

ENTANGLED HISTORIES OF ART AND MIGRATION

THEORIES, SITES AND RESEARCH METHODS

Edited by
Cathrine Bublatzky, Burcu Dogramaci,
Kerstin Pinther & Mona Schieren

Entangled Histories of Art and Migration

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Introduction

Cathrine Bublatzky, Burcu Dogramaci, Kerstin Pinther and Mona Schieren

> *It wasn't just a pastime. Our stories were drumming with power. Other people's memories transported us out of our places of exile, to rich, vibrant lands and to home. They reminded us of the long, unknowable road. We couldn't see yet, fresh from our escape, but other sharp turns lay ahead. We had created our life's great story; next would come the waiting time, camp, where we would tell it. Then struggle for asylum, when we would craft it. Then assimilation into new lives, when we would perform it for the entertainment of the native-born and finally, maybe in our old age, we would return to it, face it without frenzy: a repatriation.*
>
> *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You.*
> (Dina Nayeri 2020, 6f.)

Dedicated to the stories of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and exiles, this edited book asks how these stories are interwoven with art, art practices, activism, reception, and (re-)presentations. As a significant phenomenon of social transformation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this book explores the complex entanglements of art and aesthetic practices with migration, flight, and other forms of enforced dislocation and border/border crossings in global contexts. These entanglements take centre stage, when migration shapes forms and aesthetics (and vice versa), when actors employ image politics and visualisation strategies in and about migration at different times and different places situationally, or when materialities and sites gain importance for decision-making processes and different knowledge production. In order to give space to these interwoven stories of art and migration and the inherent power of pluriverse knowledge, the book takes up a decisive art and cultural studies perspective and questions the significance of cross-border changes of location for artistic practice in migration and elaborates on the need for new or different theory formation and research practices.

With its case studies and theoretical approaches, the argumentation of the book unfolds over five key sections: 1. Visibilities | Invisibilities, 2. Sites | Spaces,

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3. Materiality | Materialisation, 4. Racism | Resistance, and 5. Practices | Performativity. These aspects are interconnected by a common line of inquiry that consists of three cross-cutting topics in the field of migration, namely, theories, sites, and research practices.

Fundamental to the conception of this book, we envisage different theoretical approaches: from image and art historical analysis to close reading, from oral history and participant observation to performance-theoretical investigations, and from anti-racist intervention to artistic research. The notion of 'sites' is organised through the spatial location involving materialities and actors, regardless of whether the sites are real, imagined or in process. It thus brings together research practices from art history, anthropology, ethnology, performance studies, as well as activist approaches. Accordingly, *Entangled Histories of Art and Migration* combines different forms of knowledge production, agency, and self-empowerment, and draws attention to, for example, the importance of gender, intersectionality, or new media. With the aim of sustainably anchoring long-term engagement and research on migration and displacements within the field of global art studies, the various sections propose fresh categories of theoretical considerations, site-specificity, and research practices.

This field of research – the linkage of art and migration – was rather marginalised for a long time, and only sharpened and profiled since the early 2000s. In studies such as Kobena Mercer's *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers* (2008), migration has been primarily described within the framework of trans/national paradigms. Christian Kravagna (*Routes* 2002) thematised the routes of migration whereas Mieke Bal and Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro (2011) made steps towards a 'migratory culture'. Sten Pultz Moslund et al. (2015) emphasised the interweaving of migration, politics, and aesthetics. The *Handbook of Art and Global Migration* (Dogramaci/Mersmann 2019) brought together interdisciplinary and international perspectives. The concept of the border in relation to art production, communication, belonging, and place-making was the subject of two publications (Photiou/Meskimmon 2021; Miyamoto/Ruiz 2021). Cultural difference was addressed by Monica Juneja (2012), whereby the analysis of individual and social mobilisation was reflected as the core of an anti-essentialist theory, especially within the framework of postcolonial studies with a view to a hybrid subject in a diasporic context (Guillory 1994; Hall 1994; Farrell 2003; Bailey et al. 2005).

Here, representatives of cultural theory call for a discussion of migratory practices and aesthetics (Bal 2007) and the need for writing alternative historiographies (Spivak 1999, 198–311). Based on a critique of western systems of representation (Burgin 1996, among others), the structures and dimensions of global migration processes in the arts as a neuralgic point of national historical narratives had

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already moved into the focus of art historical studies in the 1990s. Saloni Mathur (2011), for example, discusses how the effects of alienation and exclusion as central components of migration are increasingly being treated as a theme in art and are equally reflected in the production, perception, and exhibition of art. Equally, T. J. Demos (2013) focuses on artists' critical engagement with crises of globalisation, showing the connection between migration, politics, and aesthetics. While others asked how migration can be not only a biographical but, above all, a thematic and conceptual movement for artists (Dogramaci 2013), attention turned towards the representation and negotiation of migration in the visual media of immigration societies (Wendl et al. 2006; Bischoff et al. 2010; Gutberlet/Helff 2011) and to specific artistic articulations such as design and migration (Dogramaci/Pinther 2019).

Since the mid-1980s, artistic genres and actors gradually began to take on more concrete forms in publications, exhibitions, and research projects. For some years now, historical exile research has become increasingly open to questions of migration and flight research – for example, in the 35th volume of the International Yearbook of the Society for Exile Studies (Jahrbuch Exilforschung), entitled *Passages of Exile* (Dogramaci/Otto 2017). At the interface between exile and migration research, institutions are particularly active with (virtual) exhibitions such as *Arts in Exile* of the German National Library (since 2013) or *Uncertain States* of the Academy of Arts (Berlin, 2016/17), which turn their attention to the arts in the past and present under the conditions of cross-border, often forced changes of location.

In light of the increasing empowerment of the depiction and representation of migrants in the mass media, scholars started to ask how these images of migration and flight are interwoven with political decision-making mechanisms to guide public debates about undocumented migration (Wenk/Krebs 2007; Bischoff et al. 2010; Lünenborg et al. 2011). In overlaps with image studies and visual studies oriented towards media and cultural studies, a theoretical and methodological research interest in inter- and transcultural image migration (*Migrating Images* 2004; Appadurai 2005) as well as manifestations of visual culture of migration (Brandes 2011) developed. With a broader methodological reflection of media and cultural studies-oriented image studies (e.g. Mitchell 2004), the research considered the transculturality of image media, their materiality and historical location in relational migration-specific spatial and historical contexts, or migration-specific concepts of space and time (Genge/Stercken 2014).

From a methodological–theoretical point of view, recent migration research in art studies can tie in with the approaches of visual culture, gender, and postcolonial studies (Hall/du Gay 1996; Pratt 1992; Mirzoeff 2001). Since around the mid-1990s, the interweaving of race and gender constructions in the visual culture of modernity,

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especially the phenomenon of the ethnicisation of gender and the sexualisation of cultural difference, has been investigated (*Inklusion. Exklusion* 1996; Friedrich et al. 1997; Kravagna 1997). The common consensus is that images do not represent natural conditions but produce and establish power relations between genders and cultures alike. On this basis, critical art studies formulated questions about the social production of meaning in visual culture and began to deconstruct hegemonic regimes of representation and gaze (Karentzos et al. 2010; Schmidt-Linsenhoff 2010; Schade/Wenk 2011). The period of investigation of postcolonial studies has currently been extended to the early modern and pre-modern periods with the help of transcultural approaches (Rees 2015), in order to open up a multi-perspective field that takes (contemporary) migratory movements into account from a global perspective (Genge 2012; McPherson et al. 2013; Mazzara 2019).

Despite these diverse expansions in the field of migration research and art studies, there has not yet been an institutionalisation and networking of previously parallel research directions such as postcolonial or transcultural art history and exile research under a common questioning of migration-specific phenomena and their aesthetic implications. With a view to debate on decoloniality (Mignolo/Walsh 2018; Vázquez 2020), there is still a lack of a multi-perspective and transdisciplinary approach to researching global migration linkages and their local effects with a focus on the arts. In response to this research desideratum, this volume takes a close look at the interwoven histories of art and migration and in its interdisciplinary orientation also attempts to pursue the logic of interconnectedness.

Central to this book is the polyphony of narratives demanded by postmigrant and decolonial research (Alkın/Geuer 2022), which also shifts the research practices from writing and research 'about' to a horizontal engagement that takes into account other forms of knowledge emphasised (in reference to Haraway 1988) as "migrant situated knowledge" (Güleç 2018, 141). This allows for the integration of alternative epistemologies either in artistic work or in research. The naming of inadequacies, deficits, and limitations led to the demand for cognitive justice, for the recognition of the plurality of sciences and the diverse forms of knowledge (production). These insights have resulted in the realisation that the different interlocutors not only have different histories but often also live in different realities. Radical difference and incommensurability foster investigation of ontological claims on their own terms, attempting to approach diverse realities and their understandings without privileging one – the western one – over the others. The positioning of knowledge can help here to defuse and decentralise the location of (cognitive) power (Giraldo Herrera 2018). In artistic research, different sites and methodological approaches make the many levels of exchange between artist and writer resonate. It can be applied in both a scholarly and artistic manner and

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enables only in a secondary step the possibility of differentiation – as well as the mutual reference of these areas. Following this line of argument, one can understand the limits of modern (Eurocentric) epistemology. Especially when it comes to how artists critique and provincialise the dominant and universalising western views (Chakrabarty 2000) and their violent flipsides of colonialism, racism, classism, and nationalism, but thus also actively realise the possibility of pluriversal ways of knowing (Kothari et al. 2019; Escobar 2020). The desire is to create a 'pluriverse' (Escobar 2017; Vázquez 2020), in which many worlds can fit.

This edited volume originates from the scholarly network of the same name "Entangled Histories of Art and Migration", which brought together sixteen researchers under the lead of Cathrine Bublatzky and was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG, 2018–22).[1] The group focused on three central and overlapping fields of research in order to outline the interwoven histories of art and migration: Forms and aesthetics of migration; actors in the field of migration; and visibility, image politics, and visualisation strategies in the context of migration. With regard to these research fields, the network organised a total of six international workshops to contribute, along with this edited volume and its invited articles, to the establishment of a long-term and sustainable transdisciplinary engagement with global migration and art. In light of the fruitful and inspiring collaboration in the network, the book and its respective sections are co-edited and co-organised by different network scholars. Together with contributions from the group and additional articles from the international scholarly community, the co-editors wrote section introductions and brought together an exciting selection of texts according to the five key sections:

Section 1, *Visibilities | Invisibilities*, revolves around the complex politics of visibility and invisibility, their ambivalent meanings in migratory regimes and refugee lifeworlds, and affective agency. The section asks how (audio)visual practices, technologies, and audio-visual methods add counter-narratives to mainstream media representations of migration.

Section 2, *Sites | Spaces*, takes up a spatial perspective, and more precisely, an architectural production of space. It explicitly links the project's research focus on exile, migration, and flight to resulting new spaces and architectural aesthetics (Dogramaci/Pinther 2019).

Section 3, *Materiality | Materialisation*, locates "objects as evidence of other complex social relationships" (Herman 1992, 4, 11) within the histories of colonialism, imperialism, nation-building, tourism, sacrality, or migration. This section aims to reflect on both the intellectual and practical notion of the processes driven by objects' potential of agency.

Section 4, *Racism | Resistance*, approaches the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory and decolonising Migration and Postmigration Studies, and

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highlights art historical enquiry as well as contemporary artistic research and curatorial practices in museums, exhibitions, and public spaces that counteract racism.

Section 5, *Practices | Performativity*, foregrounds the dynamic correlation of art historical *and* artistic practices. A performative approach to subjects of investigations beyond the sense of sight contributes to counter-hegemonic knowledges that concern the micropolitics of the body (Rolnik 2018).

These sections build a compositum of different approaches to and of key areas of research towards an entangled history of art and migration. At the same time, this book contributes to a dynamic transdisciplinary field, which is referred to as a 'migratory turn' in art-related research (Dogramaci 2019). This migratory turn calls for a fundamental re-evaluation of categories of order, the epochal, cultural, and/or national classification of art, the talk of supposedly late modernity or post–post-modernity, the foundations of (e)quality, of standards of evaluation and devaluation, the values of original and copy. In this way, the claim of this book also crosses with other claims such as by feminist research, which call for changing above all the categories of evaluation, for example, to shake the dominance of a male-centred history of art history (Chichester/Sölch 2021). Therefore, this book pleads for a fundamental change in understanding the ambiguity of migrant positions, be they cultural references, origins, myths, and future perspectives, as a motor for research and art production.

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NOTE

1. The DFG network "Entangled Histories of Art and Migration" constituted by Buket Altinoba, Christiane Brosius, Cathrine Bublatzky, Burcu Dogramaci, Elke Gaugele, Gabriele Genge, Alexandra Karentzos, Alma-Elisa Kittner, Franziska Koch, Kerstin Meincke, Birgit Mersmann, Kerstin Pinther, Mona Schieren, Angela Stercken, Melanie Ulz and Kea Wienand. For further information, see the homepage of the scholarly network https://enthisartmig.hypotheses.org/ (Accessed 23 March 2022). The network members belong to the working group "Art Production and Art Theory in the Age of Global Migration",

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which was founded by Burcu Dogramaci and Birgit Mersmann, 2015, see https://www.ag-kunst-migration.de/english/ (Accessed 23 March 2022).

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SECTION 1

VISIBILITIES | INVISIBILITIES

Cathrine Bublatzky and Burcu Dogramaci

Introduction

Visibility and invisibility have ambivalent meanings in the context of migration. Both can have protective as well as endangering functions on multiple levels and act as instruments of control and power (Schaffer 2008; Bischoff et al. 2010a).

Acknowledging that "[t]oo often, the focus is migration as a sensational event, a drama that interrupts reality, rather than as part of an ongoing, transformative, and global process that is at once political, economic, and social" (Nair 2018, 83), we can observe that not all visibility is the same. Although photography, film, or art can bring something into the sphere of the visible, different semantics are attached to images of migrants that can obscure, even though they make something apparent. This is particularly pertinent to the passages of refugees across the Mediterranean, attempts to cross borders, or the situations in refugee camps and shelters. In the context of il/legality and border crossing, for example, visualising strategies require critical methodological and conceptual reflection with questions like "whether undocumented migrants can have a face in film" (Berg/Schwenken 2010, 111). Parvati Nair critically notes that in the mediatisation of flight

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> [t]he clandestine contexts of undocumented migration, and of border crossings in particular, provide the kind of life-or-death theatricality that mainstream media often seeks out. The resulting images of such moments may shock or catch the public eye, but they also obliterate from view a more sustained and insightful examination of migrant realities.
>
> (Nair 2018, 83)

Reports that visually homogenise flight have been countered by photographers or filmmakers who accompany their work with conversations and name their counterparts, as well as projects that allow refugees themselves to participate. In the wake of the "European migrant crisis" since 2015 (Lynes et al. 2020, 27), "moving images" and "a wide range of mediating processes and representational practices work to constitute 'migrant crisis' as objects of political contention, affective investment, and legal maneuver" (Lynes et al. 2020, 28). This stereotyping iconography of the migrant 'crisis' has been contrasted by an increasing visual presence of refugee migrants in the media, exhibitions, and publications in the context of post-migrant research (Schramm et al. 2019), as well as alternative means of narrating migration from a more emphatically migrant perspective (Demos 2013). Here, a stronger presence and visibility is demanded. However, this does not happen without contradictions. As the contributions in this section illustrate, the complex politics of the visibility and invisibility of migration and immigration are further developed in contemporary artistic production. It is pertinent that studies on in/visibilities in migratory regimes and refugee life-worlds imply conceptual and methodological considerations of a range of different related issues and sites and promote interdisciplinary research. When architectural, material, and bureaucratic devices are inextricably linked to the politics of border regimes (Gerst et al. 2021), passport controls, surveillance submissions, cameras, and border officials mark the checkpoints and security projects where all border crossers are acknowledged and turn visible as such, even if only temporarily. This form of visibility becomes problematic when it makes those who try to cross the 'violent borders' (Jones 2016) by different routes – on a boat across the sea, swimming in rivers or on foot through forests, over mountains or hidden in trucks – visible as illegals and through the policies and practices of the "illegal migration industry" or "illegality industry" (Andersson 2014, 3). The representation and media coverage of illegal immigration, with its "[i]mages and their production, transfer, and reception form a system of media practices that have a powerful impact on the perception and the everyday life of human beings" (Bischoff et al. 2010b, 7). What interests here most is that "[v]isuality not only signifies what might be referred to as a rising 'flood of images', but a change in consciousness, which accords visual practices a much more substantial role in

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thought processes and in the acquisition of 'knowledge'" (Bischoff et al. 2010b, 7). But how should we deal with practices that support forces of legality being applied to that which is 'illegal' or 'clandestine' – and when "showing what is hidden" and "strategies, purposes, and dangers of giving persons without legal papers an individual face" can also "lead to new forms of oppression" (Bischoff et al. 2010b, 8)?

The articles in this section are drawn from art history, anthropology, and visual culture studies and offer approaches to visibility/invisibility that are intrinsically interwoven with the exploration of initiatives of undocumented and refugee migrants, be it public art, filmmaking, art workshops in refugee welcome centres, or activism. In this regard, this section thematises relevant concepts, such as new forms of agency, (il)legalisation, politics of representation of migratory realities, or self-reflective media strategies (Karentzos 2013; Rass/Ulz 2017).

In regard to entangled histories of art and migration, of politics and aesthetics, of visibilities and invisibilities, the contributions in this section point to the affective agency of migrant refugees or asylum seekers, to significant artistic-activist and activist strategies of making contested regimes of (violent) borders visible, and to the significant role of technologies and audio-visual research practices in this context. The articles look at the physical spaces of exhibitions in art museums and artistic film (Kea Wienand) or art workshops in refugee centres (Alessandro Mazzola). They show the potential of art making for sensorial encounters and making visible asylum seekers' agency in filmic or art storytelling that contradict either the official narratives of the municipality of Kassel (Germany) or the expectations of volunteer facilitators in refugee reception centres in Belgium. In their interdisciplinary contribution, Burcu Dogramaci and Ger Duijzings elaborate on research and representational ethics in art history and anthropology, and how vision and sound enhance the 'audibility' of precarious migrant workers. In her article "Border-crossing and the Art of 'Seeing' and Being Seen", anthropologist Sholeh Shahrokhi indicates the significance of border ethnographies when she writes about different artist-activists and how they portray an image-based narrative of migration and border crossing journeys in their projects.

The section *Visibilities | Invisibilities* raises the significant question of how visual practices add counter-narratives to mainstream media representations of migration. In which way can artistic or documentary engagements with migration and refugee migrants enable new global forms of (in)visibility? What role do potential im/perceptibilities of migration (Papadopoulos et al. 2008, 218) play in the construction and interpretation of migratory realities and their recognition?

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1

Artistically Juxtaposed (Hi)stories: Hiwa K's *View from Above* as a Multidirectional Memory Practice

Kea Wienand

A 'view from above' is a perspective that is either imagined or technologically assisted. Although abstracted and distanced, it appears highly desirable at the same time. *A View from Above* is also the title of a video artwork by Hiwa K (12:27 min),[1] which he created for the *Stadtmuseum Kassel* as a contribution to documenta 14 (2017), following which the piece joined the museum's permanent exhibition.[2] Amidst the objects and text panels representing the 'major events and small anecdotes'[3] of the city of Kassel, the film is about a man from Kurdistan or Northern Iraq who applied for asylum in Europe because he could no longer live safely in his country of birth, having deserted the military. The story of a man called M. is recounted by a first-person narrator who reports having helped M. invent a new background and personal past, on the basis of which he was granted permanent residency in a European country. One important element in the story is a map, which the narrator drew from memory and which M. used to learn his spurious hometown's cartography by heart. When the judge assigned to M.'s asylum case verified the man's statements, he was impressed by M.'s capable descriptions. Like M., the judge only knew the city 'from above' – as a map – and he approved the claim immediately. While listening to the voiceover, the viewer's eyes follow long tracking shots over an urban landscape clearly devastated by war; these camera shots alternate between a bird's-eye view and a high-angle shot. However, our visual habit of viewing cinematic images as illustrations of the auditory narration – which in this case would lead us to place the city in the protagonist's region of origin – is disrupted here. Early on, the viewers realise that this footage is not of a real city, but of a plastic scale model. Based on certain buildings in the model, we further

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recognise that this is a reconstruction of the carpet-bombed city of Kassel at the end of the Second World War.[4]

In the context of a German municipal museum, *A View from Above* renders the story of a refugee and his experiences with Europe's arbitrary asylum processes 'visible' – as in discernible, perceptible – and therefore also memorable. In the film, this visibility functions by invoking and juxtaposing two different (hi)stories (that of the asylum applicant M. and the city of Kassel in 1945) across two different sensory levels. There is no indication that M.'s experiences bear a direct connection to Kassel. Indeed, the images do not match the experiences described in the audio; they neither illustrate them nor provide any icons for the narrative. The only point at which the two tales 'touch'[5] is in a city's destruction, which also plays a role in M.'s story and is something many cities have 'in common', according to the voiceover. As such, the film juxtaposes two different situations, both communicated as memories and encourages us to think about their mutual relationship.

Hiwa K's decision to juxtapose these two (hi)stories is somewhat risky in the context of German memory culture. People have often used stories about the sweeping destruction of major German cities as a way to imagine themselves as victims and thus to abrogate societal responsibility for Nazi rule, the Second World War, and the Holocaust (Trüby 2021). For (German) viewers, a reading that involves identifying with the victim is challenged on multiple fronts. The work does not portray the asylum seeker as a victim, or at least not a unidimensional one, and neither does it present his circumstances as comparable or equivalent to those of German city dwellers after 1945. Instead, the film opens up a perspective that interrogates assumptions about individual and collective remembrance as well as about a 'collective memory'. According to Maurice Halbwachs, the notion of 'collective memory' describes a past that has been reconstructed through a present-day vantage point and organised within a group frame of reference (1925/1992). In hindsight, some theorists reduced Halbwachs' arguments to an ontological understanding of memory as a static, homogeneous storehouse, which is essentially passed down and inherited within collectives typically framed as national. This contrasts with conceptions that treat all practices and content of memory as flexible rather than fixed as well as ones that challenge the still-dominant national reference framework of contemporary cultures of remembrance.[6] Presently, there is an ongoing debate over the extent to which memory – both individual and collective – is or must be conceived on a national basis, and over how it could also be elaborated as multidirectional (Rothberg 2009).

Hiwa K's film, I contend, represents a possible form of such a 'multidirectional memory' that confronts different (hi)stories with one another. To that end, it introduces a power-critical perspective on the il/logics of European asylum policy structures and explores the implications of the visual field and forms of

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visibility in this policy. Furthermore, it takes advantage of the film's narrative capacities and fosters an aesthetic experience that allows a link between (at least) two different memories. In this chapter, I will propose a close reading of the film *A View from Above* that investigates the concrete ways in which the film renders a contemporary experience of migration and of European asylum policy 'visible' in the *Kassel Stadtmuseum* and thus inscribes these experiences within the museum itself. Therefore, I will use a methodological approach that combines a film analysis with a discursive contextualisation of Hiwa K's work in the German debate about migration politics and its culture of remembrance. Furthermore, I will discuss the narratives and possible effects of the film with historical and contemporary theories of memory research to ask whether it could serve as a model for future concepts of multidirectional memory.

Us and them

In the context of a German municipal museum, Hiwa K's film and its story of the asylum seeker M. is first and foremost an intervention in this institution's traditional focus and way of telling stories. Exhibitions of urban history in the Federal Republic of Germany have only included narratives of migration or asylum processes sporadically, and only in the past two decades. The urban collective turns out to be an exclusive one; this is also true of its representation in museums. In 2017, various developments demonstrated that nationalistic discourses of demarcation and exclusion remained virulent in Germany. Two years after the so-called 'Summer of Migration', there was a proliferation of publicly articulated defensive attitudes against refugees. The German government tightened German asylum laws in multiple ways during that period. These attitudes and measures were accompanied by mainstream media reports that predominantly used imagery to highlight a sense of difference between immigrants and the locally born population (Lünenborg/Maier 2017).

In the face of such constructions of difference along with Eurocentric and nationalistic discourses, documenta 14 took an explicit counter-position under the artistic directorship of Adam Szymczyk. The exhibition addressed issues of migration and refuge, including their root causes, and exposed the extent to which all countries' and cultures' histories are mutually entangled through relationships of power and violence and/or hold specific similarities. Many of the artworks pointed to the long history of human migrations, border-crossings, and 'foreigners' absorbed into their new societies, thus calling into question the purported essentialist differences between a national *us* and an otherised, immigrant *them*. Likewise, Hiwa K's video artwork raises objections to dominant notions and images of trans-border migration and develops its own original strategy to that end.

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"Do you ever feel like you forgot the city where you come from?"

A View from Above begins with a black screen. In the voiceover, the male narrator recounts that he lived with M. for fifteen years before they spent a year without seeing each other. The narrative repeatedly articulates the relationship between the two men and their divergent memories. The second line of the voiceover asks: "Do you ever feel like you forgot the city where you come from?" (00:20). The narrator calls M.'s question ironic, as he had been the one who had explained to him where he came from. In the context of a municipal museum whose institutional mission is to preserve the city's history, this question gains a further ironic layer while invoking the constant repetition of the past required for memory. The voice continues, reporting that M. has forgotten the period he spent with the narrator and resists the latter man's explanations and the geographical coordinates they entail: "Who are you to teach me where I come from?" (00:46). Thus, in addition to experiences with European asylum systems, the video addresses another core topic from the very beginning: the uncertainty and precariousness of any memory, its dependence on social frameworks and conditions, and forms of forgetting that are inextricable from these factors.

In its elevation of memory itself to a subject, as well as the first-person narrator's explanation that M. forgot his own story because it was no longer required for their existence as migrants, the film echoes some of Maurice Halbwachs' other theoretical points. His book *On Collective Memory* (1925/1992) begins with the story of a girl who was discovered in 1731 in the woods near Châlon and who presumably originated from an enslaved indigenous society from northern Europe (1992, 37f.). According to Halbwachs, records indicate that the girl, who had already been living in France for a while, could not remember her own history and heritage until she was shown pictures of her culture of origin. Halbwachs uses this story to introduce his theory that all groups (families, nations, etc.) possess a 'memory'. According to him, not only do the frames of reference that memory provides allow individuals to sort through their own personal knowledge and experiences, but in fact they make it possible to repeatedly retrieve those memories and preserve them. Building on Halbwachs, the field of memory studies within cultural studies has posited that a group's memory is key to the individual identity construction of its members, but that it also produces exclusions and can serve to demarcate the group from outsiders.

The story cited by Halbwachs resembles the one in Hiwa K.'s film in that both figures (M. and the girl from Châlon) have seemingly forgotten their pasts in their original societies. Another similarity is that they are both separated from their cultures of origin and that, in the new society, they lack a frame of reference for remembering it. In regard to M.'s situation, we learn that he was forced to forget his original

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story and identity and to invent a fictional new one in order to obtain asylum. The narrator reports that M. initially had trouble overwriting his earlier memories. The new memory was created as a conscious fiction in response to the policies of the UN, which imagines certain places as *safe zones* – including M.'s birthplace.

The story repeatedly touches on how fiction increasingly supplants – or at least permeates – M.'s memory of the society of origin that he had actually experienced, such as when the narrator recounts that M. believed his own mother came from the fake hometown even though that mother, too, had been the narrator's invention. M. also seems to have forgotten his memory of the narrator and their time together before he was granted asylum. At the end of the film, more and more statements seem to hint that M. could be the narrator's alter ego. For example, after mentioning that he himself was only granted asylum fifteen years later, the narrator adds: "The day M. disappeared from the face of the earth. Probably someone else is hiding him now" (10:08). He elaborates on his memory of M. with the words: "He gets under my skin sometimes. The place to which I don't have a map" (10:17). The unseen narrator conveys his emotional memory of M. using imagery of disorientation and a missing map, which in turn is centrally important to M.'s asylum story. These aspects reinforce the impression that M., too, is fictional. The film leaves that question open-ended, but it is evident that the life story invented out of necessity and the likewise fictional and studied memories increasingly come to constitute this person's own internal identity. We come to plainly see how little leeway M., as an asylum seeker in Europe, has to construct his own identity and become aware of his restricted spectrum of possibilities.

Central to the invention of M.'s new identity and backstory is the hand-drawn map, the knowledge of which will allow him to prove his origins. The sense of sight and the drawing hand are therefore emphasised. After the narrator reflects on the fiction of both the UN and M., he recites an Arabic saying: "The eye can see far, but the hand is too short to reach" (4:02). He goes on to recount having told M. "We will need to give vision to your hand", (4:45) a sentence that invokes the physical activity of drawing as seeing but also the sense of sight and visual imagination, both of which can transcend spatial distances – and ultimately also the logics of the border regime.

A crucial point of the account is that M. was able to persuade the judge precisely because he described his *hometown* from the same visual perspective through which that representative of state power knew the city. In European art history since the Renaissance, the view from above, from the heavenly spheres onto the earth, has been the 'God's eye view', gradually adopted by geographers, cartographers, and artists (Krewani 2011, 323). As a divine gaze upon the world, the bird's-eye view has been associated with power, control, and mastery from an early stage. Maps have been used in Europe for military purposes and as tools of

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(colonial) hegemony since the sixteenth century. To this day, the technologically assisted view from above remains a significant perspective of territorial surveillance (for example by drones, etc.), which Donna Haraway has also described as a disembodied "gaze from nowhere" that is "tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism and male supremacy" (2000, 188). In this narrative, M. appropriates this same dominant perspective with his hand (and thus with his body) in order to turn it against the judge's power and harness it for his survival.

As though an uncomfortable memory were resurfacing

On the visual level, the first thing we see after sixteen seconds of darkness is a shot of the aforementioned model city, also *from above*: from a bird's-eye view. The black-and-white images, in which the brightness of the buildings contrasts with a dark background, resemble views from a thermal camera taken by satellites or drones and depicting war zones or surveillance targets (Figure 1.1). The destruction of the city's built environment, which is only hinted at with this filter and angle, quickly becomes a symbol of M.'s memory and the associated constructed identity, both of which are at risk of disappearing along with the buildings and places. As with early aerial photographs and more recent satellite images of war

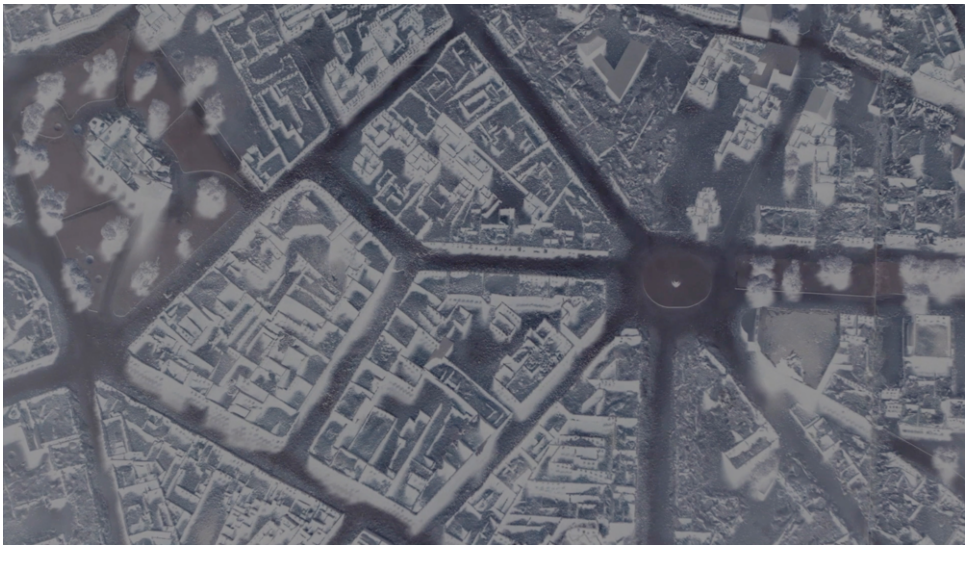

FIGURE 1.1: Hiwa K, *A View from Above*, 2017, single-channel HD video, 16:9, colour, sound, 12:27 min (courtesy of the artist and KOW, Berlin).

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zones, the cityscape depicted here seems strangely devoid of people and scarcely conveys the realities of war. In this respect, Hiwa K's film assumes greater clarity once the camera settings change after another one minute and fourteen seconds.

Before the shift in perspective, a black screen appears accompanied by a clicking sound, reminding us of the apparatus of film and the medium's mediated nature. The camera briefly shoots from eye level in a shot that is blurry at times, imitating a searching movement (Figure 1.2). After another black screen, we are shown an extremely long shot, gazing obliquely down at the illuminated model city against a black background (Figure 1.3). The camera resumes its searching movement, seeming to drift very slowly over the ruined city. It rarely approaches the destroyed objects, but mostly remains at some distance. In long and extreme long shots, we viewers gaze upon the destroyed districts. At a few points, the camera switches to a bird's-eye view; sometimes it seems to follow streets; other times it pauses. Between the tracking shots, which move along the bombed-out, brightly lit buildings, other edited-in sequences show abstract sections of the model, such as simplified pathways or green spaces (Figure 1.4). Inevitably, while observing, viewers try to orient themselves in the city's cartography. The camera repeatedly focuses on the *Fridericianum museum*, or rather, its ruins. The distinctive *Friedrichsplatz* outside the museum and the well-known, prominent, and badly damaged Baroque Revival theatre building[7] are key points of reference that someone familiar with



FIGURE 1.2: Hiwa K, *A View from Above*, 2017, single-channel HD video, 16:9, colour, sound, 12:27 min (courtesy of the artist and KOW, Berlin).

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FIGURE 1.3: Hiwa K, *A View from Above*, 2017, single-channel HD video, 16:9, colour, sound, 12:27 min (courtesy of the artist and KOW, Berlin).



FIGURE 1.4: Hiwa K, *A View from Above*, 2017, single-channel HD video, 16:9, colour, sound, 12:27 min (courtesy of the artist and KOW, Berlin).

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the city would recognise (Figure 1.5). However, it is nearly impossible to orient oneself, which is usually a core purpose of a model city, as with cartography overall and the associated hegemonic view from above.

In his theory of collective memory, Halbwachs called the structured space a framework in which memories are stored, memories that are at risk of dissolving if the framework disappears (2019, 142f). The film points to the disappearance of such a framework without concealing its own mediated nature. Nevertheless, via the filmed model, the city's wholesale devastation – and with it the destruction of culture, civilisation, and living space – becomes sharply visible and perceptible as an existential threat. The dark-light contrasts produced by the illuminated replicas of ruins, their shadows, and the dark background dramatise this visual impression. The entire model city is coloured almost exclusively in monochromatic shades of light beige and grey; its cardboard, sand, and plaster materials are often apparent. In this unreal-seeming reconstruction, the model is indeed consistent with eyewitness reports of the state of German cities after 1945. Cities were described as being at an existential turning point, ascribing an inhuman face to the seas of debris and extreme devastation – all familiarity had lost its contours (Grossklaus 2007).

Iconographically, the cinematic images are also reminiscent of disaster and science fiction films,[8] which have used footage of model cities since the early days of these genres and employ similar visual scenarios to create dystopian imagery. This thwarts the sense of omnipotence that generally accompanies a view from above. As a function of the large-scale destruction of living space, its material portrayal,

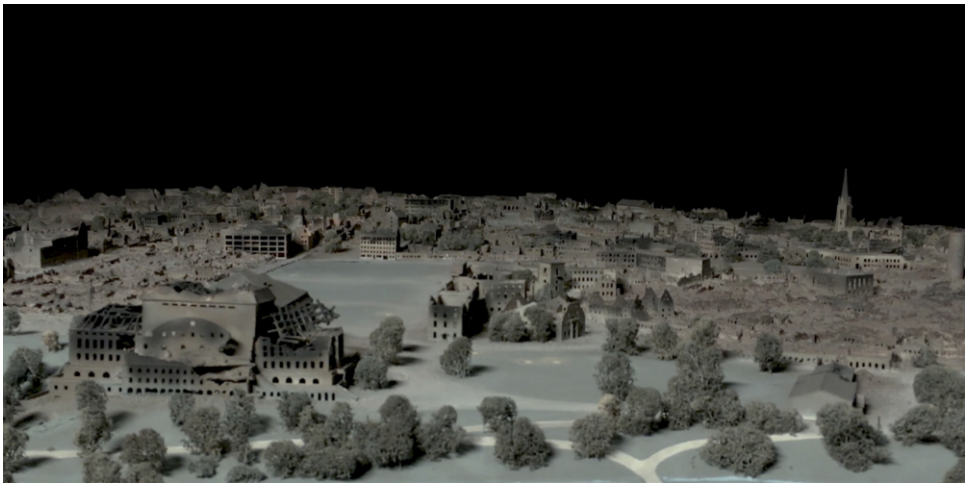

FIGURE 1.5: Hiwa K, *A View from Above*, 2017, single-channel HD video, 16:9, colour, sound, 12:27 min (courtesy of the artist and KOW, Berlin).

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and the expected disorientation and alienation that follow, a feeling of powerlessness sets in. The cinematic imagery comes across as an uncomfortable and repressed traumatic memory, one that cannot be erased and is bound to 'come to light', at least in fragments. Similarly, in Kassel, traces of the carpet bombing have largely disappeared, and modern post-war architecture predominates in today's cityscape. At the same time, this newness is a reminder of the preceding destruction.

Touching tales

Hiwa K's video makes the story of an asylum seeker visible by juxtaposing two (hi)stories and using the different sensory layers of filmic storytelling. In doing so, he carves out a challenging contemplative space that enables reflection upon the treatment of history: Whose (hi)story can become visible? And how can it be remembered? Within the framework of socially constituted memory, whose (hi)story can even be remembered at all? This contemplative space is challenging because the relationship it establishes between the two historical situations is not one of simple equivalence and because the migration story, or the experience with European asylum policy, is not simply appended to Kassel's municipal history. Instead, gaps emerge between what we hear and what we see. Simultaneously, convergences between the differing experiences and memories bridge these gaps. The two stories can be seen to 'touch' at one notable and most prominent point – the point of destruction.

The destruction of a city's built environment is an integral factor in M.'s story, but the model city also invokes this destruction as important to the history of Kassel and allows it to be experienced aesthetically. This experiential tangibility does not simply involve putting the viewers in a position that suggests they can 'simply' understand what the protagonist lived through. Moreover, instead of depicting 'his' city, the video shows Kassel, the city where the video piece is exhibited. This linkage or point of contact allows viewers to imagine many other cities and living spaces (including their own).

The destruction of living space staged here allows us to perceive the vulnerability of all living space, and by extension the vulnerability of life.[9] The film achieves this without portraying people and without claiming that the images are accurate or could 'authentically' visualise what happened. On the contrary, we are shown a model that, although it tries to represent Kassel's reality to scale, remains visibly mediated, a schematic reconstruction. Furthermore, the chosen perspective – the 'view from above', which we assume via the camera, and which usually promises the observer a position of superiority – is thwarted by the camera's subject. Perhaps the loss of a reliable vantage point and the overt attempt to reconstruct Kassel's destruction are the very reasons why the devastated cityscape affects us

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so deeply. The resulting recognition that *all* life is fundamentally precarious – in truth, a rather basic insight – runs counter to essentialist constructions of difference between an *us* and a *them*. And neither is this just a matter of framing 'everyone' as somehow equivalent or as potential victims of destruction. Rather, the film calls upon us to contemplate the vulnerability of all subjects as part of the human condition and, at the same time, prompts us to reflect on manifold inequalities in the ways that life's precariousness is treated.

NOTES

1. Hiwa K is an artist and musician born in Kurdistan Northern-Iraq who lives and works between Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan and Berlin. With his sculptures, videos, and performances, he examines a wide range of themes including migration politics, geographical situatedness, questions of memory, and identity constructions. Many of his works involve participatory dimensions and collaborations or rely on anecdotes from friends, family members, or his own biography. Thereby he explores personal experiences and reflects on questions of visibility and invisibility in a global context.
2. In 2018, the video was purchased by the association Freunde des Stadtmuseums e.V. (Friends of the Stadtmuseum) via the city of Kassel. It can also be viewed online: https://kow-berlin.com/artists/hiwa-k/view-from-above-2017. Accessed 5 August 2021.
3. This is according to the explanatory text about the core exhibition on the museum's German website. Accessed 21 July 2021. Translation by Jake Schneider.
4. In the *Stadtmuseum*, the model is located directly near the screen showing the video.
5. I have borrowed the notion of 'touching tales' from Leslie Adelson (2000).
6. For more detailed explanations of the controversies around interpretations of 'collective memory', see Ulrike Jureit and Christian Schneider (2011, 7ff.).
7. This building no longer exists.
8. In her analysis of Hiwa K's film, Eva Kernbauer discusses the references to Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and the manifold potentials of anecdotes for conveying history (2022, 181).
9. On a more cursory level, I am drawing on Judith Butler's remarks about 'precarious life' and her ethic of shared humanity (e.g. 2004). My ideas here are also inspired by the writings of Linda Hentschel, who, drawing on Butler's ethic, discusses the role of visual culture and the relationships of visibility within it (e.g. 2020).

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2

"I Like It but That's Not What We Need": Critical Ethnographic Accounts of Art Workshops in Refugee Reception Centres

Alessandro Mazzola

Introduction

The 2015–2018 refugee reception crisis featured strong humanitarian engagement and the political mobilisation of European civil society. Organisations and engaged citizens played a key role in integrating the field practices of the state-mandated actors in charge of the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers. In many instances, the civil society has even been the sole provider of services aimed at the support and sociocultural integration of newcomer asylum seekers (Vandevoordt/Verschraegen 2019; Mazzola/De Backer 2021). Artistic practices were often employed by civil society actors to establish ties and relationships with these migrants.[1] In this chapter, I will present and discuss cases of practitioners, artists, and cultural professionals (hereafter called 'volunteer facilitators'), who acted as volunteers in reception centres where they designed and facilitated participatory art projects based on visual and performing arts. In general, volunteer facilitators motivated their engagement through the idea that being involved in the arts would help participants find relief from post-traumatic stress, cope with the gruelling waiting and uncertainty related to their asylum application, and ultimately become visible, thereby finding their place and voice in local communities.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in reception centres in Belgium during the 2015–2018 refugee reception crisis,[2] I will argue that the objectives of art-based workshops, as well as the initial and final outcomes intended by the volunteer facilitators who designed and facilitated them, are often not shared by participant migrants, who hold specific priorities, motivations, and objectives that are not likely to be aligned with the formers' expectations. Their motivation to sign in

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and stay in an art workshop coincides only to a limited extent, and sometimes not at all, with those assumed by the volunteer facilitators. To relate to one of the key concepts of the collective work this chapter is included in, I will highlight how the idea of visibility that volunteer facilitators want to promote through their workshops has a completely different articulation in the individual perspective of migrants.

The data set that informs the findings presented in this chapter involves 27 in-depth interviews and numerous observations of field practices conducted in three refugee reception centres in Belgium in 2017–2019. I gained access through the local management (the Belgian Red Cross) and could freely visit public areas in the centres, meet residents, and join activities as an observer over the course of several months. Three art-based participatory workshops, one of which was ongoing during my research fieldwork, provide the case studies. The following section gives a brief overview of the workshop's content. Interviews involve six volunteers who facilitated the workshops, and 21 migrants who joined as participants.[3] By the time the interviews were collected, sixteen migrants were residents of a reception centre awaiting the evaluation of their asylum application; three had become *de facto* refugees and lived outside the centre; two had been rejected and lived as undocumented migrants outside the centre.

Case studies' content and volunteers' objectives

In many countries in Europe, the 2015–2018 refugee reception crisis was characterised by a great mobilisation of the civil society to support and integrate an overcharged and sometimes barely functional reception system (Della Porta 2018; Rea et al. 2019). In Belgium, individual volunteers and organisations worked in parallel with state-mandated actors such as the Red Cross in existing and newly opened collective reception centres. Volunteers provided first-hand support by fitting out accommodation facilities and distributing basic supplies, but they also entered reception centres and participated in their daily activities, establishing practices that lasted in the following years (Mazzola/De Backer 2021). Cooperation was particularly intense in those contexts where volunteers could appropriate spaces and infrastructures, providing asylum seekers with organised support as well as coordinated and structured services. It is in these circumstances that the three art-based workshops presented in this chapter took place.

In all three cases, the workshops were part of a number of diversified activities coordinated by volunteers yet designed and delivered by both volunteers and residents of the centres, who often acted as the main facilitators in the activity. The art workshops, however, were all facilitated by volunteers alone who came to the centres on a weekly basis and ran one-and-a-half to two-hour sessions with

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10–20 participants among the centres' residents. Each workshop had a duration of at least three months. Participants could freely enrol by writing down their names on a sheet posted on the centre's activity board. No previous artistic skills were required, and they could opt-in and opt-out at any moment during the programme. Two workshops were based on visual arts/painting and one on music. All of them included a creative writing component and bodily activities such as physical and vocal warm-ups, dance, playing instruments, and gestural creativity. A few cultural/artistic group visits outside the centre (e.g. a museum or gallery) were also planned. The sessions' contents were always negotiated with participants, provided that facilitators could maintain control over timing and outcome. In particular, the realisation of some form of public output inside and outside the centre (e.g. a concert or an exhibition) was a goal in all workshops.

From the perspective of the volunteer facilitators, the general objective of the art workshops was to provide participants with an engaged activity to relieve loneliness and boredom. Such workshops could be an outlet to socialise and cope with the long and tiring wait for their asylum application to be processed. The volunteer facilitators considered art making a way to keep active and productive through a rewarding activity or, more simply, to find a moment of emotional escape from insecurity through a social activity and aesthetic enjoyment. Connected to the problems of boredom and insecurity, a more specific objective of the volunteer facilitators was to address the urgent problems of post-traumatic stress affecting asylum seekers in the centres. This objective is consistent with an idea of the 'therapeutic function' of the arts that is an established concept in academic research (Carey 2006; King 2016). Participants, indeed, were generally encouraged to share their background and life experience, including but not limited to the lived migration experience, to reflect on these and ultimately express their feelings through artistic creation. Traumatic stories were often shared by participants, sometimes orally in exchange moments within sessions, or more often in the form of song lyrics (in the music workshop), painted short texts or painted images (in the visual workshops). Despite not being trained as therapists, volunteer facilitators showed a strong belief in the therapeutic function of their workshops, and repeatedly cited the mood regulation functions of art making, such as emotional release and venting negative emotions while being immersed in a positive environment, as part of their concrete objectives in the workshops:

> MICHEL: [The migrants] needed a space to express themselves, to express the experiences they've been through, and the pain. You know, their stories are very tragic most of the time and you have people who got tortured, who lost friends. […] It is important that they come and release their emotions here, if they want, and I think it is much easier to do so by means of a painting, or a drawing, for example.

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> TANYA: Oh, it's been so emotional to hear their stories today, I was moved to tears, really. This is what we want to be for them, you know, we are kind of a safe environment around them, in which they can write a song, an autobiographical song for example. And by doing this, they can talk about their sad experience, the painful journey heading to Europe.

Another objective that can be identified in the approach of volunteer facilitators relates to the function of artistic practices to bridge cultural diversity and provide grounded spaces for encounters of diversity (Vertovec 2009). Again, this is an established academic topic, and there is a relatively recent but robust set of research that examines the role of the arts in mediating sociocultural relations between migrants and non-migrants, and in fostering the integration of immigrant generations in post-migration settings (Kasinitz 2014; DiMaggio/Fernández-Kelly 2015; Martiniello 2015). Indeed, workshop facilitators conceived their activity as part of the volunteers' coordinated effort to provide migrants with opportunities to start a process of integration:

> JACQUES: I think that what we do is to pave the way for them to integrate, to help them […] establish the contact, to know more about our culture. And the other way around, also, it is a way for us to know more about them. […] You sometimes have some interesting mixing coming out from the workshop, [a] mix of different cultural elements. I don't want to go too far, to say that we're all artists, but it's an interesting experiment.

This function, in the specific context of the workshops, seems to be not only connected to a reflection about the contents of the art making going on but also more simply to the possibility that such contents are shown around to non-migrants, in and outside the centre:

> MICHEL: […] yes, the exhibition was a key element, I guess. We got the chance to be seen in town, you know, the people from the reception centre. That helped very much to communicate a good image, a good culture. It was like opening a door to the residents' different cultures and inviting citizens to enjoy them. It was great.

Furthermore, public outputs were indicated as important events for workshop participants to experience being heard and validated by others. These benefits are not only connected to individual well-being, as volunteer facilitators have remarked that an exhibition, a concert, or any other kind of performance outside the centre represented a key moment for the asylum seekers, their cultures, and

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their talents – and for their difficult condition, by extension – to become visible as part of the community. As such, public performances were described as an incentive that was at times decisive in stimulating engagement and keeping the level of participation throughout projects.[4]

Participants' perspectives and needs

The migrants who participated in the workshops presented a rather original perspective on the function and above all on the usefulness of the activity. Regardless of the objectives of volunteer facilitators, some participants demonstrated critical reflection on their motivation to join and on the benefits of their participation. Initially, all participants showed interest in the workshops for the main reason of engaging in an activity that could break their routine in the centre, and that represented an escape for a few moments. Some were also particularly motivated by the possibility to socialise with non-migrants and to explore local culture:

> AMAR: [The workshop] is a way for me to know Belgians, and this is good. I know many volunteers here, but in the workshop you can get to know them better. And also you learn about the history of Belgium, you know, the culture, all the things that happened in the past. […] I want to stay here, so I need to know the people, the art, the music, etcetera. I don't forget my country, but I want to find something that I like here.

The emotional relief objective, extremely important for the volunteer facilitators, was also valued by participants. Some interviewees found that telling stories about their experiences was an activity that could help them to overcome shyness when interacting with non-migrants and to find moral support. However, others did not perceive such activity as completely useful, and often even experienced it with annoyance. It sometimes evoked the context and feelings of their experience of reporting their case to the authorities in charge of the evaluation of asylum applications, which is known to be a great source of stress and anxiety for all asylum seekers (Mazzola/Roblain 2019):

> FALL: It is not easy to tell, you know. We do this so many times, like everyone wants to hear our story, and I don't feel at ease sometimes. I know [the volunteer] is not [the] police, I know. But I am always doing this, why? […] I'm here because I like to sing and to play music. Yes, it was not easy to come here from my country, but I have more things to say, maybe, other things.

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Such reflection raises the question of the objectification of refugees, which is often identified as an undesirable effect of humanitarian engagement (Ramsay 2018). In an attempt to provide support, an activity proposed in the workshops could end up reinforcing the representation of the refugee as a passive actor in need, identified by the fact of being a vulnerable migrant who went through a troubled journey, over any other personal characteristic, attitude, or belief.

Other problems raised by migrants who participated in the art workshops concerned the relationship between the facilitator and the participant, and the environment in which such relationships and all workshop activities took place. In general, migrants noted that access to workshops was often not equal for the whole population in the centre. Volunteer-led activity, in practice, did not follow the same structured organisational principles as the services provided by the Red Cross management, and recruitment in workshops was in part – but nonetheless significantly – dependent on the personal relationship that some migrants had previously developed with the volunteer facilitators. This sometimes could also represent a source of conflict within the centre's population:

> AMADOU: [Other centre's residents] are jealous I think because it's always the same people […] going out with [the volunteers]. Because we know them, we are friends. Do you think all the people here [in the centre] will go to the workshop? No, my friend, they don't go. […] I know [a workshop facilitator]. If I don't know that the workshop is on Saturday I can call, I have his number. But maybe another one doesn't know, or he can't do the workshop because on Saturday he works. So, they say that I am privileged […] they're jealous.

Somehow connected to the question of unequal access to the activity is another problem remarked by workshop participants, which relates to the running of workshops in an overprotected environment created by volunteer facilitators. In terms of art-making activities, this idea can generally be associated with the concept of a 'safe space' provided to students in the context of art education. The aim of such a space is to allow experimentation and creativity in a free and non-judgmental context (Wagner/Lum 2019, 275f.). Such a concept is broadened, however, in relation to the particularities of asylum seekers participating in art workshops in refugee centres. In this case, it includes the contextual and relational circumstances existing before and after the activity. Some interviewees' perspectives seemed to indicate that the very idea of doing a workshop in a refugee camp is imbued with the principle of a safe space, yet taken to its extreme articulation it is an overprotected environment. As such, their own experience ended up not

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being completely positive. The workshops would rather become non-authentic experiences of reality, in direct contradiction with the objective of starting the process of sociocultural integration for participants. Particularly relevant is the opinion of a former workshop participant who lived as a de facto refugee outside the centre when the interview was collected:

> AHMED: I don't say it is bad, but it is not the reality! I mean, do you think we can find something like that outside the centre? The reality is different […]. You have to pay to do music, or do a course, everything. You pay and the situation is different, even. [In the centre] you have the volunteers coming to you, asking you to do the workshop, like you do them a favour.
>
> Q: Would you have the time to take a workshop now, for example?
>
> A: Outside the centre? I don't have the time. I don't see why I should do a workshop. It is good to have time, but I don't. I can't use my energy, I can't. […] I need to work, to do my things for a living.

Migrants seemed to be conscious of the exceptional circumstances in which the art workshops – as well as many other optional easy-access and free-of-charge activities – were provided to them, and that such circumstances could hardly be replicated outside the centre, without the support of volunteers. However, some were particularly frustrated by realising that, by taking part, they had not developed the relational knowledge and social capital they could make use of, if and once they would leave the centre.

Connected to the above is the concept of the usefulness of the activity, another key element on which workshop participants reflected deeply. Again, the concept has to be articulated within the specific condition of an asylum seeker, bearing in mind the fact that these are constantly subject to the progress and outcome of their asylum application. Most of the time their priority is – obviously and understandably – to obtain refugee status. This is, in other words, the form of visibility they aim to achieve by taking part in the workshops, a form that takes a *hard* dimension, as opposed to the *soft* articulation of volunteer facilitators who are rather concerned with the representation of the participants' cultures and talents, as described above. Despite the constant efforts of many asylum seekers to live as normal a life as possible, their legal status is a source of stress, uncertainty, and fear for the future, and thus has a great impact on their motivation, attitude, and choices. Participation in art workshops makes no exception. The majority of interviewees, indeed, stated

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that one reason for them to take part in the workshop was the ambition to increase their chances of obtaining asylum, assuming that their engagement could be proof of their willingness to integrate, and in the mistaken belief that authorities would take this into account. Such a utilitarian perspective was quite outspokenly affirmed by an interviewee who quit the workshop after a few sessions:

> LENNY: We have a question always, 'what can you do for us?' You come here, many people come here and we speak, we do things, we do music and this is ok, I like it but that's not what we need.
>
> Q: Would you want to do something different?
>
> L: You know here, we all need the same, the yes [*positive asylum decision*], we need the yes. So let's do something for this […], otherwise I don't see why I should do the workshop. It didn't help me. I don't want to, I can't waste my energy, I can't, I'm sorry.

The principle of usefulness clearly illustrates how the perspectives and objectives of the volunteer facilitators were not fully shared by participants. However, the latter did not seem to feel any resentment towards the former, but rather to be aware of the difficulty to have a genuinely selfless approach, given their condition of asylum seekers.

General conclusions

Although the reflections presented in this chapter highlight criticalities in art workshops in reception centres, the intent here is not to discredit the value of artistic practices and art making for such vulnerable migrants as newcomer refugees and asylum seekers. Research conducted in similar contexts shows that the arts can be an effective empowering tool and effectively foster migrants' sense of agency, self-representation, and participation in public life (e.g. Damery/Mescoli 2019; Sechehaye/Martiniello 2019). At the same time, reducing the pivotal role of the volunteers involved in the refugee issue in the last years to the problematic circumstances and relationships evoked in this chapter would be absolutely unfair and greatly misleading.

The ethnographic accounts presented here are limited to the specific case of art-based workshops facilitated by non-migrants and offered to migrants in the context of reception centres. All critical reflections are determined by the form

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and content of these workshops, involving factors such as the distribution of work among migrant and non-migrant actors, their relationships and forms of interaction, and their perspectives, conditions, needs, and expectations. The aim here has therefore been to report and reflect on some contradictions and divergences, and perhaps to provide useful information to practitioners involved in similar activity, and research approaching similar contexts.

Workshop facilitators were genuinely motivated in their effort to provide migrants with opportunities to become visible, share their culture, and experience local culture – and in principle, these processes are consistent with a newcomer's integration. However, it is not possible to disregard the position of the actors involved, and it is crucial to acknowledge that the objective of integration is inextricably linked to the status of the participants in the specific case of asylum seekers. In the current asylum system, the integration process is not even supposed to start for a migrant who, at the end of the asylum evaluation procedures, sees his or her demand rejected. To become visible, from the point of view of an asylum seeker, means first and foremost obtaining refugee status. Significantly, the accounts presented above indicate that the migrants' approach was rather pragmatic, even utilitarian, and that the benefits they wished to obtain from participation were different from those expected by the workshop facilitators. If some valued the possibility to be able to get in contact with the local culture and people, this was not primarily to lay the foundations for their own integration, but rather to increase their chances in what has been significantly labelled as an asylum lottery (Türk/Dowd 2014, 281). This discrepancy in objectives determined that the whole context could become a source of disappointment and frustration for all actors involved. Volunteer facilitators could see their efforts as pointless, their objectives unfulfilled, and their workshops failing. Migrants could end up with disappointed expectations and a feeling of being unheard or not understood, which may increase their marginalisation or exclusion. Thirdly, but not less importantly, the integration objective also clashed with the participants' perception of operating within an overprotected environment, and that such an experience would not allow them to learn important social codes and to achieve the necessary knowledge to live outside the centre.

My research concludes that it is crucial to acknowledge participants' perspectives and to design future projects in a way that focuses on their expectations and priorities: on their motives to be involved and on what they want to obtain from the activity, rather than on what the activity can potentially do for them. This also means going beyond the idea of vulnerability, or better to be careful to give it a context- and individual-based significance, and by doing so to avoid the risk of objectification of the refugee.

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NOTES

1. The contemporary debate on migration is characterised by a multitude of definitions, often misused, to identify migrant individuals and groups. Apart from the generic definition of 'migrant', every other definition in this chapter is related to the individuals' legal status. Accordingly, a '*de facto* refugee' is a person whose asylum application has been accepted; an 'asylum seeker' is a person whose application is under evaluation by the relevant authorities; and an 'undocumented migrant' is a person whose asylum application has been rejected, but remains in the territory without legal documents.
2. The migration-related issues that emerged in the years 2015–2018, particularly following an upsurge in the Syrian conflict, was often referred to as a 'refugee crisis' or as the 'European migrant crisis' in the media and the political debate, emphasising an increase in asylum applications. In this chapter, I (like many others) adopt the definition of 'reception crisis', to specifically emphasise the fact that it was the European reception system that was particularly ill-prepared to deal with the global migration scenario.
3. All names of research participants are pseudonyms. Any information, place, context and circumstance that could lead to the identification of the research participants has been omitted.
4. Participation and engagement in such a context as a refugee reception centre, indeed, may vary largely given that migrants are supposed to transit and live there for a limited time. Even when asylum procedures become exceedingly long and migrants are stuck in centres for years, however, priorities can suddenly and quickly change for them, and so they can either lose interest or be forced to leave the activity.

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3

Making Precarious Migrant Workers Visible and Audible Through Art and Ethnography

Burcu Dogramaci and Ger Duijzings

Introduction

Physically challenging jobs like construction work, agricultural harvesting, domestic care work, and the night shift in factories and the service industries are often carried out by immigrants and seasonal migrant workers, coming, for example, from Eastern Europe (cf. Herbert 2003; Wagner et al. 2013). They may have no permanent residence title, arriving on temporary tourist or work visas without entitlement to health care and social protection, and in some cases, they may be ominously defined as 'illegal' by state authorities. Although their jobs may be exhausting, dangerous, unhealthy, and badly paid, the essential tasks they perform may remain largely invisible to the wider public. Recently, the Corona pandemic has brought their precarious existence more into focus (see, among others, Jacobs 2020), not only because of border closures creating labour force shortages but also because migrant workers, due to poor working and living conditions, were amongst the first to be affected and infected (most notoriously in the meat processing industry, see Verschwele/Wernicke 2020).

This chapter will draw attention to several projects, both ethnographic and art related, that make 'invisible' migrant workers more 'visible'. It has grown out of our shared interest in the emblematic anonymity of migrant workers and represents a first attempt to compare a number of such projects, to raise questions related to representational methods and ethics. Working at the intersection of art history (BD) and anthropology (GD), in this chapter we will reflect on issues that anthropologists and artists (many of them inspired by ethnographic methods, see Foster 1996) encounter when working with precarious migrant workers. We will

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argue that increasing migrant workers' visibility through visual media such as photography (as photographers and artists have done) may be an effective way of making their conditions tangible, but that, fundamentally, enhancing their 'audibility' provides important additional benefits when trying to promote empathy or give voice to the unheard. Audio-visual media such as (documentary) films may combine the strengths of both, under the condition that filmmakers address ethical problems and power differentials inherent to visual methodologies.

An issue that we would indeed like to focus on is research and representational ethics. As anthropologists engage with living subjects in ethnographic fieldwork, research ethics has been a concern for decades, the key objective being to protect people's anonymity and avoid research practices that may be detrimental to their interests. These concerns, which include reflections on the positionality of the researcher and power mechanisms, inform how ethnographic texts are written. In the world of the (visual) arts, such ethical concerns seem to have received less systematic attention, although they are increasingly debated in cultural, performance, literary, and curatorial studies, and focus primarily on the pitfalls of representation. This has happened, for example, in relation to artistic work on migration and migrants, and in museum studies due to post-migration and/or anti-racist critiques (see e.g. Bayer/Terkessidis 2017; Gaonkar et al. 2021). Nevertheless, we still perceive a certain deficit in art history in terms of reflecting and commenting on the possible ethical implications of artworks and the responsibilities of artists producing work on migrants and migration. The task of ethical reflection and the onus of responsibility is left to the artists themselves to deal with, with art historians often ignoring these aspects.

These ethical considerations are, however, particularly pressing when talking about migration-related artworks. In the case of visual material like still and moving images, there is by definition an 'exposure' subjecting people to the gaze of spectators and viewers, making them 'vulnerable' to forms of identification and objectification as ('illegal') migrants. It may be a breach of the ethical principles protecting the interests, anonymity, and confidentiality of those we depict. Sound/voice is potentially less problematic, as it is (technically) harder to identify someone based on voice alone. Voices can be distorted to protect the anonymity of the person, which is more challenging in visual recordings and can only be achieved by keeping faces out of the frame or blurring them or other identifiable aspects (capturing only peoples' backs for example or similar strategies).

We will partly focus on the differences between 'vision' and 'sound', and the implications of using particular media that prioritise one of the two. The first favours 'seeing', that is, the analysis of 'framed' and 'objectified' visual material consisting of stills or moving images, for example in photography, film, visual anthropology, or an object (work of art), while the latter places more emphasis

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on 'listening', thereby allowing subjects to articulate their thoughts and voice their perspectives. While anthropologists are all too familiar with these issues (being aware, for example, that any type of audio-visual recording may affect people's willingness to talk or change their behaviour or the content of a conversation), art history could be sensitised more to these aspects that intervene in the relationship between artists and their subjects. First and foremost, this means that art historians should share and explore these ethical concerns in relation to artworks focusing on migrant workers' lives. Anthropological field research could provide a model here, for example, in terms of first prioritising – recorded, or even better, unrecorded – oral exchanges between researcher and interviewees. Hence, we will address, across and between our two disciplines, the methodological issue of how to bring migrant workers' lives into perspective (through forms of ethnographic fieldwork, including representational and non-representational techniques), as well as the ethical issue of how best to protect the interests of precarious migrant workers and how to create the conditions for them to participate, adopt an active role in art projects, and to claim ownership and agency.

Framing our discussion around the distinctions between vision and sound, we do not suggest this to be an absolute binary, certainly not when it comes to recording practices and techniques, all of which produce 'objectified' artefacts, whether they are visual or sound-based (Pink 2015). We propose a fine-grained understanding that collapses the binary between 'hearing' and 'listening' on the one hand and 'seeing' and 'perceiving' on the other. In plain language, hearing and listening (in) can be both tools of understanding and surveillance and control, as much as seeing and watching can lead to detachment as well as enhance empathy. On the surface of things, however, to be heard or listened to by both the ethnographer and artist seems to be more 'symmetrical' and 'relational', which is important for vulnerable social categories such as migrant workers. Sound through resonance and reverberation indeed engenders genuine connections, more than the observing gaze does (Nancy 2002). Listening means opening oneself to multiple other voices, without the imposition of control and authority (Voegelin 2018).[1] One has no voice when being merely 'seen', and to be 'watched' connotes 'cold' observation and objectification, being potentially exposed to the powerful and condescending gaze of others (Pink 2013; 2015). The camera is usually such an exterior eye, an eye that observes an object from the outside without entering its inner life world. Perceptibility, on the other hand, means entering the subjective realm of the person observed. As we would like to suggest, perceptibility requires different forms of listening, as well as conversational and dialogic practice. Without them, photography (or film for that matter) cannot access these subjective life worlds and make us understand them from the inside. As Hubbard and Lyon have argued in the context of urban studies

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research, citing Lefebvre's work: "urban research has been widely criticised for its ocular emphasis in accounts of metropolitan experience. In this regard, an 'attentive ear' has a lot to offer …" (2018, 947).

This distinction is particularly salient in Ger Duijzings' section describing the *Nightlaboratory* project, which entailed him carrying out nocturnal fieldwork on urban streets and with night shift workers. An obvious aspect of this (field) work at night is that social life is suspended, and darkness predominates, thereby reducing 'visibility': as the example of a night security guard working on university premises shows, both security guard and anthropologist rely mostly on sound and listening, virtually ignoring visual cues or forms of representation. Listening carefully to sounds and voices (materialising in ethnographic text) becomes the key medium, producing proximity and immediacy in the connection between the researcher and night shift migrant worker. It is not only that listening implies that somebody is 'heard' and not just monitored but also that sound reverberates and is therefore potentially more immersive (Nancy 2002), whereas vision has a detaching or distancing effect.

The importance of listening may be less obvious in the case of agricultural workers and harvest helpers, but the examples provided by Burcu Dogramaci indicate that 'listening' – in the form of working together, having conversations and engaging in 'small talk' even across linguistic barriers – is essential, complementing or even tilting the distancing visual forms of representation (as in the work of the filmmaker Agnès Varda or the photographer Irina Ruppert discussed later in this essay). When visual artists start to listen, they cease to objectify their subjects. Ruppert's work shows very well how this can be done, first by listening and then photographing. Also exhibiting outside in the field, that is, where migrant workers do the harvest and the artist participates (almost like an anthropologist), reinserts the work into a meaningful context for the individuals portrayed.

It speaks for itself that listening may have uncanny aspects, for example, when it bleeds into 'interrogation' during asylum interviews. Officials listen carefully, in an attempt to catch the asylum applicant unawares with lies and inconsistencies in their stories (Walther 2021). Even worse, intelligence and state security services use eavesdropping and wiretapping as a means to capture salient information, secrets, and personal details that provide a glimpse of the 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1990; Nancy 2002, 4). Other forms of 'monitoring' may be rather visual, observing other people through CCTV for example, without sound. The movements of migrants may be traced through visual (i.e. video and infrared) surveillance technologies at borders (Vukov/Sheller 2013). Here, control is predicated on a detached and objectifying gaze, of panoptically 'watching' what migrants do, and where they go, without listening to them. Under such conditions, migrants (and migrant workers) prefer to remain invisible.

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Listening to nocturnal migrant voices: The Nightlaboratory

Equally invisible are night shift workers, often migrants, a topic that Ger Duijzings explores in his *Nightlaboratory* project, which has been based on fieldwork carried out at night on the streets of cities like London, Sofia, or Moscow, together with research student Julius-Cezar MacQuarie and other collaborators (including artists). The results of these nocturnal forays into urban spaces are published on a blog containing brief anonymised portraits of people working at night, most of them immigrants.[2] So instead of night revellers, who, in the United Kingdom at least, are conspicuous and familiar characters in public imagination, the blog focuses on the invisible individuals who spend their nights at work or on the street (see also Duijzings 2017; 2018; Duijzings/Dušková 2022).

Often not knowing the language of the host country, migrants have difficulties accessing the labour market. The employment open to them tends to be low-skilled jobs at night where language skills are less relevant, like cleaning, maintenance, and security. Their nocturnal work patterns make them largely invisible, detached, and sometimes utterly alienated from the daytime city. Their life has another rhythm and lacks synchrony with that of other citizens. Although there are plenty of disadvantages to night shift work (sleep deprivation, adversarial health effects, and the lack of a normal social life), some workers indeed see also certain benefits, such as not being subject to forms of surveillance, being able to connect with relatives in a different time zone, or being at home during the daytime and having time for children.

The blog posts offer brief ethnographic vignettes of approximately 200 words. The main purpose of this self-imposed and experimental format of ethnographic writing and reporting is to offer miniatures, almost like (textual) 'snapshots', or 'stills'. These texts are written in a hyper-realist and minimalist style inspired by Chantal Akerman's cinema (Margulies 1996). They are not co-authored, although they are based on careful listening, in an attempt to make the existence of those that are portrayed palpable. Usually, these portraits are based on one-off and unarranged chance encounters with night shift workers, on streets and wholesale markets, bus and train stations, in shops and hotels, while they are working their night shift, speaking with them for several minutes up to two hours, but without noting down their names in order to protect their anonymity. Additionally, personal details are sometimes changed or aspects of their stories are modified without changing the crux of what they share with us. The blog's main purpose is to offer experience-near and on-the-ground ethnography. 'Listening' is the key activity, without using an audio-visual recording device, not capturing the conversation as research 'data'. Instead, a voice recorder is used to recollect the conversation immediately after the encounter, after parting with the person. No photographs are taken while meeting people, only when they themselves ask to be pictured.

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Ger also shadowed night workers at work, such as a Bulgarian student working in a call centre on the 25th floor of a Canary Wharf skyscraper (2012) (Figure 3.1), or a night security guard of US-Hungarian origin at his university UCL (2014). Several nights, Ger sat down with him and accompanied him during his routine rounds through the university premises, passing through corridors and tunnels and listening to the noises of engines operating throughout the night. As Ger learned from him, to listen carefully and be aware of sound are essential, noises are vital as vision is impaired in the dark (see also the turn towards sonic methods in geography: Gallagher/Prior 2013). A fascinating 'sonic' aspect of the night-time city is that foreign languages may become dominant. East European languages such as Russian may become the lingua franca in a nocturnal work environment (as is e.g. the case in the Continental plant in Regensburg).

Nocturnal fieldwork is challenging, as is night shift work, because of the sleep deprivation and strains put on one's diurnal duties (such as teaching) and life patterns. One needs extraordinary stamina; the lived and embodied experience of night shift work is indeed indispensable for a fuller understanding of its implications. It is not unimportant to realise its corporeality and the effects it has on the night shift worker's (and ethnographer's) body and mind. The mind starts playing tricks, as sleep deprivation leads to perceptual distortions, blurred consciousness, or even mild forms of hallucination triggered by sounds and impaired vision. The standard toolbox of ethnographic fieldwork cannot be applied, as jotting down



FIGURE 3.1: Ger Duijzings, *The Nightlaboratory*, London 2012.

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field notes in the dark of the night is not as easy as during the day. Instead, one makes, as MacQuarie describes so forcefully in his work, 'body notes' or knowledge that is inscribed in the form of 'corporeal vignettes' (such as aches and tiredness) (2021, 310). For months he worked exhausting night shifts, reflecting on his bodily and mental responses to the heavy physical work he carried out during the night. The 'graveyard' shift deposits itself into the body and mind, as unspoken and tacit habitual knowledge.

Apart from the usual ethical considerations of ethnographic fieldwork, there is an increased urgency to reflect on them when encountering migrants living and working on the street at night, as they often belong to the most vulnerable social categories (being homeless or having no proper residence permit and right to work). The way around this is not to record names, avoid making photographs or recordings on which they can be identified, and ignore the required 'informed consent' forms to be signed by informants. Sometimes one confronts ethical dilemmas, when, for example, witnessing violence against refugees and migrants, as happened one night doing nocturnal fieldwork in Milan. Calling the police to step in, and reporting what we had witnessed, did not trigger adequate action, on the contrary.

As the night has its own principles, it is hard to decide what courses of action are needed in these circumstances. This has its positive sides as well: the experimental nature of nocturnal fieldwork, subverting the usual diurnal focus of anthropological research, leads to interesting (and counter-intuitive) discoveries, for example, that it is often very easy to talk to anonymous others at night. There is a heightened sense of connection and intimacy: the 'anti-structural' and 'counter-hegemonic' aspects of social life emerge as striking features of nocturnal urban landscapes. People share the intimate and personal aspects of their lives with unknown others. Although the urban night is perceived as unsafe or dangerous, one frequently encounters forms of 'communitas' (Turner 1974), including acts of solidarity or civic responsibility missing during the daytime, which may be the result of a shared sense of exclusion or marginalisation from society.

Ways of seeing gleaners and harvest workers: Varda, Van der Linden & Donkers, and Ruppert

One gets the same sense of a genuine connection between people, of mutual understanding and empathy – as Burcu Dogramaci will point out – from the film *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse*[3] (2000) by Agnès Varda, which is dedicated to the agricultural tradition of allowing strangers (various categories of people who do not own or cultivate the land, including migrants) to pick up fruits and vegetables leftover from the harvest. The filmmaker closely follows the movements of gleaners, both

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in the countryside and on food-and-vegetable markets and in supermarket dump sites, who pick up what has been discarded. In an almost ethnographic style, the film also addresses the legal aspects of these forms of collecting leftovers. While traditionally this practice is tacitly tolerated in the countryside and even legitimised by the law (Bonner 2013, 494), gleaners in the cities can be prosecuted if they pick up vegetables that have been left lying around in dismantled markets or search through discounter bins for expired and discarded food. Varda's film repeatedly brings the posture and gestures of the pickers into the picture, the stooped posture when something is picked up from the ground with outstretched arms. Varda also finds this body language in nineteenth-century paintings by Jean-François Millet or Jules Breton dedicated to agricultural harvesters (Cruickshank 2007).

Varda refers to an art history of the harvest, meaning paintings and/or works of art referring to agricultural practices, which is often also a history of stooping. In her film image and sound have an equal relationship. The cinematic gaze is mitigated by the intimacy she achieves by putting herself and her interaction with gleaners into the frame, becoming a gleaner (*la glaneuse* in the title) herself, of images, food, and objects, listening very carefully to what her subjects have to say. These filmed oral exchanges and dialogues with the filmmaker in particular give the gleaners an opportunity to speak about the backgrounds (need, hunger) and motivations (rebellion, activism) for collecting (Bonner 2013, 494). The sound overcomes the limits imposed by the camera as an observing instance. As for the gleaners Varda encounters during her journey through France, they cannot film back, they have no cameras, but they respond and interact with their words. On the other hand, the visual argumentation creates a possibility to understand gleaning not as a peripheral activity of the marginalised, but as part of a larger (art) historical and social context.

The visual and the auditory thus have different ways of giving people presence, of making them visible or audible, of involving them or observing them. The seasonal work thematised by Varda and its visualisation inevitably leads to the topic of migration in the present: temporary migrants from Poland or Romania who are employed in Germany and other West-European countries to help during the agricultural harvest. Their work often goes unnoticed by the wider public. What follows is the discussion of two contemporary visual art or photographic projects, dedicated to seasonal workers who travel from Eastern to Western Europe.

The photo book *Stella Maris* (24 × 17.2 cm) by Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers was published by The Eriskay Connection in 2016 (Figures 3.2–3.4). The photographers' approach to the subject was via the former Stella Maris monastery, which lies on the outskirts of the village of Welberg (close to the town of Steenbergen) in the Netherlands with just 1100 inhabitants

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FIGURE 3.2: Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers. *Stella Maris*. The Eriskay Connection, 2016, book cover (courtesy of Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers).



FIGURE 3.3: Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers. *Stella Maris*. The Eriskay Connection, 2016 (courtesy of Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers).

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FIGURE 3.4: Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers. *Stella Maris*. The Eriskay Connection, 2016 (courtesy of Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers).

and about 500 houses. The monastery had been converted into an accommodation for seasonal workers by an agency after 2010. In contrast to what is often the case in agriculture, the seasonal workers (around 400 of them) are not housed in overcrowded collective accommodations with undignified sanitary areas: Stella Maris has its own shop, bowling alley, bar and restaurant, a fitness room, and a party room. All the necessities of life and leisure activities are available in the complex.

For their long-term project, the photographers visited Stella Maris repeatedly between 2011 and 2016, sometimes several times a month, sometimes at longer intervals, so that they always met new residents. Their photographs show the complex's exterior, surrounded by the same well-kept lawn as other houses in the village. Their camera not only investigates Stella Maris' deserted living spaces but also shows the residents waiting, playing, and smoking. A special design was chosen for the photo book: some pages are only half or three-quarters wide so that the page underneath can be seen. This aesthetic not only connects the pages when they are turned but also emphasises the repetition of the furnished rooms in Stella Maris.

In the photo book, the village also makes an appearance: we can see the villagers' single-family homes surrounded by deserted gardens, with windows closed or made invisible by lowered blinds. The demarcation of the village is not only

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expressed by the hermetically closed houses but also visually and haptically: van der Linden and Donkers choose glossy paper for the picture section dedicated to the village, while they use rough, solid paper for the other pages of the book (where they depict the migrant accommodation). The difference between Stella Maris and the village of Welberg thus manifests itself tactilely and optically when leafing through the book.

It becomes clear that even a more comfortable accommodation, which contributes to a more pleasant stay in a foreign country, cannot bridge the distance to the local population. Stella Maris remains a segregated residential bastion where seasonal workers from Poland eke out a closed-off and hermetic existence. Their lives are governed by a strict set of rules, which are posted in every room and if breached result in sanctions, up to and including expulsion from Stella Maris. One such rule states that lost cutlery (counted monthly) must be returned within a week, and another that the rooms must be kept tidy and clean. Cameras are installed in the building itself – control is an important leitmotif of life in Stella Maris (Anonymous).

The photographs by Geisje van der Linden and Miriam Donkers convey loneliness, boredom, and social isolation that seem to take over the migrants' life in the accommodation. Although the rooms are personalised by different items – blankets, everyday objects, and pictures – each room is more like the other, more like a hotel room than a distinctive personal living space. The accumulation of leisure, living, and care under Stella Maris' roof ultimately ensures that the residents participate as little as possible in village life. This is also a concession to the local population, who are concerned about disturbing night-time leisure activities by some of the Polish seasonal workers (Anonymous n.d.). For their photographs, Van der Linden and Donkers use an analogue 6 × 7 camera (a Mamiya 7II), which poses special technical challenges: unlike digital photography, the result is not immediately visible and correctable. Analogue photography is more expensive, so each photograph is carefully considered, more elaborately prepared, and takes more time. This practice correlates with the stretched time in the photographs. Miriam Donkers says:

> This gave us the effect that we wanted: to capture the mood, boredom, and repetition that we witness every time we visit Stella Maris. We took most of the pictures in the rooms, the only places where the guests keep those personal belongings that could reveal something a bit more intimate about them.
>
> (Anonymous n.d.)

The photo book's effect is one of display and showcasing: when you leaf through it, you inevitably see all the people photographed. The sequence enables comparison

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and highlights the same equipment and the inactivity of the residents. It shows again and again a life that is not self-determined, in which the portrayed individuals always remain strangers in an alien and alienating environment. The isolation and invisibility of the residents of Stella Maris within the Dutch village is pars pro toto for the absence of the seasonal workers from the society in which they make a considerable contribution by their own labour.

The photographer Irina Ruppert also dedicated her work *Erz. 7139* to seasonal work on farms, but in the rural region of Dannstadt-Schauernheim in Germany. Most seasonal workers are from Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. Ruppert herself worked as a harvest helper for one of the family farms in the village and was thus also able to connect with other farmers, whom she asked for permission to take photographs.

Ruppert's models pose directly in the field in their work clothes (Figures 3.5 and 3.6). One woman stands upright with her head turned to the side in front of the photographer. One sees the soil on the tanned arms and hands, the trousers and the rubber boots, and thus the traces of the work just done. Another harvester has bared his upper body, he too is looking out of the picture, and another is holding a knife. She is looking into the camera. Those photographed pose in front of draperies showing various rural and nature motifs in black and white and fastened with staples.

For her project, Ruppert worked with historical photographs from the region that she sourced by inviting the local population. She enlarged these shots and printed them on fabric to use as backgrounds for her *Erz. 7139* series. In this way, Ruppert works in the tradition of the historical studio and itinerant photographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who photographed their models against an artificial background and separated them from their respective everyday contexts, capturing them against an imagined often idealised backdrop. Ruppert's reference to itinerant historical photography links the migratory practice of camera art with the status of the photographed as temporary migrants. Through this self-location in the history of photography, Ruppert makes it clear that mobility is not a special case or occurrence in history, but a widespread phenomenon that encompasses people as well as professional images, practices, and objects.

Irina Ruppert inserts and integrates the photographed seasonal workers into a history of agricultural work in the Dannstadt-Schauernheim region.[4] The photographer set up the background for the photographs at the edge of the fields she herself worked in. Any interested seasonal workers were welcome and could come to the set-up and have their pictures taken. Ruppert's language skills – she speaks some Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Polish – helped her to contact the workers.

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FIGURE 3.5: Irina Ruppert, *Erz. 7139*, 2018 (courtesy of Irina Ruppert).

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FIGURE 3.6: Irina Ruppert, *Erz. 7139*, 2018 (courtesy of Irina Ruppert).

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The connection to the local context once again formed the background for the special exhibition of the resulting portraits, which took place in situ, that is, on the spot, in the field itself (Figure 3.7). The larger-than-life prints were exhibited at the place where they were taken, on a field in Dannstadt-Schauernheim, and were thereby accessible to the local population. The photographs' large format emphasises the models' heroic appearance, their self-confidence, and presence in 'their' fields, and through their scale draw attention to workers who are otherwise hardly noticed. In this case, John Berger's understanding of art and visibility can be adapted: "Identity of an object or color or form is what visibility reveals: it is a conclusion of visibility" (Berger 1977, 32).

Irina Ruppert's exhibition in the field addresses a problem related to the social orientation of photography: what happens to the photographs of seasonal workers when they are transferred to the art context and shown in the museum or gallery? Who looks at these people, to what extent do they become objects that are seen by an audience that possibly or probably comes from other social contexts?

With this exhibition practice, Irina Ruppert engages with the existing boundary between the photographer, those photographed, and the audience. The exhibition



FIGURE 3.7: Irina Ruppert, *Erz. 7139*, field exhibition, Dannstadt-Schauernheim, 2018 (courtesy of Irina Ruppert).

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in the field does not abolish this boundary, but it creates a different accessibility outside the art institution. Ruppert says: "The seasonal workers were very proud and took a lot of selfies. I don't think they would have come to a gallery".[5]

Photo book and exhibition are two different gestures of exposing in-/visibilities: while the photo book must be read in a specific order and presupposes an intimate relationship between the reader and the book, the exhibition in the field not only focuses on attention but also marks proximity to the subject and its protagonists. In both cases, however, the seasonal workers remain photographed; they become objects in front of a camera, while their voices remain inaudible.

Final considerations

In this chapter, we explore various examples of artists and anthropologists making precarious migrant lives 'visible' and/or 'audible'. As we have seen, visibility and invisibility can have quite ambivalent meanings in the context of migration: both have simultaneously protective and threatening effects and act as instruments of control and power (Schaffer 2008). Visibility exists by virtue of light and illumination, of 'throwing light on' something (a precondition of photography), but as we have argued, it may result in a detached and non-empathic form of knowledge production, reproducing a controlling gaze that leads to the othering of (framed) 'objects'. This is a key theme in studies of the night: the colonisation of the night through the use of artificial lighting and CCTV cameras, which are the key instruments of governmentality of the night and of nocturnal surveillance, allowing the authorities to exert control and reduce the freedoms and liberties afforded by darkness.

