, in his opinion, can only occur through empathic recognition of the other as a sensitive, suffering being: “The view I am offering says that there is such a thing as moral progress, and that this progress is indeed in the direction of greater human solidarity. But that solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more tradi-
tional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation—the ability to think of people widely different from ourselves as included in the range of ‘us.’”

Narative has the potential to play an important role in creating greater solidarity, says Rorty. He defines “narrative” broadly, to include literature, documentary forms, and above all cinema: “This process of coming to see other human beings as ‘one of us’ rather than as ‘them’ is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and of redescription of what we ourselves are like. This is a task not for theory but for genres such as ethnog-
raphy, the journalist’s report, the comic book, the docudrama, and, especially, the novel. Fiction like that of Dickens, Olive Schreiner, or Richard Wright gives us the details about kinds of suffering being endured by people to whom we had previously not attended. Fiction like that of Choderlos de Laclos, Henry James, or Nabokov gives us the details about what sorts of cruelty we ourselves are capable of, and thereby lets us redescribe ourselves. That is why the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress.”
Ezzat Mardini, a young athletic swimmer, also fled to Berlin hoping for a better future in Germany than in her home country, war-torn Syria. Professor Luis Ernesto Nava Molero taught at the University of Hamburg. He faced antagonism and threats in Germany not only on account of his homosexuality, but primarily as an outspoken opponent of President Hugo Chávez, which led him to seek safety in New York. This is also where Dr. Shabena Francis Saveri, who recognized her transgender identity at a very early age, found refuge, leaving the city of Mumbai to escape the stigmatization and threat of criminal prosecution that apply to non-normative sexuality in the Indian context. José María Jão was captured and abused as a child soldier during the Angolan Civil War; he eventually fled his military captors, running from Angola to Namibia, and eventually arrived in Cape Town. Along with her three children, Mamy Maloba Langa likewise made her way to South Africa, at the mercy of smugglers. Because her husband had worked as a bodyguard to Jean-Pierre Bemba, she was no longer safe after his opponent Joseph Kabila was elected president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and left Kinshasa shortly after her house was stormed and Kabila’s thugs raped her.

The filmed interviews, in which the six refugees recount their individual stories last several hours each, and can be experienced in their full length in the context of Love Story. After recording the interviews, Breitz selected key strands and fragments of each narrative, which she abbreviated and condensed to develop scripts that would be fed to Baldwin and Moore for the fictional montage. During their interviews, the artist asked each refugee to wear a personal object associated with their experience of flight. She later borrowed these largely unobtrusive objects from the interviewees—a silver ring, a plastic armband, various bracelets, a bronze pin—asking the professional actors to wear the accessory belonging to the relevant individual as they channelled each respective narrative during their shoots.

For viewers, the turning point in the perception of the fictive and documentary films occurs when they pass from the front section of the installation to the back. A comparison between the original interviews and their interpretation by the actors makes clear how a story and our perception of it are affected as the narrator shifts. In the case of Moore and Baldwin, we encounter people who are conventionally attractive, describing experiences that are relatively easy to follow, delivered in fluent American English. These stories are sometimes brutal in their cruelty, and move us emotionally as a result of their dramatic presentation. On a rational level, however, it is clear to us that Baldwin and Moore have not experienced this suffering firsthand. The interviews with the refugees, in contrast, are lengthy in duration, at times repetitive, and occasionally difficult to understand. A greater deal of effort is required to engage with their accounts, which nevertheless remain more shocking than the fictional versions, as their tentative search for the right words heightens our awareness of the actual agonies that the people in front of us have had to endure.

On the basis of Love Story, it is possible to observe, on the one hand, the change-in-perception that occurs when Hollywood actors reanimate the experiences of others and interpret them using the repertoire of dramatic techniques they have honed. That is why Breitz recorded Moore and Baldwin in surroundings that were as neutral as possible, where the only focus is on their facial expressions and gestures, and on their vocal emphases. The montage of sequences, by means of which narrative threads start to emerge, alternates between close-up perspectives and medium-long shots, making constant reference to the setting of the shoot, and serving as a constant reminder that we are watching actors at work. On the other hand, we observe how the dramatic conventions of blockbuster cinema translate a real event or “true story,” since a movie needs to address as many viewers as possible in order to comply with the economic constraints of the film industry—and aims to entertain as well. Even films that are based on a true occurrence therefore have to dramatize reality by rehearsing familiar narrative tropes—for example, via the incorporation of a “love story”—and to tout with famous actors. Julianne Moore and Alec Baldwin represent these principles in a prototypical manner—because they have recently appeared before the camera together as a couple, for example, in the movie Still Alice (2014), a drama about a woman who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease, for which Moore won an Oscar. It is true that such a film about taboo subjects or sociopolitical deficits reaches worldwide audiences. However, the specific but perhaps less heroic or exciting story of the concrete individual gets lost during this process of adaptation to Hollywood’s conventions.

