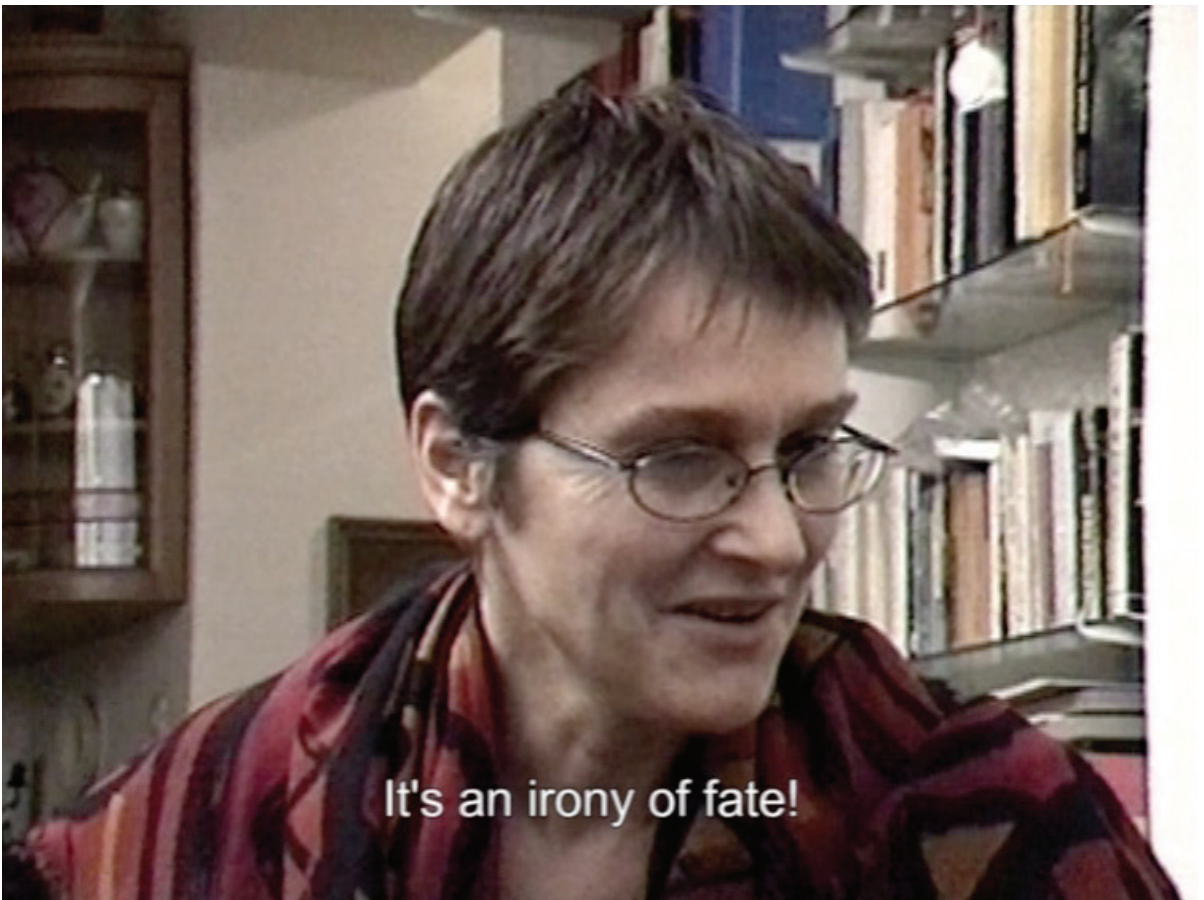




Those aren't my words.



It's an irony of fate!