There is, it seems, a complex politics of visibility and invisibility – or perceptibility and imperceptibility – of migrants in contemporary artistic production. In our view, visibility is not the same as perceptibility: the former seems to be imbued with a certain power dynamic while the latter suggests a less asymmetric and multisensorial relationship driven by empathy, intuitive (ap)prehension, and anticipation, open to both 'seeing' and 'experiencing' the nuances and the complexities and minutiae of life, through an interplay between vision and the other senses, such as during an interview, for example. As we have argued, listening plays an important role. It helps articulate silenced and marginalised voices. Listening is a key ingredient of participant observation in anthropology, which means blending in, learning skills and taking part in mundane activities, while incessantly communicating through forms of informal 'small talk' (Driessen/Jansen 2013). In the end, the aim is to understand, for which listening to our collocutors is crucial. They are the 'author(itie)s' of their lives,

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not the academic who usually starts off as a detached observer. Rather than the visual practices and representations in art, it may be the audial practices (in combination with visual practices or not) that may offer the best conduits for producing some counter-narratives. Only when one starts to 'listen', also across the existing linguistic boundaries (as is usually the case with migrants), can one start to understand.

In recent decades, artists have adopted ethnographic methods, employing (or mimicking) the strategies used by anthropologists. But they often fail to do ethnography in a manner that is methodologically and ethically rigorous, not having received anthropological training, as Hal Foster has argued: their practices may turn out to be 'unethical' in terms of using individuals for artistic purposes, being insensitive to their needs and damaging their interests and livelihoods, which is especially problematic when these individuals belong to vulnerable social categories (Foster 1996). Of course, we need to distinguish between artists and art historians. The former may be interested in the lives of the people they engage with, whereas the art historian seems to objectify the artwork and the ethnographic relationship it may be based on, but, in the end, that may not be a bad thing as it allows for a much-needed critical perspective.

NOTES

1. See also https://www.salomevoegelin.net/. Accessed 30 September 2021.
2. See https://nightlaboratory.org/. Accessed 4 July 2024.
3. *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse*, France 2000, Director: Agnès Varda, 82 minutes.
4. Incidentally, the title of the series *Erz. 7139* refers to the number of a local producer (i.e. *Erz.* for *Erzeuger* = German for producer), the Jotterts family, where Ruppert herself first worked as a harvester. Cf. Lea Gerschwitz: Erz. 7139, 2018, http://www.irinaruppert.de/en/serien/serie17/0/. Accessed 31 August 2021.
5. Irina Ruppert: Email to Burcu Dogramaci, 10.5.2021.

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4

Between Lights and Shadows: Border Crossing and the Art of 'Seeing' and Being Seen

Sholeh Shahrokhi

Art in strange places

On 2 August 2019, Boston's celebrated public monument *Make Way for Ducklings* was transformed into the *Caged Ducklings*, as it became the site of an art activism installation by Karyn Alzayer. When I saw the report of Alzayer's act of protest, I reached out to the artist for a series of online conversations about her art activism. I argue that the transformation of the *Make Way for Ducklings* sculpture (also known as *The Mallards*) into *Caged Ducklings* by the artist highlights the aesthetic power that public art has on our sense of political ethos and values. In this chapter, I concentrate on how specific works of art interrogate the workings of borders in the political North, by transforming the narrative of 'crisis' in border crossing to include the perspectives and stories of migrants, otherwise hidden in the fringes of belonging.[1]

> I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean
> where the two overlap
> a gentle coming together
> at the other times and places a violent clash.
> […]
> This is my home
> this thin edge of barbwire
> But the skin of the earth is seamless.
> *el mar* does not stop at borders.

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> To show the white man what she thought of his
> arrogance, *Yemaya* blew that wire fence down.
>
> (Gloraia Anzaldúa, 1999, 15–17)

This chapter is about an engaged form of art that brings to light a critique of border control connected to the rise in anti-migrant violence in the United States and beyond during the last decade. In what follows, I examine two distinct works of art, each engaging with the notion of the border in a judicious manner, one in response to the contemporary immigration practices in the United States, the other emanating from the borders of Israel–Palestine to offer a broader discerning reflection on mobility and surveillance at the checkpoints.

In examining the works like *Caged Ducklings* (Alzayer 2019) and *Gateway* (Hacmon 2018) from the perspective of anthropology, my aim is to explore the connections between art activism and the power to make and unmake narratives of the border. Border art activism is expansive. The works brought into focus in this chapter are examples from a much larger series of studies, which included archival research, fieldwork, and open-ended conversations with a number of artist-activists whose works directly address the complexity of the border. Moreover, this chapter owes a great deal to the ongoing and robust anthropological scholarship on migration and the border, where im/mobility and global dis/connections seem to resonate across the Anthropocene (e.g. Chatty 2010; De Leon 2015; Agier 2016; Khosravi 2021).

If children could fly

In April 2018, the US Administration initiated its 'zero tolerance policy' which allowed for the violent separation of tens of thousands of immigrant children from their families, to be held for extended periods of time in government custody, in shelters, and in detention centres, where they were subjected to physical, emotional, and sexual harm.[2] Further reports by major media outlets, the United Nations, and the US Congressional investigation organisations revealed nearly 70,000 migrant children had been detained by the US government in 2019 alone, and spent more time in custody away from their families than in prior years.[3]

It is against this political climate that Alzyar's art emerges in protest. *Caged Ducklings* is a political response to a specific moment in US immigration history when the governmental strategies for concealment of the violence endured by the border crossers reaches a new low as the state engages with systemic uprooting and separating children from their loved ones to uncertain fates. The selection of *The Mallards* as a site of protest is a significant reflection of the immigration policies and practices in the United States.

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Created during the Cold War, the City of Boston commissioned Nancy Schön to build *The Mallards* in 1987. Schön's inspiration itself came from a classic children's story by the same name, written earlier in the century by Robert McCloskey (1941) that tells the story of how a pair of migratory mallards in search of a new home to raise their ducklings find refuge in the city's public garden. A historical contextualisation of both the text in 1941 and the bronze sculpture in 1987 further reveals how aesthetics connects with the political. In 1941, the United States had begun supplying war material to Allied forces, relying on the empathetic public reception of the European escapees to the United States. McCloskey's story complimented such ambitions. Likewise, Schön's sculptures towards the end of the Cold War (Boston 1987; Moscow 1991) reflect the political climate of the time regarding borders. Decades later, *The Mallards* are again transformed in response to the political climate of the time, as Alzayer places individual cages around this sculpture. *Caged Ducklings* (Figure 4.1) separates the iconic migrant family by placing physical barriers around the mallards, rendering them inaccessible to the public. The artist further separates individual birds from one another, articulating an additional layer of distance as a direct protest against the separation and detention of migrant children by the State.[4] Although *Caged Ducklings*



FIGURE 4.1: Karyn Alzayer, *Caged Ducklings*, 2019 (© hennainspired.com).

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was quickly removed by the park's authorities, the circulation of its image in the media had a profound impact on public discourse. By evoking the image of migrant children in detention centres as obstructed birds from family and flight, this art transforms public discourse on immigration policies from the rhetoric of exclusion to ethics of care.

The 'seen' and the 'unseen'

Despite the proliferation of migrant images in the media since 2015, the story of border crossers is reduced to the 'potential threat' the 'migrant-other' is expected to pose to the so-called stability of the socio-economics and cultural values in the political North.[5] In the last two decades, Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States have ramped up the circulation of a 'refugee crisis' narrative (Agier 2002; Fassin 2005; De Genova/Tazzioli 2016; Ramsay 2020) perpetuating hierarchies of belonging between citizens, refugees, asylum-seekers, and undocumented migrants.[6] Seen from the perspective of the 'host' country, migration narratives frequently ignore the complexity of displacement; the political and historical circumstances for mass migration; and the diversity of border crossing journeys. The exclusion of stories of migration from the perspectives of the border crossers themselves is in fact an act of concealment.

> The United States might be a nation founded by immigrants, but that was a long time ago. Countless citizens today suffer historical amnesia and draw stark divisions between the 'noble' European immigrants of the past and Latino border crossers of today. How quickly they forget about the violent welcome receptions that America threw for the Irish, Chinese, and many other newly arrived immigrant groups.
>
> (De León 2015, 26)

The systemic concealment of border crossers is not exclusive to the present day. In the 1990s, the United States adopted a policy later named Prevention Through Deterrence, wherein by flooding major ports of entries with agents, the border crossing flows were pushed into the desert. Jason De León's poignant deliberations illustrate how the implementation of the 'deterrence-displacement' strategy not only funnelled border crossing into 'hostile' environments of the Sonora Desert, it further made it harder to see both the border crossers and border control.

The systemic invisibility of migrants in the political North is indicative of the presumed distinctions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Willen 2010). Within the context of contemporary neoliberalism, a hegemonic assemblage of legal–political–economic rubrics has situated migrants in a precarious position

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of liminality in terms of belonging. Migration from the political South, which is often instigated by structural violence in labour, political, and social relations, is paradoxically deemed a characteristic of globalisation, while migrants themselves have become the embodiment of the perceived political–economic threat in the political North. In *Purity and Exile* (1995), Malkki offers an anthropological perspective on how experiences of violence and dispossession are remembered as narratives that identify the subject beyond the border. Marginality of the *migrant-other* does not end after crossing over the defensive lines and security checkpoints that presumably permit their entry into a new life.[7] Immigration policies in the political North have largely focused on legal notions of citizenship, which were informed by the nation-state configuration of bordered territories that preceded the demands of globalised market economics for a type of 'flexible citizenship' (Ong 1999). Such a myopic view of citizenship ignores the importance of a socio-cultural agency and notions of 'cultural citizenship' (Rosaldo 1997) that include practices, memories, and beliefs produced from negotiating the ambivalence of relations with the state and its hegemonic discourse on belonging through national identity formation. Similar to the artistic interventions considered in this chapter, border ethnographies offer a critique of exclusionary policies and dehumanising practices designed to render the 'migrant-other' invisible. Intersecting migration art-activism with an ethnographic critique of everyday life encounters as experienced by the border crossing 'other', demonstrates how borders are drawn around the identity, language, and the body of the 'migrant-other', simultaneously locating them within the boundaries of the host country while designating them as outsiders. Migration art offers an invaluable perspective on building a more inclusive representation of the lived experiences of the 'Borderlanders'.[8]

The next art example considered here is a series of installations by Zac Hacmon that offer a creative and inclusive visual culture on border experiences, bringing a human story of checkpoints into focus, making visible that which has been erased.

The art of moving under surveillance

Gateway by Zac Hacmon (Figure 4.2) is an interactive art installation built in stages from a small prototype to a full-scale installation made from steel bars and turnstiles that are modelled after the border security checkpoints in Israel. *Gateway* is modelled on the Kalandia checkpoint near Jerusalem. The checkpoint is located between the Palestinian towns of Ramallah and ar-Ram and a refugee camp, a liminal space 'without history or identity' (Meer Art 2018). Taken out of its geographical context and placed inside an art gallery, the artist introduces an additional layer of displacement when the viewer experiences *Gateway* as a

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FIGURE 4.2: Zac Hacmon, *Gateway stage 2*, *Empathy*, 2018, Smack Mellon Gallery. Brooklyn, New York (© zachacmon.com).

standalone apparatus, in the artist's own words, "a checkpoint without border, and a naked architecture with no authority" (Hacmon 2021).

Gateway evokes questions about the opacity of border crossing, the bioproduction of otherness in relation to regulated and unregulated movements across borders, and the violence of the surveilling gaze that creates hierarchies of power between those within the confinements of the gate and those who are outside looking in. Built at a life-size scale from solid durable material – steel bars – *Gateway* critiques both the notion of visibility and the perceived impenetrability of the border. Unlike a wall of concrete and sheet metal used as a barricade to prevent movement and visibility at the border, steel bar partitions allow for a degree of visibility between those inside and outside the gates, paradoxically highlighting both the impossibility of an impenetrable 'border', as well as emphasising the liminality of the border as a grey-zone that is in between spaces of 'authority' and 'authenticated' nationalities. *Gateway* offers a visceral experience for the viewer to participate in and out of the realms of seeing and being seen, as they move through the spatial divisions that give meaning to it.

Gateway further offers a reflection on the violence of 'waiting' (Figure 4.3). It reignites the visceral memory of my own border crossing experience from Morocco

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FIGURE 4.3: Zac Hacmon, *Gateway stage 2*, *Empathy*, 2018, Smack Mellon Gallery. Brooklyn, New York (© zachacmon.com).

into the Spanish territory of Sebta (Cueta) in 2019, where hierarchies of waiting between those who could cross, those who hoped to cross, and those who never did, were most palpable. In the words of Khosravi, "to keep people waiting without ruining their hope, is an exercise of power over other people's time" (2021, 14). Hacmon's *Gateway* is a critique of the violence of the waiting gamut that distinguishes hierarchies of power around the border crossing. From the aspirational gaze of those inside the gate in anticipation of passing through, in contrast to the weary watchers locked out by the partition, to the privileged few who monitor and 'authorise' movement across,[9] the structural violence of ethno-racial inequities of border politics could not have been made more palpable than in this art project.

Concluding remarks

We live in an era of image saturation where we are always looking – at times without seeing. The visibility of the *migrant-other*, like the site and sights of the border, takes on multiple spatial and symbolic localities. As borders are redrawn beyond the national geographies, the *migrant-other* flows in and out of realms

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of visibility. Intersecting migration art activism with the anthropology of border can bring to light an assemblage of critical inquiries into the narratives, policies, and documentations that give meaning to the everyday experiences of the border crossing refugees and migrants in the political North.

Migration art, can be located at the borderlands, or refer to the art that brings border stories to our fields of visibility. My approach to art activism as a site of anthropological inquiry about the border is concerned with what Appadurai calls an "ethics of possibility" in the future of humanity (2013, 295). Where *Caged Ducklings* respond to a specific time and place in the US broader history of technologies for exclusions, in his installation series entitled *Gateway* (2018), artist-activist, Zac Hacmon brings to focus a critique of border control through examination of a series of disciplinary technologies imposed on the people crossing the border, that range from the violence of surveillance, to the affective consequences of waiting, and isolation.

Migration art has steadily risen in response to the anti-migrant sentiments and border-control policies that dominated the political North. Recognising the power of the visual, many contemporary artist-activists portray a visual narrative of border crossing that disrupts the monotony of the dominant discourse of dehumanised 'migrant-other' arriving in the political North. As evidenced in Reza Deghati's lifetime of photography from the borders, *Asylum Archive* about Ireland's Direct Provision by Nedeljkovic 2007/21, *Borderlands* and *Border Cantos* projects by Misrach 2020/21, art interventions provide a migrant-centric visual repertoire that resists modes of concealment related to 'citizenship', 'otherness' and politics of 'belonging'.

In this chapter, I concentrated on how the art of and about the border has the power to bring to public view a critique of the ideas produced around migration. A growing number of contemporary migrant artist-activists produce a first-hand account of journeys across zones of visibilities at and beyond the border, offering necessary records from everyday experiences of exclusions. Art such as *Caged Ducklings* and *Gateway* continue to transform a discourse of othering through the production of an aesthetic language that brings to light the heterogenous voices in migration stories, providing important counter-narratives to the myth of the migration 'crisis' in the political North.

NOTES

1. The distinctions between people's daily experiences as they are filtered through legal and penal systems of belonging and classified as either 'displaced', 'migrant', 'refugee', or 'asylum seeker' has enduring affect. In this chapter, however, I focus on the technologies for 'keeping people out' that reduces the migration experiences as 'other'.
2. One year later, the Committee on Oversight and Reform's staff report to the House of Representatives disclosed, "the Trump Administration's child separations were more harmful, traumatic, and chaotic than previously known" (oversight.house.gov 2019, 1).

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3. Investigative journalism further revealed that widespread abuse of migrant children in US custody in 2018 and 2019 was significantly larger than any other recorded instances (The Associated Press and Public Broadcasting Service's Front Line 2 October 2019).
4. In January 2017, an executive order charged Department of Homeland Security to apprehend and detain unaccompanied minors and children (Chishti/Bolter 2018). Further investigations revealed the administration's mistreatment of migrant children in the United States between October 2018 and May 2019.
5. The use of a binary terminology of the North vs. South assumes a false sense of uniformity, erasing heterogeneity of life experiences in the world. Elsewhere, I have teased out the hierarchies of visibilities among the 'migrant-others' (Shahrokhi 2018).
6. Innumerable anthropological scholarships inform my critique of the perceived 'undesirability' of the 'migrant-other', including that of Chatty 2010; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Köhn 2016; Schiocchet 2016, 2019.
7. Kathleen Staudt makes the same point about the expanse of borders beyond the geopolitical territorial lines through a series of ethno-racial reactions to the body of the émigré as "assigned by law enforcement officials in and away from borderlands" (2018, 2).
8. If border itself is a form of distinction between zones of belonging, beyond the geographical nation-state designations, I find the work of visual art scholars such as Kevin Smets (*Reel Borders: Film and Borderlands*, 2021) and Randa Maroufi (*Bab Septa*, 2019) useful in offering the terminology of 'Borderlanders' to refer to people who experience, witness, and/or cross the border in their everyday life.
9. Michel Foucault introduced the theory of the subjugation of bodies in a modern sociopolitical context as 'biopower', which refers to the growing 'calculations of power' through 'governmentality'. The contemporary migration politics in the United States during the COVID pandemic demonstrates the reach of governmentality over the migrants not only in regards to mobility (biopower), but also in 'deportability' (De Genova 2002) and in 'necropolitics' (Mbembe 2019). Migration politics denote life and death (Agamben 1998) as both subject to state control over bodies that sit outside of the law (undocumented immigrants) as well as those who are deemed deportable through the law (Talavera and Nunez 2010).

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SECTION 2

SITES | SPACES

Kerstin Meincke and Kerstin Pinther

Introduction

"How does migration take place?" – the question posed by Tabea Linhard and Timothy H. Parsons in the introduction to *Mapping Migration, Identity, and Space* (2019), refers to two essential levels of migration: the circumstances in which it takes place and the spatial implications tied to it. This perspective goes beyond an examination of the causes, consequences, and depictions of migration in different parts of the world and different moments in history, "but also calls attention to the crucial role that space and place have in it" (Linhard/Parsons 2019, 4).

This section explores histories of art and migration from a spatial perspective and more precisely from the point of an architectural production of space. It explicitly links the research focus on the exile, (forced) migration, and flight to the resulting new spaces and architectural aesthetics (Dogramaci/Pinther 2019), and, related to this, on the mobility of ideas, construction material, handcraft, or technologies (McQuillan 2010; Kilper 2019). Thus, it departs from this "web whose strands cross and connect dots" that Michel Foucault has described as crucial for the world today (Foucault 2006, 317).

While architecture has long been considered and analysed as standing for permanence and locality, migration was associated with mobility, movement, or

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uprooting, thus architecture and migration have long been thought of as virtually antagonistic domains, as unrelated, and research has only occasionally addressed this topic (Cairns 2001; Pinther 2011; Yi-Neumann et al. 2022). Much recent research has demonstrated that migratory movements of artists, architects, and intellectuals have had profound, long-term influences on the production and history of art and architecture. For example, in the first half of the twentieth century, new transcultural sites for artistic encounters emerged in metropolitan areas (Nicolai 1998; Dogramaci 2008; 2020). And while the transfers of spatial notions and their manifestations in the urban space carried out under the historic flag of colonialism, from the colonising countries into the colonies, have been widely researched in recent years (see for the African context, e.g., Çelik 1997; Crinson 2003; Avermaete et al. 2010; Jackson/Holland 2014), we still know less about transfers carried out through alternative axes of power constellations (Teriba 2019) as well as about feedback effects on the states that had sent the architects in (Crinson 2003; Avermaete et al. 2010; Osayimwese 2017). This goes along with the neglect of recognising alternative ways of knowing (alternative epistemology) and being (alternative ontology) and thus with the establishment and maintenance of predominantly western canons: "And so all the products [and architectures] and the way that we have to think about design doesn't include the majority of the world and their culture and their cultural perspective" (Burks in Hobson 2020).

Thinking about the recent refugee movements from Africa to Europe, it is precisely the ephemeral architectures and spaces in the context of migration that have recently attracted the interest of scholarly, artistic, and curatorial projects, such as the exhibitions *Making Heimat. Germany, Arrival Country* [Making Home: Germany, Arrival Country] in the German Pavilion of the Architecture Biennale in Venice (2016) (Schneider 2011; Cachola Schmal et al. 2017; Mersmann 2019), or *Calais: Witnessing the 'Jungle'* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2019/20), that dealt with the photographic negotiation of a refugee camp near the French harbour city prior to its dismantling in October 2016, which became popular as 'the jungle', from three interwoven perspectives (Bruno Serralongue, Agence France-Presse, and inhabitants), or the documentary Maria Kourkouta shot in the migrant camp Idomeni in Greece together with Niki Giannari, which based on Giannari's poem *Des spectres hantent l'Europe* (2018) (Didi-Huberman 2017). And one of the most radical formulations of such a transitorily yet powerful space is certainly Merle Kröger's and Philip Scheffner's 2016 film *Havarie*, which consists of only one unedited sequence appropriated from YouTube which is stretched from its original length of around three minutes to feature film length and depicts a small boat with thirteen refugees. Unable to manoeuvre, the boat appears like a black dot in the endless blue expanse

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of the Mediterranean Sea, one of the most precarious and contested spaces of transit, controlled by the European border protection, and simultaneously one of the most familiar spaces that have been produced and reflected in the media related to recent refugee movements. This film points towards our involvement and responsibility as bystanders (see in this context also Sven Johne's video work *The Circumnavigation of Lampedusa Island* from 2014 or Irene Gutiérrez Torres' recent short films dealing with the European external border at the Strait of Gibraltar).[1] In his short essay "Visibility and Navigation: The New Images of Flight", Tom Holert also concluded (2017, 143–144) that "flight and migration, because of their political consequences and human chicanery, are always also motifs of spectacle culture" (Holert 2017, 143). He also analyses how photographic practices by migrants are tied to practices of orientation and connectivity (with the different places and spaces along their routes), and thus a practice of emancipation, while at the same time being used for official mapping purposes and surveillance (Holert 2017). As a subject, cartographies of flight and their 'double-rhetorics' (Holert 2017) have gained intensive recognition in the field of art through Bouchra Khalili's *Mapping Journey Project* (2008–11), in which the artist focuses on the experiences of eight displaced persons, who narrate their own experience without becoming visible themselves. Against this background, Argyro Nicolaou has described the *Mapping Journey Project* as the "literal backdrop of the migrants' trajectories as well as the symbol of a geopolitical and visual order that both produces the migrant condition and refuses to acknowledge it" (Nicolaou 2020).

Because migration not only has an impact on destination countries but also affects the entire route and regions of origin (Dogramaci 2008; Pinther 2011), several artists have addressed this reciprocal relationship and the interplay between transnational migration and architecture and urban spaces brought forward through this section. Regarding the above-mentioned Mediterranean, Yto Barrada's work *A Life Full of Holes: The Strait Project* (1998–2004) is certainly crucial, as it traced the building practices of immigrants who live temporarily (some shorter, some longer) in the artist's hometown of Tangier (Morocco), situated along the route to Europe, mostly in the vacant lots and housing projects situated around the Port (Barrada 2005).

Thus, this section takes up these topics and aims to investigate the overlapping of architectural and spatial concepts caused by migration processes and the translations and transfer of aesthetic concepts linked to them. It includes close readings of architectural approaches that take up or reflect this hybrid status in their design issues such as the creative and architectural production or negotiation of 'home' or the role religion plays within migratory building aesthetics (Becker et al. 2013; Lozanovska 2019) take centre stage. From this perspective,

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Phi Nguyen explores the architectural negotiations of Christianity's presence in Vietnam, which emerged out of the encounters between colonial and vernacular architecture, and presents an intercultural dialogue, as well as a process of decolonisation. The question of the entanglement between countries of origin and arrival is also the topic of Kerstin Meincke's contribution to this section, which focuses on the interplay between building practices and migration by analysing Christoph Wachter's and Mathias Jud's collaborative artistic project on Roma building culture, realised in the city of Dortmund between 2018 and 2020. This approach also touches upon "memory practices" (Bond/Rapson 2014) within urban planning strategies, which are discussed by Mareike Schwarz in her contribution to this section. Working with the concept of 'atmosphere', she empirically explores the spatial politics of the city-funded project *Superkilen* [Superwedge] in Copenhagen, a park that was designed as a recreational park reflecting the neighbourhood's cultural pluralism and opened in 2012. More recent articles also discussed the linkages between race, urban planning, and architecture. This very topic was recently taken up in an exhibition entitled *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America* organised by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (2021). In her contribution, Jessica Hemmings introduces and discusses the textile works by Kathryn Clark and Loren Schwerd which in very different ways evolve around the topic of the racial production of space in US American cities.

NOTE

1. Gutiérrez' works were presented and discussed by Rhea Dehn (26 January 2022) in the talk series "Borders. Borders and Border Regions in Contemporary Art Production and Art Theory", organised by Alma-Elisa Kittner, Kerstin Meincke, and Miriam Österreich from the research group "Art Production and Art Theory in the Era of Global Migration" (Ulmer Verein), see https://www.ag-kunst-migration.de/deutsch/workshops-tagungen-talks/talks-2021-22/. Accessed 30 March 2022.

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5

Towards a Minor Textile Architecture: Kathryn Clark, Loren Schwerd, and Igshaan Adams

Jessica Hemmings

In *Toward a Minor Architecture*, Jill Stoner explains:

> Minor architectures operate from outside the major economy, potentially outside the architectural profession, and outside prevailing critical frameworks – outside these dominant cultural paradigms, but *inside* architecture's physical body […]. This is often a matter of economy, for minor architectures tend to rely on minor resources.
> (Stoner 2012, 15)

Stoner calls attention to what has already been built and is now abandoned or generally disregarded. At times this means bricks and mortar, and at times this means the spaces built with words. This chapter borrows its inspiration from Stoner's call for minor architecture, which draws its own inspiration from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's writing on 'minor' literature located "at the bottoms of power structures, yet hold[ing] an extraordinary potential for power" (Stoner 2012, 13). Each of the three artists discussed work with textiles that refer to built environments and address topics, and materials, that arguably exist beyond "dominant cultural paradigms" (Stoner 2012, 15). Kathryn Clark's series of *Foreclosure Quilts* (2011–ongoing) record the extent of home loss through bank foreclosure experienced across the United States during the 2000s. Loren Schwerd's *Mourning Portraits* (2007–2009) are woven from synthetic and human hair collected from the curbside of an African-American hair salon after Hurricane Katrina destroyed sections of New Orleans in 2005. Finally, Igshaan Adams' installations repurpose the flooring of domestic interiors from his childhood in the segregated Cape Flats of Cape Town, South Africa.

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Clark, Schwerd, and Adams each make work about homes that occupy the undervalued and overlooked substrata. As examples of practices that consider themes of exile and flight, this chapter's consideration of art made in textile materials is an effort to expand the voices contributing to discourses about architectural and design practices. The textile, as I have written before, is a particularly adept traveller, across continents as well as nations (Hemmings 2015, 15). But instead of this more commonly understood scale of migration, this writing focuses on what may be understood as micro-migrations within communities. The examples selected for discussion each capture the architectural production of space, or perhaps more accurately, the loss or lack of access to particular spaces. Clark's poignant use of the quilt, typically an object of comfort inside the home, is used to convey the extent of US home loss. Schwerd's scavenged weaving materials offer haunting reminders of New Orleans' damaged communities. Adams' repurposing of the worn patterns of linoleum flooring brings together material culture from communities driven apart by South Africa's Apartheid laws. As record keepers these examples construct poetic, and often evocative, reminders of the real material loss at stake in suburban peripheries.

Physically, this writing moves from the two-dimensional site plan (Clark), through small- and large-scale models (Schwerd) to 1:1 scale installations (Adams). Geographically, it roams. Clark's series *Foreclosure Quilts* predominantly focuses on the western and midwestern United States, while Schwerd's work is specific to the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. Adams does not share in Clark and Schwerd's focus on the United States, nor does his work look to the experiences of others. In this aspect, all three artists occupy different positions: Clark's first career in urban planning underpins her interest in the US foreclosure crisis; Schwerd is a long-time resident of New Orleans yet recognises that the loss she records is not her first-hand experience; Adams' approach looks to his childhood, avoiding the potential criticism of harvesting the loss of others by collating domestic materials from his community.

Kathryn Clark

Home ownership was unusual in the United States prior to the 1920s. Mortgages were considered much the same as renting from a landlord, and as Alyssa Katz notes in *Our Lot: How Real Estate Came to Own Us*, debt of any form, including mortgages, was considered a last resort (Katz 2009, 3f.). But just shy of a century ago mortgages became more readily available to individuals sold on the image of the American dream that necessitated home ownership. Fast forward to the 2007–2010 subprime mortgage crisis (mortgages to individuals who would not

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previously have qualified due to existing debt, bankruptcy, low income, or no deposit) and Andrew Carswell explains a cruel contradiction: the crisis "sprouted fully from the early efforts toward giving low-income households a chance at achieving homeownership" (2011, 103). By the 2000s, over-construction followed by aggressive lending by banks resulted in an epidemic of bank foreclosures in communities across the country.

The subprime mortgage crisis did not occur overnight. Starting in the 1930s when home ownership through mortgages first emerged through to the 1960s, a policy known as *redlining* created segregated communities in all but name (Katz 2009, 11). Coined in the 1960s by sociologist John McKnight, the term refers to "the practice, currently illegal in the United States, of color-coding different neighborhoods on residential maps based on mortgage default risk (as a proxy for race)" (Luke 2014, 1117). Katz explains:

> For all that time the FHA [Federal Housing Association] had refused to insure loans in older, poorer, and, most especially, blacker parts of cities. The agency's appraisers' manual, which determined who would and who wouldn't qualify for a government-insured loan, ruled out all kinds of homes as too risky – including those in neighborhoods that were 'aging,' 'changing,' or 'racially inharmonious.' Row houses, places where lots of people lived in close quarters, and integrated areas were all verboten.
>
> (2009, 6f.)

"An obvious consequence of redlining has been the persistence of racial residential segregation, but another consequence is the social reproduction of racial wealth inequality" (Luke 2014, 1118). When banks began to exhaust their supply of borrowers, they shifted from lending to individuals most likely to meet their mortgage payments to actively seeking those with a financial history that made them unlikely to be able to meet their payments. The penalties – including foreclosure – profited the mortgage lenders who often remarketed the properties and collected the profit. From effective segregation of communities grew *reverse redlining*, "where the lender or insurer targets minority consumers in order to charge them more […] rather than ignoring minorities or not considering them for loans, reverse redlining targets minorities for exploitation" (Luke 2014, 1118). In Katz's words reverse redlining is "the practice of deliberately targeting desperate people with loans they'd never be able to pay back" (2009, 52).

Trained as an interior architect, a "passion for the social benefits of urban planning and a fascination with maps" led Clark to her first career in urban planning (2021). She worked for the offices of Peter Calthorpe who is credited with

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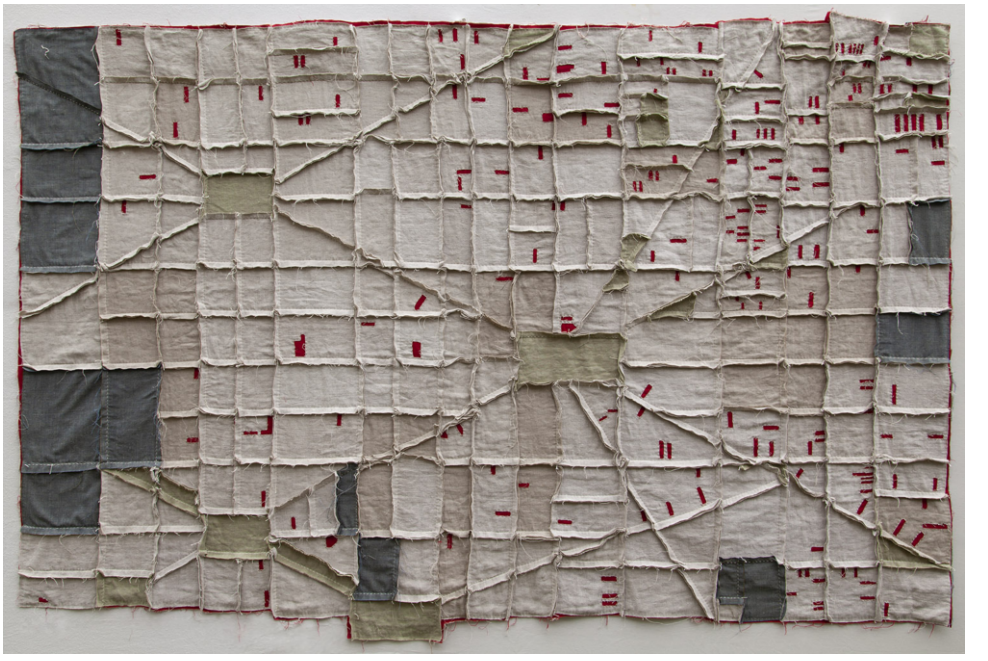

FIGURE 5.1: Kathryn Clark, *Washington, DC Foreclosure Quilt*, 2015, 84" × 57.5" / 213 × 146 cm, embroidery thread and recycled string on linen and wool.

the emergence of New Urbanism – a movement that prioritises planning mixed-use development and neighbourhoods that are walkable, rather than reliant on cars. Clark worked on massive projects, including over four thousand acres of mixed-use development in Utah in the early 2000s. In 2004, she left her career in urban planning to focus on creating artwork that mines much of the same data. "Accurate data is crucial to stop denial", she explains of the facts and figures that underpin her textile series *Foreclosure Quilts* (2011–ongoing). Clark joined the database *RealtyTrac*, which for a subscription fee provides information on bank foreclosures to investors, realtors, and home buyers. "I want to make sure I'm portraying something that's telling the truth, I actually want a street address that I can verify. So the quilts are my way of offering this information to the public" (Clark quoted in DeWeerdt 2012).

The US foreclosure crisis of the early and mid-2000s included some of the suburban neighbourhoods Clark had a hand in designing during her time as an urban planner – a sobering reality of a vision that did not come to pass in reality as intended on paper. In response, she made a commitment to use her artistic practice "to keep a historical record of the data" in the hope that hard facts may move viewers more than abstractions (2021). Gabriel Craig acknowledges that

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the *Foreclosure Quilts* also "exploit the humanizing ability of textiles to ground this abstract problem in the resolutely personal realm of the domestic" (2013, 26). The series borrows some colour schemes from the materials legend of urban planning maps used since the 1950s: blue areas refer to civic zones; green open areas and environmental conservation; red is commercial; and purple is industry (Jeer 1997). The quilts' titles refer to their general location and have become a further type of legend.

The first quilt in the series, *Las Vegas* (2011) (Figures 5.2a and 5.2b) used sturdy wool and bleached linen with roughly sewn recycled denim patches reminiscent of an inexpertly added clothing patch. After finishing *Las Vegas* Clark explains, "I realized it looked almost too perfect, and I wanted to show how fragile and imperfect these neighborhoods are, how they're falling apart" (Clark quoted in DeWeerdt 2012). Made the same year, *Atlanta* (2011) (Figures 5.3a and 5.3b) turns the rough seams of the quilt back onto the face. To mark each foreclosed property, gaps appear on the surface of the quilt, literally cutting into its strength.

Katz explains the decade of aggressive lending and foreclosures prior to the data recorded in Clark's *Atlanta* (2011) and *Chicago* (2013) (Figures 5.4a and 5.4b):

> Atlanta, even while foreclosures overall declined, the number resulting from subprime lenders more than doubled. In Chicago, foreclosures also doubled from 1993 to 1998, following a period in which subprime lending increased from three thousand to nearly fifty-one thousand loans each year. More than a third of the fourteen hundred Chicago foreclosures in 1998 could be traced to a subprime lender.
>
> (2009, 69)

Since completing *Las Vegas*, turning the seams and knots typically found on the quilt's back to face forward has become a consistent orientation for the series. For the quilt *Cleveland* (2011) (Figure 5.5), cotton organdie (a sheer textile with a stiffness similar to the tracing paper familiar to urban planning offices) is layered in combination with linen and recycled denim. Noting the extent of bank foreclosures experienced in Cleveland, Katz explains, "in just four years, starting in 2003, more than four out of every five home loans made in Cleveland and then securitized by Wall Street banks ultimately went into foreclosure" (2009, 83). Because "decades of population drain, industrial death and, most recently, the foreclosure crisis have left about 3,300 vacant acres in the city, and at least 15,000 vacant buildings" (Sterpka 2009, n.p.), Cleveland has an excess of vacant lots. In Clark's quilt four green blocks, marking open areas turned into community farms enabled by a $1 annual licencing fee (Land Bank), are covered in shades of green running stitch in recognition of the harvests the converted lots yield: minor architectures of minor resources (Figure 5.5).

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FIGURE 5.2a: Kathryn Clark, *Las Vegas Foreclosure Quilt*, 2011, 36" × 12" / 91 × 30 cm, recycled denim, wool, yarn, and embroidery thread on bleached linen.

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FIGURE 5.2b: Kathryn Clark, *Las Vegas Foreclosure Quilt*, 2011, detail.

Craig acknowledges:

> the very domestic nature of the quilt itself amplifies the critique embedded in the work as Clark records the crumbling of households from the inside out […] Instead of participating in the decline of a destined-to-fail suburban development, Clark's focus on presenting collapse is a compulsive and poetic ode to the deteriorating fabric of each community. (2013, 28)

Household stains and fabrics associated with the kitchen encourage associations with the domestic. For example, *Albuquerque* (2011) and *Modesto* (2011) use tea-stained voile and linen. Some quilts also include fabrics that are materially on the verge of their own collapse. *Detroit* (2011) is pieced together from cotton and wool topped in cheese cloth – a fragile open weave. (Jam makers may know of the cloth through instructions to sieve seeds through an open gauze such as cheese cloth.) Similarly bound in cheese cloth, *Flint* (2013), a city northwest of Detroit, uses the inverse colour palette to *Detroit*. Foreclosed properties in *Phoenix* (2012) reveal a weave so open that it has already begun to break apart. *Chicago* (2013) (Figures 5.4a and 5.4b) is made from linen and wool with embroidery floss and recycled string – excised sections designate foreclosed properties in sharp white – a white running stitch marking out each lot, while red running stitches visibly expose the piecing that assembles the quilt. More recently, *Washington*

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FIGURE 5.3a: Kathryn Clark, *Atlanta Foreclosure Quilt*, 2011, 19.5" × 19.5" / 50 × 50 cm, recycled denim, bleached linen, yarn, and embroidery thread.

DC (2015) (Figure 5.1) tackles a larger scale mapping, confirming the extent of foreclosure across an even larger area.

Over time, Clark became interested in how she could capture foreclosures at different points in time but came to notice that records often pointed to the same address:

> With Riverside I looked three years back, and at first I was trying to figure out some way to differentiate between the old foreclosures and the new foreclosures. But then I realized that the old foreclosures are often the new foreclosures, they're the same home that's been foreclosed on several times.
>
> (Clark quoted in DeWeerdt 2012)

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FIGURE 5.3b: Kathryn Clark, *Atlanta Foreclosure Quilt*, 2011, detail.

Clark now thinks of the impact of her textiles more in the timeframe of urban planning and is satisfied that her quilts may offer a story to be understood not a decade into the future, but a century ahead. The alternative – the immediate lessons learnt – is difficult to find. Speaking in 2012, she explained:

> I initially thought foreclosures would all be in the inner cities, and I was really surprised to find out that so many are also occurring in the suburbs. There was this pattern where early ones were in the inner city, then you start to see them out in the suburbs, and now since it's become so pervasive you're seeing it back in the cities again.
>
> (Clark quoted in DeWeerdt 2012)

Today, she reflects that during the "foreclosure crisis we solved nothing" (2021). The west of the country, for example, is more prone to overbuilding due to the greater availability of space, which has led to water shortages and a greater risk of fires. "But each city is different", Clark explains, and "so many elements is one reason why the problem has never been resolved" (2021). Carswell offers another reading, which Clark's cut and fraying quilts echo: "one of the prevailing lessons

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FIGURE 5.4a: Kathryn Clark, *Chicago Foreclosure Quilt*, 2013, 42" × 31" / 107 × 79 cm, embroidery thread and recycled string on linen and wool.

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FIGURE 5.4b: Kathryn Clark, *Chicago Foreclosure Quilt*, 2011, detail.

from [Katz's book] *Our Lot* is the depersonalization of the housing decision […] while the house was becoming less of a home and more of a commodity, friendships within communities were also being destroyed" (2011, 104). In the next example, Loren Schwerd responds to both the structural and community damage experienced in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Loren Schwerd

The Yellow House (2019), writer Sarah M. Broom's memoir, rebuilds the history of her mother's home in New Orleans East. Broom uses the house, and more particularly its location on the low-lying land in a city with two-thirds of its geography below sea level, to try and make sense of her own family history. Perhaps even more difficult to reconcile, she tries to make sense of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. When the hurricane made landfall in Louisiana in late August of 2005, one of the low-lying areas was New Orleans East, a dramatic and ill-advised development plan on land that was "largely cypress swamp, its ground too soft to support trees or the weight of three humans" (Broom 2019, 52f.). Broom's mother purchased Yellow House in 1961 when

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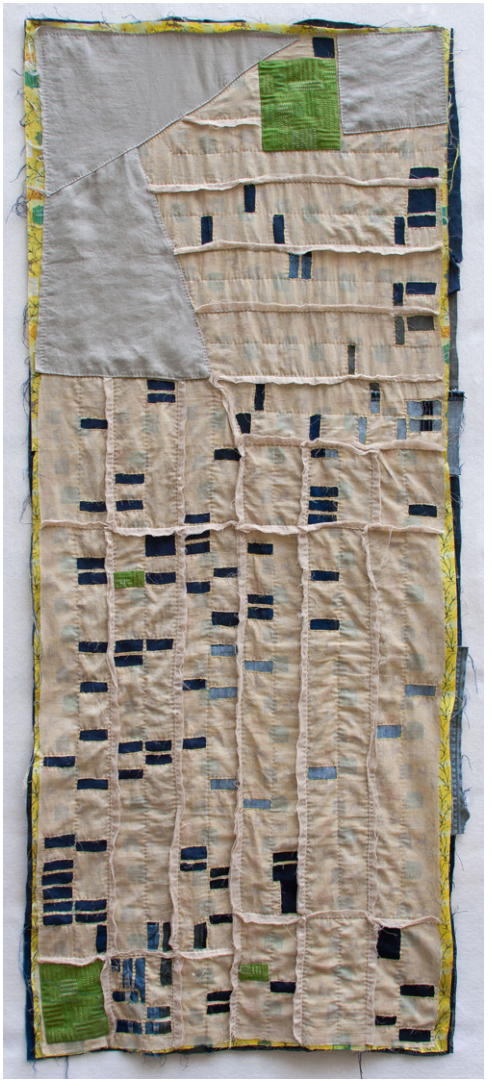

FIGURE 5.5: Kathryn Clark, *Cleveland Foreclosure Quilt*, 2011, 60" × 25" / 152 × 64 cm, cotton, linen, recycled denim, and embroidery thread.

New Orleans East was "overwhelmingly white" (Broom 2019, 57). But as Nicholas Lemann writes:

> Katrina flooded out many white people as well as Black people, and, within Black New Orleans, many working-class and middle-class people as well as poor people.

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> That was because the largest wiped-out neighborhoods – Lakeview, Gentilly, New Orleans East – were places where New Orleanians of both races had moved to ascend the ladder by a step or two, often enabled by government-backed lending programs that didn't sufficiently appreciate the risk of flooding.
>
> (2020)

Beyond the historic French quarter familiar to tourists, New Orleans' low-lying land is vulnerable to storm surges. With the exception of the Bywater neighbourhood of the Ninth Ward, which exists on a natural levee of the Mississippi River that drew many to seek safety in the area during the Hurricane, New Orleans East, where the Yellow House stood, is prone to flooding. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, followed by Hurricane Rita in September of the same year, damage to homes depended not only on storm damage but on how long the standing water remained. The lower the land, the longer the water took to recede.

Lemann goes on to explain that public-housing projects in older parts of the city did not experience nearly as much flood damage. That did not stop the urban planning committee appointed by the city's mayor Ray Nagin, "a Black businessman elected with more white than Black votes in 2002" who "unveiled a plan that entailed not rebuilding some of the Black neighborhoods that had flooded" and demolishing several housing projects that had not even been damaged in the storm (2020). Broom's family home, the Yellow House of her book's title, was part of Nagin's plan.

Loren Schwerd's *Mourning Portrait* series are "memorials to the communities of New Orleans that were devastated by the federal levee breeches which accompanied Hurricane Katrina" (lorenschwerd.com). The series' title refers to the Victorian tradition of constructing jewellery from the human hair of the deceased. But Schwerd's series is constructed from human and synthetic hair used in hair weaves she salvaged in the aftermath of the storm damage from the curbside of St. Claude Beauty Supply Shop in the Upper Ninth Ward. The removal of buildings' contents onto streets in anticipation of curbside collection after the storm was not a gesture of despair, but rather preparation for recovery. The combination of water damage and high humidity of the region required flooded properties to be emptied and dried before anticipated repair work could begin. Stoner suggests that "Minor architectures are acts of clearing […] even as that space begins to close in behind" (2012, 14). Schwerd reflects that the communities' "minor architects" gutting the interiors of their homes and businesses were indications of the desire, and expectation, to return when the power was restored (2021b). But in some areas of the city, the power was not restored.

Shot Gun (Figures 5.6a and 5.6b) was hand woven on a loom by Schwerd in 2009 using synthetic hair combined with clothing and burlap wrapped on a steel

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FIGURE 5.6a: Loren Schwerd, *Shot Gun*, 2009, 45" × 78" × 90" / 114 × 198 × 229 cm, synthetic hair, clothing, burlap, steel.

frame. The work's title refers to a building style popular throughout the south that features a narrow, long configuration that would allow a bullet to travel in a straight line through the front door and out the back. The building design is popular in hot climates because the floor plan encourages a through breeze. The scale of *Shot Gun* is slightly smaller than 2:1, and uses, Schwerd only came to recognise belatedly, the proportions of the mausoleums of New Orleans where burial above ground is necessary because the groundwater table is so close to the surface. The textured fabric holds hidden mementoes: a button missing many of its stones; shiny ribbons; and strips of clothing. Schwerd reflects on the mix of materials held within the woven structure: "on the curb peoples' stuff had lost its hierarchy" (2021a). Lives, and the material of lives, were turned inside out by the storm damage.

The *Mourning Portrait* series also includes seven small-scale textile models of homes. *Charbonnet Near Rocheblave St* (2008) (Figures 5.7a and 5.7b) collapses under a utility pole, wires dangling loose and streetlight waiting, in a moving

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FIGURE 5.6b: Loren Schwerd, *Shot Gun*, 2009, detail.

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FIGURE 5.7a: Loren Schwerd, *Charbonnet Near Rocheblave St*, front view, 2008, 24" × 18" × 16" / 61 × 46 × 41 cm, human hair, mesh.

reminder of the utilities the area never saw switched back on after the storm. Schwerd points out that the utility pole is also a cross, recognising that faith and the church played a central role in many of the areas (2021b). The braided silhouette of *1317 Charbonnet St* (2007) gradually changes from dark brown at the roof to light auburn and tapers into plaits made from human hair marking the water line that remained throughout the area long after the waters had

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FIGURE 5.7b: Loren Schwerd, *Charbonnet Near Rocheblave St*, back view, 2008.

eventually receded. *1812 Tupelo St* (2007) sits on a mesh of orthogonal streets common to land development in the United States, with verdant tufts of red hair growing around the abandoned home's perimeter. Visible structural lines of *Arc* (2008) and *Gordon St* (2008) suggest architect's models pared down to the bare remains of the supporting structure. The latter is enclosed along with its tumbled wig tree in a hairnet of chain link fencing, while the basket weave roof of *Unmoored, Near Dorgenious St* (2007) (Figures 5.8a and 5.8b) seems

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FIGURE 5.7c: Loren Schwerd, *Charbonnet Near Rocheblave St*, source, 2008.

to crush down on the rest of the structure – physically and emotionally untethered (Figures 5.8a–5.8c).

When first exhibited, Schwerd presented the small sculptures alongside the black and white source photographs she had taken of each home (Figures 5.7c and 5.8c). Dismayed that viewers seemed to reduce the works so that each 'became only about accuracy' between the photograph and the sculpture, later displays do not include the original photographic record (Schwerd 2021a). Now more than a decade removed from their making, Schwerd acknowledges her regret that the original titles included each property's full address: "I could have named the street, but should not have used a house number, because people owned these homes" (2021a). Schwerd did not anticipate at the time of making how the Internet has ordered, preserved and prioritised information: "an Internet search will now pick up the name of my artwork if families are searching for information about their homes" (2021a). Considering the extent of displacement caused by the storm and its aftermath, the Internet as a memory keeper of places at first not accessible, and later demolished, was an unanticipated reality for the families who were evacuated as the flood waters rose.

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FIGURE 5.8a: Loren Schwerd, *Unmoored, Near Dorgenious St*, back view, 2007, 18" × 12" × 8" / 46 × 30 × 20 cm, human hair, mesh, wire.

None of the properties depicted in the *Mourning Portrait* series remain today (Schwerd 2021a). Although some have been rebuilt, many have not. What was a strong community with a high proportion of multigenerational African American home ownership in the Lower Ninth Ward is now sparsely re-populated (Schwerd 2021a). Recalling the demolition of Yellow House, while her mother and many of her siblings remained evacuees in other American cities, Broom writes of the demolition notice posted to the mailbox of Yellow House:

> Perhaps there is a trick of logic that fails me now, but to deliver such notification to the doomed structure itself seems too easy a metaphor for much of what New Orleans represents: blatant backwardness about the things that count. For what can an abandoned house receive, by way of notification? And when basic services like sanitation and clean water were lacking, why was there still mail delivery?
>
> (2019, 230)

Road Home, the government programme to provide compensation for families who lost their homes during the storm, was mired in red tape. Late in her efforts

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FIGURE 5.8b: Loren Schwerd, *Unmoored, Near Dorgenious St*, front view, 2007.

to gain compensation for her mother in the agonising bureaucracy of Road Home, Broom learnt that the area's zoning had reverted back to light industry (2019, 334f.). Recounting the irony of the advice received from the City Planning Commission Office in City Hall, she explains, "I repeated it back to myself: We lived on an industrial-zoned street where the houses were the exceptions" (2019, 335).

For New Orleans, the 2008 economic crash, precipitated by the subprime mortgage crisis and bank foreclosures that Clark charts in her quilts, exacerbated the city's problems. The region felt its own delayed economic contraction in 2010, by which time the city faced a severe shortage of low incoming housing. Investors flipped properties for quick profits and Airbnb businesses to serve tourist demand drove up local housing costs. "We are the canary in the coal mine", Schwerd explains of the city of New Orleans and the litany of social and environmental factors that contributed both to the extent of damage caused by Hurricane Katrina and the impediments to recovery many families

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FIGURE 5.8c: Loren Schwerd, *Unmoored, Near Dorgenious St*, source, 2007.

faced: "People hated being referred to as refugees inside their own country" (2021a).

Igshaan Adams

South African artist Igshaan Adams explains:

> It's something that I find interesting: how environments shape us, how we absorb whatever the environment has to offer and eventually becomes a part of us […] identity formation. I did that first body of work about my domestic environment, around how that affected the formative years of my life. And I always really wanted to know, so how did I get to be […] what would have been […] how would I be if I grew up in a different environment?
>
> (2015, 14)

Adams grew up on the Cape Flats, an area populated under South Africa's Apartheid laws by communities forced from homes in central and west Cape Town under the

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Group Areas Act. South Africa's first Group Areas Act came into effect in 1950 and remained in various forms until the 1991 Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act. The low-lying land of the Cape Flats grew into a mix of government-built townships and informal settlements populated by what had been racially diverse urban communities such as District Six, which under the Act was declared a white area on 11 February 1966. By "1982, the life of the community was over. More than 60,000 people were forcibly removed to barren outlying areas aptly known as the Cape Flats, and their houses in District Six were flattened by bulldozers" (District Six).

Sites of public and private identity are central themes in Adams' practice. The artist was born Muslim and raised by his Christian maternal grandparents. "I am openly homosexual and classified as 'Cape Malay' (of mixed race) in the Apartheid South African system" (2015, 109). Early in his career, Adams created a series of works using linoleum flooring, tapyt in Afrikaans (Figure 5.9). Titles such as *Hennie se kamertapyt* [*Hennie's room carpet*] (2010) and *Boeta Joe se voordeurtapyt* [*Boeta Joe's front door carpet*] (2010) refer to where Adams acquired the old flooring in exchange for providing new flooring. "These are all people in my own environment that I grew up with – friends and family and community members, people I have always known. The spaces we draw from are the spaces I know intimately" (Adams 2021).



FIGURE 5.9: Igshaan Adams, *When Dust Settles*, 2018, installation view, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg. Image courtesy of blank projects, Cape Town.

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When he exchanged the flooring, Adams requested that the original flooring was not cleaned or changed:

> You could see where it [the original pattern] was walked off and where the furniture was and, of course, I titled the work in reference to where I got it from […] it was important that the titles referred to the spaces that I'd gotten them from because I specifically chose families who had links to my own story. So I was in a way telling my own story through their stories. And the work did feel like a collective narrative. Each piece had a bit of a story when it came together.
>
> (2015, 23)

Over the past decade, Adams has continued to work with floor coverings, along with other textiles, including Islamic prayer rugs and more recently weaving. In the context of South Africa, these material choices take on an added historical weight. The so-called Bantu Education Act of 1953 not only segregated education but also determined the subjects available for study. Adams recalls, "In terms of education there was really no art in my education process. The education system was set up with different race groups specifically to function in that very narrow corridor that each group could function in" (2021).

Getuie, the title of Adams' 2020 exhibition at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), is Afrikaans for witness. He explains:

> The linoleum itself operates as these witnesses. What kinds of stories do they tell? What kinds of events took place on them and left this residue? The material is largely associated with the working class. It comes from a community I grew up in, Bonteheuwel on the Cape Flats, but also a community in Khayelitsha (SCAD YouTube).

Mixing the two sources of flooring physically brings together the Cape Flats coloured community, Bonteheuwel, with domestic interiors from the Black township of Khayelitsha, which Apartheid laws segregated. Adams explains:

> The history of Apartheid in South Africa being so successful in keeping these communities separate [meant] there was not a lot of crossing over. If you go to the two different communities, you would feel like you are in two different countries. In this installation the way I have placed them together one would never know which piece comes from which community and I think that is my simple idea of trying to say we have such a shared history, both oppressed communities (SCAD YouTube).

More recently, Adams has moved the collaged patterns from linoleum flooring into woven tapestries (Figures 5.10 and 5.11). In his 2021 Hayward Gallery exhibition

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FIGURE 5.10: Igshaan Adams, *Vroeglig by die Voordeur* (*early light by the front door*), 2020, beads, cotton twine, wire, turmeric, tea, fabric dye 88.97" × 74.8" / 226 × 190 cm. Photo: Mario Todeschini (© Igshaan Adams. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York).

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FIGURE 5.11: Igshaan Adams, *Oor die Drimpel* (*over the threshold*), 2020, beads, rope, cotton twine, wire, fabric, 102" × 72.8" / 260 × 185 cm. Photo: Mario Todeschini (© Igshaan Adams. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York).

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Kicking Dust in London, eight tapestry weavings hang from the gallery walls that blend together patterns, wear, and stains from flooring (Figure 5.12). Each textile is woven from a braided rope with plastic beads, some plied together from various ends and off-cuts of larger rope orders. The exhibition's title refers to the dust that rises in the dances that Adams saw in the Northern Cape as a child, evoked in the exhibition in suspended sculptures of wire and beads.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is an over-sized carpet measuring 18 × 6 m. Woven from nylon and polyester rope, the carpet is laid in pieces that suggest walking routes or 'desire lines'. Adams' reference to desire lines draws from landscape architecture and urban planning, where desire lines are the shortcuts foot traffic or animals create when they circumvent formally planned routes. The work is literally drawn from data in Google map images of the paths made between communities Apartheid separated by placing them on opposite sides of a motorway. As Adams explains:

> With the craziness of Apartheid communities, of course, they used highways to keep communities separate from each other. And it was very effective, or at least that is what I would always say and thought. That is also partly why I did that exhibition [*Getuie*] with these different sheets of linoleum pulled from different homes and put together […] I was trying to address this issue of these two different communities next to each other that are completely alienated from each other because of the history. Me being Cape Coloured, classified as a second-class citizen, but next door to Bonteheuwel is Langa which would have been a Black community and they would have been classified as third class.
>
> (2021)

In this most recent work, the weaving of the grass patches of land not walked channels visitors onto a 1:1 scale pathway, to walk the route between the communities others have travelled before. The foot traffic, Adams concedes, is not necessarily always positive (Green Room), but offers a path joining what Apartheid intended to segregate.

Conclusion

When Stoner wrote her call to dwell in the unremarkable interiors of existing architecture and make use of what was already built, she was advocating for the possibilities within abandoned and disregarded spaces. The artists discussed in this chapter respond to sites that arguably also fall within Stoner's realm of the unremarkable: "vulnerable, permeable, and unstable, minor architectures

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FIGURE 5.12: Installation view: Igshaan Adams, *Kicking Dust*, 2021, Hayward Gallery, London (© Igshaan Adams, 2021. Photo: Mark Blower).

appear only obliquely, within gaps formed and shadows cast by majority rule" (Stoner 2012, 19). In each case, navigation takes on different routes. Clark sought the authority of foreclosure facts to depict in her quilts to ensure that the textile offered a credible form of witness. Schwerd faced a different reality. Her work made in response to Hurricane Katrina initially disclosed the street names and house numbers of the properties her sculptures reference. Time has forced her to reconsider the function of such literal naming when the longevity of her sculptures' titles online has outlived the very buildings they mourned. Adams refers to where he has sourced the flooring he recombines and transfers into woven carpets in part to bind himself to the stories of others living through the displacement Apartheid intended.

If, as Stoner explains, "a *minor* architecture is political because it is mobilized from below, from substrata that may not even register in the sanctioned operations of the profession" (2012, 4), then Kathryn Clark, Loren Schwerd, and Igshaan Adams navigate this substrata with textiles that map material neglect and damage: Clark cuts into her quilts and turns the untidy outward to face the public; Schwerd built from storm damaged stock replicas of homes that are now

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no longer standing; Adams' worn flooring and weavings bring together interiors Apartheid wished to separate. Each of the examples considers sites that remind us of the extent of inequality that persists in the world today. As expanded examples of Stoner's original idea of minor architectures, they move incrementally from the poetic to the literal as "opportunistic events in response to latent but powerful desires to undo structures of power" (2012, 7).

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6

Spatial Practices, Craftsmanship, and Empowerment. On the Collaborative Project *Fațadă/Façade* on Roma Building Culture in Dortmund

Kerstin Meincke

Dortmund's Nordstadt district is located north of the main station, stretching out to the East and West along the course of the tracks. It gained shape as an industrial suburb in the second half of the nineteenth century in the context of the mining and steel industries. Against this backdrop, the district had become the city's central place of arrival (City of Dortmund, Amt für Stadterneuerung) for immigrants from different parts of Europe under different sociopolitical circumstances. Presently, the Nordstadt covers around 60,000 inhabitants, 76 per cent of which have family histories of immigration or have immigrated themselves (City of Dortmund 2021). Compared with the city as a whole, Nordstadt is characterised by high rates of unemployment (especially among families with migration experience), a high level of poverty, and a low level of education, as well as various deficits in urban development (City of Dortmund, Amt für Stadterneuerung).[1] Despite an existing situated knowledge, Nordstadt is from the perspective of municipal politics a district with a high need for intervention in many respects. It is against this background that the area has been a locus of various urban development plans for several years. This includes, for example, the purchase of 'problem properties' as a regulatory tool.[2]

On a tour through this area, one might pass a residential building located at Schleswiger Street 31, which was purchased by the city of Dortmund on this basis (Figure 6.1). Its façade clearly stands out from the row of houses from the Gründerzeit it is embedded in, as it features catchy geometric ornamentation coloured in pastel tones, blended architectural elements, tinsmith works, and gold-plated medallions – all

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FIGURE 6.1: Schleswiger Street 31 façade (© Christian Huhn 2020).

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references to the aesthetics of the so-called 'Roma palaces', houses built by wealthier members of the Roma population in Romania or Bulgaria (Gräf 2007; Preda et al. 2018, 191; Toma 2020).[3] The façade was designed in the context of a collaborative art project simply named *Fațadă/Façade*, conceived and realised by the artists Mathias Jud and Christoph Wachter with members of the local Roma community, among others, Alex Ciurar, Cernat Siminoc, Constantin Ciurar, Cristina Siminoc, Leonardo Radu, Lincan Raimond, Memo Ciurar, Stefan Raul, and Vasile Siminoc,[4] upon invitation by Interkultur Ruhr, an initiative brought to life in 2016 by the regional association Regionalverband Ruhr with the scope to diversify the Ruhr area's cultural landscape.[5] The community space Mallinckrodt Street workshop, in the Nordstadt, which was founded in 2017 by Interkultur Ruhr, is meant to investigate the question of how, in the urban context, a reputation, a dignity, and a self-assertion can also be given to a certain extent to those people who, with their own contexts of life and experience, are not represented, or are only represented in a very marginalised way, in the cities along the Ruhr (Jud/Wachter 2016). As the project progressed, the circle of collaborators expanded to include Dortmund's major exhibition and discourse venue for contemporary art, Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV), and the city of Dortmund itself, who owns the building, runs out its apartments, and has made it available for the project.

The following discussion applies to this project, led by the desire to explore the architectural form of the 'Roma palace', which the project's initiators apply as a point of departure to unfold a "different narrative, a collective attempt to counter the stigmatizations", which the Roma are exposed to everywhere they live (Jud/Wachter 2020). After an introduction that seeks to situate the subject of reference both in the context of the political and historical landscape with respect to the specific living conditions of the Romanian Roma population, the two central places of action of the collaborative project *Fațadă/Façade* will be approached as spaces of transcultural re-mediations of spatial concepts and architectural forms. The first is the community space Mallinckrodt Street workshop, during which numerous architecture models referring to 'Roma palaces' were constructed, and the second one is the realisation of the façade itself. The subsequent third phase of the project, its aforementioned transfer into the exhibition space of HMKV Dortmund, will only be touched upon cursorily.

Reading 'Roma palaces' as transcultural objects

The appearance of the housing type of the 'Roma palace' in Romania some 30 years ago needs to be reflected through the local history of the Roma community, a centuries-spanning history of suppression and exclusion that can be traced back

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to the Middle Ages (Crowe 2007; Creţan/Powell 2018; Grigore 2020). From being enslaved between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the persecution and extermination during the Holocaust, the forced assimilation under the Socialist regimes, until the new dimensions of racist violence in the context of the new nationalist tendencies that came up after the end of the Warsaw Pact, Romanian Roma spatial practices developed within and in relation to the dominant spatial orders which were commonly imposed to Roma communities by force (Cojocaru 2017). This interweaving of Roma migration, building practice, and spatial politics can certainly be demonstrated most clearly by means of the provisional architectures ('camps') outside their countries of origin, to which Roma often have to refer, possibly also due to their integrability in an already existing iconography of nomadic lifeworlds associated with or attributed to them (Brooks 2013), then by means of the type of building considered here, which does not initially convey the aforementioned condition.

The erections of the first 'Roma palaces' in the country coincided – not accidentally – with the end of socialism, when the Roma population was finally recognised as a national minority by the Romanian state, and preserved the right to leave the run-down, mostly peripheric settlements they had been forced to inhabit. It is against this backdrop that the 'Roma palaces' had been attributed retrospectively as "claim[s] to citizenship" (Tomlinson 2007, 77). Today, they can be found in different rural and urban regions throughout Romania (Toma 2020, 3), and, due to their distinctive designs and construction styles, can be easily distinguished from other existing housing types belonging both to the less privileged Roma population and the Romanian majority society (Toma 2020, 8).

Like the Roma building practices outside their countries of origin mentioned earlier, the building culture of the Roma in Romania is also closely intertwined with the 'migratory condition'. As Stefánia Toma has pointed out, both the simple fact that the 'palace' has developed and manifested itself as a central component of Roma building culture, as well as the specific style that characterises it, are closely entangled with migration processes and the economic, social, constructive, and aesthetic prerequisites carried out with them (Toma 2020; Kilper 2019).[6] Analysing the social and symbolic values of the 'palaces' within this parenthesis, and referring both to the intra-Romanian and international mobility of members of the Romanian Roma population, she suggests reading them on two levels, first as "signs of a successful migration project, because they irrevocably show that the family was able to leave behind the segregated Roma neighborhood", and secondly as social agents within transnationally spread family networks, in which they serve as "the link that strongly ties the migrant members of the family to their homeland and to the family members left-behind" (Toma 2020, 10), also considering the strong impact of remittances on their designs. Beyond this sociological perspective,

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the 'palaces' can be approached, also from an art historical perspective, as transcultural objects. Their aesthetic programs have been outlined as 'hybrid' reference systems, entangling architectural forms associated with multiple time-historical and geographical contexts related to the migration history of their builders – before they had reached Romania (Cioponea n.d.).[7] As cited by Cioponea, the Romanian architect Nicolae Dan Manea pointed to this 'transcultural mindset':

> if we look back to the history of this minority and look at the architecture specific to the lands from where they migrated to Europe, we will be surprised to find a great similarity with the pagodas of China or Mongolia or with the arabesques and colours of Indian buildings. These palaces are, beyond their questionable appearance, a present-day expression of a very old tradition […] of this minority. In a country in which the Romanians failed to impose a national architectural style […], an ethnic minority is instinctively able to produce a specific traditional architectural style that is in accordance with its history.
>
> (Cioponea n.d.)

Thus, through the analysis of recurrently appearing construction forms, such as little towers, travertine and marble columns, plaster ornaments, or overlapping cornices (Preda et al. 2018, 204), one can easily identify references to Asian, Balkan, Ottoman, Alpine, or European architecture, not only through their style, but also through the materials being used (such as marble, several types of stone, steel, or aluminium) (Tomlinson 2007, 80; Preda et al. 2018, 202f.).

The community space 'Mallinckrodt Street Workshop'

Brought forward by the artists Mathias Jud and Christoph Wachter, the workshop at Mallinckrodt Street 57 was founded in 2017 as a space for communication, reflection, and, above all, production. The workshop's participants were primarily teenagers and younger adults, the majority males from Romania, who identified themselves as Roma, but probably not as artists. They were employed by Interkultur Ruhr for the duration of the project period to contribute to the projected façade design of Schleswiger Street 31, located in a neighbourhood only a few hundred metres from the workshop space (Figure 6.1). The architectural model that was meant to be created for that purpose (Figure 6.2) marked the starting point for a broader reflection upon the 'Roma palace' among the workshop participants, executed by the workshop group through the same medium, the architectural model (Figure 6.3).[8] For their designs, participants brought in their own knowledge, personal memories, expectations, or assumptions in addition to

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FIGURE 6.2: Model for the Schleswiger Street 31 façade, exhibition view, HMKV Dortmund (© Christian Huhn 2020).

considering examples of existing buildings that were mediated through photographic images by multiple authors (Arns 2020; Saavedra-Lara 2021), such as the results of the workshop trips to Romania undertaken by Mathias Jud, Cernat Siminoc, or Christoph Wachter.[9] As was already described regarding the building culture itself, the model designs also seem to "repeat a distinct lexicon", whose repertoire of forms, design principles, and techniques is constantly cited and reassembled in the construction process (Tomlinson 2007, 80). Through this process, one can assume with Ulrich Lehmann, knowledge about the subject was not only compiled and entangled but also produced: "There is a distinct ontological dimension to making, as it implies the emergence of the new, of something that is whole, from separate, often disjunctive and opposing components" (2012, 155).

Most of the models constructed during the workshop can be described as fictional instead of being replicas of or bearing direct references to concrete Romanian building examples. Those that do are very prominent expressions of political reinterpretation, such as the residence of Dan Finutu in the village of Buzescu, a monumental building, which in turn is based on the appearance of the courthouse of Caracal (Arns/Saavedra-Lara 2020, 79), or the House of Puiu Stancu

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FIGURE 6.3: Architectural models, Mallinckrodt Street workshop (© Christian Huhn 2020).

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FIGURE 6.4: Malinckrodt Street workshop (© Projekt Fassade – Werkstatt Malinckrodtstraße 2019).

in Timișoara, that had belonged to the Romanian secret service before Stancu took it over and transformed it into a 'Roma palace' (Arns/Saavedra-Lara 2020, 91).

Beyond the citation of recognisable forms and architectural elements that *mirror* Roman craftsmanship, craftsmanship itself can be considered *as being* referenced (while not necessarily executed, as one can learn, for example, from the application of typical tinsmith elements, Figure 6.5). This reference can be linked to craftsmanship's relatedness to notions of empowerment and emancipation among the Roma population, who had gained, under the problematic conditions they had to cope with historically, notable success as "wandering craftsmen", "groups of [Roma] who wandered within a given territory and stopped here and there to offer their services to either rural community of squire households" and passed down their skills from one generation to the next and within their circles (Cioponea n.d.). As such, they excelled in some fields, such as blacksmithing (and metalworking in general), and got involved in construction activities (Remmel 1993, 187).[10]

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FIGURE 6.5: Architectural model, HMKV Dortmund (detail) (© Christian Huhn 2020).

This understanding of craftsmanship as a mode of social emancipation and empowerment, which forms its own art theoretical debate (Harrod 2018, 192–229), leads to the consideration of the collectivising potentials of craft practices, and the role these potentials, together with the processes themselves, might have played in the workshop (Lasser 2013, 79–86). The formation of (temporary) collectives always plays a significant role when marginalised groups seek to gain visibility, or claim for justice, under the conditions of asymmetrical power constellations. For the Roma population, the collective is also crucial in processes of empowerment, which are also expressed through activist and/or artistic means.[11] Examples are presented in the framework of the first Roma Pavilion (entitled

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Paradise Lost) at the Venice Biennale 2007, and, more recently, through the *Roma Biennale*, an interdisciplinary festival at Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin that combines specific experiences of exclusion with individual artistic perspectives and feminist strategies to provoke visibility and self-determination, which took place for the first time in 2018. In this context, the publication of *We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* (Baker/Hlavajova 2013) should be acknowledged as a relevant critical platform and resource. Given the fact that the works created in the workshop are all attributed to the collective, the turn to the collective needs to be reflected critically also as an anonymising condition, which neglects individual authorship, and, even more efficiently, as well as an oppressing strategy (Tomlinson 2007, 78; Creţan/Powell 2018). Interestingly, in their empirical study, *The Power of Group Stigmatization*, Remus Creţan and Ryan Powell also chose "the neglected spaces of wealthy Roma in Romania", their "palaces", "to capture the under-researched diversity of Roma experiences and challenge their representation as a homogenous mass of impoverished, marginalized people residing in degraded environments" (Creţan/Powell 2018, 439).[12] In the following, this narrative and its manifestation in public space, on the façade, will be further explored.

Schleswiger Street 31 façade

The model-building phase was followed by the design of the façade at Schleswiger Street 31, which was carried out collaboratively by the workshop participants. As part of the project, Mathias Jud and Christoph Wachter documented its implementation in the form of a film. Even if it is filmed from the hand, obviously without greater technical requirements, there a certain pathos can be found, an idealisation of contemplative work, in the film. It shows young men engaged in various craft activities around it (sketching, masking, painting, filling surfaces or contouring, and applying gold leaf). The space in which they act is a scaffolding (Figure 6.6). It is bounded on one side by the façade and on the street by a net, making up a contemplative space in which the respective craft activities seem to be pursued with great concentration, regardless of the street life that is conveyed in the immediate vicinity by its typical background noise. Even if the two three-storey roof structures, that were to be placed on top of the building (Figure 6.2), could not be realised for building code requirements, the façade involves recognisable architectural elements like parapet mirrors with pilasters, a porch roof with familiar tinsmith works, and gold-plated medallions showing the Medusa head conveyed prominently through the Versace logo, and thus making a claim for historicity, presence, and contemporaneity (Figures 6.7 and 6.8).[13] The integration of popular culture elements, as seen here, can be thought of as 'actualisation', an aspect

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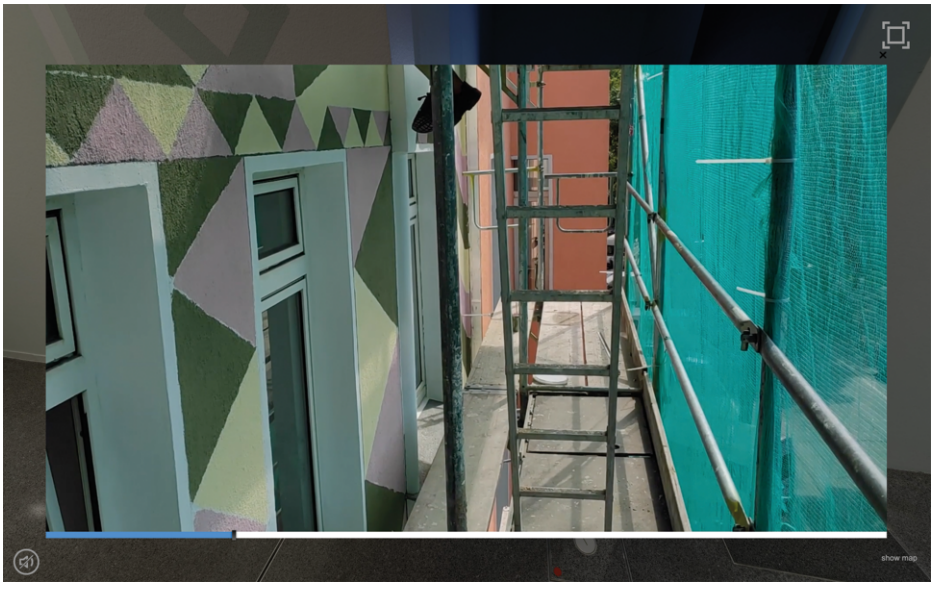

FIGURE 6.6: Implementation of the façade, virtual exhibition tour, HMKV Dortmund (screenshot: Kerstin Meincke).



FIGURE 6.7: Medusa head, Schleswiger Street 31 façade (© Christian Huhn 2020).

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FIGURE 6.8: Tinsmith works, Schleswiger Street 31 façade (© Christian Huhn 2020).

that has been described as constitutive of Roma building culture, which undergoes constant processes of remodulation and transformation, often for practical reasons, as Nina Petryk (2020, 87) argues, but, according to Preda et al. (2018, 189), is in relation to fashion or the desire to invest or represent (Figures 6.9 and 6.10).[14] Against this background, Roma building practice has been described as "an expression of the now" (Petryk 2020, 87). This constant remodelling also includes the reworking of facades:

> The foundation of houses in the style of the Roma building culture often consist of merely one room, to which, depending upon the available resources (labour, money, material), extensions are added. When such changes are made, walls are torn down, rooms are repurposed or reinterpreted. The added building sections result in a permanent modification of the basic form and of the façade with respect to colouring and ornamentation.
>
> (Petryk 2020, 87)

Regardless of the reasons, facades are thus not to be understood as static objects, but as constantly changing displays that undergo continual processes of transformation.

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FIGURE 6.9: Architectural models, Mallinckrodt Street workshop (© Christian Huhn 2020).



FIGURE 6.10: Architectural model, HMKV Dortmund (© Christian Huhn 2020).

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For builders and architects, facades have always been central spaces for communicating ideological, social, and political ideas (Scheppe 2021; Ngo/Kellermann 2021). Due to this effectiveness, facades are prominently being used, transformed, or appropriated in contexts of protest and resistance, to indicate areas of conflict, to gain and claim for visibility, and, as an aspired consequence, to initiate political and social processes and collaborate in them (McGarry et al. 2020, 16). Pointing towards this ambiguity, Jens Kastner has shown for Mexican *muralismo*, where political murals fulfilled state-bearing, i.e., little subversive functions, that not every expression mediated through a façade can be considered the direct expression of a protest culture (2012, 39).

With the transfer from the protected space of the workshop to the public sphere, the project can be situated as such in between. It applies, to a certain account, to rhetorics of activism, while at the same time, however, this step also completes its institutionalisation by the city of Dortmund, thus resonating with and becoming incorporated by public concepts around marketing or urban development (Keitz 2019),[15] besides being handed over an official function within the local (and the German, maybe even European) memorial culture around migration, and in particular Roma migration, perhaps first and foremost as a site of recognition. It refers to and addresses different economies, interests and motivations, including within the project itself or among the members of the collective that it articulates; it neither emerged from a bottom-up-, nor from a top-down-initiative, and yet it significantly contributes to the visibility of the group involved by giving reference to its presence, history, and spatial practices through the recognition of specific means of knowing, learning, and narrative forms that are unfolding complementary to the predominant narratives around the same topic (Santos 2014).

Personal note

I would like to thank Fabian Saavedra-Lara, former co-curator of Interkultur Ruhr and co-curator of *Fațadă/Façade*, for supporting my research through several conversations and site visits, and Christian Schramm and Andreea Nagy for their kind support with research and translations. Anne Söfker-Rieniets and Anna Kloke kindly helped me with their architectural expertise. Furthermore, I would like to thank HMKV and Mathias Jud for providing me with the photographs that accompany this text.

Note on 'collective authorship' ('Team Mallinckrodt Street workshop'): The architectural models and the façade are the results of a collaborative work process. Therefore, their authorship is presented as a collective one ('Team Mallinckrodt Street workshop') and not further indicated by HMKV. Behind this are, among others, Alex Ciurar, Cernat Siminoc, Christoph Wachter, Constantin

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Ciurar, Cristina Siminoc, Leonardo Radu, Lincan Raimond, Mathias Jud, Memo Ciurar, Stefan Raul, and Vasile Siminoc.

NOTES

1. Further information about the district's social and economic development can be taken from the statistical reports published by the city of Dortmund and from the municipal website.
2. In 2017, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia initiated a model program (Modellvorhaben Problemimmobilien), which supports its municipalities to purchase so-called 'problem properties' as a strategic impulse to counteract urban planning deficiencies (MHKBG 2019, 7). A problem property is defined as a property that is not used appropriately, that has structural deficiencies, that can cause negative spillover effects on its surroundings, that poses a threat to public safety, and that does not comply with the applicable regulations on handling, use, and management or conflicts with urban development goals or housing policy objectives (BBSR 2019, 23; MHKBG 2019, 7). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German into English are by the author.
3. Besides the few scholarly approaches to the subject, the 'palaces' have been subject to some photography-driven publications (Calzi et al. 2007; Andreşoiu 2008). In the publications considered for this text, the palaces are often referenced as 'Gipsy palaces', a term I decided not to work with for political reasons. In quotes, I exchange it for 'Roma', which is indicated by square brackets. In publications titles, this term is not exchanged. Furthermore, I would like to indicate that I am focusing mainly on the Romanian context, not the Bulgarian.
4. The architectural models and the facade are results of a collaborative work process. Therefore, their authorship is presented as a collective one ('Team Mallinckrodt Street Workshop') and not further indicated. For their project 'Hotel Djelem' (initiated in 2011), the artists had already worked with different Roma communities across Europe before. Further information can be taken from the artists' website: http://www.wachter-jud.net/Hotel-Gelem.html. Accessed 20 February 2022.
5. The first program phase of 'Interkultur Ruhr' ran from 2016 to 2021 under the curatorial direction of Johanna-Yasirra Kluhs and Fabian Saavedra-Lara (Kluhs et al. 2021).
6. In her analysis of changing housing conditions in Romania within the context of migration and return, Stefánia Toma distinguishes between two building types, 'pride houses' (migrants' remittance houses) and '[Roma] palaces' (houses built by members of the Roma population).
7. This migration history has been reconstructed mainly through linguistic analyses (Remmel 1993, 187f.).
8. Given their omnipresence, not only in Romania but also against the backdrop of their popular visual reception, one can assume that the members of the workshop were familiar with central aesthetical aspects of 'Roma palaces' or, if not or only to a certain extent, could get access to it through the media.

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9. At this stage, it is not possible to reconstruct in detail what role photographic images actually played in the design and manufacturing process. They were most likely not used in a systematic manner, but rather as a mode of approaching the affective power of the buildings. In accordance with the artists' decision, the photographs taken on site are not shown here.
10. By examining historical sources, Franz Remmel has shown that the spheres of activity of the representatives of some crafts were systematically restricted when they were perceived as too influential, for example by the guilds (Remmel 1993, 187–199). This is also subject to the film *Inherited Crafts* by Osman Yuseinov (2021), which deals with crafts and their processes of transmission among the Roma population in Stolipinowo, Bulgaria (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUMCtdpxBYE). Accessed 25 November 2023. I would like to thank Christian Schramm for the link.
11. The 'empowerment concept' was originally postulated as a political program by the Black Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s in the United States (Gernot 2018).
12. The complex diversity within the Roma 'group', which is referred to here only cursorily, would certainly need further explanation.
13. For a substantial discussion of the aesthetic temporalities, see Gabriele Genge, Ludger Schwarte, and Angela Stercken *Aesthetic Temporalities Today: Present, Presentness, Re-Presentation* (Genge et al. 2020). For the concept of 'presence' as being related to a spatial relationship to the world and its objects, see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht *Diesseits der Hermeneutik. Über die Produktion von Präsenz* (Gumbrecht 2004).
14. This condition also became visible in the last phase of the project, which comprised the transfer of the architecture models from the workshop, where they had mainly served as sketches, into the exhibitions at the Mallinckrodt Street workshop and HMKV Dortmund. Some of the models presented were already designed down to small details, others were shown uncompleted.
15. In Germany, this ambivalence is currently negotiated by an interdisciplinary discourse field critical of power relations and representation regimes in the urban space (Finkenberger et al. 2019). Kay von Keitz, for example, points to the appropriation of artistic ideas and networks within political fields of responsibility: "For urban developers and planners as well as for the associated political decision makers, employing art and culture has become an effective device to generate ideas and impulses for difficult urban situations or even to achieve specific improvement and enhancement" (Keitz 2019, 149).

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7

Evolution of a Hybrid Typology: Catholic Churches Built in Huế, Vietnam in the Early Twentieth Century – Nationalism and Decolonisation

Phi Nguyen

Introduction

An image in the earliest comprehensive monography on the history of Catholicism in Vietnam (sixteenth to eighteenth century) features a priest tending his sheep, behind whom stands a church atop a hill (Hồng Lam 1944, n.p.). The priest leans down to get some water, his hand holding a Vietnamese bottle gourd (Figure 7.1). It is unclear from his appearance whether he is Vietnamese or not, except for his conical hat. He wears a long beard, reminiscent of Vietnam's second ordained bishop Hồ Ngọc Cẩn, whose look was celebrated by Vietnamese Catholics because "when he wears the bishop's clothes, it's easy for people to mistake him for a Western bishop!" (qtd. in Keith 2012, 109), thereby, not inferior. The church's façade resembles the *cổng tam quan* – Vietnam's traditional multistorey three-arched gate. This image perfectly renders the complex nature of Catholicism and its evolution in Vietnam, where an increasingly global religion made possible by transnational migratory movement interacted with local culture, creating "culturally distinctive forms" (Hanciles 2003, 146). Churches built during this time manifest the dialogue of "power and resistance, of refusal and recognition, with and against Présence Européenne" (Hall 1990, 233) by Việt people in preserving their culture in the heartland of oppression.

Once labelled a foreign religion, even a *tả đạo* (heterodox faith), Vietnamese Catholicism has been portrayed as a consistent opposing force to the nation. Some Vietnamese Catholics had close ties with the French before and during the colonial period; others held an arguably conservative anti-communist position against the

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FIGURE 7.1: A Priest Tending His Sheep, n.d. (Hồng Lam 1944, n.p.).

