

Carmen Gray on FoR Shorts #2

Burnt-out cars are strewn through *Kindertotenlieder*. They are charred beacons of resistant yet impotent rage against the heavy-handed policing methods, racial profiling, and lack of opportunities fuelling disaffection among youth in the Paris suburbs. Filmmaker Virgil Vernier has assembled archival footage from television news bulletins of the 2005 riots, sparked when two children fleeing police were killed, and then-presidential hopeful Nicolas Sarkozy was campaigning on a hardline policy of restoring order. Some locals rejoice at the crackdown; others condemn riot police, who fire teargas into a mosque, for stoking tinderbox tensions. The German-language title, shared with a Mahler song cycle composed as an outpouring of grief over children's deaths, reframes this lattice of historical impressions as a mourning refrain.

The idea of a road as a simple, traversable line that connects one city to another is shown in Tali Liberman's *Unrendered Road* to be a seductive illusion – at least, when it comes to Jerusalem and Jericho, geopolitical hotspots of contested habitation and access. A woman wishes to reach Jericho, governed by the Palestinian National Authority on the West Bank. A car drives through a landscape. The earth is raw, carved up, a massive construction site of occupation and projected dreams of civilisation. Despite an ancient road, the journey is absent from Google Maps. Digital place, after all, is contingent on control. Even aerial perspective offers no definitive overview when all vantage points are relative. Lines of origin back through history are barricaded and broken, with no clear way to go.

Listen to the Beat of Our Images revisits the impact of colonialism on the settlement of Kourou in French Guiana, chosen by the French government as the site of a new space base in the 1960s. Locals were displaced, and the environment disrupted with excessive rainfall. Audrey and Maxime Jean-Baptiste draw on audio-visual footage from the archive of state space agency CNES (Le Centre national d'études spatiales, or National Centre for Space Studies), recontextualising it through the voiceover of a granddaughter who considers the rocket launches not with propagandistic triumphalism but with the melancholy of a town descendant who saw life as she knew it eclipsed. Within images of power and spectacle, she clings to personal traces. Laid bare is the annihilation that is the flipside of supposed progress.

Carmen Gray is a journalist, film programmer and critic