Anri Sala, *Intervista* (*Finding the Words*), 1998, single-channel video and stereo sound, 26 min, edition of 6+2 AP. Courtesy the artist and Ideal Audience International, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

Subtitling Communism: Beneath Anri Sala's *Intervista*

- Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei

In Anri Sala's film *Intervista* (*Finding the Words*), which ostensibly deals with the traumatic legacy of the communist period in Albania, the reconstruction of the lost soundtrack to a mute video reel becomes a metaphor for the uncertainty and subjectivity of memory and remembrance.¹ The film opens with the artist finding an old reel of footage featuring his mother, Valdete Sala - a member of the communist elite and later director of the National Library of Albania - attending a congress of the Labour Youth Union of Albania in 1977 at which she was interviewed by Albanian National Television.² In the footage she dons a red partisan scarf and smiles, positioned next to

dictator Enver Hoxha, the First Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania (PPSh) from 1941 until his death in 1985, amidst a standing ovation. The sound for the film has been lost; Sala sets out on a quest to reconstruct it - to translate the silence into sound - and confronts

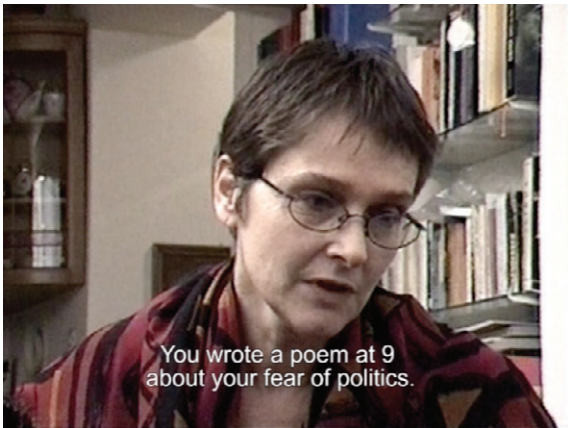
Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei investigates the politics of Anri Sala's work and its relation to the legacies of communism.

his mother with the result. Upon hearing his version, she is in disbelief about her own nonsensical and ideologically predetermined statements. But their conversation subsequently turns into a dialogue about the communist past in Albania.

In an early interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist from 2000, Sala refers to the film as follows: '*Intervista* is more personal and could be very dangerous politically, all this dealing with the past and the truth and so on, but if you don't believe the story at least you can believe the character, who in this case was my mother.'³ It is precisely the issue of *belief* that I aim to problematise here. Which mother are we supposed to believe: the mother who speaks in Albanian, or the one who reaches us through the English subtitles? This question relates to what art critics such as Mark Godfrey have called the 'meticulously formal' quality of the work.⁴ It also addresses how Sala approaches 'the traumatic transition from communism'⁵ in Albania in the midst of the country's attempts to overcome its society's 'widespread amnesia'.⁶ What has been overlooked in these interpretations, which nevertheless continue to stress the importance of 'language' and 'politics' in Sala's work,⁷ is the formal and ideological role that the mistranslations of the subtitles play in front of an international art audience in the film. A close reading of the subtitles in *Intervista* reveals a very different politics from simply 'dealing with the past and the truth and so on'.⁸

Such a reading of the subtitles in *Intervista* is particularly relevant given they are the point of access through which the film is consumed and understood by an international art audience.⁹ *Intervista* was shown only once to the public in Albania, in the now destroyed Kinema Millennium in Tirana.¹⁰ However, it has had a wide international distribution outside the country despite never having been shown on Albanian public television, or included in any local art show. It therefore did not face scrutiny in its original language. At the same time, *Intervista*'s subtitles allow us to understand Sala's intimate and unacknowledged relation with the current Albanian regime.