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country's dominant political and social movements in the twentieth century (Keith 2008, 129f.). While such binary and reductive readings have been challenged, works concerning the actual spatial and material manifestations of this process are far and few between, if any. Investigating the architectural morphology of Catholic churches built in Huế in the first half of the twentieth century, this paper traces the evolution of the Vietnamese Church from a colonial to a national one, from a transcultural hybrid form to a claim on a common root through the deliberate incorporation of local architecture. It plans to do so by relying primarily on the architectural analytical approach: combining field observations (photos) with study diagrams to study how these churches' design relate to other local typologies. To situate the churches within their historical context and explore their sociopolitical implications, these analyses are read against background information gathered from archival materials and secondary historical texts. The choice of the city of Huế, located in Central Vietnam, is multi-fold: (1) it was the seat of the Nguyễn Lords during the Trịnh–Nguyễn conflict (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries) and the Nguyễn dynasty throughout the nineteenth century, as well as early twentieth-century French colonial rule, under whose repression and persecution Vietnamese Catholics faced the bloodiest period in their history; (2) it was the seat of the Đàng Trong diocese[1] and the Vatican's apostolic delegate, and saw the first two bishops to be ordained in Vietnam in 1933; and (3) it witnessed South Vietnam's religious crisis in 1963, a tragedy that helped bring down the country's first Catholic government.

Despite their contested history within the mainstream narrative of the communist revolution, Vietnamese Catholics' aspiration for religious independence and nationalist sentiment was deeply rooted in the colonial period and inseparable from the country's history of decolonisation.

The encounter and clash among religions

Catholic missions in Vietnam date back to 1533, under Emperor Lê Trang Tông (Nguyễn 2003, 18). In Huế and Đàng Trong, more sustained missionaries under the support of Portugal started in 1615 (Phan 2008, 514). Part of a global trend in the missionary mobilisation of Christianity starting in the fifteenth century, Vietnam saw new connectivities in its commerce as well as religious landscape (Andaya 2017; Phan 2008, 515f.). The spread of Christianity in Vietnam, particularly before France's colonisation of the country, however, faced two major challenges: (1) The deep anchoring of Buddhism and local religions in the region; (2) Nguyễn's fear of foreign influence and their view of Catholic missionaries as an extension of European military and colonial power.

Huế is considered the Buddhist centre of Vietnam. Buddhism, among the major religions (together with Taoism and Confucianism) brought South by northern

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migrants, has accompanied Viet people since their early migration and settlement in Huế and the surrounding areas. To a migrant population mainly comprised of criminals banished to the unknown borderland or political dissidents seeking refuge, Confucianism's moral standards were rather constricting, while the Buddha and his power to appease sufferings appeared most appealing (Li 2002, 22). Consequently, Buddhism was naturally endorsed by the Nguyễn lords in their attempt to win the hearts of the people and legitimise their ruling status. Many Nguyễn Lords took on Buddhist titles, and their palaces were decorated like a Buddhist temple (Thích 2019, 33). By 1749, there were about 400 Buddhist temples around Huế, the capital alone, according to the French traveller Pierre Poivre (Li 2002, 114).

Patronising Buddhism and local beliefs, the Nguyễn Lords were generally hostile towards Catholicism, inflicting severe punishments on Catholics on the grounds that Christianity condemned Buddhism and ancestor veneration (Launay 1923, 435, 451; Phan 2008, 515). Added to the Nguyễn's fear was a new kind of citizen who had multiple loyalties, as later claimed by the third Vietnamese Bishop Ngô Đình Thục: the Vatican being their big homeland and Vietnam their small homeland (Keith 2012, 178). The Nguyễn Emperors, with the exception of Gia Long, not only maintained a policy of closure towards western powers but also reinstated Catholic repression. The longest and bloodiest Catholic persecution was under Emperor Tự Đức (1847–1883), who was forced to grant freedom of action for missionaries (1862) following France's conquest of South Vietnam.

Syncretism and the question of Vietnamese authenticity

As France took a foothold in Vietnam, so did Catholicism. Large funds from France and Rome flowing into Vietnam resulted in an unprecedented number of missionaries and the proliferation of churches all over the country, including the cathedrals of Sài Gòn (1880, Roman style), Hà Nội (1886, Gothic style), and Huế (1902, Gothic style). However, conflict among different parties also began to surface, from the competition for local influence between missionaries and the increasingly secularised government to the sentiment of racism felt by local Catholics segregated from European missionaries (especially the French).

The early twentieth century saw a new generation of Vietnamese Catholics emerge with a new consciousness and ideas against colonial capitalism; a wish for not only an independent national church but also an independent nation; and the recognition that they simultaneously belonged to two communities – global Catholic society and the Vietnamese homeland. Moreover, the missionary's presence and their reinforcement of orthodoxy in Catholic life further disrupted locals' involvement in common activities outside of the church, negatively affecting the

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laity's relations with both local officials and non-Catholics. All of these urged Catholics to re-think their long-term accusation of 'traitors to the nation' and to resolve their anxieties about cultural marginalisation (Keith 2012, 188, 214).

Church architecture, therefore, became a fertile land for Catholics to engage with emerging questions regarding national essence as a mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism, ancestor worship, and local spirit cults (Keith 2012, 82f.). Besides the literal transplantation of imported colonial architecture, Huế saw a wide range of hybrid types. Such disruption of architectural expression leaked from colonial buildings into vernacular architectural language. Despite missionaries' attempts to 'correct' or forbid local Catholics from participating in village activities which they deemed unacceptable, Vietnamese cultural elements found their way into the visual expression of village parish churches (Figure 7.2). Architecture born out of this colonial setting, hence, appeared out-of-place to people from both the dominant culture and the supposedly subordinate one. This is a dimension of cultural materials produced in what Pratt calls the contact zones, "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths" (Pratt 1991, 34). The first part of the essay will investigate in detail the case of An Vân parish church.

Case study: An Vân parish church (Nhà thờ Giáo xứ An Vân)

An Vân parish was established around the eighteenth century in Hương An, Hương Trà, Huế. Today's church building was finished by Vietnamese Father Bùi Quang Lợi and his parish in 1907 and dedicated to the Mother of the Word. The façade generally resembles a Gothic church, from the three-portal entrance to the rose window, the side towers with Gothic archways and belfries, to the Virgin Mary and the cross atop. A closer look, nonetheless, reveals various components that were morphed and reshaped according to local cultural forms.

Unlike their western precedents which tend to centre a square, many of Huế's parish churches obey the villages' layout, humbly making themselves part of the *sacred strip* facing the village's *minh đường* (literally light road), where village's most important religious structures are located. The *minh đường*, a flowing waterway, is meant to bring *phúc khí* (blessing) according to *phong thủy* (Fengshui, 风水: wind, water) principle. According to the parish's record, An Vân used to stand by small waterways (now having been filled), as described by the Chinese distich on the outer edges of its façade: "*Nhật nguyệt quang huy tân đống vũ / Sơn xuyên hoàn củng cựu lâu đài*" (The new temple shines under the sun and the moon / The mountains and rivers surround the respected old building) (Tổng Giáo Phân Huế 2019). The church together with its annexe house (the *nhà ngang*, a horizontal structure in a

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FIGURE 7.2: Churches built in Huế in the twentieth century (photos by author, 2019).

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typical Vietnamese layout) is surrounded by a large garden with fruit trees. The integration of green space is characteristic of Huế architecture, ranging from the imperial complex as a collection of palaces separated by green zones to the city's typical residential typology (the *Nhà Vườn*, literally a garden house). Another Fengshui element is the two *bể cạn* (shallow ponds) in front of the church. The ponds feature miniature landscape: stones arranged into small mountains floating on the water's surface and decorated with plants. This setup is called *hòn non bộ* or *giả sơn* (artificial mountain). Besides its cooling function, the water ponds display locals' cosmovision regarding the integration of human, nature, and the supernatural. Vietnamese oftentimes use *non nước* (mountains and river) when figuratively referring to our country, such as in songs and poetry, as noticed before by John Whitmore (1994, 479). Similarly, locals refer to Huế as *sông Hương núi Ngự* (the Hương river and the Ngự mountain), the city's most sacred natural features.

The church's main structure, like that of Ngọc Hồ, was literally an existing *nhà Rường* frame, a traditional wood-joint building, salvaged from the Citadel yet rotated in a 90-degree angle (Figure 7.3). Interestingly, the roof is asymmetrical: the right has one row of tiles fewer than the left, most likely because the original house's entrance was to the right whose eave was shorter than the rear's. The *nhà Rường*'s roof ridge runs along its longer side where one finds the main entrance. Four rows of columns divide the interior into three layers counting from the entrance. This modular system made it easy to transform the *nhà Rường* into a church: the central layer (under the ridge), housing the most important space (the altar), was turned into the nave and the side layers of the aisles. With a six-bay nave and a sanctuary, An Vân's side elevation hardly differs from a *seven-gian* (bay) *nhà Rường*. A direct result of the *nhà Rường*'s spatial organisation, each bay opens out onto two

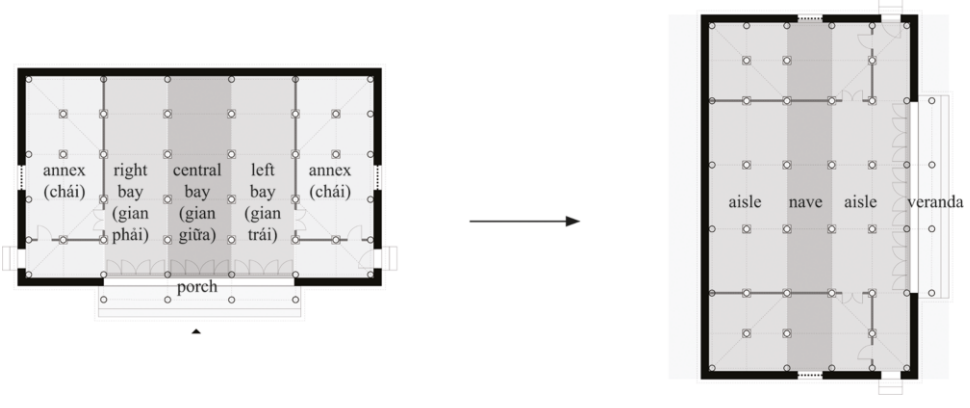

FIGURE 7.3: Interior transformation of a traditional *nhà rường* into a church (drawings by the author based on *Thuật Ngữ Kiến Trúc Truyền Thống Nhà Rường Huế*, 2010).

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large verandas, allowing for cross ventilation, rain protection, sunshade, and extra seating (Figure 7.3). The interior wooden columns rest on lotus bases. The lotus, a Buddhist symbol, is extremely popular in Vietnamese architecture, and Huế's decorative art in particular; lotus bases and pedestals were found in royal architecture as early as the tenth century (Kiều 2011, 17). Likely inspired by these column bases, two lotus buds top the outer corners of the façade's lower frame (Figure 7.4: I, II).

Literally wrapping a *nhà Rường frame*, An Vân's façade carries powerful symbolism: it marks not only the threshold between the secular and the sacred but also the encounter between the East and the West. The façade has three levels, a three-portal entrance on the ground floor and two levels of Gothic arches. While it is ambiguous whether its three-arched door is a reference to the Royal Portal in a Catholic church or the three symbolic entrances into the sacred world of a Buddhist temple (*cổng tam quan* với hai tầng mái) (Hương Nguyên 2012, 56), the Gothic archways are flattened to the point of being purely decorative (Figure 7.4: III). They are either solid or simply superficial openings in the absence of any gallery in the space behind: the *nhà Rường* frame is one storey.

The faux double roof across the façade, separating the ground level from the ones above, is only about 20 cm thick, sandwiched between two friezes. Covered with *ngói âm dương* (yin yang tiles), a very popular local roofing technique, it curves up at the two ends into two abstracted dragon sculptures, reminiscent of the traditional flying roof eaves (Figure 7.4: IV). The bell tower's roof is also covered with scale tiles and abstracted dragons. The bell, moreover, resembles the Buddhist temple style; it has two handles in the form of dragon heads and is pounded by hand, not pulled. The dragon, the most sacred among the *tứ linh* (four mythical animals – dragon, kylin, turtle, phoenix), symbolises nobility as well as the wishes of agricultural civilisation, due to its association with clouds and rain. Therefore, in addition to royal architecture, this motif also appears in civic, religious, and even residential structures.

The faux roof and its accompanying friezes are clearly inspired by a Vietnamese traditional roof structure – *trùng thiềm* (重簷) – doubled eaves separated by the *cổ diềm* (frieze). The *cổ diềm* is normally divided into decorated rectangular sunken panels (*ô hộc*). An Vân's *ô hộc*, moreover, follows another design principle, the *nhất thi nhất họa*: one verse (scripture), one image (Figure 7.5: I, II). The lower frieze's central panel presents the Latin letters ECCLESIA SS. AROSARII (Church of the Most Holy Rosary). The left panel features two deer under bamboo branches and apricot bushes. To the right are two sparrows perching on a bamboo branch and a chrysanthemum bush. The central panel on the frieze above says "Church of the Mother of the Word" in Chinese. To the left is a sparrow sitting on a tree branch, with apricot blossom bushes; the right shows two deer standing on a rock, with vine branches. Except for the deer and the grapes, which might be a Christian symbol for those who enjoy the fruits of salvation, the other figures refer to *tứ thời*, a recurring

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FIGURE 7.4: An Vân church (Nhà thờ Giáo xứ An Vân) (photos by author, 2019 (I) and 2022 (Center, VI, VII)).

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FIGURE 7.5: Faux roof and friezes on An Vân church facade (I), a reference to Vietnamese traditional architecture, in comparison to Hòn Chén temple (II) (photos by author 2022).

Vietnamese decorative theme of four seasons: spring (apricot, peach), summer (orchid, lotus), autumn (chrysanthemum, willow), and winter (pine, bamboo). Decorated *ô hộc* in the *nhất thi nhất họa* style is generally reserved for royal architecture or religious structures endorsed by the emperors. The use of this style here obviously raised the status of a religion once banned by the royal court.

In place of the piers and jamb figures on a typical Gothic façade, we find distiches written in Chinese characters praising Christ and the Virgin Mary. Such juxtaposition of elements from the East and West is also found in the upper levels: Chinese

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distiches next to half columns with lily petal capitals (a symbol of the Virgin Mary) present different Bible teachings flanking the rose window and the Sacred Heart under a panel (in Chinese characters) that indicate "The Three Crowns". At the top, flanking the Virgin Mary's sculpture, are two scriptures in Sino that were added recently and copied those engraved on the temple's ancient bell.

All *ô hộc* and distiches' reliefs feature the *khảm sành sứ* technique: the cutting, glueing, and grafting of porcelain or ceramics pieces on objects, sculptures, and most popularly architecture. It had existed in Vietnam for centuries but blossomed during the Nguyễn Dynasty, decorating the royal palaces and tombs, village religious structures, communal halls, and garden houses.

Nationalism and an independent church of a divided nation

In 1962, the Archbishop of Huế, Ngô Đình Thục, ordered to have Huế's cathedral replaced by a Modernist church designed by Ngô Viết Thụ, a Vietnamese architect educated in France. It was not an accident that the cathedral was to be demolished: 1960 marked the final stage of the Vatican's project to indigenise the Vietnamese Church where the last leadership position was transitioned into Vietnamese hands. If the construction of the Gothic cathedral attested to the concretisation of French colonial power, its demolition and replacement were a testament to Vietnamese independence, in particular the Republic of Vietnam, under the country's first Catholic president – Ngô Đình Diệm, Thục's brother. Thục's career was charged with nationalist sentiment and political agenda from the outset. He inherited "the Catholic faith and …absolute fidelity to the Anamite homeland" (Keith 2008, 154) from his father, an anti-French Mandarin in the Nguyễn court. The construction of the Cathedral of Huế was also part of the second boom of church (re)construction in Huế following the 1954 great migration (*cuộc di cư vĩ đại*). A large wave of Catholics migrated to Huế after the public announcement of the church's divorce from the Communist Party and the Treaty of Geneva that separated the country in two parts: the North under the atheist Communist party, increasingly hostile towards Catholics, and the South under a Catholic family.

To distinguish themselves from western foreign forces (and hence erasing the stigma of 'traitors to the nation') while legitimising their power as an inheritance of the age-old nation, the southern regime sought to embrace the past through the representative tool of architecture. As characterised by Murray Edelman, "[b]y aligning itself with a historic mission, a work of architectural nationalism typically transcends the present for the remote past" (qtd. in Schwarzer 2012, 33). This is seen clearly in the case of the parish church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

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FIGURE 7.6: Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish church (*Nhà thờ Giáo xứ Đức Mẹ Hằng Cứu Giúp*): The roof system (photo credits: Ngô Phi, courtesy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish church (centre, V); Hoàng Lợi, courtesy of Âmaze house (I–IV) and ventilation panels, Hoàng Lợi, courtesy of Âmaze house).

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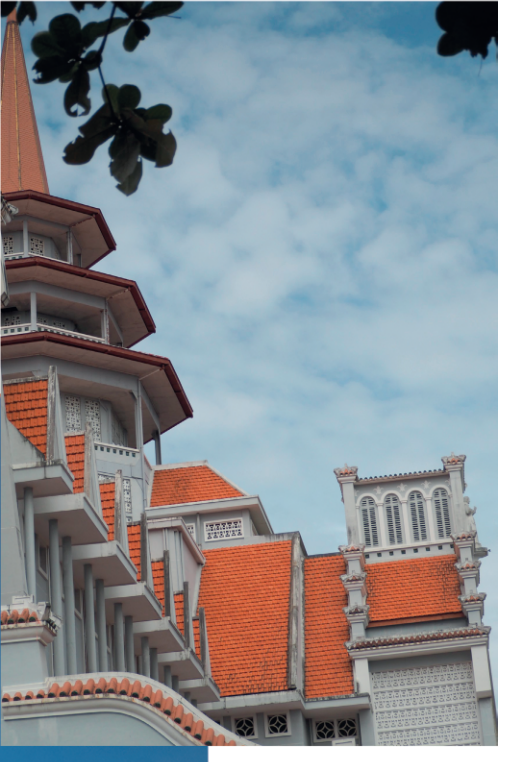
V



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Case study: Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish church (Nhà thờ Giáo xứ Đức Mẹ Hằng Cứu Giúp) (Figure 7.6)

The parish was established in 1940, but the church's current construction was built between 1959 and 1962 after the winning proposal by architect Nguyễn Mỹ Lộc, who studied architecture in France. The building is located on a triangular lot on the south side of the Hương river. With its French-gridded streets, this area was called *phố Tây* (western streets) to contrast with the Citadel to the north. The church's central position demonstrates the change in the status of Vietnamese Catholicism. With the aid of modern construction methods (reinforced concrete), the church is free from the *nhà Rường*'s dense columnar system. It has a basilica's Latin cross floor plan with a central nave, two transepts, an apse, radiating chapels, and a central bell tower. The church is illuminated, thanks to a system of large stained-glass panels, a clear Gothic characteristic. It has seven bays, separated by load-bearing concrete pillars that gradually bend upward from the inner walls to the ceiling, forming a series of Gothic ribbed vaults, creating a high central nave. Between the pillars, above the wooden doors, are fourteen reliefs, presenting the Stations of the Way of the Cross.

Local cultural elements are interspersed among such western forms: two corridors separated from the nave by solid walls with doors take the place of aisles, resembling the front porch of a *nhà Rường*. Another trace of local architecture is the ventilation panels on the façade, above the nave doors, in between the stained-glass windows, and on the wall of the bell tower. These panels are decorated with not only geometric shapes but also floral motifs from local architecture. A popular solution among Modernist architects is to provide sunshades and enhance natural ventilation for a tropical climate like that of Vietnam, and these draw inspiration from the wooden screen panels and *Ô hộc* mentioned above (Figure 7.6: VI). The church's complex roof system, which is both practical and decorative, resembles traditional Vietnamese roof structures. The faux stepped ones on the main and transepts' facades and the pitched roofs of varying heights and sizes clustered on the sides are reminiscent of the *trùng thiềm điệp ốc* (重簷叠屋; doubled eaves, connected houses) (Figure 7.6: II, III). The protruding roof above the main portals and the transept entrance also brings to mind a *nhà Rường* with an independent porch roof, protecting visitors from the heavy sun and rain. Covered with the local *âm dương* (yin and yang) tiles, they gently curve up into an abstracted dragon like those found in the aforementioned An Vân church (Figure 7.6: IV).

While the central steeple with its spire is Gothic, its octagonal form and tapering roofs with wide overhangs must have been inspired by towers found in Buddhist temples (Figure 7.6: V). Buddhist temples oftentimes have either square, hexagonal, or octagonal plan, divided into an odd number of floors, tapering upwards

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with emphasised roof eaves (Nguyễn 1972, 30). The octagon draws from the eight directions of the *bát quái* (八卦: bagua).[2] For instance, Thiên Mụ, one of the city's major Buddhist temples, has a seven-storey high octagonal tower and a bell embossed with the bagua. Such traditional form is coupled with modern technology: this bell tower is made entirely of an iron I-beam frame and has a separate structure from the church below, designed and built by the Eiffel company; the bells are electrically controlled and accompanied by a Swiss-made clock. Additionally, the church uses a drum and gong (Buddhist dharma instruments) on special occasions (Trần et al. 2019, XX). It is therefore an emblem of hybridity: various cultural forms made possible by state-of-the-art technology yet mainly realised with local materials, including iron and steel from Đà Nẵng, bluestone from Nhà Dòng quarry in Thừa Lưu, sand brought from Cù Bi (now An Lỗ river), and marble from Ngũ Hành Sơn (Trần et al. 2019, XX).

Migrant architecture and the contact zone

Despite successive regimes' attempts to exert their power by using architecture for various political ends, material culture took its own turn and reveals the complexity of a history involving multiple actors. By reworking the past to impart a vision of unity in an obviously divided nation, the discussed churches unsettle the common association of Huế with the Nguyễn dynasty's royal heritage and thereby concretise a history that would be otherwise invisible in the grander narrative. Moreover, the incorporation of what was considered 'Vietnamese' into an imported typology (Catholic churches) unravels the country's complex history of the post-colonial city as a contact zone, following Pratt's use of the term.

These churches disturb the notion of architecture as something that signifies stability, demonstrating how it could register movement and manifest differences. The pairing of architecture / migrancy (here understood as the physical displacement of human bodies across space) is inherently paradoxical, activating opposite meanings of, on the one hand, "groundedness of buildings, the constitution of places, and the delimitation of territories", and on the other, the "uprootedness, mobility, and the transience of individuals and groups of people" (Cairns 2004, 1). Conventionally, migrants' architecture is seen as either segregated or assimilated into the host society's cultural forms. However, the case studies show how in between these two extremes, there 'drifts' (Cairns' term) a variety of architectural adaptation, syncretism, and hybridity (Pratt 1991, 36; Cairns 2004, 2; Massey 2008, 111). Migrant architecture is indeed 'caught' between the migrant's place of arrival (the 'here') and their place of departure (the 'there'), a negotiation not only across space but also time (Ahmed 1999, 343; Norberg-Schulz qtd. in Cairns 2004, 38). The Our

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Lady of Perpetual Help parish church expresses this paradox well. Buddhist elements are incorporated into a Catholic typology in order to legitimate a newly established government, which took deep roots in Vietnamese feudalism yet was inspired and made possible by western and capitalist exchange. Migrant architecture, therefore, lies at the junction of opposite trajectories embedded in various temporalities (Carter 2004, 91; Massey 2008, 139), marking a "throwntogetherness" (Massey's word) of the "past", the "then", the "there", and the "now", the "present", the "here": a "pluri-local" (Cairns 2004, 6; Jacobs 2004, 168) and 'pluri-temporal' process.

While many colonial spaces were conceived as offshore architectural and urban experimental terrains through the construction of monumental civic architecture representative of colonial power, this paper challenges the notion of agency often attributed to migrants, especially those from a dominant culture: the colonisers' inability to be in full control of what gets absorbed into the local culture, and the colonised's capacity to determine what gets selected and reinvented.

NOTES

1. In 1558, Nguyễn Hoàng left Thăng Long (nowadays Ha Noi) to Thuan Hoa (encompassing today's Huế) to establish Đàng Trong to oppose the Trinh family in the north. In 1659, based on Trinh Nguyễn's division, the Roman Church established two locations, the Inner and Outer Divisions (Đàng Ngôài and Đàng Trong). Despite the country's official ruler was the Lê dynasty in the seventeenth century, Vietnam was in fact divided into two parts ruled by two rival families, the Trinh and the Nguyễn in the north and the south, respectively.
2. The bagua consists of eight symbols used in Taoist cosmology, each made up of three lines (either solid or dashed, 'unbroken' or 'broken', representing yang and yin, respectively).

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8

Atmospheres of Designed Diversity? The Spatial Politics of *Superkilen* in Copenhagen

Mareike Schwarz

Metropolis meets migration

On a sunny day during my field research in Copenhagen in May 2019, *Superkilen* is dominated by a multi-faceted soundscape. A babble of voices speaking different languages blends with the metallic rhythms of skateboards and traffic sounds. The versatile appearance of the intense colours, striking graffiti, and different outdoor furniture makes my eyes wander rapidly around the park. Haptic impulses ranging from soft rubber flooring and hard asphalt to slick street posts reinforce the urban quality of the setting. Surrounded by diverse groups of people, I perceive the park's atmosphere as both invigorating and complex (mood protocol 2019).

This multifarious, polyphonic impression resonates with the concept of *Superkilen*. It was explicitly designed as a recreational park reflecting the neighbourhood's cultural pluralism by the architects of Copenhagen's Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), the Danish artists' collective SUPERFLEX and the Berlin landscape architecture firm TOPOTEK1 (Rein-Cano/Schwarz 2019).[1] *Superkilen*, in English 'Super Wedge', opened in Copenhagen in 2012 (Figure 8.1). The city-funded project responded to the need for urban spaces that negotiate diversity spatially, as the migratory often remains repressed in both the visual culture and built form of European metropolises (Mekdjian 2018, 1ff.). While *Superkilen* has been praised by the international art and architecture scene (i.e. Akšamija 2016; Petersen 2020), Denmark-based urbanists have criticised the park as mere "place marketing" instead of the proclaimed 'place making' asserted by its creators (Bloom 2013, 12; Hermansen/Schuff 2016).

Taking this controversy as a starting point, this chapter analyses *Superkilen*'s claim as "expression for an inherently heterogeneous, yet shared, space" (Steiner 2013, 22). I thereby critically examine conceptualisations of public space as

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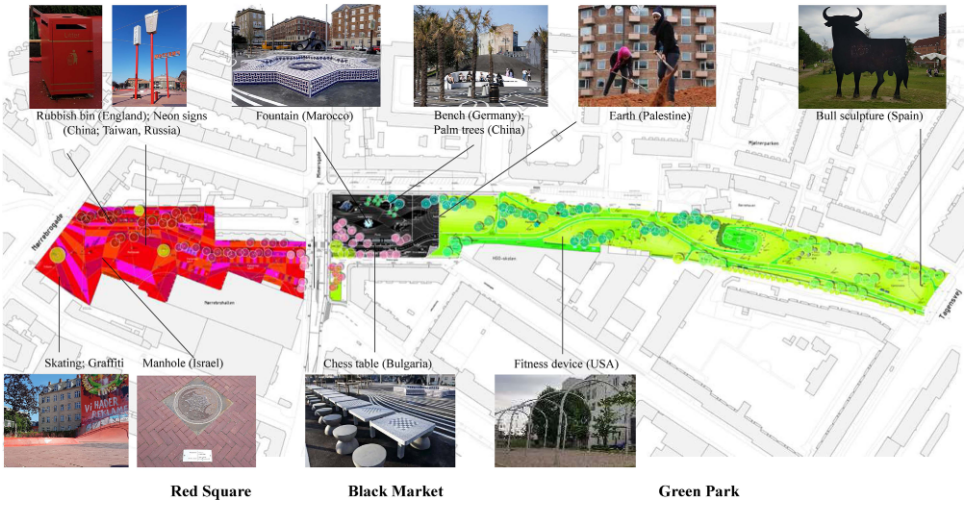

FIGURE 8.1: BIG/TOPOTEK1, Site plan with selected objects, *Superkilen*, 2009 (photo: MS | SUPERFLEX | Plan: Steiner 2013, 28, editing: MS).

"equally accessible to all" (Berger/Wildner 2018), which supposedly improve "migrants' inclusion by acting as places for intercultural dialogue" (UNESCO 2017).[2] In my analysis, I deploy an atmosphere concept that I have adapted methodologically for urban art and space. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from 2019, this chapter explores the conceptual, design, processual, and user-oriented conditions of *Superkilen*'s atmospheres. Finally, I argue for developing diverse atmospheres as a co-creative practice with plural representations in the public sphere, where interethnic encounters unfold despite – or precisely because of – differences.

Urban public space atmospheres and their sociopolitical agency

Conceptually, atmospheres are ephemeral 'tuned spaces', which are able to shift into bodily and affective dispositions (Böhme 2001, 49).[3] Through a co-presence of socially situated subjects and objective factors like sounds or colours, specific activities and moods can be induced (Löw 2012, 208). For example, ergonomic forms or soft surfaces tend to presuppose comfort, while material hardness instead evokes an emotional distance (Wagner 2018, 62f.). The story behind an object or personal reference also affects the atmosphere. In the context of migrant communities, objects taken from the contexts of origin – such as

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the ones collected for *Superkilen* – can lead to an increased 'place attachment' (Lewicka 2011, 209ff.).

The impact factors described above are shaped by the city with its varying levels of traffic and social interaction (Hasse 2012, 11). Even though the ephemeral is amplified outdoors due to weather conditions, 'typical atmospheres' of temporal stability can arise in a spatially limited neighbourhood (Kazig 2018, 11). Furthermore, pre-mediated knowledge about a place influences the sensory experience in situ. Particularly with projects like *Superkilen*, city marketing produces an image, which is then checked against reality during a walk-through. The processual dimension of cooperation and participation is vital for urban public spaces, yet largely ignored by atmospheric research. Case studies of open space designs in Denmark have highlighted the need for user-oriented co-creation (Tietjen/Jørgensen 2018, 17f.), while the performativity of participatory art projects is considered to enable social cohesion (Bishop 2012, 73ff.).

Although atmospheres cannot be anticipated structurally due to their situational character, specific modes of ambient experience can nonetheless be designed (Nothnagel 2012, 251ff.). Atmospheres can trigger civic engagement in and for the neighbourhood in two steps (Kazig 2018, 13f.): the stimulation to action and the constitution of the civically engaged subject. At the first level, atmospheres activate shared impulses and perceptions, which may foster a "unifying and bridging social capital" (Putnam 2000, 22ff.). Secondly, a 'political agency' of spatial atmospheres is necessary for these impulses to stimulate community orientation. This means a future activity that addresses problems of everyday coexistence in a world characterised by plurality (Häkli/Kallio 2018, 23). The value decisions underlying a design thereby have an inherent impact (Rawsthorn 2018, 96ff.). Thus, the atmospheric experience correlates with the planning approach of the actors involved.

This analytical approach to *Superkilen* by means of a broad atmosphere concept (see Figure 8.2)[4] is particularly productive since it provides insights about the lifeworld as well as the sociopolitics of urban space. The associated model illustrates factors influencing urban public space atmospheres. Beyond a co-presence of subject and object, the role of outer space, the underlying processes of cooperation and participation, as well as the imaginaries and narratives that emerge are taken into account. The phenomenological findings (mood protocol, recordings) on site were substantiated by empirical research with users and planners (questionnaires n=25; qualitative inquiries n=10; semi-structured interview with Martin Rein-Cano of TOPOTEK1). This is additionally motivated by the art historical literature (Steiner 2013; Petersen 2020), which argues on a solely visual or historic, but not empirical basis.[5]

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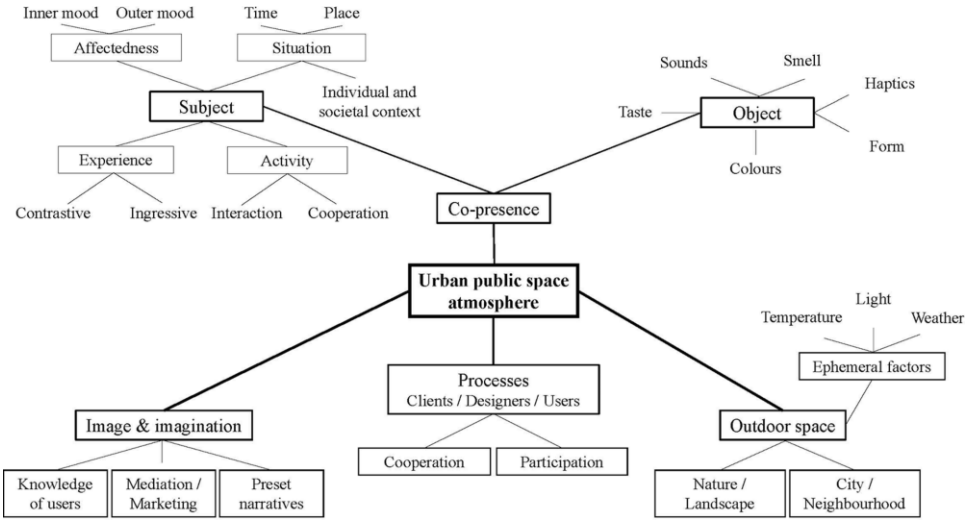

FIGURE 8.2: Urban public space atmosphere (Model © Mareike Schwarz).

'A world exhibition at Nørrebro': Concept, design, and the formation process of Superkilen

Superkilen extends over 750 m in length and around 30,000 square meters on the site of a former railway line. Its central location in the Copenhagen district of Nørrebro positively stands out compared to many spatial projects for migrants in the urban periphery (considering, for example, Center Kongelunden in the Copenhagen Capital Region). In the planning period of *Superkilen,* 27 per cent of Nørrebro's residents were migrants (Larsen/Møller 2013, 33), which partly led to its categorisation as a 'ghetto' (Transport- og Boligministeriet 2020, 2).[6] Despite the city's highest density of 19.6 inhabitants per square kilometre, a low average income of 193 000 kroner and intercultural conflicts (Den Tværgående Analyseenhed 2020, 17, 32), the area is increasingly marketed as the 'cool Nørrebro hood' (Grosso 2019).

This area of tension gave rise to the initiative for *Superkilen*. The 2007 competition aimed to create a 'park for migrants', as TOPOTEK1 architect Martin Rein-Cano stated in an interview on *Superkilen* with the author (Rein-Cano/Schwarz 2019). It was commissioned and financed by the city of Copenhagen in partnership with Realdania: a well-known private foundation, which is sometimes accused of exerting too much neoliberal influence on planning decisions (Bloom 2013, 13). In addition to the social impetus, *Superkilen* stands in the context of Copenhagen's

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image campaign, as the high profiles of BIG, TOPOTEK1, and SUPERFLEX were bound to attract media publicity.

Superkilen's design is characterised by a three-part division, in which each zone follows a specific colour range and is intended for different activities. The 'Red Square' is used for sports and play. Its original paving in bright shades of red and pink was particularly eye-catching but had been replaced by a restrained, Danish clinker paving during the author's walk-through due to a lack of durability. The 'Black Market' has striking, white cycle path markings on dark asphalt, which highlight the objects in the 'Urban Living Room'. The northern 'Green Park' with shady seating invites for recreation.

Programmatically, *Superkilen* was conceptualised as a "world exhibition of furniture and everyday objects" to reflect the "true nature" of Nørrebro and foster intercultural dialogue (SUPERFLEX 2013). For this purpose, 108 objects and 11 plants from the more than 50 origin contexts of the residents were distributed across the park. Apart from the plants most of them were functional items such as benches, some of which were obtained or replicated at great expense.

The project team asked for object suggestions through public announcements, workshops with the neighbourhood association Kilebestyrelsen, and by going from house to house with five translators (Rein-Cano/Schwarz 2019). SUPERFLEX was disturbed by these standardised forms of participation.[7] Therefore the artist collective intervened with a so-called 'participation extreme', where they travelled together with selected residents directly to the original sites of the proposed objects.[8] While the proposal of a bull sculpture from a Spanish holiday destination by one of the five travel groups conveys less plurality than a tourist cliché, Alaa and Hiba chose earth from Palestine as an object (Pallarés/Castellanos 2016, 214f.). Following a custom of Palestinians in exile, they distributed the earth in their new residence. The proximity to a manhole from Israel subtly transmits the ambiguity of origin and belonging (BIG/SUPERFLEX/TOPOTEK1 2016).

However, most of the objects were eventually selected by the project team (Rein-Cano/Schwarz 2019), who predominantly lacked 'migrant situated knowledge' (Güleç 2018, 1ff.). Thus it remained a speaking about migration and multi-ethnicity.[9] Nevertheless, the profound concept and overview of the objects' cultural-historical backgrounds (see SUPERFLEX 2013) also testifies the planners' effort to represent cultural plurality beyond mere marketing.

Diversity and difference: Atmospheres of Superkilen

All these factors condense into artificial, representative, and participatory atmospheres in and around *Superkilen* (mood protocol 2019).

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Artificial

Notwithstanding the marking of visual and functional boundaries by the aestheticised zoning, the park is conceived as a hybrid. Thereby plants, such as the Chinese palm trees re-rooted in Denmark, combine botanical differences and commonalities. This follows the gardening tradition of importing 'foreign atmospheres' to negotiate 'being alien' (Steiner 2016, 140ff). It ties in with the typological hybridity of *Superkilen* at the intersection of city square, landscape garden, and theme park: large open spaces reference Mediterranean plazas; the objects translocated from regions all over the world resemble English gardens; neon signs (Figure 8.3) are reminiscent of theme parks (Rein-Cano/Schwarz 2019). The dynamic surface design and use of colour blocking reflect less of a migrant visual culture than the signature styles of the designers.[10]

By using plexiglass to protect these neon signs, an almost museum-like appearance is created. The floor lines on the 'Black Market' reinforce a distance to the objects which is visible by the movement patterns of passers-by. The iconicity culminates in the digital space, where stylised images of the park circulate on social media. While the park's status as a Copenhagen must-see represents a positive reference point for visitors, it remains questionable if its strong programming leaves room for personal inscription. According to Bloom, graffiti was promptly removed in the first period after the opening, thus preventing material as well as symbolic appropriation by the local community (Bloom 2013, 50). Therefore, it is noteworthy that a local charity organised a food drive for homeless migrants in May 2019 not on *Superkilen*, but in the nearby bottom-up developed *Folkets Park*.[11] The aesthetic control by the city results in an atmosphere that is less approachable through its artificiality on the one



FIGURE 8.3: Trash can from England | Neon signs and floor lines at the Black Market | Red Square | App - Superkilen, 2012. Urban park in Copenhagen. Commissioned by the City of Copenhagen and Realdania. Developed in close collaboration with Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) and TOPOTEK1 (photo: Mike Magnussen | SUPERFLEX | MS | Torben Eskerod. Press photos via www.superflex.net/press/label/superkilen. Accessed 11 December 2023, editing/cropping: MS).

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hand and offers points of identification through its recognisability on the other (Inquiry 1+2, 2019).

Participative

The processes propagated by the project team as a "completely new way of public participation" (Steiner 2016, 146) have an ambivalent effect on the experienced atmospheres of *Superkilen*. Affectively, the top-down tendency during object selection is rather counterproductive for building an attachment to a place. SUPERFLEX caricatured the normed participation, in that the five groups of diverse residents were given action and decision-making power during the travels. However, the artists' impact and the stories behind the projects are barely visible in situ. During the on-site survey, no one knew about the supplementary smartphone App for information about the objects (Questionnaire 2019).[12] To understand the ontologies of belonging or conflict, however, such knowledge is required. Although locals became aware of the transcultural entanglement of European communities and embraced the upgraded perception of Nørrebro with pride, the gentrification and lack of co-creation were also criticised (Inquiry 2, 2019).

Moreover, the 'open approach to conflict', as described by Rein-Cano regarding the togetherness of the Israeli manhole and Palestinian soil, addresses migrants in an agonistic way (Rein-Cano/Schwarz 2019). While it reflects on the difference arising from social plurality and the shared use of public space, it may cause destabilising mood effects. Even though the image of migration as a field of conflict is derived from Nørrebro's historical struggles over space (Petersen 2020, 31), it probably stands in the way of identification. Also, the various acts of vandalism on the objects speak against a feeling of ownership (Figure 8.4). This affects future attachment, as self-identification with damaged objects seems less likely.

In contrast, the associations with *Superkilen* were most frequently described by the questionnaire respondents as 'happy', 'relaxed', and 'inspired' (Questionnaires 2019). The diverse spectrum of visitors also speaks for a cross-societal acceptance, which refutes the statements about a low or one-sided use by Hermansen and Schuff (2016). During my field trip, I observed a high level of interactions with the urban items and interpersonal exchanges, such as the encounter between two strangers at the chess (Figure 8.4). Even though they had few obvious similarities in age and nationality, the two men from Denmark and Egypt played several games together. Both confirmed that the quality of *Superkilen* lies in creating such unforeseen relations by offering playful get-togethers (Inquiry 3+4, 2019). In this case, the bridging social capital resulted less from the objects' reference to origin than from the informal encounter of two

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FIGURE 8.4: Chess Players, Black Market, 2019 (faces were made unrecognisable due to personality rights) | Green Park | Soil from Palestine (photo: MS | Iwan Baan | SUPERFLEX. Press photos via http://www.superflex.net/press/label/superkilen. All accessed 15 May 2021, editing/cropping: MS).

people regardless of identity characteristics. Such participatory atmospheres promote the political agency of *Superkilen*.

Representative

With the objects from different nations and recourse to the world exhibitions, various representational modes are present in *Superkilen*. These not only shape its image but also charge the objects with meaning. Many respondents identified a favourite object, which was explained empirically through aesthetic pleasure, personal interactions on site, and a feeling of being represented by the reference to origin (Questionnaire 2019). The latter is evident in the conversation with a 16-year-old resident who recognises the Iraqi benches from her parents' homeland and felt a 'sense of unity' through the objects 'from everywhere' (Inquiry 1, 2019).

However, a weakness of the nation-based concept lies in stereotypical depictions. When a fountain with Islamic patterns is positioned as a national representation of Morocco in line of sight with a modern mid-century bench from Germany (Figure 8.5), it seems a misleading comparison of European modernism with Arabic traditionalism. Also, the reference to the world exhibition as a colonial and imperial model of national competition counteracts the initial idea to represent a heterogeneous society. Thus, an atmosphere of difference unfolds.

Nevertheless, *Superkilen* does not assign a singular cultural identity to Nørrebro. Situating all objects in the same, yet hybrid environment, emphasizes diversity. Since the selection of urban items is equally distributed among different nations and contexts of use, a 'mixology' (Caples/Jefferson 2005, 5) is designed. In addition, migrant cultures are granted visibility, as well as a sense of belonging in urban space. Such an image of *Superkilen* as a 'place for everyone', which is also confirmed by questionnaire participants associating the park most often

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FIGURE 8.5: App for information on the objects, 2019 (Screenshot: MS) | Black Square. Fountain from Morocco in line of sight with bench from Germany | Vandalised bench | Bull from Spain (photo: Iwan Baan | MS. Press photos via http://www.superflex.net/press/label/superkilen. All accessed 15 May 2021, editing/cropping: MS).

with 'diversity' and 'urban life' (Questionnaire 2019), evokes atmospheres representative of plurality.

Conclusion

In the analysis of *Superkilen* as a park designed for migrants, an atmospheric duality of conflict and cohesion was traceable. For investigating the design and social surroundings, a specially developed atmosphere method based on exploratory impact research proved valid. Contrary to previous scholars, this study did not focus only either on the arts or the social. Instead, a holistic examination took the design, use at the site, and reception into consideration. All these layers produced artificial, participatory, and representative atmospheres.

Designed monumentality combined with aesthetic control made appropriation difficult. The resulting artificial atmospheres may be perceived as iconic, but at the same time create a distance for park visitors. Co-creative rather than top-down processes would have empowered the locals more and thus used participation's potential to promote social cohesion. User needs and place making were partly subordinated by image building and place marketing. Furthermore, the design team lacked migrant-situated knowledge. Due to some stereotypical representations and a notion of migration as a distinguishing condition, the nationally conceived concept manifested an atmosphere of difference.

Superkilen's visualisation of hybridity as a city-constituting quality is convincing. The diverse objects produce the imaginary of a society that comes together in one place despite or because of multiple contexts of origin. The efficacy is partially potentiated in the digital, insofar as not only the eye-catching design but also the concepts receive attention. The field investigations of 2019 revealed

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how togetherness is spatialised, as in the case of the intercultural encounter at playing chess. SUPERFLEX's unconventional participation also created positive bonds among those residents who had travelled together or know about them. Over time, the identification with *Superkilen* seems to have grown along with the dynamic, multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Nørrebro, where personal historiography overwrites pre-set marketing narratives. The entanglement with the urban space unfolds an atmosphere of unity in diversity.

Personal note

Many thanks to Martin Rein-Cano (TOPOTEK1) for the interview, Bettina Werner (COurban Design), all the survey participants, and my former professors Burcu Dogramaci and Kerstin Pinther for their input along the way.

NOTES

1. All translations by Mareike Schwarz (MS). The essay was submitted in May 2021. Therefore, publications and empirical material after 2021 could unfortunately no longer be considered.
2. For a detailed discussion of the different understandings and inclusion/exclusion mechanisms, see Berger/Wildner (2018). The second quote is taken from the UNESCO guidelines on *Inclusion Through Access to Public Space* as an example of such positive postulations.
3. The more abstract notion of 'space' is in contrast to a concrete 'place' associated with implicit or explicit valuations (Günzel 2012, 326). However, this essay on atmospheres follows the opinion that space and place cannot be neatly separated in the lifeworld.
4. For a detailed description of the model, please refer to the author's master's thesis (Mareike Schwarz 2020, 12ff.).
5. In contrast, social science studies on *Superkilen*, such as the actor-network analysis by Jonathan Daly (2019), are based on intensive field research, but neglect the artistic dimensions.
6. The residential area of Mjølnerparken northwest of the park was listed on the linguistically and socio-politically problematic 'ghetto area list'. Since 2010, the Danish state (Transport- og Boligministeriet 2020, 2) has listed so-called ghettos, which are in need of development due to certain factors such as a high migrant rate.
7. It is worth noting that SUPERFLEX had already made critical reference to Denmark's increasingly xenophobic migration policy in public space in 2002 with the poster campaign *Foreigners, Please Don't Leave Us Alone With the Danes!*
8. For an overview on participatory art, see Zhong Mengual/Douroux (2017).
9. The list of team members is printed in (Steiner 2013, 216).
10. Examples are the colorfulness of the Munich *Railway Cover Theresienhöhe* by TOPOTEK1 or the experimental height design of *The 8 House* by BIG in Copenhagen.

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11. More details in (Folkets Hus 2004).
12. 2021 the App was no longer available in the Appstore.

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SECTION 3

MATERIALITY | MATERIALISATION

Buket Altinoba and Alma-Elisa Kittner

Introduction

Materiality and materialisation in the field of migration studies are linked to the central idea of the object after the material turn in the humanities, social sciences, and other disciplines. Since the 1980s, material culture studies have focused on 'the social life of things' (Appadurai 1986) by emphasising an object-biographical approach (Kopytoff 1986) based on the importance of things in social practices (Bourdieu 1979). While thereby advancing a reevaluation of objects, newer anthropological conceptions of the subject–object relationship (Miller 2009) empowered things as actors, allocating them an active role in generating knowledge and meaning in culture and society. By introducing the world- and knowledge-constituting role of things as a new category of analysis (Schulze 2017, 312) the material turn not only started an epistemological shift in terms of New Materialism (Braidotti 2002; Latour 2005; Hoskins 2006; Miller 2009; Bennett/Joyce 2010) but was also increasingly taken into account in the arts and visual culture. More recent approaches to New Materialisms (Dolphin/van der Tuin 2012; Hoppe/Lemke 2021) further problematise the dichotomy of binary structures, e.g. subject/object, nature/culture, man/woman, etc. The dissolution of hierarchical distinctions is decisively advanced by new materialists developing different approaches that have this distinction per se as their subject (Hoppe/Lemke 2021).

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Considering the various notions of material, materiality, and materialisation, this section aims to reflect on how new perspectives on material culture can add further insight to the study of art and its materiality within the context of migration. It therefore takes up the question of things, artefacts, and objects that are increasingly thematised and re-conceptualised within this re-orientation and shift, therefore emphasising the agency of the object. Even material itself is to be understood as active, effective, and plural instead of passive, inert, and uniform (Latour 2007). Neo-materialist discourses in particular focus on the transformative and irritating force of materiality (Hoppe/Lemke 2021, 10).

We understand the object or work of art not only as a complex structure but also as a material performing (Edwards 2009) at the intersection of political and social import. Locating "objects as evidence of other complex social relationships" (Herman 1992, 4, 11) within the developments of colonialism, imperialism, nation-building, tourism, and migration (return/forced/undocumented, etc.), this section aims to reflect on both the intellectual and practical notion of the processes driven by objects' potential of agency (Latour 2005; Harvey 2017). Unfolding in dialogue with new materialist discourses, the essays in this section pursue the following critical questions: When is the object seen as a pure symbol of migration, for example in the overexposure of obvious things related to migration (e.g. 'life jackets') in the arts and visual culture? And when is its materiality reflected and transformed regarding objects and material showing current and historical transcultural entanglements? Material means "in contrast to matter, only those natural and artificial substances that are intended for further processing" (Wagner 2001b, 867). In this respect, an activity and a potentiality are inherent in the term material. Material is always the starting point of an artwork – a fact long neglected by the history and theory of art, as Monika Wagner critically notes (Wagner 2001a, 11f.). By contrast, modern and contemporary art has long since recognised that art does not mean the overcoming of a supposedly inferior material in favour of the supposedly superior form. Hence, this section's visual essay by Azra Akšamija takes the material of Venice's urban structure as a starting point for a self-reflexive understanding of materiality, step by step turning it into a new hybrid: architecture transforms itself into something human; human beings converge with the material. Therefore, the material turns out to be intrinsic to the bodily experience in itself. The dichotomy of human beings and architecture is dissolved into a new performative practice as it is displayed in Azra Akšamija's contribution to the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2020.[1]

Corresponding to the topics outlined above, the contributions in this section provide an in-depth understanding of multiple conceptions as well as conflicting discussions about the materiality of the art object through a series of diverse issues related to creativity, curatorial, and artistic production in the global and

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contemporary context of migration. The contributions intend to span an arc from the haptic, the memory, and the re-functionalisation of things regarding the question of whether other forms of materiality emerge through migration, or even become conceivable in a microhistorical perspective: Considering its display, e.g. in museum exhibitions, in recent years the material culture of migration has been represented in archives, museums, and in artistic or activist off-spaces as Fabrice Langrognet puts into debate in his contribution. Basically, questions arose here regarding the appropriate approach for an exhibition that speaks not about but 'through' migrants, or takes migratory aesthetics into account (Bal/Hernández-Navarro 2011).

Moreover, this raises the question of how different materials should be preserved, handed down, and remembered in the future. The potential of things is to undermine rigid structures when certain materials and forms come into motion or (are forced to) get into motion. Even mobile artworks take up new meanings and entanglements elaborated through new methodologies that add more contextual depth. For instance, with such a canonical painting such as *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso, which is according to Martin Schieder's paper generally received in a more static way, unexpected and new perspectives emerge when the mobility of the object becomes transparent. Transcultural entanglements become visible through the mobility of a single art object, but also through a network of relationships and migration routes, as well as through the interrelation between language and space. As Lilian Haberer unfolds in her contribution strategies of mapping, forms of expression such as poetry, oral and documented history refer in different ways to the physical-material dimension of migration in global cities. Other routes, such as the transatlantic routes of the 'Black Atlantic', considered in its spatio-temporal dimension, form new diasporic image concepts that Angela Stercken takes up in her critical examination of the traditional material of Western art history, which is paint colour. More precisely, the perception of colour as a materialisation of knowledge processes intersects with the abstract program of the New York School, which is transformed into a political attitude. The concept of Blackness developed out of the materiality of colour and as a distinction to other conceptions of the 1960s – it frames something politically resistant through the diasporic. A different appropriated concept of Blackness comes up when categories of presence and sacrality as well as aesthetic and religious phenomena are engaged: In her contribution, Gabriele Genge refers to various materials on image performance, image politics, activism, and visibility, which are ingeniously interwoven in the idea of Muslim Cool or Black Turks. Just like visibility, non-visibility is also a central issue and concern of materiality. Images and objects of migration are often linked to New Media and the digital as emphasised in Alma-Elisa Kittner's analysis of different aspects of objects and their display, both analogue and digital. On one hand,

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contrasts between the materiality of things and the immateriality of their digital representation can be discussed (Müller 2018) while on the other hand, questions regarding participation and material resources can also be raised.

The same is to be considered in times of pandemic when the physical/material equipment in the context of materiality stands against immateriality. Even power structures such as dependency and hierarchy could be rebalanced. However, in order to be able to access virtual spaces there's also a need for material equipment (e.g. computers, hardware, cables, screens, etc.). In particular, the migrants' and refugees' participation depends on these material resources challenged by scarce disposability. They are the decisive factor to gain significance, impact, and canonicity. As work categories and methodologies oscillate constantly, art history is challenged to foster further studies on the ever-changing significance of material and materialisation with respect to migration.

NOTE

1. The Venice Biennale Architecture was planned for 2020 but took place in 2021.

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9

Silk Road Works

Azra Akšamija

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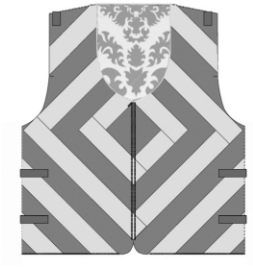
"Silk Road Works" engages with subject positions defined by "otherness" and marginality, aiming to counter biases against Islamic societies and proposing a vision for the architecture of coexistence. Inspired by Venice's historical role as a cultural and commercial hub of Europe's exchange with the East, the installation takes the form of a body-scale construction site for building an inclusive, pluralist society. Informed by the social and cultural history of Venice, architecture becomes a medium to visually deconstruct an essentialist idea of a homogenous, static identity, and to embody the leitmotif of cultural mobility. This proposition is translated into the design of three architectural wearables: construction workers' safety vests, coveralls, and hard hats.

3 ELEMENTS











1. SILK **COVERALLS**
2. DOUBLE-SIDED **SAFETY VEST**
3. GLASS HELMET

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COVERALLS





THE COVERALLS translates palatial colonnades into construction workers' coveralls featuring Venetian Gothic arches. These 'armpit arches' only become visible, once individuals connect their hands.

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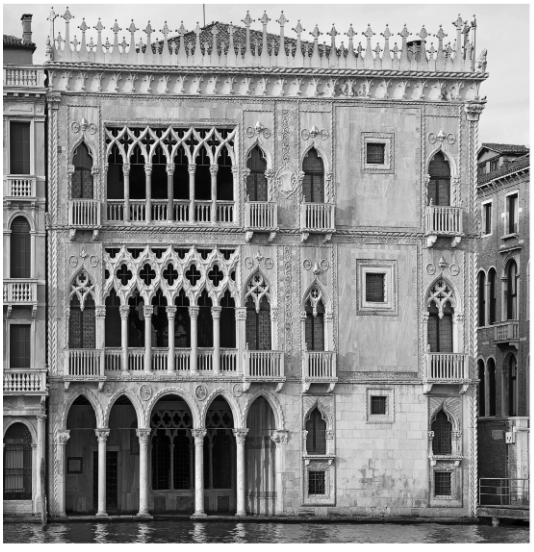
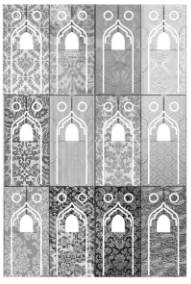
FABRIC RUBELLI TEXTILES

BARBARIGO - AVORIO
Barbarigo is the reproduction of a wall covering in engraved leather typical of the Venetian Baroque, also known as Cuoridoro, which can still be admired in Palazzo Ducale. Work on this silk fabric focused on re-creating the play of lights and shades and the metallic effect of the original document.

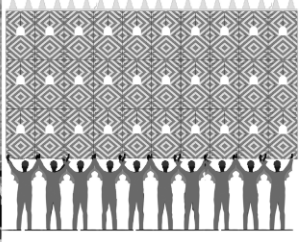
COMPOSITION: 55%AC 24%SE 21%LI
WIDTH: 140 cm
HORIZONTAL REPEAT: 69 cm
VERTICAL REPEAT: 106 cm
WEIGHT: 383 gr
MADE IN: ITALY

SAFETY VEST









The external tessellation of **THE SAFETY VESTS** references façade elements of Palazzo Ducale in Venice as well as Mamluk architecture. The vest's interior silk lining, made of damasks and brocade fabrics, alludes to the prayer carpet-like façade elements of the famous Venetian Palazzo Ca' d'Oro. Unfolded flat, these vests constitute a wearable, portable mosque.

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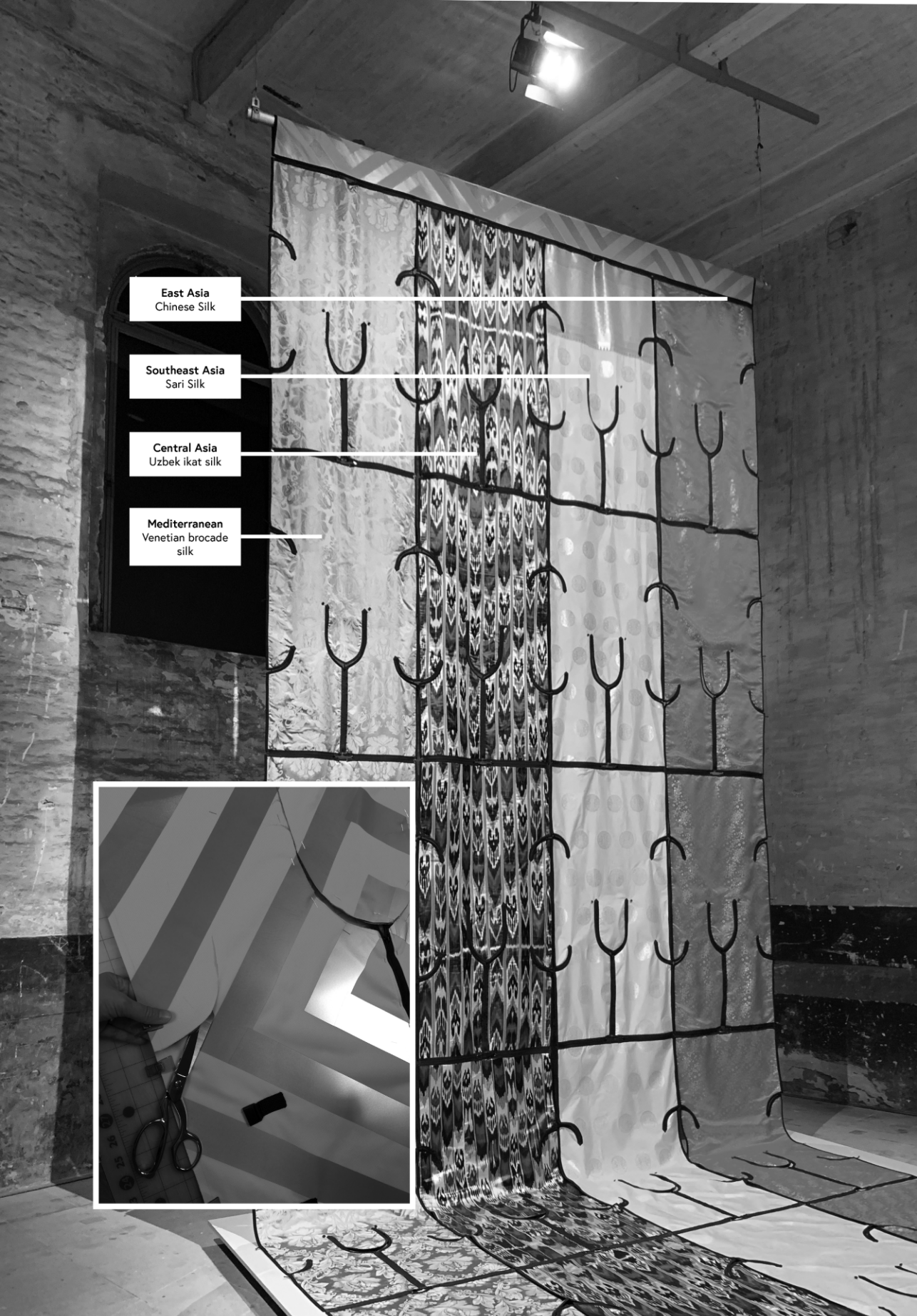
East Asia
Chinese Silk
Southeast Asia
Sari Silk
Central Asia
Uzbek ikat silk
Mediterranean
Venetian brocade silk

HELMET





THE CONSTRUCTION HELMETS are made of glass. These 'soft hats' draw attention to the pressing social, political, humanitarian, and environmental crises along the Silk Roads of today. The brittleness of the material points at the fragility of the natural and cultural heritage, linking the agency of construction and preservation with the urgencies of architectural destruction and labour exploitation in and through architecture.

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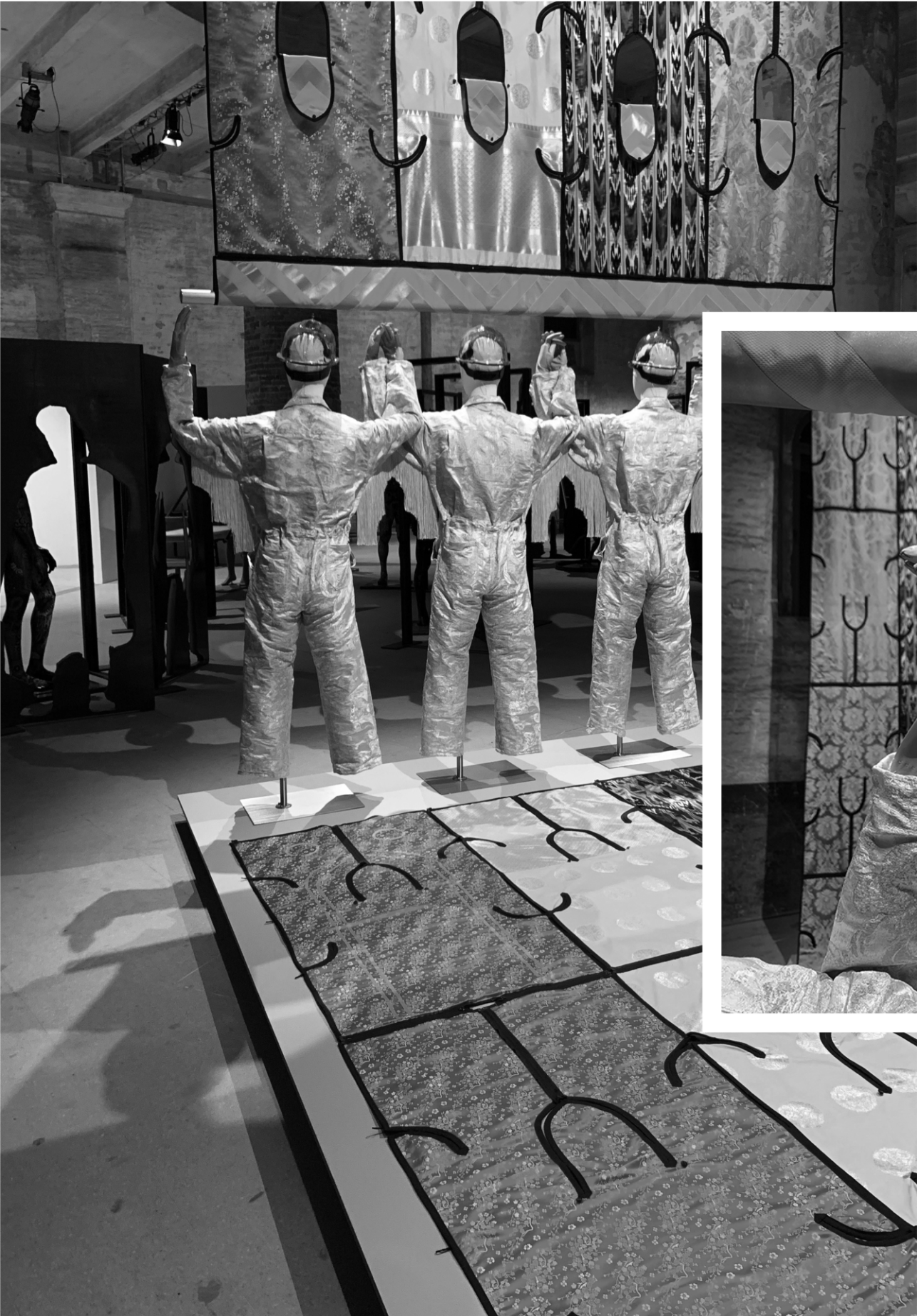

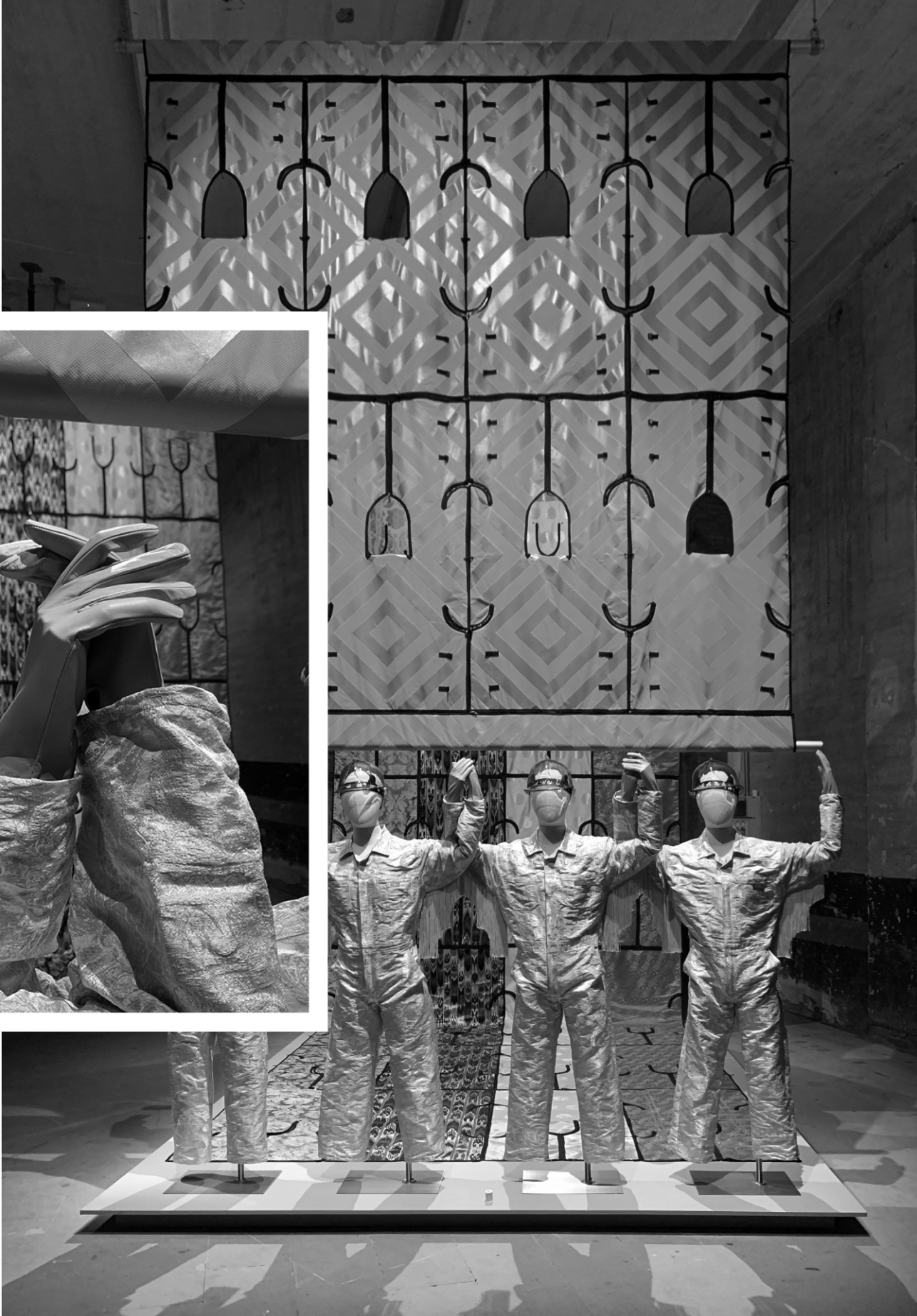

10

Singular Travels: Microhistory as a Museology of Migration

Fabrice Langrognet

In recent decades, working-class and subaltern cultures and experiences have finally begun to permeate the heritage world, both within established museums and as part of new, distinct institutions (Rasse 2017, 280).

> Although out-numbered and outsized by the museums of the superordinate culture, there continue to emerge museum initiatives in the contemporary period that reflect the world-views of cultures or peoples who have been marginalized or suppressed by the dominant social and political forces.
>
> (Coffee 2006, 444)

Museums big and small have responded, albeit to varying degrees, to higher expectations in terms of their educational, political, and social involvement in society. This *engagement* relies on a growing theoretical apparatus, which has led to redefining the very notion of the museum (Marstine et al. 2013). In rethinking the museum, the three "spheres of the sensitive", as François Mairesse puts it, are increasingly intertwined: nature, aesthetics, and society (Mairesse 2018, 13).

Migration offers a case in point. As it came to occupy the forefront of western politics in the 1990s, the heritage world reacted with a newfound interest in the question propagated by academics, artists, and curators. Led by the growing number of specialised institutions, museums started to 'de-marginalise' migration (Pelsmaekers/Van Hout 2020). To this day, their common denominator is an attempt to generate empathetic experiences and counter the pervasive prejudices against people on the move. In that regard, the role of curatorial research has been hailed as essential, all the more so when it can help debunk prevalent historical myths by focusing on the itineraries of particular objects (Saphinaz-Amal 2013; Ingemann Parby 2016). When it comes to enhancing the relatability

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of migration stories, the value of singular narratives and first-person voices has also been acknowledged (McFadzean 2019).

Still, displaying migration at the museum is no easy task. It requires "the development of new exhibition and display settings supporting innovative practices and programmes" (Lanz 2016, 179). Such innovations remain rare. This contribution is meant to provide food for thought in this respect. It does so through the prism of one particular approach to displaying migration experiences, which combines migration objects and migration stories. The intent is to show how objects of migration can play an important role in exhibition strategies that put singular stories at the centre of museography. Written from a historian's perspective, this text does not primarily aim at engaging with the growing scholarship, whether theoretical or practical, that deals with migration from a curatorial perspective. Rather, it is meant to situate the microhistory of migration in its intellectual context and highlight its heuristic potential for both the historian and the curator (1). It then delves into an exhibition taking place in Aubervilliers, France, from October 2021 to June 2022, which I co-curated along with an organisation called Association pour un musée du logement populaire.[1] This exhibition's historical narrative aims at entangling and rendering visible, questions of class and migration through the stories of former inhabitants of one particular public housing unit (2).

Microhistory as a device to display migration stories

Microhistory of migration: A growing historiographical trend

The history of modern migrations has long relied on the macro level of analysis. Microhistorical approaches, whose early success in the 1970s and 1980s came from their capacity to highlight "the individuality of persons. […] as agents of historical change" (Iggers 2005, 112), were initially neglected by migration scholars. There were various reasons for this. From a theoretical standpoint, specialists of modern displacements initially mistook micromethods, championed by students of the Medieval and Early Modern period, for a *pis aller* meant to make up for the impracticality of a macro analysis due to a lack of sources. Then the transnational turn, with its emphasis on global, connected, or shared history, appeared to call for panoramic landscapes rather than detailed close-ups. The relative disinterest in singular narratives was also due to political and ideological factors. Starting in the 1960s, the torchbearers of migration history had shared the emancipatory, countercultural concerns of the New Social History and its efforts to 'historicise ordinary people'. They were less concerned with individual experiences than with the broad historical picture and its perceived unfairness towards immigrants in

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general – or at least ethnic groups. Individuals were all the less appealing since sources documenting singular itineraries seemed to be the preserve of socially dominant, educated elites.

Around the turn of the twenty-first century, however, scholars started to realise that stressing the agency of individuals could, in fact, advance their historiographic agenda. It could at once fend off capitalist and nationalist teleologies and keep readers engaged by telling complex life stories they could relate to (Gregory 1999). In contrast to the Annales' paradigms, which emphasised structures and macroscopic forces, microhistorical approaches stayed clear of wide-ranging explanations of historical phenomena, focusing instead on particular cases scrutinised on their own terms. In the context of post-structuralism starting in the 1990s, such study of individual trajectories was also credited with avoiding, or at least controlling for, the perils of taking ethnic, national, racial, or gender groupness for granted (Zalc/Mariot 2010). In recent years, more and more historians of migration have tried their luck under the microscope.

An important factor in that shift of fortunes is that technical and logistical conditions have become more favourable to inquiries at the microlevel. Early attempts at microhistory had mostly been based on serendipitous discoveries of document 'treasure troves' – judicial records, diaries, correspondences – containing unusually rich information. New digital tools and databases, including privately funded genealogy depositories, are now making it easier to track specific people and families. Although they still account for a minority of historical studies about migration, microhistories are now an increasingly popular subgenre of scholarly literature on the topic. Yet such accounts largely remain absent from heritage institutions.

Migration museums and their grand narratives

Museums or exhibitions about migrations have appeared in growing numbers since the 1990s and have often been commissioned or supported by national authorities. As such, their underlying objective was to expand the inclusiveness of the national narratives, not to question the national framework or its analytical relevance (Baur 2017). By relating the integration of immigrants or the dispersal of emigrants across the world, the idea is often to underscore an overlooked, positive trait of the nation, rebranded as an assimilationist success (Gordon-Walker 2016) or a globally influential polity (Wang 2020). The many categories of people and complex stories that do not fit this picture are often left in the shadows – small ethnic groups, non-assimilated migrants, returnees, expellees, internal migrants, colonial subjects, Romani People, traveller populations, and recent immigrant communities, to name only a few (Blickstein 2009; Sutherland 2014; Bounia 2016).

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At times, the liberties taken by institutions with a broader historical record have been too blatant to go unnoticed, resulting in significant public debate. In France, the rocky start of the National Museum of Immigration History was largely related to its failure of engaging with the country's colonial past, despite being located in a pavilion from the notorious 1931 Colonial Exhibition (Delaplace 2015). Recently, the long-awaited effort to reform the museum's permanent exhibition fell short of expectations (Bertrand/Boucheron 2019). In particular, it did not put into question several mainstays of the dominant, nation-based approaches to migration in museums: (a) the essentialism of the nation as the ultimate frame of reference; (b) the strong teleology of assimilation of immigrants, and the belief in the overall progress of their treatment over time; (c) the hypertrophy of politico-legal turning points. The process to rethink this exhibition was also striking in its scant attention to museum design. The role of artefact selection, contextualisation, and display cannot be a mere afterthought.

Objects and artefacts in migration museums

In museum displays about migration, objects are typically used for their iconic, evocative power. From Ellis Island to Genoa, from Dublin to São Paulo, old suitcases, worn-out wallets, and over-stamped passports have become a curatorial trope. Selected for their semiotic rather than their aesthetic or historic value, they are integrated into the museum design insofar as they can convey a dramatic effect. The point is not to elicit empathy with "the feelings of those who originally held the objects, cherished them, collected them, possessed them" (Greenblatt 1991, 45), but rather to illustrate, introduce, or visually underscore a macro-narrative that is driven independently from the objects' history and agency.

Objects identified in their singularity and connected to the personal story of one or more migrant people are exhibited much less frequently. When curators do intertwine these dimensions, the effect of identification and relatability seems particularly high (Witcomb 2010). But there is still a limited appetite for micro-historically loaded, narrative-laden artefacts, especially in social history museums. It is true that in general, these institutions have only a vague knowledge of the ownership history and spatial itinerary of their material possessions, which have not been acquired for their historical and narrative content.

In contrast to mainstream museographies of migration, the choice of a micro-historical and micromaterial focus – understood here as reliance on objects as carriers of singular narratives – is meant to generate two related benefits: a non-prototypical reconstruction of people's itineraries and life courses, in which their perspective occupies centre stage and a more immersive/empathetic experience.

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Singular stories through singular objects: The example from an exhibition in France

Articulate stories and objects in the domestic space

House museums are peculiar heritage sites. They distinguish themselves from other places of public memory by offering a more immersive experience with the past and its present legacies (Hodge/Beranek 2011). Those that tell the stories of ordinary people are rare, despite a strong public interest in the intimate experiences of the lower classes alongside elites. One museum that fits the profile is the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York. Founded in 1988 as a result of a grassroots initiative, this pioneering institution built its success around a radically innovative project. It sets out to share the authentic stories of the building's former occupants *in situ*, in the unassuming places they inhabited. In the words of its co-founder Ruth Abram,

> the most important thing in terms of authenticity is that the museum is telling actual stories of people who actually lived in the building […] We're not talking about this room and that table and this vase; you can't do that with poor people. They had to be measured by the content of their dreams, not the content of their apartment.
>
> (quoted in Berlinger 2018, 24)

This approach has inspired a few other institutions around the world (see for example the Susannah Place museum in Sydney, described in Cossu 2008). In France, no such museum exists. Museums in and about working-class neighbourhoods, such as the Musée urbain de Suresnes near Paris or the Musée urbain Tony-Garnier in Lyon, typically centre on urbanistic choices, demographic archetypes, and typical interiors, not the histories of actual families. In that sense, they do little to fend off some of the stereotypes and stigma associated with the sprawling, lower-class areas called *banlieues*. These urban areas have become a synonym for everything wrong with contemporary France: unemployment, unassimilable migrant communities, youth violence, anti-Semitism, and radical Islam. The objective of the Association pour un musée du logement populaire is precisely to counter those prejudiced simplifications by offering a closer, more human glimpse into the complex realities of those diverse neighbourhoods.

The first major step on a journey that should lead to a brick-and-mortar museum by the decade's end is a temporary exhibition. This event takes place in a 'cité HLM' (for example a complex of subsidised housing) erected in the 1950s a few blocks outside Paris.

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The exhibition

Entitled *La vie HLM*, the exhibition takes visitors on time travels. It delves into the lives of several families across multiple decades, from the 1950s to the 2000s in different apartments. The stories are based on microhistorical research, conducted through archival work and interviews. In two separate but identical 51-square-meter two-bedroom apartments, 45-minute guided tours allow visitors to get acquainted with families who resided there for years.

In the first apartment, the narrative centres on one family with Polish roots, whose long-standing presence in the building resulted in vast networks of solidarity. The visit's screenplay, so to speak, consists in having visitors spend a day with the family in 1967, about ten years after its arrival in the complex, and choose which of the five family members they want to follow. The aim is to raise awareness about each of the characters' background, constraints, and agency, right before the occurrence of a major (micro) event – the father's sudden death – that will alter the trajectory of the family. Prompted by the guide and through their own explorations, visitors are able to understand in the most intimate way how the family negotiated that turning point.

In the second apartment, the focus is on the domestic setting itself. The narrative connects three different families that lived here successively, each one having a slice of their experiences recounted in one room of the apartment. This display allows for a depiction of three occupational profiles, three ways of getting access to public housing, and three migration waves – internal, European, and postcolonial. Moreover, the families are captured at three important moments in the macro history of France, Paris, or its suburbs. This does not mean that the families in question partook in, or even knew about, the events or major evolutions going on at the macro level. Rather, potential absences, silences, and lacunae are acknowledged and used as heuristic tools to question how, why, and when those specific people would decide to take part in larger movements.

Throughout the unfolding of those family narratives, a number of historical themes crop up. They include but are not limited to the evolutions of comfort, hygiene, cultural practices, consumption, and leisure; intimacy, relationships between genders and generations, life rhythms; political behaviours, economic crises, pollution, and even occupational diseases. Hardship and challenges are depicted in no uncertain terms, while audiovisual excerpts also present positive recollections narrated by the former inhabitants themselves. Towards the end of the visit, guides encourage visitors to reflect on issues of memory and distortion, and to discuss the common belief that 'things used to be better'. This opportunity for critical analysis, as well as insights into the historian's toolkit, contributes to a 'participatory microhistory' in which visitors are invited to partake in the

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interpretation and representation of the past (Hammett et al. 2020). In addition, a key feature of this particular exhibition is that the tour guides themselves hail from the *banlieues* and have been able to incorporate allusions to their own personal experiences into the tours' script.

Microhistorical musealia

Objects play a key role in the *La vie HLM* exhibition. Two types of artefacts are common sights in historical exhibitions. First, the evocative ones – pieces of furniture, utensils, toys, and clothing items – are meant to immediately immerse visitors in a particular era and social setting. They have been chosen to match as closely as possible the information available from archival sources including a vast repository of photographs extensively documenting the *cité*'s interiors in the mid-1980s as well as from the families' own recollections. Those objects are secondary, however, and do not feature as such in the story. The second category is archival documents, whether generic for example TV and radio clips or specific to the protagonists' lives letters exchanged with institutions, commercial invoices, and salary slips. Only a fraction of this material is exploited in the scenography, the rest being stored away and kept out of view in drawers, cupboards, and behind wall coverings. Visitors are invited to access these objects at the end of each tour as a form of supplementary material, as they can roam freely around the apartment.

The third category of objects is the more visible and important one. They could be called deep artefacts: they have a rich history of their own and have performed multiple functions in the families' lives. Their scenographic role is to enhance the visitors' microhistorical knowledge and provide a tangible feel to past experiences by conveying the 'visceral in the visual' (Pink et al. 2010). An example among others: a crystal chandelier, which remained in one of the families for generations. Beyond its basic use as a light source, it acquired several layers of meaning over time. Crafted by the family's father as part of his work at the famous Baccarat company as a bronze caster, the chandelier became an object of pride and fascination. It carried an unmistakable measure of luxury that was at odds with the family's modest means and otherwise lacklustre way of life. Later on, it came to concentrate the memories of a bygone, happy era; its bronze parts even conjured painful images of disease and death. The chandelier then vanished out of view, changed hands with the extended family, moved regions, then reappeared and returned to its primary hanging spot – or at least the illusion of it. A good slice of the family history is being told through the prism of that object which was used, loved, and longed for by real people, making it a great vehicle for the micro-storytelling at play in the exhibition. In that sense, displacement is embedded in the object itself. Mediated and enacted by the singular stories of migration and

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the working-class experience it takes part in, the micromateriality of the artefact places it at the centre of the production of historical meaning.

It is about time we devote time and resources to tell the history, in an embodied and relatable way, of immigrants and the urban working class in France in the twentieth century. One exhibition in France – and the museum it paves the way for – offers an intimate and immersive museum design precisely tailored to that effort. Largely inspired by the New York Tenement Museum, the display is based on microhistorical investigations and adapted into a participatory and inclusive visit format. One of its singularities resides in the emphasis placed on 'deep artefacts' whose own migrations – both in space and people's cognitive and sentimental geographies – structure and support the entire narrative.

NOTE

1. Association for a museum of working-class housing. For more information on the organisation and the exhibition, see http://www.amulop.org and http://www.laviehlm-expo.com. Accessed 31 March 2022.

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11

A Painting Goes Into Exile. Picasso's *Guernica* in the United States

Martin Schieder

In 2015, at the height of the refugee crisis, the Bulgarian artist Jovcho Savov published a cartoon with the title *Aegean Guernica* (Figure 11.1), one of the countless transformations undergone by Picasso's meta-image since its creation. Savov has crammed the traumatised figures from *Guernica's* claustrophobic stage into a tiny refugee boat on the Aegean while a cruise ship impassively holds its course on the horizon. Through this simple symbolism, the artist draws attention to the plight of Syrian refugees fleeing their war-torn homeland in overfilled craft, attempting to reach Europe across the Mediterranean. What Savov may barely have been aware of is that in 1939, Picasso's painting itself embarked on a voyage to the United States by ocean liner, which would result in its unanticipated exile there. Two years after Picasso had brought the horrors of the Spanish Civil War before the eyes of the world at the *Exposition Internationale* in Paris, he and his good friend Juan Larrea were pursuing the strategy of extracting as much from *Guernica* in terms of global anti-Franco, anti-fascist-alliance propaganda as "its exceptional nature would have us hope" (Juan Larrea to Roland Penrose, 12 February 1938, quoted in Tardío 2019, 149). Having initially shown the emblematic painting in various European cities, the artist sent it across the United States on an exhibition tour aimed at generating publicity for the fascism-imperilled republic and raising donations for Spanish intellectuals in exile.