Against this background, Love Story confronts viewers with moral questions that individuals can only answer for themselves: In whom do I invest my attention and my time, and with whom do I identify? Am I interested in the individual suffering of others, and does it make a difference if their fate is conveyed to me impersonally? Which expressions of empathy are real: those that famous faces offer, or the revelations of unknown individuals? And what, to come back to Rorty, does empathy and an attitude of solidarity mean in this context? We, we are the others.

Stuttgart, Spring 2016
CANDICE BREITZ
LOVE STORY

Alexander Koch

“Alec, you’re famous! People will listen to you,” says Alec Baldwin to himself, a few moments before sharing the details of his arrest in Cairo, his journey to Italy on a desperately overcrowded fishing boat, and his eventual arrival in the unfamiliar city of Berlin on a rainy day in September 2015. Cut. Julianne Moore briefly fixes her hair. And then recounts the brutal attack that she and her children survived back home, shattering what had been a comfortable life in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and leaving her with no choice but to smuggle herself and her children—via an endless journey in the back of a windowless truck—towards an uncertain future in an unknown country. In our first encounter with Love Story, Moore and Baldwin address us via a large projection, to speak of past anguish and hope for the future, of forced migration and loss, but also of the comfort of safety, friendship and love. They send shivers down our spines. We feel for them and with them, although the experiences that they articulate are obviously not their own and—for the most part—unlikely to be ours. Such is the power of cinema. Who would deny its ability to create illusion?

Yet these narratives of escape and of fresh beginning are hardly delivered to us seamlessly. Breitz has recruited two familiar faces—two members of the global media family that we’re accustomed to welcoming into our living rooms—only to put into their mouths the stories of people who are generally treated as faceless and voiceless in our culture, only so as to introduce us to those who are typically destined to remain outside and beyond our zones of comfort: isolated in refugee camps and asylum courtrooms, relegated to the basement of our social (un)conscious. Over the course of seventy-three minutes, the montage featuring Baldwin and Moore suspends us between cinema-at-its-best—a dramatized narration that moves us to tears and to laughter; and the inevitably awkward spectacle that ensues as we observe two highly-privileged celebrities attempting to earnestly channel lives that could not be more remote from their own. We are alternately moved and utterly perturbed. What business do major stars of the hegemonic American storytelling industry—with their iconic onscreen presence and professionally polished delivery—have slipping into these roles?

Alec Baldwin as a former child soldier from Angola? Julianne Moore as a refugee from war-torn Syria? The irreconcilable gap between these famous faces and the stories of displacement that they endeavour to embody on the screen before us, is reiterated formally by Breitz’s edit, which moves us at whiplash-pace between Baldwin and Moore, weaving a series of narrative fragments into a cinematic composition that in turn invites empathy and critique, credulity and disbelief. Captured in the nondescript vacuum of a green-screen set and denied the usual tricks of the trade (the actors wear their own clothes and perform
without backdrops, accents or props), these two white bodies are exemplary of the exceptionalism that neoliberalism holds so dear. As they seek to animate the invisible lives of others, we cannot help but read the actors as privileged representatives of a broader economy of subjectivity, an economy in which an exclusive handful of individuals monopolises the precious currency of our attention, bathing in the visibility that we lavish on them as others are left to linger in the shadows of obscurity, their vague contours condemning them to anonymity. But there is still more of *Love Story* to be seen.

Moving into the second space of the installation, we come face-to-face with six men and women, whom Breitz interviewed in Berlin, New York and Cape Town in late 2015. The script for the Hollywood montage was in fact compiled from excerpts drawn from these interviews, which Breitz now presents to us in their full complexity and duration on six large monitors. These are the faces and the lives behind the fictional montage. The dramatic intensity of our initial encounter with the work gives way to sobriety, curiosity and insight, as the interviewees articulate their lived experience, sharing memories and anecdotes against a now familiar green screen. "People don't even care about us, you know, they would never put us on a movie screen and talk about us," says Mamy Maloba Langa, who fled the horrific violence that was inflicted on her in Kinshasa: "The media is only interested in famous people; I don’t think all those nice people would come just to listen to my story, I don’t think so…". José Maria João, who – as a child soldier – spent years following the murderous commands of generals (before finally fleeing Angola for the relative safety of Namibia), has a strong message for Baldwin: “Alec, you must be happy that Candice is giving you this opportunity to give people my story, to tell them about my life. I just want to ask you to tell this story that I went through in the right way. You must get it right.” João is issuing an assignment to the Hollywood actor. Some kind of collaboration is in the works.