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- 1 *Intervista* (*Finding the Words*), 1998, single-channel video, 26min, stereo sound, colour.
 - 2 She was certainly not one of the 'ordinary people', as erroneously suggested in Mark Kremer's article, 'Getting Lost Is of the Essence: Anri Sala's Cinematic Parables', *Afterall*, vol.5, 2002, pp.78-83. Nicholas Pano observes: 'As is the case with many of the communist-era elite, Valdete has prospered during the post-communist period. She is now an executive with the Soros Foundation in Tirana. In contrast, Todi Lubonja, like most Albanians who ran afoul of the communist regime, lives a modest life' ('Review of "Intervista" by Anri Sala', *Slavic Review*, vol.60, no.3, Fall 2001, p.600). Although this is nowhere explicit in the film, Charles-Arthur Boyer suggests that Valdete Sala was already director at the time of the interview. See C.A. Boyer, 'Images Never Sleep' (trans. C. Penwarden), *Art Press*, vol.268, 2001, pp.25-27.
 - 3 '(No) Paris No Cry: Hans Ulrich Obrist interviewing Anri Sala', *Nettime* [online mailing list], 28 April 2001, available at <http://nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-bold-0104/msg00633.html> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).
 - 4 See Mark Godfrey, 'Anri Sala', *Art Monthly*, vol.278, July-August 2004, p.18.
 - 5 David Ryan, 'Anri Sala', *Art Monthly*, vol.351, November 2011, p.29.
 - 6 Paolo Magagnoli, 'Documentary Fictions: New Concepts of Truth and Representation in the Works of Anri Sala and Hito Steyerl', *Object*, vol.12, 2011, p.44.
 - 7 Ossian Ward, 'Beyond Translation', *Art in America*, vol.92, no.11, 2004, p.111.
 - 8 '(No) Paris No Cry', *op.cit.*



Anri Sala, *Intervista* (*Finding the Words*), 1998, single-channel video and stereo sound, 26 min, edition of 6+2 AP. Courtesy the artist and Ideal Audience International, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

In an analysis of *Intervista*, Søren Grammel suggests that the film makes ‘clear how language is always ideological and itself produces ideology as a constitutive element of belief systems and political constructions’.¹¹ He further observes: ‘The formal difference between visuality and language appears as a metaphor for the problem, and in *Intervista* this is constantly emphasised, reflected upon and applied to the medium itself.’¹² This observation is entirely correct, but not in the way that Grammel suggests. I propose that the main ideological device of this film is not the transformation of mute lip movements into comprehensible speech, but the consistent alteration of his mother’s words when translated into English. On the one hand, spoken claims about objective truths are transformed into written subjective perceptions. On the other, Valdete seems to be deliberately isolated from her social context, thus allowing her to become an ‘ideal’ post-communist subject. As a result, the subtitles make it possible for *Intervista* and its maker to be understood as post-communist and thus, as post-authoritarian.



According to the story behind *Intervista*, the audio that originally accompanied the film reel of Valdete’s interview with journalist Pushkin Lubonja was lost. Valdete claims to no longer remember what was said. In search of the missing words, Sala pays a visit to Pushkin’s parents Todi and Liri Lubonja, former members of the Central Committee.¹³ Todi is the former director of the national radio and television, where Pushkin worked as a journalist and director. Todi informs Sala that all interviews given on public television were completely predictable and that everyone knew what was going to be said in them. They were scripted performances aimed at rehearsing the party line. But Todi doesn’t have any recollection of the specific congress at which Valdete spoke, which took place after he and his wife had been interned as political prisoners in 1974 for agitation and propaganda against the government.

After this meeting, Sala goes to a school for the deaf mute to ask a lip-reader to reconstruct the words spoken during his mother’s interview. The content indeed turns out to be ‘predictable’ regarding ideological content, containing stock phrases such as ‘struggle

The artist is taken out of the equation, to fade into the background, to function as a neutral chronicler in history, to make him – in short – merely ‘the artist’.

against imperialism, revisionism’, ‘youth uniting its efforts under the guardianship of the Marxist-Leninist Party’ and so on.¹⁴ When Valdete is confronted with her own phraseology, she exclaims in Albanian ‘*Nuk mundet! Se është absurde! Nuk është e vërtetë!*’ (It cannot be! Because it’s absurd! It isn’t true!). These statements are translated incorrectly in the subtitles, which read: ‘I don’t believe this! It’s absurd. I just

can’t believe it!’ There are two crucial issues at stake in this crucial moment in Sala’s film. First, Valdete’s utter denial of her own words, a clear sign of repression. Second, the way in which Sala transposes this repression, from claims of objective falsehood (‘It isn’t true!’) to subjective claims about belief (‘I just can’t believe it!’). Sala’s insertion of ‘believe’ here tempers Valdete’s clear rejection of her own words. She explains, ‘*S’ka asnjë mendim. Nuk*