Thus, *Guernica's* migration begins on a ship. In the 1930s, the SS Normandie was one of the most popular ocean liners on the Atlantic route. Thanks to its luxurious furnishings and fittings, designed by the leading interior designers of the day, it was regarded as a floating Art Deco stage. This was the specific setting in which Picasso's exceptional painting – rolled, stowed in a specially constructed wooden crate, and accompanied by 59 drawings and oil sketches in three further crates – was transported via Southampton to the United States. Hitherto unknown is that

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FIGURE 11.1: Javcho Savov, *Aegean Guernica*, 2015 (© Jovcho Savov).

Guernica was originally to have sailed on the SS Paris but Picasso seems to have changed his plans at short notice, with the result that the crossing was delayed by a week and was finally made on the SS Normandie instead. And a good thing too, for upon leaving its berth in Le Havre on 18 April 1939, the SS Paris caught fire and sank (Anonymous 1939e)! After sailing out of Le Havre on 26 April, the SS Normandie reached New York, whose famous harbour statue greeted the passengers from afar, on 1 May. And contemporaries were not slow to recognise 'Liberty' in the figure holding aloft the lamp of truth in Picasso's painting (Wheeler 1947, 66). In addition to works by Picasso, however, the SS Normandie also had on board exhibits from the Louvre destined for the show *European Paintings and Sculpture from 1300–1800*, to be held within the context of the *World's Fair* in New York (Anonymous 1939d; Claas 2024). *Guernica's* migration therefore took place, in the literal sense of the phrase 'traducere navem' on a 'Bilderfahrzeug' ('image vehicle' or specifically in this case 'picture vessel'). In an alien society and culture, the artwork was to become a migratory object that materialised the historical memory of war and dictatorship in its native country. And yet at the same time, just like Warburg's Flemish tapestry, it would itself, over the ensuing

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years, become a 'Bilderfahrzeug', functioning as an "'automobile' carrier of visual information […] that moves through time and space in the medium of the artwork or its reproduction" (Fleckner/Tolstichin 2019, 3).

On tour

Upon docking at the 48th Street Pier, the SS Normandie was greeted by a delegation from the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign (SRRC), for on board was not only *Guernica* but also its prominent escort: the last Republican Prime Minister Juan Negrín, who in 1937 had commissioned Picasso to create a work for the Spanish pavilion at the *Exposition Internationale*. Negrín, who regarded himself as having been forced into exile, was intending to sound out to what extent the United States and Mexico would be prepared to receive a share of the almost 400,000 Civil War refugees (Anonymous 1939g). At the same time, he had evidently been planning to exhibit *Guernica* at the New York *World's Fair* in order to draw the world's attention once again to a Spain shattered by Francoism. However, the United States' recognition of the Francoist regime on 2 April had rendered obsolete the presentation of *Guernica* in the Republican "pabellón español en la Exposición Internacional de Nueva York" (Murga Castro 2011, 697). Instead, the painting was to make its grand appearance in an exhibition at Valentine F. Dudensing's Valentine Gallery on 57th Street, in close proximity to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Curated by Sidney Janis, *Guernica by Pablo Picasso* was organised for the benefit of the SRRC and was held from 5 to 29 May under the patronage of the communist-leaning American Artists' Congress (AAC), with the US Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, as honorary chairman, and in cooperation with the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. The SRRC, supported by personalities such as Albert Einstein, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Mann, had taken up the cause of the Republican fighters. The proceeds from the *Guernica* tour were destined 'for the relief of Spanish artists and intellectuals now in French concentration camps', to whom Picasso was lending his vigorous support in Paris (Program Bureau 1939). And so it was that Peter Rhodes of the SRRC, along with the painters Stuart Davis and Max Weber of the AAC, convinced Picasso of the merits of a nationwide tour of the United States. The organisers employed lavish public relations to assemble an exquisite sponsoring committee comprising figures from the worlds of politics, business, and culture. Chaired by Caspar Whitney and Dorothy Parker, its members included US First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Simon Guggenheim, Ernest Hemingway, gallerists Valentine F. Dudensing and Pierre Matisse, painter Georgia O'Keeffe, and the art historian James J. Sweeney (Whitney 1939). Their agenda was to draw attention in the United States to the

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Republican victims of the Spanish Civil War and to raise at least $10,000, corresponding to 'Picasso's hope', in the battle against fascism (Backus/Guggenheim 1939). Over 100 hand-picked guests attended a private view and fundraiser gala after donating $5 each to the SRRC. The exhibition was opened before this distinguished audience, a virtual cross-section of New York's elite, by no less a figure than Negrín, who read out Picasso's *Message to American Artists*, disseminated by the media, in which the Spanish artist called for support and appealed for resistance to 'those doctrines contrary to the Spanish tradition' (Anonymous 1939a).

Over the next three weeks, some two thousand visitors were prepared to pay an admission charge of fifty cents to view the painting and its sketches. During the preceding weeks, Sidney Janis's exhibition committee had successfully sought to ensure that *Guernica* could travel to additional venues in the United States following its presentation at the Valentine Gallery. To this end, they asked numerous museums whether they would be interested in hosting the exhibition against a payment of $500 to the so-called Picasso Fund and responsibility for the transportation and insurance costs (Ahrend 1939a). And so, thanks to the mediation of Galka Scheyer and under the auspices of the Motion Picture Artists' Committee, *Guernica* was shown initially at the Stendhal Art Galleries in Hollywood (10–21 August 1939), where it was seen by Fritz Lang and Ernst Lubitsch, before travelling by train to the San Francisco Museum of Art (28 August–18 September 1939), and finally, under the patronage of the Arts Club of Chicago, to the Wrigley Building (1–10 October 1939), where it was seen, among others, by Mies van der Rohe. The committee accompanied the exhibition with an intensive fundraising campaign, professional public relations, and merchandising in the form of a catalogue priced at 25¢, with copies signed by Juan Negrín selling for $1. In spite of the public relations exercise dedicated to *Guernica*, the calculations proved wide of the mark: after the deduction of expenses, a mere $700 remained (Chipp 1981, 119f.). After returning to New York, *Guernica* was one of the exhibits in the retrospective *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* at MoMA (15 November 1939–7 January 1940), in which Alfred H. Barr presented Picasso's work in a hitherto unknown quantity and quality.

Symbol

The original plan was for *Guernica* to return 'back to Europe' (Morley 1939c) after its presentation at MoMA. In the meantime, however, the Second World War had broken out, and before long the German Army would occupy Paris, where Picasso was holding out in his studio where he had painted *Guernica*. After Barr, as early as July 1939, had begun to suspect that *Guernica* would be unable to

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return to Europe and had suggested to Picasso 'que nous gardions les tableaux', he asked the artist whether *Guernica* might not continue its "tour triomphal grands centres culturaux États Unis" (Alfred H. Barr to Pablo Picasso, 15 December 1939, quoted in Bouvard/Mercier 2018, 207). Hitherto unknown is that he also made an offer for the painting. This elicited no response from Picasso because in his eyes it belonged to the Spanish Republic and should find its way home as soon as the republic was liberated from Francoism (Barr 1941). Thus the exhibition, in its various constellations, continued to tour the United States until eventually finding a provisional resting place at MoMA alongside Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, another of Barr's spectacular new acquisitions, and *Girl Before a Mirror*.[1] Henry McBride, the great New York arts journalist of the 1930s, would therefore be proved right after prophesying, as early as May 1939, that: "*Guernica* will doubtless be shown in some of our other cities before seeking permanent asylum in some museum" (McBride 1939). As it was, the exiled artwork was stylised into the symbolic image of the Spanish exile community, the 'vencidos':

> Por éstas y aquellas inolvidables cosas será siempre Picasso para nosotros un símbolo primordial en este filo en que estamos. Su triunfo actual es considerado por nosotros como nuestro. Al felicitarnos por él nos felicitamos también de que una gran parte de su obra se encuentre en América,

announced Larrea with Republican pathos from his exile in Mexico in 1940 (Larrea 1940, 35). Ultimately, *Guernica* was to remain in its American exile for more than 40 years.

The day the painting arrived on the continent of America, it met with an undreamt-of reception in society, in the media, in the specialist press, and not least on the art scene.[2] In keeping with the SRRC propaganda, *Guernica*, for many people, represented the work of an 'artiste engagé', a citizen of the democratic world. It was, in equal measure, an indictment and a piece of propaganda, "an heroic canvas of the horror condemned by the whole civilized world" (Elizabeth McCausland. "*Guernica*, Picasso's Great Mural, shown." *Springfield Republican*, 21 May 1939, quoted in Oppler 1987, 226; Anonymous 1939f). Against the backdrop of the events in Spain, Picasso came to be seen as a modern history painter whose works were the successors of Delacroix's *Massacre de Chios* and Géricault's *Radeau de la Méduse* (Brian 1939, 12). After Herbert Read's description of *Guernica* as a 'modern calvary' (1939, 6), it was a logical next step to present it as an altarpiece. At the Fogg Museum in Cambridge, it was raised 2.5 m above floor level as if 'a sacred symbol' (Juan Larrea to Roland Penrose, 12 February 1938, quoted in Tardío 2019, 155) in a chapel. A photograph of the installation exists (Figure 11.2), showing three ladders leaning in front of the painting. On the central ladder stands a curator adjusting

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FIGURE 11.2: Installation of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* with workman on ladders, Warburg Hall, Fogg Museum, 1941. Photographs of the Harvard Art Museums (HC 22), folder 2.32 [2/2]. Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (© Succession Picasso/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024).

the ropes by which the painting is secured. In the visual memory of the viewer, this scene evokes the erection of Christ's cross. And at the San Francisco Museum of Art in particular, the painting was staged as an icon of the struggle against war and fascism. In her analysis, the museum's director, Grace McCann Morley (1939b), captures *Guernica's* universal symbolism: on the one hand, Picasso has united in a single painting the horrific and the beautiful, as in a Greek tragedy. On the other hand, "[he] has proceeded from a particular incident to a general expression that has validity far beyond the time and place". It is quite possible, Morley maintains elsewhere, that the picture will remain forevermore a "significant document of art", whereas the historical event on which it is based will disappear "between the pages of history books" (McCann Morley 1939a). For this reason, she crafts the display of the exhibition "as a protest against war" (Figure 11.3) in order to demonstrate "that the episode at Guernica may be repeated today or tomorrow in London or Berlin" (Olmsted 1939 n.p.). Thus, an exhibition was mounted in the adjoining galleries in

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FIGURE 11.3: Installation of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*, San Francisco Museum of Art, 28 August–18 September 1939. Photo: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Archives (© Succession Picasso/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024).

which, among other works, Picasso's cycle of etchings *Sueño y mentira de Franco*, Goya's *Los desastres de la guerra*, and the *Mütter* from Kollwitz's *Krieg* series were shown as well as some "photographs from the front, if you have the stomach for them" (Frankenstein 1939). Just a week after the opening, the Second World War broke out. No longer did *Guernica* simply warn of war; it documented a war that would, before long, pull in the United States as well.

Modern art or sanity in art

"Is the picture art – or insanity? Or is it either, neither, or both?", asked the *Los Angeles Times* (Anonymous 1939c) provocatively during *Guernica's* visit to the

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Californian metropolis. And the magazine *Art Digest* ran the headline: "Picasso's Guernica Misses the Masses, but Wins the Art Critics" (Anonymous 1939b, 11). In the United States, the painting was by no means perceived simply as an anti-war picture serving the purpose of political propaganda; first and foremost, it was regarded as a piece of art. In his high-profile review, Henry McBride designated it "the most remarkable painting to be produced in this area" and described the transformation in *Guernica's* reception from its original function as "propaganda" at the universal exhibition in Paris to "something vastly more important – a work of art" (McBride 1939). *Guernica* arrived in the United States at a time when the art scene there was aesthetically and politically torn between academism and modernism, between individual expression and political engagement, between realism and abstraction, and between the anti-modernist Sanity in Art movement and the communist Art Front. At the Valentine Gallery, *Guernica* had already unleashed "a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and interest in all the New York papers and in art magazines" (Ahrend 1939b). The work acted as a kind of catalyst for reviewers, amateurs, and artists of all stripes. *Guernica* was seen by an important subset of critics as the very epitome of modernism – as "the most forceful achievement of art in our century" (Soby 1939, 9), as a "historic turn in modern culture" (Anonymous 1939f). A decisive role in the canonisation of *Guernica* was played by its presentation as an icon of modernism within the white cube context of MoMA in the exhibition *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art*.[3] In a letter to Picasso, Larrea (1939) makes fun of the New York public at the opening, where he claims to have seen countless 'Mademoiselles d'Avignon': 'Jamás pensé que pudiera haber tantas en el mundo. Un verdadero estrago el que el Ud. ha hecho'. On the other hand, he is euphoric about the display at MoMA, describing how visitors are led through the exhibition as if through a labyrinth, until eventually arriving at the 'santuario' where *Guernica* awaits them.

No surprise, then, given its pared-down visual language, leaning towards abstraction, that for followers of the conservative cultural scene, and the Society for Sanity in Art in particular, *Guernica* would come to embody the very image of the enemy. One critic blustered:

> For the average gallery-goer *Guernica* must remain unpleasantly incomprehensible, and the purpose of the present editorial is merely to deplore the dishonesty of the American art public when confronted with work which it can neither understand nor appreciate but which it feels nevertheless obligated to accept.
>
> (Whitehill 1940, 12)

And in the *New York Times*, this and that commentator made no secret of what he thought of the 'abstract caricature' (E. A. J. 1939). The debate flared up particularly

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in San Francisco, where the *Exhibition by Members of the San Francisco Branch of the National Society for Sanity in Art* was simultaneously being held. Not without good reason did Grace L. McCann Morley therefore fear that the exhibition was a 'signal for attack by the rather unscrupulous publicity-seeking spokesmen of that group' and that Picasso was being defamed in right-wing conservative circles as a communist (McCann Morley 1939c). *Guernica* found itself on the receiving end of similar disapproval in Los Angeles, where "proponents of the sanity-in-art movement, born of a reaction against modern art of this type, see only decadence in such a picture" (*Los Angeles Times* 1939). And yet bad news is better than no news: the fuss made by the conservatives was positively welcomed by the Stendhal Galleries because it gave them a 'great deal of publicity'. Although most of the commentary was "very common and vulgar", it would contribute to "making the exhibition known", notes Scheyer (1939) in a letter to Janis. The mural came under fire even from the communist side for its hermetic iconography. George Biddle (1943, 34), who was involved in various mural art projects of the Works Progress Administration, reproached Picasso for employing an elitist visual language accessible to only the very few. He claimed the artist's attempt to show the horror in Spain by means of 'semiabstract symbols' revealed that symbols have 'a hundred different meanings to a hundred different people'.

Discourse and popularisation

These few examples reveal the extent to which *Guernica* provoked controversial reactions in the United States and how the picture was appropriated and exploited by different interests. Beyond the arts pages, it also found its way into discourse about the nature of human existence, philosophy, and aesthetics. Psychoanalysis, for example, seized on the painting in connection with the strokes of fate that had affected Picasso personally. Vernon Clark (1941, 75) subjected it to a scientific visual analysis according to which a "dissociation of the subject matter and the method of expression" occurs in *Guernica*, compelling the viewer to register both the 'abstract-aesthetic qualities' and the specific symbolism of the painting. Nicolas Calas (1949–1950, 134) deconstructed Picasso's pictorial language, pointing out that in transforming movement into an abstract picture, the artist had confused two different visual levels: "The indicative one of charts with the expressive one of painting. Picasso made a similar error in his *Guernica* and confused pictorial expression with cartographic indication." Also remarkable is how the meta-image inspired its contemporaries to come up with cross-media transformations and theories. Stimulated by Dora Maar's photographs of *Guernica's* genesis, Sidney and Harriet Janis developed a detailed film screenplay![4] When the painting was hosted

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in San Francisco, Charles Lindstrom wondered to what extent painters were still able to react to real events in the age of photography: "Numbed, one averts one's eyes – and the most horrid photos are rarely printed! No painting can equal these ghastly scenes" (Lindstrom 1939, 16). Where Lindstrom compared painting and photography, we now know that Picasso was inspired by press reports of the bombing of Gernika and that by reducing his palette to black, white, and grey, he was alluding to photography and print media. Long before Susan Sontag published her essay *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Lindstrom was reflecting on how viewers were emotionally overwhelmed by images of war. It can be observed at the same time how *Guernica* was made accessible to a lay audience and was able to find its way into popular culture. The book *Understanding Picasso*, in which the painting was placed between a cave painting and Manet's *Execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico*, is an early example (Mackenzie 1940). Within the context of the series *How to Look at Art*, in which he created 23 'art comics' for the magazine *P.M.*, Ad Reinhardt also explained to readers 'How to Look at the Picasso *Guernica* Mural' (1947).

Appropriation

In his consideration of *Guernica*, McBride prophesied in 1939 that Picasso had created "a group of revolutionary forms" and "[a] new language"to which from now on modern artists would need to have recourse (McBride 1939). A warning of the horrors of war, which was itself forced to flee war, Picasso's requiem travelled to the United States in 1939 as a tragic envoy of the downfall of the Spanish Republic. But its impact there was much wider than this: it entered social and artistic discourse and made a lasting impression on Abstract Expressionism. From contemporary reports, we know that a Who's Who of Abstract Expressionist artists visited the exhibition at the Valentine Gallery, their confrontation with the meta-picture making a lasting impression on them. For reasons of space, how the encounter with Picasso's 'big abstract' influenced the development of the American art scene in the early 1940s it can only be sketched out here on the basis of Jackson Pollock's example. He wrestled with Picasso's work to the point of emotional exhaustion. Lee Krasner claims to have heard him calling out from the studio one day: "God damn it, that guy missed nothing!" When she looked, she saw him engrossed in a copy of the catalogue *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* ("Jackson Pollock. A Questionnaire." *Arts and Architecture* (*Los Angeles*), February 1944, quoted in Karmel 1999a, 36). Even more important than the painting itself were the corresponding studies because they offered Pollock a direct insight into Picasso's working method (Friedman 1999). If we examine Pollock's studies alongside Picasso's, striking correspondences become apparent. And in

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Man, Bull, Bird (1939), *Head* (c. 1938/41), and *The Water Bull* (c. 1946) we see the symbolic creatures bull and horse transformed into expressive abstractions. It is almost as if this artist from Wyoming had transposed the bull and the horse from Spanish myth into the American prairie. At the same time, however, Pollock's engagement with Picasso is more than the transformation of myth. We encounter here what McBride announced as a "profound rethinking of Picasso's style" (quoted in Karmel 1999b, 77). What unites the two artists is their individuality of hand,[5] the process-based development of the 'prima idea', the palimpsest-like overwriting of the motif, and the material dissolution of paint and canvas. In 1943, in his epic *Mural* for Peggy Guggenheim, Pollock would ultimately set demons, avian creatures, and serpents dancing and copulating across a 243 × 604 cm panorama. In this work, not only did Pollock approach the dimensions of *Guernica*, but he also emancipated himself from it through his radical visual language.

On the evening of 9 September 1981, after MoMA had shut its doors for the day, *Guernica* was taken down, rolled up, and at one o'clock in the morning carried by truck to the airport. There, the *Lope de Vega*, a Boeing 747 of the airline Iberia, was waiting to carry the painting back to its homeland, now liberated from Francoism – the passengers having no idea that the plane's hold contained such a valuable cargo. When culture minister Iñigo Cavero took receipt of this icon of the Spanish Republic at Madrid airport, he declared: "Es el último exiliado que regresa hoy a España" (Anonymous 1981).

NOTES

1. From February 1940 to November 1941, the stopping-off points were: the Art Institute of Chicago, the City Art Museum in Saint Louis, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, San Francisco Museum of Art, Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, the Isaac Delgado Museum of Art in New Orleans, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, the exhibition *Masterpieces of Picasso* at MoMA, the Fogg Museum in Cambridge (MA), and the Gallery of Fine Arts in Columbus (Ohio).
2. See Herschel Browning Chipp. *Picasso's Guernica: History, Transformations, Meanings*. University of California Press, 1988, p. 159ff.; Gijs Van Hensbergen. *Guernica. The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon*. Bloomsbury, 2005, p. 154ff.; *Picasso and American Art*, edited by Michael Fitzgerald, exh. cat. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2006; James Attlee. *Guernica. Painting the End of the World*. Head of Zeus, 2017, p. 146ff.
3. See https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2843?installation_image_index=4; 17 November 2021.
4. The author is currently preparing a publication about the project.
5. Friedman, B. H. "An Interview with Lee Krasner Pollock (1969)."

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12

Displaced Migrant Mobility: On Reappropriating Spaces Through Embodied Materiality

Lilian Haberer

Performativity of movement, displacement, and difference

A wall text catches my attention while navigating through the meandering spaces of the exhibition: it is a poem in French and English translation with short single-line sentences, and one-word thoughts unfolding across the wall space. There are gaps in between that create the rhythm of this inner monologue. The poem *Les Rites Circulaires/ Circular Rituals* by the artist Nil Yalter is a self-description, a strong plea for being part of heterogeneous groups simultaneously, and an act of self-determination within different realms (Figure 12.1). It starts with 'I am an artist', and goes on by expressing her own belonging to cultural, social, religious, and geographical spheres, as Muslim, a Jew and Circassian, nomadic, female Janizary, and immigrant worker and ends with 'exiled, I am the message, I am'.

Yalter, born in Cairo, raised in Turkey and living in Paris since the mid-1960s, a pioneer of feminist art and media installations, created her work in 1992 as a visual, performative poem. Due to its circular structure, its repetition, and the acoustically staged and read form, it resembles an ongoing incantation. It was exhibited for the first time on a wall display along with an integrated video screen on the occasion of the project *Trans-Voices: French and American Artists Address a Changing World Order* in a public space, a cooperation between the Public Art Fund, the American Center Paris, and the Whitney Museum in New York. The one-minute, edited found footage video *Transvoices* shows protesting and demonstrating women in Algiers and also sequences of Turkish female workers in the Sentier quarter of Paris. The fades and oblique angles support the staging of different forms of political resistance. Technically, Yalter used superpositions

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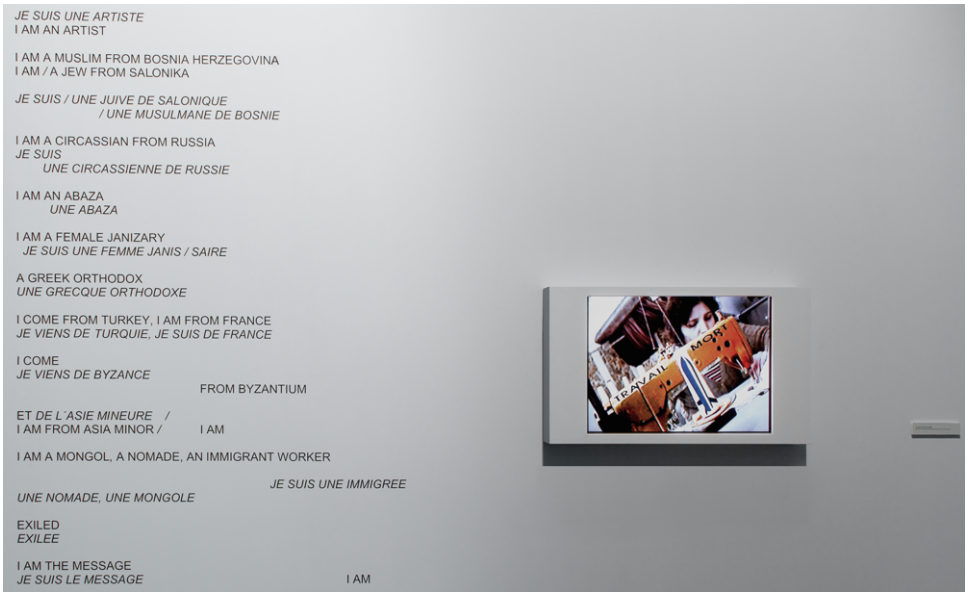

FIGURE 12.1: Nil Yalter, *Les Rites Circulaires/ Circular Rituals*, 1992, Installation view, Gallery Hubert Winter, Vienna 2011 (© and courtesy of the artist and GALERIST, Istanbul).

of the black and white footage as well as multi-coloured graphic 3D elements of missiles and abstract forms merging into each other. In addition to the computer sounds, Yalter put sound to the images by using two voices singing the poem in French and English like a dialogue.

The programmatic character of Yalter's poem strikes me, as on the one hand, the artist stages it as a speech act and self-determination, but on the other hand also as a withdrawal of any fixed identity by attributing heterogeneous and multiple geographical locations of the artistic subject. She shares her affiliation with different groups and emphasises the unstable, variable, but also precarious condition of her being in the world. With that, at the end of her poem as incantation and ritual, the artist assumes the role of a mediator and a message at the same time. Through reading, writing and pronouncing, it emerges anew and differently each time in the various, changing speaker positions: the author and cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa described this process in a similar way in her text on body gestures and her writing as "auto-historia" (Anzaldúa 2015, 4). *Les Rites Circulaires/ Circular Rituals* refers to being in exile, being constantly dislocated and in motion, moving out, which in Anzaldúa's work means writing oneself out, thinking with one's own images and narratives, exposing oneself

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as a transgressive body, as a participant and observer at the same time. Thus, she completely merges into the performance of language that leads to the reassurance of one's own being, 'I am'. As a circular structure and with more than one repetition, she emphasises her artistic existence. In the act of reading the poem directly affixed to the wall while passing, each visitor perceives how the text comes into existence entirely new as re-performance. So, it creates a double, repeatedly affective movement of reading and embodiment. The circular movement of Nil Yalter's spoken ritual, therefore, opens a subjective, self-empowering field of action beyond unambiguous ascription and stereotyping, as they are often used in media or society for displaced, nomadic, and migrating human beings. Journalist and activist Moha Gerehou accentuates how they are often objectified or addressed in specific roles, as victims, or as originators and perpetrators, but not from their own subjective, social, and intersectional perspective (Gerehou 2019, 42), like in Yalter's work.

The materiality of the nomadic subject, embodiment, and change

With that in mind, my focus lies on artistic interventions that give rise to and trace different modes of migratory mobilisation: of being in between, of movement, embodiment, empowerment, and also of transformation. To analyse the artist's reflections on the socialities and materialities of migratory movements requires a methodological approach that directs attention to new materialist philosophies, such as politics of the nomadic subject, of post-human relations, and of difference (Rosi Braidotti) and a philosophy of movement and experience (Erin Manning, Brian Massumi). These theorists favour a non-representational approach of relation, fluidity, intra-action, and embodiment which are essential for the analysis and contextualisation of the following three artistic examples and for a close reading of their oral histories and intra-active relations. However, this is not directed at the myth of a nomadic subject, which in the logic of states and territories means the identification and definition of a political body, as Manning criticizes (Manning 2007, XIII). Rather, the body in motion is meant as a feeling, sensing one, also storing experiences, organless, as materialities, intensities, layers, "nomadism as the movement (keep moving, even in place, never stop moving, motionless voyage, desubjectification)" (Deleuze/Guattari 2005, 160). By reflecting a subjectively ascribed role and tracing their histories with found and remembered materials, the discussed works confer an understanding of oral and documented history through an experience of materiality. They also enable, I argue, through the necessity of a subjective and lateral view, the practices of oral history and situatedness in the material, in recording media

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with a reappropriation and resistance to forms of quantification, standardization, objectification. As in Nil Yalter's poem, *Temporary Dwellings*, a series of mixed media collages with interview sequences focuses on the everyday experiences of inhabitants and the materiality of their displaced or exiled life. Yalter documents the life within quarters and habitats of Istanbul, New York, and Paris through an ethnographic lens. Further discussed examples are practices of notation, documentation, and drawing alongside an oral history, as addressed in Mounira Al Solh's ongoing drawing series *I Strongly Believe in Our Right to Be Frivolous* (2012–present) and, as documentation of flight passages, Bouchra Khalili's video installation *The Mapping Journey Project* (2008–2011).

As these projects show different approaches and provide access to personal archives, to material that documents such movements, displacements, migration routes, and individual histories, they trace and adopt procedures artistically to save them from oblivion, to make them visible and graspable. This also means to oppose the dominant stereotyping and narratives of a politically engaged, displaced, but also migrant life with subjectivity and an autonomous view (Mezzadra 2005, 25ff.).

In her defence of a (geo)political reading of the post-humanities, Rosi Braidotti argues for a trans-disciplinary, rhizomatic thinking that makes differences in perspective transparent and draws attention to a broader understanding of mind–body relations (Braidotti 2016, 32).

As a theorist of New Materialism and nomadic feminism who focuses on shifting neo-materialist approaches of subjectivity, Braidotti understands the subject as an embodied and situated figuration where "the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological" overlap and nomadic epistemologies begin (Braidotti 1994, 4). Her understanding of a nomadic figuration and agency are critical ones that resist settlement and social forms of behaviour. Braidotti's concept of 'as if' as a fluid way of becoming opens up spaces for political and shifting subjectivities (6ff.). She also warns that short-circuit thoughts and volatile understandings of post-human relations won't change questions of intersectionality automatically. Rather, she considers it necessary to negotiate the complexity of transversal alliances. Braidotti also sees the need for cartographies that trace relations of power and focus on "embedded and embodied, relational, and affective" approaches (Braidotti 2016, 35f.).

Therefore, artistic processes and experiments receive impulses through movements and entanglements between the body, thinking, and its materiality. In doing so, not only the flow of thoughts and affective actions are imprinted on these procedures, but they are also imminently linked with materiality and a body that constantly transforms in motion. The dynamics of such an extended subject is an autopoietic, auto-ethnographic with Anzaldúa, 'intra-active' (Barad 2003, 817), mediated and thought in relation to a living system. As Brian Massumi criticises, the notion that a moving

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and sensing body in the everyday brings about transformations was long neglected in cultural theory. Thus, the two terms framing this social fabric 'body – (movement/sensation) – change' (Massumi 2002, 1ff.) and their immediacy of movement would predominantly be seen as a rupture to not fall into the trap of a too simple realism. They often were not understood as a form of translation, or of subversive transformations carried out by the body as a performative, affective, and discursive entity. The latter, change, encourages a shift of its own 'positioning' (Massumi 2002, 2f.) in a double sense and shows at least how to be resistant as part of everyday practice.

Notate and narrate: On reappropriating spaces and cartographies of exile

The ways in which bodies and their everyday experience could express being resistant to their conditions and how artistic techniques might make this graspable will be discussed in the projects by Mounira Al Solh, Bouchra Khalili, and Nil Yalter. In 2012, Mounira Al Solh started her ongoing drawing series *I Strongly Believe in Our Right to be Frivolous*, where she used the encounters with individuals with Syrian backgrounds who had to leave their countries to live in Lebanon or elsewhere due to the war in Syria, as well as the crisis and uprising in the Middle East. The title is a citation Al Solh took from an interview with the poet Mahmoud Darwish by Raja Shehadeh, where he expressed this thought in relation to poetry and its humanisation (Shehadeh 2002). As Al Solh has a Syrian mother and had lived there as a child during the civil war in Lebanon, she started to pursue her own Syrian history. In the following years, the artist extended the series to local communities and people whom Al Solh met in other cities who had to flee. During each personal meeting where the stories and fates of her interlocutors were shared, the artist started to draw them with ink, marker, graphite, and paint (Figure 12.2a). She scribbled down their personal histories, memories, and perspectives in Arabic alongside the portraits on a characteristic yellow, ruled college paper, and also recorded translations of these oral histories. (Al Solh 2021).

As the artist emphasised in a conversation with Kate McFarlane, by taking time, sitting with the person and listening, the stories they carry emerge. The interviewed people enabled us to understand how their bodies resisted the Syrian dictatorship. There is no single story, but many (Yalter 2021) and they are configuring, as I would add, as Braidotti says, a rhizomatic, an oral and temporal history archive that maps their geographical and geopolitical effects. With this approach, Al Solh gives access to oral microhistories similar to Carlo Ginzburg's *microstoria, an approach to writing* about the oral, fragmented, and distorted cases of the non-privileged which were often historically overlooked and establish a different way of exploring history

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FIGURE 12.2a: Mounira Al Solh, *I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous*, 2012–ongoing, Mixed media on legal paper, various dimensions, Installation photograph of *Mounira Al Solh: I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous*, October 17–February 17, Arab Museum of Modern Art Mathaf 2019 (image courtesy of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha).

(Ginzburg 2013, 16–22, 33–41; Magnússon/Szijártó 2013, 22f., 25f.). Interestingly, in a feminist turn to micro*her*stories, she focuses on female perspectives between one's own non-time and historical 'real time' (Tofantšuk 2007, 63) and their contradictions between awareness and the non-knowing traumatic side of their experiences (Tofantšuk 2013, 75; Tofantšuk 2007, 59–62). As a way of introducing non-official and often neglected feminist viewpoints (Andermahr/Pellicer-Ortín 2013, 4f.) their sensing/moving and transition (Massumi 2000, 1, 4), the herstories unfold by noting and therefore retelling single cases, circumstances, or details. The microperspective enables the ones who orally share their pasts and migrating herstories to participate within a bigger picture where these different events in the same action, place, and time occur (Magnússon/Szijártó 2013, 26). It also offers a different, embodied perspective of nomadic thinking, as Braidotti has addressed the 'structural aporia' in standard philosophical discourse and doubted the ability of an often 'phallogocentric and anti-nomadic' philosophy (Braidotti 2016, 33). The artist followed the individual approaches of the people with whom she was doing the sitting (Dahshan 2018). Using everyday

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notebook paper for her was a way to avoid the specific convention of art paper. The ruled paper reminded also of the long and difficult formal, legal, and bureaucratic process of obtaining citizenship (Folkerts 2017, 6 May, the documenta catalogue uses dates instead of page numbers), and the procedures the interlocutors had to undergo. Here, it becomes clear how roughly or more detailed sketching is essential to making individual events public. The paper colour in particular creates a specific uniformity that counters the different spirits and unique moments of the interviews. Many of the portraits directly confront the viewer's gaze. I experienced the drawings for the first time at documenta 14 in the Glass Pavilions at Kurt-Schumacher-Platz in Kassel, where they were installed upon long grey display shelves and exhibited without glass – a continuous flow of personal expressions through the space, as if their bodies and faces unfold their memories and impressions (Figure 12.2b). Reading the translations of the people's thoughts revives the moments of the sittings, their faces and expressions, and their direct or contemplating views as if the artist's handwritten notation in Arabic at the borders of the drawings would bring their voices to life once again.

Another artistic work is the eight-channel video installation *The Mapping Journey Project* (2008–2011) by Bouchra Khalili, which also focuses on alternative, individual cartographies through short video sequences in which eight people draw their own high-risk escape routes and border crossings on political maps telling their personal stories in their own languages (Figure 12.3a). The artist shows a close-up of the protagonists' tracing hands by opening up a fragmented kaleidoscope of oral microhis- and herstories. They speak from offscreen about obstacles, delays due to being caught and imprisoned, deportation or detention, fraud, theft, and also illness, as well as disinformation, repression, waiting periods, border controls, and border regulations by each state. It is striking that their faces are not visible, but the escape routes are traceable through their voices and the drawings on the maps. By drawing, retracing, and orally articulating their individual routes and border crossings, the approach of sharing microhis*herstories can be understood as a material practice of embodiment and fluidity, which Khalili introduces through the fragmented moving image displays in space. The persons affected are given space and voice to explain the backgrounds of refuge and migration movements from their own subjective perspective in order to establish counter-narratives (Gerehou 2019, 41; Malik 2019, 117–120). The recorded and exposed performativity of drawing and commenting on the routes, their geographies, and individual movements across borders and countries are therefore imprinted on our memories as well, as we take part synesthetically and affectively by standing within the installation space (Figure 12.3b). The artist's aim was to open up different spaces, geographies, and moments of resistance against state despotism and restriction through borders, against fixed concepts of identity and the nation-state by showing their 'passing through' (Khalili/Schoene 2012; Braidotti 2016, 33; Khalili/Lambert 2018). These manifestations of resistance are mediated

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FIGURE 12.2b: Mounira Al Solh, *I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous #255*, Mixed media drawing on legal paper, 28.8 × 21 cm (photo: courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery; Beirut/ Hamburg).

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FIGURE 12.3a: Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey Project*, 2008–2011, Eight-channel video, color, sound, video still of the installation, solo exhibition, *Bouchra Khalili: The Mapping Journey Project*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 2016, Fund for the Twenty-First Century 2014 (© the artist/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024. Courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art New York, photo: Jonathan Muzakar).

through Khalili's approach as a way of unfolding materiality and embodiment with the act of microhis*herstorical articulations (hands/voice). The micro perspective makes the abstract routes comprehensible through drawing and tracing on the map and by listening to the accompanying voice that imbues these itineraries with life. Massumi addressed this abstract reality as a "transitional immediacy" where the body as a constantly passing entity in the process has an "incorporeal dimension" for perceivers (Massumi 2002, 5). Both aspects, immediacy and incorporeality, can be explored by moving in between the eight screens in the exhibition space and the moving image representations of the cartographies.

The Mapping Journey Project, as curator Diana Nawi stresses, refuses sentimentality and didactics. Instead, each video reveals the dominance of state-run border demarcations and its human-made authority through individual stories (Nawi 2015).

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FIGURE 12.3b: Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey Project*, 2008–2011, Eight-channel video (color, sound), installation view, solo exhibition. *Bouchra Khalili: The Mapping Journey Project*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 2016, Fund for the Twenty-First Century 2014 (© the artist/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024. Courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art New York, photo: Jonathan Muzakar).

As the exposed cartographies are printed versions (no digital maps) that the migrating individuals seem to have used for their routes, they are now present within the videos only, where material and virtual tracing come together, where escape routes are inscribed in these standardised political cartographies individually and materially through these manual pen-drawings. Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis summarise the paradoxical aspect of individual cartographies and their obstacles by explaining that mobility creates a temporal arrival of persons and groups in movement but no permanent perspective. In this way, a 'freeze frame' takes place in which mobility from a subjective point becomes static and a decentral, paradoxical, and current endeavour (Holert/Terkessidis 2005, 104). The discussed projects by Mounira Al Solh and Bouchra Khalili both collect oral his*herstories of individual people, reclaim their own views, experiences, routes, and impacts as counter-narrative to the often de-humanised, disembodied reports on migration movements.

In both works, the migrant bodies are present in an interview situation being made tangible through drawings and voices in Al Solh's work and as fragmented

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hands and voices in Khalili's installation. The serial and repetitive aspect is important here, and also for Yalter, as they all convey different voices in their microhis*herstorical perspective. It highlights that the artists' aim is not only to give space to the individual fates and remembrances but also to draw a bigger picture through these exemplary cases, similar to Ginzburg and Tofantšuk who emphasised their way of giving access to history as a new approach of embodiment and materiality. While Mounira Al Solh works with people's sittings and interviews and exposes the drawing results on a long exhibition display that the visitors have to explore in space, Bouchra Khalili emphasises the translation of abstract itineraries on maps and fragmented bodies into a time-based moving image work where the public has to navigate between the screens to animate and materialise these virtual stories. By notating the people's remembrances with different techniques, both artists give a material dimension to difficult and traumatic routes that are connected with loss and leaving their belongings behind: they locate them, make them tangible and visible to us as public, and create awareness of each of these precious microhis*herstories.

Time-movements: Decentralised and nomadic mobility

From observations and studies of peripheral quarters in Paris, Istanbul, and New York, places which were mainly characterised by immigration from Portuguese, Puerto Rican, Turkish, and Kurdish language areas, Nil Yalter produced thirteen different plates on landscape format archive board with Polaroids, drawings, and documented materials of the artist between 1974 and 1977. Since then, seven are part of the Tate Modern collection in London where they are exhibited together with six video loops documenting interviews. *Temporary Dwellings* was part of the most extensive institutional solo exhibition of Nil Yalter's work at Museum Ludwig in 2019 curated by Rita Kersting and documented in a comprehensive catalogue (Kersting 2019, 104–109). The Polaroids on these plates, grouped and shown as a series of two parallel horizontal rows of six images each, depict urban areas and interiors, some have written comments with descriptions, dates, and times of days on the frames of the Polaroids. The artist connects them with materials that she collected at the location of her discoveries. She arranges two Polaroids with one found object (like building material or a colour drawing of the found objects) as a visual unity and thereby documents the portrayed places (Figure 12.4a). One of the works was created on Wednesday, 2 July with a note on top of the plate: "Cité d'urgence d'Algeriens à Nanterre, Rue Jeanne d'Arc."

While the top row shows urban views of a courtyard, the façades of houses or details of facades, and some of the images with people, the bottom row of Polaroids indicates interiors and furniture details. The found objects are a rusty piece of metal, some pieces of paper with notes, and a wire slingshot, which a boy

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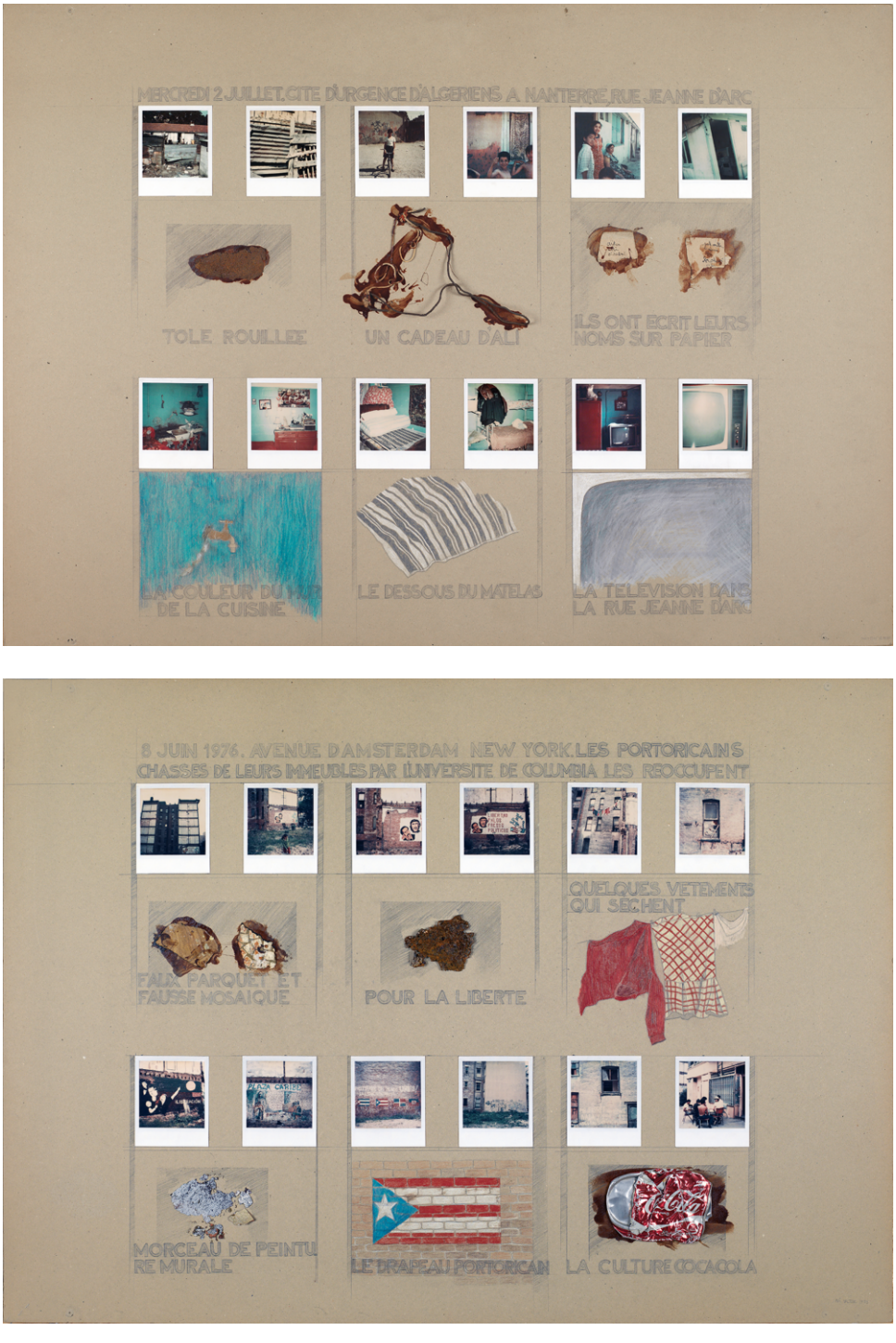

FIGURE 12.4a, b: Nil Yalter, *Temporary Dwellings*, 1974–77, Polaroids, Pencil and other materials on archive cardboard, Singular view (copyright and courtesy of the artist and GALERIST, Istanbul).

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named Ali gave to Nil Yalter in the courtyard. The different traces of colour and details on the lower bottom of the board document the rear turquoise wall in a kitchen, a sheet with stripes, and a TV screen. By directly glueing or sketching these materials on the board, the artist succeeds in showing the materiality and the provisional quality of these specific spaces and places. By displaying vernacular aspects and details of the everyday in a direct and material way, as a form of a documenting notebook, Yalter avoids an impression of social romanticism or a voyeuristic dismissive view of the quarter. Her views show a variety of vernacular fragments of the everyday and convey multi-layered impressions of the found material, connected to remembrances of the inhabitants and the artist herself that further trigger subjective associations in the viewer. The objects and drawings are situational, living testimonies that reflect specific places in a recognisable period of time and keep the memory alive through their tactility.

In the suburbs of Nanterre, we can trace community notifications since 1953/1954, already proving *bidonvilles*, an uncontrolled expansion of quarters that were also noted by Yalter on another board. Initially, there were immigrants from Algeria, who worked in the paper and car factories, and later people who fled the Algerian war. In this armed conflict, attacks by the National Liberation Front (FLN) were waged against the colonial power of France to gain independence. It came to an end via a ceasefire agreement in 1962. With 14,000 inhabitants, the *bidonvilles* housed the highest amount of people from Algeria and Morocco in the Parisian suburbs during the early 1960s. The urban reports of the time document desolate landfill-like conditions, waste and furniture on the streets, and quarters lacking water and sanitation. The families who lived there were considered undesirable (Steiner 2004, 331–353; Legris 2005; Krais 2014). The title of Yalter's boards suggests that the situation in the quarters is not only an ongoing but also an unsupportable temporary solution. The reason why the artist worked intensely on the topic of labour migration in her artistic projects, is – according to Fabienne Dumont – her collaboration with the procedures of the ethnologist Bernard Dupaigne who accompanied the artist on her excursions to the *bidonvilles* quarters in Paris and elsewhere (Dumont 2019, 185). In 1975, Nil Yalter was co-founder of the feminist group *Femmes en Lutte* and also collaborated closely with political and cultural NGOs and trade unions (Yücel 2013, 27, 39). In this, she follows what Braidotti described for nomadic consciousnesses and the necessity of a translation of these images into a politically institutionalised project (Braidotti 2016, 34). Yalter saw the materiality of symbolic things as a possibility to activate other and counter his*herstories and remembrances of each of the communities, and also to give space to their experience of stigmatisation (Dumont 2019, 185). In a conversation with curator Rita Kersting, she commented that the materials imparted a sense of place-specificity

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in the different suburbs of Paris, Istanbul, and New York that made the experiences tangible (Kersting/Yalter 2019, 212).

Another board from 8 June 1976 shows parts of the quater primarily inhabited by New York Puerto Ricans in East Harlem, an area that was previously populated mostly by Italian people (Figure 12.4b). It presents towering and narrow facades, dismal blocks, abandoned home angles, wall paintings, and murals, while the latter shows a view into a courtyard with a group of seated people. These relics on the boards reveal a residue of a floor mosaic, a blue-grey part of a brick wall, a squeezed and flat cola can, remnants of fabric, and also the Puerto Rican flag.

Nil Yalter's assemblages not only create an inventory referring to ethnographic, sociological, and socio-critical approaches and their readings but also shed an aesthetic light on them. By focusing on these material details, Yalter draws her attention to the mismatches as well as the gaps of a life undergone in determined spaces, which is subject to the constraints of labour migration and where participation in the city's society is often denied. Six video sequences consisting of interviews with the quarter's residents are part of the boards and were addressed by articulating their individually perceived problems and desires.

Derya Yücel has described Yalter's series *Temporary Dwellings* as fragments, where the artist addresses cities as research fields for immigrant communities. Yalter has picked these groups as a central focus, she understands their intersection not only of an urban reality, of collective memory and history but also reflects minor stories in which immigration is marginalised. With this approach, fluidity and movement are created between these different levels that convey aesthetical and ethno-critical reflections (Yücel 2011). Nil Yalter's way of zooming into the housings and also to the blurring of official and private spaces show porosity and brittleness (Berkmen 2016, 39). This materiality of urban space deeply affects the inhabitants and their bodies.

Nil Yalter, Mounira Al Solh, and Bouchra Khalili put their emphasis on artistic research that addresses migrant movements through exemplary, oral, embodied, and material practices. Their approaches form counter-narratives through the microperspectives of many nomadic, migrant beings in the world as moving, fluid, precarious identities. By working with microhis*herstories, as well as using materials, interview practices, and the aspect of translation in the exhibition space, their artistic works open up other spaces that can be explored by the visitors of these installations in material but different way: they animate microperspectives by re-performing the poem, moving in-between the itineraries and route descriptions, zooming into the materials of the dwellings, reviving stories through drawings while following the exhibition display. The materiality and embodiment of these individual perspectives therefore require a translation into the exhibition space to create a corporeal and tangible perception by the visitors and a broader understanding of what it means to be forced to move and migrate.

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13

Norman Lewis' *Black Paintings* in the 1960s: Diasporic Image Concepts of Materiality and Historicity

Angela Stercken

The 'return of painting' has already been celebrated many times – if it had actually ever disappeared.[1] Even today debates about the medium of painting are being conducted again, and not only in art history, whereby above all colour is now being negotiated as a material producing and transferring knowledge and even epistemological processes.[2] Yet this ability of painting and colour is perceived far less in the context of actually intertwined non-'western' and diasporic positions or even transcultural fields of reference. Even if, for example, in the United States, the postulate of the 'Post-black' in the present of the late 1990s could have already provided a certain theoretical basis for this retrospectively,[3] the 'other painting' or the 'painting of the *others*', particularly on the African continent and in the African diaspora, still seems to be under the dictate of the darkness of the achromatic and colourless, which the *colour line* had fortified so powerfully (Konaté 2018, 117–130).

The same seems to be applicable to the perception and location of the painting of the American artist Norman Lewis, whose family migrated from the British colony of Bermuda to New York City at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the 'Black Atlantic' considered here in its spatio-temporal dimension is of fundamental importance, especially for the formation of an object-based and abstract visual language since the late 1940s in the United States, unfolding in African-diasporic art and the Black Arts Movement (BAM) as one of its supporting movements and institutions.[4] To the same extent, this also applies to the artistic exchange and the decentrally conducted art and cultural theoretical debates about its material cultures and pictorial traditions in the transatlantic, marked by migration, which must be regarded in the light of their specific conditions. Alongside

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contemporary artistic production on the African continent, it provides a historical matrix up to the 1970s.[5]

Painting and the pictorial

> "If we had been allowed to pursue our own image historically, it would have been a Negro Image."[6]
>
> (Lewis 1966, 49)

Norman Lewis' abstract works of the 1950s and 1960s – a period that includes his affiliation with the artist group Spiral, which existed for only a few years – are strongly influenced by his earlier graphic-calligraphic pictorial drafts. However, above all, in the medium of the painting, they testify to the consideration of the potentials and forms of articulation for which the question of pictorial and political realisation is just as significant as the negotiation of African-diasporic object and pictorial traditions.[7] Thus, Lewis' elaboration of an abstract concept of the image goes hand in hand with attacks on its racist inscriptions both in painting and colour. Some of Lewis' paintings created during this period, which the artist initially exhibited in 1965 as 'Black and White Paintings' later called 'Black Paintings', will be examined in the following.[8] In the light of contemporary political events, in the sinister, bi-chromatic images of the 1960s, the subtle critique of racist everyday practices and an omnipresent culture of violence against minorities in the US connects most closely with the artist's aesthetic concerns.

The enormous efficacy and transcultural legibility of Lewis' group of paintings owe much to those abstract pictorial and drawing traditions of European, African, American Indian, and US provenance that are getting in contact in the transatlantic spaces of North American art metropolises (cf. Jones 1985, 2). Lewis operates with inscriptions of a phenomenology of the sacred, 'revenants' of apparently secular modernity, getting a key figure for a new understanding of the image in the United States and the transatlantic. His works, which "embraced the possibility of nonfigural, that is, nonrepresentational meaning" (Gibson 1989, 17) earlier than those of most members of the New York School, have far-reaching effects, precisely because they emerged from the terrain of a violently segregated art. After 1945, Abstract Expressionism became a nationally purified flagship of US cultural policy – contrary to its actual transnational spheres of influence.[9] Even if Lewis' paintings apparently have been excluded from these political claims, his influence on the formal concepts of Abstract Expressionism is quite obvious.[10] In this respect, the paintings visualise the beginning of diasporic practice, whose initial points are to be found in the decolonised, newly politically independent West Africa of the 1960s (see Stercken 2020, 143–168).

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Materiality and colour

We can gain insight into Lewis' pictorial practice through the collection of material that he compiles in his studio across time. Here, his fields of interest are condensed, as it were, into thematic and temporal intersections.[11] The now partially dispersed materials on politics and art, philosophy, literature and music, and relevant contemporary phenomena include articles and texts on racist attacks, demonstrations, and political activities in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, in which Lewis himself is involved. A folder, meaningfully titled 'Inspiration', which contains his own photographs, landscapes, and portraits, is also enclosed (see Fine 2015, 27f). The artistic archive reveals theoretical reflections on individual artists and art-historical periods, statements, and teaching materials together with the artist's own pictorial concepts in a time-spanning manner (cf. *Procession* 2015, 145–159).

Lewis' *Black Paintings* refer to these material and theoretical contexts. They take up contemporary American history as well as European traditions of modernism, ranging from Cubism and Surrealism to the second École de Paris and postwar Abstract Expressionism in the United States. The African present and history play an equivalent role, relevant for Lewis' early object-related mask paintings, graphics, and increasingly colour-reduced pictorial concepts. These influences are also reflected in varying artistic adaptations of his materials archived under 'ceremonies or rituals' until the 1960s.[12]

In the *Black Paintings*, these adaptations are now condensed into an abstract, gestural-figural pictorial language and clearly take on a performative framing through the sacred-ritual contexts Lewis had already explored in his often earth-coloured, abstract-figurative formations beginning at the end of the 1940s. Their semiotic concepts originate in the textile and calligraphic pictorial traditions of North and West African provenance – as works like *Congregation* (1950), *Procession in Yellow* (c. 1955), and *Boccio* from 1957 (Figure 13.1a–c) show. Here, painterly approaches to patterns of colour and form, which Lewis in part already explores in all-over,[13] are closely connected to figural, sacred, and ritual pictorial traditions, combining African and African-diasporic pictorial and material cultures with those of the European avant-garde.

The works that are now also often untitled furthermore establish a metahistorical nomenclature: They refer to those museum exhibitions of prehistoric African rock paintings that had already been received by the European avant-garde and even served as crucial models for the abstract tendencies in postwar American art.[14] Exhibitions such as Alfred Barr's and Leo Frobenius' widely regarded *Prehistoric Rock Pictures* 1937 at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) up to *Impact Africa: African Art and the West*, co-curated by the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1969

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FIGURE 13.1: Norman Lewis, a | *Congregation*, 1950, Wash, gouache, and ink on Masonite, 61 × 45.7 cm, 125.7 × 152.4 cm; © Estate of Norman Lewis; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY; b | *Procession in Yellow*, c. 1955 [or *Yellow Figures*, 1965(?)], oil on canvas, 69.8 × 108.6 cm (quoted from *From the Margins: Lee Krasner – Norman Lewis. 1943–1952*, edited by Norman L. Kleeblatt, and Stephen Brown, exh. cat. The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, 2014, p. 47); c | *Boccio*, 1957, oil on canvas, 129.5 × 161.8 cm, Collection of Billy E. Hodges (quoted from: *Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis*, edited by Ruth Fine, exh. cat. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts a.o., Berkeley, 2015, p. 46, pl. 18); a–c | © Estate of Norman W. Lewis / courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY.

and shown at two prominent venues in addition to MoMA, contributed to the heightened perception of a time *before* history and African art history.[15]

Paintings such as *Prehistory* from 1952 (Figure 13.2a) with its clay-like colour modulation and scriptural agency recall the tonality and materiality of African rock painting, while its title might be a tangible reflex to the early New York Rock Picture exhibition.[16] Yet, also new abstract pictorial principles are derived from prehistoric material, as they appear in Lewis' later paintings such as *Untitled [Processional Figure Composition]* from 1956 (Figure 13.2b). They are visibly influenced by a global surrealist reception of African rock painting as well as by Senghor's concept of the *image idéogramme*, which equally recurs to the surrealist reading and is negotiated in the context of the BAM.[17]

For the later *Black Paintings*, several discursive lines dealing with the diasporic have emerged, which should be considered in more detail.

Seeing and recognising

In contrast to the partly untitled works of the 1950s, Lewis' *Black Paintings* of the 1960s stand out by bearing almost exclusively expressive titles. *America the Beautiful* (Figure 13.3a), created in 1960, will introduce the paintings to be discussed here.

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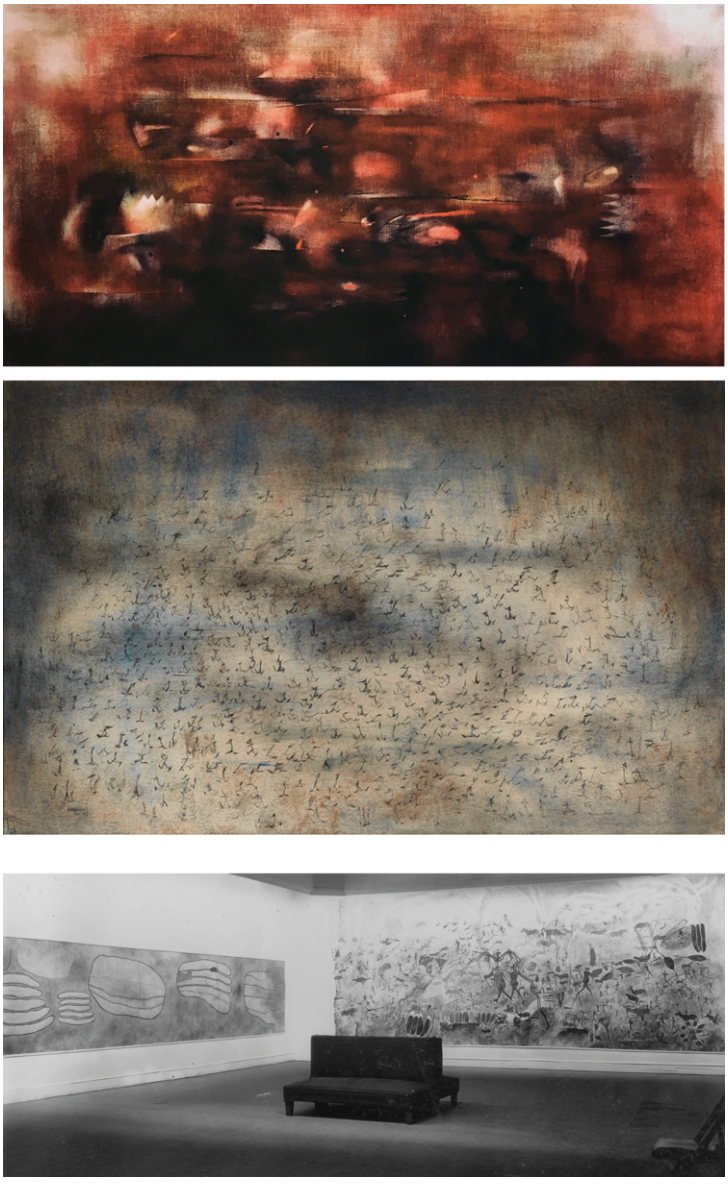

FIGURE 13.2: a | Norman Lewis, *Prehistory*, 1952, oil on canvas, 65.3 × 126.2 cm, The Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, OH (quoted from *Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis*, edited by Ruth Fine, exh. cat. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts a.o., Berkeley, 2015, p. 72, fig. 44); b | *Untitled [Processional Figure Composition]*, 1956, oil on canvas, 65.3 × 126.2 cm, (quoted from "African-American Fine Art." *Swann Auction Galleries*, Apr 07, 2016, Lot 31, https://catalogue.swanngalleries.com. Accessed September 10, 2022); a–b © Estate of Norman W. Lewis / courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY; c | *Installation view of the exhibition "Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and Africa,"* April 28, 1937–May 30, 1937, Museum of Modern Art, Photograph by Soichi Sunami (quoted from *Urknall der Kunst: Moderne trifft Vorzeit*, edited by M. Faass and J. Schmidt, exh. cat. Hess. Landesmuseum Darmstadt, Leipzig, 2023, p. 17, fig. 7).

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FIGURE 13.3: Norman Lewis, a | *America the Beautiful*, 1960, oil on canvas, 127 × 162.6 cm, private Collection; b | *Post Mortem*, 1960, oil on canvas, 162.6 × 127 cm, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (quoted from: *Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis*, edited by Ruth Fine, exh. cat. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts a.o., Berkeley, 2015, p. 176, fig. 8); a–b © Estate of Norman W. Lewis/courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY.

The origin and context of this allusive title had to be familiar to contemporary North Americans. The eponymous patriotic song (1893/1895) the title evokes, singing of purple mountain majesties and fertile plains, of divine grace and patriotic dreams, freedom, brotherhood, and heroism, could hardly be more contrary to Lewis' sombre pictorial vision. Unlike the Christian-patriotic tenor of the song, the painting unfolds a peculiarly flickering pictorial repertoire whose effect is very immediate. Against the dominating black and darkness, the calligraphic constellations of forms and figures emerge in slightly broken white as sudden appearances of light (Bohrer 1981; Schwarte 2015; cf. Genge 2020, 289ff.). They do not seem to follow a strict principle of order, but rather, in their apparently uncontrolled expansion on the picture plane, promote the fragility of their local condensations as well as the instability of the picture itself.

The discomfort that must undoubtedly arise upon viewing owes to compositional decisions. The unfolding of the pictorial subject *out* of the black is of particular importance. The Renaissance and Baroque *chiaroscuro*, applied in enigmatic presentations of light and shadow, is transformed in modernism into a topos of ambiguity, between visualisation and visual deprivation of seeing and awareness, per se. Until Lewis' *Black Paintings* and the aesthetic concepts of the New York

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School, these seemingly autonomous readings retain a magical and iconoclastic significance that, of course, Greenberg seems to deny.[18]

America the Beautiful instead reveals the cultural traditions of the *chiaroscuro* for a re-gained aesthetic temporal, an *epiphany* of the sacred and spiritual – as it were, like ghosts entering the pictorial space in a dynamically ongoing process of transformative appearance. In fact, the painting, as ultimately the entire group of works, deals with visibility and invisibility, with presence and absence.[19] On an inner pictorial level, it is firstly the *appearance* of single forms and constellations of forms, it is the phenomena of (achromatic) colour, its absence, or in other words, blackness, which condenses in the picture into darkness and produces the aforementioned effects. But it is not only the painterly decisions that are revealed in this way, which here lead to the unfolding of an aesthetic of the *sudden* that is owed to colour. The image also negotiates the (in)visibility of social and political participation and strategies of visual deprivation, which according to Jacques Rancière's 'distribution of the sensual' as a 'regime of visibility' (Rancière 2008, esp. chaps. 1 and 2). In Lewis' *Black Paintings*, they are articulated in the physical presence of black – the materiality of colour as well as its extra-pictorial meaning – including the social and political dimension of colour and colour contrast in the contemporary context of the 1960s, in which presence and visibility become crucial concerns of the Civil Rights Movement and BAM.

In the abstract composition *America the Beautiful*, the eye only gradually seeks and finds anchoring points, as white crosses and pointed triangular shapes can only be made out successively in a detailed view (see Figure 13.3a).[20] And abruptly we see, as it were, the routes of white-cloaked Ku Klux Klan members in their haunting nocturnal moves and ceremonies, as they have also been handed down via historical and contemporary drawings and photographs (Figure 13.4a). And we now also *realise* the form-figure references – the eerie cowls, hoods, and masks with the black eye holes – and with them the meanings of the movement motifs that emanate from the form groupings, as well as those of the figure-ground relation and black image ground in its temporal dimension.[21]

In order to create the haunting effect, Lewis also subtly takes up those sacralisation strategies that the KKK employs in its own history- and tradition-obsessed stagings. Thus, according to this reading, the abstract confrontation of colour and form in the painting is superimposed by the meaning of white (as a symbolic colour) on the one hand and the significant crosses, hoods, and masks (as attributes of the KKK) on the other. By invoking the Klan's gruesome practices, however, Lewis also indirectly picks up on those historical models and Christian sacred contexts that the second Klan purposefully borrowed from powerful European religious iconography as well as from the sign repertoire of Christian brotherhoods

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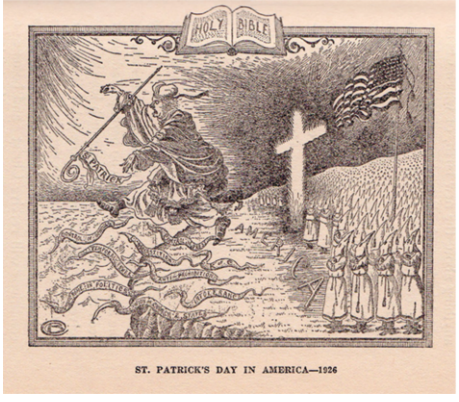

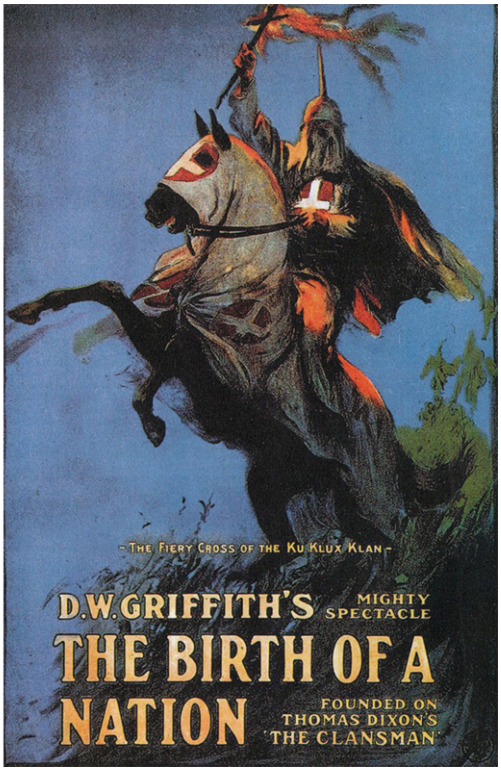

FIGURE 13.4: a | *Cross burning at a Ku Klux Klan rally – Tallahassee/ Florida,* 1956-09-01, State Library & Archives of Florida, https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/39386. Accessed 1 November, 2022; b | Branford Clarke, *St. Patricks' Day in America*, 1926 (quoted from Alma White. *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*. Zarephath, 1926, p. 21); c | *D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation*, 1915, Movie poster by an unknown illustrator (Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Birth_of_a_Nation_theatrical_poster. Accessed 10 September 2023).

and crusades – as some illustrations of the KKK from various contexts of its pictorial agitation may exemplify (Figures 13.4b and c).

The successively applied pictorial process of perception and cognition in *America the Beautiful* stems from a painterly exploration that Dieter Mersch has described as a procedure of epistemological range. His phenomenological approach, which recognises painting as a manifestation of an act of thinking – and in this respect valorises the painting as the origin as well as the result of a process of recognition influenced by the painter (Mersch 2018, 106f.) – is also able to give Norman Lewis' painterly decisions the status they can actually claim.

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A painting from a few years later makes the ghostly appearance of the white forms and constellations clearer and more indistinct at the same time. Actually, the title *Post Mortem* from 1964 (Figure 13.3b) confirms the presence of the haunting beings to be captured in and through the paintings: By strictly underlining a time closure, an 'after-death' and 'afterward', we are confronted with an afterlife and its ghostly appearance. This specific time regime requires a more abstract pictorial language, which Lewis responds to with a freer arrangement of the now more indistinct white forms and their interweaving. Even more than in contemporaneous *America the Beautiful*, they have been detached not only from the historicising attributes of the KKK but also from its sacred and ritual contexts and thus have become both autonomised and ambiguous spectres of an unsolved past.

Processions and processes – Prospectivity and futurity: A brief outlook

Concluding remarks apply to Norman Lewis' 1960s Procession paintings in black and white and give rise to a brief outlook. In *Procession* from 1964 (Figure 13.5a), the abstract-figurative compositions, which are rich in references, have merged into abstract constellations of forms and almost serial-like structures and framings.[22] Reformatted and cut to size, the painting only indirectly recalls the abstract-figurative constellations of the paintings discussed earlier in its new, dynamic framing and the condensing brushstrokes and forms.

And yet, even a painting like *Procession*, whose title refers to the mentioned subjects – a path from ritual movement and procession to succession and processuality – once again calls up a ritual pattern of action: In evoking not only nameable objects such as masks and mask-like pictorial abbreviations, but also places and events such as the key marches of the Civil Rights Movement, the painting also ties the material invocations to contemporary occurances and their medial representation. Thus, the decision "to use only black and white and eschew other coloration" for Spiral group's exhibition in 1965 also seems derived from those "deeper motivations" (*Spiral* 1965, 2) named in the catalogue with reference to the coming March on Washington and to a future prospect of a manifold black 'creativity'.

By combining the formations of earlier ritual and processional representations (see Figures 13.1a–c) with the invocations of the *Black Paintings*, Lewis' *Procession*, shown in the aforementioned exhibition, also alludes to the material of his hauntological pictorial practice (see Figures 13.3a and b). But the painting is now carried by dynamic processional temporal structures, decisively formatting, directing, and expanding the pictorial space. In this respect, *Procession* – together with the later *Untitled (Alabama)* from 1967 (Figure 13.5b) – forms both the

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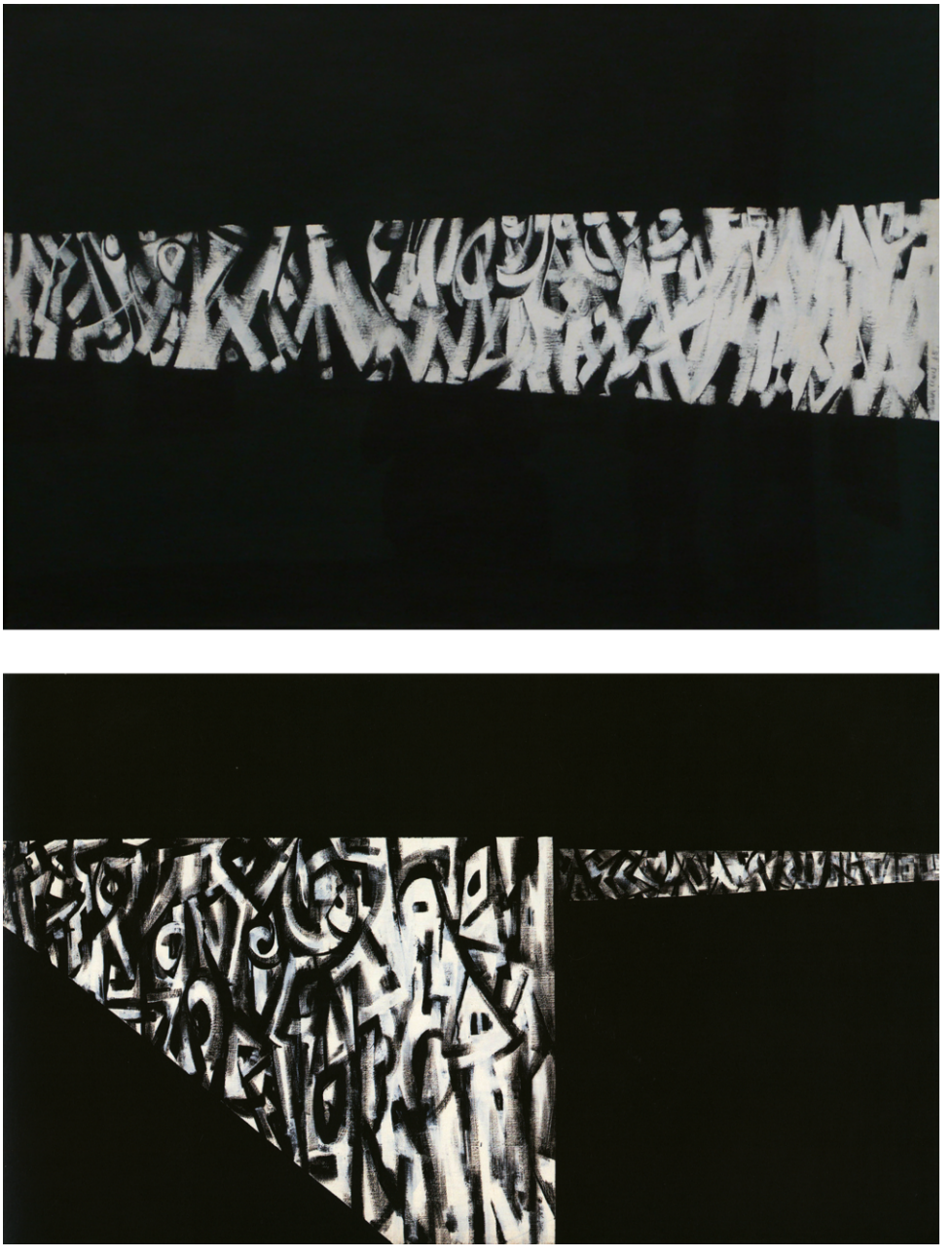

FIGURE 13.5: Norman Lewis, Norman Lewis, a | *Processional [Procession]*, 1964, oil on canvas, 97.8 × 145.4 cm, private collection (quoted from *Norman Lewis: Black paintings, 1946–1977*, edited by Stephanie Salomon, exh. cat. The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, 1998, no. 34, p. 52); b | *Untitled (Alabama)*, 1967, oil on canvas, 114.9 × 186.7 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (quoted from *Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis*, edited by Ruth Fine, exh. cat. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts a.o., Berkeley, 2015, pl. 74, p. 179); a–b © Estate of Norman W. Lewis/courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY.

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centre and substrate in Lewis' oeuvre. As contemporary voices underscore, the painting might be compared to those from the 1950s (such as *Migrating Birds* from 1955), referring to motifs of spatial movement and migrating forms, and a specific new element of pictorial agency: "His subject, tiny forms in clusters that suggest migrations of people or birds in space, hasn't changed, but what had been delicate and diffuse sharpened, in a painting like *Procession*, into a definable object with direction and power" (Siegel 2011, 82).

Actually, paintings as *Procession* retain their pioneering character even after the eventful 1960s. The numerous references distilled from Lewis' works of the late 1940s up to the *Black Paintings* lead into a seemingly boundless, exterrestrial, futuristic pictorial space.[23] In images such as *After Dawn* (1966, Figure 13.6a) the inner structure or the pictorial stripe from earlier *Procession(al)* emerges from an indeterminate black paint. The latter, however, also relates to other groups and paintings like *No 3* (1973, Figure 13.6b), showing a bizarre colour appearance out of the seemingly infinite pictorial darkness. And even *Seachange VIII* (1976, Figure 13.6c), with its significantly more stylised forms, indirectly derives from the formal repertoire of *Procession[al]*. According to Romare Bearden, who recognises a 'lyrical abstract expressionism' in Lewis' work, such examples create

> a spaciousness that began with acceptance of the sky and the distancing sea. An intimacy with nature informed his serene paintings. Lewis' art focused on the energies and tensions underlying the abstract forms of clouds, trees, and the seas, revealing in elegance, harmonious, and never overpainted colors the natural unity of earth, sea, and air.
>
> (Bearden/Henderson 1993, 321)

It is this elemental and all-encompassing power and spatiality combined with a specific temporal aesthetic of spectral presence that also brings Jeffrey Stewart to declare Lewis a forerunner of twentieth-century Afrofuturism in Fine arts, describing him as a visionary and cosmic messenger. Lewis' abstractions are seen here as expressions of a search for a spiritual relationship to the world – an 'unseen world of transcendence', which he would be able to glimpse in the shape of nature, and which would open up a new universe (Stewart 2015, 161ff.).

His pictorial cosmos thus also gains relevance in the context of the cross-genre artistic phenomenon of Afrofuturism, in which the narratives of a fictional 'new diasporic future' as well as the material agency of an unsolved past become the basis of a multifaceted migrant memory (cf. Bennett 2011, 115ff.). This is also where the space opens up for new image concepts, cultural techniques, and knowledge systems that span time and space, but also for (postcolonial) debates in the transatlantic that are still being conducted today:

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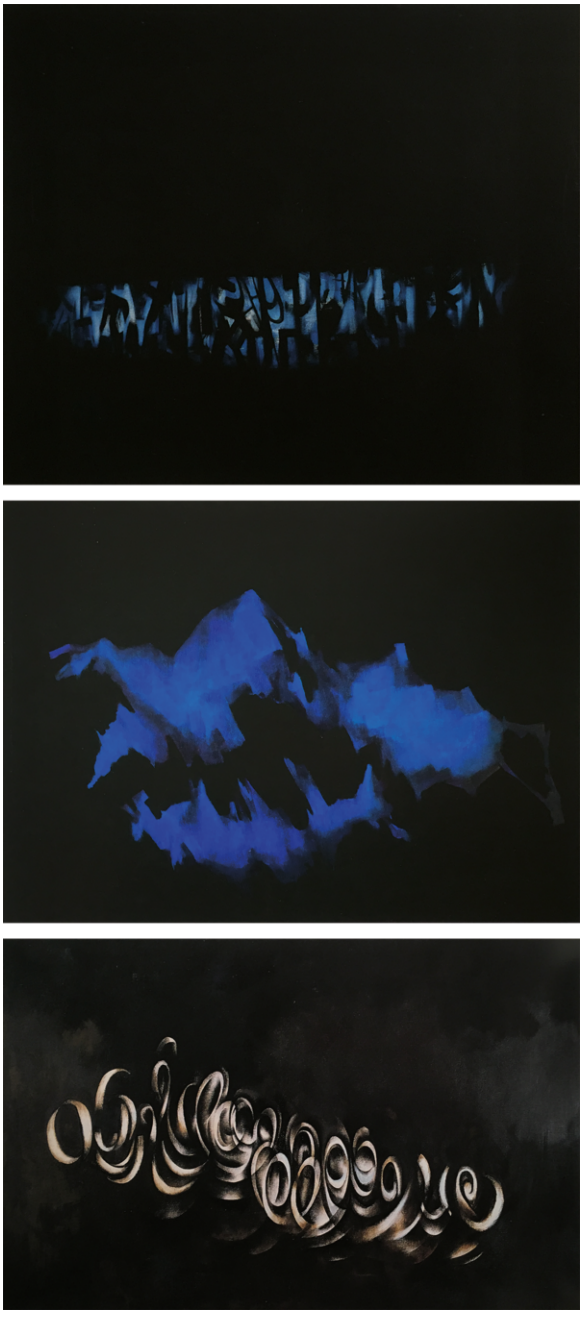

FIGURE 13.6: Norman Lewis, a | *After Dawn*, 1966, oil on canvas, 125.7 × 152.4 cm; b | *No 3*, 1973, oil on canvas, 127 × 171 cm, Elisha Hawkins Collection (quoted from *Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis*, edited by Ruth Fine, exh. cat. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts a.o, Berkeley, 2015, Fig. 57; c | *Seachange VIII*, 1976 (quoted from *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings, 1946–1977*, edited by Stephanie Salomon, exh. cat. The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, 1998, no. 41; a–c © Estate of Norman W. Lewis/courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY).

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> Afrofuturism is a science-fiction story, a story about the future, which very often involves technologies yet to come alongside technologies that are already here. And the 'Afro' part of Afrofuturism basically makes the whole enterprise grounded in a particular, I would say, mythical – or fictional – place of Africa. Afrofuturism is a quest both to return home and for a new diasporic future in space.
>
> (Henriques/Offeh 2017, 99)

NOTES

1. Cf. Merleau-Ponty 1993, 138f.; Schwarte 2020, 34.
2. See among others Schwarte 2015; Kupczyk et al. 2018; Schwarte 2018, 21–45; Schwarte 2020.
3. See Golden's auspicious approach at the time (Golden 2001, 14) and the following debates on Post-Black a.o. in Barson 2010, 8–25, Womack 2010, Baker 2015 and Crawford 2017.
4. See Peffer 2003, 24ff.; Genge 2012.
5. On the significance of the theoretical debates in the 'Black Atlantic' for the aesthetic positioning of the BAM, see my forthcoming monograph *Temporality and Aesthetic Regimes in the Black Atlantic (vol. 2). Blackness in Conflict: Pictorality and the Making of a shared Present and Future*. transcript/Columbia University Press, 2024.
6. Norman Lewis in discussion with other Spiral members (Siegel 2011, 49). Lewis uses the term "N* image" here both in the tradition of Alan Locke as a historically conscious-emancipatory term of temporality as well as a 'label' for an alteritarian image concept in the context of the 1960s.
7. On the 'Africanness' of his imagery, see Norman W. Lewis [1994], 5; cf. Gibson 1989, 9–50; Jennings 1989 (Addenda. Norman Lewis, Thesis, 1946), 63.
8. For Spiral group's exhibition of paintings in black and white, see *Spiral* 1965, 2. The term 'Black paintings' was obviously retrospectively established (cf. Gibson 1998, 11ff.; *Norman Lewis: Black Paintings* 1998).
9. See among others Auping 1987, 146–166; Craven 2002, 309–316; Frascina 2003, 71–97; Craven 2017, 119f.; Stercken 2020, 147.
10. See Shannon 2015, 233–243. Already in the 1990s, Craven attributes to Lewis's artistic practice after the late 1940s, according to the latter's own terminology, a 'multicultural universalism' that, emerging "from a triangulated field of views, values, and discourses to constitute an early chapter in what came to be termed a post-colonial aesthetic" (Craven 1998, 118ff.); cf. Gibson 1987, 64–93.
11. On artistic archives in the transatlantic up to the 1980s, cf. Stercken 2014, 129–158.
12. Gibson groups Lewis's *Black Paintings* "visually and thematically, into three major categories: Post-war Abstractions, Rituals, and Atmospherics," and assigns them central importance in the oeuvre, starting with the early abstract-figurative and sign-like pictorial compositions of the 1940s (Gibson 1998, 11, 20ff.); cf. Fine 2015, 19–103.

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13. Craven points out that Lewis' All-over paintings are among the earliest examples in art history, thus also granting him a pioneering role in Abstract Expressionism (Craven 2017, 51f).
14. See most recently Lambrusse 2021, 221f.
15. *Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and Africa* 1937; Barr 1937, 9–11; *Impact Africa* 1969, p. 29. On terminological aspects of 'prehistory', see Lambrusse 2021, 218f.
16. On the interdependence of complex and aesthetically differentiated pictorial and formal languages and the use of colour in cave painting, see Schwarte 2020, 7f.; cf. Boehm 1994, 30f.
17. Cf. Barr 1936, 64–202; Genge et al. 2021, 185f. On Senghor's *image idéogramme*, Norman Lewis and the Black Arts Movement, see Stercken 2020, 143–168, and the forthcoming volumes from the same research context.
18. "By excluding the full range of color – for the essence of the problems does not lie there – and concentrating on black and white and their derivates, the most ambitious members of this generation hope to solve, or at least clarify, the problems involved. And in any case black and white seem to answer a more advanced phase of sensibility at the moment" (Greenberg 1986, 229), cf. Sylvester 1996, 396–398; Prange 2006.
19. On the question of visibility, see Spriggs 2011, 74ff.; Francis 2015, 193–219; Shannon 2015, 233–243; Stercken 2020, 147ff.
20. Cf. Godfrey 2017, 153ff. Cf. Bohrer 1981; Genge 2020, 289f.
21. Recurring to the exclusionary notions of purity in art criticism and academic discourse in the USA around the mid twentieth century, Kravagna discusses Norman Lewis' 'Black Paintings' as 'discrepant abstractions', that is altered articulations between 'pure abstraction' and object reference. This paper, however, tends to question the stringency of the dominant art theory of 'purity' itself and to methodologically situate Lewis' paintings in the context of African and African-American epistemological concepts of the pictorial, time and space. Cf. Kravagna 2017, 173–213, esp. 195ff.
22. The title, which is deliberately given here as *Procession* is taken from the small exhibition catalogue for the group show of Spiral. See *Spiral* 1965, p. 3. For the later titling (as *Processional*), see among others *Procession* 2015, fig. 52b.
23. For Lewis' early abstractions in black like *Shapes in Space* (1948), see Jones 2011, 487.