Breitz has in fact built a bridge over which six refugees — standing in for millions of others — have been invited to step into public view. “Some of the most pressing social issues of our times have come into the limelight only after Hollywood actors and actresses performed certain roles,” explains Shabeena Saveri, a transgender activist who was forced to leave India under severe duress. Saveri is aware of the visibility that is afforded to blockbuster cinema and contemporary art. She sets out to harness this visibility, threading her own words — as a ventriloquist might — through the body of Julianne Moore. Moore rises to the task dutifully: “I was thinking, and I put myself in the shoes of that Hollywood actress, and I was thinking that if I were her, then this story would make a huge impact, because then it would reach a much larger audience….“ Saveri’s sentiments are echoed elsewhere by Luis Nava, a respected Venezuelan professor and political dissident who fled Caracas, and now lives in exile in New York; Farah Mohamed, a young atheist whose lack of religious conviction put his life at risk back in Somalia; and Sarah Mardini, who left Syria in 2015 along with her younger sister Yusra (Yusra’s participation in the Olympic Games in Rio in 2016, perhaps inevitably, attracted bids from Hollywood to turn her life story into a movie).
Each of these six stories is singular. Each demands to be heard. And each intersects with thousands of similar stories. The world is full of such stories. Who can listen to them all? Love Story asks this question pointedly, putting forward six first-person accounts that collectively amount to twenty-two hours of footage. Sooner or later, we are overwhelmed by the duration. We wander back to the condensed summary offered by Moore and Baldwin. Or we head home. Or we go to the movies. The great show trumps the truth. In an age in which cat videos and Trump’s tweets vie with stories of humanitarian disaster to capture our short spans of attention, an age in which late-night comedy has become a primary news source for so many, it is futile to insist on distinctions between fake and real news, between lived experience and fiction, between events and their representation. Instead, Breitz hacks into the operating system of the neoliberal attention economy, hoping to re-direct the flow of our attention, seeking to interrogate our capacity for solidarity.

Breitz’s montage exposes the mechanisms by means of which mainstream entertainment manipulates us emotionally, drilling into our affective being, choreographing our empathy and our relationship to community via the cult of celebrity and the disavowal of narrative complexity; a relentless combination of technology, aesthetics and performative prowess. The manipulative potential inherent in popular form is perhaps best understood, in the current political climate, by those on the right. Propaganda is hardest to dismantle and critique when it appeals to us at the level of emotion, rather than by reasoning with us. Love Story both reflects and reflects on the rampant populism of our time. The work caters to the same affective mechanisms, all the while purposefully stripping them bare; deconstructing them in order to take a clear stance against right-wing populism.

Does Love Story succeed in carving out a form of solidarity? Does the work spark passionate concern for the plight of others in a language that might be understood by many? The work is neither able (nor does it pretend) to resolve the ethical dilemma that is at the core of our fast-moving digital culture: Most of us simply don’t have the time, attention or patience that is required to hear out the very voices that can grant us an understanding of today’s economic and political cruelties. So, we surrender ourselves to the oblivion that allows such cruelties to be perpetuated. Over the past twenty-five years, Breitz’s oeuvre has scrutinised the manner in which neoliberal logic shapes and defines the experience of subjectivity, questioning the degree to which this logic might be evaded. In presenting a dense archive of marginal voices in counterpoint to an easily accessible and digestible fiction that appropriates and dramatizes these voices, Love Story urges us to interrogate the conditions under which we are able (and willing) to exercise empathy.

Breitz suggests that the end of universal narratives does not necessarily imply the failure of far-reaching instruments of communication. There’s something to be gained when we trade a longing for truth and authenticity for the hope that new modes of storytelling can be found and disseminated, stories that might make people whom we wouldn’t willingly invite into our living rooms seem familiar enough so that we might want to change our minds. At the same
time, Breitz demonstrates how readily over-simplified narratives can be instrumentalised, first to bolster illusion and then to serve ignorance. Luminous with the artist’s keen intelligence, Love Story offers us emancipatory pleasure that is tinged with the bitter insight that we may not overcome the barrier between ourselves and those values which we hold to be morally just. Failing to put our convictions into practice may effectively signal our contribution to the diminishment of others’ prospects in life.