9 It doesn’t matter whether Sala made these and other translations himself or not. They are part of the film as it is distributed on the art market and should therefore be considered an integral part of the work. There also exists a version of the same work with French subtitles. I have been unable to verify whether the analysis that follows below can be equally applied to that version of the work. But see Nadia Fartas, ‘Temps de la transmission, écarts de la familiarité. *Intervista* d’Anri Sala’ (‘Transmitting Experiences of Temporality: Gap of Familiarity. *Intervista*, Anri Sala’), *Images Re-vues*, vol.9, 2011, available at <http://imagesrevues.revues.org/1629> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

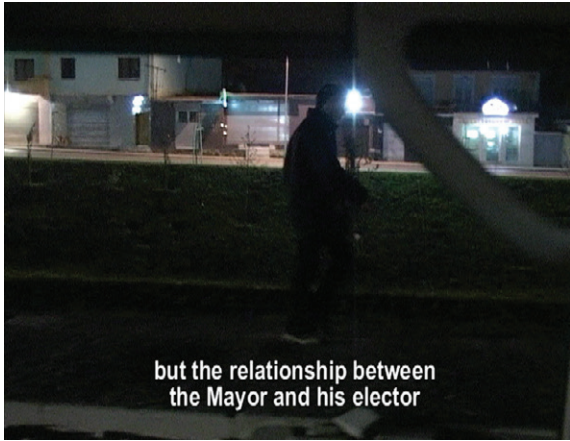
10 An iconic cinema during the communist period.

11 Søren Grammel, ‘Finding the Words’, *Afterall*, vol.5, 2002, p.69.

12 *Ibid.*, p.68. See also Magagnoli, ‘Documentary Fictions’, *op. cit.*, p.43: ‘In this documentary, truth appears to be inseparable from the mediation of opaque archival images and from an equally obscure language’.

13 The Central Committee was the second-highest level institution in the party hierarchy of the Party of Labor of Albania, and included all key government officials and prominent members of the intelligentsia.

14 See for a full analysis of the rhetoric of communist Albania, Ardian Vehbiu, *Shqipëria totalitare: Të përcaktuesit ligjërimit publik në Shqipëri në viteve 1945-1990* (Totalitarian Albania: Characteristics of Public Discourse in Albanian During 1945-1990), Tirana: Çabej, 2008.



but the relationship between the Mayor and his elector



is like the relationship between the artist and the spectator.



jam njeri që s'artikulon dot mendim' (There is no thought. I am not a person who cannot articulate a thought). However, Sala turns the double negation into an affirmation and the statement about existence into a statement about knowledge: 'I know how to express myself.' I stress here the details of the translation from Albanian to English because these are vital to understanding Sala's own attitude towards the memory and recollection of his mother.

Intervista explicitly thematises the act of translation, from the muted movements of lips to a transcription of spoken words, and from one ideological period to the another. Moreover, the film, like most of Sala's early work, gave the outside (art) world its first glimpse of Albania. As a result of the far-reaching dissemination of *Intervista*, Sala's mother became representative of the entire Albanian population that lived through the communist period, and her supposed 'disbelief' became the disbelief of all Albanians.¹⁵ Yet, as I pointed out, Valdete's emotions are much stronger than those that would have been provoked by mere disbelief given her straight-up denial that 'this isn't true!'

