

**MCAD
COMMONS**

**A STATE
IN RESOLVE**

TEKLA ASLANISHVILI

23 September–23 October 2023
Orange Project
Art District, Bacolod City



Tekla Aslanishvili, *A State in a State*, 2022, Still, Single-channel video, color, sound [Georgian, Russian and English], English subtitles, 47'00"





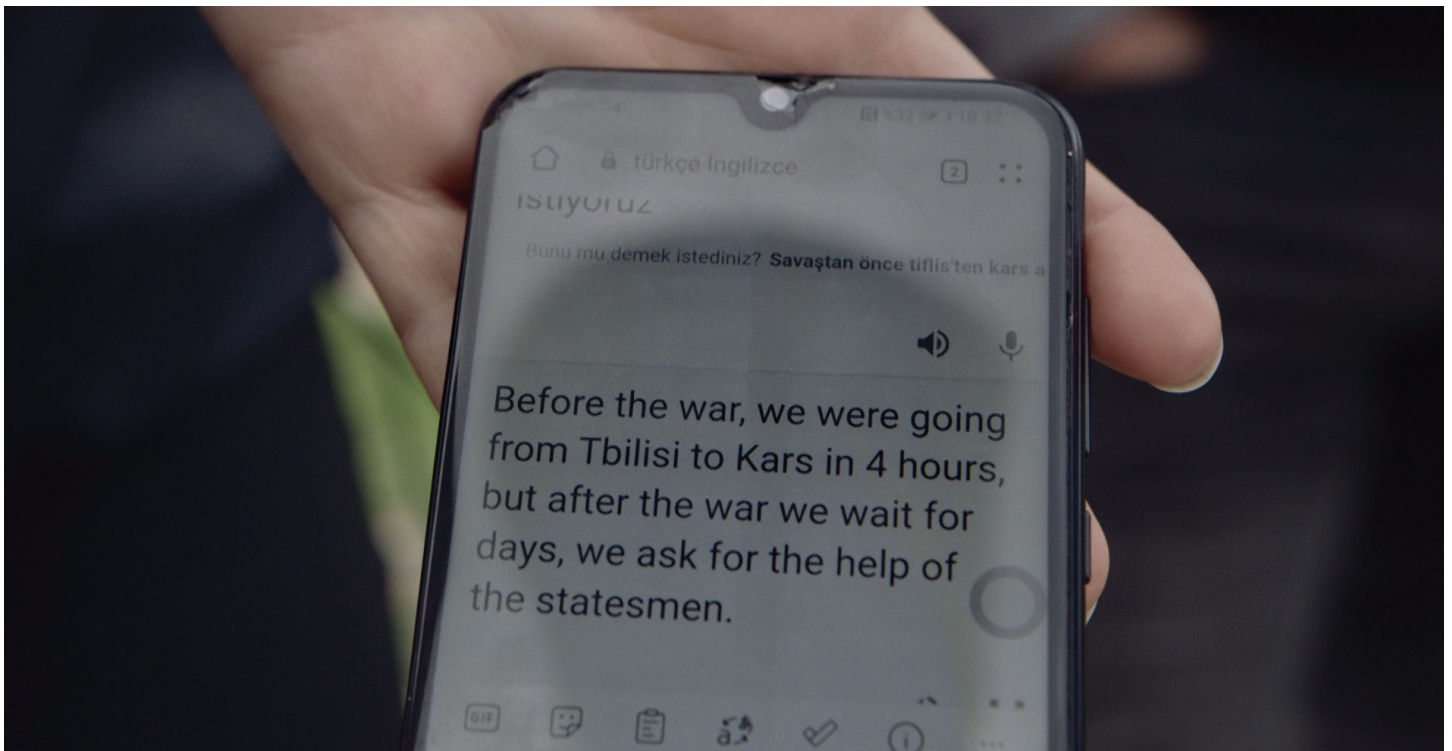
A State in a State is an experimental documentary film by artist and filmmaker Tekla Aslanishvili that follows the construction, disruption, and fragmentation of railroads in the South Caucasus¹ and Caspian regions. The film looks at railways and considers them as the technical materialization of the fragile political borders that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Revolving around scenes of delay and waiting that constitute the movement of cargo, the film gives an alternative reading to the optimism presented by narratives of the New Silk Road. Instead, *A State in a State* shows how the iron foundations of railway connectivity can be used for exclusion and geopolitical sabotage. As the railway snakes through mountains and towns, stopping at stations for people and materials to get on board, patterns of resistance emerge and a kind of infrastructural consciousness surfaces. Workers along the lines disrupt political violence through various forms of resistance; with the film exploring the potential of the rail system to create a lasting, transnational kinship among the people who live and work around it.

¹The Caucasus or Caucasia is a transcontinental region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, mainly comprising Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and parts of Southern Russia. The Caucasus Mountains, including the Greater Caucasus range, have historically been considered as a natural barrier between Eastern Europe and West Asia.