**Text:** Alexander Koch  
**Translation:** Gerrit Jackson  
**Editing:** Kimberly Bradley

**Source of Text:**  
http://www.kow-berlin.info/artists/exhibitions/candice_breitz/candice_breitz
Oh! Oh! Love: Candice Breitz’s Monologues for Troubled Times

Zoé Whitley

Alfredo: Love is a heartbeat throughout the universe, mysterious, altering, the torment and delight of my heart.

Violetta: Oh! Oh! Love!

– “Sempre Libera”, Giuseppe Verdi, La Traviata

The crepe of the upper lip is what draws you in, before a single uttered word does. Not as a sign of imperfection, but as one of shared humanness, of vulnerability to time, to age, to circumstance – laughter, frowns, screams, puckered tastes and kisses – the travails that make a life. I stare at the larger-than-life face of Julianne Moore. She’s more human on screen than ever before: unvarnished, freckled and creased where Hollywood actors typically appear to have been burnished – around the eyes, on the cheeks and especially around the mouth. This makes her words utterly convincing. I believe her story implicitly. Even though the words are not her own. Moore is a medium. The personal narratives of three people are channelled through her: Shabeena Francis Saveri, from Mumbai, India; Mamy Maloba Langa who was born

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in Ntala, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Sarah Ezzat Mardini from Damascus, Syria. They are seeking asylum in New York City, Cape Town and Berlin respectively. Moore alternates on screen with fellow actor Alec Baldwin who ventriloquises excerpts from the harrowing life experiences of Luis Ernesto Nava Molero (Venezuela), Farah Abdi Mohamed (Somalia) and José Maria João (Angola) – all with self-aware Baldwin swagger. Over a feature-length duration of seventy-three minutes, Moore and Baldwin deliver matter-of-fact, deeply emotive monologues, performing the lives and hardships of others in the first person. Armed with the talismanic presence of personal effects borrowed from the original storytellers, the actors are a visual manifestation of cognitive dissonance, audio-visual bait-and-switch.

Candice Breitz’s *Love Story* (2016), a seven-channel video installation, initially presents itself along traditional Hollywood cinematic proportions. The artist is invested in “making visible the mechanics of exceptionalism, whiteness perhaps being the most obvious visual marker of privilege.”¹ In an interview in Johannesburg, Breitz pre-empted me with characteristic candour, asking, “Who am I, a white South African woman, to speak on behalf of anyone else?”² It’s disarming. But it’s also honest. She’s posing the question not so as to avoid it, but in order to confront it. What price does white privilege exact? What price does silence exact in the face of fear, oppression and injustice experienced by others? Why are the lives of some valued more than those of others, eliciting more pathos in the face of suffering? To whose cries do we collectively respond? We can and should still ask these questions, but the artist has already asked them of herself, and her answers move beyond mere rhetoric. They are emphatically present in the work. While Breitz hasn’t *more* right to lay claim to certain narratives, she can marshal her own position and point of view to focus our attention on stories that we might otherwise choose not to hear.
There are many well-worn Hollywood film genres: Period costume drama. Teen slasher. Rom-com. Buddy action. Breitz zooms in on a sub-genre that is ubiquitous but infrequently acknowledged: African love story. You may never have heard it described as such, but you know it when you see it. It’s the audio-visual accompaniment to Binyavanga Wainaina’s script, “How to Write about Africa”. An unsuspecting white tourist/intrepid journalist/selfless NGO volunteer/rakish arms trader gets caught up in the socio-political drama of a named (or nameless, no matter) African country. Cue the outbreak of storm-, famine- or drought-induced desperation/violence/disease (delete as appropriate). And yet, against all odds, the white protagonist almost certainly finds, as Rihanna sings, love in a hopeless place. South African actor Charlize Theron and Spanish actor Javier Bardem find romance in Liberia (The Last Face); Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Connelly share on-screen chemistry in Sierra Leone (Blood Diamond); Kim Basinger and Vincent Perez start a new life in Kenya (I Dreamed
of Africa). Each of these blockbuster titles – and many others besides – populates a dramatic African backdrop with recognisable Hollywood personalities, calling to mind a strategy that cultural critic bell hooks has astutely critiqued, one that invariably guarantees “that the [audience] will not become more enthralled by the images of Otherness than those of whiteness.” hooks refers to the logic that drives this genre as one of ‘defamiliarisation’, whereby the foreignness of the setting “distances us from whiteness so that we will return to it more intently.”