In response, Sala replays the footage to Valdete, uttering his mother's reconstructed words in sync with the images. Valdete still denies having said these words: '*Nuk i ke këto fjalë*' ('You don't have those words' or 'Those words aren't there'). Once more the artist mistranslates these words into the following subtitles: 'Those aren't my words.' Again a statement about objective truth is turned into a subjective perception. Later on, Sala asks his mother how she felt about deaf mutes having made her speech in the past accessible to her; she responds, '*ironia e madhe*' (the great irony). However, Sala translates this as 'It's an irony of fate!' Valdete doesn't refer to 'fate' and its insertion into the translation has an orientalist effect, turning her from a woman of reason, conviction and objectivity into a stereotypical Balkan subject who abandons herself to the uncontrollable waves of history.

Anri Sala, *Dammi i colori*, 2003, video, 15min and 24sec. Courtesy the artist, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Zurich; Johnen & Schöttle Gallery, Cologne and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

¹⁵ As Edi Muka states, '*Intervista - Finding the Words* addresses a personal story but reaches the full dimensions of an Albanian universe. It is the personal story of every individual'. Cited in S.Grammel, '*Finding the Words*', *op. cit.*, p.69. The description on the website for distributor Icarus Films speaks of a 'reflection on the country's - and one woman's - history and present state', available at <http://www.icarusfilms.com/new99/intervis.html> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

These mistranslations obfuscate the fact that Sala's family's social status and associated connections to the communist establishment were conditions for making *Intervista*. These connections granted him contacts within the Lubonja family, meaning he had access to top-tier members of communist society. When he calls them early in the film, he introduces himself as the son of Valdete Sala, saying '*Besoj se njiheni*' (I think that you know each other), implying familiarity. In the film, Sala translates her words into 'I think that you know her', avoiding the mutual implication of 'each other'. The result of Sala's investigation is that Valdete's role during the communist regime seems to be relatively isolated from her actual social context. There are other significant moments in which the artist conceals his mother's relationship to the regime. For instance, when Liri Lubonja speaks about those who continued '*të ushqenin idealet*' (to nurture the ideals) of the revolution, Sala translates this into 'to cling to their ideals'. The implication of the original claim is rather different from that in Sala's translation. Lubonja's use of the word *ushqenin* is neutral with a positive tendency, whereas the translation 'cling' has a negative connotation. Valdete, Liri continues, '*ka qenë një e re aktiviste, vajza e pastër. E donim, e donim gjithë neve Valdeten*' (Valdete has been a young activist, a proper girl. We loved her, we all loved Valdete). But this last sentence is translated simply as 'honest, sincere',¹⁶ thus again severing the ties between Sala's mother, his family and those 'others' identified with the regime – others, who, different from his family, fell afoul of that same regime.

Sala's ideological sub-titular translation device, through which his mother appears as the 'ideal' post-communist subject, becomes even more problematic at the moment she addresses the conditions in which they used to live as members of the communist elite. She states that, if she could go back, she wouldn't do anything differently, '*sepse kam besuar se bënja mirë*' (because I have believed that I did good). The artist, once more, protects his mother from herself, by removing the moral qualification: 'I believed in what I was doing.' He asks his mother whether she sees anything '*rastësisht të përbashkët*' (incidentally in common, the 'incidentally' is left out in the subtitle), between the regime and the deaf mutes. Valdete half-heartedly obliges with this cue from her son in order to develop the following analogy: '*Ai ishte një sistem që ishte shurdh dhe fliste me një gojë, me një zë*' (It was a system that was deaf and spoke with one mouth, one voice). Yet, Sala translates: 'Yes, we were living in a deaf and dumb system, where we only spoke with one mouth and one voice.' The objective 'it' is turned into the subjective 'we'. This we is avoided, however, at the moment the artist himself becomes implicated. His mother continues, '*Kjo është, por në një mënyrë shumë simbolike, sepse nuk kemi qenë kaq... kaq strikt*' (It's that, but in a symbolic way, because we haven't been that strict). Only here when Valdete speaks of 'we', the we of the elite families – a we that includes Sala – does he suddenly become the one who is removed. He translates his mother's 'because we haven't been that...' as 'because in certain milieus [sic] things were less strict'. This mistranslation cannot have been a matter of economy; it clearly shows that Sala wants to avoid being implicated in a logic that should remain outside his film. The most problematic omission of this kind is perhaps that which follows the above translation, when Valdete turns to her son and says '*Edhe ti e di këtë*' (You too know this); these words were never translated into the subtitles! She continues, '*A e mban mend, vjershën që ke shkruar 9-vjeç që ka frikë nga politika?*' (Do you remember, the poem you wrote nine years old, that there is a fear of politics?). This is a direct question, but again Sala erases himself by turning it into a statement: 'You wrote a poem at 9 about your fear of politics.' The artist's answer is no longer needed, because the English-speaking audience never picked up on the question.