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14

Halil Altındere's *Wonderland*: Sacralisation and Subversion in Sulukule

Gabriele Genge

> *The very word 'sacrality' implies the existence of something beyond the reach of rational elucidation and explanation, but also what should be protected from being approached disrespectfully. It is a word that in itself would seem to signal a limit. If somehow 'real,' it calls for and implies respect, awe, and even fear. If not 'real,' it seems to shrink down to nothing at all, and it becomes unclear what it means to study it in the first place.*
>
> (Bornemark/Ruin 2012, 5)

This text[1] deals with specific forms of contact and interweaving in migration cultures, which have so far only been partially explored. Discussions in our field have multiplied, especially in the context of a global exhibition culture and its claims for omnipresence, and even political and historical constellations in diasporic, transmigrant, and transnational societies have been discussed (see Bal/Hernández-Navarro 2011). In all these theses, however, there often remained a strange blank space, that of the connection between art, politics, and religion. This is especially true for the following investigation of a specific form of artistic protest, whose aesthetic potential owes itself to religious concepts persisting in a post-secular present in Turkey. Some methodological considerations might therefore be prepended.

Implicitly, religious phenomena have already received attention within the context of primitivist concepts in postcolonial studies and their approaches to global image concepts, such as fetishism (see Genge/Stercken 2014), which accompanied the development of modern aesthetics as a parallel discourse. However, they were usually regarded as distant from religion and, apart from approaches in the field of religious studies, were primarily investigated in the methodological context of ethnology. Actually, a traditional branch of image theory opens up

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post-secular debates (see Koschorke 2013; Lutz-Bachmann 2015). In pursuing the theological debate around the Christian cult image, it seeks to excavate its idolatrous practices (Butticci 2016; cf. Genge 2020). It remains, however, in the context of Christianity, i.e. theological aesthetic experience, for which a transcultural vocabulary is hardly available.

These reflections lead us to Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) who was of great influence in Turkey and is currently regaining attention. The crucial point in his book *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie réligieuse*, published in 1912 (Durkheim 1995), was the attempt to develop a general theory of religion, related to the role of the religious concerning the foundation of society. Durkheim in the first paragraph limits religion to an act of separating the so-called *sacré* (sacred) from the profane. Moreover, he dismisses the supernatural as a property of religious phenomena, and considers the concept of God to be dispensable:

> A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. The second element thus holds a place in my definition that is no less essential than the first: In showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from the idea of a Church, it conveys the notion that religion must be an eminently collective thing.
>
> (Durkheim 1995, 44)

Durkheim has received much critique, not least because of how he places the 'profane' and the 'sacred' in strict opposition to one another without considering their possible intertwining or ambiguity, and even without clarifying aspects of perception and experience. Nonetheless, with his remarks, the concept of religion opens up to the question of its social production and construction.

Newer impulses from religious studies also make it possible to direct interest towards the ambiguous character of religious experience. Such approaches deal with the borderline phenomena of the profane and the sacred. Moreover, they can grasp processes of material sacralisation and aesthetic experience within the context of social and cultural systems of order (see Böhm 2009, 56). The focus here is less on the constructional character of religion still favoured by Durkheim. Rather, experiences of alterity are taken into account, which makes a collective sacred accessible in things and spaces. Within the framework of the older phenomenology of religion by Mircea Eliade or Rudolf Otto, those aesthetic phenomena became essentialist quantities whose inescapability was not in question (cf. Bräunlein 2017, 16f.). However, it is only by emphasising the ambiguous,[2] unstable character of religious experience that it is possible to trace its aesthetic dynamics and collective discourses with appropriate research methods.

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Clearly, it is not only the persistence of religious or secular institutions that tells us about the role that beliefs and practices have always played in the North and South. Rather, implicit concepts and their materialisations, the overlaying of aesthetic and religious phenomena, are to be traced in a transcultural present. In current religious studies, the focus is therefore less on the religious concepts themselves and more on forms of visibility and invisibility, practices of representation and rituals, which often pursue their own plural identity politics in national contexts. Colonial and postcolonial inventions of religion, transgressions, and profanations – as well as their re-enactments – play a special role in the formation of ethnic collectives and particular legal and political claims. They include ideas of cultural heritage, spectral futures and revenants, deviance and affirmation.

In this context, far-reaching disseminations of the religious in the traditions of Michael Polanyi and Bruno Latour also play a role, which gives special weight to material formations, things and their epistemic handling, their implicit knowledge and character of action, which, however, also presupposes passive subject positions as well as a material forms of the sacred (cf. Houtman/Meyer 2012; Bräunlein 2017, 23).

In the specific case of Turkey and its art history, the debate on the phenomenon of sacralisation takes place within the framework of the secular reorganisation of the relationship between religion and state that began with Kemal Atatürk in 1923. However, the proclaimed replacement of religious influence on state institutions and social regulation is currently being reassessed, at the latest in the context of global contemporary analysis and post-secular debate. In the words of the sociologist Massimo Rosati, the Kemalist state is seen as 'laboratory' (Rosati 2012) of a contemporary concept of the post-secular, which – oriented towards the guidelines of Émile Durkheim – also includes new state claims for the integration of religion. Within this focus, Durkheim's model of religion remains of interest even in the post-Kemalist state, where rituals were not to represent faith but to generate it (Rosati 2012, 66f.).

How and in what way the resulting contradictory conflicts about religious affiliation and state participation also reach into artistic phenomena, and indeed can become visible through specific aesthetic processes and material concepts, will be examined in the following discussion of Halil Altındere's *Wonderland*.

Apocalypse or Wonderland*?*

With *Wonderland*,[3] a video by the Kurdish artist and curator Halil Altındere we are located in a cultural and political context that directly addresses the clash of ethnic groups in Istanbul's urban landscape. It is not clear from the outset that

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religion also plays a role here. The film is prompted by the urban reconstruction and demolition measures of the state's resettlement policy, which took place during Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's term as Prime Minister from 2003 to 2014. The authoritarian project of urban modernisation emerged from the desire to control and contain existing migrant cultures living in 'problem neighbourhoods' with high crime rates. Erdoğan's approach affected, among others, the historic Sulukule, a traditional Roma neighbourhood with established buildings that had been built as *gecekondus* since the 1940s. The houses had emerged from ephemeral housing cultures whose owners claimed their right to live in a blurred area of state control as a customary right (cf. Aslan/Erman 2004). In 2009, the residents were forcibly expropriated and relocated.[4]

Halil Altındere's *Wonderland* from 2013 – though only four years later – shows an act of rebellion against these state measures, a music video by the Roma rapper group Tahribad-ı İsyan, in which his artistic intervention only pretends to become invisible. It had been produced before the massive Gezi Park protests that accompanied another of Erdoğan's demolition projects. The video gained political weight in the same year when it was exhibited at the Istanbul Biennial in the Antrepo warehouse and became the focus of a controversial form of aesthetic protest inaugurated by the curator Fulya Erdemci.[5]

Even though the Sulukule neighbourhood had already been largely destroyed, the newly built residential areas were subsequently given the same name, remembering its past location and therefore continuing a bind between past and present. Here, according to Yıldırım, a 'hip hop acculturation' developed that reacted to the state expulsion with social and educational projects and made ghettoisation a concern of resistance with its own local lifestyle (Yıldırım 2017, 88f.). But this is also the starting point for Altındere's work of art, exceeding by far the means of a rapper performance. He seeks to overlay the seemingly clear story and its actors with another meaning, thereby transforming a transcultural sacred past into an ambiguously artistic performance, a sort of weapon, and even a missionary initiative. Altındere's aesthetic interventions involve not only the staging, story, and offensively used cinematic montage, but also the musical performance, the appearance, and the influence of the German rapper Fuat Ergin (see Krajeski 2014), who is a friend of Altındere's, as well as the perspective, which is achieved with the use of drones (Altındere/Obrist 2018, 46).

The rapper group Tahribad-ı İsyan acts as a street gang, which is followed and simultaneously filmed from a police car in a long tracking shot with a shaking screen at the beginning (Dobben Schoon 2014). Already in the opening credits, a loud police siren begins and the video starts with a fast-paced chase. In a quick change of perspective, we see Zen-G, the young leader of the rapper group Tahribad-ı İsyan, on the run (Kaya 2015, 319f.). While the motorised

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state authority initially remains visible only as a grotesque dummy, its aggressive clout is not in question; the vehicle finally pursues the fugitive with a gesticulating crew in ever tighter curves through a dystopian urban demolition scenario riddled with rubbish, burning oil drums, and empty window cavities (Figure 14.1).

Slowly, a beat that lasts throughout the rest of the film – overlaid with traditional Turkish music – becomes audible in the background noise further disturbed by interference. The view widens and we now see the neo-Ottoman residential quarter that Erdoğan had built from above (Figure 14.2). The next shot provides the narrative context and key: inside a detached house with a crumbling wall façade, the band receives an order from the King (Fuat Ergin), enthroned in a clichéd petit-bourgeois residential ambience, to reconquer the neighbourhoods destroyed by Erdoğan through artistic means: 'Let art and music be your armaments' (Figure 14.3). The next actions of the rappers who follow this call remain in the scenario of the music video, they roam the streets as they run and become visible on the aqueducts of the city (Figure 14.4). They seemingly transcend the fictional context where, in addition to breakdancing and chanting, violence against policemen becomes visible in a burning figure. The counter-shots at the band itself (Figure 14.5), visible in the vibrantly coloured bursting textiles, again take the actors into an artistic tradition of performance, just as the playful struggle with



FIGURE 14.1: Halil Altındere, *Wonderland,* 2013, Video, 08:24, Film still 00:26 (© courtesy of the artist and PİLOT Gallery, Istanbul).

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FIGURE 14.2: Halil Altındere, *Wonderland*, 2013, Video, 08:24, Film still 00:59 (© courtesy of the artist and PİLOT Gallery, Istanbul).



FIGURE 14.3: Halil Altındere, *Wonderland*, 2013, Video, 08:24, Film still 01:49 (© courtesy of the artist and PİLOT Gallery, Istanbul).

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FIGURE 14.4: Halil Altındere, *Wonderland*, 2013, Video, 08:24, Film still 04:00 (© courtesy of the artist and PİLOT Gallery, Istanbul).



FIGURE 14.5: Halil Altındere, *Wonderland*, 2013, Video, 08:24, Film still 06:26 (© courtesy of the artist and PİLOT Gallery, Istanbul).

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the demolition excavators' animalistic gripping arms evokes the paradoxical relationship between man and machine.

In Altındere's vision of Istanbul, it is not only the drones that are used as invisible instruments of military control,[6] but affective violence is also evident in the blackened architectures and objects set on fire, which invoke apocalyptic scenarios that go beyond the present, covering a militant past and activating a transgressive future. And even the residential district of Sulukule and its traditional structure of ruins and *gecekondus* appear as an immediately present, material threat. Altındere thus provides an interpretation that is confirmed by social science. Since the 1990s, there has been a change in urban perception; the formerly socially inferior residential areas of traditional rural migrants now appear to numerous critics as core cells of violence, which also includes forms of radical Islamisation (cf. Demirtaş/Şen 2007, 87).[7] In this respect, Altınderes' filmic invention shows similarities with Rem Koolhaas' controversial approach to the Nigerian megacity of Lagos, filmed from a helicopter, in which a seemingly out-of-time dystopian urban agglomeration suggests the absence of social and political structures. In its 'apocalyptic vision' devoid of history, Lagos in Koolhaas' film becomes the demonstration object of a sacred narrative in which the view from above invokes forms of the religiously sublime (Godlewski 2010, 16; Hecker 2010, 257).

In a completely different approach, the artists' collective *Oda Projesi* showed the construction of a *gecekondu* as a participatory project during the Eighth Biennial in 2003, which conceived of everyday actions and migration contexts in the material reproduction of collective masonry (Özkan 2011, 56). While the site-specific context of political space in the context of craft and political practice was conjured up on the stage of the exhibition, *Wonderland*'s urban concept uses the vehemence of eschatological motifs of violence, whose references to the African continent by no means remain marginal. It is essentially part of the performative concept of the rapper group to overlay their Roma identity with a 'Black' African American cultural affiliation.

In an interview with Jenna Krajeski, Altındere reinforces this positioning by referring to the most important aesthetic device of his video: the concept of *Coolness*. "I didn't want to make a normal documentary or film some crying kids, […] I wanted to make something 'cool' – something aesthetically and thematically more complex than simple documentation of the neighbourhood's struggles". Krajeski continues, "[l]ike humour, that 'Coolness' was employed to what he hoped would be a greater effect, bonding the members of Tahribad-ı İsyan to people outside of Sulukule and, perhaps, all over the world" (Krajeski 2014). Altındere thus uses an older, significantly sacral concept of affect regulation, which formulates decisive characteristics of materialised *Blackness* from Cool Jazz to

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Hip Hop. In Altınderes' paradoxical approaches to the political and the aesthetic, this *Blackness* comes equally close to Erdoğan's political grouping, which, as will be shown, has more in common with the rappers than was thought: The origins of Hip Hop refer to Islam and thus touch on the religious context of the 'Black Turks', which has long traditions in Turkey.

Material concepts of Blackness*: Muslim Cool and* Black Turks

The concept of *Coolness* is part of those ambiguous body performances that can simultaneously subvert and affirm sacred and profane classifications in an almost congenial manner. Even though the appearance of this aesthetic category of distancing and affect regulation can be traced back to the seventeenth century and lines of tradition in German and American intellectual and cultural history,[8] Robert Farris Thompson's theses are particularly decisive for the present question of its sacral underpinning. The title of his work is *An Aesthetic of the Cool* (Thompson 1973) and undertakes the historical substantiation of a specifically African cultural technique, which he derives not only from linguistic interpretations of West and Central African languages but also from the material sculptural model and the ethnological-aesthetic description of the *Ife* heads of the Yoruba culture.[9]

The specific feature of this attitude is the possibility of temporal and spatial transgression and the declared establishment of contact with the spirits of the ancestors:

> Manifest within this philosophy of the cool is the belief that the purer, the cooler a person becomes, the more ancestral he becomes. In other words, mastery of self enables a person to transcend time and elude preoccupation. He can concentrate or she can concentrate upon truly important matters of social balance and aesthetic substance, creative matters, full of motion and brilliance.
>
> (Thompson 1973, 41)

Thompson further refers to the naming of West African ancestral figures or kings, who would have inaugurated a special form of indifference and thus spiritual greatness with coolness:

> During the first half of the 15th century a certain leader was crowned king of the famous Nigerian empire, Benin. He took the title Ewuare, meaning literally 'it is cool.' […] Nigeria seems a fountainhead of the concept cool. Art historical evidence supports this. Superb sculptured heads of important personages […] suggest abiding

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> interest in a facial serenity as the sign, in the company of kings, by which the certainty and calm from the past is transferred to the present and, as a phenomenon of mirrored order, from this world to the next.
>
> (Thompson 1973, 43)

This specific African religious practice moreover reached, as Thompson continues, the United States through the slave transports, and captures in an aesthetic idiom what had been received through the music history of the Black Atlantic as a specific African American *Coolness*. Miles Davis and the circle of Bebop and Jazz, which was soon taken up by a White music scene, were decisive here (Schröder 2010, 169). What is new, however, is the derivation and the precise reference to sculptural models, such as the *Ife* head (Figure 14.6), which opens up sacred lines of connection.

In fact, however, *Coolness*, especially in the context of Hip Hop culture, has been filled with Islamic references, which, according to Hisham D. Aidi, underline the rebellious character of this music, but at the same time unfold a special form of sacrality that can be transnationally shaped and, moreover, opposed to the conservative lifestyles of Islamic traditionalists. With Malcolm X and his followers, a Black religious and above all male practice of Islam established itself, which equally claimed a specific spiritual presence in the African American civil rights movement through the aesthetics of *Coolness* (Aidi 2018; see also Johannsen 2019).[10] It must now seem interesting that the bandleader of Tahribad-ı İsyan calls himself Zen-G. He thus marks himself as a n**** with the pejorative Turkish word z****, which has the same sound[11] and provides himself with a superimposed, transnational, and minoritarian identity. In the context of their localisation in Turkish Hip Hop, the group thus moves into the cultural scene of Muslim Cool, without having explicitly called upon these religious contexts (Solomon 2006).[12]

Equally, however, the more accepted *Blackness* as a category of action and protest also had a certain role in Erdoğan's political rhetoric, which took on a new relevance in the contemporary Gezi Park protests. His widely received speech, in which he described himself seemingly as a *Black Turk*, is part of a populist positioning with which Erdoğan opposed himself and his political grouping to the Turkish educated elite of the secular *White Turks*. Inaugurated in English as *Black Turks*, this refers to traditions of a specifically rural, conservative Turkish Islam, which ultimately invoke a line of tradition to the Muslim African slaves in the Ottoman Empire (cf. Durugönül 2003). Addressing the Turkish parliament, Erdoğan pretends to belong to the underprivileged class of *Black Turks*, but in using the Turkish word z****, meaning n****, he reveals a quite different impulse:

> According to them we don't understand politics. According to them we don't understand art, theater, cinema, poetry. According to them we don't understand aesthetics,

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FIGURE 14.6: N/A, *Brass Head*, c. 1100, CE Ife Society, Nigeria, National Museum, Lagos, Nigeria (Photo: Jerry L. Thompson/Art Resource, NY/Source: Thompson 1973, reprinted in: Robert Farris Thompson. *Aesthetic of the Cool: Afro-Atlantic Art and Music*. Introduction by Lowery Stokes Sims, edited by Roberta Davis et al., Periscope Publishing, 2011, pp. 16–23, Figure 4.1., p. 19).

> architecture. According to them we are uneducated, ignorant, the lower class, who has to be content with what is being given; meaning, we are a group of n****.
>
> (Ferguson 2014, 78; see Steffny 2020)

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Erdoğan's words by no means only carry forward a class-oriented argument that is in common with the *Black Turks*. His religious-social agenda affirms an underlying primitivist concept with racial ascriptions[13] that challenge artistic practice and even the discourse of art.

Altındere's *Wonderland* thus undertakes a complex game of ambiguity, which breaks the exclusive political identity of the *Black Turks*. The closed concept of 'religion' is also rejected, and now amalgamates with African American cultural classifications and for this very reason gains not only current political but also artistic visibility against the Islamic *Black Turks*. An important aspect here is not only the elements of an imaginary political activism, and the references to artistic traditions of performance, but also *Coolness* as an ultimately African connoted physical manifestation of sacred alterity. The rappers bring Erdoğan's instrumentalisation of *Blackness* to bear against himself. By referring to the spirits of the ancestors, whether artistic performance, Yoruba king or rapper-king, Altındere subverts Erdoğan's concept of the *Black Turks* towards an inverted political manifestation of 'Black' and sacred resistance.

NOTES

1. In addition to the research contexts of the DFG network, this text also refers to the results of the sub-project of the DFG Research Group *Ambiguity and Distinction: Historical-Cultural Dynamics* entitled *Contemporary Art in Istanbul: Ambiguous Spatial and Visual Politics between Religion and State*.
2. The concept of the 'ambiguous', previously known as a rhetoric mode, is here relating to dynamic processes of perception and cognition – not only dealing with multiple layers of meaning but describing the absence of a clear differentiating. Media of the aesthetic ambiguous are conceived as forms of veiling, the trace, the ornamental, and the various phenomena of blurring space and time passing the performance of social and political order. For more exclusive disciplinary definitions, see Krieger 2021.
3. The American thriller *Wonderland* (2003), dealing with a brutal massacre resulting from a private war between street gangs in Los Angeles, might well have been an inspiring while repulsive model for the title of this work.
4. Regarding Sulukule, see Yıldırım 2017, 87f.
5. Doğtaş 2017, 246, referring to the 13. Istanbul-Biennial and the role of Fulya Erdemci.
6. For artistic approaches referring to drones (Trevor Paglen and Omer Fast), and to sacred traditions of the sublime perspective from heaven, see Kaller 2020, 235ff.
7. Referring to the Islamic readings of the *gecekondus*, see Erman 2001, 996.
8. Looking to American or African American origins of the concept: Schröder 2010. For a general recognition of the aesthetic field of the Cool, see Mentges 2010.

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9. In approaching contemporary performance and African ritual practice, Thompson refers to the main concepts of Nigeria's independence movement, including the art festival FESTAC (1977), see Apter 2009.
10. For aspects of male gendering, see Majors 1992.
11. I am grateful for this argument to Eva Liedtjens, member of my subproject of the DFG Research Group (cf. footnote 1). The redundant use of the word "n****" or "z****" in the following passages conveys a clearly discriminatory meaning and the word is therefore replaced as shown.
12. Focusing on the specific aspects of youth culture, cf. Herding 2013.
13. Bulut 2012, 916: "The word z**** […] was originally used as a neutral word to refer to the subject of the Ottoman Empire of African origin, basically the enslaved populations working as palace aids and maids. Z****, literal equivalent of n**** (originally used in Spanish), was vulgarised in time gaining an inferior connotation. In today's Turkish siyah [black] is used as the politically correct neutral word since z**** [n****/n****] still has a discriminative tone to it."

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15

On Materiality, Migration, and the Arts

Alma-Elisa Kittner

The relationship between material culture and migration has been discussed since the late 1990s. "Scholars have explored the interrelatedness of the movements of people and things, […] have enquired into the belonging of migrants, and other objects […] for a better understanding of migrants' experiences" (Şanlı 2022, 149). The focus is particularly on migrants' objects, which are often interpreted as 'biographical objects' and therefore as "things that are related to personal biographies" (Yi-Neumann 2022, 102). The slightly different term 'biography of the object' was coined by the Russian artist Sergei Tret'iakov as early as 1929. He "states that neither their development and production nor the emotional attachment to these things is personal; rather, they are collectively shared in the biography of the object" (Tret'iakov 2006, 62; Yi-Neumann 2022, 100). In the context of objects of migration and their materiality, photography plays a central role: personal photographs of migrants are biographical objects. At the same time, they are 'photo-objects' (Bärnighausen et al. 2020) whose objecthood and materiality are increasingly explored in the material approach in photography. Furthermore, photography is an art form itself, negotiating migration and its relation to materiality as an explicit topos or in relation to migratory aesthetics (see Bal/Hernandéz-Navarro 2011) that go beyond it. This chapter exemplifies various relationships between migration, art, and materiality, as they can be found in objects of migration, photography and, beyond that, in social and cultural spaces. The aim is to find out what different forms of materiality are at play, especially regarding things of migration. How do they give shape to migration and make it visible? How is this visibility connected to art and its dealing with materiality? The paper explores the different approaches and how they refer back to the findings of the material turn.

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Materiality, the museum, and disciplinary approaches

Biographical objects and photographs are displayed in various institutions. Archives and museums on migration, such as the *Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany* in Cologne (DOMiD e.V.), founded by immigrants themselves in 1990, actively shape the culture of remembrance of the migration society. The 'museum from below' continues to collect objects of migration in a participatory manner, archives them, and makes them accessible in exhibitions and publications. Most recently, the exhibition *In Situ: Photo Stories on Migration* (2021) was shown at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, in cooperation with DOMiD. It featured both private photographs and their material contexts: for example, their places of storage such as the photo album for the waistcoat pocket: a purse converted into a mobile album (Figure 15.1). But, the material working and housing conditions of the migrants were also an issue. The curators Barbara Engelbach and Ela Kaçel had a particular focus on the architecture of the *New Cologne* of the 1960s and its pictorial representation. Initially seen as a material, architectural environment that alienates them, migrants



FIGURE 15.1: Asimina Paradissa, *Photo album for a waistcoat pocket*, 1963, Purse, black-and-white photographs (© courtesy of Asimina Paradissa, photo: Marc Weber/Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln).

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appropriate urban space through their photographic practice. Although the exhibition at the Museum Ludwig also showed artistic works, it predominantly consisted of private photographs of migrants outside the artistic context. These photographs are "yet unclassified images of migration and post-migration that represent a visual statement against the order of 'othering'" (Engelbach/Kaçel 2021, 37). Showing them in an important art museum makes it clear once again that the material culture of migration is now considered to have a central function in the visual memory of society. Images are very important to this. Thus, the exhibition was also image-oriented through its photo- and architecture-historical approaches, but connected with migration-historical perspectives as well as the history of socio-political movements. Narratives and texts complemented the concept.

In museums of arts and crafts, too, questions are increasingly raised as to how transcultural histories of interweaving can be read in things. The exhibition *Mobile Worlds or the Museum of our Transcultural Present* at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg by Roger M. Buergel and Sophia Prinz (2018) was characterised by a sociological, transcultural, and object-oriented approach to artefacts. The transcultural interweaving of things was visualised through an exhibition concept, "that allowed objects, texts and images to be linked in a performative way, as if in a three-dimensional collage" (MKG Hamburg 2018). It explored the question of how an 'independent transcultural order of things' has crept into everyday life, turning it inside out. The curators concluded that "'migratory things' have to be understood as mediators or catalysts of social processes that actively contribute to society's transformation" (Prinz 2018). The related ethnological project on *Households and Migration* by Hans Peter Hahn and Friedemann Yi-Neumann investigated "how individual migration histories are reflected in (post-)migrant households and what significance 'transcultural' thing-universes have for the people living in them" (Neumann/Hahn 2018). The starting point is the conviction that objects cannot be reduced to being "mirrors of society" (Hahn 2018, 9, transl. by the author). In contrast, "the roles and meanings of the material in everyday life […] emerge from its linkage with practices, perceptions and attributions of meaning and are to be thought of as discontinuous interrelations" (Neumann 2018, 40, transl. by the author). Thus, different disciplinary approaches reflect on the materiality of migration, among them art history, photography, and architecture studies, as well as ethnology and sociology in the contexts outlined above.

Art and material culture

Objects of migration can be found in art exhibitions and in public spaces when artists work with them. A particular focus is on objects of undocumented migration. At the Venice Biennale 2019, for example, Christoph Büchel exhibited *Barca*

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Nostra (*Our Boat*) in the Arsenale, the historic shipyard and former centre of power in Venice. It was the wreck of a ship that had sunk in 2015 with about 800 migrants on board from Libya on its way to Lampedusa. More than a year later, it was salvaged under former Italian President Matteo Renzi. According to Büchel *Barca Nostra* is "a relic of a human tragedy but also a monument to contemporary migration, engaging real and symbolic borders and the (im)possibility of freedom of movement of information and people" (Mezzofiore/Borghese 2019). The exhibition of the wreck as a work of art in the context of the famous Biennale was controversially discussed because its visualisation could be considered an inappropriate spectacle (see Lorch 2019).

Apart from ethical questions, these seemingly self-explanatory thing-symbolisms are based on the strong effect of the materiality of the objects but have little to do with a grasp of the material in the sense of the material turn. Certainly, the materiality of *Barca Nostra* had a very impressive effect: its turquoise-blue and rust-red colours, the traces of its use, and finally the cracks caused by the first failed attempt to salvage it (see Glauner 2019). But another boat could just as well have been on display. Only in passing was it conveyed that it was a special wreck: A team led by forensic scientist Cristina Cattaneo recovered a number of items from the fatally injured migrants from this boat, which served to identify the anonymous corpses. A week after the opening of the Biennale 2019, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin* published photographs of the things that came from the forensic collection. The photographer Mattia Balsamini staged these objects of flight in a distanced and at the same time intimate way. The fishing boat is thus linked to a whole universe of other things that refer directly to the nameless dead (see Kittner 2021).

In *Barca Nostra*, on the other hand, the focus is primarily on the iconography of the object; its meaning as a boat of escape is independent of its material status. So even if objects of migration are the focal point, this does not automatically mean that their materiality is significant. The danger of becoming a 'metasymbol' (Hinrichsen 2010) also arises when things of migration are represented in museums. In contrast to the exhibition examples in Cologne and Hamburg, migration is often visualised in stereotypes through suitcases or identity papers; it is codified through objects and placed in a narrative context that supports exclusion mechanisms (Bayer 2017, 61). Approaches that take up New Materialisms, on the other hand, focus on the agency of objects, their materiality, and their ambiguity. Despite the diversity of their perspectives, New Materialisms have in common that the hierarchy between subject and object is to be abolished. The object is at eye level, so to speak, and looks back. Matter is thereby understood as flexible and dynamic (Hoppe/Lemke 2021, 13). Within artistic contexts, this means, for example, that the artist steps back in favour of the artefact – this was certainly the case of the artist Christoph Büchel.

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In contrast, the person of the artist Ai Weiwei comes much more to the fore in relation to his actions. One of his best-known works is *Safe Passage* (2016). It is an installation of hundreds of life jackets that the Chinese artist installed in 2016 on the pillars of the Schinkel'sches Schauspielhaus at the Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin. The "thing symbol 'life jacket'" continued to be used in many artistic installations to protest against the restrictive European refugee policy. But since 'the humanitarian idea is only very generally represented by a thing-symbol' (Ullrich 2018 transl. by the author), political messages become ambiguous and run the risk of holding the stirrup to right-wing ideologies. Wolfgang Ullrich criticises that Weiwei's *Safe Passage* could also be interpreted as a negative occupation of a cultural institution (2018). In addition, the artist was accused of developing overly photogenic scenarios out of the humanitarian crisis: The accumulation of life jackets appeared ornamental. Protest, occupation, ornament? – these critical perspectives on the installation show that it is more ambiguous and more complex than it might at first appear.

In the meantime, life jackets and high-visibility waistcoats have become part of the protest culture, as the yellow waistcoat movement in France shows. The artist Azra Akšamija also works with waistcoats as artistic material. In contrast to *Safe Passage*, ornamentation is explicitly used as a transcultural form in her work *Silk Road Works* for the Venice Architecture Biennale 2020 (see visual essay in this section). In one part of the work, she designed wearable waistcoats whose signal colour is reminiscent of life jackets, but whose exterior picked up on façade ornaments of the Venetian Palazzo Ducale. The interior of the waistcoat referred to the windows of the Ca d'Oro, whose shapes are reminiscent of those of Islamic prayer rugs. The waistcoats become an object in which the transcultural intertwining of historical Venice with both the historical Ottoman Empire and the migrant present is revealed. Spread out, the fabrics of silk, damask, and brocade form a wearable mosque out of the waistcoats. Venice was historically a trading centre to which precious fabrics were imported. These, in turn, influenced Venetian Renaissance painting and its conception of depicted texture and 'colore'. But at the same time, the portable building made from the waistcoats refers to the presence of the Muslims living in Venice, who still lack a large mosque today.

Photography, digitality, and virtuality

The approaches aiming at sensuality and haptics initially might seem to be in contrast to photography and digitality. The materiality of things contrasts with the immateriality of their photographic and digital representation. But undeniably,

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both photography and the digital realm play an important role in making objects of migration visible in different contexts.

Websites and digital archives increasingly exhibit objects of migration, among them the research and exhibition project *On the Materiality of (Forced) Migration* of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Göttingen, the Museum Friedland and the exhibition agency *Die Exponauten: Exhibitions et cetera*. A digital open archive is part of the project that presents and explores objects of migration. These forms of collecting and archiving migration's material culture actually result in more visibility for overlooked objects of migration. How does the mise-en-scène of materiality affect the image-based notion of migration? Images of migration are often based on photography, film, and digitalisation. Thus, new media is essential for the process of image building. Photography in particular has an important mediating function between digitality/immateriality and materiality. On the one hand, it builds up a contrast between the materiality of things and the immateriality of their representation. On the other hand, even the 'digital objects' assume another form of materiality. Therefore, digital objects "are objects of performative materiality and definition-dependent border crossers" (Müller 2018, 50).

They are also present in the virtual and analogue exhibition *Hostile Terrain 94*. The show was a global pop-up exhibition about the United States' humanitarian crisis at the US–Mexico border, created by the *Undocumented Migration Project* and directed by UCLA anthropologist Jason De León. It was presented in 2021 in Frankfurt am Main in Germany by Pınar Şenoğuz, Maliheh Bayat Tork, Friedemann Yi-Neumann, and the initiative *Faites votre jeu!* in the cultural centre *Klapperfeld*, a former police prison in the heart of the city. The exhibition's title refers to the hostile terrain of the Sonora Desert, which migrants have to cross without papers in order to enter the United States. The material conditions of migration here lie in a seemingly natural border that is used as a 'political landscape' (Warnke 1992) for deterrence. Therefore, the number in the title also refers to the strategy known as *Prevention Through Deterrence* (PTD), which was implemented in 1994. What was remarkable about the exhibition was the effect of different media and materialities: The central exhibition object is the installation of a collectively made collage consisting of 3352 handwritten toe tags of different colours, as they are attached to corpses for identification (Figure 15.2). They are placed above a map of the border area and commemorate the migrants who died violently in the US–Mexico border area between 2000 and 2020. The exhibition space in Frankfurt opened up further material dimensions: a former prison, which served the Gestapo during the Nazi era and housed deportation prisoners from the 1980s onwards. The prison's bare walls, its corridors, the smell, the light, the traces of many years

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FIGURE 15.2: *Map*, 7.6 × 2.7 m (24.9 × 8.8 feet), 3205 handwritten toe tags (detail), 2020–2021 (© courtesy Friedemann Yi-Neumann).

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of use, and the dust-covered metal beds and sinks still visible in the adjacent rooms had an oppressive effect. Together, these elements produced a presence in the sense of a "spatial relationship to the world and its objects" (Gumbrecht 2004, 11). This presence has an immediate effect on the senses and the human body (Gumbrecht 2004). Finally, opposite the collage, a video was shown that depicted the materiality of the desert from the perspective of a drone. The rather abstract sound was underpinned by the sound of human footsteps through the desert; graves also came into the digital picture.

Hostile Terrain 94 consists of another, virtual version that can be accessed at any time with a smartphone. Viewers find themselves in an augmented reality in the middle of the Sonoran Desert. Within the 360° images of the landscape, 3-D scans of recovered objects of flight appear; they can be rotated, zoomed in, and their textures and traces of use and weathering can be closely examined. They are traces of the identified or unidentified people mentioned on the toe tags. The handwritten entries on the toe tags come very close to the recipients through the smartphone in their hand; as they are read aloud in the virtual tour, there is no escaping them. In the exhibition in the prison, on the contrary, visitors can decide for themselves how close they want to get to the collage. In this way, a digitally mediated form of immediacy is created in the virtual exhibition.

Communication, social media, and social spaces

The curatorial team in Frankfurt expanded the exhibition *Hostile Terrain 94* with artistic works. A ten-part photo series by the Afghan photographer and filmmaker Reza Heidari was also shown. In this captivating, black-and-white narrative series, he visualises the story of Hossein. He belongs to the Afghan community in Iran, which has immigrated there for over 40 years, but is still perceived as foreign. Reza Heidari's photographs give an insight into the Afghan community in Iran, focusing on Golshahr, a district in Mashhad where a particularly large number of Afghans live (Figure 15.3). He is also the founder of the *Golshahr Photographers Group*, which was established in 2015 and is particularly characterised by female photographers. Under the hashtag #everydaygolshahr, the community is visible locally and globally on the Instagram platform. In training seminars, Reza Heidari educates young people to use photography as a tool to connect with each other and make the Afghan community and its daily lives visible.[1] In this way, they try to find better access to Iranian society. Since there is a lack of material resources and photographic equipment, the smartphone serves as a precondition for establishing these accesses. Equally important are digital social media platforms. The prerequisite for using them is access to the

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FIGURE 15.3: Reza Heidari, Macaroni Structure Competition held in 2017 among Afghan students in Golshahr area, Mashhad, Iran, 2017, photograph (© courtesy of the artist).

internet, which is not always guaranteed in Iran due to infrastructural and political reasons.

Photography is an important means of communication and a medium of expression for emotions and belonging in migrant communities. In art historical research on exile, for example, things of exile and their photographic representations are examined within the estates of emigrants (Dogramaci 2013, 36). In contrast to ethnological research on migrants' households, the focus here is on the pictorial level of photographs in which migrants express their relationship to their things.

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Common to both approaches is the knowledge of "the remarkable ability of things to stir both positive and negative affects and emotions, and to facilitate belonging, relatedness and place-making" (Lauser et al. 2022, 1). The emotional significance of material culture and objects in the context of migration has been increasingly researched in recent times, with emotion being understood "as a culturally specific translation of affect" (Bräunlein 2022, 160).

These culturally shaped forms of emotion are artistically explored by Rosanna D'Ortona, who grew up near Stuttgart, Germany, with her Italian parents. In her eleven-part photographic series *Anna e Rosa* (2016–2018), she slips into the clothes of her Italian *nonna*, her grandmother, who had died recently (Figure 15.4). She explores the emotional significance of these fabrics, which are far too large and sometimes appear to be worn the wrong way around. But they fit in a different way, as part of the staged self-portraits with their specific light and as part of her emotional and physical approach. *Anna e Rosa* is not initially about the German-Italian migration story, but about exploring one's own identity and the relationship between the generations – a role play familiar to everyone



FIGURE 15.4: Rosanna D'Ortona, *Anna e Rosa*, 2016–2018, eleven-part photo series (detail) (© courtesy of the artist).

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from childhood. Vilém Flusser describes exile, "wherein the blanket of habit has been pulled back", as a creative state of being, desirable for every human being (Flusser 2000, 105). Not only the context of migration opens up the chance of being expelled according to Flusser, but also "that being expelled of the older generation from the world of their children and grandchildren" (Flusser 2000, 104). In Rosanna D'Ortona's photo series, it is conversely the children and grandchildren who are displaced from the world of their mothers and grandmothers in the context of labour migration, for example when the parents immigrate or emigrate without the children. The familiar skirts, dresses, and blouses establish connections between the different forms of being expelled. "Material objects are important in creating and maintaining relatedness" (Bräunlein 2022, 166). Finally, the connection to all viewers is created: "Their story of migration mirrors our story. It no longer matters where you were born" (Della Ventura 2019, 43, transl. by the author). Artistic engagement turns this utopia into an image and gives it reality.

Present spaces and stories from below

This contrasts with the reality of life for Italian migrant workers in Germany, who have long been discriminated against and insulted as 'Spaghettifresser' ('spaghetti eaters').[2] In the meantime, Italians have become more embedded in German society than other immigrant groups. However, this only applies to the social, emotional, and cultural factors. "On the other hand, there is still poor structural integration", as German Italians have significantly less educational success compared to other immigrant groups (Haug 2011, 152). They are more likely to work in the underprivileged labour sector, which ultimately leads to a higher risk of poverty (Haug 2011, 147, 151). Another derogatory term for Italians in Germany was 'Makkaroni' ('Makkaroni', 'Makrone'). It refers to the Italian *maccheroni*, short, curved tubular pasta. However, the term and its associated practice have become transcultural, referring to different pasta or sweet pastries such as the German *Makronen*, the Greek *macarona*, or French *macarons*. In Golshahr, Iran, macaroni is also known in Persian Farsi and Afghan Dari. Reza Heidari, for example, shows a macaroni competition with Afghan students in which the winner stands in front of a fan-shaped macaroni sculpture (Figure 15.3).

In Germany in Cologne, 'Makkaroni' is being positively revalued by cultural activists from the Italian community. Aurora Rodonò, Rosanna D'Ortona, Luisa Zanzani, and Francesca Magistro founded the Makkaroni Academy in 2020 (Figure 15.5). In the social space, the founders initiated the collection of 'macaroni

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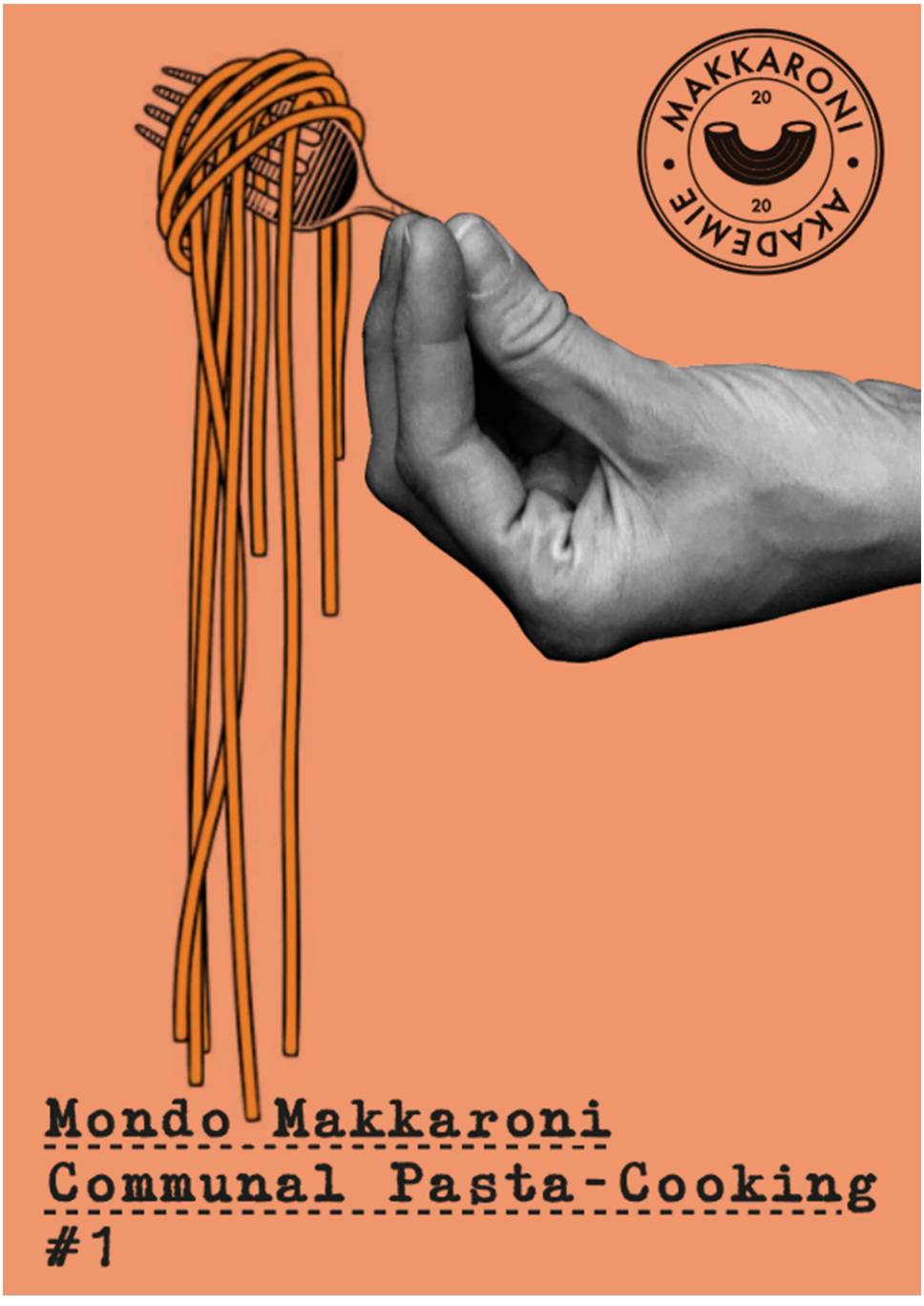

FIGURE 15.5: Makkaroni Akademie, *Mondo Makkaroni, Communal Pasta-Cooking*, 2022 (© courtesy of the Makkaroni Akademie).

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stories', that is stories of Italian immigrants and their descendants. In the 'storytelling café', history from below is pursued, which is to result in an archive. The cultural technique of making pasta is also practised to bring to light the associated stories of the Italian community in Germany, which have hardly been heard so far. In this way, the transcultural material of macaroni becomes a springboard for a social practice that brings different cultures of 'being Italian' into conversation with each other. In the inclusive encounter space, alternative forms of being Italian and alternative images of Italy emerge.

The various relationships between migration, materiality, art, visual, and social culture fan out in the examples shown. From the perspective of an art history that refers to the approaches of the material turn and New Materialisms, it becomes clear that the conditions of access to artistic material determine the visibility or invisibility of immigrants. They shape the artistic product as much as the material contexts in which the migrated people live. The 'biographical object' from the concrete living environment can be visually reflected and staged or first created as such in social, artistic, and museum practices. Paradoxically enough, objects of migration represented in an art exhibition can appear as topos and as a 'thing symbol' in which material qualities tend to be almost irrelevant. Or they can be transformed into emotional objects with a strong presence. As transmigratory objects, they make the interconnections of migration and transcultural mobility transparent. Various media play a role in this. The importance of photography as a means of representing migrant communities as well as highlighting the materiality of the object and as an important mediator between analogue and digital spaces was emphasised. Finally, the material itself – such as pasta – can become a starting point in social and cultural practices to unfold the agency and visibility of migrant communities.

NOTES

1. According to Reza Heidari, the project started with seven people in 2015, and so far 180 people have participated in the training seminars. Fifty people are continuously participating in the programmes, ten of them are working professionally – an opportunity mostly reserved for men in Iran, although 70 per cent of the project group are women (Heidari 2022). The author is grateful to Reza Heidari for offering insight into his work. Thanks also to Maliheh Bayat Tork, Friedemann Yi-Neumann, Asimina Paradissa and Rosanna D'Ortona for their support.
2. As late as 2004, the term came easily to the lips of the presenter Karl Moik in the popular TV programme 'Musikantenstadl'. Thereafter, this caused a scandal and he apologised (Lutteroth 2004).

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SECTION 4

RACISM | RESISTANCE

Elke Gaugele and Birgit Mersmann

Introduction

This section sheds light on the entangled histories of art and migration from a post-migratory, postcolonial, and anti-racist standpoint. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of critical race theory and decolonising migration and postmigration studies, this section highlights art historical enquiry as well as contemporary artistic research and curatorial practices in museums, exhibitions, and public spaces that counteract racism. The section focuses on alter histories, counter-movements, and counter-hegemonial politics of remembrance and brings artistic, curatorial, and activist resistance to the fore. Contributions range in scope on the one hand from the Black Arts Movement to contemporary debates on museum-institutional racism and the decolonisation of collections to curatorial strategies for exhibiting the history of racism and actions of resistance. On the other hand, this historical time span from the 1960/1970s until today in Europe encompasses the massive recruitment of migrant labour from southern Europe and Turkey into states like the Federal Republic of Germany. This was followed by the rise of the extreme right after 1989, with an increase in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim racist violence, as well as the ascent of global flight and migration in 2015/2016. While contributions dredge up the historical and contemporary effects of colonial, fascist, and racist violence at the respective levels of institutional, structural, direct, and mortal

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acts of power, the chapter emphasises that transformations are the effects of struggles of (post)migrant and anti-racist actors (see Espahangizi et al. 2016, 17f.). As Maria Alexopoulou (in this section) aptly outlines, politics of remembrance of the victims of racist violence in Germany have brought up new solidarities and alliances in a new generation of post-migrants, BIPoC, Sinti and Roma, and Jews.

Drawing upon the concept of the post-migrant society (Tsianos/Karakayali 2014; Yildiz/Hill 2014; Espahangizi et al. 2016; Foroutan 2019), we refer to the fact that migration is central to national socialisation processes. Nevertheless, reproductions of racism on structural, institutional, and everyday levels have developed new forms and paths (Espahangizi et al. 2016, 17; Castro Varela/Mecheril 2016). Alexopoulou emphasises that racism retrospectively has even been "normalised by migration research in Germany and contemporary history more generally" (2020, 64–94, 216, passim). The amount of racist violence experienced by guest workers since the 1950s in Germany, where they had been confronted by a migration system permeated with racist knowledge on many levels, has not yet been worked through historiographically (Alexopoulou 2020). 'Migratory birds', the visual article by artist Cana Bilir-Meier, historically reveals multiple dynamics of exploitation, structural and everyday racism, and classism. Since the early 1960s, when her grandfather Gani Bilir migrated to Germany to work at an engine factory, his wages did not increase. While a Turkish press agency in 1964 promoted him as a showpiece of the good Turkish worker, sending record sums to his family in Mersin, German media like *Der Spiegel* (1973) later stoked racism with incendiary terms like 'invasion' or 'criminality' and headlines such as 'The Turks Are Coming – Run for Your Lives!' (Bilir-Meier, in this section).

Maria Alexopoulou emphasises the importance of art, performance, and theatre projects for the transformation of a post-migrant German remembrance culture. The key for this shift towards a post-migrant antiracist art production is the performative art and theatre project Tribunal by 'Unraveling the NSU Complex' (NSU Komplex auflösen) as a courtyard for the social accusation of racism and judgement against the institutional embedding and nationwide support of the neo-Nazi terrorist network National Socialist Underground (NSU), who from 2000 to 2007 killed ten people: Enver Şimşek, Abdurrahim Özüdoğru, Süleyman Taşköprü, Habil Kılıç, Mehmet Turgut, İsmail Yaşar, Theodoros Boulgarides, Mehmet Kubaşık, Halit Yozgat, and Michèle Kiesewetter. Already in 2017 activist artwork on the victims of the NSU murder had been shown as 'Society of Friends of Halit' at documenta 14 in Kassel. As part of the Parliament of Bodies, it had been conceived by Ayşe Güleç, Initiative 6th April, and Kassel postcolonial to connect various groups and initiatives working on racism, violence and murder from the far-right. An important recent artwork in this context was presented in

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2022 at the exhibition 'Three Doors' at Frankfurter Kunstverein. In cooperation with Initiative 19th February Hanau and the Initiative in remembrance of Oury Jalloh Forensic Architecture and Forensis Berlin jointly developed an exhibition in memory of the nine victims of the racist terror attack in Hanau on 19 February 2020 and Oury Jalloh, who as a young asylum seeker from Sierra Leone, burned to death in a police cell in Dessau in 2005. 'Three Doors' presents new investigations on the circumstances of the racially motivated terrorist attack that caused the death of Ferhat Unvar, Hamza Kurtović, Said Nesar Hashemi, Vili-Viorel Păun, Mercedes Kierpacz, Kaloyan Velkov, Fatih Saraçoğlu, Sedat Gürbüz, Gökhan Gültekin, and of the decease of Oury Jalloh. With this exhibition, the Frankfurter Kunstverein aims to show its fundamental re-positioning of leaving the purely metaphorical and symbolic level of an art space and to expand the role of art and cultural institutions as participators and actors in 'the real democratic process' (Frankfurter Kunstverein 2022).

Contemporary racism centring upon the immigration complex builds upon the framework of "racism without races" (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991, 21). Since the early 1990s, neo-racism has been coined as a term linked to the category of immigration. It documents how at that time migrants in Europe became "a substitute for the notion of race and a solvent of 'class consciousness'", and how xenophobic violence progressively had been grounded on racist stereotyping (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991, 20), also referred to as "xeno-racism" (Fekete 2009, 44). Arguing for an asserted insurmountability of cultural differences (instead of biological inheritance), these neo-racisms are 'differentialist racisms', speaking up for the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions and for the "harmfulness of abolishing frontiers" (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991, 21). Since both the rising extreme right movements in Europe and post-September 11 governmental policies defined Islam as a 'threat', Muslim citizens had been caught in an expanding loop of anti-Islamic/anti-Muslim racism. From the 2000s onwards, anti-Muslim principles began to shape structural racism within European immigration asylum and national security laws (Fekete 2018, 17). The rise of Femonationalism (Farris 2017) with its ambivalent entanglements of racism, sexism, and feminism (Hark/Villa 2020) also fostered anti-Muslim racism. 'Ethno-sexism' became one of the major narratives and popular formats of white supremacy and toxic masculinity in and beyond Europe (Dietze 2019; Dietze/Roth 2020). The mythical norm of racism, outlined by Audre Lorde (1984, 115) as 'the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance', thereby had been updated once again.

In art history, post- and decolonial approaches (Karentzos 2012; Allerstorfer 2017; Kravagna 2017), including critical whiteness studies (Schmidt-Linsenhoff et al. 2004; Greve 2013), have given rise to a new wave of scholarship keen to face

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race and racism in the art world. They also serve as a conceptual and methodological toolbox to critique the West-centrism and white supremacy of art institutions and art historical scholarship. Inspired by postcolonialism and critical race theory, *Race-ing Art History* was the first comprehensive anthology to confront the long-standing tradition of 'othering' representations in visual art and culture. Spanning from ancient art to twentieth-century art, it addressed "issues of race and ethnicity in relation to the primarily Western visual culture of the last two thousand years" (Pinder 2002, 2). Over the last decades, the race-ing of art history has been established as a widely accepted and broadly expanded research field and scholarly practice among art historians. It has even reached architectural history, analysing how architecture has intersected with histories of slavery, colonialism, and inequality (Cheng et al. 2020). The historical rediscovery, repositioning, and revaluation of BIPoC artists from the perspective of critical whiteness studies, critical race theory, (post-)migration, and diaspora studies represents another important move to diversify and decolonise dominant canons and narratives of (western) art history (Woods 2021). Recent studies on intersectional entanglements (Frohnapfel 2020) contribute to the "critical exploration of the nexus of race, coloniality, gender and sexuality in contemporary art-making, scholarship and artistic research" (Hagström-Ståhl et al. 2020, n.p.). In this section, Annabel Ruckdeschel sheds light on the work of Loïs Mailou Jones within the Black Arts Movement. She carves out how Jones introduced the category of influence in (a discursive and painted) an art historiographical account to intensify the exchange of African and Afrodiasporic artistic communities. The critical art historical debate on long-standing legacies and modern discourses of race and racism in the visual arts has strongly spilled over to the field of museum studies, exhibition research, and art education. Recent conflicts and activist developments provide evidence that the museum as an exhibition, research, and educational institution founded in Europe in the wake of enlightenment burdened with the violence of colonial history and grounded in cultural extractivism (Savoy 2021) has come under political pressure. It is being accused of white supremacy and racism – a criticism that has been voiced above all in the context of current debates on decolonisation, restitution, and anti-racism. In *The Brutish Museums*, Dan Hicks has used the Benin Bronzes as a case study to critique the face-saving expressions of solidarity and anti-racism put forward by western museums (Hicks 2020). Therein, he opts for an active and consequent process of restitution and calls for a radical rethinking and reordering of European and North American museum institutions, their mission and practices. Even museums, such as migration museums, that explicitly embrace cultural diversity and actively engage in promoting transcultural identification and social cohesion in post-migrant societies have become venues for political disputes and protest movements, as nationalist and cultural-racist hate speech in the public debate surrounding the opening

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of the Immigration Museum in Melbourne (Message 2018), or the occupation of the Paris Immigration Museum by the Sans Papiers have shown (Labadi 2019; Ostow 2019). Museum institutions as well as exhibitions have turned into showcases and battlefields for political, social, and identity struggles between racist and anti-racist, ethno-nationalist, and transnational orientations. In analysing protest actions, including exhibition interventions, by the New York-based activist group 'Decolonize This Place' (DTP) directed against American art museums as institutional accomplices of colonialism and racialised capitalism, Birgit Mersmann sheds light on the fight of museums activist movements for an art and museum systemic change (in this section). DTP's manifestations of museum resistance can be seen as an implementation of a decolonial aesthesis, developed by decolonial theorists such as Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez.

As a complement to the museum's critical debate, fought out within, against, and for the vision of a decolonised (Lonetree 2012; Onciul 2017; Abdulla et al. 2020), socially just (Labadi 2019) and post-representational, radical-democratic museum (Sternfeld 2018), a new exhibition-theoretical discourse on anti-discriminatory, equity-oriented exhibition making, and anti-racist practices of curating (Bayer et al. 2017; Reilly 2018), has made a strong appearance in museum work and art education. In a joint conversation on museum exhibition projects between 2016 and 2020, Josephine Apraku, Ismahan Wayah, and Susanne Wernsing reflect on the conflicts and 'learning lessons' with exhibiting racism, resistance, and empowerment in the institutional framework and historical setting of white-positioned museums in Germany (in this section). They emphasise that to move from an anti-racist critique to an anti-racist institutional development, the museum must link its out-reach strategy of addressing diverse audiences and including plural voices in the curatorial process with an in-reach strategy that builds anti-discrimination skills within the museum staff.

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16

The Difficulty of Remembering Racism – Jena, Chemnitz, Zwickau, and the NSU Complex[1]

Maria Alexopoulou

But memory is a disturbance, because it doesn't only remember the deed, but also the continuing presence of racist and anti-Semitic violence and its institutional embeddedness. It is an act of appropriation by historiography.

(Perinelli 2018)

Remembrance culture in an immigration society

What meaning does 'remembrance culture' have in Germany, now a professed immigration society? At the moment, this is a highly debated topic. The previous twenty years focused on incorporating migration in the politics of history and historical consciousness of a society of heterogeneous origins, thereby creating a new 'we' as a shift in the conception of 'identity history'. Today's debates, on the other hand, address the actual substance of the specifically German conception of a 'remembrance culture'. What role can racism play in this beyond the Holocaust?

Since the German Empire, various practices of racialisation – 'endemic' forms which were also directed against Jews before and after the *Third Reich*, in the context of German colonial politics of violence and expansion overseas and in eastern Europe, as well as in the context of migration to Germany – formed partially invisible and overlapping layers of experiences with racism accumulated by different affected groups, which today seek memorial sites, signs, and spaces of confrontation.

A new generation of post-migrant, BIPoC, Sinti and Roma, and Jews – as well as those in solidarity with these groups – increasingly take up these spaces

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of their own initiative. There are also precarious sites of remembrance, however, such as the *Memorial in Memory of the Victims of Racism and Police Violence* on *Oranienplatz* in Berlin, which was erected by unknown people and which the initiative *#WoIstUnserDenkmal* [where is our monument] lobbies the district administration.[2] A plaque commemorating Hanau, which the group *Stuttgart gegen Rechts* [Stuttgart Against the Right] mounted on its own initiative, was removed relatively quickly by the city administration on 'grounds of equal treatment' (Meier 2021a; Müller 2021).

However, such sites of remembrance are also precarious insofar as they become targets of racist terror, like the Hanau plaque in Stuttgart, which was smeared with black paint before its removal by the city (Meier 2021b). The scrawny German oak tree that the city of Zwickau planted in a park for the first known murder victim of the NSU, Enver Şimşek, in September 2019 was also chopped down after a month (*Zeit Online* 2019a), a bench that was erected as a substitute was destroyed two days later (*Zeit Online* 2019b). Both self-organised and officially installed memorials to racism share this precarity with Holocaust memorial sites and visible places of Jewish presence in Germany, which have always experienced attacks. But mainstream society has also always perceived sites that remember racism as a disturbance and has taken action against them, as countless examples show: such as in 1982, when the building that housed a former concentration camp in Mannheim-Sandhofen, which was located in the middle of a residential area, was publicly commemorated with a plaque – years after the first provisional wooden plaque installed by a history workshop in 1979 had been vandalised with black paint. Until then, the existence of the slave labour camp in a school building had been 'forgotten' by the city administration and local residents; however, even this belated remembrance was accompanied by an éclat at the ceremony and a debate deflecting guilt in the aftermath, in which many publicly refused to accept this 'defilement of the nest' (Brenneisen 2011, 82–112; quotation 102). In 1990, a concentration camp memorial was erected, which the city now proudly refers to in its work on remembrance culture, even if, according to the historian Brenneisen in 2011, it is more or less ignored by the local population (169–189).

As 'World Champions of Remembrance Culture', from which, according to the Jewish American philosopher Susan Neiman others – in this case the United States – should learn how racism is dealt with, atoned for, and how its victims are remembered, Germany should actually know very well by now how this works. One could also say that the appropriate handling of racism belongs to the cultural capital of a society whose state has made the condemnation of the Shoah – the world-historical peak of every form of racism – its brand essence. But the reappraisal, atonement, and remembrance of German colonial racism and its far-reaching consequences, the racism against migrant others – particularly

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against forced labourers from eastern Europe – and even to Pharrajimos scarcely comes close to a world-class performance. The current struggles of Sinti and Roma who are protesting against the relocation of the central memorial to their Holocaust victims in Berlin evidence this once again. A sign at a demonstration in June 2020 bore the telling inscription: "Germany, world champion of selective remembrance culture" (see Bundes-Roma-Verband 2020). This is compounded by the fact that, until recently, there was almost no historiographic examination or remembrance of racism and antisemitism[3] that manifested in Germany after 1945, a situation that seems downright provincial. Indeed, until a few years ago a political, social, and even scholarly consensus prevailed that racism has not existed in the Federal Republic for a long time and, if it did, then only on the 'right-wing fringe'. Anti-racist and postcolonial perspectives have long been considered ideological or over the top, particularly when they were applied to the experience of migrants in Germany (Dirim et al. 2016). Instead, in Germany at the end of the 1970s, concepts like *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* or *Fremdenfeindlichkeit* (hostility to 'foreigners') were invented to name the manifested hatred for *Ausländer.*[4] This conception reverted the causes of the production and hierarchisation of others, who on the basis of this hierarchy of origins were legally, socially, and societally discriminated against, hated, and sometimes even killed, back to those affected themselves: *Ausländer* claimed scarce resources that didn't belong to them, were too numerous, or simply too foreign (Alexopoulou 2020, 187ff.).

However, the failure to name racism changed little, even after the NSU became known (Bojadžijev 2013). Despite the current wave of speaking about racism in Germany beginning in the summer of 2020, one nonetheless doesn't want to let go of these inadequate conceptions. A scene from *Markus Lanz* in August 2020 is paradigmatic of this tendency (ZDF 2020): On the program – during which they could only speak briefly as the last guests – Ajla Kurtović and Saida Hashemi clearly explained why it wasn't *Fremdenfeindlichkeit* (hostility to foreigners) that killed or severely injured their brothers on 19 February 2020 in Hanau, but racism. The moderator nevertheless continued to speak of *Fremdenfeindlichkeit* and, in the presence of the women struggling for composure, reproduced what the relatives and the February 19th Initiative have fought against from the very beginning: namely, that these victims of racist terror were precisely *not* foreigners.

Top German politicians surprisingly avoided this kind of faux pas in February 2020 and immediately spoke of racism and even named the victims, which the parliament president Wolfgang Schäuble did himself in the Bundestag's remembrance hour on 3 March 2020 (Schäuble 2020). (Post)migrant commemorative practices thereby arrived in the mainstream, which had been devised and established in Germany by initiatives of those affected, and above all the Tribunal 'Unraveling the NSU Complex' (Tribunal NSU-Komplex auflösen) which can be

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considered a sign of the transformation of remembrance culture. In the process, the reappraisal of the NSU in theatre had itself adopted and adapted forms of Holocaust witnessing and memory (Brod 2020, 109). But despite these advancements in remembrance culture, the current racism debate in Germany – also within scholarship – remains historically and theoretically uninformed and therefore perhaps also so extremely polemical. In such a discursive environment, it is not surprising that the ever-louder demand from those affected that their suffering be remembered, and thus acknowledged, is sometimes criticised as 'victim competition' or self-serving identity politics. The most serious accusation, relativising the Shoah, is then not far away (Axster 2021).

Relating back to the practices of the racists themselves, such as the perpetrators of Halle and the NSU, would thereby be enough to recognise the close connections between the phenomena at hand and how their remembrance belongs together: the murderous anti-Semite went to a kebab shop, the epitome of a translocal space in Germany's immigration society when he couldn't kill any Jewish believers in the synagogue. In the 1990s, the NSU trio participated in the antisemitic campaigns of the *Thüringer Heimatschutz* [Thuringian Homeland Security], which hung dolls with a star of David on poles or bridges several times. They allegedly also spied on a synagogue in Berlin in 2002 but ultimately chose lone migrant victims as 'easier targets' (Kleffner 2018).

All forms of racism and anti-Semitism don't have much to do with the groups themselves but rather are embedded in the society in which they are produced and perpetuated. Addressing this systemic racism in memory doesn't pose competition, but instead establishes congruencies (see Rothberg 2021; Arnold/König 2018) Ignatz Bubis had already implicitly underscored this with his visit to Rostock-Lichtenhagen in 1992 (Alexopoulou 2020, 240ff.). But ignoring these congruencies belongs to the history of racism in Germany since 1945, which is at the same time a history of ignorance.

Remembrance in the 'perpetrator cities' Zwickau, Chemnitz, and Jena[5]

As locations where the NSU core group was based throughout their lives, Jena, Chemnitz, and Zwickau also ignored, as long as they could, that they had a special role to play in what happened to the NSU. "It was a coincidence that the three had lived here. Zwickau doesn't have any more responsibility than the society at large", claimed Pia Findeiß (SPD), Zwickau's mayor at the time, in an interview from 2018. In 2011, she had already lobbied directly to the German Chancellor Angela Merkel that the main actors in the National Socialist Underground (NSU) should not be

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called the 'Zwickauer Zelle' [Zwickau Cell]. The city councilman and member of State Parliament Gerald Otto also resisted the stigma 'Zwickau, the NSU city', which he regarded as a 'disaster for city marketing'. The NSU trio had lived here for such a long time precisely because they had not been exposed to any 'surveillance pressure' and the bourgeois nature of their last residence on *Frühlingsstraße* had offered an ideal hiding place (Sundermann 2018). But it was precisely this bourgeoisie that appeared to be the actual problem: that the trio not only remained inconspicuous, but even in this last bourgeois neighbourhood – as well as earlier in the less bourgeois *Polenzstraße*, where almost all of the attacks began – they found a 'neighbourhood community' that shared the same convictions – even if not to this level of radicality. Also, after the racist murders became known, this community did not clearly distance itself from their former neighbours who had remained in good memory (Quent 2016a, 284–288). The perpetrators were similarly integrated into *Heckert-Gebiet*, one of their residences in Chemnitz, where they didn't live in the "underground in the true sense", but were able to immerse themselves as "protagonists in a somehow hegemonic neo-Nazi subculture", according to the results of a student research project undertaken onsite in 2020 (*Offener Prozess* 2020). 'Searches for traces' or commemorative actions undertaken by small initiatives, journalists, artists, or scholars have long encountered disinterest from the majority of the population of the 'perpetrator cities', or even overt defensiveness.[6] Even a small artist group, who were the first to want to set a counterpoint in Zwickau on their own initiative on 4 November 2016, remained anonymous out of fear of reprisals – even when their campaign was awarded a prize. The group erected eleven benches, ten with the names of the victims and one for any unknown victims, which were vandalised or stolen multiple times. And in their word of thanks on their website, also anonymous, they too emphasise the image problem: "It thus becomes clear that the image of our hometown doesn't suffer in the least when it reminds us that, unfortunately, people lived in our midst who considered the existence of others not worth living and simply eliminated them" (Sternendekorateure Zwickau 2016).

However, the University City Jena found the loss of image particularly disturbing. It was there that the three NSU protagonists met one another, in the *Winzerla* district, and began their terrorist career. "Just a short while ago they were living in a 'boomtown on the Saale' (Handelsblatt), now the people of Jena suddenly have to endure being described as residents of a violent problem city", the newspaper *Der Westen* summarised Jena's image problem (Thiele 2011). However, the article didn't refer to the reactions after the NSU's self-disclosure, but rather to the outrage triggered in Jena by an *aspekte* feature from 18 November 2011. The segment provocatively addressed 'fear of the *Ausländer*' from the East with the help of a flying visit by the Munich author Steven Uhly, who, as we learned

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in the intro, has a Bengalese father. After Uhly had interviewed, among others, the youth pastor Lothar König who had been campaigning against the neo-Nazi scene in Jena for decades, he expressed his relief at being able to quickly leave the city again by ICE to Munich (ZDF 2011). The anger about this segment was so intense in Jena, that some weeks later a well-attended panel discussion took place in the presence of *aspekte*'s editor-in-chief and the mayor of Jena, during which the former apologised to the people of Jena (*Thüringer Allgemeine* 2011).

Here, too, it was initially smaller initiatives of students, anti-fascist activists, scholars, and history workshops who dealt with the NSU and the topic of racism.[7] However, dealing with the radical right-wing and neo-Nazi milieu was anything but new or overcome after 2011, also regarding the often ignorant or relativistic attitude of the authorities and politicians towards this massive problem. In 2016, an expert report for the Bundestag found that the Thuringian security authorities still had major deficits in adequately handling right-wing and racist violence (Quent 2016b, 47–51). In the meantime, however, signals are coming from Jena and the state of Thuringia for more adequate forms to memorialise the roots and consequences of NSU terror: thus, in September 2020, *Enver-Şimşek-Platz* was inaugurated in Jena's *Winzerla* district, the state parliament decided on a financial compensation for the victims, as well as the establishment of an NSU archive (Litschko 2020). "We are not a perpetrator city, but we are the city that the perpetrators come from" – this is the motto under which Jena's mayor Thomas Nitzsche (FDP) presented the new stance on the NSU (*inSüdThüringen.de* 2020).

Nevertheless, the recent electoral success of Höcke's AfD in Thuringia and the closeness that some bourgeois parties have shown to it indicate that everything that falls under the motto 'NSU-complex' is by no means a thing of the past, both politically and socially. Also in Zwickau, where the AfD performed only a few tenths behind the CDU as the second strongest party in the 2019 local election with 22 per cent, the political constellation seems rather difficult regarding how to adequately deal with openly racist tendencies and the social embedding of an anti-racist remembrance culture. After Mayor Findeiß stepped down in 2020, who had always at least nominally supported the NSU documentation centre, this project now also seems to be a distant prospect (Mitic 2020). The aforementioned Chemnitz initiative *Offener Prozess* [Open Process] and their political supporters who had lobbied for years – also in Zwickau – for the establishment of the NSU documentation centre in Saxony were indeed pleased that this request had been included in the state government's coalition agreement in December 2019 (Tolerantes Sachsen 2019). In November 2019, the first tribunal to be held in eastern Germany, *Unraveling the NSU Complex*, in Chemnitz/Zwickau, had also underscored this demand (Tribunal NSU-Komplex auflösen) and a history workshop in Zwickau had already begun collecting and presenting relevant material

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(Reinhard 2019). But the optimism that the documentation centre would open very soon in Zwickau that prevailed in 2019 has thus far proven to be deceptive. The difficulty of remembering racism in the places where the perpetrators came from and operated is manifested in such tough, long, and at times opaque processes. Meanwhile, Chemnitz has launched an open call to design a travelling exhibition about the NSU that doesn't merely address the terrorists' actions but should also address the reception and afterlife of the NSU locally. Could this be happening now because it is considered image enhancing after Chemnitz has been named the European Cultural Capital of 2025 (MDR 2021)? Since the events in late summer of 2018, Chemnitz has had a reputation as a racist city (Friese et al. 2019) and thereby an image problem that extends far beyond the image of the NSU 'perpetrator city'. But the assessment of how one should deal with the damage to the city's image has changed: addressing it is seen as less detrimental than ignoring it, which in turn risks using the engagement of the few who have been advocating for years as a kind of fig leaf in city image campaigns to conceal the dominant sentiments and attitudes that prevail in large segments of the population. Here, too, there are parallels to the handling of memorial work, which was ignored for decades, locally rejected, and then ignored again, only to be marketed today as a 'location factor' by the local authorities (Brenneisen 2020, 637).

But are ten trees and placards in a park – on which the names were written incorrectly and the circumstances of the crime were described insensitively and luridly – an appropriate space to commemorate victims of racist violence in the first place, moreover, to counteract the NSU Complex, which in its countless ramifications remains in darkness and in some cases is still active? "I also don't know whether I would like a tree to be planted in Zwickau for him at all, if you can't even be sure that it won't be cut down again", Mehmet Kubaşık's daughter Gamze was quoted as saying. Kubaşık, like all the other surviving relatives was not asked and not even invited to the first official memorial event in Zwickau on 4 November 2019 (Monecke 2019).

Perpetrator cities – Victim cities?

The NSU only becomes understandable from the violence of reunification, which in turn was an escalation of the racist violence of the 1980s – this 'storyline' has primarily emerged from the perspective of migrants and the affected community (Perinelli 2020, 342; Kahveci/Sarp 2017). But don't the lines of continuity reach back much further, particularly if they are detached from the specific experience of Turkish immigrants and their descendants who, except for one Greek, all have migrant fatalities to mourn in the streak of Mölln, Solingen, and NSU? It is not

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only the "NS" in NSU that compels this thought: national socialist. This is not meant as a rough equation, but rather underscores how racist knowledge and the practices shaped by it, along with practices of violence, mindsets, institutional, and structural racism have a long history. Racism is therefore systemic in this country. If one takes a closer look at the developments in the Federal Republic, it becomes clear that even in the immediate postwar period, the former slave and forced labourers from eastern Europe, many of them Jews, as 'Displaced Persons' continued to be subject to the hatred of the former *Volksgemeinschaft*. Even the few who remained in Germany were objects of numerous discriminations, despite the legal protections that the Allies had demanded from the Federal Republic for them as 'homeless foreigners'. Just how much racist violence guest workers have already experienced since the 1950s has not yet been worked through historiographically; that they were confronted by a migration system permeated with racist knowledge on many levels is known, however, it was only retrospectively normalised by migration research in Germany and contemporary history more generally (Alexopoulou 2020, 64–94, 216, passim). It therefore falls short of only looking at the 'baseball bat years' or at 'Ossi-Trauma' [East German Trauma], or the *völkisch* nationalism of reunification (Alexopoulou 2019), in the last years of the GDR, in which racism supposedly only began due to a blossoming of a young right-wing scene there and, during the same years on the other side of the wall, *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*. In truth, there is a common German history of racism that didn't end at the 'Zero Hour', which was the founding myth of both German states. What sense then, other than a documentarian one, does the distinction between 'perpetrator city – victim city' have at all within the context of the NSU, other than to make us aware that all but one of the victims were killed in the West and the perpetrators came from East Germany?

The question that arises for the historian here is, of course, whether and to what extent the oft-cited asymmetry of the history(s) of the FRG and GDR[8] came into effect here and are now reflected in this constellation. Surely there was, and is, a difference: the NSU terror primarily took place in the West because the transformation to a migration society was already much further along here, a greater number of migrants have been living here for a long time and had largely carried out this process of immigrating autonomously and upon their own initiative. But as is well known, the perpetrators found the 'complex' of the NSU complex in the victim cities, which didn't only consist of right-wing networks but also security agencies, political representatives, and media that were themselves part of the machinery of the production and reproduction of racist knowledge in the everyday, in structures and institutions. Can we therefore deduce that, with its victim cities, the West can also argue for better NSU commemoration?[9] Can the West conclude from this that it is anti-racist and thereby – once again – supposedly

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morally superior to the East? The East German lament about this very issue can, of course, also take on legitimising features: For example, when the "every day […] right wing extremism in the East" is cancelled out by the "East German experience of reunification" and the resulting "sub-alternisation" of the East Germans is lamented, as the sociologist Lessenich did in 2013 in a volume on the NSU (Lessenich 2013, 140f.).

It's characteristic that his discussion of the 'German political implications' of the events manages almost completely without migrants – apart from Steven Uhly who only appears here within the context of the *aspekte* scandal (Lessenich 2013, 137). This 'German' navel gazing is typical. It arises from the same attitude as the city of Zwickau's approach to its memorial, which was even fully planned and implemented without the affected parties – a mistake that the city administration only noticed three days before the planned events and sought to rectify by asking those responsible for the NSU Tribunal whether it would still be possible to quickly organise someone from the victims' families (Perinelli 2021). The rock concert in Jena in December 2011, which took place not even a month after the NSU became known (*Der Spiegel* 2011), also seems almost disrespectful from today's perspective, or at least misplaced. The self-referentiality of such actions also explains the uneasiness that the much-vaunted chains of lights in the 1990s triggered among many migrants at the time. This resonated with the paternalistic behaviour in the 1980s and 1990s of professional foreigner experts and 'allies', who gave little or no voice to the *ausländische Mitbürger* (foreign citizens) they 'cared for' (Alexopoulou 2020, 218f., 190f., passim).

The actual question here should therefore be less about whether the seemingly democratic and anti-racist West actually comes off better and thereby discredits, or even discriminates against, the 'brown east'. There are other important points, and, out of spatial considerations, I will only name two here. First of all, the work of remembering racism in Germany since 1945 is not possible without the participation of migrants and those affected in the process of coming to terms with and remembering racism; it has always primarily been migrants and other minority actors who have the knowledge 'of' racism, uncover it, and find and claim forms of processing it. In the case of the NSU, it was even the victim families themselves who directly pointed out the correct perpetrator milieu to state and security agencies and at the same time asked – in vain – for protection from them (*NSU-Watch* 2014).[10] Participation in this remembrance is their *right*. Secondly, there should be a renewed emphasis on the lack of research about the NSU complex. Karakayalı et al. already did this in 2017, but these authors did not explicitly mention the lack of historical research in particular. The full extent and depth of the NSU complex and the failures in the East and West are only comprehensible historically. How

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inadequately this subject area has been researched in contemporary history is shown, for example, by the fact that there is only one historical monograph on the events in Hoyerswerda, which also argues in terms of legitimation. There had been "manifest hostility to foreigners in Hoyerswerda", but the "real motive for the violence lay in the residents' increasing insecurity"; the author thereby concluded that it was not a pogrom but a social protest (Wowtscherk 2014, 215), an assessment that is often uncritically adopted by contemporary history in general. However, the testimony of one of the individuals present at the time shakes up this narrative, as it vividly reveals that manifest racist attitudes were indeed acted out here (Sineması 2020). A functionalist understanding of social protest, which only serves "ethnic differences" (Wowtscherk 2014, 215) therefore seems unconvincing. Likewise, there also isn't a study that compiles and analyses the countless pogroms against refugee shelters and migrant homes during the reunification years, from which differences and similarities between the pogroms in the East and West could be presented in detail. An example: In Mannheim-Schönau, unlike in Hoyerswerda, skinheads weren't the driving force of the racist pogrom at the end of May 1992, but instead the classic motive of 'racial defilement': an outraged mob of 'alarmed citizens'[11] wanted to take revenge on an *asylum seeker* because a Black man had raped a German girl – a baseless rumour, as was also very quickly made public by the police themselves, even during the height of the pogrom[12] – which seemed reminiscent of the 'terror on the ground, in the everyday life of cities and villages', of the 'joy of violence' once experienced by the *Volksgemeinschaft* in the *Third Reich* (Schüler-Springorum 2021)[13] – which seems to be a typical scenario of racist pogroms.

The fear of not stigmatising the East because of the right-wing and neo-Nazi milieu that is widespread and rooted there, or of not knocking the victor of the Cold War off its high pedestal as a 'successful democracy', therefore cannot remain the guiding principle for the writing of contemporary history either. In fact, one should also begin to listen to the migrant voices and minority counter histories here, including those of the young East German second-generation migrants resp. the *Ossis of Color* [East Germans of Colour] (Lierke et al. 2020), who have also confidently represented themselves at the NSU Tribunal in Chemnitz/Zwickau. They point out that there were also victims in the 'perpetrator cities' well before the NSU-trio's activities, which are an integral part of these cities that no longer want to be ignored (Perinelli 2021) – also not from left-wing activists, many of whom first had to 'learn that the GDR also has a history of migration' (Diedrich/Alexopoulou 2021).[14] This indicates that the histories of the asymmetric FRG and GDR immigration societies are also still waiting to be 'unified', which also seems to be a necessary precondition for more inclusive and coherent remembrance work in Germany.

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NOTES

1. This article first appeared in German: Alexopoulou, Maria. "Die Schwierigkeit, Rassismus zu erinnern. Jena, Chemnitz, Zwickau und der NSU-Komplex (https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839458631-028)." *RASSISMUS.MACHT.VERGESSEN*, edited by Suzanet Nobrega et al., transcript, 2021, 361–378 (https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839458631). Reused with the permission of transcript, 2022.
2. Like the Nachbarschaftshäuser Urbanstraße e.V. and xart splitta e.V.'s event *Umkämpfte Erinnerungen – Erinnerungskultur in einer Migrationsgesellschaft* on 23 March 2021: https://www.nachbarschaftshaus.de/arbeitsbereiche/aktuell/?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=367&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=8f9f022d84ed3217f553291e1de25a8d, a video of the event is here: https://vimeo.com/530872853. On the initiative #*WoIstUnserDenkmal*: https://twitter.com/wdenkmal?lang=de. All accessed 8 April 2021.
3. The relationship between racism and antisemitism is an open and very complex research question, which is also controversially debated today and will not be discussed in detail here.
4. I use this concept in German, as *Ausländer* serves as a racialised figure in the context of German immigration history and society.
5. I thank Matthias Quent for sharing informational material and literature on this aspect of the topic.
6. For example, in Zwickau according to the article Sundermann 2018.
7. See for example the actions and events by KoKont since 2012, https://www.kokont-jena.de/?s=nsu&lang=en. Accessed 7 April 2021.
8. The contemporary historian Christoph Kleßmann coined the term the 'asymmetrical interwoven parallel histories' of the FRG and the GDR.
9. The following contribution shows that the work on commemoration in Cologne was different from that in Zwickau (Kurt/Monecke 2019). However, the memorial has not yet been realised in Cologne either, even though its construction and location have been secured (Akyüz 2020).
10. See the video with demands of the victims' relatives: https://pad.ma/CTC/editor/00:00:00,00:05:43.321#embed. Accessed 8 April 2021.
11. According to a letter from the mayor at the time (Widder 1996).
12. This assessment is based on my own research in the context of my habilitation thesis *Racial Knowledge in Germany's Transformation into an Immigration Society*, which was accepted by the university of Mannheim and is going to be published in Fall 2024 at Wallstein Verlag.
13. Cited in Schüler-Springorum: the first quotation on p. 229 is from Reinhard Rürup (see footnote 69 there), the second quotation on p. 227 from Michael Wild (see footnotes 61 and 29).
14. Maria Diedrich was a student and an activist in 2011 and continues to be active with the NSU-Tribunal.

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17

Migratory Birds

Cana Bilir-Meier

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In 2020, long after the death of my grandfather, Gani Bilir, I came across his pay slips in a box at the home of my grandmother, Vehbiye Bilir, in Mersin. They span the period from December 1976 to February 1983. In all the years from 1962 to 1988, Gani Bilir's wages from the Triebwerkfabrik engine factory in Kiel remained the same, while those of his fellow workers who were non-migrant Germans increased. More than 100 pay slips are fragmented testimony to over 25 years as a migrant worker in Germany. Among these documents from my grandfather's working life were two paintings of migratory birds, which he had made on transparent foils. He painted and drew a great deal, and taught me to paint a bird, when I was a child.

In 1962, the year the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey signed an Anwerbeabkommen [recruitment treaty] to regulate the subsequent westwards flow of migrant labour, Gani Bilir began work at the Triebwerkfabrik Maschinenbau Kiel (MAK).[1]



Kocasının iki sene içinde çalışarak yolladığı 30 bin markla ev yaptı

MERSİN, (HA) — Gani Bilir adlı bir işçimizin, iki yıl önce çalışmaya gittiği Almanya'dan, bugüne kadar ailesine 30 bin Mark göndererek kırdığı rekor sayesinde "Bilir Ailesi,, şimdiden gelir sağlamaya başlamıştır.

Almanya'nın Kiel şehrinde, motorlü tren fabrikalarında çalışan Gani Bilir, işe başlamasından 25 gün sonra ailesine 300 markık ilk havaleyi göndermiştir. Bundan sonra, Almanya'dan Türkiye'ye en çok parayı gönderen işçi olmuştur. 45 yaşında, beş kız babası olan Gani Bilir, şimdiye kadar eşya olarak sadece bir buzdolabı göndermiş onun da üç bin liralık gümrük bedelini ödemiştir. Gani Bilir, bir mektubunda şöyle demektedir:

— "Size buradan tek hediye alamadan dönersem sakın bana darılmayın. Alın terimle kazandığım her markı, sizlere havale ederken sevinçten gözlerim yaşarıyor.,,

Gani Bilir'in gönderdiği 30 bin mark ile eşi Vehbiye bir arsa satın almış, arsada üçer odalı, üç katlı bir ev yaptırmıştır. Evin iki katını kiraya veren Vehbiye, bir katına da beş kızı ile birlikte yerleşmiştir. Gani Bilir, Almanya'daki kazancını arttırabilmek için günde altı saat fazla mesai yapmaktadır.