In addition to race, one can also riff on the privileges that attend to recognisability. The interviewees who appear in Love Story each recorded a personal message that Breitz promised to relay to the relevant Hollywood actor (who would be channelling edited versions of their stories). Admitting that she doesn’t know exactly why Moore is renowned, Mamy Maloba Langa nevertheless imparts something of herself to the actor. She acknowledges that given Moore’s celebrity status and visibility it is both what and who
Moore is that might allow her own story to have a wider reach: “My message to Julie … I really don’t know much about her, but what I know, because they’re famous people, because she’s a famous one (all over the news, TV), my message is that I know that when she will listen to this story and share it with the world, it won’t be the same as if it were just me – Mamy – coming to stand here to share my story … I don’t think all those nice people would come just to listen to my story, I don’t think so … But I think, because of what she is, because of who she is, I know that sharing my story will be something, you know, something nice that people will come and hear, because she’s a famous one …”

That something – the social and emotional value, the attention that we “nice people” pay – is a rich area of study, because how and to whom we pay attention, show compassion and demonstrate empathy, has serious socio-economic implications. In her thinking around Love Story, Breitz builds on philosopher Georg Franck’s hypothesis that material wealth is rapidly being replaced by “mental capitalism”: “Dedicated attentiveness imparts dignity to the person receiving the attention. This alone makes receiving somebody’s benevolent attention a most highly valued good.”7 Though Franck tends to assume a universal subject (leaving unsettled the matter of how different individuals have fluctuating access to attention), he poses useful questions regarding how we invest our time in a neoliberal economy. What kind of individual does attention stick to? In Moore and Baldwin, Breitz offers us two specimens of the kind of individuality that successfully attracts our attention. The exceptional individual occupies centre stage within our economy of images: those in possession of a particular beauty and magnetism, of athletic prowess, of political or financial power. And the more you are regarded as exceptional in our media culture, the more people are willing to invest in you materially and emotionally.

“Nobody is inherently exceptional,” of course, as Breitz herself has pointed out. “We typically have access to exceptional status via
being born into privileged social and economic circumstances, via entering the world on favourable terms. The exceptional individual is more often than not the beneficiary of whiteness and, as such, has access to particular tools of self-narration.” The exceptional individual, for one thing, is able to perpetuate the myth of being self-made, rather than registering his or her belonging to an interconnected community. Franck concludes that, “Receiving alert attentiveness means becoming part of another world.”

His analysis tallies with hooks’s observation that, “Movies not only provide a narrative for specific discourses of race, sex and class, they provide a shared experience, a common starting point from which diverse audiences can dialogue about these charged issues.” Indeed, psychologist James Cutting has developed a mathematically sound analysis for studying a sample of 150 high-grossing Hollywood cinematic releases, demonstrating a clear pattern according to which film editing and management of scene length can “resonate with the rhythm of human attention spans.”

Beneath the Hollywood veneer that is our first experience of Love Story, the layered work unfolds further on six more modestly scaled screens. Here we meet the genuine people behind the dramatisation that has been offered by Moore and Baldwin. Having previously been dwarfed by the magnified presence of A-list celebrities, we are now face-to-face with a series of intimate interviews, invited to engage at eye-level with approximately twenty hours of documentary footage. While the words delivered by Moore and Baldwin in the first space of the installation are cinematically amplified, the anecdotes of the interviewees can only be heard over headphones, by a maximum of three people at a time. This human reality – tucked away behind the great Hollywood machine – offers us an entirely different version of the six narratives that are compressed within the Baldwin-Moore montage. The mechanics of packaged identification and empathy give way to a more nuanced human vulnerability, to testimonies that yield their richness only
to those who are willing to invest considerable time and energy in them. I’m reminded here of literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, who describes “the word in language” as being “half someone else’s.” Bakhtin reminds us that the negotiation of power is always inherent to communication. Our words are not only our own, but also come to belong symbolically to those who receive them: “[The word] exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one’s own.”

Mindful of this, Breitz introduces us to a range of subjects for whom the presentation of immaculate, manicured selves – preened and camera-ready, armed with rehearsed and easily memorable soundbites – is not the end goal: “I wanted Love Story to preserve and dignify the stories that are so generously shared by the interviewees, no matter how hard these can be to hear. Mamy, for example – having described in intimate and gruelling detail the sexual and psychological violence to which she was subjected
before fleeing Kinshasa – explicitly insisted, during the course of her interview, on how important it was to her to share the minute details of her ordeal with an audience: ‘Candice, it’s really important that people know exactly what these men did to me. I want everybody to know that they ripped up every family photograph I had in my home, that they made me drink litres and litres of water to torture me and to weaken me. If I leave out these terrible details, people will not understand the horror that we experience as women’.