The translations in *Intervista* accomplish two things. First, they provide Sala's mother with an acceptable and recognisable subjectivity. She is a person with common beliefs and hopes with which foreign viewers can sympathise. She is not a traumatised figure who grew up in a totalitarian state who refuses to relate to or acknowledge her past ideological statements while *at the same time* twice stressing her belief that she 'did good'. Second, the translations gently remove anything that would implicate Sala in his mother's history – his mother may be a product of the communist regime and the relative privileges she enjoyed in that period, but he certainly isn't. The artist is taken out of the equation, to fade into the background, to function as a neutral chronicler in history, to make him – in short – merely 'the artist'.

16 Even in the French translation: 'honnête, sincère'. See N. Fartas, 'Temps de la transmission', *op. cit.*, p.12.



...in terms of the struggle
against imperialism, revisionism...



It was real Anri,
because we were building.

Anri Sala, *Intervista* (*Finding the Words*), 1998, single-channel video and stereo sound, 26 min, edition of 6+2 AP. Courtesy the artist and Ideal Audience International, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

Sala's treatment of the subtitles in *Intervista* gives us important pointers with respect to the politics of his artistic practice. In the film he absolves his mother (and himself) from involvement in the communist regime. A later work, which engages with the current Albanian political leadership, betrays a similar tendency. Once again, Sala removes himself from the political equation. This 2003 film somewhat eclipsed *Intervista* in contemporary overviews of the artist's work: *Dammi i colori* features Sala's former art academy teacher, former minister of culture and then Mayor of Tirana, Edi Rama.¹⁷ In spite of Sala's 'fear of politics', which according to his mother he had expressed as a boy, *Dammi i colori* portrays a political action, an urban renewal project initiated by Rama in his first term as mayor. Evening shots of the Tirana façades, painted in colourful patterns, are interspersed with a monologue delivered by Sala's former teacher filmed inside a taxi. Even more than he does in *Intervista*, Sala withdraws from the situation – his questions and reactions are never shown. In the film, Rama expounds on a totalitarian vision of an artist-mayor, who is not politically responsible to the people, but rather 'performs' for them: 'The relationship between the Mayor and his elector is like the relationship between the artist and spectator'.¹⁸ This of course is not a democratic situation, but rather an 'avant-garde of democratisation, a process that precedes [...] democratisation'.¹⁹ All of this passes without comment or reflection. Sala's film has in fact become a powerful advertorial for Rama, elected Prime Minister in 2013, and who has continuously deployed *Dammi i colori* as propaganda for his own policies.¹⁹ Ironically, however, Rama's politics continue to 'precede' democratisation fifteen years later, even though some in the art world erroneously continue to qualify them as 'Beuysian'.²⁰

Like Sala, Rama came from a prominent communist family. His father Kristaq Rama was the most prominent socialist-realist sculptor, and member of the Presidium of the *Kuvendi Popullor* (People's Parliament).²¹ It is not only Rama's political ascendancy that signals the survival of the former communist nomenclature in contemporary Albanian politics. Last year, Gramoz Ruçi became Speaker of Parliament after Rama's election victory. Ruçi was former first secretary of the PPSH (Albanian Communist Party) in Tepelena and communist Minister of Interior Affairs in 1990, during which he was responsible for the destruction of the archives of the feared Sigurimi and the 'April 2 massacre' in which four pro-democracy protestors were shot dead in Shkodra when they invaded the local PPSH offices in 1991.²² Rama's new government also saw the return of former Minister of Interior Affairs Fatmir Xhafaj,²³ who had been a prosecutor under the communist regime.²⁴ Meanwhile many former nomenclature members or their direct family continue to hold high positions in the government, while families of former political prisoners often continue to live in poverty without their former tormentors going to prison.