Railway systems in the Philippines were introduced in the 1870s, almost at the tail end of the Spanish colonization. When the Americans took over, they furthered the system across the main island of Luzon and included the Visayas islands. The railroads in the Visayas were put in place in the early 1900s to create both passenger and cargo transportation across the islands.² Early rail systems in haciendas were built to support logging, but later became part of the sugarcane mills, when the logging industry collapsed. The film's context in Bacolod mirrors the economic and political relevance of railroads on the islands, as those found in the regions of Eastern Europe and West Asia. While railroads in the Philippines do not stretch for kilometers crossing borders as those found in *A State in a State*, the iron roads in the Visayas are part of a history that speaks to labor practices and cruel monopolies that indentured hundreds of thousands of hacienda laborers, the effects of which continue to the present.

² "It was determined to offer five lines on as many different islands of the Visayan group. These lines had apparently never been contemplated in the time of the Spanish government of the Philippines. The lines selected in the Visayas were, first, on the island of Panay from Iloilo, the capital of the Province of Iloilo to the towns of Capiz and Batan on the north coast, a distance of approximately 95 miles; second, a line on the island of Negros, from the harbor of Escalante on the northeast coast to Himamaylan on the west coast, approximately 108 miles; third, a line on the island of Cebu to Argao, on the same coast with the option of a line across the island from Carcar or Sibonga to the west coast ... Lines were also proposed on the islands of Leyte and Samar for 55 and 50 miles, respectively." See p. 56, Frank McIntyre, "Railroads in the Philippine Islands," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 30 (1907): 52-61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1010633>.





Tekla Aslanishvili (b.1988, Tbilisi) is an artist, filmmaker, and essayist living and working in Berlin and Tbilisi. Her works emerge at the intersection of infrastructural design, history and geopolitics. Aslanishvili graduated from the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts in 2009 and holds an MFA from the Department of Experimental Film and New Media Art of Berlin University of the Arts. She is a fellow of the 2018–2019 Digital Earth, a nominee for the Ars-Viva Art Prize 2021, and a recipient of the Han Nefkens Foundation-Fundació Antoni Tàpies Video Art Production Award 2020











Tekla Aslanishvili, *A State in a State*, 2022, Still (detail), Single-channel video, color, sound (Georgian, Russian and English), English subtitles, 47'00"





Photography by Nikoloz Tabukashvili

Nikoloz Tabukashvili (b. 1985, Tbilisi) is a documentary photographer and cinematographer based in Tbilisi. After completing his studies at Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgia State University (TAFU), he has been involved in various film, music video, and TV productions. In his black-and-white photography, he captures the raw reality in cities and villages across Georgia and the broader South Caucasus region, portraying the everyday lives of common people amidst the vast political and economic transitions. His work has been featured in international catalogs, and he has received multiple awards, including the annual Kolga Tbilisi Photo contest, where he received the prize for the best landscape and genre photos.

The photo project featured in the exhibition *A State in a State* serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it documents the making of the film in which Tabukashvili acted as a cinematographer. However, these photographs also delve into the scenes of social life and labor unfolding around the specific segment of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line examined in the film. In this manner, the project extends the film's methodological approach by incorporating seemingly unrelated peripheral scenes and individual stories into the broader narrative of transit infrastructure.



Photography by Nikoloz Tabukashvili











PUBLIC PROGRAMS

THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2023, 3 PM

Negros Sugar Trail

Neil Solomon L. Locsin, Chairman of the Negro Occidental Historical Council Inc, will speak about the network of railways in Negros and the sugar industry. Mr. Locsin's talk will touch on the period when the railways were built in Negros and when they were widely used by the sugar industry, leading to the boom, and disruptions in the railways and its effects on the sugar industry in Negros.

SUNDAY, 22 OCTOBER, 3 PM

Artist's Talk: Tekla Aslanishvili

The artist's talk of Tekla Aslanishvili will focus on the work *A State In A State*. Also included in the talk are her experimental documentary film "Scenes from Trial and Error," which examines the failed development of a port and city on the Black Sea shore, and an ongoing project on renewable energy infrastructures in South Caucasus.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A State in a State was made possible through the Han Nefkens Foundation–Fundació Antoni Tàpies Video Art Production Grant 2020, in collaboration with Art Jameel, Dubai; Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), Manila; NTU CCA, Singapore and WIELS, Brussels.

The film is developed in artistic-scientific collaboration with Dr. Evelina Gambino, Margaret Tyler Research Fellow in Geography at Girton College, University of Cambridge.

Produced by the Han Nefkens Foundation and supported by the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe.

Research & Script: Tekla Aslanishvili/Evelina Gambino
Music: Ani Zakareishvili/Nika Pasuri
Cinematography: Nikoloz Tabukashvili/Tekla Aslanishvili
Typography: Dato Simonia
Editing: Tekla Aslanishvili
Field recordings: Viktor Bone/Teona Rekhviashvili,
Sound mastering: Irakli Shonia
Color: Sally Shamas

Special thanks to MCAD Manila's supporters who made the exhibition at Orange Project possible:

Charlie Co
Bong Lopue
Manny Montelibano
Candy Nagrampa

Orange Project Gallery Hours

Monday to Saturday 1–7 PM
Sunday 1–5 PM

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Image (detail) by Nikoloz Tabukashvili

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