Is it possible to ghost-write oneself into subjectivity? Can the deployment of white privilege as a platform for those who might otherwise remain unheard overcome the reification that comes with whiteness? bell hooks has this to say: “As cultural critics proclaim this post-modern era the age of nomadism, the time when fixed identities and boundaries lose their meaning and everything is in flux, when border crossing is the order of the day, the real truth is that most people find it very difficult to journey away from familiar and fixed boundaries, particularly class locations. In this age of
mixing and hybridity, popular culture, particularly the world of movies, constitutes a new frontier providing a sense of movement, of pulling away from the familiar and journeying into and beyond the world of the other.”

*Love Story* stages and exaggerates our general inattentiveness. In today’s too-long-didn’t-read, time-poor culture, screen time relentlessly captures then splinters our attention. Offering an apt metaphor for the empathy gap that results, Breitz chooses to preserve the irreducibility of the original interviews, presenting us with stories that are impossible to absorb and process in a single sitting, if ever. How can one ever grasp the entirety of what Mamy or José have lived through? One cannot. How many people can personally relate to being a middle-class teenager like Sarah, once preoccupied with shopping for accessories and antiques back home in Damascus, now tentatively building a new life in Berlin, having been forced to flee her country? In truth, this is the experience of far too many young people worldwide, though it is an experience that is likely unknown to those reading (or writing) this text. “Even with the best of intentions,” Breitz reflects, “those of us who live comfortable lives will never truly be able to comprehend what it might be like to watch dozens of people die before you, or to watch the expressions on the faces of your children as they observe you being relentlessly brutalised. The unwieldy duration of the footage that is archived in *Love Story* is intended to point to the magnitude of the lived experience that is encapsulated in the six narratives, to infer the impossibility of ever being able to truly grasp and digest these stories in the full range of their nuance and complexity. The sheer duration of the footage denies those experiencing *Love Story* the gratification and sense of fullness that mainstream storytelling has trained us to expect. These are not stories that can be easily owned by their audience.”

And this is by design: we may invest some of our precious time in accessing the work, seduced first by Moore and Baldwin, and then
perhaps drawn into hearing the individual stories directly from the mouths of the affected. But ultimately ownership of the stories is resolutely retained by those who have lived them. The interviewees remain the only authentic possessors of their lived experience.

Breitz’s amplification of the irreconcilable distance separating dramatised narration from lived experience, is both artistic and editorial: “Often when we encounter interviews with survivors of socio-political crises or trauma of some kind, editorial decisions regarding what information is relevant (or not) have already been made for us. The editor brings a structure to narratives that might otherwise resist easy comprehension, imposing a grammar that packages the unimaginable in comfortable form. I wanted to resist offering that easy comfort to viewers as they engage the interviews that are at the heart of Love Story.”

Breitz instead provides us with a hagiography of those who have had their lives stripped of material comfort through persecution, suffering, forced imprisonment and forbidden loving. The tender trepidation of Farah Abdi Mohamed in professing his atheism transforms non-belief into the ultimate form of unrequited love; the threat of rejection from the family circle. Will we be seduced by the Hollywood formula that favours celebrations of the triumph of the human spirit over strife, to the exclusion of documentary reality? Do we want to be seen as – and to perceive ourselves as – good people? Does our “niceness” extend no further than Moore and Baldwin? I can provide no better conclusion than the artist’s own voice in my ear: “As I got to know the six interviewees and to familiarise myself with their stories, I noticed that above and beyond the specificity of their narratives (and the particular challenges of the personal journey that each has navigated), there is an intensity that they all share ... An insistence on the possibility of transcending dire circumstances, a refusal to be bowed by oppression, a striving – at times against all odds – towards more liveable lives, the utter conviction that things could be better elsewhere. I can only describe
this force – which manifests over and over again in the stories shared by the interviewees – as something like love; a love for life, a love for family, a love for god, a love for expression, a love for being on this fucked-up planet despite everything. The desire to live and love without encumbrance is profoundly and emotionally insistent throughout the *Love Story* interviews. It is a refusal to succumb to darkness, an insistence on remaining human at all costs.”