This complex background to Rama's political career is erased in *Dammi i colori*. Ever since its release, Sala has held a key function in mobilising the international art world to support and legitimise Rama's political regime (an act that we might call 'art-washing') – first through a series of international biennials and later through initiatives such as the Centre for Openness and Dialogue,²⁵ of which he is a board member.²⁶ There is also a strong pattern of events that show up Sala's support as essential to the development of Rama's personal artistic career. Before his election as prime minister in 2013, Rama did not enjoy such international

17 *Dammi i colori*, 2003, video on DVD, colour, sound, 15min 24sec.

18 In this sense, Rama's political style needs to be analysed as a predecessor to *Trumpian* politics.

19 For further discussion see my 'Give Me the Colors... And the Country: Albanian Propaganda in the 21st Century', *ArtPapers*, March/April 2016, pp.10-16, also available at http://artpapers.org/feature_articles/2016_0304-Albania.html (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

20 Hans-Ulrich Obrist, 'Hans Ulrich Obrist on Why We Need Artists in Politics', *Artsy* (18 September 2017), available at <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-hans-ulrich-obrist-artists-politics> (last accessed 25 December 2017).

21 The People's Parliament was the name of the legislative body during the communist dictatorship. As there were no free elections, its role was mainly symbolic.

22 The Sigurimi, officially the Directorate of State Security, was the state security, intelligence and secret police during the communist dictatorship, responsible for the arrest, imprisonment and torture of many political dissidents. An internal order from the Ministry of Interior Affairs dated 2 April 1991 signed by Ruçi states 'Hit hard from the beginning of the protests, [...] take up high positions with prepared snipers [...]'. 'Dokumenti: Masakra e 2 Prillit '91, zbulohet urdhri i Gramoz Ruçit: Qitësit të zenë lartësitë, goditi ashpër!' ('Document: The massacre of 2 April 1991, the order of Gramoz Ruçi discovered: Let snipers take up high positions, hit them hard!'), *Balkanweb*, 14 September 2017, available at <http://www.balkanweb.com/site/dokumenti-masakra-e-2-prillit-91-zbulohet-urdhri-i-gramoz-ruçit-qitesit-te-zene-lartesite-goditini-ashper/> (last accessed on 23 January 2018).

23 Xhafaj was also briefly Minister of Interior Affairs in Rama's first government, from 12 March to 22 May 2017.

24 See Desada Metaj, 'Sikur Fatmir Xhafaj...' (When Fatmir Xhafaj...), *Exit*, 17 March 2017, available at <http://www.exit.al/2017/03/17/sikur-fatmir-xhafaj/> (last accessed on 23 January 2018).



Installation view, 'Edi Rama', Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples, May 2016. Photograph: Francesco Squeglia. Courtesy Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

recognition as he has now.²⁷ His presence was clear in Sala's recent solo show *Anri Sala: Answer Me* at the New Museum, New York in 2016, in their collaborative work *Inversion – Creating Space where there appears to be None* (2010). Several reviews focussed on the Albanian prime minister's contribution.²⁸ Rama's first solo show in Italy took place at Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, also in 2016, just after Sala's show at the same gallery in 2015. And on 11 November 2016, Rama opened his first solo show in the United States at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, which also represents Sala. The press releases made for both the Italian and US show made sure to prominently mention Rama's 'friend and collaborator Anri Sala'. Undoubtedly, without Sala's help, Rama's work would never have found entrance to the international art world.