ALMANYA'da çalıştığı üç yılda 30 bin mark biriktiren Gani Bilir adındaki işçi, fabrikanın küçük vapur iskelesinde görülmektedir. (Foto: Haber Ajansı)

Gani Bilir at the port of the engine factory in Kiel around 1964.

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As my mother, Zühal, recalls:

We children and teenagers – I was nine years old when my father left – were considered strange people at the time, for our father had gone to a country everyone was afraid of. There was war in Germany, and it had been bombed to smithereens, or at least that's the story I grew up with: a very distant land, somehow peculiar and with a dangerous past. We feared for my father because Germany was very far away from us, in cultural terms as well as geographically, so who on earth would travel to Germany, back then? Today, it's no big deal: everyone in Turkey has relatives in Germany.[2]

Around 1964, two years after Gani Bilir arrived in Germany, the Turkish press agency Haber Ajansi ran a feature about him and his time as a migrant worker. Of interest here is the article's headline: 'With the 30,000 Deutschmarks her husband earned in two years and sent home to her, she has built a house'.

At this, Zühal retorted:

My father lived very thriftily and worked his fingers to the bone, even on weekends. He didn't return to Turkey for seven years and he went through hell. His goal was to make money in the shortest possible time, to afford his children a good education and to come back very soon. To do so, he had to work extremely hard, never taking a holiday or the like. It was a very hard life, full of sacrifice. He must have led a very meagre existence. And we, for our part, had to do without our father, while my mother had to manage all by herself, with five children (Interview Z. B-M.).

The aforementioned Haber Ajansi article quotes my grandfather saying, "Please don't be disappointed, if I come back without any gifts. Whenever I send home a Deutschmark that I have earned honestly and by dint of great effort, my eyes fill with tears of joy". And it adds: "Gani Bilir worked an extra six-hour shift every day, to increase his income".

Zühal continues:

Turkey's dual goal, in 'selling' migrant labour to Germany, was to reduce unemployment at home and to acquire foreign currency. That was the beginning of the end of our migration history drama. My father was just a pawn in the game, so to speak, both politically and economically. For a very long time, the migrants did not admit how very difficult it was for them in Germany, or that they were stuck in the dirtiest jobs, for the lowest wages. My father was the decoy. Germany was in desperate need of workers (Interview Z. B-M.).

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Bruttolohnabrechnung MAK

03.1977

84 3057 BILIR,GANI 601 01

Zahl-St. Stamm-Nr. Name Lohngruppe Blatt-Nr.

Kostenträger/Zähl-Nr. Kostenstelle/Kostenart	Lohnart	Für Monat	Vorgabe-Min.	Zeitlohn-Std.	Zuschl.-Std.	Min.-Faktor Std.-Lohn	Lohnbetrag (F = steuerfrei)
974/51	003			107,0		11,31	1210,17
970/76	004			72,0		11,71	843,12
970/76 9 TG	031						421,56

Neue Akkord-Abschlag-Min.		179,0	steuerpflichtiger Lo	2474,85
Gesamt-Std. lt. Stempelkarte		179,0	steuerfreie Zuschl	00,00
			Arbeitstage	2

STUNDENLOHN 11,31 DM GUELTIG VORMONAT

1589

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MaK Nettolohnabrechnung

Gilt als Verdienstbescheinigung

84 Zahlstelle | 3057 Stamm-Nr. | BILIR,GANI Name | 03.1977 Monat | BLATT 1

Art	Bezeichnung	Für Monat	Schlüssel	Steuerpflichtiger Betrag	Gesamtbetrag
000	LOHN LT.BRUTTO-ABR.	03		2.053,29	2.053,29
031	URLAUBSVERGUETUNG	03		421,56	421,56
084	KTO-FUEHRUNGSGEBUEHR				2,50
041	VERMW.SP.ARBEITGEBER			39,00	39,00
	SUMME BR[illegible]			2.513,85	2.516,35 *
	LOHNSTEUER	PERM	404	381,60-	
	KRANKENVERSICHERUNG	03	1	131,98-	
	ARBEITSLOSENVERS.	03	1	37,71-	
	RENTENVERSICHERUNG	03	1	226,25-	
	GESETZLICHE ABZUEGE			777,54-	777,54-*
101	VERMW.SP.ZULAGEBER.			52,00-	
099	SPARZULAGE			20,80	
175	TELEFON			51,00-	
	SONSTIGE ABZUEGE			82,20-	82,20-*
	UEBERWEISUNG KONTO	0041411494			1.656,61 *

	3.300,00 Jahresfreibetrag	275,00 Monatsfreibetrag	6.324,10 Sozialversicherungspfl. Verdienst
6.324,10 Aufgel. steuerpflichtiger Lohn	829,20 Aufgel. Lohnsteuer	0,00 Aufgel. Kirchensteuer	0,00 Aufgel. Ergänzungsabg.

80.02 / 40 000 3.76

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The newspaper article goes on to say:

The Bilir family in Mersin has already gained additional income of 30,000 Deutschmarks – that is the record sum sent home to date by our worker, Gani Bilir, since he first went to Germany two years ago. Gani Bilir, who works in the engine factory in Kiel, made his first bank transfer of 300 DM just 25 days after starting work there. So far, no other worker has sent such a large sum of money back to Turkey. Gani Bilir, who is 45 years old and has five daughters, sent home goods only once: a refrigerator, on which he paid a customs duty of 3000 Lira.
What a first glance at this newspaper article does not reveal is the brutal reality of the conditions in which the so-called guest workers lived and worked. Critical migration research has long since called into question the strategies pursued to exploit labour. By the capitalist market logic, people are rated in terms of their economic surplus value, the profit that can be squeezed out of them. They are not seen first and foremost as human beings. Max Frisch hit the nail on the head when he wrote that: "We summoned a labour force; we got people instead".

It was 1961, the [Berlin] Wall had just been built, then in 1962 my father was among the first to arrive, and labour was urgently needed. The Germans didn't want the dirty work. The Germans could get better jobs, and study. Structural racism still hounds us today and it's just as bad now as it was then. This is the Germany I arrived in (Interview Z. B-M.).

Castro Varela has this to say about German society's inhumane treatment of its "guest workers" and its failure to acknowledge them as equal citizens: "Neither German language courses nor decent housing were provided. Instead, a lot of energy was invested in keeping migrant workers away from the German majority, so as to prevent any solidarity building" (Castro Varela 2015: 38).[3] My mother Zühal echoed his opinion: "In Kiel, 'guest workers' were kept far away from mainstream society and close to the factories, in special hostels solely for them, where men and women had to live apart" (Interview Z. B-M.).
The solidarity mentioned by Castro Varela was in short supply when my grandfather was still working at the factory and his German colleagues went on strike in response to a reduction in their hours. The latter's line was: 'The Turks must go'. So, this was no distant slogan for my grandfather, but a reality of daily life. He, who had worked for years on end for the same pay, in the same wage bracket, was not included in the strikers' campaign. In their slogans and demands the strikers even lashed out at migrant workers, showing zero solidarity with their struggle for visibility in a society that saw them, if at all, as nothing but 'guests'.[4] The heated racist mood of the time is evident from a headline of July 1973 in the news weekly Der Spiegel: 'The Turks are Coming – Run for your Lives!' The article also spoke of an 'invasion', 'burgeoning ghettos' and 'criminality'.[5]

In 1973 Germany put a halt to recruitment. My grandfather and my grandmother, Vehbiye Bilir – who had followed her husband to Germany in 1972 and was meanwhile employed as a hospital cleaner – saw no other option but to bring over to Germany their six children, among them my mother, Zühal Bilir-Meier. For my

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family, and especially for the younger children, this meant being abruptly torn out of their familiar home environment and taken far away from their school, relatives and friends. My grandparents returned to Mersin in 1988.

Today, I feel that my artistic practice is closely interwoven with my personal experience and my activism. Acting in solidarity with others is an important step towards questioning my own privileges and sharing resources, for example by opening up space for other voices in exhibitions or projects, or by making financial resources available. My artistic projects and films focus on knowledge gained from migrant perspectives and work with the nonlinearity of memory and history and counter-narratives. So, this project, "Migratory Birds", likewise deals with migration and labour struggles, with migrants' struggle for recognition, with the parallels to be found in migrant viewpoints, and with the fight against multidimensional forms of discrimination, such as everyday racism, sexism, antisemitism and classism.

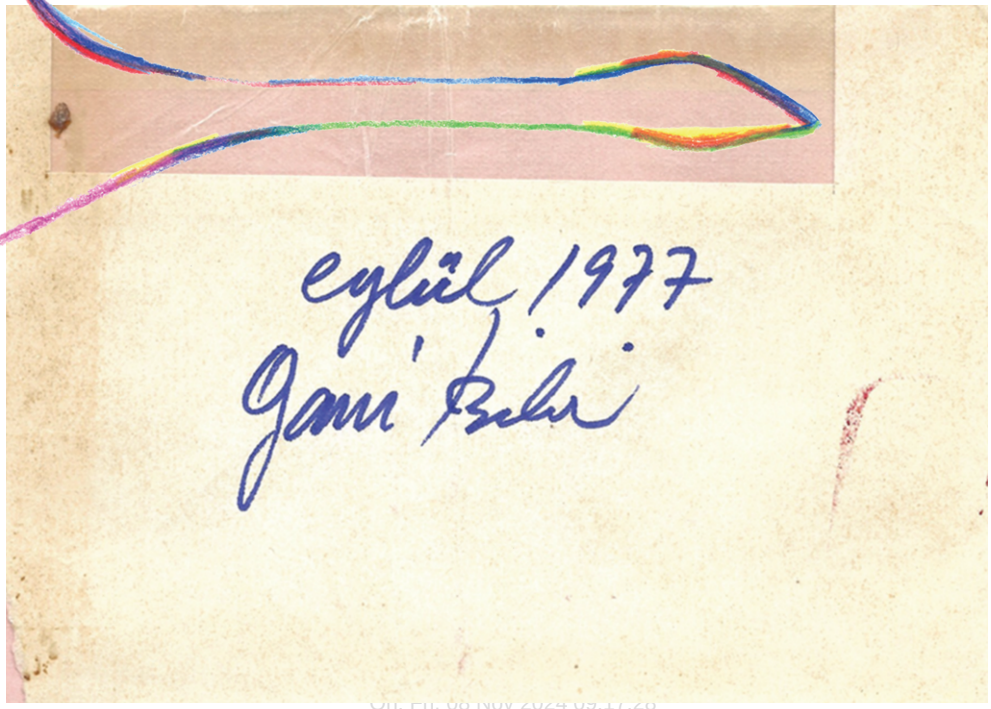
[1] Founded in 1948, the Maschinen- und Triebwerkfabrik MaK (Maschinenbau Kiel) manufactured diesel locomotives and diesel trams, among other things. In the 1990s, it was split up into several companies. For more details (in German), see: loks-aus-kiel.de.

[2] This and all further quotes followed by (Interview Z. B-M) are taken from the author's interview with Zühal Bilir-Meier on 16 April 2021.

[3] Castro Varela, María do Mar (2015): "Willkommenskultur: Migration und Ökonomie" in: S. Taş & Z. Çetin, (eds.): Gespräche über Rassismus: Perspektiven & Widerstände, Verlag Yılmaz-Günay, 2015, pp. 87–97.

[4] The year 1973 also saw notorious industrial action at the Ford plant in Cologne-Niehl, which was sparked by the dismissal of three hundred Turkish migrant workers. Their German colleagues failed to take action in support of them. See (in German), https://lebenswege.rlp.de/de/sonderausstellungen/50-jahre-anwerbeabkommen-deutschland-turkei/der-tuerkenstreik-bei-ford/. Accessed 21 November 2023.

[5] DER SPIEGEL. (1973, July 29). »Die Türken kommen - rette sich, wer kann«. DER SPIEGEL, Hamburg. See (in German), https://www.spiegel.de/politik/die-tuerken-kommen-rette-sich-wer-kann. Accessed 21 November 2023.



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18

Curatorial Strategies and Anti-racism in the Museum: 'Exhibiting' Racism, Resistance, and Empowerment

Josephine Apraku, Ismahan Wayah and Susanne Wernsing

The contemporary critique of racism and decolonisation processes calls for a paradigm shift within museum work. Not only is the history of the European institution and 'its' collections based on (colonial) racist relations of domination, but even when museums put racism and colonialism on their agenda and plan exhibitions and programmes on these topics today, these debates tend to be decisively shaped by dominant-societal perspectives and actors. This situation further reproduces the related structures of institutions and experiences of racism. Therefore, the selection of the objects on display, as well as the language of exhibitions, can only be changed by involving people who do not have 'blind spots' when it comes to racism and discrimination. In other words, people who experience racism need to be involved. Previously marginalised positions and narratives have made it clear that today we must redefine exhibition spaces, subject matter, audiences, and the aims of communication in order to initiate far-reaching processes of institutional development.

With our background in non-discriminatory educational work, diversity management, and anti-racist, decolonising curating, we, the three authors, Josephine Apraku (JA), Ismahan Wayah (IW), and Susanne Wernsing (SW) reflect in a joint conversation on our museum projects in the period from 2016 to 2020. Referring to our work for current exhibitions and publications such as *Racism: The Invention of Human Races* [*Rassismus. Die Erfindung von Menschenrassen*], Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden 2018/19, *I Spy with My Little Eye: Racism, Resistance and Empowerment* [*Ich sehe was, was Du nicht*

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siehst], Historisches Museum Frankfurt 2020/21, and *Borderless: Colonialism, Industry and Resistance* [*Grenzenlos. Kolonialismus, Industrie und Widerstand*], Museum der Arbeit Hamburg 2020/21 (1), we discuss the subject matter of various exhibitions and curatorial strategies, as well as the necessary preconditions and processes for cultural institutions to thematically and structurally engage with racism and colonialism in contemporary societies. The following conversation between the three of us emerged from questions we had asked ourselves as practitioners.

Q1: What kinds of topics and subject matter did the museums define for the exhibitions? To what extent were shared curation or collaborations (colleagues with/without experience of racism) intentional and how were these negotiated?

IW: The Frankfurt exhibition *Ich sehe was, was Du nicht siehst: Rassismus, Widerstand und Empowerment* [eng. *I Spy with My Little Eye: Racism, Resistance and Empowerment*] is a participatory format, which is called CityLab. The CityLab at the Historical Museum Frankfurt is based on the idea of shared expertise as a curatorial practice. By inviting Frankfurt residents to curate the exhibition with the museum team, the museum reflects on people's experiences in Frankfurt. This format was developed more than ten years ago to make the museum a more inclusive, democratic, and subjective space. The exhibition was developed in close cooperation between the museum and external experts (activists, scholars, artists, city residents, etc.). In the CityLab, the curators become moderators and coordinators of a process that focuses on the knowledge and perspectives of the participating Laboratorians. Everyone was welcome to participate in the exhibition as a co-curator. In the end, more than 70 people from Frankfurt and the Rhein-Main region participated in a nearly one-year-long process of curating the CityLab exhibition.

The CityLab exhibition's title references the guessing game 'I spy with my little eye' and highlights the varying nuances and facets of racism. But how can we make something visible that is invisible to many and an inevitable reality for others? In the context of a city museum, this includes departing from a *white*, hegemonic and supposedly objective historical narrative. The CityLab's concept of shared expertise has been particularly useful here.

Additionally, it was important for us to work in an intersectional team. Our diverse team consisted of people with various social positionalities, including several BIPoC women. Examining our own positioning was a central aspect of anti-racist curation. For some of us, racism is something that

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has followed us with varying intensity our whole lives. For others, this exhibition offered them the opportunity to become theoretically and practically acquainted with the topic and become familiar with resistance strategies.

SW: The Deutsches Hygiene Museum Dresden (DHMD) came up with an exhibition idea that was framed by critically recalling the anti-Semitic 'Nuremberg laws' in 1935 and commemorating the program in 1938. The museum initially wished for an exhibition that first and foremost reflected the museum's history within the Nazi regime. It therefore decided to frame the exhibition within a historical perspective on 'scientific racism' and particularly sought to critically reflect upon the DHMD's collection and exhibition policies. The museum aimed for an exhibition that not only sets out that the DHMD actively spread racist theories and Nazi *Erbgesundheitspolitik* (eugenic policies) but also the museum was involved in developing these theories and played a significant role in political, scientific, and administrative networks. And the museum later commissioned the exhibition to a freelance curator, which was me.

The museum held a conference in 2015 to kick off the exhibition-making process. The conference not only examined the racist legacy of the Nazi regime but also addressed racist violence against refugees and referred to corresponding traditions of the so-called *PEGIDA* [an acronym for 'Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes'], which was founded in Dresden in 2014 and since has been classified as a right-wing extremist movement. Nevertheless, the museum commissioned the exhibition as a 'history of "constructing" human races (in Europe, Germany, and Dresden)', and accepted my deep concerns and discomfort by showcasing the racist propaganda and 'scientific' methods that needed problematising because of their persistent racist impact. As the museum did not opt for an explicitly anti-racist exhibition (but rather one that is critical of racism), it failed to initiate a more confrontational discourse with the dominant *white* (local) society and the emerging racist violence and rhetoric, at the time.

Regarding the selected focus, the exhibition concept first had to shift dominant narratives, as I see it. The exhibition sought to characterise racism as an ideology of inequality, as a social structure and individual imprint on all, and as an everyday and violent experience for many. It also aimed to make visible that the European Enlightenment played an important role in colonial and racist knowledge production. The exhibition wished to make clear that the conceptualisation of racist sciences happened during

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the eighteenth century and not in the nineteenth century. It pointed out that nineteenth and twentieth-century racist science was not only the legitimisation of racism, but its effect. The exhibition attempted to situate DHMD's history and exhibition policies within the context of racist sciences since its foundation in 1912 (and not since the 1930s). And it strived to describe the invention of human races as a legitimation for colonial exploitation, violence, and genocide and aimed to relate German colonialism to the era of the Nazi regime. The concept envisaged, at the time, a section on anti-racist, anti-colonial emancipation, and resistance movements up to the present day and thus, a concrete shift to make marginalised voices visible. During conflictual discussions, the responsibility for this final section was to be handed over to a working group from the museum.

Q2: What curatorial strategies and settings were employed (object selection, visual politics, etc.)?

IW: The CityLab exhibition *I Spy with My Little Eye: Racism, Resistance and Empowerment* put people who experienced racism in the centre. It was important to us to not just portray people who experience racism as victims but to also present them as capable and resistant subjects. The exhibition contributions were developed by individuals, groups, initiatives, and associations that stand up against racism, whether privately or in an organisation. The CityLab exhibition shows that racialised people offer an abundance of approaches, strategies, practices, and methods of dealing with racism. This really enhanced the exhibition. Racism is a complex topic, which is why we did not claim to have fully covered this multifaceted issue. For instance, we did not receive contributions from people who experience anti-Muslim racism, although it can be argued that it is one of the most socially acceptable types of discrimination in Germany. The aim of the exhibition was not to provide straightforward answers but to invite visitors to reflect, ask further questions, and take responsibility.

Moreover, we created an atmosphere for respectful interactions that was critical of racism and discrimination. The team formulated clear guidelines on how not to reproduce racism for the CityLab participants' contributions, particularly when it comes to language and images. All contributions received a discriminatory sensitive reading. To make the exhibition accessible for those who are not familiar with certain terminologies, such as Critical Whiteness, intersectionality, etc., we developed a glossary, which was available as a small booklet in the exhibition.

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JA: I'd like to highlight the bookazine that accompanied the exhibition *Borderless: Colonialism, Industry and Resistance* because collaboratively creating it with Christopher A. Nixon and everyone else involved was such an intimate process. As Ismahan mentioned, we too focused our work on BIPoC – we centred our resistance in all its vulnerable beauty. Specifically, this meant we wanted to create something that allowed being read in different ways, which to some could mean just looking at the pictures by all of the amazing photographers who luckily responded to our open call, to others it might mean reading through the poetry by the talented writers who graced the bookazine with their words, some will take the time to read the personal essays by activists, scholars, and artists. The question that led to all of our decisions was: 'How can we create something significant that offers space for the many complex identities within our communities, something that is beautiful, something that represents us?' For us, it meant that there were mostly BIPoC involved in the making of the bookazine and we wanted to be open as to what they wanted to share. As a consequence, we mostly didn't ask for anything specific but rather gave a vague framework. Another aspect of our process of creating the bookazine was that we wanted to print things that already existed, we wanted to show the many brilliant things that had been written.

Personally, I've mostly been in the very comfortable position of being part of an advisory board. This means I don't have to be part of any kind of struggle if I don't want to. Honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way, as I can only imagine how daunting it must be to work in an environment – especially as the only Black person – in which dominant culture is so rarely reflected in everyday practice and so deeply a part of it at the same time.

I've worked with a few museums and different exhibitions so far and can honestly say that I've appreciated this kind of work: asking questions such as what do we want to show, whose stories do we tell, whose don't we tell, how do we tell them, and who do we want to tell them to? I enjoy the fact that everything I imagine somehow needs to be materialised so that people visiting an exhibition can reflect upon their social position within society. I feel confident in the work that I do. This mostly isn't welcome by institutions that represent, even if they try to paint a different picture, the dominant culture. Because of that, I try to have as little contact as possible as I feel that it is my expertise that they are asking for, but I can only give them that if I have space to make decisions by myself. I think this is why the bookazine is something that I feel I can actually stand for. There was only one minor thing changed at the end, other than that it is exactly the way it was created by everyone involved.

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SW: The exhibition team was not diverse at all and, like the institution itself, represented exclusively, *white*-positioned perspectives, which the project team was aware of. Our team could not fill the knowledge acquired through the personal experiences of everyday, racist violence and discrimination. Since the project started, controversial debates between the project team and the museum focused on specific topics and thematic interpretations, but primarily on the struggle for participatory processes and formats. However, the project was only able to get BIPoC experts involved in 2017, ten months before the opening. This meant that the members of our expert advisory board – who each have a strong profile in anti-racist activism, scholarship, or educational work that is critical of racism and anti-Semitism – saw their long experiences of institutional racism confirmed by our project. The advisory board of experts contributed and intervened with critical input, installations, and texts to the exhibition and the catalogue. Our advisors articulated their criticism on the planning process itself and they finally enforced the renaming of the exhibition.

The curatorial strategy aimed to deconstruct racist knowledge production. We sought to find displays, material objects, and images that (1) showcase and yet deny the racial sciences' claim for objectivity, (2) analyse displays and colonial collections in 'ethnographic' museums, and (3) critically frame the propaganda exhibitions under National Socialism in Dresden. It seemed very important to me to deconstruct racist knowledge within European sciences as museums still remain within this legacy and represent themselves as objective and neutral rather than situated and hegemonic. Moreover, the DHMD exhibition took place in 'authentic' historical exhibition spaces and presented the museum's propaganda archives and collections. Ultimately, it is difficult or even impossible to visually deconstruct instruments, methods, and media that had been designed as a visual 'scientific proof'. My curatorial strategies included object montages, analyses of historical exhibition displays, image deprivation, concealment, sight blinds, mirrors, and emancipatory counter-images. Critical artworks included photographs and mixed media works by artists Yinka Shonibare, Tasha Dougé, Chris Buck, and videos by VV Brown and Solange Knowles. Clips from the film documentary *ReMIX: Africa in Translation* by Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard and Nicolas Grange (2016) and various interview projects presented the experiences of structural racism and the current struggles for the recognition of restitution claims and the German responsibility for colonial violence and genocide.

QU3: Dresden-Frankfurt-Hamburg what was the initial situation of the public discourses and the civil society actors in the city? What influence did

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they have on the respective institutions as well as the exhibition's subject matter and accompanying program?

JA: Personally, I find this question interesting, because I don't actually think that there was a huge difference between the impact the respective cities had on the outcome of each exhibition. From my perspective and considering the work that I have done with several museums, the challenges are generally the same. Museums in Germany have a huge problem catering to different target groups – I'm referring to an anti-discriminatory point of view here. This is represented in the people who work within the museum as well as the people who attend exhibitions.

SW: Comparing the projects in Dresden, Frankfurt, and Hamburg, we can see that the local dominant-societal discourse and the diversity and position of local anti-racist initiatives are of quite great importance for the corresponding exhibition projects. *White*-positioned institutions address and are oriented towards the (local) *white* 'majority societal groups'. At most, the museums aim to sensitise dominant societal group(s) towards racist discrimination but exert the greatest care possible to not make the *white* majority feel uncomfortable or attacked.

IW: I think that the local communities do have an impact on museums. The participatory exhibition *I Spy with My Little Eye: Racism, Resistance, Empowerment* would not have been possible without all the grassroots organisations and activists in and around Frankfurt. Many participants came to the first CityLab workshop with great interest, but also with doubts about the museum. The suspicion towards the museum is legitimate because racialised people had not been included in the conception of the exhibition. It is predominantly *white*-positioned people who bring the works of Black activists and activists of Colour to institutions such as museums, art galleries, and universities.

JA: On this basis, adding experts to a curatorial team will not be the answer to a profound challenge: the overall lack of diversity. While I see the value of working with local activist groups and experts, as well as drawing from the historic implications of each city, my focus lies on the question of how to change these power dynamics. At the end of the day, it is not only our knowledge of history and our choice of who to involve but also how much power these people are afforded to make decisions and whether their perspectives are valued.

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SW: Civil society actors such as the ISD, NoHumboldt, Glokal eV., and Round Tables on Colonial Heritage increase the pressure on museums. Moreover, as Ismahan and Josephine have mentioned, exhibition projects should invite their positions and act as allies of these initiatives. Two exhibitions were important to me at the beginning of our project in 2016. *Die Vermessung des Unmenschen. Zur Ästhetik des Rassismus (On the Aesthetics of Racism)* at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden exhibited a massive part of a racist 'ethnographic' collection. Yet it neglected to disturb this collection's violent aesthetics, reflect upon the curator's positioning, or to expand the perspectives and voices related to the exhibited materials. By contrast, the constant pressure of ISD and Berlin Postkolonial succeeded in restructuring the exhibition project *Zurückgeschaut / Berlin's Colonial Exhibition (1896)* at the District Museum Treptow in 2017, thereby making a profound difference in the exhibition's subject matter, staff, and means of representation.

IW: Initially, the Historical Museum Frankfurt planned to present the CityLab exhibition alongside the exhibition *Rassismus: Die Erfindung der Menschenrassen* (*Racism: The Invention of Human Races)* acquired from the Deutsches Hygiene Museum in Dresden. This prompted criticism and opposition from BIPoC activists in the Rhein-Main region who felt that the exhibition from Dresden reproduced racism by displaying it. Another argument raised was that racialised people are often not included in the conception of the exhibition. The museum decided to involve the voices criticising the Dresden racism exhibition by means of a Frankfurt intervention track, which was to be developed with a group of differently positioned activists from Frankfurt. During the coronavirus pandemic, however, plans changed, as the acquisition of the special exhibition from Dresden was cancelled. In the end, the CityLab became a stand-alone exhibition, presenting contributions by Frankfurters who experienced racism and their allies. The fact that the voices of Black experts and experts of Colour largely went unheard and their perspectives remained unseen in the exhibition in Dresden is therefore a justified criticism. However, it does not apply to the CityLab, which is participative and geared to the subjective realities of people's lives. It was important to us to work in an intersectional team. This did not just include the curators but also the designers, the assistants, and the programme curator. The positionality of the team is crucial as it helped facilitate the museum as a safer space for racialised participants.

JA: I feel comfortable saying that there is a lot more pressure on museums to deal with their own history, including the museum's colonial past and

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present and all its racist implications, which I think is important. I think we must thank the many activist groups who are working so tirelessly and relentlessly to make racism and German colonialism topics of public interest. Yet it remains a process that I think becomes apparent when we look at the different exhibitions and the various approaches that were taken to create them. I can't think of a single exhibition in Germany before 2010 that dealt with any of the topics at hand that changed and is still changing when it for example comes to who is asked to do an exhibition or what is shown.

SW: 'Who does the exhibition address? Which communities and voices are represented?' The board of experts' initial questions confronted the Museum with the fact that *white* critical perspectives, deconstruction, and sensitisation cannot counteract structural racism. The subsequent projects in Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Cologne [*RESIST! The Art of Protest*, Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in 2021/2022] emphasised that shifting perspectives and representation means a fundamental thematic shift from histories of racism to narratives of resistance and empowerment. Our projects once again show that an intervention is a textual or aesthetic format that retrospectively expands and corrects hegemonic representations and narratives, but it cannot effect a structural change.

Q4: How do we move from an anti-racist critique to an anti-racist institutional development of the museum? What does this mean for content, methods, curatorial strategies, and mediation concepts?

IW: I think that it is no longer sufficient for institutions to address racism and postcolonial issues. They must take another step and deconstruct their own role in hegemonic *white* discourses. Cultural institutions are faced with the task and challenge of examining and changing their presented programme, the audience they address, and the staff they employ. Using diversity as a challenge to whiteness as a normative concept means hiring more non-*white*, Black, and People of Colour. But this is only the first step in restructuring museums through an anti-racist lens. The questions we asked ourselves in the museum team are: What are the common norms of museum and participatory work? Which groups do we address, and which do we possibly exclude? How can we develop appropriate mediation approaches for people who have different societal positioning? From an institutional level, I think that outreach work as a strategy should always be linked to an in-reach strategy. The goal cannot be to just attract a diverse

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audience but also to guarantee a diverse workforce. We offered various interdepartmental training courses throughout the year for museum staff to build awareness of anti-discrimination. (During the process of the CityLab, workshops were conducted by external consultants on the following topics: 'Language Critical of Racism' (Hadija Haruna-Oelker), 'Anti-Racist Curation' (Natalie Bayer), and 'Critical Whiteness and Empowerment' (KARFI).)

JA: I find this to be an important aspect as I work with quite a few rather different organisations. Some of them work globally, some locally, but I feel that because power structures aren't part of the founding process of organisations, most of them face the same challenges: Most think that they don't have a problem at all, and if they think they do, they are looking in all the wrong places.

SW: I agree with Ismahan's institutional critique, and I would like to answer the question from the perspective of a freelance curator. For institutional change, one needs to conceive of different tools, and diversity management must have an impact on the exhibition programme, collections, audiences, and staff. The debate led by ICOM Change regarding an alternative definition of the museum reflects the critical points of the current controversy. Exhibition projects are under significant time and budgetary constraints while developing concepts and looking for collaborations. A project could be used as a temporary instrument for change management, but it often collides with the museum's hierarchies and with the decisive neoliberal structures of institutions and cultural policies. Anti-racist curating needs schedules for controversial processes, conflicts, and negotiating, as well as budgets for the work of external, marginalised actors and experts in collaborative processes. I think it is most important that museums understand that it is their task to gain the trust of these actors and civil initiatives and to stop expecting their gratitude. And I think that future curatorial strategies should focus on developing new formats for presenting the exhibition-making processes, which should not be confined to making diverse identities and critical voices visible. We must make clear that including marginalised voices in temporary projects does not mean a sustainable change in representation and hegemonic structures. Quite the contrary, many museums indeed take advantage of this kind of limited inclusion as Tokenism.

JA: The most important thing is to question the status quo, everything that seems normal. Yet this is also one of the hardest things to do because our

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perspectives are limited by our social identities. I don't necessarily think that we need perfect definitions of different terms, but rather a clear understanding of how discrimination operates in our everyday lives. In order to fight it, we need an intersectional approach because all kinds of oppression are interconnected. Furthermore, we need to have a clear understanding that because discrimination intersects, there is marginalisation within marginalisation. I would only make one exception: the term diversity, with which many seem to feel very comfortable, actually isn't in and of itself critical of power structures. For institutions, this means that they would have to focus on all the small details. Just to give an example: How are people being hired? Who decides who is being hired? For which positions within the organisation are marginalised folks being hired? Are anti-discriminatory perspectives considered? Are there any guidelines to deal with discrimination when it occurs? This is by no means exhaustive, but it helps to understand the questions we need to ask.

Q5: What does a successful cooperation look like? What conditions and requirements must be created for an interchange between museum curators and civil society actors?

IW: Solidarity as a strategy in museum work means constant renegotiation. There is no set of rules for work critical of racism because they don't exist. However, it is inevitable that institutions that wish to become more critical of racism need to entrench diversity and inclusion as their guiding principles. A shared vision of a 'diverse Us' can enable a new basis for work that should be reflected and discussed depending on the specific context and topic. Using the 'diverse Us' as a working basis gives socially marginalised groups the opportunity to demand transparency, build trust, and, at best, see cultural institutions not only as places of struggle for hegemony but also as places where alliances are built.

JA: I think Ismahan made such an important point. I think it's relevant to stress that anti-discriminatory work within a museum, or any institution for that matter, always focuses on the vision of a society that can be better and more just. But because this is a vision and we are far from it, there need to be clear guidelines that everyone involved understands regarding how a respective institution will ensure safety when racist incidents take place. While it is important to diversify teams, it is just as important to address the fact that there needs to be safety for those that are vulnerable.

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Decolonial Insurgency for Art-Systemic Change: Dissenting Art Museums in New York

Birgit Mersmann

The museum as an exhibition space, educational institution, and site of cultural representation has increasingly come under public attack since the 1990s. Historically founded in Europe and burdened with imperial and colonial history, it has been accused of being a white supremacist and racist institution. In his article 'Are Art Museums Racist?'[1] the American art critic Maurice Berger identified "systemic, institutionally defined conditions of racism" (Berger 1992, 145) in the art system and judged the art museum as "America's most racially biased cultural institution" (Berger 1992, 146) ruled by agents of white supremacy, among them patrons, board members, collectors, visitors, and interpreters.

Criticism of museum-institutional racism, including disputes over provenance, ownership, and restitution regarding museum collections, is not limited to academia and art criticism; it has become a key driver of activist movements targeting "detoxing and decolonizing museums" (Wajid/Minott 2019, 25ff.). Even museums with an explicit focus on the representation of cultural diversity, such as immigration/emigration museums, are facing political disputes and protest movements. One of the best-known examples is the four-month occupation of the National Museum of Immigration History in Paris in 2011 when a group of Sans Papiers, that are illegal migrant workers, went on strike to protest for the legalisation of their working conditions (Labadi 2017, 107–128; Ostow 2016). As sites with a public mandate, even if they are privately funded, and institutions of cultural and political identity construction, museums have been drawn into the global, national, and local arena of current political contestations and social conflicts in the public sphere. They are urged to respond – to migration policies, refugee crises, and the struggle for social justice (Labadi 2017), structural and institutional racism

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(Message 2018; Shellman 2022), colonial heritage (Greve 2019) and cultural extractivism, the climate emergency (Brophy 2013; Lyons/Bosworth 2019), the issue of cultural citizenship (Ho/Ting 2019; Wheadon 2022), and the needs of local communities (Crooke 2008; Taylor 2020). Two interdependent response movements to the aforementioned challenges can be observed in the contested field of contemporary society and museum culture – the activist societal call *from outside* the institution and the internal call *from within* the institution for initiating and implementing a fundamental, even radical change of the (art) museum system. Since activism for museum-institutional change can be found on both sides, it appears appropriate to differentiate between museum activism as institutional *in-house activism*[2] operated by the museum staff in collaboration with agents from outside (among them local communities, non-governmental organisations, expert groups, etc.) and museum activism as a public, mostly urban form of *out-of-house activism* practised by political and social activist/artivist movements as resistance *against* and *for* the museum to instigate change.[3] Although interconnections and even collaborations between these two orientations of museum activism can occur to form strategic alliances, it is important to conceptually distinguish these opposing organisational and agential perspectives of museum activism.

This research contribution aims to gain a deeper understanding of activist movements within civil society that call for more inclusive, diverse, and socially just museums. It will focus on a museum-activist case-study analysis of the New York-based movement 'Decolonize This Place' (DTP). The collective DTP is an outgrowth of the anti-global, anti-capitalist, and decolonial movements that became active as social non-governmental movements at the beginning of the 1990s to fight the excessive 'capitalist realism' (Fisher 2009) under the expansionist impact of neoliberal globalisation.[4] The agenda of DTP is directed towards the linking of five strands of political and social activism: indigenous struggle, black liberation, free Palestine, global wage workers, and de-gentrification.

Since 2015, DTP has organised targeted actions against museums in the city of New York, in particular art and national museums identified as "key players in the settler colonial project and racialized capitalism" (DTP 2019, n.p.). Until 2021, the movement has directed actions of decolonial resistance against five museums in New York – the Brooklyn Museum,[5] the American Museum of National History,[6] the Whitney Museum of American Art,[7] the Metropolitan Museum of Art,[8] and the Museum of Modern Art.[9] This study will focus on one museum resistance case study only – the early actions of 2016 and 2018 in and against the Brooklyn Museum, since they can be considered foundational for the programmatic goals and strategies of the activist group. By debating the Brooklyn Museum as an example, the analysis intends to demonstrate in what ways the demands and activities of the DTP movement have been (and are still) exerting pressure on

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the (art) museum to initiate a site- and institution-specific decolonisation and to what extent they reflect the transference of the concept of 'decolonial insurgency' together with the theoretical approach of 'decoloniality in/as praxis' (Mignolo/Walsh 2018, 99) into museum activism.

The article's primary focus is on the decolonial praxis perspective of urban out-of-house activism *against* and *for* museums, its agenda, concepts, and action strategies. The reception part on how the attacked museum has responded to or ignored the often-radical claims made by DTP will remain largely unaccounted for because it would require a separate paper based on in-house interviews led by the responsible personnel and key decision-makers in the Brooklyn museum. Beyond criticising or pre-judging the anti-institutional museum activism for its exaggerated demands and partly ideological agenda, the study aims to thoroughly describe the praxis of decolonial insurgency for art-systemic change as enacted by DTP to gain a deeper understanding of its motivation, artivist programme, and system-critical intentions. This is not to choose a side in the museum-political conflict but to give voice to those who feel not included and represented in the history and present of the western-type modern art museum, or even worse, feel expelled and exploited by its social, cultural, and financial conditions and structures.

"Decolonize this place … this place … this place": Performing direct action for decolonising the Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum, the second-largest art museum in New York[10] and one of the oldest on the North American continent, was deliberately chosen by DTP as a place for direct action due to its politically progressive, activist-minded, and community-engaged art curation programme to which the group could easily link.[11]

Reading the web-published mission statement of the Brooklyn Museum in the year 2021 imparts the impression of a postcolonial, anti-racist, and ethical museum. Firstly, the museum acknowledges that it stands on the occupied land of the Lenape (Delaware) Nations and expresses its commitment to "confronting the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism in the Museum's work" (Anonymous n.d., n.p.). Secondly, the ambition "to incorporate anti-oppressive and anti-racist practices into all facets of the Museum and to use our resources to further these goals, including the full engagement of our Board and staff" (Anonymous n.d., n.p.) is highlighted. And thirdly, as a response to the Black Lives Matter movement, it posits that it stands "in solidarity with the Black community", "against police brutality and institutional and structural racism" and that, "[a]s part of this commitment", it "will no longer contract police for extra security" (Anonymous n.d., n.p.).

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These statements and commitments can be comprehended retrospectively as enforced responses (and responsibilities) to the direct actions and demands by the activist group DTP that, since 2016, has activated forces to fight for the decolonisation of the Brooklyn Museum (Figure 19.1). It was during the first campaign against the Brooklyn Museum in May 2016 that the 'Decolonial Cultural Front' became publicly active. During performative resistance actions to 'decolonize this place', the appeal-driven group name was coined. The Decolonial Cultural Front intervened in two exhibitions – *Agitprop!* and *This Place* – that were on show in parallel at the Brooklyn Museum in May 2016. The exhibition *Agitprop!* offered a congruent connecting point for the intervention, since it displayed contemporary artistic expressions and practices of creative activism for political change and social justice in dialogue with historical case studies.[12] The exhibition *This Place* explored 'the complexity of Israel and the West Bank, as place and metaphor, through the eyes of twelve internationally acclaimed photographers',[13] among them Fazal Sheikh, Stephen Shore, Thomas Struth, and Jeff Wall. The Decolonial Cultural Front constructed direct links between these two exhibitions by accusing



FIGURE 19.1: Decolonize This Place, Reparations/Repatriation Now!, protest in front of the Brooklyn Museum, 2018, https://decolonizethisplace.org/downloadable-materials. Accessed 10 December 2023.

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them of a racialised art-systemic normalisation of people's displacement – on one side the arts-driven gentrification of Brooklyn and the neighbourhoods, on the other side the displacement of Palestinians under Israeli occupation and settlement policy.

By reacting to the paradoxical relation between the two exhibitions, the activists posed the critical question 'How can the museum in one gallery claim to be presenting the vanguard of political art and in the very next gallery lend itself for a spectacle of artwashing a people of existence?' and published it, together with other information, in a pamphlet that was distributed in the respective exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum on 7 May 2016 (MTL Collective 2018, 217f.). In a tactical move, they directed their message not only to the institution of the art museum with its managers, curators, and staff but also to the artists participating in the exhibitions by calling on them: "Artists! Resist Becoming Weapons of Mass Displacement!" (DTP and MTL+ 2016). Within the exhibition-institutional complex, art museums and artists should resist harbouring racialised capitalism and occupation politics. The call resonated with some artists displaying their works in the *Agitprop!* exhibition, who joined the Decolonial Cultural Front to participate in the group's orchestrated direct actions.

To lend force to the call for de-occupation, the activist group organised an interventionist action inside the exhibition rooms. Based on agitprop methods and Occupy strategies, it consisted of an assembly with announcements and calls, mediated via microphones and manifesto-like pamphlets, a counter-tour through the exhibition, and the installation of a newly created artwork for the *Agitprop!* exhibition – the *People's Monument to Anti-Displacement* designed by the 'Movement to Protect People' activist Alicia Boyd and collaborators. The entire action agenda mimicked the practices of art mediation in the museum but subverted them by a decolonial *détournement* in the Situationist sense.[15] The assembly in the exhibition *This Place* was opened with an acknowledgement of the indigenous history of the site of the Brooklyn Museum, namely a reference to the settler-colonial context of occupied Lenape land.[16] After DCF's announcement that the museum (exhibitions) occupied indigenous territory, an unauthorised counter-tour through the exhibition *This Place* was organised by a team of activist guides. It included the relabeling of Stephen Shore's landscape photographs with native Palestinian place names in Arabic that substituted the Israeli Hebrew names for the occupied land. This replacement strategy demonstrated how activists diss(ent)ing counteracted museum-institutional and artistic ties (or tacit agreements) with displacement politics. During the tour, the guides animated the exhibition visitors to join the chorus of voices shouting: 'Decolonize this place … this place… this place'. By this place-bound call to performative action, the new name of the activist group was born. Altogether,

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three demands were postulated during the interventionist action in the politically linked art exhibitions. The museum should (1) organise a People's Summit on Gentrification as opposed to the Real Estate Summit that took place in the museum parallel to the *Agitprop!* exhibition; (2) remove all real estate members from its board, and (3) support the 'Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions' (BDS) movement to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians. In particular, for the last claim, DTP has to confront the allegation to act out discrimination, namely anti-Israel or anti-Zionist sentiment and behaviour.[17] Because of the radicalness of the claims, requests 2 and 3 were ignored by the museum leadership, but it cooperated with the activist group to organise a People's Summit on Gentrification. For DTP, the 2016 occupation of the Brooklyn Museum demonstrated "how direct-action interventions can force the hand of otherwise negligent or unresponsive institutions by creating crises for their brand image and disrupting the normal functioning of their operations" (MTL Collective 2018, 219).

From art museum curation to collective care for communities: The second decolonial operation at the Brooklyn Museum

In a second direct action against the Brooklyn Museum in 2018, the DTP collective combined its accusation of the museum's settler colonialism with a concrete call for the formation of a Decolonisation Commission. This time the call for the decolonisation of the Brooklyn Museum was aimed particularly at Black liberation. An important triggering factor for the organisation of a second decolonial action was the 'white' hiring policy of the Brooklyn Museum. In March 2018, the institution appointed Kristen Windmuller-Luna as consulting curator of the African Art division, and in April of the same year, Drew Sawyer followed as new curator of the photography division. From the viewpoint of DTP, this hiring policy confirmed the continuation of the white supremacist and racist governance of the museum institution. Even though renowned African art historians such as Chika Okeke-Agulu defended the museum's decision to employ Windmuller-Luna, arguing that "it makes absolutely no sense to say that white people should not be hired to curate or teach African art" (cit. in Neuendorf 2018, n.p.), DTP insisted on its anti-white identity politics for decolonising the Brooklyn Museum. To counterstrike the settler-colonial legacy of white museum leadership, activists started an assemblage in the museum's exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* (2018/2019) dedicated to Black artistic practice and political struggle between 1963 and 1983.[18] After this prelude, the group moved on to occupying other museum galleries that displayed artefacts of

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colonial provenance. During the occupation, activists enrolled diverse banners questioning the illegitimate acquisition of the cultural objects, accusing the museum of 'imperial plunder' (DTP 2018, n.p.) of thousands of artefacts, and demanding the formation of a Decolonisation Commission. Inside the museum halls, they installed banners with the inscription "THEY WANT THE ART BUT NOT THE PEOPLE" in both English and Spanish language. Against the backdrop of long-standing demands towards European and American museums for the return of objects of colonial legacy to their communities of origin (Sarr/Savoy 2018; Savoy 2021), radical demands for a decolonisation of the Brooklyn Museum were formulated on banners and pamphlets (Figure 19.2), namely: "the full repatriation of stolen objects, and beyond that, the paying of reparations for centuries of colonization, enslavement, and dispossession" (DTP 2018a, n.p.). The call to establish a Decolonisation Commission at the Brooklyn Museum bundled altogether seven demands that articulated the widely interconnected political and social struggles of the decolonisation movement (DTP 2018b, n.p.), acted out on the site and in the name of the museum: (1) the territorial acknowledgement of occupied Indigenous land and its reflection in curatorial practices; (2) the diversification of curatorial staff and executive leadership; (3) the creation of an inventory of the colonial-era objects of both African and Indigenous people in the collections and the set-up of a working plan for repatriations and reparations; (4) better payments for the ground staff in the museum; (5) the replacement of board president David Berliner[19] and other trustees involved in real estate business; (6) a commitment to a de-gentrification strategy; and (7) institutional support of the BDS movement. With these claims for commissioning museum-institutional decolonisation work, DTP followed its intersectional agenda to fight for indigenous sovereignty, Black liberation, free Palestine, social justice for global wage workers, and de-gentrification. This intersectional approach is programmatically grounded in a statement by the Caribbean-US-American feminist writer and activist Audre Lorde: "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (DTP 2018a, n.p.).

The demand for the decolonisation of the Brooklyn Museum through the establishment of a Decolonisation Commission as a political body was not an isolated single-group action author(is)ed and operated by DTP. Quite contrary, it was articulated as an orchestrated public claim supported by a coalition of nineteen community groups that were active in Brooklyn and beyond, among them Occupy Museums, Chinatown Art Brigade, the American Indian Community House, the Black Youth Project 100, Eagle & Condor Community Center, the Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network (BAN), and Take Back the Bronx. Due to this community-based feature of collective action, the care for local communities,

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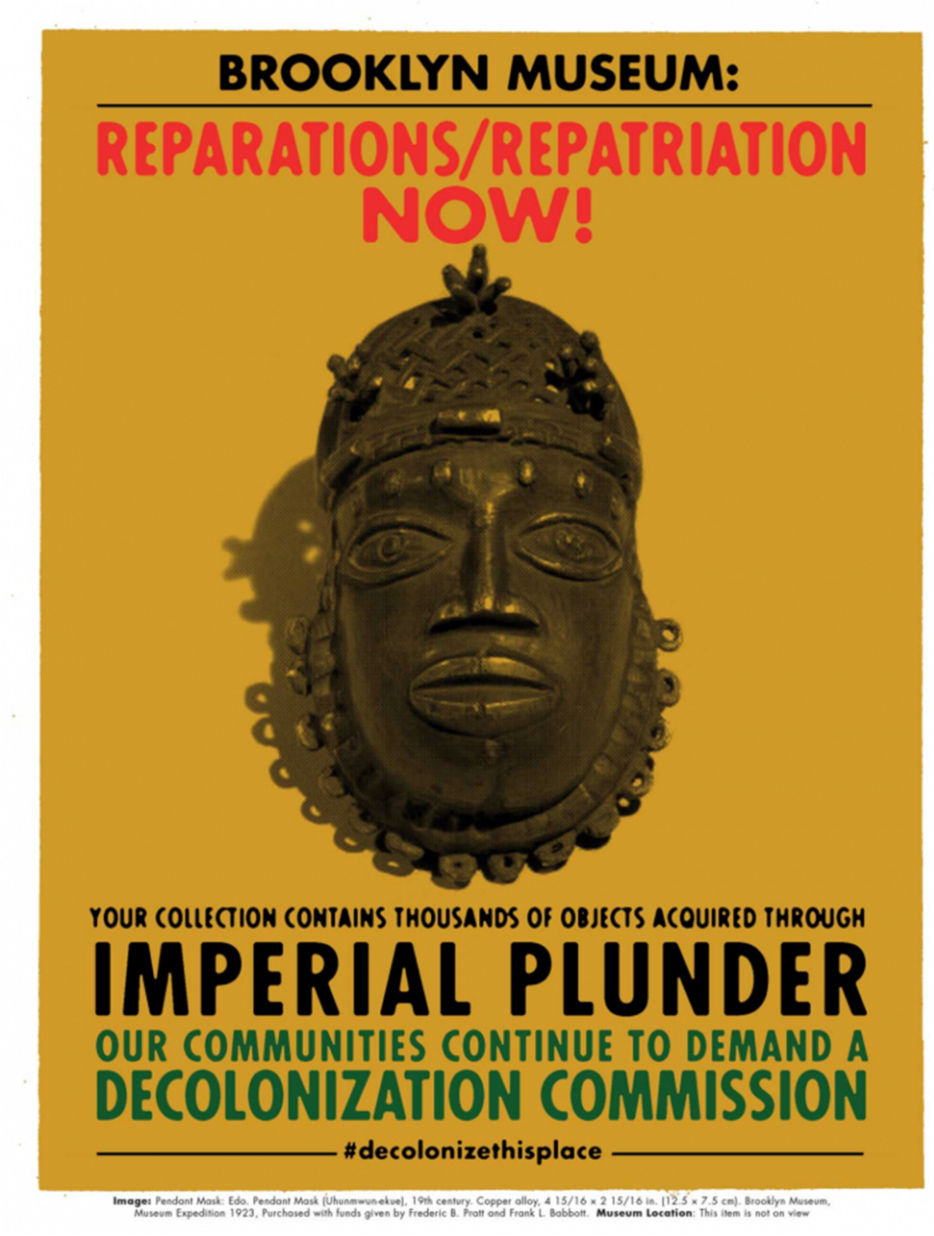

FIGURE 19.2: Decolonize This Place, "Reparations/Repatriation Now!", Brooklyn Museum 2018, the first page of the handout, https://decolonizethisplace.org/downloadable-materials. Accessed 10 December 2023.

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their needs, issues, and struggles became a prominent argument in the demand that the museum implement a decolonisation process:

> Why does an institution need professional curators? An Executive Director? A Board of Trustees? These professionalized roles are elite concentrations of power. […] Why assimilate to a system that perpetuates so much harm? How can institutions become places not of curation but of collective care?[20]
>
> (DTP 2018a, n.p.)

In searching for a radically democratic (Sternfeld 2018), socially engaged, and participatory museum, the collective signatories to the demand for a Decolonisation Commission entirely question the legitimacy of a professional museum institution and its governing body and launch an appeal to disrupt the settler-colonial-hierarchical power structure of the museum management. The decolonisation of the museum shall result in a structural and institutional transformation; in short, a system change. The museum should feel responsible for settler-colonial land theft and embrace accountability towards the displacement and dispossession of people; it should place people and their communities at the core of its work, and not art objects. This call for a turn from art museum curation to collective care for communities corresponds with the anti-capitalist and anti-racist move to de-occupy sites, institutional structures and strategic practices of colonialism, enslavement, and gentrification.

About the list of demands, the question arises whether the two direct actions of DTP in and against the Brooklyn Museum have effectuated a game change within the art museum system. In the exemplary case of the Brooklyn Museum, the answer is double-edged. The current status quo of the Brooklyn Museum in the year 2021 leads to the conclusion that the impact of the direct actions on initiating a permanent decolonial restructuring of the museum institution remained minor. A Decolonisation Commission has never been established, and David Berliner whose removal DTP had claimed in 2018 still serves as the President and Chief Operating Officer of the Brooklyn Museum. Nonetheless, a turn towards in-house museum activism in the aforementioned sense has become noticeable. As demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, the museum has somehow responded to the demands of DTP by incorporating major arguments and goals of the collective's interventions into its current mission and future agenda. Furthermore, in 2021, the Brooklyn Museum restituted around 1300 artefacts, among them pre-Columbian sculptures, vases, and tools, to the National Museum of Costa Rica. By conducting the return of artefacts without any request or judicial process, the museum demonstrates its active engagement in decolonisation. The most recent hiring of museum educator and academic author Keonna Hendrick as the museum's

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Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access[21] as well as the development and implementation of the Museum's DEIA Plan across the institution's operations and strategy indicates a move towards *in-house activism* performed by museum staff. Nowadays, the inclusion of diversity and equity managers has become a standard for professionalising community-oriented and socially engaged museum work. Whether the newly created position of a diversity director merely contributes to a stabilisation of the contested power concentration within the institution or whether it can act as an art-systemic game changer that reaches the core of the museum institution and beyond its walls will only be decided in the future.

Decoloniality in/as praxis. DTP's operations of museum resistance

The strike art of DTP is publicly performed as a resistance practice against New York museums as settler-colonial institutions – among them the Brooklyn Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the Whitney Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art – as well as the colonial–capitalist art-system within which the museum institutions operate their power matrix. In the understanding of the activist collective, American settler colonialism[22] cannot be reduced to a historical event; it must be recognised as a structure embodied by and reflected in the modern institution of the art museum. As a settler-colonial cultural institution, the museum is accused of operating like an empire, i.e. occupying indigenous territory and displacing and dispossessing people (in particular Indigenous and Black people) (compare diagram of settler colonialism by DTP) (Figure 19.3). Direct and place-bound actions for decolonisation are considered appropriate responses and effective interventions for destabilising, deconstructing, and transforming the existing settler-colonial power matrix[23] of the art museum system.

DTP's decolonial focus on artivist resistance practices resonates in theoretical approaches to decoloniality as/in praxis and the design of a decolonial aesthesis from the Global South, in particular Latin American strands of decolonial studies. The dissenting of the modern institution of the art museum goes hand in hand with the decolonial demand to delink thinking, analysis, and practice from the historical-structural node of modernity/coloniality (Quijano 2007). The artivist museum manifestations by DTP reflect a decolonial aesthesis (Mignolo/Vázquez 2013) in practice. According to decolonial theorists Mignolo and Vázquez, the project of 'modernity/(de)coloniality' refers to the "ongoing, hidden process of expropriation, exploitation, pollution, and corruption that underlies the narrative of modernity promoted by institutions and actors belonging to corporations, industrialized nation-states, museums, and research institutions" (Mignolo/Vázquez

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FIGURE 19.3: Decolonize This Place, sticker with diagram of settler colonialism, https://decolonizethisplace.org/downloadable-materials. Accessed 10 December 2023.

2013, n.p.). Significantly, museums are mentioned here (alongside research institutions) as institutional agents of the colonial logic of dispossession and extractivism, thus providing a direct link to the activist decolonisation strategies of the protest movement DTP.[24] Decolonial aesthesis is conceived as a counter concept to the modern-colonial western concept of aesthetics. By valorising multisensory approaches to aesthetic experience and turning its attention to everyday and popular cultural practices and performative expressions, it seeks to transcend and break through the hegemonic normativity of modern-colonial aesthetics. Mignolo and Vázquez name two orientations of how decolonial aesthesis can become effective. First, decolonial aesthesis can help identify and valorise areas of aesthetic experience and contemplation, theory, and practice that have been marginalised or devalued by the colonial-modern order of aesthetic discourse. Secondly, decolonial aesthesis can be used as a critical interventionist tool to directly intervene in the colonial-hegemonic structures of the contemporary art world. DTP's manifestations of museum resistance can be seen as a praxis-oriented implementation of the interventionist approach of decolonial aesthesis.

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Based on the previous analysis, the conclusion can be drawn that the museum activism of DTP embodies the emergence of a movement of 'decoloniality in/as praxis'. Decolonial studies scholar Catherine E. Walsh has argued in her co-authored book with Walter Mignolo that decoloniality is "not a done deal, a condition to be reached, or a stage of critical enlightenment" (Walsh/Mignolo 2018, 99). Just to the contrary, decoloniality is a postulate, full of struggle and praxis. It is "a perspective, stance, and proposition of thought, analysis, sensing, making, doing, feeling, and being that is actional (in the Fanonian sense), praxistical, and continuing" (Walsh/Mignolo 2018, 100). The persisting operations by DTP confirm this approach, and they are loaded up with a plethora of demands for art-systemic change. Taken together, the movement's interventions and claims for a decolonisation of the museum are to be comprehended as a process, practice, and long-term project based on study, reflection, action, and labour.

One major observation is that the decolonial insurgency enacted by DTP is not only directed *against* the settler-colonial institution of the museum; in line with Walsh's perspective on decoloniality, it involves "the potential and prospect of the decolonial *for*" (Walsh/Mignolo 2018, 16) as the planting and growing of an "otherwise despite and in the borders, margins, and cracks of the modern/colonial/capitalist/heteropatriarchal order" (Walsh/Mignolo 2018, 101). In that sense of a 'decolonial *for change*', the collective artivism of DTP can be interpreted as a proposition for the creation and cultivation of a radically distinct art museum institution that takes collective care of the people by including their demands, social engagement, and activism into the museum work. By probing the endurance of decolonial insurgency and situating external museum activism inside of the museum institution, DTP has triggered an institution-critical reorientation.

NOTES

1. The article was first published in *Art in America* in September 1990 as a response to the group exhibition *Strange Attractors: Signs of Chaos* that took place in 1989 at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. On the difficult place of African-American artists in museums of modern and contemporary art in the United States, cp. also Cahan 2016.
2. Regarding in-house museum activism, I refer to its definition by museum studies scholars Janes and Sandell who comprehend it as an engagement in "activist practice – marshalling and directing […] unique resources with explicit intent to act upon inequalities, injustices and environmental crises" (Janes/Sandell 2019, xxvii).
3. According to McKee, the artivist museum performance contributed to the avantgarde-related reinvention of art "as direct action, collective affect, and political subjectivization […] to reconstruct the commons in the face of both localized injustices and systemic crises that characterize the contemporary capitalist order" (McKee 2016, 6).

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4. Its forerunner movement, the 'Global Ultra Luxury Faction', abbreviated by the acronym G.U.L.F., was inspired and nurtured by the political goals, actions, and protest strategies of the Occupy Movement, in particular the subgroupings of 'Occupy Museums' and 'Arts and Labor' unified by their struggle against the capitalist art system (McKee 2016, 1ff. and 172–179).
5. The actions against the Brooklyn Museum included 'Decolonize This Place' (2016) and 'Reparations/Repatriation Now!' (2018). See https://decolonizethisplace.org/bk-musuem, accessed 27 November 2021.
6. For the 'Anti-Columbus Day Actions' (2016) targeting the American Museum of National History, see https://decolonizethisplace.org/monh, accessed 27 November 2021.
7. For 'Nine Weeks of Art in Action' (2019) at the Whitney Museum, see https://decolonizethisplace.org/9weeksofartinaction2, accessed 27 November 2021.
8. The action was performed on the occasion of Indigenous Peoples' Day in 2019.
9. For the action 'Strike' (2020–present), see https://www.strikemoma.org/, accessed 27 November 2021.
10. From 1997 until 2004, the museum was named Brooklyn Museum of Art.
11. The Brooklyn Museum was among the first New York museums to involve museum audiences in exhibition curating. Already in 2012, the museum invited artists and art lovers from the Brooklyn community to participate in curating an exhibition of contemporary art (cf. Bernstein 2014). Also, with regard to restitution issues, the Brooklyn Museum showed early self-initiative. In 2011, the museum voluntarily transferred 981 pre-Columbian ceramic vessels and figurines to the National Museum in Costa Rica.
12. The exibition *Agitprop!*, organised by the curatorial staff of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, took place from 11 December 2015 to 7 August 2016. The focus was on artistic work as a call to action.
13. Citation following the announcement of the exhibition on the museum's website under https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/this_place (accessed 11 October 2021). The exhibition took place from 12 February to 5 June 2016.
14. The collective MTL, founded in 2011 in New York by the students Amin Husain and Nitasha Dhillon originating from Palestine and India, combines research, activism, and artistic practice. When renamed into MTL+, the collective cooperates with Decolonize This Place (DTP) to facilitate actions.
15. *Détournement* is an artistic practice that has been conceived by the international movement of the Situationists. It was introduced in 1956 by the French Situationist theoreticians Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman in their text 'A User's Guide to Détournement'. The practice is employed to transform artworks through disfiguration and dispurposing.
16. That the museum in 2021 recognises on its official website that it stands on occupied land of the Lenape makes it obvious that the direct action performed by DCF has triggered an institutional decolonisation awareness and effectuated a response.
17. In May 2019, the German Bundestag has passed a resolution in which the BDS campaign was declared anti-Semitic. In July 2019, the House of Representatives in the United States

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passed a bill condemning the BDS movement as discriminatory due to its questioning of Israel's right to exist. Since 2019, the introduction of anti-BDS laws has proliferated across the states of America, Canada, and the European Union.

18. For further information, see the exhibition catalogue Godfrey/Witley (2017).
19. Before joining the Brooklyn Museum, David Berliner was the Chief Operating Officer of Forest City Ratner Companies, a Brooklyn-based real-estate developer and property owner. DTP publicly attacked David Berliner due to his continuing involvement in real-estate businesses; it accused him of "rent-boosting and displacement" (DTP 2018a, n.p.) through gentrification projects in the Brooklyn area, such as the Atlantic Yards and the Botanical Gardens project.
20. Italicised sentences in the original text.
21. Keonna Hendrick was hired in April 2021. Besides working as a museum educator and cultural strategist, she has published widely. Her writing has appeared, among others, in the *Journal of Museum Education* (2017), the edited volume *Professional Development in Art Museums: Strategies of Engagement Through Contemporary Art* (2018) and *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education* (2018).
22. The triangulation of race, capitalism, and settler colonialism is much debated in the context of American decolonisation studies, see Goldstein/Lubin (2008) and Veracini (2010).
23. With this term, I relate to the 'Colonial Matrix of Power' (CMP) introduced as a concept by the Peruvian decolonial sociologist Aníbal Quijano and translated from Spanish into English by Walter Mignolo (Mignolo/Walsh 2018, 111ff.).
24. Cp. also Vázquez 2019.

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Entangled Histories and 'Influence': Loïs Mailou Jones' View on the Black Arts Movement in Her 1976 Dakar Lecture

Annabel Ruckdeschel

The contribution of the painter, art instructor, and researcher Loïs Mailou Jones (1905–1998) to the thriving culture of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as her proximity to the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, has only recently been acknowledged with extensive art historical research (Benjamin 1994; *A Life in Vibrant Color* 2009; Finley 2011; Earle 2014; Finley 2019; VanDiver 2020).[1] Although art historical narratives often cast Jones as a marginal figure, she consistently and legitimately claimed a central position, negotiating her role as a black female artist between several working places in the United States, France, and Haiti while demonstrating a long-standing engagement with the African diaspora (VanDiver 2020). This essay examines Jones' own view of the Black Arts Movement, as well as her positioning therein. Her stance towards this movement rarely surfaces as clearly as it does in the keynote lecture *The African Influence on Afro-American Art*, which she gave in Dakar on the occasion of Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor's 70th birthday in 1976 and therefore is the focus of the following contribution.

Jones' Dakar lecture and her artistic work of that time sought to situate the Black Arts Movement within the broader transnational framework of the Négritude and pan-Africanist movements with their cultural resistance to racial discrimination and (neo-)colonial structures. In recent research, Jones' closeness to the Black Arts Movement has been found in her work's Afrodiasporic aesthetic; her concept of Blackness; the imaginary, sometimes monolithic reference that was Africa in her work; and the artist's network (Finley 2011, 146f.; Finley 2019; VanDiver 2020, 152ff.). I, however, focus on Jones' art historiographical underpinnings of the movement and her use of the category of influence

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that becomes evident both in her lecture and a painting she presented to Senghor. Jones contributed to the Black Arts Movement on an epistemic and educational level that went against the grain of western-centred art historical narratives. As I will argue, she highlighted the entangled histories of multiple African and Afrodiasporic sites by drawing on the idea of African art's influence on African-American art. The category of influence has been criticised in recent art historical research for reinforcing dependencies and hierarchies (compare with Mitter 2008, 238ff.; Kaufmann 2015, 2). In the case of Jones, however, speaking of influence was a means of resistance, pointing towards alternative genealogies of modern and contemporary art that were underrepresented in American educational institutions and art teaching. Thus, this modernist art historiographical concept held the possibility of resisting the suppression of alternative epistemologies that, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos states, go hand in hand with political oppression (Santos 2014).

The African Influence on Afro-American Art

In October 1976, Jones travelled to Senegal. The reason was an invitation as keynote speaker at the 70th birthday celebration of Léopold Sédar Senghor, who was honoured with a one-week conference programme in Dakar. Jones held her lecture on *The African Influence on Afro-American Art*, which was accompanied by a slide projection (VanDiver 2020, 165ff.). She was visiting Dakar as part of a delegation from Howard University in Washington, D.C. At this point, the artist could already look back on a decades-long career as an art instructor and faculty member of said institution since 1930. From the 1920s onward, Jones was inspired by the New Negro movement and encountered key figures of the Harlem Renaissance such as Aaron Douglas, Augusta Savage, and Alain Locke. Working as a painter, illustrator, and costume designer, she contributed to the cultural resistance against racial discrimination in New York City (Earle 2014, 184–200; VanDiver 2020, 35–75). In the following decades, she successfully pursued her career in Washington, Port-au-Prince, and Paris, and especially from the 1970s onwards in exhibitions dedicated to Black women artists. But in 1976 her professional situation became contested. The then 70-year-old was facing a younger, more radicalised generation of African American artists who counted her among the moderate establishment at her home institution, which led to her unceremonious retirement in 1977 (VanDiver 2020, 152ff.).

Jones' Dakar lecture, however, demonstrated that she kept abreast of the Black Arts Movement. It built significantly on her activities at Howard, especially her multi-year research project *The Black Visual Arts: Contemporary*

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Afro-American Art. Contemporary African Art that she directed between 1968 and 1970. The project researched contemporary art of Africa and the African Diaspora, with Jones conducting numerous interviews with artists in eleven African countries, Haiti, and the United States, collecting materials on their biographies and work, and making more than 1000 slides that remain to this day almost uncatalogued and understudied at Howard (Finley 2019, 463ff.; VanDiver 2020, 158ff.). Jones assessed her work, as well as that one of her colleagues of an older generation, as pioneering the Black Arts Movement at Howard University. In a class note, she wrote: "The Black Arts Movement was realised by members of the art faculty at H.U. Prof. James Wells, James A. Porter and I. We were pioneers in introducing the movement among our students" (Finley 2019, 463). It was also in this role that the artist wanted to present herself in Dakar.

The international and interdisciplinary symposium *Culture and Development* in Dakar was organised from 2 to 9 October by the Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation and, with its rich programme of exhibitions, theatre, poetry, musical performances, and international participants, was inspired by the pan-African cultural festival that the Senegalese president had initiated in 1966 with the *Festival mondial des arts nègres* in Dakar. The bilingual conference programme in French and English should be a "joint act of reflection upon one of the essential constants of Senghor's thinking, namely, the impossibility of achieving development without a cultural dimension, better still, the necessity of culture as a condition precedent to development" (Argument presented by the International Scientific Committee, 1). Its programme pursued the twofold goal of demonstrating the unity and specificity of the African diaspora while at the same time negotiating and questioning its position in an international cultural order. This programme mirrored Senghor's intellectual programme of Négritude, which stressed culture in negotiating Black identity, emphasising dialogue and exchange. Yet it also aligned with his political trajectory on an international level, as the president of newly independent Senegal also strived for close economic and cultural contacts with western countries and promoted French as an official language. Although Senghor set the course for an active cultural life in his country, his policies and philosophy nevertheless garnered criticism for never achieving complete detachment from old colonial structures and for fostering a neo-primitivist 'Africanness' in art (compare with Riesz 2006, 307–334; Harney 2004, 49–105).[2]

In her presentation, Jones did not raise such questions about neocolonial dependencies but professed her affinity with Senghor. It was not so much the role he had played in the decolonisation process that fed her great sympathies for him, as the idea of a shared identity of the African diaspora inherent in Négritude, which enabled Jones to read recent artistic phenomena in the United States and

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her own work in Haiti as part of an African tradition. Jones followed Senghor's claim that certain African elements were preserved in African-American culture and indelibly stamped on its art.[3] While she was aware that critics had accused the poet and statesman of mysticism at this point, her talk acknowledged the persistence of African elements such as "myth and image making, the importance of rhythms, the sense of community" (Lecture Manuscript, 5) in American contemporary artist groups like AfriCOBRA. In doing so, Jones not only positioned herself clearly within a debate on the survival of African traditions within African American culture that had been ongoing since the 1930s and 1940s (compare with Holloway 2005, 2–7.), but she also adopted a global, sometimes homogenising, perspective on 'Africa', which aligned with pan-Africanism's goal of fostering unification and alliances.

In this sense, Jones emphasised at the very beginning of her talk the entangled history of the African art and the Black Arts Movement:

> the art of our ancestral homeland so permeates contemporary Afro-American art that it is presently impossible to speak of Afro-American art without speaking of African art, without expressing our indebtedness to Mother Africa who has nurtured us spiritually and aesthetically, who has given form and substance to the Black Art Movement, which aspires to reflect the Black experience and heritage as a means of establishing Black identity.
>
> (Lecture Manuscript, 1)

Jones drew on a concept of influence that already intrigued her in the 1930s within the circle of the Harlem Renaissance, particularly in her illustration *Under the Influence of the Masters* (Figure 20.1). It was created in 1939 for *The Negro History Bulletin* edited by Carter G. Woodson, one of the early scholars who studied the continuities of African Culture within the United States (Holloway 2005, 4). At the centre is Jones' androgynous self-portrait surrounded by the 'masters' that inspired her: European artists from the Renaissance to Modernism, younger African American artists, Egyptian art, and African prehistorical stone paintings, which had been brought to the attention of the western art world by the German Ethnologist Leo Frobenius and an exhibition at the MoMA in 1937. These multiple influences do not weigh heavily on the artist who proposed with her illustration "a potential genealogy of African American art in which a black woman claims the center" (VanDiver 2020, 5). As VanDiver shows, Jones was ahead of a curve of Afrodiasporic imagery, while her standing as a Black female artist was always fragile and in need of justification. Using the category of influence helped her in a twofold manner that can also be found in Jones' later work: on the one hand, she claimed a central position where various influences converge; on the other hand,

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FIGURE 20.1: Loïs Mailou Jones, *Under the Influence of the Masters*, illustration for the *Negro History Bulletin*, vol. 2, no. 7 (April 1939), front page.

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she called to mind a common cultural space of Afrodiaspora, where shared traditions lay the foundation for future connections and exchange.

In her Dakar lecture, Jones particularly emphasised these future connections when she spoke of former ties being strengthened within the Black Arts Movement:

> Today, the Black Art Movement in America stands on the thresholds of its greatest and most complete articulation. The second renaissance in Black art has truly arrived. And in many ways, the force most responsible for the strength and vitality so visible in the contemporary Afro-American artist has been the renewal of the deep aesthetic and spiritual ties with Africa, the Motherland.
>
> (Lecture Manuscript, 2)

Jones thus presented the current shift of interest of many African American artists such as Carolyn Lawrence, Jeff Donaldson, Betye Saar, and Faith Ringgold from western art to the African continent as a vitalising force. For her, the Black Arts Movement was fully developing its creativity by becoming aware of its cultural heritage from Zimbabwe, Nok, Ife, Benin, and the Ashanti Empire (Lecture Manuscript, 3). This recently spurred, according to Jones, cultural exchange among contemporary artists in two directions and led to African American artists travelling to African countries on the one hand and, on the other hand, bringing artists from African countries to the United States. She cited painter Jacob Lawrence and Howard faculty member James A. Porter as examples of American travellers to mainly West African countries but also discussed other artists like Paul A. Collins, Larry Erskine, and E. Harper Johnson, who made such artistic research trips in the 1950s and 1960s. Regarding the mobility of ideas and artists in the opposite direction, Jones stated: "Naturally, many contemporary African artists have specifically and individually influenced the organic flow of African art to Afro-American artists" (Lecture Manuscript, 10). As an example, she mentioned Ethiopian-Armenian artist Skunder Boghossian who had become a faculty member at Howard University in 1972. But Jones also singled out Nigerian artist Prince Twins Seven-Seven, whom she met on her first trip to Africa when he was working in the Osogbo Group's studio before leaving for the United States in 1972 (Glassie 2010, 189–211). Jones wanted these relationships to intensify in future, as they would not only enrich the Black Arts Movement but also connect the geographic space of an African diaspora. She concluded her lecture with a plea:

> It is my opinion that there should be an even greater relationship and closer ties among the peoples of the African Diaspora. We must share our collective inspiration by knowing and communicating the cultural achievements of our people internationally, for to me Haiti, Black America, and Africa are one.
>
> (Lecture Manuscript, 15)

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With this main argument, Jones aligned herself with a broader cross-border trend in the Black Arts Movement. She was thus able to present her own work, both her artistic practice and her research activities of the Black Visual Arts Project, as taking place at the centre of the core events of the Black Arts Movement – at a time when important impulses were being set by a younger generation of artists she coined as 'political expressionism' (Lecture Manuscript, 12) and her position as a faculty member at Howard was already precarious. It was primarily the educational aspect found in some of the works of the Black Arts Movement to which Jones could best relate her own artistic practice, but also her activities as a researcher. Just before Jones was going to talk in the lecture about her research trip to Africa, she referred to Cliff Joseph's painting *Blackboard* (Figure 20.2):

> In this painting, a beautiful Black women teacher is pictured with a young student in front of a blackboard on which is written the alphabet of the Black Power Revolution. The names of African countries, tribes and personages 'Uganda', 'Zulu' are juxtaposed with the word symbols of the Black American experience, 'Huey Newton', 'Freedom', 'Power to the People.' The work is Joseph's conception of what education in America should be for the Black child.
>
> (Lecture Manuscript, 13)

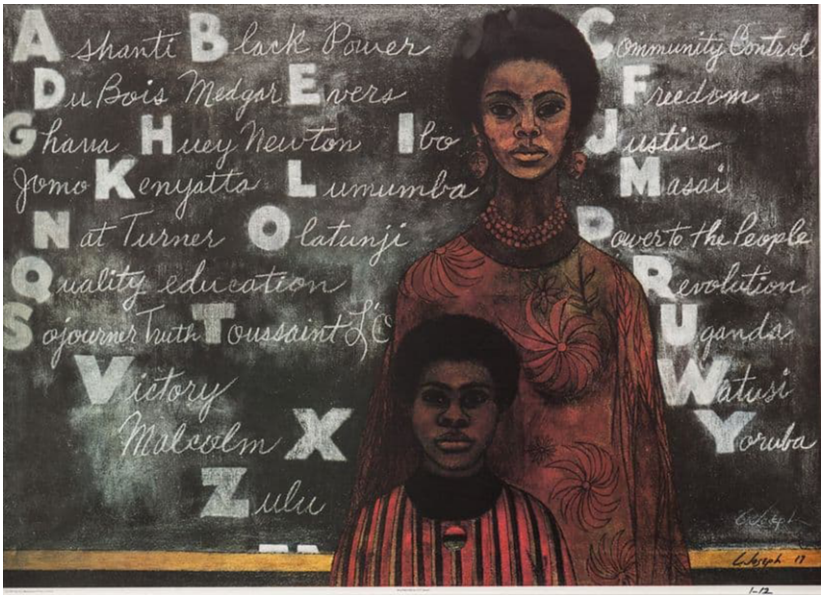

FIGURE 20.2: Cliff Joseph, *Blackboard*, 1969, Oil painting on canvas, 26 × 36", Aaron Galleries, Glenview, Illinois.

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As a member of the *Black Emergency Cultural Coalition*, Joseph was part of the Harlem art community's activist protest against the underrepresentation of African-American artists in museums. But he also wanted to bring the Black Power Movement into other educational institutions and took *Blackboard* as a teaching tool into Chicago classrooms (*Soul of a Nation*, 80). Jones took a similar approach when she sought to enrich her teaching canon with new material, thus pioneering – by her own account – the Black Arts Movement at her institution. This approach is also expressed in her artistic work, which refers to cultural traditions and influences as well as the legacies of important political actors.

Hommage au Président Léopold Sédar Senghor

As an underpinning to Jones' argument in her Dakar talk, she created a portrait of the Senegalese President that she presented to him at his birthday celebration (this painting is reproduced in VanDiver 2020, 167). It was commissioned by Howard University President James Cheek and intended as an homage to Senghor (Benjamin 1994; Finley 2019). Jones later explained her painting as follows:

> It was rendered in acrylic on canvas and depicted his portrait, which was supported by the most outstanding cultures of Zimbabwe, Benin, Ife, and a tribute which I paid to the beautiful works of Papa Ibra Tall, who is the outstanding Senegalese artist. Then there were little inserts in the composition of The Island of Gorée [underlined in the original] and the slave house which is a symbolic reference to the torture and the tragedy which occurred there. In another insert I creatively introduced in the composition a comparison of a Senegalese nobleman with the slaves at that time.
>
> (Black Women Oral History Project, 21)

VanDiver identifies in this pastiche an articulation of Blackness that encompasses a diasporic understanding including not only different historical moments but also different places and objects of collective memory (VanDiver 2020, 166ff.). With the slave house on Gorée Island in the upper left corner of the background, the painting refers to an infamous site of the transatlantic slave trade, whereas the stone-carved Zimbabwe bird in the lower left and the Ife terracotta bust in the middle ground relate to a pan-Africanist vision of shared artistic heritage (VanDiver 2020). The contemporary history of Senegal is represented by the portrait of its president and forward thinker of Négritude. Yet on an aesthetic level, the painting also follows a 'diasporic grammar' inspired by the collage technique, juxtaposing various motivic inserts, and sometimes working in mixed media, something that can be found in Jones' work from the 1960s onward (VanDiver 2020, 133–147).

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Beyond these diasporic implications, Jones meant the painting as a stand-in picture 'illustrating the influence of Africa on American art of Black expression'.[4] The category of influence here again took on the dual function mentioned above: On an individual level, it proved Jones' central position within the Black Arts Movement while on a more general level, it addressed entangled histories and future connectivities of contemporary African American and African art communities. In this sense, *Hommage au Président Léopold Sédar Senghor* became a touchstone by which the Senegalese president was to ascertain the historical and contemporary influences Jones had studied and that she herself was under. The painting thus illustrated a statement in Jones' lecture on her research trips to Africa:

> The trips provided opportunity to get a clearer picture of the various ways in which African art has influenced the works of the Afro-American artists […]. The major influence of my current work is still African in origin and I am certain that this trip will renew and enrich my inspiration.
>
> (Lecture Manuscript, 14)

In referencing Ife, Benin, and Zimbabwe, Jones fulfills her call for Black Arts Movement artists to explore these traditions. The colourful ornamental structures in the background, in contrast, represent contemporary influences. They were inspired by the works of Papa Ibra Tall, who at the behest of Senghor had founded the *Manufactures Sénégalaises des Arts Décoratifs* in Thiès (Harney 2004, 54–70). Jones described her visit to the tapestry workshop as the standout experience of her research trip (Lecture Manuscript, 13). With her reference to Tall she not only presented herself as an artist who participated in the Black Arts Movement's current shift of attention to contemporary Africa, but she also proved on a more general level that 'one of the world's leading designers' (Lecture Manuscript, 13), who was supported by Senghor, influenced art in America.

Hommage au Président Léopold Sédar Senghor was thus a piece of painted diplomacy and an appeal for cultural exchange. Jones saw herself as an ambassador for Howard University, but also, by introducing her own Afrodiasporic imaginary, for a larger collective of American artists who sought closer ties with Senegal and its pan-African movement. On the level of the subject, Gorré Island refers to the history of slavery as a basic condition of many African Americans' sense of belonging to Africa but also of their shared history with Senegal. Furthermore, according to Jones, Senghor "certainly has done much to strengthen the black movement in our country" (Black Women Oral History Project, 21). Not only did AfriCOBRA artists pay tribute to him by quoting from his poetry in their exhibition (*Soul of a Nation*, 88), but Collins, whose journey to West Africa was a model for Jones, also chose a line from one of his poems as the epigraph for his *Black Portrait of An African Journey*

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(Collins 1971). Jones herself inserted a quote from Senghor's poem 'Aux soldats négro-américains' in her portrait painting: "J'ai touché seulement la chaleur de votre main brune, je me suis nommé: 'Afrika!'" (I just touched your warm brown hand and said my name, 'Africa!') (Senghor 1991, 67). Senghor evokes in this poem his experience as a colonial infantry soldier in the Second World War detained in the German prison camp *Frontstalag 230* for French colonial troops (Hanf 1972, 14–17, 59–62; Riesz 2006, 217–237). Among the prisoners, the poem's narrator recognises an American soldier by his warm handshake as a brother, which reminds him of his own African identity. The experience of the Second World War caused many African American veterans to demand equal rights upon their return as a reward for the war effort and their sacrifice. Also, fighting a racist regime provided a template to charge racial discrimination in the homeland during the Civil Rights Movement (Kruse/Tuck 2012). The war experience took on a similar function for colonial subjects who had fought for France and returned to a postwar situation of independence claims (Birmingham 1995). In this respect, Jones' painting alluded to another collective memory of the African diaspora, but in this case specifically to the shared experience of Senegalese colonial subjects and African Americans. Once more, the artist addressed a parallel situation that gave rise not only to shared political goals but also to a shared commitment to future cultural connectedness.

Conclusion

Jones engaged with entangled histories within the Black Arts Movement following a twofold perspective: facing the past to give current artistic phenomena a historical foundation and facing the present to forge new relationships and alliances. Both perspectives converge in Jones' own artistic practice and research where connectivity appears as a trope. Both in her lecture in Dakar and in *Hommage au Président Léopold Sédar Senghor*, the artist relied on the category of influence, which she introduced in a discursive and painted art historiographical account to intensify the exchange of an Afrodiasporic artistic community. This served Jones' goal of locating herself at the centre of the Black Arts Movement while situating it within a larger transnational framework that resisted common patterns of western-centred artist networks and art histories.

NOTES

1. The term 'Black Arts Movement' was claimed by a specific group of artists, musicians, and writers. However, it is also used in research to describe Black cultural production between 1965 and 1975 (*Soul of a Nation*, 36). Jones used the term in this broad sense and frequently used it synonymously with the 'Black Art Movement'.

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2. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, however, describes Senghor's view on African art as a strategic essentialism which had a liberating function (Diagne 2011, 186–200).
3. The idea that such patterns had been preserved in African American culture was formulated by Senghor, for example, at the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris (*Le Ier Congrès International des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs*, 1956). This thesis was criticised among others in the same event by Frantz Fanon, who sensed in the search for a common original culture the danger of running into a white scientific view (Riesz 2006, 283–304).
4. "Très fière de participer à cet évènement historique, j'aurai le plaisir d'offrir au Président Senghor une de mes œuvres illustrant l'influence de l'Afrique sur l'Art américain d'expression noire" (Loïs Mailou Jones to Alioune Sène). Jones later repeated this description (Black Women Oral History Project, 21).