Candice Breitz’s *Love Story* trusts us to be a receptive audience rather than an indifferent one. Ultimately, we are all performing versions of ourselves, seeking approval and looking for something very much like love.
Love Story

[Texts in German]


Die Parole „Wir sind das Volk“ lässt sich nach Richard Rorty (1931–2007) als „Wir-intention“ bezeichnen. In seinem Buch...


Stuttgart, im Frühjahr 2016
CANDICE BREITZ
LOVE STORY

Alexander Koch


Doch die Darstellung von Flucht und Neuanfang geht nicht bruchlos über die Leinwand. Candice Breitz hat zwei vertraute Gesichtern, die wir als Familienmitglieder unseres globalisierten Medienhaushalts gerne auch ins Wohnzimmer lassen, Geschichten derer in den Mund gelegt, die oft als Gesichts- und Stimmlos betrachten werden und draußen vor der Tür bleiben, in den Flüchtlingslagern und Asylgerichtssälen, den Kellergeschossen des sozialen (Un-)Bewusstseins. 73 Minuten lang ist dieses Filmereignis mal großes Kino, das zu Tränen rührt und amüsiert, mal sehen wir den beiden Vertretern einer hochprivilegierten Schausstellerklasse dabei zu, wie sie redlich bemüht ihr Handwerk verrichten, um aufzuführen, was sie nicht verkörpern können. Ein anderes mal erscheint der ganze Vorgang ärgerlich. Denn was haben Großstars der hegemonialen US-Erzählindustrie mit ihrem ikonischen Auftreten und der durchtrainierten Rhetorik überhaupt in diesen Rollen zu suchen?


Breitz lässt uns am eigenen Leibe erfahren, wie gut sich affektive Reflexe medial ansprechen lassen. Sie zeigt, wie effektiv die Kombination von Technologie, Ästhetik und Rhetorik, Starkult und narrativen Kurzbotschaften einen manipulativen Apparat hervorbringt, der sich in unsere Einfühlungsbereitschaft und unser Wir-Empfinden verschafft. Man könnte es eine Kulturtechnik nennen, die heute augenscheinlich vor allem rechte Mentalitäten als Propagandawerkzeug so zu nutzen verstehen, dass sie sich nicht ohne weiteres kritisieren oder demonstrieren lassen, eben weil sie auf Gefühle, nicht auf Rationalität setzen. Love Story ist eine deutliche Reaktion auf den Populismus unserer Tage. Das Werk bedient die gleichen affektiven Mechanismen, offenbart sie jedoch durch gezielte Dekonstruktion und nutzt sie zugleich selbst, um sich dem Rechtspopulismus inhaltlich frontal entgegenzustellen.


Candice Breitz zeigt, dass das Ende der großen, universalen Erzählungen nicht das Ende weitreichender Instrumente der Verständigung bedeutet, und dass wir etwas zu gewinnen haben, wenn wir unsere Sehnsucht nach Wahrheit und Authentizität gegen die Hoffnung eintauschen, Erzählungen zu finden und zu verbreiten, die uns Menschen, die wir nicht so ohne weiteres in unser Wohnzimmer bitten, so vertraut erscheinen lassen, dass wir unsere Meinung vielleicht ändern. Sie zeigt aber zugleich, wie schnell solche Erzählungen Regime errichten, die auf den Lücken unserer Wahrnehmung erst Illusionen und dann Ignoranz etablieren. Love Story ist ein emanzipativer, klug leuchtender Genuss, dem der bittere Zweitgeschmack der Einsicht bewohnt, dass wir vielleicht von dem getrennt bleiben, was uns moralisch richtig scheint, sich praktisch als schwierig erweist und in Konsequenz unseren Beitrag zur Verknappung der Lebensperspektiven Dritter bedeutet.

Source of Text:
http://www.kow-berlin.info/artists/exhibitions/candice_breitz/candice_breitz
Love Story

[Online Viewing]
LOVE STORY

Demo Footage / Online Viewing

**Password:** Sunday

The extracts provided below are only a partial representation of *Love Story*. Links can be made available to view all seven channels in their full duration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRONT SPACE</th>
<th>BACK SPACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Hollywood Montage)</td>
<td>(Corresponding Interview Footage)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FRONT SPACE**

**I arrived in Berlin on my birthday….**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love Story (Extract 01)</th>
<th>Sarah Ezzat Mardini (Interview Source)</th>
<th>Farah Abdi Mohamed (Interview Source)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/lovestoryextract01</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract01_sarah_syria</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract01_farah_somalia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BACK SPACE**