Despite the fact that Rama, like his fellow Balkan leaders, has developed his own brand of authoritarian leadership and propaganda,²⁹ Sala has never openly addressed his close ties with a politician who considers his country to be his private 'canvas'.³⁰ Rama casts himself as the visionary leader of an avant-garde of democracy, while at the same time leading one of the most corrupt governments in Europe.³¹ If anything, Rama's authoritarian discourse should set off all kinds of alarm bells for someone who has so intensely studied the language of the communist regime and its traumatic effects on memory. But Sala has remained silent. Like his mother back in the day, he stands next to the 'great leader', and the soundtrack is mute.

25 See Raino Isto, "'It's Very Exciting to Talk About Artist-run Countries": Edi Rama, the COD, and the Problematics of Celebrating the Artist-Politician', *ARTMargins* [blog], 22 December 2016, available at <http://blog.artmargins.com/index.php/74-it-s-very-exciting-to-talk-about-artist-run-countries-edi-rama-the-cod-and-the-problematics-of-celebrating-the-artist-politician.html> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

26 For board members see the Centre for Openness and Dialogue website at http://cod.al/?page_id=21. The board also includes Philippe Parreno, Christine Macel, Maja Hoffman and Alastair Campbell.

27 See 'Edi Rama', *Artfacts* [art information database], available at <http://www.artfacts.net/en/artist/edi-rama-21783/profile.html> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

28 For example, Jason Farago, 'Anri Sala: Answer Me Review - Art Cures 20th Century's Broken Dreams', *The Guardian*, 4 February 2016, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/04/anri-sala-answer-me-review-art-cures-20th-century-s-broken-dreams> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

29 V.W.J. van Gerven Oei, 'Give Me the Colors', *op. cit.*, pp.13-15.

30 Edi Rama, keynote lecture at '2014 Creative Time Summit: Stockholm', available at <http://creativetime.org/summit/2014/11/15/edi-rama/> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

31 See, for example, 'RCC Balkan Barometer 2017: Unemployment remains the chief concern, while anxiety over corruption grows' [press release], Regional Cooperation Council, 9 October 2017, <http://www.rcc.int/news/304/rccs-balkan-barometer-2017-unemployment-remains-the-chief-concern-while-anxiety-over-corruption-grows> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

Already within Sala's earliest work, *Intervista*, we can discern the processes that allow him – and maybe even the entire nation of Albania – to deal with the political past, and, by extension, with the political present. In the transformation of objective truth into subjective perception, and the self-effacing gestures that we have seen in the subtitles (the subtext) of *Intervista*, we see repression at work – the will to 'not see'. Sala never approached those who, unlike the Lubonjas or his mother, *refused* to be card-carrying PPSH members, or those who, simply because of the family they belonged to, were persecuted systematically for more than 50 years. He never publicly questioned the conditions that made the production of his first film possible and, in a way, never left the life communism prepared for him. This is even more visible in the way in which he has chosen to allow Rama to use one of his most well-known and widely shown works, *Dammi i colori*, as political propaganda, without ever questioning the relation between Rama's propaganda and that of the former dictatorship – a relation that is far from incidental.

In an interview with Obrist, Sala says of the footage of his mother, 'I found that this image of her belonged much more to me, to my age, to my moment, than to her age'.³² This is, indeed, *Intervista's* 'great irony of fate'. The work, I argue, reveals to us much more about Sala's generation – the one currently in power – than his mother's. Valdete refuses to acknowledge that she ever spoke the hollow pre-fab phrases of communist discourse; but Sala refuses to acknowledge the background of that categorical refusal and the implications for him and his work. Valdete represses *a fact*; Sala represses *that it is a fact* – he represses *facticity*. And the last of these is more dangerous than the first, because it denies that *possibility of truth*, rather than *truth itself*. In the absence of any *possibility of truth*, why bother interrogating the politician or political system one serves?

32 '(No) Paris No Cry', *op. cit.*