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SECTION 5

PRACTICES | PERFORMATIVITY

Burcu Dogramaci, Franziska Koch and Mona Schieren

Introduction

The 'migratory turn' in art studies and post-migrant theory (Dogramaci 2019) challenges the long-standing dichotomous conception of the author (subject) and work (object) (cf. Bayer 2015). Building on a relational understanding, scholars engaged with new materialisms have suggested that it is less a matter of writing 'about' an object/object of study than of 'writing/thinking with' it. Such a re-orientation requires situating the authors, their motivations, blind spots, and the ways in which they select an object, as well as looking into the conditions and limits of their knowledge production. Following this approach, the object is not only observed but also plays a productive role in that it 'looks back' at us and acts itself (Latour 2018).

'Practices/Performativity' also reconsiders the relationship between scholar and artist as active agents in the conflicted contexts of migration by introducing a plurality of methods, voices, and disciplinary perspectives on an equal footing. Emphasising "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988, 575) and particularly "migrant situated knowledge" (Güleç 2018, 33) allows for putting alternative epistemologies in perspective that are significant for artistic work, yet often overlooked in dominant Eurocentric frames of interpretation.

In turn, the section also asks how these underlying dominant paradigms and epistemological assumptions can be challenged, expanded, or even overcome by

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(re-)inserting epistemologies rooted in non-western ways of knowing or (entangled) histories informed by artistic migration connecting the global North with the global South. Taken together, the six case studies attempt to acknowledge pluriversal aspects of knowing and being in that they pay attention to who is speaking how and situated where when addressing artistic practices that relate to (embodied) knowledge marked by migratory experiences.

The section contributes to developing a set of methodologies that enables expanded access to works of art. The contributions critically engage with the productive conceptual tension that marks the pairing 'Practices/Performativity', which we conceive as a dynamic relationship between art historical *and* artistic practices/actions. The term 'practices' denotes all kinds of artistic activities, ranging from rehearsals to making art, from performances to activism. We comprehend performing and performativity as a production of meaning (performance of something) that can be both visual and textual, artistic and scholarly. Performativity refers to the speech act theory by John L. Austin, which postulates that language may function as a mode of social action (Austin 1975; Butler 1988; Jones 2014).

Foregrounding performative moments when studying the relation between subjects and objects in ways that do not necessarily privilege the sense of sight nor dichotomous structures, but account for tactile, auditory, or other senses creates space for counter hegemonic knowledges that introduce powerful micropolitics of the body (Rolnik 2018). Such a shift in perspective helps to explore other spaces of meaning (Smith 2012) that lie beyond modern epistemic conventions that have forcefully separated art historical and artistic forms of knowledge and effectively relegated them to different social realms that are strongly governed by institutional regulations and colonial as well as imperial histories.

Focusing on performativity also alerts us to the fact that writing about 'migration' is a powerful act of (discursive) differentiation that potentially 'otherizes' artistic practices and their makers. The ambiguous relationship of 'Practices/Performativity' can soften the borders between oneself and the other, between the observer and the observed. We therefore orient ourselves towards a 'poétique de la relation' (Glissant 2020) as an alternative working model that conceives writing and artistic practice, subject and object, on equal footing and negates the assumption of an identity as a 'fixed essence' (Hall 2017).

Pairing reflections on performativity with different practices, the section offers insights on how artists working in a broad variety of media – spanning several decades from the early 1960s to today – have shaped particular ways of knowing informed by migratory experiences. While 'practice' points to the act of doing something and producing knowledge (Lury et al. 2018), performing relates practice to particular forms, as well as transformative effects and affects in turn. Arguably,

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migration strongly impacts the ways in which artists do not only relate to one place or field of cultural belonging, but how they – forced or willingly – learn to (artistically) relate to several places when seeking refuge, exile, or making new homes during their trajectories. A performative practice in such contexts highlights *how* we create new cultural knowledge when we relate places, persons, and concepts and dynamically create complex, multi-layered identities in transcultural processes to debunk notions and practices that try to construct a fixed, clearly delineated, or mono-cultural identity.

What art historians can grasp when focusing on these conditions and performative moments is how historically specific migration functions with regard to time and space. In turn, it also allows comparing structurally similar situations across different locales and periods that imbue individual experiences with greater societal relevance and infuse works with meaning that speaks way beyond the geographical horizons of the individual artist and their time. Discerning artistic strategies that emphasise how relating different worlds works, more precisely how 'worlding' (borrowing the gerund from Heidegger 1935 but leaving his ontological essentialism behind) works as a performative act that makes (a) world is thus a way to (scientifically) acknowledge the limitations of rational understanding, ultimately embracing other ways of knowing and being in (the) world(s). Following thinkers such as Glissant, Wynter, and Hall thus allows understanding and trying to cross the limits of modern (Eurocentric) epistemology, when asking how artists not only criticise and provincialise the dominant western universalism (Chakrabarty 2000) and its violent flipsides of colonialism, racism, and nationalism but also actively realise the possibility of pluriversal ways of knowing (Kothari et al. 2019; Escobar 2020).

Methodologically, this requires scholars to pay much more attention to the transcultural aspects of how art history is also 'a form of world-making' by

> moving beyond studying connectivity or mobility or interaction per se […] to find ways of theoretically incorporating new factors that impinge on the relationships […] [art history] investigates: paying attention to scale, to 'anachronic' temporalities, to textures of affect and to different modes of knowledge beyond that of our scholarship – the artistic, the everyday, and non-professional – that might bring with them conflicting claims to authority.
>
> (Juneja 2018, 480)

It is indicative of these conflicting claims of authority that all contributions in this section exhibit moments when artists struggle with the different scales, modes of knowledge, temporalities, and textures of affect when inhibiting a world marked by (conflicted) migration while probing the potential of knowing 'otherwise'

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(Escobar 2007, 179, 183f., 195) and making other worlds possible. Accordingly, and while being clearly informed by art historiographical concerns, the contributions leave conventional disciplinary boundaries behind by integrating ethnographic, artistic, and visual culture-related approaches.

Performativity is thus methodologically foregrounded in the contributions to this section in several forms: they explore participant observation as a form of research practice and focus on embodied forms of knowledge in addition to rational analysis. Performative-participative works such as the walks in Yana Meerzon's contribution as well as the performative workshops by Halprin and Rezaire discussed in Elke Gaugele and Mona Schieren's contribution primarily unfold in multi-sensorial, collective engagement and bodily experience. Such experiences provide an additional perspective that (possibly) differs from the analytical mode of 'looking at' and allows conscious reflection on the (multi)perspectivity and marked situatedness of those looking/writing. Meerzon's contribution also highlights the migrant artists in their role as activists using performative interventions to challenge stereotypes of migration and enable new dialogues about forced mobility.

Mi You examines the various intersecting scales of national popular and propagandist visual culture and private visual archives that Pu Yingwei fuses in a multi-layered installation. The artist thus re-visits the revolutionary deterritorialisation (violently) performed by migrating capital, people, images, and ideologies between China and Africa. His contemporary exercise of 'looking into and with' things that make a world is echoed by an earlier art historiographical drawing by Nam June Paik discussed in Franziska Koch's contribution. The artist not only mapped the demarcations produced by war trauma but humorously envisioned a 'ministerium for mixing the enemy race' to world another future, while creating a participatory device that performs dis/orientation rather than providing clear directions. Arguably, the cultural ambidexterity of Paik also allowed Edoh Lucien Loko to escape the objectification and exoticisation he experienced as a student of Joseph Beuys. Ethnographically informed, Anna Brus gives room to the Togolese artist's autobiographical propositions in order to side-step the overwhelming canonical authority of figures such as Beuys, instead letting EL Loko's overshadowed knowledge inform our revisiting of the 1970s.

Accordingly, the scholarly efforts to 'think with' these fragile, intimate, contested, or non-rationally driven modes of knowing challenge and change academic ways of writing. This becomes particularly obvious, when Gaugele/Schieren pursue a joint text, writing in the 'we', while Cathrine Bublatzky and Anahita Razmi perform a joint 'becoming' in their exploratory conversation. Their collaborative visual mapping explores the intersections between scholarly and artistic knowledge, situating themselves within migratory stories of their

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families relating to Germany and Iran. Taken together the contributions invite us to explore the complex relations that make 'Practices/Performativity' a key to understanding art and migration.

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21

Reparative Workshop and Body Practices in the Field of Art, Diaspora, and Migration 1969 and 2020

Elke Gaugele and Mona Schieren

Since the 2010s the workshop has been rediscovered as a political art format reappropriating spaces at the edge of institutions (Harney/Moten 2013). Digital workshop formats increased in the early 2020s to create participatory situations while art institutions were shut down due to the various COVID-19 lockdowns. Although the format has been appropriated by network capitalism – as workshops transmit soft skills between the conflicting priorities of the performance economy – it nevertheless still makes skills "easily accessible" (von Eikels 2021, n.p.). Particularly in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, anti-racist mending and decolonial practices have become important topics for both art institutions and self-organised groups (e.g., HKW Berlin #healing; Narration Group, South London Gallery; nGbK, Berlin).

The history of the 'workshop' as a tool for encounter and skill transfer is not only connected with institutional critique but also with the emancipatory aims of anti-racist movements after the American Civil War. Following the abolition of slavery, Hampton University (1861) and Tuskegee University (1880) offered workshops for African Americans to learn agricultural skills as a tool for self-empowerment. A political fusion of art and grassroots initiatives has occurred since the late 1960s within the framework of the Civil Rights and the Human Potential Movements. At that time, western workshop culture was established in the United States and rapidly expanded globally. Like those of the late 1960s, many of today's workshops also employ performative and somatic practices to cope with issues of race, diaspora, migration, and decolonisation, since, as Memories Studies scholar Michael Rothberg observes, "social actors

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bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing post-World War II present" (Rothberg 2019, 30).

In the following, we examine the entanglements of art and migration from a critical migration research angle, pursuing different constellations that have arisen as a result of the Atlantic slave trade, the Holocaust, and the course of contemporary global flight and (forced) migration. We, therefore, focus on migration processes as long-term diasporic, post-migrant conditions. We begin by shedding light on the specific historical situation of the post-Second World War US (post) migrant society in which a close relationship between the African American diaspora and the Jewish-American diaspora emerged (Du Bois 2007; Rothberg 2009, 302). With that in mind, we proceed to investigate contemporary configurations of global migration and Pan-African communities.

To examine the historical and conceptual interrelations in these fields of art, migration, and diaspora, we will revisit Anna Halprin's workshops for her performance *Ceremony of Us* (1969, *CoUs*) (Figure 21.1) and cross-read it with contemporary performative work, based on the concept of Decolonial Healing as it has

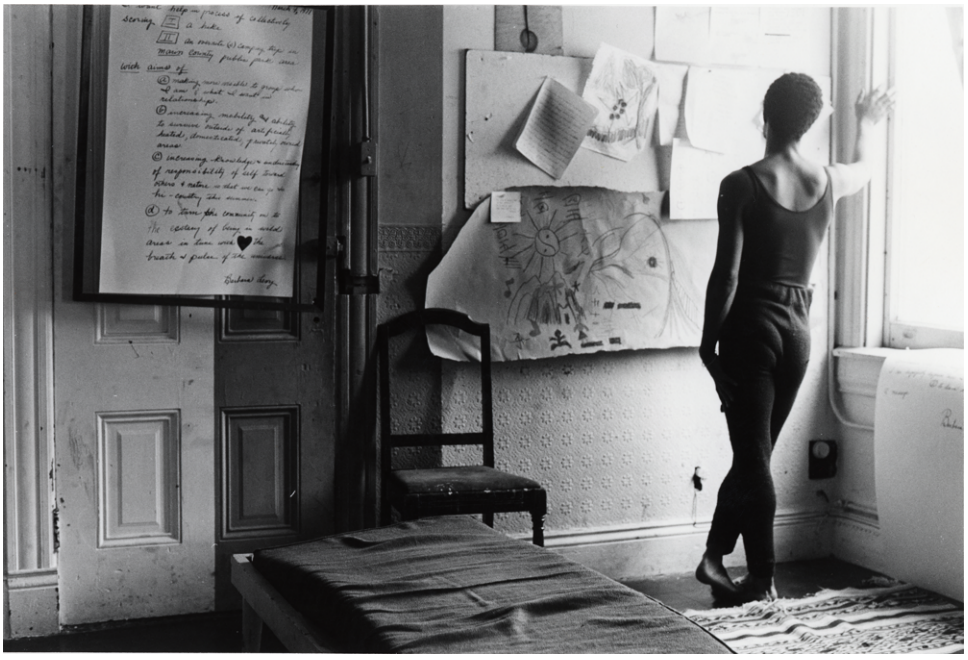

FIGURE 21.1: Unknown photographer, Anna Halprin, *Ceremony of Us*, 1969, back of person looking at papers and drawings on a board, Anna Halprin Digital Archive, Identifier AH-0450 (© Anna Halprin Papers, The Elyse Eng Dance Collection, Museum of Performance + Design, San Francisco).

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been developed during the 2010s, amongst others by Tabita Rezaire (*MerKaBa for the Hoeteps*, 2016–2020). Both artists assume that traumatic experiences of racism, colonialism, and diaspora are inscribed within the body and can be transformed through somatic practices.

With – Within –Through

How can one approach artwork situated at the intersections of different formats such as performance, live art, community/collaborative art, and pedagogical or even therapeutic mediation? On the one hand, the workshop establishes art as a transformative process, which only exists with and through the performative involvement of its participants. On the other hand, it largely depends on the context of the hosting institutions and the kind of public they constitute (Bishop 2012). Furthermore, workshops assemble "a variety of practices that aren't necessarily artistic in nature but require dedication, commitment and engagement" (Oberender/Sehgal 2018, n.p.). They only appear in live presence, through the performative practices of the participants as and within the art world. This changes the relationality of the viewer in terms of his participation and creates a *World Without Outside* (Oberender/Sehgal 2018) as a programmatic exhibition title by Thomas Oberender and Tino Sehgal states.

There is no outside perspective, no objective, or even innocent view; this is also the point we depart from in our writing. We, as the authors of this text, as located in Germany, cannot leave our white bodies, academic perspectives, and our situatedness within the histories of (post)fascist trauma, flight, migration, and the (post)colonial condition. The 'implicated subject' therefore seems a reasonable starting point, as it "is not an identity, but rather a figure to think with and through" (Rothberg 2019, 199). Hence, we are 'implicated subjects' who as "scholars and activists need both to interpret implication and to transfigure implication" (Rothberg 2019, 203). Besides that, we situate our writing as a performative process, that beyond writing #through and #for art as a social, political, and bodily practice, also creates space for decolonising concepts like #listening, #unlearning, and #dissent.

Right On*:* Ceremony of Us

We are approaching Anna Halprin's workshops for her performance *Ceremony of Us* (1969, *CoUs*) through the film *Right On*, a 'rehearsal shot' (Halprin/Hill 1969, 01:10) by Seth Hill, which was produced as part of the Dilexi Series for

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KQED-TV, San Francisco. This documentary features the days when artists from the San Francisco Dancers Workshop (SF) and the Studio Watts (SW) from Los Angeles met for the first time for a joint ten-day workshop (Herbst 2014, n.p.). Based on "life situations" to "break down […] barriers and arrive at some sense of understanding, and of feeling of trusting each other" (Halprin/Hill 1969, 00:48), the workshop and choreography for *CoUs* were created as a political project for the catharsis and healing of racial trauma in response to the Watts Uprising in Los Angeles (1965), as well as the increasing violence against civil rights activists. In 1968, amidst a social climate of shock, grief, and radicalisation in the United States following the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. in April and Robert F. Kennedy in June, James M. Woods, the African American director of Studio Watts School of the Arts contacted Anna Halprin. Driven by the idea of art as 'a tool for social change' (Woods cit. in Halprin/Burns 1969, 131), Woods invited Halprin to develop a joint project between her SF dancers and the SW for the Los Angeles Festival of the Performing Arts (Ross 2007, 265). Halprin later said that Woods was particularly interested in how she created moments of participation, freedom, involvement, and companionship between the performers and the audience (Halprin/Burns 1969, 131). Influenced by the spirit of the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, the centre of the Human Potential Movement (HPM), *CoUs* intended the African American community and the (usually) white art and theatre audience to meet on stage. The aim was to mutually go through a process of catharsis in order to heal racism and thereby, in a symbolic and almost ritual manner, to create a new community in an equivocal sense of 'us' and the nation, the 'US'. Halprin's interest lay more in the interaction among the participants and viewers than in creating an aesthetic dance performance. She sought a shift from a theatrical focus and traditional narrative to the creation of solidarity.

Listening to Halprin and Gestalt

If we listen to Halprin thinking out loud her methods and aims in *Right On*, four aspects appear: First, the labour on 'interpersonal relations'; second, the unlearning of former 'preconceptions' and habits; third, working to build a 'new vocabulary' based on the 'nonverbal' and the state of being in touch with the organism; and finally, the awareness of 'now', as a constant form of becoming and 'growing' (Halprin/Hill 1969, 10:00ff.). These aspects are closely related to the principles of Gestalt therapy, which aim "to promote the growth process and develop the human potential" (Perls 1971, 2), as Gestalt is defined as 'an organic function' and 'an ultimate experiential unit', embedded in every organism (Perls 1971, 16). Halprin had already worked with Friedrich Salomon Perls, the co-founder of

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Gestalt therapy. Perls, a left-wing Jewish intellectual and psychiatrist who had fled Nazi Germany in 1933, had taught Gestalt workshops "with movements, with posture, with sound, with pictures" at Esalen (Perls 1971, 56) since 1964. With Perls, Halprin and her company discovered how to recognise somatic limitations and move beyond them (Herbst 2014, n.p.). Halprin began to infuse transformation, as "performance's most consistent and recurring condition" (Heathfield 2012, 23), with Gestalt's therapeutic approaches of human and social change based on the principle of nowness, which according to Perls have "the creativeness of the now available" (Perls 1971, 56).

With the community

The workshops for *CoUs* mirror the deeply embedded racism in the United States. Aiming at transcending racism by changing interpersonal relations, Halprin refused to work 'for', but rather 'with the community' and "to give a workshop at Studio Watts School of the Arts open to anyone regardless of training or experience" (Halprin/Burns 1969, 131f.). The psychologist Paul Baum, who had studied dance with Halprin in the 1940s (Herbst 2014, n.p.), supervised her workshops for psychosocial conflicts. Halprin worked in similar, separate workshops for about six months with two groups of the same size, classified as 'Blacks' (SW) and 'Whites' (SF) (Halprin/Burns 1969, 132). Workshop methods were (see Figure 21.1):

> Body exercises, massages, psychic-stress movements, improvisations to break through an individual or group impasse, drawings, […] We modelled ourselves in clay, we wrote about the ways we identified with our workshop experience, we spent time breathing in and out of each other with our bodies; vocalizing, singing, touching, looking, […] When things got too heavy, we'd play tag, have horse races, do red light-green light, construct pyramids with our bodies, etc.
>
> (Halprin/Burns 1969, 132)

Ten days before the performance in 1969, both groups came together "collectively creating their performance around the experience of becoming a group" (Halprin/Hill 1969, 03:00). Halprin's anti-racist work corresponds with Perls' theory of Gestalt, saying that "immediately a new boundary is created – now the enemy" would be "the non-freedom fighter" and no longer be identified through race (Perls 1971, 12). Halprin underscores the level of collective progress: "The production was, what happened between the groups, it was like a collective effort, and that's why we called it a *CoUs*" (Halprin/Hill 1969, 00:59–01:07).

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Breakthrough movements: Somatic unlearning towards a new vocabulary

In the documentary *Right On*, Halprin's voice narrates images of the 'life situations' that bring the workshop participants into a relationship with one another. Unlike the workshop, the experimental film documentation makes us viewers and observers alike and positions us in an in-between state. Through the lens of the film, we investigate the specific situations in the workshop that aim at the unlearning of former racist preconceptions, and to contribute, as Halprin says, to "a new vocabulary" (Halprin/Hill 1969, 10:16). Beyond that, it had been planned that the bodily experiences should also radiate from the workshop to the audience at the public performance: "through us a door will open, with our organism, growth, potential to change, joyful, celebrate, others make a change through us" (Halprin/Hill 1969, 11:55). In this process, we notice two strands: exercises, movements, and encounters on the one hand, which aim at personal and social change in the sense of Gestalt therapy; on the other hand, we perceive scenes that unfold 'multidirectional memories' by entangling and layering different historical experiences of violence and trauma.

Halprin's ideas of changing and growing are deeply rooted in the HPM: Perls' Gestalt therapy, Lawrence Halprin's creative process,[1] Ida Rolf's Rolfing practices, John Rinn's bio-energetics, and the bodywork of Moshé Feldenkrais and Randolph Stone (Halprin 1995, 111–112). She had already developed her own exercises for releasing, letting things go, and breakthrough movements in her performance series *Ten Myths* (1967), which she also used in *CoUs*. One example is allowing the voice to freely intone 'om', obviously borrowed from eastern healing practices like yoga. For *CoUs*, Halprin expands her repertoire and bodily vocabulary through bio-energetic movements "in order to break through preconceived modes of physical behaviour" (Halprin 1995, 112f.). She developed a set of breakthrough movements, such as bending back while being held by other performers (Figure 21.2). Another practice to build confidence named 'Carry', which was already used in *Ten Myths*, entails a person being carried by others like a "corpse carried to grave" (Halprin 1995, 137). Their subsequent resurrection is brought about by the group's humming. In both constellations, the dancers experienced the transformation of their roles and relationships, they learned that racist and class-defined preconceptions can be unlearned and transformed. Halprin claims that she

> worked on aggression first, to release anger and tears. […] I introduced the bio-energetic movement of hitting in order to try to release rage. A black man in the group said to me, 'I'm not ready to do that movement. If I let go, my rage will be so destructive I will tear this whole room apart and everyone in it'.
>
> (Halprin 1995, 112f. and 116f.)

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FIGURE 21.2: Unknown photographer, Anna Halprin, Rehearsal of Halprin's *Ceremony of Us*, 1969, Anna Halprin Digital Archive, Identifier: 080721-002.jpg (© Anna Halprin Papers, The Elyse Eng Dance Collection, Museum of Performance + Design, San Francisco).

One way that Halprin sought to cope with these tensions was to bring the structural integration of Rolfing techniques into play: "In doing so we can find our goals reinforced, and their fulfilment brought nearer" (Halprin 1995, 117). With its alteration of the fascia muscles and capacities to integrate the body, Rolfing was also considered an important remedy to mend racial trauma, based

> on the idea that, either because of an injury caused by accident, or illness, or by some psychological incident, these experiences lodge themselves in the muscles, which in turn create tension and block the natural capacity for cantering and alignment in relation to gravity.
>
> (Halprin 1995, 117f.)

Rolfing, Halprin expounds, alters the body drastically, but in so doing, also transforms the capacity to feel and increase energy: "Sometimes it is necessary to go

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to the physical body to repattern, and sometimes we go to the emotional body to do this work" (Halprin 1995, 17). The instructions for the scene named "When I look at you, I see" are strongly connected with the Gestalt therapeutic notions of integrating awareness. Halprin directed one dancer from the SF and one from the SW to respectively describe each other in the manner of "confessions", instructing them to "comment objectively on precisely what you see, no more" (Halprin 1995, 161). Subsequently, the participants looked at and touched each other following Halprin's directive to "respond […] to your immediate feelings about the person you are looking at and reacting to" (Halprin 1995, 161). Halprin's use of techniques from Gestalt group therapy also led to mythically charged figures and scenes, like a birthing scene, where a black woman is giving birth to a white woman, developed during the workshop. Towards the end of the film, a mutual washing of hands and feet, licking, and wiping dry with a white towel is shown, which also becomes part of the performance. Those images invoke religious topoi of rebirthing and transition between birth and death, as well as allusions from purity to whitewashing.

All of these breakthrough movements intend to enhance the 'acting out' and subsequently the 'working-through' of traumatic scenes related to historical and collective trauma, as we will discuss later.

'Acting out' multi-directional memory

The longing for safety, integrity, and wholeness are some of the commonalities shared by all of the body therapies that Halprin works with – yearnings that may be rooted in the experiences of racism, flight, and migration that the founders of these therapeutic concepts endured. At the end of the 1960s, Perls still perceived the political climate in the United States as a race between "fascism and humanism", which he considered "lost to the fascists" (Perls 1971, 3). In 1969, he fled for the fourth time in his life to Canada. By the virtue of their inside/outside position vis-à-vis dominant culture, W.E.B. Du Bois argued that in the post-war era, African American and Jewish-American minorities had been "gifted with second-sight" as they were "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (Du Bois 2007, 8; Rothberg 2009, 302). During the work on *CoUS*, the Halprins moved close to a 'black' neighbourhood. Ross, who frames *CoUs* with the title 'Ceremony of Memory' says: "More than just inexpensive rent, there was a certain political idealism at the time that prompted Jewish Americans […], to locate their music and dance centres in San Francisco's black community" (2007, 265). Today's memory studies perspectives emphasise the "strategic relationship between black and Jewish histories" in the Left public sphere at that time, coming together and creating a discursive urban space "in an act of resistance against terror" (Rothberg 2009, 294).

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To us, it seems insightful to analyse this historic art piece through the lens of the currently debated concept of 'multidirectional memory' (Rothberg 2009, 1–32), as we observed mythical, historical, and politically charged scenes that evoke overlaps between contemporary political situations like sit-ins (Figure 21.2), protests, and policing (Halprin/Hill 1969, 19:40) with historical moments of enslavement, Fascism, the Holocaust, and drumhead trials martials (Figure 21.3) during the Second World War. A scene in which male dancers stomp forward synchronously, moving their arms powerfully from top to bottom (Halprin/Hill 1969, 12:10–12:23), elicits a broad thread of associations ranging from captives on a slave ship and forced labourers (in cotton fields or war factories) to primitivist dance rituals and an encounter-group empowering each other. The performers' clasped hands seem like tools hammering in the same rhythm into the ground or moving the oars of a ship while repeatedly emitting the same sound ('Uh, oh'). Thereafter, the scene dissolves into a collective dance.

The key scene – if we read the piece with 'multidirectional memories' – starts with a Watts dancer instructing the group to line up against the wall according to height (Halprin/Hill 1969, 20:27; Figure 21.3). 'Put your hands down!', he reprimands in a harsh voice, 'don't look at me, look out there'. The oppressor next changes his role and lines up (Halprin/Hill 1969, 21:01). Then 'Ave Maria' sounds offstage. Right after that, the first person in the row starts to fall to the ground. The woman plunges lengthways, flat, and face forward. As she lies motionless on the ground, the second woman begins to sink to the floor. The performance becomes an execution shooting. At the end of the scene, the group lies on the stage, still, in sideway postures or flat facedown. The 'acting out' raises associations of multidirectional memories from anthropological line-ups to summary executions as scare tactics during enslavement, the Holocaust, and war as techniques of colonial and racial extermination and conquest.

This is the beginning of the experimental end of the film, in which some of the scenes already shown, now run backwards. One of these fragmentary loops lets the 'dead' rise again. In Halprin's sense of working-through transgenerational traumatic events, this could be interpreted as resurrection after the process of healing; thus, it takes the 'perpetrator trauma' into account (Bond/Craps 2020, 104, 117–125).

Against – Dissent

*CoU*s often met harsh criticism upon its first public performance in 1969. Right after the premiere, Martin Bernheimer's *Los Angeles Times* review (1969) was mildly amused by the 'deep mystical significance' of the piece and the 'handsome

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FIGURE 21.3: Unknown photographer, image of Bo Connely shouting at a group of performers standing against a wall in Anna Halprin's *Ceremony of Us*, 1969, Anna Halprin Digital Archive, Identifier: 080721-001.jpg (© Anna Halprin Papers, The Elyse Eng Dance Collection, Museum of Performance + Design, San Francisco).

young people who obviously enjoy freedom from inhibition' while 'the racial struggle that underlay its concept' had not been expressed on stage (Bernheimer 1969, 8). US culture critic Robby Herbst's (2014) analysis takes an even tougher line by stating that the whole idea of 'art as the tool for social change' has been acted out by performing 'a myth of the adventurous white woman and a virile black man' (Herbst 2014). Herbst criticises the 'racially based clichés' of the movements that divide male bodies into 'a black primitive' and 'a white savior' and female in 'a delicate pale lily' and 'a simple colored girl' (Herbst 2014). For him, the performance is a symbol of the failure of hippie counter-cultural practices and their Esalen Institute-associated group psychology, which he claims produced nothing more than "essential race and gender stereotypes – nodding toward a new age of 'free' (association, love, etc.)" (Herbst 2014). He further argues against the naiveté

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and failure of the four Esalen Racial Confrontation Workshops in the summer of 1968, which applied Gestalt techniques to work through the 'blocked dynamics' between races (Herbst 2014). The workshops ended in irresolvable dissent and proved disastrous for the whole therapeutic project of generating personal and political solutions to racial tensions (Curtis 2002, 21:18ff.)

Questioning modernism – Concepts of historical and collective trauma

Although we agree with Herbst's general critique on primitivism, we consider that those exoticising images might function both ways: as screen memory covering trauma and as a therapeutic process in which acting out these primitivist scenes enables one to surpass them. From the perspective of a cultural theory of trauma, this is part of a modernist conception of healing, globally disseminated through HPM's workshop culture. Halprin's work is dedicated to two sorts of trauma: historical and collective trauma. The idea of historical trauma derives from an identifiable event or the specific experience of suffering and loss, such as the Holocaust, and was conceptualised from a western perspective after the First World War (LaCapra 2014, 49; Bond/Craps 2020, 144). Collective trauma is defined as the response of a group to the specific violent or overwhelming occurrence of historical trauma and the social disruption that follows this traumatic event (LaCapra 2014; Bond/Craps 2020).

The breakthrough movements created by Halprin are related to the concept of historical trauma, open to various processes of acting out and working through that would allow the traumatised subject to reconnect to the present and the future (Bond/Craps 2020, 144). The emerging scenes of *CoUs* enhance the 'acting out' by flashbacks of compulsively reliving traumatic events of the past to occur in the present. Different specific historical moments that have produced transgenerational trauma like enslavement, forced labour, war, assassination, and the policing of members of the civil rights movement collapse and meld into one another in the sense of "multidirectional memory" (Rothberg 2009, 1–32). A further working-through enables one to distinguish between past and present (Bond/Craps 2020, 151), not to fall back into traumatic stress automatisms and to come to terms with trauma. This – according to the logic of Halprin and the HPM – leads to an unlearning of white racism and black self-hatred. At the same time, the workshops for *CoUs* created situations in which "historical trauma" (cf. Bond/Craps 2020, 144) had been 'acted out' on a bodily, non-verbal level. We argue that the strength of the performance lies precisely in the 'acting out' and staging of 'multi-directional memories' that posit "collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive

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versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites" (Rothberg 2009, 49). In hindsight, was it better to dare such a project than not to do it?

Feminist doubts

Halprin's reflections nevertheless make clear how strongly she focused on "powerful sexual tensions" (Halprin/Burns 1969, 132). In her view, "relationships between white men and black women vs. black men to white women" became a (doubtful) benchmark for racial transformation: "This became the unifying theme, it was as if sexual attraction and repulsion was the force that either brought them together or split them apart" (Halprin/Burns 1969, 132). French feminist Françoise Vergès elaborates how the definition of a "sexual temperament" historically had moved to that of a "racial temperament" (2021, 26). In retrospect, Halprin's thinking through the powers of heterosexual desire and its "unbelievable sexual potency", as well as conflicted utterances such as "the white women were so liberated by the black men" (Halprin/Burns 1969, 132), sound like a reaffirmation of colonial and racist topoi. Ethno-sexist racism also reoccurred when – as Halprin talked about the workshop – "one white man's first reaction was that the women were being raped" (Halprin/Burns 1969, 133). This echoes a universalistic colonial perspective with its binary conception of gender, race, and sexual desire as women/men, white/black, based on the long history of racialization through anti-Semitism, the invention of the 'Black race' and the 'Asian race' (Vergès 2021, 25f.).

Viewed this way, Halprin is an 'implicated subject' in "the machinery of political violence" at that time (Rothberg 2019, 200). Her group encounters had neither been perceived from queer perspectives, nor through an understanding of the company's broader diversity, constituted by, among others, African Americans, Latin Americans, Jewish Americans, and WASPs as well as European, Arab, and Asian dancers. However, in the sense of Rothberg, Halprin transforms and reconfigures implications (Rothberg 2019, 199). *CoUs* focuses on modernist concepts of historical and collective trauma, not yet having structural racism in mind (Bond/Craps 2020, 145).

Contemporary perspectives: Listening to Rezaire's Decolonial Healing

At the time Halprin was working on *CoUs*, the movement on black yoga salvation and enlightenment evolved as an African American reparative body practice, referring to spiritual practices of African ancestry. At present, it plays an important role in the work of the contemporary artist Tabita Rezaire. Her programmatic

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talk *Decolonial Healing: In Defense of Spiritual Technologies* states: "By engaging with African and indigenous ancestral technologies of information and communication, we dare to reconcile the worlds of organic matter, energy and electronics to nurture a mystic-techno-consciousness" (Rezaire 2016, 1). Rezaire thereby refers to Walter Mignolo's (2011) concept of decoloniality that aims at 'epistemic reconstitution' and proposes alternative ways of sensing and knowing. She develops practices to heal the "symptoms of coloniality." For the artist, "ancestral practices of divination" enable "cosmic downloads" (Rezaire 2016, 6). The "rewriting of history" and its "potent healing" open up "new potentials for what can be dreamt for our future" (Rezaire 2016, 6f.). Rezaire associates our present with a chain of negative affects and attitudes: "Shame. Anger. Pain. Humiliation. Low self-esteem. Anxiety. Fatigue. Restlessness. Addiction. Stress. Depression. Precarity. Loneliness. Disconnection" (Rezaire 2016, 2). In response, her workshops aim at an "epistemic delinking" that removes participants from "a materiality-centric fear-based reality" (Rezaire 2016, 9). Her approach also reverberates concepts developed by the black feminist Audre Lorde's *Uses of the Erotic*, a pioneering contribution to intersectional queer discourse. Lorde saw the erotic as "a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (Lorde 1984, 87). Rezaire's work connects decolonial Amerindian, Pan-African, Afrocentric, and cyberfeminist perspectives against the internet as a '*dispositiv* of coloniality' causing repression and surveillance: "Healing as Transforming […] Unlearning, […] Aligning, […] Listening" (Rezaire 2016, 3) via "TeChnology, sPiriTualiTy and The eroTiC" (Rezaire 2016, 4). In an interview Rezaire enumerates the practices her work 'resonates with':

> dance, water, Judaism, daydreaming, drug culture, classical philosophy, psychoanalysis, European/Eastern mysticism, oracles, Kemetic Yoga & Ancient Egyptian cosmology, Kundalini Yoga & Vedic sciences, Sufism, African and diasporic spiritual systems, South African traditional healing, Ifa, Amazonian teachings, herbalism, Tantra, Buddhism, conspiracy theory, alien/spirit channelling, New Age, animal life, astrology, numerology, physics, womb work, dreams, sound, nature […] They all […] reflect my eclectic path, […] some I only read about, others I practice daily.
>
> (Rezaire/Ford 2018)

About Kemetic Yoga: MerKaBa for the Hoeteps

Kemetic Yoga with its mantra 'hotep', which can be roughly translated as 'to be satisfied, at peace', is deeply embedded in the history of the African American

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non-violence movement. During the 1970s, in the years after King's assassination, Asar Hapi and Elvrid C. Lawrence (Master Yirser Ra Hotep) from Chicago started researching the ancient Egyptian system of yoga salvation and enlightenment. Following Afrocentric historiography and the mythology of *The African Unconscious* (Bynum 1999), the roots of Kundalini Yoga go back to Kemetic Egypt, transmitted by the postures of "numerous bas-reliefs on the walls of tombs and ancient Egyptian statues dating from the old kingdom period" (Bynum 1999, 297). In the high times of jazz icon's Sun Ra's Afrofuturistic performances, Kemetic Yoga became a trademark and a modern version of an Afrocentric yoga system, to heal the racial trauma of the Afro-Diasporic Community:

> Black people brought to America, or other countries in the diaspora, as enslaved Africans have been damaged psychologically and psychospiritually. […] When we are able to train ourselves to get into a state of deep relaxation, healing can take place on the deepest levels of our being.
>
> (Ra Hotep 2021)

Rezaire, who had been trained in Kemetic Yoga by Ra Hotep, developed the piece *MerKaBa for the Hoeteps* (2016–2020) as a 'collective healing offering'. During the museum closures in 2020, she produced a video (90 min) for the Migros Museum (Zurich) featuring a guided yoga set that she has practised live since the Berlin Biennale 09 (Figure 21.4). She begins the video of her set by describing the history of Kemetic Yoga, as well as its Egyptian cosmologies, and draws upon the Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop's 1970s Afrocentric theories. Each physical exercise follows a specific Egyptian deity, while the artist explains their different hand positions – similar to mudra gestures – and spiritual meanings as "powerful practices to channel our ancestors" (Rezaire 2020, 02:52). Rezaire wears a turban and a pink jellabiya with an ankh appliqué, which is a symbol of life. Instructing the exercises, Rezaire sits in the centre of the film frame, surrounded by historical representations of the respective deities mounted in front of animated desert landscapes with pyramids, similar to the visual universes of Sun Ra and other Afrofuturists. Her body is frequently positioned in relation to the geometrically and ornamentally structured collages so that she is enthroned, for example, on the hand of the goddess Seshat ('the record keeper'). Rezaire relates the mythological meaning of Seshat to the call to preserve the history of one's ancestors. In other sequences, Rezaire's body is surrounded by the celestial canopy of Nut, the goddess of the firmament Nut (Figure 21.5) or by the healing hands of the protective goddess Selket. In the Maat cycle, she is backed by the golden wings of a Maat relief (Figure 21.6).

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FIGURE 21.4: Tabita Rezaire, *MerKaBa for the Hoeteps*, 2019, installation view, Museum of Modern Art New York (© courtesy of the artist).



FIGURE 21.5: Tabita Rezaire, *MerKaBa for the Hoeteps*, 2020, video (1:20:29), filmstill 33:45, Migros Museum 2020, https://vimeo.com/412617569. Accessed 14 September 2021 (© Migros Museum, Zürich/courtesy of the artist).

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FIGURE 21.6: Tabita Rezaire, *MerKaBa for the Hoeteps*, 2020, video (1:20:29), filmstill 51:08, Migros Museum 2020, https://vimeo.com/412617569. Accessed 14 September 2021 (© Migros Museum, Zürich/courtesy of the artist).

With: First rehearsal

I[2] followed the technique and felt a connection with the ground while lying down. Thoughts subsided, relaxed heaviness, deep breathing; tension slid off from the feet, past chakras, out through the crown of my head. Sometimes I cannot see how Rezaire positions her foot and wonder if I'm doing the pose correctly. In any case, I would rather close my eyes and follow my inner perception. In the mountain pose – assumed by stretching my arms above my head and slowly lowering them – an energetic space is created around me. Due to the stretching, I perceive my body as longer and wider due to the (auto)suggested sensation of 'geometric inalignment' (Rezaire 2020, 33:33). During the final relaxation, Rezaire's gongs in an animated night sky with constellations resonate in my body/mind/spirit. I have more courage that there will somehow be a coherent way to balance the ambivalence of this article.

Commodifying the canon of 'other knowledges' and nativism?

Rezaire's decolonial argumentation, however, also remains rather schematic to us. Is it a commodified assemblage of the western art-school canon? Referring

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to Mignolo (2011), Rezaire claims "ancestral knowledge as a weapon against modern/colonial imperialism" and identifies "the tyranny of logic, rationality and dogmatic science" of the West. Understood as such, every kind of critique can bounce off her work. One might also wonder about the intersections of the art system and lifestyle magazines promoting Kemetic or Kundalini Yoga and their fashions from oriental-style bloomers to folding batik tanks. The commodification of "decolonial healing" is in full swing: in health training as well as in the artworld. Rezaire's videos and workshops function all too well in the outreach program of thoroughly marketing-oriented exhibition institutions (Bishop 2012, 17).

According to the artist, other knowledges are often "disdainfully labelled as 'archaic,' 'primitive,' 'naïve,' 'underdeveloped,' at best exotic or good enough to entertain, non-Western knowledge systems still suffer from this stigma as this demeaning rhetoric keeps being disseminated through formal education and mass media" (Rezaire 2016, 2). These are crucial points, but how can we prevent nativism? Perhaps one can see it more as strategic essentialism. Following Édouard Glissant, it is opacity (1997, 189ff.), which as a condition of relationality can avoid nativism – similarly, Rezaire's technologies of ancestral connection differ from nativism.

Pro: Why those workshops are artworks, and not beyond repair

Rezaire's decolonial healing operates on the level of trauma caused by structural violence. This is linked to a concept of structural trauma, defined as "foundational absences […] which might be ontological, ideological, theological, or referential in nature, [and] are transhistorical and unbridgeable" (Bond/Craps 2020, 149). Unlike the legacies of discrete historical losses, trauma caused by structural violence is not respondent to processes of 'working-through' that aim to alleviate the effects of 'historical trauma' (LaCapra 2014, 49). Rezaire's work on 'structural trauma' is less about identifying specific historical events of violence, but instead about creating a collective Afrocentric history, with positive imaginings of common ground and telepathic connection to ancestors. In a pacifist, somatic, mental, and spiritual manner, she initialises the fine-tuning for other frequencies – namely those of connection, kinship, and entanglement.

Her video performances and installations in (art)spaces are designed with syncretistic visual elements to additionally create images within the perceivers, thereby transforming them into participants. The artist activates holistic images of entanglements within the body: through auto-suggestive images as well as through the invitation to perceive the body, mind, organs, chakras, blood- and lymph flows, fascia, and their strains. What is special here is that the participants

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are enabled to influence, put in motion, or guide those images further with their imagination in a creative process. A compelling agency of 'the image' emerges to repair trauma. Even more than in the traditional model of beholding art, it is a shared image-making that unfolds between the artist and the perceiver – with the perceiver being comparable to a film director of one's own lucid images. It sensitises the perceivers to their creative ability for self-healing and transmits an autonomous technology to all.

The works not only activate perception within the body but the postures and narratives can also act as powerful technologies to clear the track to other levels of cosmic connection: Dreaming leads to a sense of holistic networks, which enhance 'the otherwise' and its creative energy, which was long suppressed by coloniality (Lorde 1984, 53–59). This generates international publicity and shared experiences about spiritual methods beyond the western ones: alter-histories and non-western spiritual paths.

Concluding: Entangling strategies

The central concern of both artists is to dissolve diasporic, racist, and colonial traumas in order to achieve long-term social change. The workshops in 1969, as well as today in the 2020s, are based on bodily practices that are driven by the idea of non-violent resistance and the conviction that reprocessing somatic trauma and unlearning is necessary for all participants. This corresponds to current popular concepts related to the healing of historical and racialised trauma carried in the body and the soul, as outlined by, among others, The Embodied Lab or the *New York Times* bestselling trauma specialist Resmaa Menakem. The latter emphasises that "healing from white-body supremacy begins with the body", "new expressions of culture", and needs "social activism" (Menakem 2017, 440, 465). Artistic workshops enable experiencing the physical body and sensing alternative forms of knowledge. As Halprin says, they reflect "the impact of psychology, social sciences and the new technologies" (Halprin 1995, 111). Both Halprin and Rezaire are committed to fostering somatic knowledge within the context of other forms of knowledge. For Halprin, these are closely related to the HPM. Her methodological toolbox draws on a broad spectrum of the latest alternative body and psychotherapies: "All combinations of these techniques Gestalt, Rolfing, bioenergetics, our own inventions, and Polarity therapy are used in new combinations" (Halprin 1995, 122). Unlike Rezaire, however, Halprin does not enter the stage as a therapist or healer, but as a choreographer. She uses therapeutic methods to develop the performance and through this a performative, new vocabulary. It is simultaneously based on mutual creativity and "non-totalizing collectivity" (Shea

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2011, 10). By contrast, as a visual artist, Rezaire plays with the aura of the spiritual healer and the image of the goddess under the sign of a new cosmology based on indigenous knowledge, among others. Through artistic workshops, Halprin and Rezaire activate the role of the viewer and artist alike, to become allies in working towards personal and political change. Rezaire's workshops involve international museum audiences, whom she guides through a choreography of meditation and yoga postures, while she also empowers BIPoC communities, such as the Narration Group, a collective of women and non-binary people of colour at the South London Gallery. Parallel to their artistic work, both artists have built therapy centres: Halprin founded her Tamalpa Institute in Marin County, California in 1978 while Rezaire opened the Amakaba Center in the Amazonian Forest of French Guiana in 2020. A central critique of workshops is that they promote the commodification of art and life. Due to the precarious art field, artists also offer their workshops in the educational sector. This can be seen as a blurring of artistic practices with wage labour on one hand and a fulfilment of the modernist longing for the merging of art and life on the other.

Workshops can enable the non-violent exchange of diverse perspectives and seek 'to hold the space' for divergent voices. However, in terms of racism and the diaspora, the dictum of consensus orientation might cause flattening by wrapping radical subjective expressions and anger up in cotton wool through regimented speech. This is also mirrored by an inflationary use of booming terms such as listening and unlearning. Workshops can be strongly mind-altering as a performative act, but at the same time they might produce a performative loop, in that change is not initiated, but merely demonstrated and exhibited. Yet the workshop impetus often aims for betterment on the individual level and dilutes the collective task that caused the problem. This critique is also raised by Stef Craps, who aims for a decolonisation of the euro-centrist trauma therapy, which takes the universal validity of western definitions of trauma and recovery for granted (Bond/Craps 2020, 112). At the same time, the vulnerability of bodies is constitutive of decolonisation processes, as they are sensitive, perceptive, and different from one another. On one hand, a focus on the individual level can depoliticise issues of social justice (Bond/Craps 2020, 109) and can weaken solidarities and the spirit of the group to fight. On the other hand, we might argue that after a workshop there is more strength to take action towards systemic change. Furthermore, it is important not only to value the (western) 'acting out' and 'working-through' trauma strategies as positive to the disadvantage of other cultural practices like coping strategies, which minority groups have developed to survive (Bond/Craps 2020, 34). Just recently at this point trauma has been differentiated in manyfold ways, including insidious trauma, complex PTSD or disorders of extreme stress not otherwise specified, type II traumas, safe-world violations, oppression-based trauma, and postcolonial syndrome (Bond/Craps 2020, 109). In contemporary art, various

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somatic decolonising practices from diverse, and locally situated strategies of coping and mending are currently being expanded, for example by Maque Pereyra's Yoggaton or Daniela Reina Téllez's fieldworks on de-coloniality self-pleasuring and story-telling.

In conclusion, we consider both the anti-racist and decolonising work of the artists discussed above, as well as our own writing, part of being 'implicated subjects' – "joining with others in collective action" (Rothberg 2019, 200). Although this path often "involves ambivalence, error, and unintended consequences", we link together to form the ground for a "long-distance solidarity" (Rothberg 2019). In this spirit, our text would like to emphasise the performative relationality that speaks of and from a plurality of perspectives interweaving *I*, *us*, and *we* anew – less in the form of a stringent academic analysis than in the form of meandering narratives.

NOTES

1. To enhance creative collaborative processes in workshop encounters, landscape architect and designer Lawrence Halprin published *RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* in 1969, jointly developed by the Halprin couple.
2. One of the authors practiced the set on 23–24 May and 15 August 2021. In this paragraph we use the personal pronoun 'I' to activate experiences of introspection.

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22

Theorising Migration and 'Bodily Speech Act' – Thinking Together with Judith Butler

Yana Meerzon

In *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Judith Butler theorises performativity and the political impact of a public gathering generated by a group of people, who come together (intentionally or otherwise) to express their political standpoint and will for action. Butler argues that it is not necessarily the language that "names and forms the people as a unity" (Butler 2015, 154), but rather peoples' 'bodily resources', such, as "silence, concerted movement, stillness, and […] persistent clustering of bodies in public space", that make them visible, impactful, and powerful as a group (Butler 2015, 155). Theatre and performance arts work according to similar principles. The body of the performer appears on stage to see and to be seen, to call the viewer's attention to its difference and sameness. In a theatre performance that tells stories of migration or features migrants as performers, the performer's body – specifically, if this performer is a migrant themselves – can serve as a *synecdoche of difference*, through which forced displacement, free travelling, and/or the impossibility of return can be re-enacted. By using a "bodily speech act" (Butler 2015, 9), performance arts can contest a nation's hierarchies, challenge its bio-political norms, and offer political alternatives.

To examine and support this statement, I examine two projects that mobilise Butler's theory of bodily speech act through the methodologies of cultural and theatre performance. My first example is a multi-disciplinary outreach project entitled *Refugee Tales*, initiated by the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group and Kent University, which includes public walks with refugees and detainees in the UK, discussions, concerts, and readings of short stories that were written by UK writers and based on the experiences of refugees.[1] My second example is Tawiah M'Carthy's semi-autobiographical solo performance *Obaaberima* (2013),[2] which

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chronicles the journey of a young Agyeman from a troubled childhood in Ghana to a migrant's adulthood in Canada. Despite their differences, both projects could be read through the lens of Butler's bodily speech act and its performative power.

Before I provide a close reading of the chosen works, I briefly outline my terminology and methodological approaches, all informed by the paradigms of cultural and performance studies as specified by Judith Butler, to whom a single body or a group of bodies appears as a cultural, symbolic, and performative construct. My case studies serve as a concretising mechanism to this approach: working with these examples helps avoid essentialist discourses about all refugees being equal or making assumptions about their experiences being the same. An immigrant myself, I strongly believe that we appear and see the bodies of others both in life and on stage as performative constructs of difference.

In an outreach project like *Refugee Tales*, the participants appear as themselves, bringing their personal stories and biographies onto the walk, as well as socially, racially, gender, and linguistically bound performative constructs, which are called upon to confront and negotiate their positionality within the newly formed community of walkers.

In an autobiographical solo performance, an actor (specifically if they are a migrant) often "perform both as themselves and as the actual personages they represent. The absent, unavailable, dead, and disappeared make an appearance by means of surrogation" (Martin 2006, 10). Here, the body of a (migrant) performer functions not only as a container of their experiences and memories but also as a canvas to write upon, so one's personal story is revealed through a series of performative codifications that expose the (in)visible gap between the performer's own body and that of a character. On stage, scholars of theatre semiotics teach us that everything (bodies, objects, spaces, sounds, etc.) appears as a 'sign of sign phenomenon' (Bogatyrev 1977), when acting – a performer's bodily appearance on stage – is understood as a "representation of human and anthropomorphic beings and their actions and behavior by human beings and their actions and behaviors" (Veltruský 1984, 393); or a juxtaposition of one's personal behaviour with the psychophysical characterisation of a dramatic character that implies producing stage action as a codified system of appearances and (re) presentations. Tawiah M'Carthy's solo performance *Obaaberima* invites one to study how migrant theatre creates signs of signs on stage and demonstrates how Butler's theory of a bodily speech act relates to the practices of performative intersectionality.

On the bodily speech act and the power of the assembly: Refugee Tales

Butler defines the bodily speech act as a gesture in which our linguistic and bodily performativity overlap, although they never appear as distinct or identical to each

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other (Butler 2015, 9). Her thinking draws upon J. L. Austin's speech act theory and Hannah Arendt's assertion that politics requires both a space of appearance and bodies to appear within this space (Butler 2015, 155). For Butler, the political authority of a group originates within the "plural movement of bodies" (Butler 2015, 156), which come together and manifest as an assembly. A temporal/spatial happenstance of a public congregation, assembly refers to people, who come together to exercise their 'expressive freedom', political autonomy, and will (Butler 2015, 22). Like the illocutionary power of Austin's speech act, in which the action is performed through making a linguistic statement (Austin 1982, 94f.), a body appearing in a public space produces political impact through its own materiality and lived experience. Even before we begin to talk, the physicality and the semiotics of our arrival into the space of visibility make our bodily speech act not only assertive but also vulnerable: this act of arrival not only creates the performative gesture of resistance and protest but also exposes people to the gaze and power of the authorities.

Refugees – whether they come in groups or individually and whether they appear at national borders by force or on their own accord – exemplify such bodily arrival into the space of visibility. For refugees, the border of the country, in which they seek asylum, presents both a metaphorical threshold of hope and a mechanism of bio-politics, which stands for an oppressive relationship between the state and the individual. Refugees' arrival at the border transforms them into a tangible threat to the host community; and thus, it enhances the performative power of their bodily speech act. At the same time, at the border – a space of estrangement from the self and from others – an individual story of flight can be foregrounded; yet also and somewhat paradoxically, it can also be homogenised. A group's visibility can make each asylum seeker more noticeable and thus more vulnerable to the controlling and manipulating gaze of the authorities.

The project *Refugee Tales* builds upon the paradox of visibility and vulnerability inherent to a refugee's arrival into a space of non-hospitality that is new for them. Through the act of communal walking, it offers performative, legal, and communal devices of resistance; thus, in its political and performative dramaturgy, the project adopts the aesthetics and the methodologies of performance walking. Butler's theory of a bodily speech act serves as a theoretical lens, which can help us better understand the impact that the communal walks had on refugees' long-lasting battle for human rights and freedom.

Claiming asylum in the United Kingdom can end in detention without charge or sentence, with detainees often unaware of "when, or how, their detention will end" (Muir 2017). *Refugee Tales* (I argue) mobilises Butler's performative power of the assembly to bring this inhumane practice to the attention of the UK authorities, seeking to make them accountable for the violation of human rights – the right of free movement and seeking asylum – and to stop this practice altogether.

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Through an array of outreach initiatives, including acts of (self)-advocacy, storytelling, an online performance entitled *28 Tales for 28 Days*, and, most importantly, a series of communal walks in solidarity with refugees, *Refugee Tales* aims to make Butler's bodily speech act politically relevant and assertive. Large groups of visibly differentiated people, *Refugee Tales* invites refugees, representatives of the law, civil servants, academics, social workers, artists, and anybody from the local and international community ready to stand in solidarity with the victims of the unjust asylum system in the United Kingdom to participate in these walks and attend discussions and performances. The participants – dressed in bright blue T-shirts – walk together across the English countryside. Openly visible and assertive, these walks can last a week or be one-day gatherings. They can also manifest as individual events, which even continued to take place during the pandemic. These marches are voluntary, durational, immersive, and performative; and they aim to provide a safe space for all participants, who are given a chance to "hear from migrants themselves about the fears and terrors and pressures that often led them to undertake arduous, terrifying journeys over land and sea, only to find themselves subject to our lamentable procedures for deciding what should happen next" (Muir 2017).

In its gesture of performance walking, *Refugee Tales* helps the organisers translate this project into a series of political objectives, such as to "redraw borders", to "redefine them within England", and "to open up a pan-national geography where text (if not people) are able to travel freely" (Barr 2019, 85). An act of performance activism, *Refugee Tales* aims to transform spaces of hostility into places of solidarity, comradeship, and personal and institutional commitment. For the victims of indefinite detention, who have a chance to participate, walking with *Refugee Tales* might serve as an expression of camaraderie and as a therapeutic tool. A gesture of emotional and physical labour or *topophilia*, communal walking can foster "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (Tuan 1974, 4).

Performance walking with *Refugee Tales* begins with a small registration fee, which covers one's lodgings, community meals, afternoon meetings with activists and artists, and evening performances. Former detainees join the walk for free; often they also receive support to get to the walk and return back to their places of settlement. Depending on personal circumstances, including their level of physical fitness and health, participants can follow the entire route or leave the pilgrimage at their convenience. Upon their arrival, walkers are assigned to their walking groups and walking leaders and given safety instructions. The first communal meal is served, and brief introductions are arranged. After a night's rest, the walking begins.[3]

The beginning of a walk marks the group's symbolic separation from the comforts of civilisation. The route unfolds from the chosen city's centre through

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the countryside, or the space of the limen, where the participants become visible to bystanders, including the villagers. The walk closes with the act of re-entry into the community. Thus, in its spiritual and political symbolism, *Refugee Tales* turns into a sacred route of Victor Turner's "mythical journey" (Turner 1975, 198), which gives it the status of a *communitas*. A utopian and performative construct, it emerges as "a temporary social reality" (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 51), something short-lived, transient, and ephemeral. A type of performative protest, it also engenders "a spectacle of welcome," so that people "who are hidden by and from the culture, rendered invisible by the procedures of the state, [may take and assert] their place in the landscape" (Herd 2016, 134).

Butler's theory of a bodily speech act provides a useful lens to translate the experience of walking with refugees into the language of activism. As *Refugee Tales* moves through the English countryside, the detainees, storytellers, volunteers, and supporters all become directly and equally involved in constructing this fleeting and liminal comradeship. The group assumes a special visibility when the participants are invited to put on identical blue T-shirts with the words 'Refugee Tales' imprinted on their backs. As the group moves through the countryside, it produces "a rift within the sphere of appearance", which is often regulated by cultural stereotypes, and thus disrupts the assumptions of universality of the public sphere (Butler 2015, 50). Dressed in identical blue shirts, the participants become a homogeneous group of difference, which then turns into a gesture of performative protest or a bodily speech act. Every walker of this project, be they a UK citizen or a new refugee, a white person or a racialised one, asserts their right, collective and individual, to appear in the public sphere of their home or adopted country, to assert their agency and to demand recognition. Here, a blue T-shirt turns into a special theatrical prop: it functions as a marker of the group's identity and an instrument of belonging. When the group appears on a town square, in a field, or on a riverbank, it asserts its visibility and agency; and so, it performs politically through a collective bodily act.

The project thrives on the participatory and durational mechanisms of the assembly: central to its political structure is the transformative power of endurance. Separated from the privileges and seductions of civilisation – including mobile technologies and the elaborate comforts of home, such as hot showers and comfortable beds – participants are forced to re-discover a simple life. Walking with *Refugee Tales* works by osmosis: personal discomfort, being cut off from civilisation and finding oneself in close proximity to other bodies give participants a sense of embodied experience. Although this experience cannot bear a resemblance to the precariousness of travels endured by migrants, marching with a group of strangers pulls walkers out of their emotional and physical comfort zones, and thereby prompts personal agency. The walk accentuates both the power

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of collective performance and the solitude of each of its participants. The group exercises *processional solidarity* (Cox 2017, 496).

The transgressive body of a migrant – An autobiographical border performance

In order to theorise the experiences and narratives of migration, one must speak of borders in their literal and metaphorical dimensions. Borders – geographical, social, political, or private – demarcate both a sense of rupture and connectivity. In their geopolitical functions, borders map out a territory; they protect and unite the people who live on it, but they also separate one group from another. In their figurative dimensions, borders denote the interdependencies of discrimination that situate a refugee as a subject of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw 1989) – someone who appears at the cross-sections of race, gender, and class; and someone whose personal sense of self and identity is fragmented and informed by their embodied past and present experiences.

When seen on stage – either in the context of documentary theatre or a fictional performance – the body of a migrant performer can appear as an iconic sign of forced displacement. Functioning as a kind of time machine, this body can serve both as a container of memory, that is, it can reflect the performer's own past, and a vehicle to tell a story. A canvas onto which a new story, the story of making and performing the Self of a migrant, is projected, this body becomes a performative object displayed for the audience's consumption, so the conflict between the autobiographical and the fictional (which such a body evokes) drives the drama of migration forward. The newly created body/character dependence becomes the subject of an autobiographical solo performance, and thus it calls for Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and bodily speech acts (Butler 2015, 29–50).

Cultural expectations and fantasies of others constitute a set of norms 'imprinted' on and 'produced' by individuals: these expectations "inform the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time" (Butler 2015, 29) and are the target of protest, when, for example, we viscerally and publicly "reject the terms of gender assignment" (30). This protest is performative and political, and it demands recognition and invites agency (35–45). It is simultaneously mobilised by bodily enactment or reproduction of these gendered norms and by their deconstruction (31).

Butler's theory of gendered bodily acts can be extended to the bodily performances of migration both on and off stage, supported by Sara Ahmed's notion of "stranger-fetishism" (2000, 45), which recognises a migrant's body as stranger or alien. "Stranger-fetishism" takes many forms, but it always comes back to our

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perception of the other's skin as "a visual signifier of difference" (Ahmed 2000, 44). When a migrant performer appears on stage, their body, specifically if it is a racialised body, signifies the semiotics of difference and often becomes an instrument of a testimonial protest.

Tawiah M'Carthy's autobiographical performance *Obaaberima* (2013) exemplifies this practice. "Named after a derogatory term in the Ghanaian Tui dialect meaning 'girly boy'" (Anthony 2015), *Obaaberima* chronicles the journey of a young man Agyeman from a troubled childhood in Ghana to a migrant's adulthood in Canada. Border – internal and external – is its leading theme. M'Carthy uses the traditional Ghanaian ceremony of an 'Out-dooring' as the play's structure. Here a newborn baby, who has survived the first seven days of their life, is presented to the community and named. "The name you are given becomes your path, your box to carry – M'Carthy explains – it signifies your lineage […] and your future"; "it is also the role that you will play […] in the history of the family which becomes the history of the community, and the history of the country, and the history of the universe" (M'Carthy in Halferty 2013, 22).

The name 'Agyeman' means "he who saves nations" (M'Carthy 2015, 4), and thus even in Canada, Agyeman must remember that he has to return home, to give back to the place that made him. But Agyeman has difficulties reconciling "his personal desires with his obligations to others" (Halferty 2013, 21), specifically when he begins to accept his second Self, the beautiful dancer Sibongile. 'Sibongile' means 'thanks', and it functions as Agyeman's "gift of empowerment" and "a gift of self" (Halferty 2013, 22). However, it takes Agyeman years of silence and shame to appear publicly as Sibongile. Only when he is about to be released from Canadian prison, Agyeman decides to tell his story and perform the second ritual of outdooring, in which a new Agyeman as Sibongile is born.

Fusing traditional dancing and singing with multilingual storytelling, M'Carthy creates a series of performative transformations that help drive this idea home. By collapsing Agyeman and Sibongile into one symbolic body, M'Carthy makes this story of internal ruptures visible. He capitalises on the invisible borders of difference that mark his personal sense of Self and that of his character; and so, he transforms Butler's theory of gendered, performative, and politicised bodily speech act (2015, 30–50) into a theatrical sign-of-sign phenomenon. To reconcile this sense of intersectionality, M'Carthy stages his character's future in the gesture of return. Thanks to his experiences in Canada and to the strength he found in accepting his other Self and his other name, Agyeman is ready to go back to Ghana, to fight for the rights of the LGBTQ community.

As a migrant and as a queer person himself, M'Carthy's solo work illustrates Butler's theory of a bodily speech act and demonstrates how it can be asserted on stage. *Obaaberima* proves that it is peoples' 'bodily resources', our presence within

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our bodily difference, that makes us visible, potent, and forceful individually and as a group (Butler 2015, 154f.); and so, it grants refugees the right to appearance, recognition, and agency.

To conclude, through the performativity of a bodily speech act – the act of arrival and the gesture of appearance in a public space or on stage – migrants make the power hierarchies of a nation visible. Their bodily speech acts – including "gathering, gesturing, standing still, all of the component parts of 'assembly' that are not quickly assimilated to verbal speech" (Butler 2015, 48) – force us, the bystanders, to question the bio-political norms of the refugee/state dichotomy and to seek alternatives to them. Performance activism (like performance walks organised by *Refugee Tales*) or individual theatrical works that feature migrant performers (like *Obaaberima*) mobilise the power of a bodily speech act to focus our attention on how we interact with each other and with strangers.

NOTES

1. See *Refugee Tales*, official website: https://www.refugeetales.org/. Accessed 3 May 2021.
2. The winner of Outstanding Production, Outstanding Sound Design/Composition, and Outstanding Lighting Design at the 2013 Dora Mavor Moore Awards in Toronto, *Obaaberima* was produced at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. It was directed by Evalyn Parry, with music by Kobena Aquaa-Harrison.
3. I participated in the 2018 walk. This description is informed by my own experience.

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23

China–Africa: Performing the Image of Migration and Migration of Image

Mi You

My article focuses on Beijing-based artist Pu Yingwei's[1] works that address the complex relations, both real and imagined, between China and Africa.[2] *Dam Theater* is a commission of the 13th Shanghai Biennale (2020–2021) (Figure 23.1), a monumental installation whose topological form alludes to the Karimenu II Dam in Kenya, which the artist's uncle Li Guiping worked on as a hydraulic engineer. The monumental painting embedded in the installation, at the larger-than-life size of 2 × 10 m, serves as an unusual composite of painting, public art or graffiti, and a billboard sporting ambiguous political or commercial campaigns. The videos projected onto the dam structure further constitute the discursive and narrative layers of the work. Taken together, the artist traces the migratory paths of people and ideologies across time and space.

This article provides a close reading of Pu's work and contextualises the wide array of visual culture materials from the post-Bandung 1960s to the present that the artist draws on. An expanded notion of performativity is deployed in the critical engagement with the artistic gestures. Implying a field much broader than theatre, performance renders the moment as an event, an 'actual', in which something actualises (Schechner 2003). The performative event can be located in language, which not only presents information but also 'does things', such as when naming properties, giving promises, and pronouncing verdicts (Austin 1975). In visual culture, revolutionary art or images in media are performative in that they enact or magnify social potentials in ways more than felicitousness – they 'do *things*'. This can be seen in how China and Africa strategically and mutually shape their images today or "contest, consolidate, improve images, rather than convey reality" (Batchelor/Zhang 2017, 7). Furthermore, Dutch artist Jonas Staal's concept of macro- and micro-performativity helps to elucidate the function of images in the contemporary political economy.

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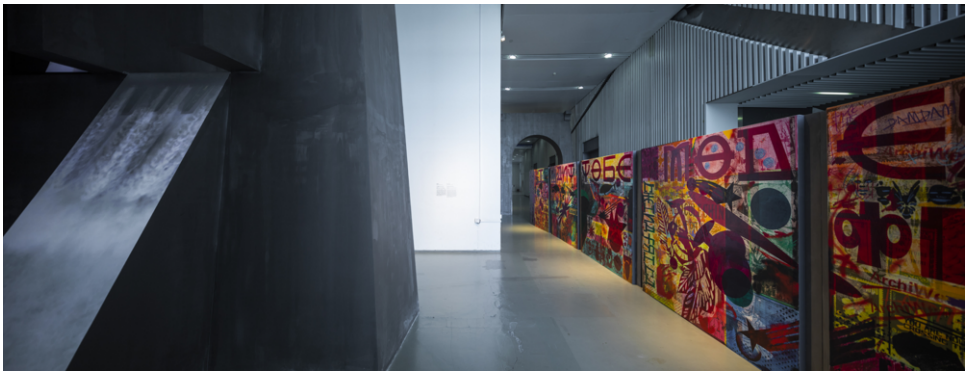

FIGURE 23.1: Pu Yingwei, *Dam Theater*, installation view, 13th Shanghai Biennale, 2020–2021 (© Shanghai Biennale).

With this, the article teases out the performative dimensions in the artistic content, techniques, and how it interacts with the economy around it with the triangulating concepts of pop and propaganda, which the artistic work leans towards.

China–Africa then and now

Dam Theater is situated at the nexus of personal micro-narratives and transnational, geopolitical macro-narratives. The artist is drawn to personal migratory paths as well as the shapeshifting migration of ideas and ideologies. Studying in France between 2013 and 2018, Pu was confronted with the question of identity in the turbulent aftermath of Charlie Hebdo. This period coincided with his engineer uncle's visits to the Central African Republic and Kenya to work on dam projects sent by a Chinese state-owned company. Having never set foot abroad before, his uncle shared photographs from his trips, some of which appeared to the western-educated Pu as unabashed exoticisation. Trying to make sense of China–Africa relations on the level of the individual, Pu started building an archive of journals, posters, stamps/postcards, and personal recollections from his acquaintances. The variegated materials span the period from the fervent heyday of *Third Worldism* in the 1960s to today and find their way into his videos and paintings.

Speaking an accented French, which constitutes a deliberate performativity of identity, the artist relates the story of himself and his family in the video. We would learn that, as a birthday present, Pu's uncle sent him a video clip in which a group of black men uniformly held their rifles skyward and saluted Pu – apparently a performative message service that can be purchased for any purpose online. Then,

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there is the Taobao e-commerce shop owner with over 400,000 followers, a young lady who travels extensively in Africa and sells African jewellery and crafts back in China and strives to communicate knowledge about African cultures. With all good intentions and coming from the position of 'people-to-people' – a contemporary diplomatic rhetoric – there is something 'off' in these instances that strikes Pu as representing a 'grainy' and 'dirty' reality – grainy as against the 'smooth', mediated, and self-sufficient reality and dirty in the sense of getting one's hands dirty rather than drawing moralising conclusions from a distance (Pu 2020).

This 'dirty reality' perspective aligns with a growing number of recent scholarship and artistic/institutional practices focusing on China–Africa relations at the grassroots level, from anthropological research on African traders in Guangzhou (Matthews et al. 2017) to the Chinese 'drifters' in Africa (Driessen 2021), from the multifaceted *All the Way South* research initiative of Guangzhou's Times Museum to the itinerant artistic research project *Chinafrika: under construction* by Jochen Becker and Daniel Kötter. They variously show the many Chinas and Africas beyond simple signifiers and test the limit of what Lionnet and Shih call 'minor transnationalism', the alternative spaces of hybrid exchange and participation where "it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the centre" (Lionnet/Shih 2005, 5).

At the same time, the personal qualms are mirrored in socio-historical inconsistencies. In Figure 23.2, we see an old video fragment showing acclaimed singer Zhu Mingying performing a Zairian (Congolese) song in local attire with her skin painted black. In the video, this is juxtaposed with Zhu's more recent appearance at



FIGURE 23.2: Pu Yingwei, *Dam Theater*, video still, 13th Shanghai Biennale (© Pu Yingwei).

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the Chinese New Year Gala on national TV, after which her blackfacing triggered a netizen outcry (Wang 2021). This prompts the unpacking of a longer history.

After officially establishing Sino-African relations at the Bandung Conference in 1955, Chinese premier Zhou Enlai's 1963–1964 state visits to ten African countries consolidated non-aligned principles and promoted solidarity and cooperation among third-world countries. In the spirit of Bandung, the Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble was established in 1962 to promote cultural exchanges between non-aligned countries. The repertoires saw music and dance from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and the ensemble's Chinese actors studied in several African countries, Zhu being one of them. Various productions featured revolutionary themes, and the dancers performed with dark body and facial make-up and in African costumes. The goal of this racial impersonation, as dance scholar Emily Wilcox contends, was to celebrate anticolonial themes and struggle for national independence (2019, 149).

The Zhu Mingying clips duly speak to a 'Bandung nostalgia', the unfinished cultural decolonisation project that was highlighted in Bandung (Yoon 2018). Yet as Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, it is exactly its unfinishedness that allows us to "conceive cosmopolitanism without seeking any overall mastery over the untamable diversity of human culture" (Chakrabarty 2010, 59, quoted in Yoon). The minor cosmopolitanism of cultural production is also manifested in visual cultures in the form of what art critic Lee Weng Choy calls "multiple and lateral frames of references" (2017, 342). Some of the visual cues in Pu's painting come from his study of woodcut art, which harkens back to Chinese proletariat art with figureheads like Li Hua and Hu Yichuan, and just as much to woodcut prints from Latin America that were enthusiastically introduced into China in the 1950s.

But there's more to a nostalgic throwback to *Third Worldism*. Pu references poster art from the era depicting Africans and Chinese locking their arms together as a gesture of collective struggle. Notably in revolutionary paintings, as anthropologist Melissa Lefkowitz observes, the Africans are often depicted wearing traditional robes, while the Chinese are variably in their worker, peasant, or soldier outfits, thereby suggesting China incorporates Africa into an imagined global community (Lefkowitz 2017).

In the video, Pu juxtaposes grainy video footage from the 1960s of Chinese and African construction workers labouring together with the sleek promotional video of the recent Chinese-sponsored dam and railway projects in Kenya, which again shows African and Chinese on the construction site. Only this time, the managers or engineers are featured more prominently than actual workers. The dam, bulky and commanding like the structure reproduced in the installation, conjures up associations with the threshold between latency and the flushing of global capital and migratory flows (for example Kooperative für Darstellungspolitik 2019). The homogenising power of capital today erases the revolutionary sentiment and differences among the labouring bodies. Looking back, perhaps one should not avail the experiences and material

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residues of the common struggles involving the staging of ethnic identities too readily to postcolonial studies, for the critique is conditioned by present-day politico-economic frames. In a compelling study on cinema and literature between the second and third worlds, Rossen Djagalov documents how proponents of postcolonial theory, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o or Ousmane Sembène, were shaped by experiences of the third-world exchanges ranging from physical convenings to literary circulation networks, only to later be assimilated into western academia where the field of postcolonialism became specialised and institutionalised (Djagalov 2020).

A parallel structure can be identified in the visual registry from revolutionary art to pop. If the research materials were presented merely in a documentarian way, such as through the video, the artist would be performing a first-order political critique on the migration of people and capital. Conscious performativity of critique being embedded as a mode of cultural production in capitalism, the work takes a decisively performative turn.

Pop, propaganda, and performativity

It is in the monumental paintings that the performativity latent in the video, in the sense of performing migrating identities, gains a more pronounced expression. At first sight, not only can the paintings be associated with political pop and propaganda art, but they are also elusive and incongruous, as they operate across different registers of history, political aspirations, and gestures of language.

Upon closer examination, the paintings reveal elements borrowed from or alluding to revolutionary woodcut art, Soviet avant-garde art, *dazibao* ('big character poster') characteristic of the Cultural Revolution, and symbols of consumerism (Figure 23.3). The lavish use of red, yellow, and green sets the tone of the painting – a reference to the flags of African nations and China. Layers of found objects are transposed onto the canvas, such as photo journalistic documentations of Chinese and African workers from the 1960s, personal photographs of the artist's uncle, and the cover of *Chinafrica* journal (Figure 23.4).

A prominent element is the slogan 'I want to be modern' painted in a self-made 'revolutionary realist typeface'. The constituent parts derive from Chinese characters, English, and Cyrillic letters, which represent the Chinese tradition, capitalist globalisation, and Communist heritage. As such, it is the stylised visual equivalent of the intellectual debate *tong santong* or unifying three traditions, a concept proposed by political philosopher Gan Yang that describes the modernisation of China as a struggle to fuse Confucianism, socialism, and liberalism (Gan 2007). What does this fusion tell us?

If third-world cultural productions crisscrossed borders back in the days, after the fall of the Soviet Union, cultural producers gravitated towards first-world

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FIGURE 23.3: Pu Yingwei, *Dam Theater*, detail of painting, 200 × 200 cm (series size 200 × 1000 cm), 13th Shanghai Biennale, 2020–2021 (© Pu Yingwei).

systems for arbitration of their worthiness. The prevalence of pop art in places like China is an exemplary phenomenon. Pop embodies, as curator Jessica Morgan argues, what Jürgen Habermas calls a 'performative contradiction' in that 'the denunciation of an ideology employs in its critique the very language of that ideological power'. While this seeming conundrum affords pop its methodological opportunity in 'simultaneously championing populist expressions and disavowing the media's ideological coinage', Morgan perceptively notes that how pop plays out beyond the West needs to be recognised as "a complex, ambiguous and self-reflexive response to contemporary culture" (Morgan 2015).

Chinese political pop emerged in the 1980s and 1990s and is associated, such as in the works of its figureheads Wang Guangyi and Yu Youhan, with the radical

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FIGURE 23.4: Pu Yingwei, *Dam Theater*, detail of painting, 200 × 200 cm (series size 200 × 1000 cm), 13th Shanghai Biennale, 2020–2021 (© Pu Yingwei).

use of poster art and iconography from the Cultural Revolution era. Art theorist Paul Gladston has complicated the reading of these works as covertly oppositional counter-authoritarian gestures, and instead places Yu's intentions as anything than straightforward (Gladston 2016, 39). Recently, Peggy Wang has resuscitated the rich visual and material culture associated with Wang's work, such as the masthead booklets that served as a tool for mass engagement with art, thereby energising the interpretations of political pop (Wang 2020). Approaching the socialist legacy sideways, art critic Carol Yinghua Lu and artist Liu Ding argue against the common conception that realism is realist only in content. For them, artworks experimenting with expression and form can also be considered a manifestation of realism. In this way, they see the 'radical' experiments in Chinese contemporary art as precisely in

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keeping with socialist realism's historical demand to present reality in creative work (Lu/Liu 2014). This challenges the tired notion of hylomorphism, or the dichotomy of form versus matter/content, and instead introduces a dynamic 'self-moving form', which actualises the content as a 'developed form' (Osborne 2022).

Pu similarly posits that political pop itself is not outdated, but rather political pop as a meaningful critique. Adding to this rich and not unproblematic lineage, he coins the term 'speculative pop' to describe how political pop was prescient of what was to come and blends perfectly into the political and economic reality of contemporary China with both heightened ideological dominance and entertainment culture (Pu 2021). Pu aptly reactivates the heritage of political pop by performing the over-identification twice – by citing political pop of the 1990s and his own reinterpretation today – and effectively wagers on a speculative future of syncretic ideological systems. It is only telling that Pu has put the digital files of this typeface in the public domain free for anyone to use and, at the same time, has licensed a fashion brand to use it in a line of their street fashion apparel (Figure 23.5).

The 'becoming form' of art, as Peter Osborne (2022) argues, at a time when art seems to infinitely expand its boundaries to include non-art forms precisely reflects the homologous structure between the form of art and the capitalist social form. That is, a structural similarity could be identified between the self-positing subject of art and the self-positing subject of capital.[3] In this light, Pu's work crystallises the 'becoming form' of art regardless of or exactly thanks to its manifold forms, from revolutionary art to pop, from typeface to fashion. His work stands to witness the effortless convergence of the form of art and the social form: compositing, re-arranging, metabolising, the form bleeds into the content, the ideological into the speculative, and the revolutionary into a (life)style of revolution.

The juxtaposition of revolutionary art and the capitalist condition for art chimes with Dutch artist Jonas Staal's concepts of macro- and micro-performativity. Framing his own practice provocatively as a 'propaganda artist', Staal discerns macro-performativity of propaganda as aiming to enable massive processes of transformation, such as toppling governments and instigating global warfare, or here, the references of poster art of Third Worldism or Cultural Revolution. The micro-performativity, on the other hand, is the internalised lived experience of propaganda on a day-to-day level, manifesting in the films we watch, in our dinner table conversations, and in our voting decisions. Staal underscores that "propaganda is performed on us on a macroscale, but to become sustainable it needs us to participate and contribute to this performance on a microscale as well" (Staal 2019, 2). Staal's own work on leftist popular propaganda, as the collective imagination of how we envisage the world differently, is nothing short of galvanising. What his practice demonstrates, and what Pu in his own art corresponds to, is that studying propaganda itself is far from innocent, for it simultaneously studies and teaches the art of world-making.

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FIGURE 23.5: Pu Yingwei for INXX 2021SS, Hangzhou, 2020–2021 (© Pu Yingwei).

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Conclusion

The revolutionary propaganda of the 1960s that united differences in common struggles and encouraged lateral reference frames is eclipsed by today's propaganda, which enshrines politics as readily commensurable and consumable as a lifestyle. Capitalism operates micro-performatively, instilling images of progress, connectivity, and even the exercise of critique. Pu's work, by framing the images of migration and the migration of images between China and Africa, performs a double critique of both political propaganda and capitalism. To test the efficacy of propaganda, the work elicits vestiges of the macro-performative apparatus of revolutionary art, while complicating the history and legacy of Bandung and China–Africa relations. To elucidate the logic of capitalism, the work itself strategically embodies an updated notion of political pop that becomes a form of many contradictory forms, smoothing out historical, artistic, and politico-economical ruptures. The inextricability of the doubleness points to how the socialist revolutionary is assimilated into the capitalist postmodern by way of style and critique. And indeed, not only can critique be performed, but it can also be dressed in.

NOTES

1. All Chinese names are rendered with family name first.
2. The choice of terminology – whether China–Africa or Africa–China – reflects the political positioning of the speaker. The article uses China–Africa, as the analysis is based on the work of Pu Yingwei who uses the term Chinafrica. *Chinafrica* is the title of a monthly periodical published by the official China International Publishing Group since 2009, which marks China's re-engagement with Africa in an era of global China.
3. See also Marina Vishmidt (2016).

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24

On the (Im)possibilities of Migrating Images

Anahita Razmi and Cathrine Bublatzky

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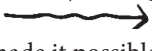
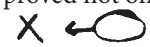
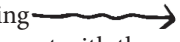
This is an explorative photo essay that engages with two dispersed family photography archives and a search for migratory family histories. With our artistic and anthropological interest in migration and migrating regimes of photographs, we began a conversation some years back about the visual performative cultures of the migratory everyday and aesthetic visions of (forced) displacement in historical family photographs.

When we realised that we share (like many others) a complex situation and multi-layered record of migratory histories in our own families, which are shaped by fragmented and incomplete collections and archives of photographs, memories, and stories of others, we developed a collaborative approach in order to come to terms of notions of the (im)possibility of migrating images.

With individual searches about our families' histories related to the Second World War in Eastern Prussia, Silesia, and Federal Republic of Germany (1942–1951) and Iran, the Iranian Revolution (1979), and the Federal Republic of Germany (1977–1981), we first collected photographs, documents, and stories by family members. Our aim was to experiment with "imagination and experience between aesthetic and rational forms of knowledge" (Greverus/Ritschel 2009, 30) and through different strategies of audio-visual communication, archiving, and digital representation. Over a period of several months, we met in regular online and face-to-face meetings and collected the records on a shared online platform, moved images, annotated, (dis)connected, and animated them. In listening, narrating, writing, and speculating about each other's family archives, we co-created this photo essay. The tracks / trails  (trail 1–starting at Cathrine's collection),  (trail 2–starting at Anahita's collection),  (track A – imagination / animation),  (track B – dis/connection) present our questions, observations, and arguments. They made it possible to connect and disconnect ourselves from the photographs as well as to animate and release the photographs from the archives. With these pictograms, we make the inherent autonomy of the objects and archives visible to the readers and possibly also expandable.

We thus suggest to the readers to find their own tracks through the material. The symbols can be read in multiple directions and work neither only linear nor alternating.

Our assumption that voids and interruptions would determine the access to our own family stories proved not only to be true. Observing and experiencing each other's archives of family photographs  even provoked us to look for methods of imaginating/animating  or (dis)connecting  to identify and explore existing overlaps and speculative moments, and to experiment with the meaning production of historical photographs. Along with the installation elements of digital, text-based, and animated actions and pictograms, we established a format in which the stories of migration and flight in our otherwise disjointed photographic family archives of a migratory everyday life in times of crisis intersect and make existing (dis)connections  visible. Thus, this photo essay ties the multimodality (Collins et al. 2017) of our knowledge production together, and, simultaneously, interweaves and questions our artistic and anthropological positions.

A shared notion of the (im)possibility of migrating images (Mitchell 2004) was central to our approach. We observed it along reciprocal processes of animation  that happened between the different photographs and archives: between us as the viewers and the photographs, but also among ourselves. In this wider landscape of border-crossings between different visual regimes of migration and between different photographic archives and generations of one family, we stimulated a distribution of the sensible (Rancière 2013) when we pushed the photographs' circulation further through  and  across geographical and temporal distances, in and beyond photo albums  and digital devices.

With the question 'What do images tell about migration?', we found ourselves stimulated and challenged by different frames of visibility and invisibility, performativity, and knowledge production. This photo essay is one outcome. It shows our collective attempt to question the role of photographs and ourselves as we both turn into producers and mediators of knowledge about fragmented histories of political oppression, violence, and displacement that shape our families and their photography archives (Bhabha 2012).

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What do images tell about migration?

Some tracks/trails:



Cathrine: Somewhen in Edenkoben/Southwest Germany in 1951. The family poses in front of their first own home after their flight from Eastern Prussia during the Second World War. Is the family's migratory history detectable?

Anahita: When I look at this image, I am somehow reminded of other German post-war photos, especially when you tell me this must be around 1951. The family seems happy in this photograph; the three kids to the right are smiling, and the boy on the left appears shy but curious. The adult women in the photo are smiling, too; I want to read some kind of relief into their faces. Some sort of post-war optimism for the future [...] I wonder how much of this photo is spontaneous and how much is staged. The male figures in this image look serious and 'competent', with their suits and ties and your great-grandfather with his quite impressive hat and moustache – your great-grandmother seems more 'dressed up', while the other women and the children look more casual. Not sure if casual is an appropriate word here, as we know this is a period of shortages and probably not much choice. A family who needed to flee most definitely would have been heavily affected by these shortages. When you tell me that they – as a family of refugees – are standing in front of their new home here, I wonder how they arrived at this place. I look at that typically German wooden fence in the image, that door behind them, the plastering of the walls – and immediately imagine what is part of this new home. Also, what did this family leave behind? I do not see this in this image, but my brain is immediately trying to fill some gaps.