**Hugo Chávez used to talk about ‘the Hollywood Dictatorship’…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love Story (Extract 02)</th>
<th>Mamy Maloba Langa (Interview Source)</th>
<th>Luis Ernesto Nava Molero (Interview Source)</th>
<th>Shabeena Francis Saveri (Interview Source)</th>
<th>José Maria João (Interview Source)</th>
<th>Sarah Ezzat Mardini (Interview Source)</th>
<th>Farah Abdi Mohamed (Interview Source)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/lovestoryextract02</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract02_mamy_drcongo</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract02_luis_venezuela</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract02_shabeena_india</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract02_jose_angola</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract02_sarah_syria</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract02_farah_somalia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FRONT SPACE**

**Certain situations in life push you towards extreme decisions…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love Story (Extract 03)</th>
<th>Luis Ernesto Nava Molero (Interview Source)</th>
<th>Shabeena Francis Saveri (Interview Source)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/lovestoryextract03</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract03_luis_venezuela</td>
<td>vimeo.com/candicebreitz/extract03_shabeena_india</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sarah (aged 20) and her 17-year-old sister Yusra left Damascus in August 2015. In her interview, Sarah describes the 25-day odyssey that the sisters survived as they made their way from Syria—via Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and Austria—to Germany (often in the hands of smugglers). She vividly describes how she and Yusra spent a night in the dark waters of the Aegean Sea, literally pushing a rubber boat full of grown men from Izmir (Turkey) to Lesbos (Greece), after the motor of their over-loaded dinghy failed just offshore. Less than a year after arriving in Germany, Yusra competed at the Rio Olympics (swimming for the Refugee Olympic Team).

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A well-respected professor of political science at a university in Caracas, Luis became a target of Hugo Chávez’s regime not only due to his outspoken criticism of the regime’s politics, but also because his closeted life as a gay man infuriated the conservative Catholic community in which he was embedded (Chávez himself was notoriously homophobic). After being beaten within an inch of his life by government henchman in a campus parking lot one night, Luis fled Venezuela to seek asylum in New York.

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Mamy’s husband fled Congo DRC soon after the presidential candidate for whom he had worked (as a bodyguard) lost a key election in 2006. Left to fend for herself and three young children in Kinshasa, Mamy was mercilessly raped by members of a militia loyal to the candidate who won the election (political opponents of her husband). She smuggled herself and the kids to South Africa in the back of a truck, nearly dying of suffocation on the way. Soon after managing to reunite with her husband in South Africa, he was killed while working as a bouncer at a Cape Town club. She is yet to be granted asylum in South Africa after nine years.
Born into an extremely religious community in Somalia, Farah did everything possible to ‘find the signs’ of Allah, but realized as a young child that he did not believe. Aware of the danger that he potentially faced as a result (there was a high likelihood that members of his extended family would feel obliged to end his life to prevent him from poisoning the minds of others with his doubt, within a community in which the death penalty is viewed as appropriate punishment for those who renounce their faith), Farah fled Somalia to study in Egypt, eventually boarding a rickety fishing boat operated by smugglers to travel from Cairo to Berlin, in search of a new home where he could enjoy freedom of belief.

Born into a Catholic family in Mumbai, Shabeena felt trapped in her body and longed for a future as a woman. Under laws inherited from the British colonial era, sexual intercourse that is not reproductive and heterosexual remains illegal and severely punishable in India. At a young age, Shabeena joined a hijra community, only to discover that within that community she would be condemned to a life of begging and prostitution. Having discovering the term ‘transgender’ online in her teens, Shabeena managed—against all odds—to escape the hierarchically-structured hijra community, and to acquire a PhD in gender studies in Chennai, soon after which she fled to the USA, seeking asylum and the possibility of living her life as a transgender women without daily fear.

Abducted from the market of a small village in northern Angola in his early teens, José was taken to a bush camp to join a rebel militia (UNITA). Given an AK47 on the day after his arrival at the camp, José spent many years observing and perpetrating killings in enemy villages as the militia sought to expand its territory. Child soldiers who did not follow orders were tortured and/or shot. Around 1994, José started to hear his mother’s voice in dreams, pleading with him to stop killing. He found the courage to flee the camp around 1997, late at night, running through the bush for five days to reach Namibia. He was granted asylum first in Namibia and later in South Africa, where he lives today.
Love Story: Personal objects belonging to Shabeena Francis Saveri, Mamy Maloba Langa, Sarah Ezzat Mardini, Farah Abdi Mohamed, José Maria João and Luis Ernesto Nava Molero.