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Anahita: Somewhen in Tehran/Iran in the 1980s – a family portrait across different locations?

Cathrine: This family portrait fascinates me, it even touches me: how the persons are grouped and depicted. Who are the old lady and the two kids? Also the additional photograph of the third child who obviously cannot be there but is still 'with them' is part of this family portrait. Looking at this portrait within the portrait evokes so many questions. You tell me that this child is you? But why are you added, pinned, as a photograph? And I wonder why the atmosphere is so serious, almost anonymous? Is it taken in a photostudio? I try to imagine the story behind this picture and its arrangement. If a person is added with a photo as a placeholder, an effigy, that person must be greatly missed. So how are the depicted persons actually related to each other? Where do they live? We see at least two if not three generations, in the photograph. And they look somehow staged with all of them looking in different directions. Only the boy on the left has direct eye contact with the photographer. From their clothes, I would not be able to say when the photograph is taken, and where. You tell me this is your grandmother in Iran (the mother of your father), and the boys are your cousins (sons of your father's brother), and it's you, who lives far away from your Iranian family, somewhere in Germany. What is the reason for these distances that I observe in this picture on several levels? When does this distance have its starting point, does it end at some point or does it continue? Is it a story of migration, of flight?

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Cathrine: This image very much represents what my relatives would call 'arrival'. 'Arrival' and 'reunion' and 'proximity' of the family after the traumatic flight from their home in East Prussia that the great-grandparents (on the left) had to leave behind and after their experiences during the Second World War. With the exception of the younger lady next to my great-grandfather (about her I learned only fragmentary information, except that she came for a visit from South Africa where she worked as a missionary) the other elderly and adults, my grandparents and great grand-parents went through serious times of war, loss, and forced displacement. My father and his sister, the young kids standing next to their father/my grandfather on the right side, were born during this time of war and when the family had lost everything. The photograph was taken during a family gathering by the sister of my grandmother, who was a professional photographer. So the family is posing in front of their first own home, and yes, as you say, that's why there is maybe some 'relief' on their faces. I try to imagine the meaning of 'arrival' and 'home', of displacement and flight, and if/how it is visible in this photograph. During and after the war, people from the eastern areas were considered as refugees, they were not always and not everywhere 'welcomed'. I wonder, what 'belonging' meant to them. My father never talked about the time when he was a young boy, just like many of the (post-war) generation who experienced the Second World War. I have always asked myself how these traumatic experiences of forced displacement and migratory histories have been inscribed into the family story and into photographs such as this one. For the elder generations depicted in this image, have they ever thought about the possibility of returning back 'home'? What can 'home' mean when a family's history is shaped by migration and fragmented, multi-directional memories? This fragmented history and memories seem to continue, in family photo albums with missing photography, with those stories about 'who is who', 'who knows what', or 'who has which images'. With the desire to not forget, a patchwork of fragments emerges, each time family members talk about relatives, about places or incidences. There must be a lot that nobody talks about, or pretends not to know or to remember. Like a hotchpotch that the two of us seem to continue within our exploratory exchange.



Anahita: This must be shortly after my father arrived in Germany. His hat to me looks like one of those traditional Bavarian feathered caps that wants to say "I am here and yes, this place is as German as it gets". Is there a lightness, an easiness to the photo? This was not yet a story of flight or exile at this point.

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Cathrine: A look into one of the last family albums marked by the traces of time, damages and blank spots. After the grandmother (the lady depicted in these pictures) died, many of the family photos were lost over time or scattered with her three children and their children over many places in Germany and Central America. How to deal with such ongoing fragmentation of family photographs and their own migratory histories? Is this a repetition or a continuation of the migratory family history itself? Or, can we, with such exploratory conversations and observation bring our personal impossibilities of knowing together? Can our co-created language across differences and distances help us to establish an 'easiness' in the engagement with the burden of history? Does it allow us to protect invisible histories and memories of exile and flight from vanishing?

Anahita: It is interesting to me that you see something like 'multiple distances' in this image.
Yes, the people in this photo are my grandmother and two of my cousins in Iran. I am the child in the photo print within the photo – a print that my parents had sent via mail from Germany to Iran in the early 1980s. The photo then took another journey when my cousin in Iran sent me a digital copy of it in 2015.
I don't know who took the photo and am confused about the time it was taken. It was for sure taken in the early 1980s, but to me, its black-and-whiteness makes it look much older, almost like someone used outdated technology in an old-school photo studio. I know that the photo pinned to my grandmother's chest is a colour photograph, for example, as I have a copy of it in Germany.
My father left Iran at the end of the 1970s after the Iranian Islamic Revolution and could not ever return. I only met the two cousins who are in this photo over twenty years later.
Yes, this is a story of migration – and a story of complex, fragmented, and not at all straightforward displacement. It created this strange photo montage that we are now looking at and which, for me, somehow tries to perform an overcoming of the distances that migration had forced upon our family.
You mention effigy and staging as a mode of bringing separated things closer together. In this photograph, I feel like I am looking at an aim for closeness, for proximity, even if it is only symbolic, a longing for some kind of togetherness. Is this achieved?
When thinking about what images we place close together, and what images stay separated and distant, I do believe this urgent aim for closeness does hold a potential.

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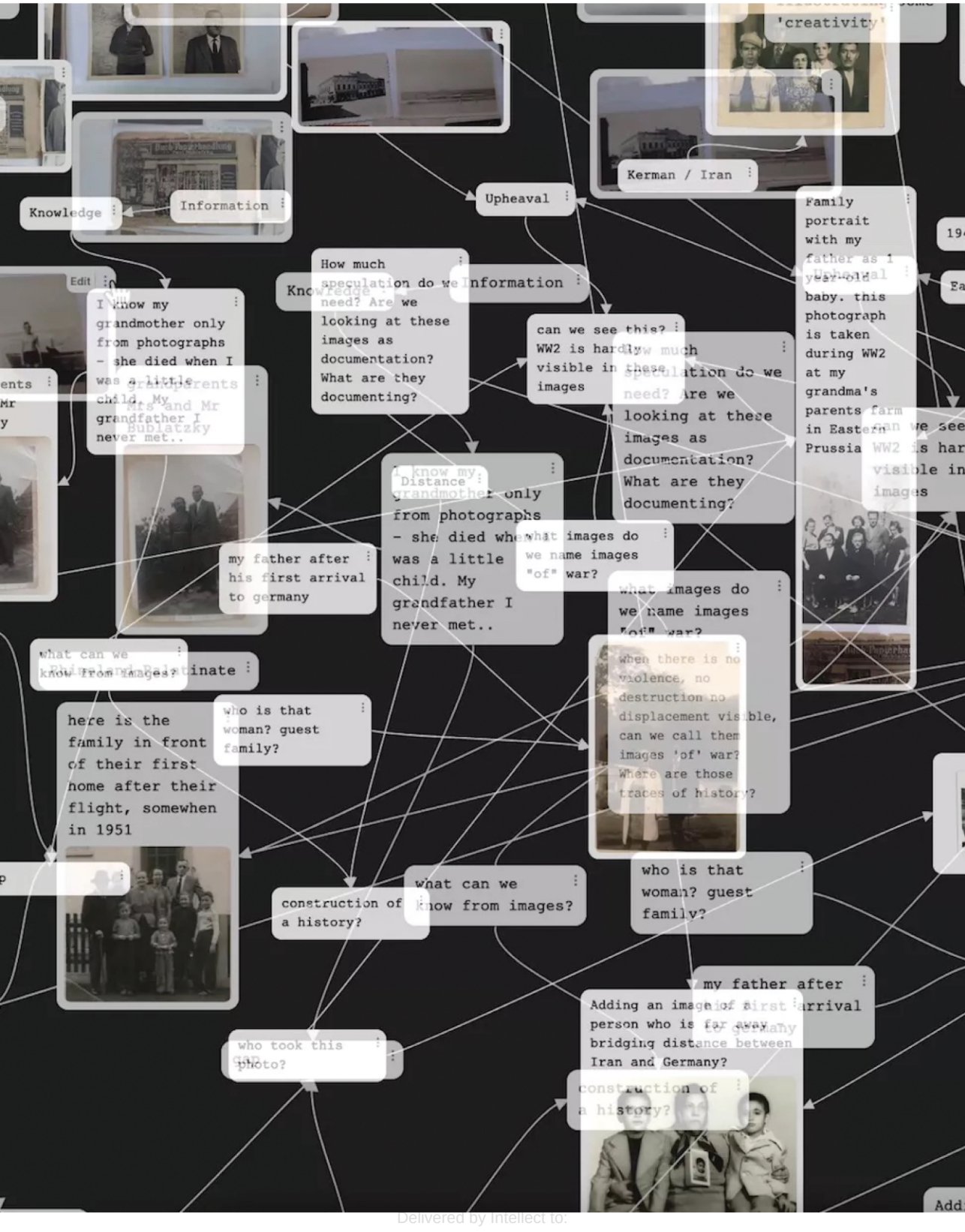

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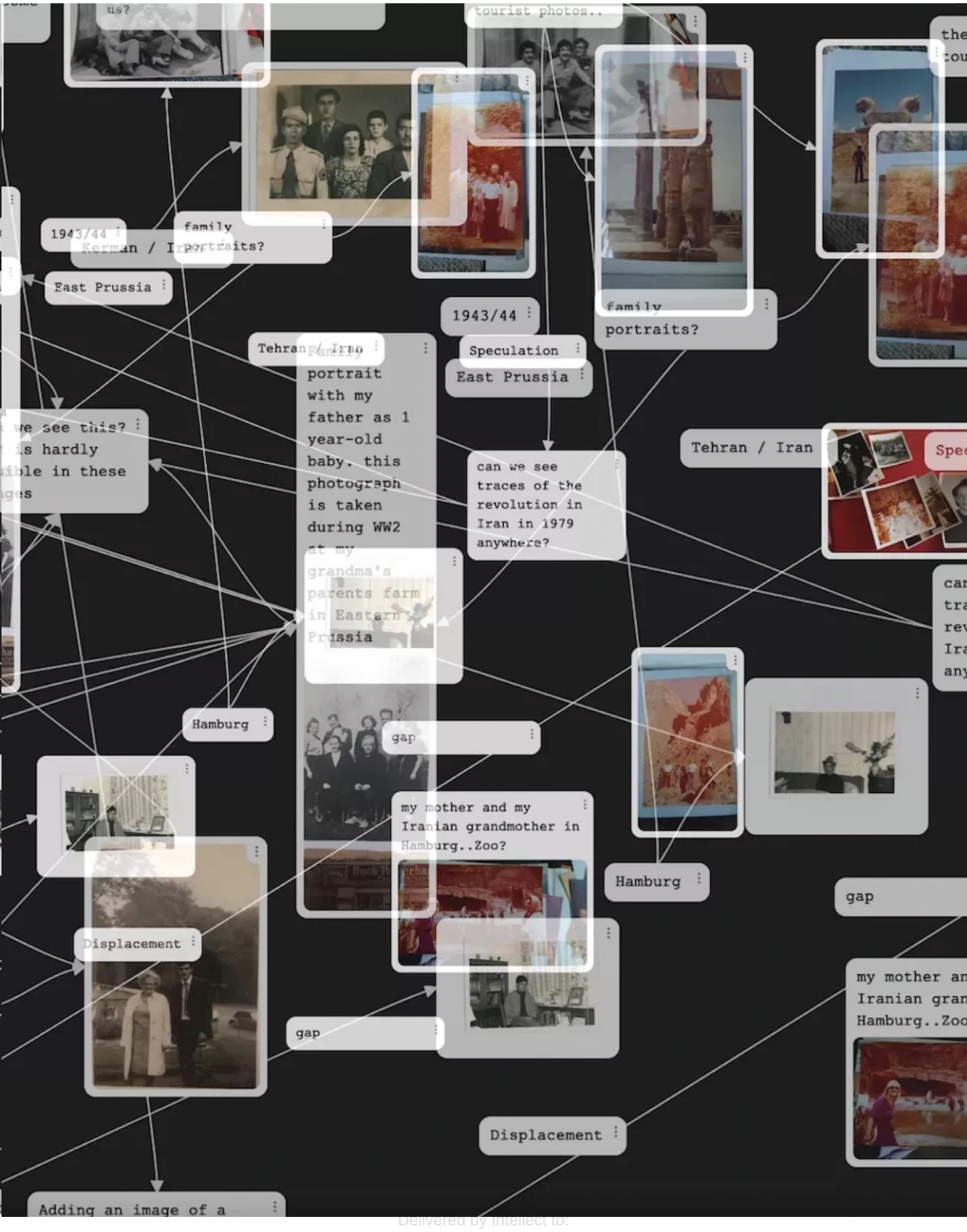

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Anahita: Does a history of migration stop when someone arrives somewhere, settles somewhere, and calls this place home? When does this happen? And how do experiences of forced migration play into this? Can any of this be documented? It is interesting that you say your father never talked about this time of flight and re-settlement much. You also told me that this photograph itself travelled, too, and that other photos of your family are scattered, were not taken care of much, and some were lost.

Cathrine: You ask, when migration ends, but can we even know from photographs when migration begins?

This family portrait was taken ten years earlier. It's a family reunion during the Second World War when my grandfather was already a soldier, and my grandmother had already found refuge in Reichenbach in Silesia (today Dzierżoniów). Was this maybe one of the last family gatherings in the old 'Heimat' at my grandma's parents' farm near Tilsit, in Eastern Prussia before they were forced to leave everything behind? My father was a one-year-old baby, when he was born in a time of forced displacement – I never asked him what 'Heimat' actually means to him.



1943/1944 in Tilsit (Sowetsk/Kaliningrad since 1946)

Cathrine: This photo has come a long way itself, from where it was made to my grandmother's family albums, across borders, out of photo albums and into glass viewing envelopes. It was left behind in a shelter in Managua/Nicaragua when my uncle and his family fled to Germany recently from the Covid-19 pandemic there. It was subsequently brought back to Germany, packed in a paper bag with some others. Now it is with me, the great-grandchild of the depicted elderly couple, in another century, in another lifeworld, another history.

Can I see these traces of its migratory history?

How are we (dis)connected?

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Cathrine: I like to look at the trajectories of the photographs, to imagine the transformation they underwent, and as you have also described them. To me, it is like a migratory history of the photographs themselves. And as if it is the aim to bridge the distances history creates. When looking at these photographs, I see the overlaps of different forms of migration, I see the desire to overcome disconnectedness, to fill the blank spaces of missed persons, of knowledge, and to fill the lack of shared family histories. Is this, in the end, not also proven by the way these photographs reached us?

Via mobile phones or post, in the luggage of travelling persons?



Iran, Spring 1979

Anahita: The family photos of this time between Iran and Germany are still in separate albums in Iran and Germany, some were sent and shared, others were not.
This photo was taken ca. three years earlier than the other black and white one.
It is also in Iran and my grandmother is again in the centre of the photographs – this time linking arms with my parents. This is in the spring of 1979 – it was the first time my parents went together to Iran and the last time my father went back. I don't think they were aware of this, although I'm not sure, maybe it is a situation of multiple realities.
The reality of migration begins here? Or earlier? Or later – when the political situation in Iran manifested itself more clearly?

Right now, it is impossible for me to look at this image without this added knowledge.

Again bridging gaps?

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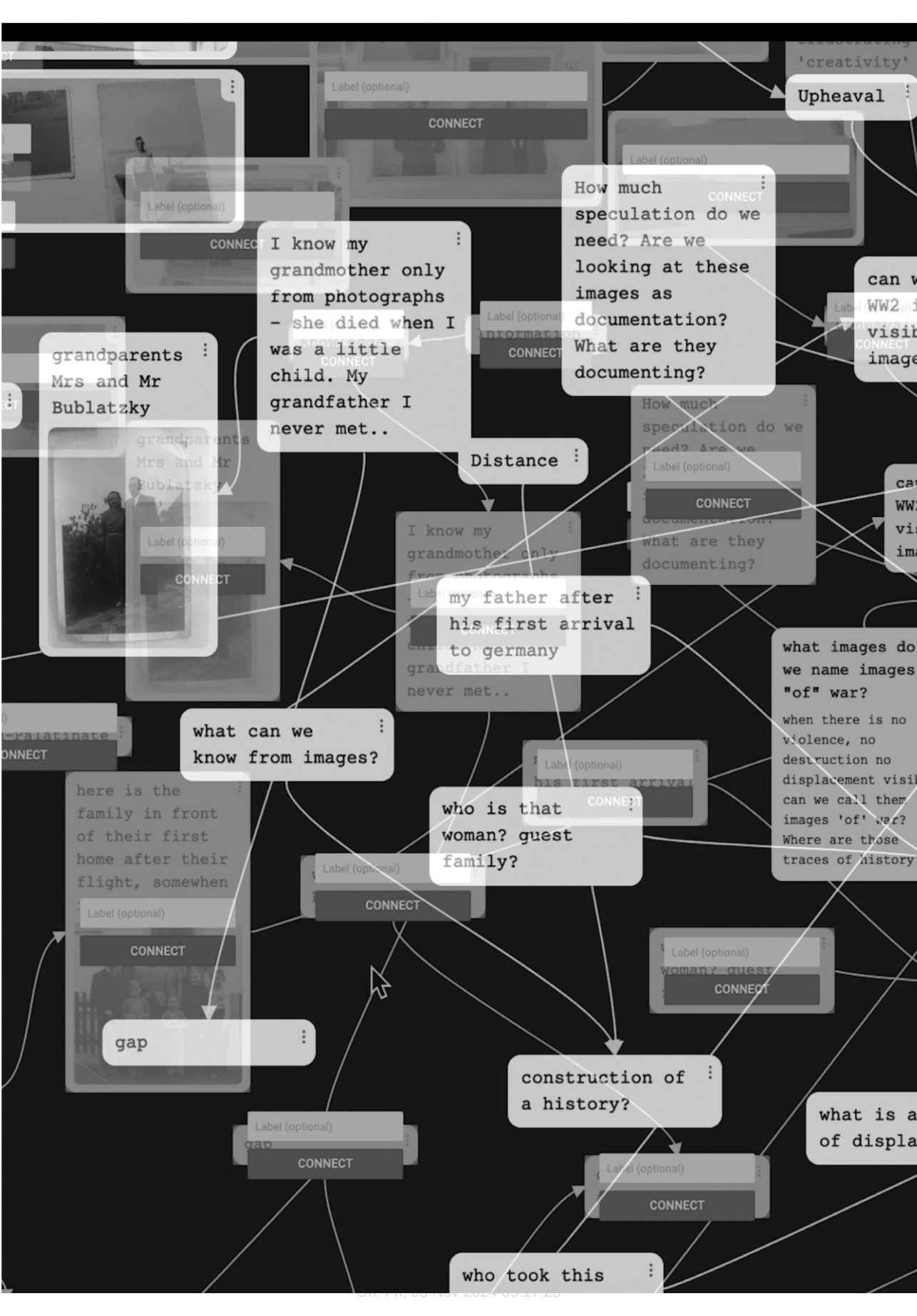
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CONNECT
Upheaval
How much speculation do we need? Are we looking at these images as documentation? What are they documenting?
I know my grandmother only from photographs – she died when I was a little child. My grandfather I never met..
grandparents Mrs and Mr Bublatzky
Distance
my father after his first arrival to germany
what can we know from images?
what images do we name images "of" war?
when there is no violence, no destruction no displacement visi can we call them images 'of' war? Where are those traces of history
here is the family in front of their first home after their flight, somewhen
who is that woman? guest family?
gap
construction of a history?
what is a of displa
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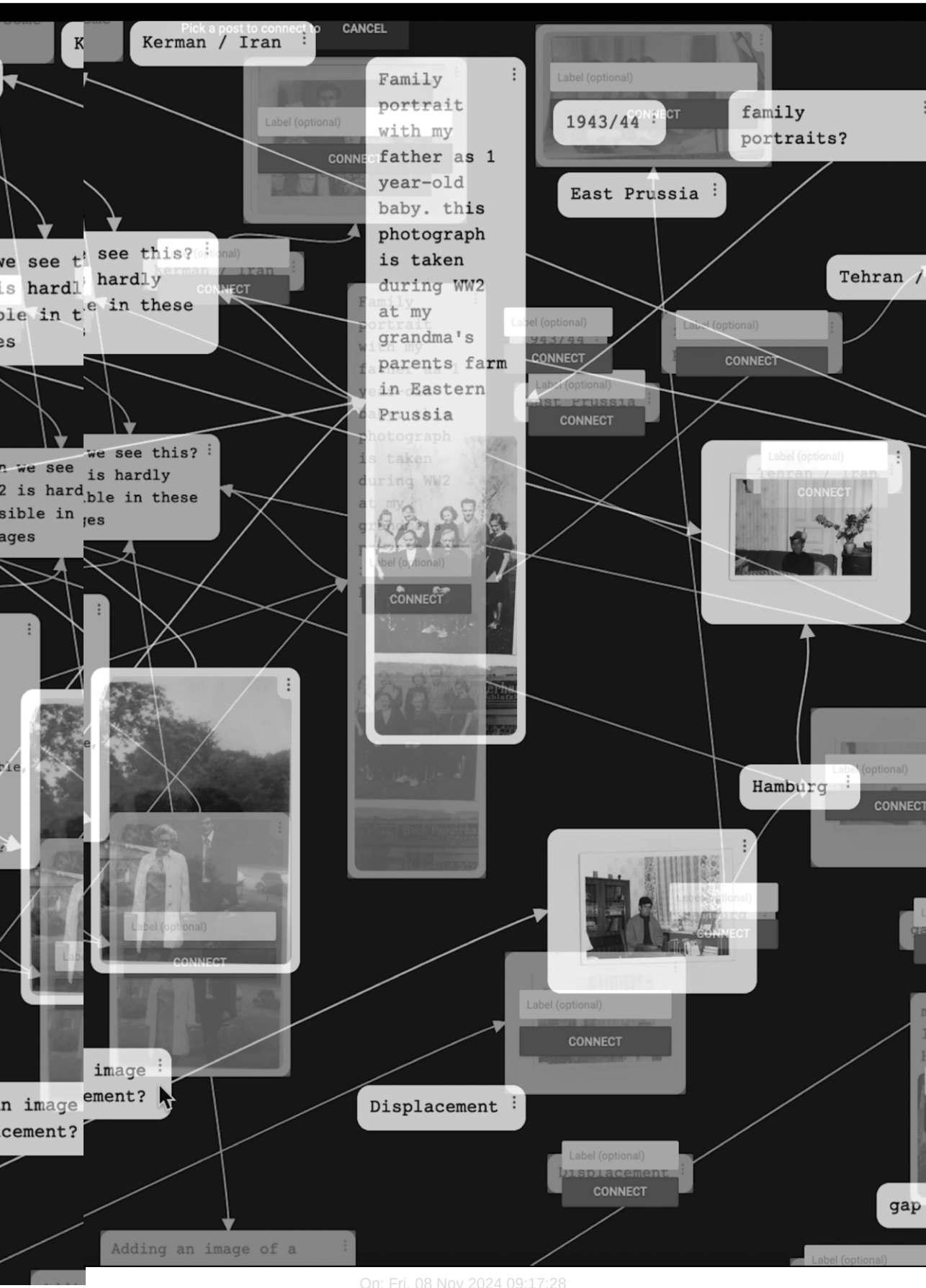
Pick a post to connect to
CANCEL
Kerman / Iran
Family portrait with my father as 1 year-old baby. this photograph is taken during WW2 at my grandma's parents farm in Eastern Prussia
1943/44
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Adding an image of a
gap
Label (optional)
CONNECT

Both of our family archives link to times of political turmoil, of subsequent displacement, of migratory histories.

When we are looking at the photos now, what is our aim?

Looking listening understanding

Are we projecting this aim?

We have only these photographs

We try to (dis)connect them to their stories

We animate the photographs

They animate us

We and the photographs become
spectators, witnesses
story tellers actors

Reciprocity

Animation is a mutual transformation

Reciprocity

It transforms us

It transforms moments in history

Migrating, Connecting, Layering, Overlapping

Speculation becomes reality

The (im)possibility of migrating images means no ending no results

New equations mutate into new questions

New annotations

Not a loop but also not infinity

Another move

Another becoming moved

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25

Beyond Apprenticeship: EL Loko and Joseph Beuys

Anna K. Brus

This text situates the migratory art and experience of a nascent artist between West Africa and Germany before the post-1989 era of the so-called 'global art'. It zooms in on how the Togolese art student Edoh Lucien Loko (1950–2016) refused to become the marginalised figure the Düsseldorf Art Academy and German society tried to impose on him. By reclaiming an African identity on his own terms, he resisted becoming the *other* of European imagination and regained agency. I follow the traces that EL Loko left in his work, and, almost incidentally, in the archive of his teacher Joseph Beuys. Like many other students at the Düsseldorf Art Academy around 1970, EL Loko worked in the shadow of Joseph Beuys' fame. He became one of the many young people who showed up to Beuys' performances and became part of his public appearance, of which Beuys remained the centre. In what follows, I will nevertheless discuss moments in which EL Loko and Beuys changed roles and the powerful hierarchies became fluid between the (in-)famous professor, a dazzling public figure of the FRG, and his student EL Loko, a migrant from Togo with short-term residence status. As EL Loko's various performances and installations in which he recollects his teacher show,[1] Beuys was pivotal to his artistic evolution yet the relation to him proves to be ambivalent.

Writing about EL Loko today means writing about an internationally renowned artist. His large-scale installation *Cosmic Alphabet* at the Zeitz MOCCA in Cape Town (2016)[2] garnered international recognition, and Wendl described him in 2004 as "the most important artist of African origin living in Germany" (Wendl 2004, 77).[3] In retrospect, success appears as the result of a linear process, here as the culmination of a determined artistic career. Throughout his life, EL Loko himself has resisted the temptation to create a biography of his own success. In his writings and artworks, he has addressed the precarity of his migrant life and the uncertainties and difficulties he encountered searching for an artistic place in

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Germany. His autobiography speaks of loss, seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and moments of deep crises as well as the struggle to regain agency and a sense of belonging (Loko 1986). EL Loko treated his artworks as a means to make his situation as a Togolese, a migrant, and an artist accountable, perhaps as much to himself as to others, but in particular to a German native audience. He used his art to create spaces of mutual appreciation and reconciliation beyond the dystopian Euro-African history of colonialism and domination.

Writing from the perspective of a *white* German and with the distance of the next generation, I respond to his invitation to relate to his experiences during his first years in Germany and at the art academy in Düsseldorf. In engaging with EL Loko's work and biography, zooming in on its particular historical situatedness in the 1970s and 1980s, I attempt to take up his call for mutual understanding (Loko 1983, 1986, 2009; *Pedakondji* 1993; *Afrikanisch-Europäische Inspiration* 1996). Furthermore, the representational practice in this paper is developed in dialogue with oral and literal assessments and memories of contemporary witnesses.[4] It tries to respond to the 'unique adequacy requirement' of (historical) praxeology (Hirschauer 2013) by mimetically adapting to the various meaning-making processes that not only shaped the interaction of Beuys and EL Loko but can also be traced in the accounts of EL Loko that he gave himself in his works and in those that are given in the accounts of his contemporaries. I try to follow "participant relevancies" (Hirschauer 2013, 240) and aim to find the different traits and forms this cooperation took. My methodology then consists of tracing connections as they come to the fore in the various disparate sources, and it asks the reader to accompany me on the paths that were laid out by others, and those that I forged myself. Breaking the Eurocentric focus of art scholarship on the Düsseldorf Art Academy, this paper thus suggests to interpret the cooperation of Beuys and EL Loko as a form of transcultural exchange, mutual invention, appropriation, and entitlement.

Tracing EL Loko in the archive on Joseph Beuys

While browsing an old German art journal, the Kunstforum *Afrika – Iwalewa* (1993), I paused at a photograph showing a close-up of Joseph Beuys' back with his characteristic hat, lecturing in front of a huge crowd of young people (Imfeld 1993, 326). Next to Beuys and turned towards him, focusing on him like the others, stands his student EL Loko, obviously an element of the show in front of the audience. Beuys carefully selected the students who accompanied him onstage or, at least, they were expected to keep to the performance's unwritten script. Why did Beuys invite EL Loko onto the stage? Which role did EL Loko have to play as the only Black person in the room? What sense did the passive crowd make out

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of this configuration? Did this performance deconstruct or rather recode racial stereotypes? How did Beuys use or rather abuse EL Loko as the essentialised visual 'other', as an attraction or distant echo for his eclectic universalism and an artistic transgression of 'ethnic' boundaries? And moreover, what was it like for EL Loko to appear as a prop in Beuys' performance in front of an exclusively white audience?

The event entitled *Who Is Still Interested in Political Parties?* took place during *Experimenta 4* 1971 in Frankfurt. In the biography *Joseph Beuys: Leben und Werk*, Götz Adriani describes it as "a dialogue" that provocatively pled for a free democratic election of the Bundeswehr, followed by public debates (Adriani 1973, 138). Despite the fact that EL Loko played an important role here, Adriani does not mention him by name and instead addresses him as "the Togolese student" (Adriani 1973, 138), thereby rendering him invisible as an individual. EL Loko entitles Beuys' claim to human bonds and universality that transgress national borders and thus questions military action.

A small but significant detail struck me and provoked contradictory speculations about what happened between the teacher Beuys and his student EL Loko beyond this singular event. Beuys has taken off his characteristic uniform, the angler vest that echoes military camouflage, and wears, like EL Loko, a batik shirt with embroidery, most likely of African origin. This detail made me think about the possibility of trespassing or an act of mimetic cooperation that is more than the rather obvious form of cultural appropriation Beuys enacted (Figure 25.1).

Starting to search for evidence about the relationship between EL Loko and Beuys, I scanned through some of the immense amount of literature on Beuys and found various photos showing EL Loko.

In December 1971, he participated in the protest action *Overcome the Party Dictatorship!* in which Beuys led a crowd of students who swept the Grafenberger Forest and marked trees with white paint to make an eco-activist statement against their planned clearing to extend the buildings of a tennis club (Adriani 1973, 154; Figure 25.2). On 1 May 1972, EL Loko took part in the happening *Sweeping Out* (*Ausfegeaktion*) on Karl-Marx Platz in Berlin. The *Ausfegeaktion*, which was directed against political ideologies and partisanship, became, as it says in the catalogue *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, a 'universal happening'. Among the helpers was not only EL Loko but also the Japanese student Hiroshi Hirose.[5] According to von Wiese, the two students "stood as Africans and as Japanese outside the European cultural circle" (von Wiese 1987, 313). This account also notes that EL Loko and Hirose were obviously staged as visible 'others' for the cross-border claims of Beuys' art. At the same time, they seem to stand in for the critical confrontation with the rationalistic demarcations of modernity. It has become almost a kind of common sense when analysing Beuys' subjective cosmology that the figure of the Asian is rendered as a bearer of spirituality, while the figure of

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FIGURE 25.1: Theatre play, *Who Is Still Interested in Political Parties?, Experimenta 4*, 1971, Frankfurt am Main (© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024; photo: © Inge Werth).



FIGURE 25.2: Joseph Beuys, Protest Action, *Überwindet endlich die Parteiendiktatur!* (*Overcome the Party Dictatorship!),* Grafenberger Wald, 1971 (© bpk / Stiftung Museum Schloss Moyland / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024; photo: © Ute Klophaus).

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the European stands for rationality; in the much-invoked concept of 'Eurasia', both worlds come to a harmonious agreement (recently discussed again in *Joseph Beuys und die Schamanen* 2021). What role EL Loko actually had to play in Beuys' cosmology remains unclear, but he seems to triangulate the east–west relationship through the personification of the south. It is likely that EL Loko, not unlike the African artist of primitivist imagination, was to stand in for supposedly pre-modern intuition and creativity. At the same time, he might have embodied the "suffering black humanity oppressed by the imperialist system" (Imfeld 1993, 326), as I will discuss, a common trope in the 1970s.

Mutual learning

It seems that EL Loko later debunked the misuse of his person in the role of 'the eternal apprentice' and as a prop in Beuys' self-dramatisation. He does not mention these happenings in his autobiography and judges this time as unproductive, in which he "took part in pointless discussions and demonstrations" (Loko 1986, 26).

Apart from these and several other photos documenting EL Loko's constant presence, he is rarely mentioned in the literature and most of his fellow students do not remember him beyond his stereotyped role as the 'African' or 'Togolese' student.[6] Nevertheless, he was accepted as another emerging artist of the time in the 1980s at the latest.

These meagre findings are contradicted by what EL Loko himself remembers in retrospect starting in the 1990s, when he spoke to Imfeld and Richter about the relationship with Beuys, as a rather intense relationship with his teacher (Imfeld 1993; Richter 1994). Beuys was intrigued by EL Loko's knowledge of Togolese spirituality and involved his students in lengthy conversations about spirits, Voodoo culture, and what EL Loko calls 'shamanism' in reference to the discourse on Beuys. EL Loko himself claims to have, unlike his German fellow students, always immediately understood Beuys' ritualistic idiom that reminded him of what he had experienced in rituals of "medicine men" (Loko in Imfeld 1993, 330) in Togo. Consequently, the happening in the Grafenberger Forest, when trees were marked with white crosses, reminded him of rituals "where places or things become taboo or are declared sacred" (Loko in Imfeld 1993, 330, and similarly in conversation with Richter (1994)).

Beuys himself did not find this relation worth mentioning and Beuys' reception has to a large extent followed his self-interpretations. I do not want to overestimate the meaning of these encounters for Beuys. He seems to have been a self-sufficient planet around which students, art critics, and the audience circled like an infantry. An encounter on eye level between two 'ritual experts', or, to put it more correctly, non-initiated laymen with an interest in shamanism, does not fit into the grand

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image of the self-sufficient artist-shaman Joseph Beuys. It is quite telling that Beuys, reacting to another encounter with non-western cosmology while seeing the film *Shamans of the Blind Country* by Michael Oppitz, shrewdly commented: "These shamans, they all copy me!" (Ebbinghaus 2021).

In the literature on Beuys, his search for knowledge beyond the European horizon has mainly been framed in relation to his imaginary ideas about Native Americans and his interest in Far Eastern philosophy. His relation to 'Africa', another big phantasm of the European imagination, leaves only very few traces in his work that have mostly remained unnoticed.[7] In 1981, Beuys inscribed a book cover with the phrase *Heute habe ich die deutsche Sprache zur Sprache Afrikas gemacht* ('Today I made the German language the language of Africa', Beuys 1981). This sentence seems to relate to an obscure romantic idea of an affinity between the Germanic and African '*Volkstum*' (folklore). Whether it can be seen as a sign of Beuys' cosmological openness and signals a form of cultural critique or remains an imperial projection and a kind of "Nazi Tourette's" (Lütticken 2013, 160) depends on which side of research on Beuys one takes – a more critical, even confrontational or a more appreciative, even eulogist approach.[8]

However, my concern is not so much to expose Beuys' megalomaniac tendencies once again or add another facet to the literature on Beuys, but to take a germane look at the agency that EL Loko unfolds in this encounter. The rather passive role that EL Loko is ascribed in the script of Beuys' happenings is contradicted by the inversion of the apprenticeship relation in these rare situations where Beuys listened and boundaries became fluid. In one of the earliest surviving artworks that EL Loko made at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, he boldly calls for an exchange of perspectives. In the drawing tryptic *Xylophone and Piano* from 1972, EL Loko assigns himself the place at the piano, while Beuys makes music with the African xylophone and drum (*Brennpunkt Düsseldorf* 1987, 314f.). Comic cartoon-like arrows underline the switching of places and positions, of becoming involved with a different tune. The reference to intercultural exchange is not just a comment on what happened between EL Loko and Beuys or what EL Loko might have wished to have happened. Indeed, the changing of roles and his emphasis on cross-cultural exchanges was not merely a mental game for EL Loko but became an existential, long-term mission. He saw Togo and Germany – in a wider sense, also the African continent and the former colonising nations – as inextricably linked.

Into the heart of whiteness

It was not a random incidence that EL Loko came to Germany in 1971 to study art. Togo, colonised by Germany between 1884 and 1914, still bore the imprint

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of German colonial rule in institutions from schools to cultural centres.[9] In his autobiography, EL Loko frames the painful experience of migration not in the sense of a geo-cultural shift, a dislocation and binary between original home and diasporic existence, but rather as a road that he had to walk since his childhood. Entering missionary school, he became "infected" (Loko 1986, 17) with western education that devalued and obliterated what was once his source of joy and sense of belonging. EL Loko cannot escape the trap that the colonising nations laid out on the African continent. In a later artwork, EL Loko gives form to the historical trajectories of the African continent by visualising the entangled history with the West and the resulting and on-going physical and epistemic violence of colonialism (Figure 25.3). In sampling the Beuysian material iconography, EL Loko uses a chair that wears a heavy foot shackle – referring to the enslaved human body – and on the backrest, its 'head', a cross. Read as a symbolising the African, they seem to literally sit in a tight squeeze between the dystopian history of slavery and its lasting racist effects at the base of the installation and – on its top end – missionisation and education, which has taken over the head and obscures the view.

According to his autobiography, EL Loko walked the path of progress, moving to bigger cities where the booming African version of capitalism set him into a mode of restless searching and desire (Loko 1986, 20). Working as a textile designer in Accra, he had heard about the Düsseldorf Art Academy and Joseph Beuys at the Goethe Institute. He hoped to exit his unsatisfactory financial and artistic situation in Ghana and was accepted by Beuys who even funded his expensive flight (Loko in conversation with Richter 1994). After having gone through erratic paperwork, EL Loko (n.d.) arrived in Germany with ambitious aspirations and no money in his pocket, hoping that Beuys himself would pick him up at Düsseldorf airport. (Loko n.d. JBA-B 020249/020252).

What was it like to arrive in the main city of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1971 during the peak of the Cold War? What kind of cultural and social climate did EL Loko encounter? The student rebellion of 1968 had just unfolded an on-going protest against the Vietnam War; Germany was also experiencing a burgeoning feminist movement and attempting to come to terms with the Nazi past. Brutal crackdowns on demonstrators by the police were not rare and the state was pushing back against the protesters with the expansion of the state executive and the restriction of civil rights. Beuys embodied both in one person, once a committed member of the Hitler youth and later a protester against encrusted structures. He was part of a movement that dissolved conventional concepts of art and turned towards performances, happenings, and public actions and also engaged in public debates about institutional, artistic, and overall social reforms. At the same time, prominent Nazis were still in control all over the country and the Nazi generation, just like Beuys himself, was only

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FIGURE 25.3: EL Loko, *Strafgefangen* (*Detained*), Object 54, 1986, 115 × 200 × 15 cm, wood, iron, nettle, painted, lost in the Gulf of Mexico (© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024; photo: © Gido Grümmer).

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seemingly turned upside down ideologically by the denazification program of the Allied Forces.[10] The beginning of public questioning of the Nazi past was by no means – or only for a handful of anticolonial thinkers – connected to a critical historical reappraisal of the German imperial ambitions and colonial crimes on the African continent and the South Seas. This "colonial aphasia" (Stoler 2011, 122) was enhanced by another blind spot. The elimination of the word and concept 'race' from the German vocabulary as a Nazi ideology led to the assumption that racism as a social phenomenon was eliminated as well and allowed persisting forms of structural racism to continue to exist unquestioned.[11]

The Rhineland, where EL Loko arrived, was once the setting of massive propaganda against the French colonial soldiers stationed there in the 1920s and the cruel persecution of their children and other Black Germans before and during the Second World War. In the public press, Africa appeared essentialised as a place of famine and refugee crises, which needed help from the West and was rarely given a chance to self-articulate. The leftist movement sympathised with the Black Panther movement in the United States and viewed the 'Third World' as well as Germany equally victims of US imperialism. German leftists consequently felt a kind of diffuse compassion when assuming a shared fate (see Broeck 2010; Dinkel 2014). In general, Black life in Germany was marginalised and only slowly started to become politically organised again after the collapse of Black and communist movements in the 1930s. It remained almost invisible in the public sphere and media culture until the end of the 1970s, an era that Sabine Broeck shrewdly coined "the proverbial heart of whiteness" (Broeck 2010, 126).

"You should stay African!"

Beuys did not pick up EL Loko at the airport and EL Loko did not get to see him for another three weeks, which he spent strolling through the art academy desperately searching for a task and for the 'German qualities' that his uncle had so colourfully praised (Loko 1986, 33f.). EL Loko, who had undergone a rigorous missionary schooling, hoped for clear instructions from his teacher that never came. Nothing was as he expected it to be. However, the student would soon find out that he might have been stranded in one of the most unorthodox places in the Federal Republic:

> I had an idea of the mentality of the German people, and therefore I wondered how the existence of such a school on German soil was possible. There was no question of civil order and discipline here, but I was to learn that the academy had its own customs and mores.
>
> (Loko 1986, 25)

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Contradicting the often romanticised descriptions of the atmosphere at the Düsseldorf Art Academy during the Beuys era, EL Loko, the participant-observer, describes it as an embattled terrain driven by envy, competition, and recklessness (Loko 1986, 26).

The first meeting with Beuys, which EL Loko had longed for, turned out to be deeply disturbing and disappointing. After flipping through some of his drawings Beuys asked him: 'What do you want here?' While EL Loko stumbled and searched for the right words, Beuys went on: 'Well! You're already here, and we can't possibly send you back'. Encouraging the speechless student, Beuys patted him on the shoulder and said: "Open your eyes, Loko!" and was gone (Loko 1986, 25).

How exactly the situation unfolded cannot, of course, be fully reconstructed, but it is not free of primitivist and primitivising moments. In retrospect, it seems that in a game of transference and counter-transference, EL Loko was ascribed to possess an instinctive knowledge of art located outside of Europe, in Africa. EL Loko found Beuys' statement initially dismissive and was left confused. In retrospect, and after he was able to better assess the attributions ascribed to him, he embraced the incident as an encouragement to engage with his 'African roots'. It seems that for Beuys, as well as for EL Loko's fellow students, a preconceived opinion about how the art of an African should look was already in place. In Beuys' class, EL Loko seems to have remained a marginal figure; fellow students treated him with distance and sometimes with resentment, as he pinned down in his autobiography:

> As time went on, they did come closer, watching me paint my pictures. I sensed arrogance, but continued as I saw fit. It wasn't until later that we got to talking and they said, 'We don't do it that way.' Or 'You should stay African.' I pretended I hadn't heard, but the phrases resonated like a warning. I sought to blame myself and wanted to figure out what I had done wrong. Wasn't I an African, for instance? The question was strange and superfluous to me, because I felt like an African. So why was I being asked to remain African?
>
> (Loko 1986, 68)

Apparently, EL Loko's African cosmopolitan attitude was met with scepticism; he was a misfit that did not easily match the naturalised grids always already in place for the 'other'. A primitivist concept that viewed Africans as devoid of an 'original' identity and supposedly authentic African craftsmanship predominated. These patterns of discriminatory othering and exclusion from the western art world have obviously been in place before the marketing of ethnicity in the post-1989 period.

According to EL Loko's autobiography, he eventually lost the sense of purpose for his work, and the initial determination and euphoria he felt in the first two

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semesters soon gave way to disillusionment and an incomprehensible paralysis (Loko 1986, 27).

Reconciliation

EL Loko describes the turning point in his student life after several years of aimless wandering through Düsseldorf's night life as one in which he started to reconcile with his African heritage. He found a moment of almost epiphanic inspiration when taking a fresh look at a small *Akuaba* fertility doll that he had bought just like a tourist at the airport in Ghana (Loko 1986, 28). He describes this moment as unleashing unforeseen creative forces:

> The focus of my work from now on was to be in my room. I researched to get to the bottom of African culture. I did not need to doubt its value, its superiority, as Europeans do, because the figure proved the high level of development of African art.
>
> (Loko 1986, 31).

Whether this is a true incident or a literary artifice is irrelevant. It points to the fact that EL Loko finally found his personal voice and healed from his blockage by relating 'back'. In an interview, he states that Beuys pushed him to do woodcuts and wooden sculptures (Loko, interview with Richter, 1994). In the German context, wood as an artistic material was associated with fantasies of origin and unadulterated primitiveness and thus met the German audience's expectations of 'authenticity' as well as EL Loko's wish to understand the formal specificities of 'classical' African art that he saw in his *Akuaba* figure. EL Loko carved archetypes: masks and chimaeras in black and white and in positive and negative, invoking local cosmologies (Figure 25.4).[12] In continually evolving formulations of animistically charged landscapes, he seems to try to regain his childhood memories and to re-appreciate what colonial education had devalued and alienated. His early work seems to agitate between a continuation of primitivist motifs according to western desire and his own search for a lost past. Also in other media, he borrowed from African art and performative practice, translating them into new forms of agency. In his early 'duel performances' from 1976, he combined music, lyrics, and singing that, according to Wendl, were "designed in the style of African singing duels and djembe competitions" (2004, 79). The burgeoning *fluxus* movement and his teacher Beuys' transgressions of Eurocentric ideas of art in his own performances might have encouraged EL Loko to question the binaries between western knowledge/rationalism and non-western 'irrationality' and 'superstition' that had also shaped his own education in Togo and entitled him to fuse differing art traditions.

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FIGURE 25.4: EL Loko, *Ballade des Retourdataires* (*Ballade of the Returners*), 1977, 65 × 45.5 cm, woodcut print (© ARTCO Gallery/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024).

In the years to follow, EL Loko turned the exoticising attributions of his fellow German students and his teacher into a form of self-attribution. He thus authorised himself to occupy the position of 'the African artist' in which he was constantly been placed by others, albeit with significant shifts. He resisted stereotyping by

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questioning what 'Africa' is for a German audience, how it is categorised and 'known', and often pointed to the manifold contradictions of the postcolonial condition. In a kind of inversion of Beuys' sentence "Today I made the German language the language of Africa" (Beuys 1981), he opposes the western interpretative authority over a subaltern Africa. In his installation *Explaining the Image to the Pack*, a group of disoriented figures stand, like the exhibition visitors, in front of a fragmented and torn shape of the African continent that looks like a puzzle with missing parts (Figure 25.5). The title relates to Beuys' famous happening *Explaining the Pictures to the Dead Hare* in which the artist insinuated that the



FIGURE 25.5: EL Loko, *Dem Rudel das Bild erklären* (*Explaining the Image to the Pack*), 1994/1995 (© ARTCO Gallery/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024; photo: © Karsten Bootmann).

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dead animal was more intelligible to grasp the meaning of contemporary art than human spectators. Likewise, EL Loko asks spectators to step back from preconceived opinions, to be puzzled, and to unlearn what they think they know.

After EL Loko won the battle against German bureaucracy and was able to come back to Germany after his forced deportation to Togo in 1979 with the help of friends, supporters, and a major press campaign,[13] he saw his personal mission as multiplying connections and inciting cross-cultural dialogue. In the 1990s, he initiated exchange programs between African and European artists. His project *Afrikanisch-Europäische Inspiration* brought eight artists from various African countries and Germany to work together, first in his hometown Pedakondji in Togo and later in Alsdorf, Germany (*Pedakondji* 1993; *Afrikanisch-Europäische Inspiration* 1996). EL Loko wanted to provoke new conversations that transcended the narratives of hunger aid and development work. In an act that we would today address as 'repair work' and reconciliation, he created spaces of hospitality and cooperation, of mutual inspiration and assistance. Breaking free from 'being known', from the experience of being an element in a performance and an object of knowledge for Beuys, EL Loko fostered modes of mutual learning with this artistic exchange programme that did not aim at generating knowledge *of*, but at generating knowledge *with* others.

While many students of Beuys were not able to free themselves from this artistic giant and father figure, EL Loko found his own artistic language and ways of navigating through the art world. EL Loko shared a utopian program with his teacher, the idea that art was relevant for individual becoming and social transformation. Like Beuys, he used a highly individualised symbolism to touch upon 'universal' matters, like the utopian-archaic *universal* language of his very last installation, the *Cosmic Alphabet* in Cape Town. Unlike Beuys however, EL Loko went beyond the confines of the Eurocentric western art world. Art and in particular transcultural cooperation could be a threshold for him and others to bridge the colonial abyss and to transcend racialised binaries and exclusionism.

NOTES

1. This text cannot give an overview of EL Loko's extensive work crossing installation, performance, painting, collage, and sculpture in various media and of all the references to Joseph Beuys (see Imfeld 1993; Richter 2000; von Wiese 1987; Wendl 2004). For an overview of his oeuvre, see Melchers (2004). His relation to African and African diasporic art is also not discussed here and still awaits investigation. Accessed 5 November 2023.
2. See https://zeitzmocaa.museum/art/cosmic-alphabet/. For an understanding of the broad fascination with graphic systems that EL Loko shared with many African and diasporic artists, see Mullen Kraemer, Christine, et al. *Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic Systems in Art History*. 5 Continents, 2007.

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3. All translations from German are by the author.
4. I am very thankful to Petra Richter, who generously shared the interviews with EL Loko she conducted in 1994. She collected oral history and discussed EL Loko's relation to his academy professor in a long, open conversation with the artist. See therefore Richter (2000). I am also thankful to Nele Brüninghaus-Knubel, Uli Krempel, Tobias Wendl, and many others who shared their memories of Joseph Beuys and EL Loko.
5. He was another student that Beuys accepted in his aim to internationalise the academy. Like EL Loko, he was deported after he had finished his studies (EL Loko in conversation with Richter 1994).
6. Johannes Stüttgen, one of Beuys' students, wrote a heavy 1048-page book in the years 1966–1972 and EL Loko is only named twice as someone depicted in a photo and as part of a performance. Despite the lengthy descriptions, he is not commented on further (Stüttgen 2008).
7. Beuys' touristic travels to Kenya in 1974, where he made sand paintings at the beach have not received much resonance and still await critical engagement.
8. Lütticken apologetically described it as a "bizarre relapse into Wilhelmine colonialism and Nazi dreams of conquest" (Lütticken 2013, 160).
9. Germany started large-scale development projects in the 1960s in the so-called 'Third World', a third space supposedly distinguishable from the two camps of the Cold War that was to be guided to the 'right path' of western liberal capitalism. Franz Josef Strauss, who interfered in dubious and profound ways in Togolese politics, supported the Gnassingbé family, which has held the presidency in Togo since 1963.
10. On this aspect see Buchloh (2001), Ray (2001), Riegel (2013), and Wienand (2015).
11. See therefore the first publication on Black life in Germany: Oguntoye et al. (1986).
12. In his novel, *Das Kuckucksei Ahoba* (2009), he similarly uses a kind of magical realism in which mystical spirits control the fate of humans.
13. The process is described and illuminated with various attached documents in EL Loko (1986, 32–51). EL Loko wrote various letters to Beuys about the court process and sent him copies of the official documents. Beuys made at least one statement in the press to support EL Loko (see Loko n.d., JBA-B 029526/015207/009294/029504).

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26

Living Migration on Fluxus Island? Artistic World-Making as Both Collaborative and Transcultural Endeavour

Franziska Koch

> *[T]he cosmopolitan subject does not linger liminally between two cultures, but stands quite firmly in both of them.*
>
> (Dharwadker 2016, 140)

Taking Nam June Paik's drawing *FLUXUS Island in Décollage OCEAN* as a starting point, my article asks how artistic 'world-making' (Juneja 2018, 463f.) took place in the emergent Fluxus network in the 1960s. Methodologically, it aims to synthesise perspectives from transcultural studies and migration studies in the field of art history to situate Fluxus practices in more comprehensive and relational ways – ways that acknowledge both the artistic concepts and the cultural, as well as migratory, conditions that have governed the cross-disciplinary, collaborative, and actionist position of Fluxus.

Fluxus has been dominantly studied with a focus on the radical aesthetic dimension of its anti- or non-art stances as tied to transatlantic socio-political and economic conditions. Despite stressing the characteristic internationalism of Fluxus artists, these accounts did not (sufficiently) address the problematic essentialisation of Euro-American epistemic frames, when canonising Fluxus as an important phenomenon of the Cold War period. I argue that network-focused studies can be enhanced by considering the cultural conditions and limits of Fluxus practices from a transcultural perspective. Anthologies and exhibition catalogues[1] have repeatedly stressed that in a shared attempt to overcome war traumata including colonial, nationalist, and fascist legacies, Fluxus-related artists across Europe, North America, and Asia worked at the intersections of art and music based on a neo-Dadaist approach to art-making that crystallised in a collaborative transnational "attitude" (Smith 1998,

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1–11; compare "experience" by Higgins 2002, XIV), rather than the formation of just another 'group' or 'movement'. However, they did not quite succeed in elucidating exactly *how* Fluxus collaboration worked regarding the epistemic demarcations and migratory restrictions that marked the rigid block building of the post-war period. Obviously, the latter made sharing artistic ideals and practices difficult but also fuelled the desire to work together around the globe, enhancing a particular kind of 'cosmo-political' imagination.

In accordance with more recent attempts to critically re-visit Fluxus' global claims by looking closely into regional archives and entangled histories (*Fluxus East* 2007; Bentcheva 2022), I will argue that *FLUXUS Island* is not only an aesthetic attempt that reflects Paik's own positionality within the growing network but also a performance that consciously makes a world and writes/draws (art) history at the same time. Demonstrating a particular sensitivity towards the demarcations, and also the transgressive creative potential, that characterise modern cultural processes, Paik's map embodies a transcultural approach *avant la lettre* underpinned by the very real (interpersonal) conflicts that marked Fluxus at the same time. Much of the imaginary as well as practical 'world-making' that artists such as Paik achieved, when attacking established hierarchies at the intersections of art and music, hinged on specific migratory experiences that informed their interventions.

Critical epistemological discussions across the humanities (Barad 2003; Cheah 2008, 2017; Kaiser 2014; Juneja 2018; Peeren 2022) have suggested 'world-making' or 'worlding' as a more situated, relational, and planetary concept to grapple with the complexities of globalisation and transnationalism. It acknowledges the problematic limits of the modern Eurocentric epistemology, violently established in imperial and colonial expansion. The procedural understanding of 'worlding' considers entangled artistic knowledge production as part of an "intensified intra-action and a perpetually differentiating 'world' – 'world' as continuously in the making" (Kaiser 2014, 3). Accordingly, it understands culture as always already informed by transculturation and rejects the modern nation-centred concept of cultures as homogenous containers that then inter-act and eventually hybridise (Juneja 2018, 463f.). Rather, "beings (bodies, texts, cultures, nations [and I would like to add: images]) are considered in 'their differential becoming, [as] particular material (re-)configurations of the world with shifting boundaries and properties that stabilize and destabilize'" (Kaiser 2014, 251, quoting Barad 2003, 817). Methodologically, the challenge lies in situating the dynamic ways in which artists and objects 'world'. The inseparable ethical task is to acknowledge how we as scholars are performatively implicated in such 'world-making' practices that ultimately question the modern dichotomy between knowing and being.

I will briefly highlight ambivalent affect as a strong force of world-making that tends to be disqualified as being too personal, mundane, and messy an aspect to

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impact art historical canonisation. While conventionally object-centred art historical analysis acknowledges artworks' capacities to create affect, the affect of the artist is often relegated to peripheral biographical or ancillary psychological contextualisation. However, if we want to make art history a more pluriversal undertaking in post- and decolonial senses, we have to account for affects' 'worlding' power, too.

This is why I will start with a brief look into the affects invested in issues of (group) identity and (collaborative) authorship when the Fluxus network assembled at the time of Paik's drawing. Followed by a close reading of four layers that mark *FLUXUS Island* – a topography of friendship, war-related sites, gender and body politics, and a utopian administration – I will then discuss the work as a performative medium. It allows Paik and the viewer to connect real and imaginary worlds through a cosmo-politically oriented and at the same time dis-/orienting medium, informed by transcultural and migratory experiences.

FLUXUS Island in Décollage OCEAN*: Beaten by social dynamics*

With *FLUXUS Island in Décollage OCEAN* (Figure 26.1), Nam June Paik drew an island that fellow artist Wolf Vostell reproduced and circulated as a silkscreen poster, first published in 1963 by Typos in Frankfurt a. M., Germany. Presumably, it was Vostell who added the typewritten overview of the content of '*DÉCOLLAGE 4/63 Bulletin aktueller Ideen*' in the upper left corner of the drawing.[2] It effectively turns the graphic (*Nam June Paik* 2010, 79) into an advertisement for the *Bulletin*, one of the early publication outlets in which Fluxus networks and practices manifested. While the overview correctly lists Paik as a contributor to the fourth issue of the *Bulletin* (Vostell 1964), the drawing of the island itself was not a part of the fourth nor any other of the seven issues in total that were published between 1962 and 1969. Accordingly, I view *FLUXUS Island* in a double function: as a means of advertising Vostell's editorial endeavour and as an individual drawing created in relation to Paik's other Fluxus works, the mail art series *Monthly Review of University for Avant-Garde Hinduism N. J. Paik Fluxus-A* in particular (Koch 2018; *Nam June Paik* 2010, 93).

A detailed analysis of the map as related to the complex group dynamics of Fluxus lies beyond the scope of this article. However, an undated letter from Paik to George Maciunas written c. 1963/64 can serve as an indication of the very real conflicts haunting the Fluxus collaboration.[3]

Paik reiterates their communication partially based on missed or unanswered letters and the fact that Maciunas had continuously delayed his own planned Fluxus publication due to poor health, lack of funds, relocation, and increasing internal conceptual fights. In contrast, Paik points out that he himself had managed

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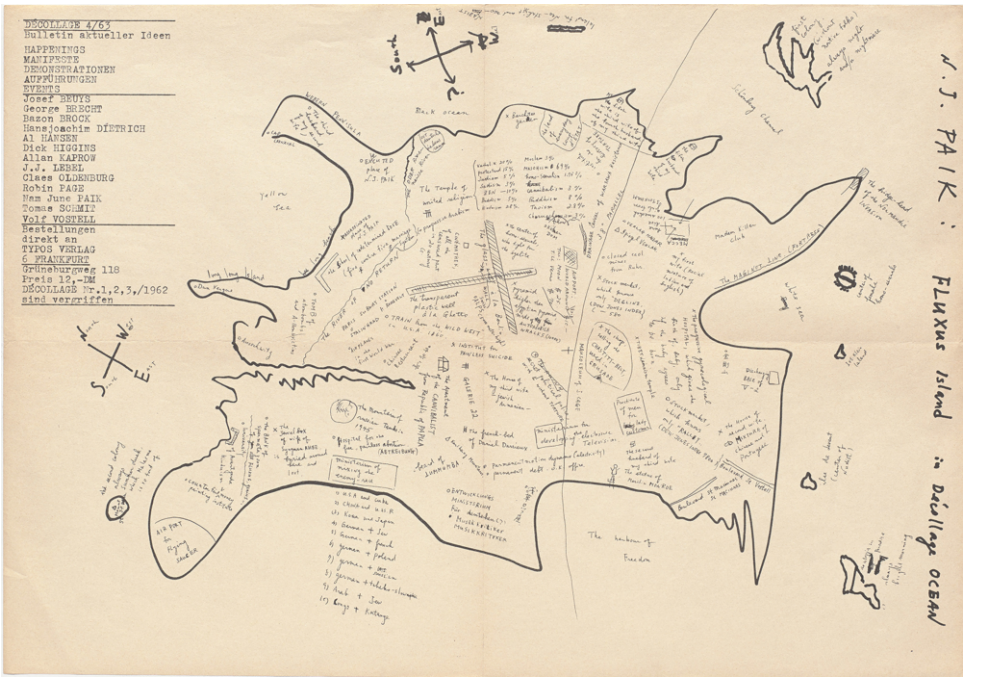

FIGURE 26.1: Nam June Paik, *FLUXUS Island in Décollage OCEAN*, 1963, 40 × 57.3 cm, offset lithograph, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift. Acc. no.: 3211.2008. x1-x7, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (Digital Image © 2022, The Museum of Modern Art/Scala, Florence).

to realise, fund, and circulate the *Monthly Review* by assuming the role of its publisher, signing with 'FLUXUS GGGGG' as initially agreed between both. Yet, he was now willing to stop using this pseudonym:

> IN short, I am really tired of pol[i]tik. I will compose alone. […] Still I have deep sympathy to you. but I don't want to be mixed up by the Trago-comedie of FLUX-US-DECOLLAGE sandwich. All the complication comes from that I am in the administration of […] FLUXUS. Please ERASE MY NAME FROM THAT, […] I want to be a free man, who has a freedom to write every one, without to be blamed dirty name. DOUBLE AGENCY.
>
> (Paik 1963)

Crucially, Paik's negative reply did not stop him from asking Maciunas for help in acquiring a visa for the United States as the last paragraph of the letter shows. It proves that political borders had a very real impact on the lives of migrating

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artists such as Maciunas and Paik, outweighing any conceptual border conflict in their midst. Not only was social networking much more than a question of shared artistic ideals, but it also had a pragmatic flipside that made it possible to actually move around and come together in distant places such as Wiesbaden, Tokyo, or New York.

Although I could not establish the exact temporal relation between this letter and the map's inception, the simple fact that Paik has drawn a 'Fluxus' island and anchored it in 'Décollage Ocean' – and not the other way round – is a telling indicator of his conscious self-positioning as an active early Fluxus promoter – one, who was, however, deliberately networking across the emergent boundaries of Fluxus by seriously *per*forming Fluxus' ideals of border- and genre-crossing collaboration and advocating aesthetic relationality and indetermination. A key strategy of Paik's understanding of Fluxus – also visible in the quoted letter – was thus to dilute authorial claims and not to pursue narrow conceptual or ideological demarcations, even if the latter would have helped to better distinguish the network from concurrent radical experimental approaches and similarly oriented groups that marked the 'global sixties' (Chen et al. 2018; Christiansen 2017; Brown 2015). At least in retrospect, *FLUXUS Island* presents not only a pointedly multi-relational, participatory, and procedural counter-account of the emergent network to the historiographically more influential, but also a much more hierarchically structured *Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus*, which Maciunas published a decade later (Schmidt-Burkhardt 2005, 357–390; *Charting Fluxus* 2013).

Reading FLUXUS Island *closely – Four prominent reference layers*

Taking a first glimpse at the territory exhibited by Paik's map, the unfamiliar shape of the island identified as 'Fluxus' through the title leads viewers to assume it presents a purely imaginary ground, a *utopia* in the literal sense that inhibits a poetic presence rather than exactly mapping a ground in the real world. Looking closer at the many spots that Paik marked on the roughly outlined island, the first impression is, however, only partially confirmed. In fact, his hand-written labels refer to real people, sites, and (historical) events as well as invented ones. We find prominent references not only to the Second World War and Germany's role in particular in labels such as 'Ausschwitz', the 'THE ODER River neisse River', but also to other countries as, for example, the '38th PARALLEL', which denotes the line dividing Paik's home country Korea since 1953. Such historically charged references to real sites are mapped next to imaginary landmarks, which can be read as homages to the artist's peers and role models. They mostly stem from the field of New Music and post-war experimental art in western Europe and the United

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States and are accompanied by references to Paik's literary, philosophical, and spiritual preferences, often transgressing the Euro-American frame.[4]

Reading the map as a representation of the artist's intellectual home and personal artistic network (von Wiese 1996, calling it a 'Lebenspartitur'), it is striking that Paik creates a memorial for the American composer John Cage with the centrally placed 'Mausoleum of J. CAGE' – an ironical gesture, given that Cage was then still a rather recent and very much living acquaintance of Paik (Daniels 2010, 107). Humorously, Paik also honours his senior mentor, the influential art critic and Francophile Jean-Pierre Wilhelm with a holy mountain ('Mount St. J-P Wilhelm') located on a tiny satellite island (lower left side), titled 'the second colony always summer dusk, which Malarmé is so fond of', while another, even tinier island (middle right side) is labelled 'IVE. Klein Island'. Equally significant for Paik's projection of a shared conceptual world of vanguard composers and experimental fine artists is a promontory titled 'WEBERN PENNISULA' (upper left), a channel dedicated to his idol Arnold 'Schönberg'[5] (upper right) as well as another mountain dedicated to Karlheinz Stockhausen on the main island.

However, the drawing is far more than a playful and subjective self-positioning in intellectual realms, rendered comical by more or less deliberate spelling mistakes. The literal mapping of a cross-disciplinary cosmos, in which Paik's conceptual appreciation for French Noveau Réalism impersonated by painters such as Yves Klein and a symbolist writer such as Stéphane Mallarmé can equally figure next to his preference for radical serial experiments by the Second Viennese School, is just one of the map's multiple layers. This becomes clear when discovering that the 'Schönberg channel' immediately connects the main island with a jagged satellite island in the upper right corner titled 'first colony (without native folks) always night and/a nightmare'. Further circumnavigating the main island, viewers face a conflicted colour-coded cultural terminology that permeates the waters. They see a rigidly squared, small 'Island for Neo-Stalinist and Neo-NAZIST', which Paik pointedly surrounded by the 'Black Ocean' (central upper part). They find the vulva-shaped 'center of female homo-sexuals' placed in the 'white sea' (central right), adjacent to the 'ilse de Levant (center of Nudist)', and another island called 'the utopia in Paradise always bright morning' (lower right) followed by 'The harbor of Freedom' (central lower part; Figure 26.4), before moving upwards again to the 'Yellow Sea' (upper left).

The Yellow Sea (Figure 26.2) – likely both a reference to the existent popular term for the marginal sea between mainland China and the Korean peninsula and a tongue-in-cheek reference to racial stereotypes against 'yellow people' that Paik had encountered in Germany[6] – presents an entry point to explore a part of the coastline in greater detail. The sea indents the main island forming a large bay area, the lower part of which is embraced by a phallic-shaped

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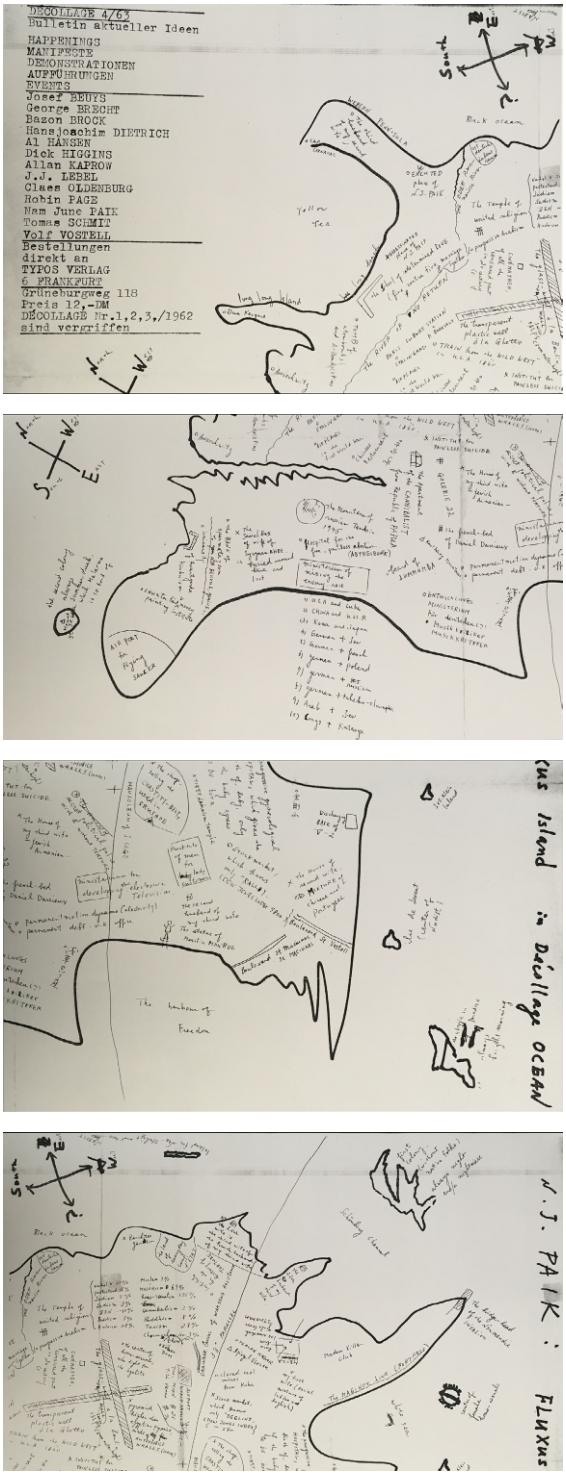

FIGURES 26.2–26.5: Nam June Paik, details of *FLUXUS Island in Décollage OCEAN*, c. 1963, based on black and white photocopy of Figure 26.1.

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landmass, mockingly termed 'the long island', with a spot labelled 'Dun Kerque' at its point. Arguably, these labels radically conflate allusions to male (pre-)potency with traumatic memories of the battle of Dunkirk in 1940.[7] However, as if to discourage overly politicised interpretations, the coastline leads on to the unsuspicious, California-connotated 'long beach'. Next to it, a cross morbidly marks the 'ASSASSINATED place of N. J. Paik', followed by 'CAP CARNAVAL' on the 'WEBERN PENNISULA', which additionally sports a spot labelled 'EX\e/CUTED place of N. J. Paik'. Ostentatiously, the artist sacrifices his authorial power here. Instead of drawing a map with classically structured, clearly oriented, and coherent meaning, *FLUXUS Island* presents a radical tool of dis- and re-orientation to the extent of imag(in)ing the (violent) death of its author. The chain of explosive conceptual associations derived by the wilful juxtaposition of terms pointing to different parts of (real) life, (art) history, politics, and (war-related) geographies strategically fosters the viewer's own creative participation in the poetic making of meaning and a peculiar (Fluxus) world.

Accordingly, Paik presents us with as many as two compass roses (on the upper and lower left; Figures 26.2 and 26.5) – which not only contradict each other in how they orient the four cardinal points but also place 'West' and 'East' as well as 'North' and 'South' next to each other, breaking with their conventionalised oppositions. The '*?*' that replaces '*North*' in the upper compass further serves to highlight that orientation itself is at stake in this map, rather than being its designated function.

The artist formally increased the conceptual multi-directionality of the map by making the labels run in all directions, forcing the viewer to turn the device when attempting to decipher the indications. Labels are dominantly written in English, interspersed by German and French, and a handful of labels in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.[8] In addition, Paik uses rudimentary pictograms to indicate buildings or memorials.[9] Viewers are challenged to make sense of a dense (art) historically as well as socio-politically informed, polyglot system of references relating distant geographies. The habitual expectation to find a central thread of meaning or consistent conceptual direction on how to read the map is teasingly discouraged with each new label and turning off the map (or head) that it requires.

FLUXUS Island is thus literally enacting dis- and re-orientation by showing how mapping and relating sites, things, and persons works. It is informed by a subjective, but ultimately open semiosis of the artist that invites viewers to partake in (his) migratory cultural experiences, making signification itself the governing theme of the drawing. In this regard, Paik's *Island* presents an early instance of artistic "mapping as a practice of transcultural intervention" (Hopfener 2015, 302f.), which has gained urgency in light of accelerated globalisation and its cultural discontents as also a comparison with contemporary artist Qiu Zhijie's maps has shown (Hopfener 2020, 49f.).[10]

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Importantly, Paik's map is, however, neither about total disorientation nor completely subjective. Rather, he took care to emphasise several layers of signification that are complicated by sudden juxtaposition and intersections of the meaning they constitute. Next to the two sketched layers – artist friends/idols and war-related geographies – a third prominent layer is preoccupied with gender and body politics. It is interlaced with a fourth layer that entails three institutions, a 'ministerium', a 'school', and a 'temple', which seem to co-administer a policy to overcome the effects of nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia, and religious fundamentalism.[11]

FLUXUS Island *as a performative tool to overcome essentialist notions of difference?*

To unpack the latter two layers, viewers have to consider the rather conservative background of West Germany in the 1960s. It resonates with Paik's own upbringing until the age of 18 in the patriarchal, neo-Confucian culture that characterised Korea, then still a colony of imperialist Japan, and his subsequent stay in post-war Tokyo (1950–1956), another conservative setting, which he had left for further music studies in Germany only seven years before creating the map (*Nam June Paik* 2010, 227). Given these contexts, the map exhibits not only very liberal but also ambivalently coded concepts of gender and body politics: not only did Paik explicitly map places for heterosexual as well as homosexual men and women, but he even envisioned future generations to have a say in this world. While *FLUXUS Island* thus records 'The center of homo-sexuals, who fight for the égalite', it also sports institutions that seem established tropes of male fantasy such as a 'Madam Killer Club', 'The shop selling the CHASTITY-BELT, used in CRUSADE/a\', as well as a 'Hospital for the free, painless abortion (ABTREIBUNG)'[12] (Figure 26.3). (Self-)ironical, but again ambivalently conscious about the dominance of male artists in the Fluxus network at the time is 'The BANK of spermata zoon of all FLUXUS, genius', potentially counterbalanced by the 'progressive gynecological hospital, which does the birth of the baby only if the baby decides to be born'. In sum, Paik seems to envision *FLUXUS Island* as a much more inclusive world than the actual societies across which he had lived by then and which Fluxus began to span through mail art projects such as his *Monthly Review* or Vostell's *Bulletin*. He actively inscribed traces of concurrent feminist, homosexual, and intergenerational concerns into the map without naïvely projecting a completely harmonious social solution.

The other prominent reference layer crystallises around the 'ministerium of mixing the enemy-race' (in Figure 26.3, lower middle) and 'the school for

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indetermined LOVE (five ♀ contra five ♂ marriage system)' (in Figure 26.2, middle left) as viewers find numerous hints pointing to the power of these two institutions distributed across the main island. The ministerium, as well as the school, seems in charge of systematically fostering a kind of cross-cultural intercourse that can be read as a satirical transcultural means to undo racist policies as those of the National Socialists. At least for German viewers at the time, Paik's suggestion of 'mixed' marriages brings back horrible memories of the anti-Semitist use of the term in the context of the Holocaust, while for fellow Koreans as well as Paik's many Japanese friends, colonial policies violently enforcing ethnic distinctions between the two countries might have been the more immediate connotation.

In labels such as 'my first wife (Racial mixture of Indian and English)', 'the house of my third wife – Jewish-Armenian', or 'My fifth wife is the third wife of the fourth husband of my third wife', Paik explicitly inserts himself again. He obviously envisions a polygamous system pertaining equally to men and women, resulting in a transgressive family scheme, whose members share multiple marital cross-relations and pointedly overcome colonially or nationally enforced ethnic segregation.[13] The ten confrontational pairings, which the artist additionally lists under the 'ministerium for mixing the enemy-race', not only work to intensify associations with Germany's disastrous role in the Second World War but also point to violent conflicts between other countries and ethnicities as a more general trope of the Cold War, if not world history as such (e.g. "3 (Korea and Japan, […] 9) Arab + Jew", in Figure 26.5).

Significantly, the idea of systematically mixing 'enemy races' or nations also resonates in the mock statistics that Paik provides in 'The Temple of unified religions […] progressive Arabism' (Figure 26.2). In contrast to the ministerium, the temple is not marked by a dichotomist structure of confrontation but invites readers to calculate the excess of participant believers, which humorously adds up to more than 100 percent. Again, the constellation of the mentioned 'religions' seems partially inspired by the immediate German environment, as the list starts with 'Katolik 20% protestand 15%'. However, it ironically disappoints scholarly classifications of (world) religions and defies the attempt to read the list as realistically tied to one particular country, when continuing with 'Indiem 5% Sadism 3% ZEN 10% Buddism 5% Hinduism 28% Moslem 3% MASOHISM 69% homo-sexualism 1.75% Cannibalism 3% Buddhism [again] 8% Taoism 2.8% Churusch(tchow)ism 3%'. Evidently, Paik follows through with his ironic strategy to collapse conventionally distinct fields of references and to actively confuse established hierarchies and (sub-)categorisation of terms. He strategically dis-orients normative (European) distinctions between the sacred and the profane and deliberately conflates political ideology and religious, spiritual, and philosophical beliefs with conflict-laden historical, gender, and cultural attribution

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processes, when housing cannibalism, masochism, and Taoism in a temple with selected world religions that provocatively omits Judaism, while being sub-titled 'progressive Arabism'.[14]

Effectively, the temple 'unites' less than it makes viewers aware of the exclusionary potential of taxonomies and institutionalised power relations by synchronising seemingly incommensurable terms that conventionally pertain to different cultural conditions, spiritual concepts, regional histories, and political registers. The reference layer connecting the 'ministerium for mixing the enemy-race', the 'school of indetermined LOVE', and the 'temple of united religion' thus precisely constitutes both a historiographically informed proposition and its ironic, self-reflexive deconstruction. Reinforcing the generative irony of the other reference layers (artist friends/idols and war-related geographies), the exhibited semiosis characterises the map as a performative tool. It is literally informed by the – often violently disorienting and displacing – (subjective) experience of migration that Paik verbalises/visualises and the affiliated pressure of creatively translating himself into different cultural, political, spiritual, and artistic settings, which result from it.

Preliminary conclusion: Cosmopolitanism as a transcultural performance

Paik's migratory biography and the conflicted Cold War *zeitgeist* inscribed in the map encourage a transnational reading that shows the culturally conditioned ways of living (on) *FLUXUS* (*Island*). However, the map also presents a performative tool to dis- and re-orient the artist's world in highly ironic and multi-layered relational ways. In turn, the map's viewers then and now experience many, clashing aspects of Paik's world – or rather of multiple worlds – that were/are not limited to the emergent Fluxus network. *FLUXUS Island* exposes diverse temporalities that are associated with and interrelated through the mapped spots, in a topography that deliberately synchronises existent and imaginary concepts, places, institutions, and people.

Consequently, the map also helps to re-orient scholarly sensitivity towards a more general level of understanding transcultural processes, which characterise migration and affiliated artistic world-making way beyond the horizon of the global sixties. Paik's systematic mixing of terms, languages, and symbolic shapes, as a generative remedy to historically and culturally rooted notions of difference, does not neglect the social power of identification and otherisation. His literally *cosmopolitan* stance is not an extension of the universalist gesture of European enlightenment that ignores the epistemic violence and actual wars engendered by the colonially, imperially, and nationally formed flipside of modernity. Rather, he performs a 'discrepant' cosmopolitanism in

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the sense of Kobena Mercer (Mercer 2005, 11; Clifford 1998, 362, 365), a position that actively considers a/the world including conflicting views about it, while imagi(ni)ng creative means to inhibit it together (with the viewer) despite these violent conflicts. Consequently, the artist also attests to the 'cultural ambidexterity' that is characteristic of cosmopolitan subjects and their diasporic experiences (Dharwadker 2016, 139ff.) when designing a critical map that allows 'worlding' his migratory present and – by extension – the viewers' presents, too. The key is an ironic, self-conscious, but fundamentally empathetic awareness of one's own situatedness and the contingent semiotic as well as aesthetic processes of dis- and reorientation.

Consistently pointing to the difficulties stemming from entangled real and imaginary worlds, *FLUXUS Island* pleas for a less discriminatory and demarcated world. At the same time, it exposes the artist's authorial power and poetic subjectivity as framing and framed driving forces for how viewers can navigate the *Island*. Ultimately, this prevents the map from being misinterpreted as a holistic mapping of Fluxus, as Paik's personal world, or as a universalist artistic projection, orienting us instead to the procedural and collaborative labour that (any) world-making entails.[15]

NOTES

1. For example: Hendricks 1988; Daniels 1991; *Fluxus – Eine lange Geschichte* 1995; Friedman 1998.
2. I adopt the orientation that reproductions of the drawing have set.
3. Since the letter mentions Paik's plan to leave for the USA "end of march" 1964 and states an address in Japan (Tokyo), to where Paik travelled after the end of his solo exhibition in Wuppertal in March 1963, it is very likely that it stems from the second half of 1963 or early 1964.
4. The labelling has no global scope in that references only scarcely point to Africa, the Middle East, India, or countries such as Papua New Guinea, while whole continents (South America, Australia) are not alluded to.
5. Paik graduated from music history, art history, and philosophy in 1956 with a thesis on Arnold Schönberg from the University of Tokyo (*Nam June Paik* 2010, 227).
6. Paik mentions as part of his mail art series in 1963/1964 one of three planned "booklets [… titled] YELLOW PERIL, c'est moi!" (Paik 1963/1964). He published this phrase in a later anthology (cf. Decker 1992, 56f.) and returned to it in the German Pavilion of the *Venice Biennale* 1993. I have mentioned two moments, when he was mistaken for a Japanese by German and US-American journalists, respectively (Koch 2018).
7. The viewer is left to speculate if Paik mapped the town in order to commemorate the proverbial "Dunkirk Spirit" as commonly meaning "being very strong in a difficult situation and refusing to accept defeat" (The Dunkirk Spirit 2009) or if he meant to point to the scholarly debate surrounding the battle.

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8. The Japanese label spells 浅草ロック座 (Jap. Asakusa Rockza) and is a famous strip theatre in Tokyo. The Chinese label spells 金剛山 (Chin. Jingang shan, Kor. Kŭmgang san), the legendary mountain range in North Korea, a pilgrimage site since pre-modern times that plays a fundamental role in Korean cultural imagination. It was also the site of fierce fights between Chinese and American armies during the Korean War. The Korean label remains enigmatic. It spells 다방 스꼴 or 마방 스꼴. If not a generic name, it seems to refer to 'a large room/hall' (다방) or a 'horse stable' (마방) and the literal translation of the English word 'skull' (스꼴).
9. The visually most prominent pictogram denotes a cross-like structure labelled 'The glass-WALL à la Berlin' and 'The transparent plastic wall à la Ghetto'. It underlines Paik's interest in various barriers, boundaries, limits, and demarcations that pervade the *Island*.
10. Comparing *Island* with Hopfener's analysis of Qiu Zhijie's *Map of Total Art* prompts the question whether Paik's mapping might also be rooted in (East Asian) literati concepts of self-cultivation and presents a relational practice of 'personal emancipation' akin to Qiu's (Hopfener 2015, 302; Hopfener 2020, 51f.).
11. There are more layers to discover, such as references to economic and technological contexts.
12. Women are also ambivalently addressed in a spot labelled 'Prostitute of men for lady customer'.
13. Paik does not challenge heteronormative gender concepts to the extent that he would also portray himself as marrying a 'husband' in this 'marriage system'.
14. The attribution of the words '(= progressive Arabism' to the 'Temple' is my preferred reading. However, they could alternatively also be attributed to the 'School of indetermined LOVE' given their ambiguous location in the middle between both institutions.
15. My research was supported by the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung's 'Elite-Programm für Postdoktoranden/-innen'. I thank Ruixuan Chen and Hyojin Lee for helping me in translating the Asian labels.

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Jessica Hemmings is a professor of craft at HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg. She holds a B.F.A. (Honors) in textiles from the Rhode Island School of Design (1995–1999), an M.A. (Distinction) in comparative literature from the School of Oriental and African studies, University of London (1999–2000) and a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh (2001–2006) titled *The Voice of Cloth: Yvonne Vera*. Editorial board memberships include *Textile: The Journal of Cloth & Culture* (Taylor and Francis) and *Craft Research* (Intellect). Current research includes the *Reading Material* project undertaken as Rita Bolland Fellow at the Research Center for Material Culture, the Netherlands. Recent publications include *The Textile Reader*, 2nd edition, edited by Jessica Hemmings, Bloomsbury, 2023; "Material Scent: Textiles Beyond Touch." Routledge, 2024; "Can That Be Taught? Lessons in Embodied Knowledge." Somaesthetics and Design Culture edited by Richard Shusterman and Bálint Veres, Brill, 2023; and "Maximum Space Around the Typewriter: Yvonne Vera and the craft of writing." *Wasafiri: International Contemporary Writing*, 2021, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 32–40.

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Alma-Elisa Kittner, Ph.D., is an art historian and senior lecturer at the Justus-Liebig-University Giessen at the Institute of Art Education. From 2020 to 2022 she was the spokesperson of the Research Group "Art Production and Art Theory in the Age of Global Migration" (with Kerstin Meincke and Miriam Oesterreich) and she was a member of the DFG network "Entangled Histories of Art and Migration: Forms, Visibilities, Agents." She received her doctorate in 2005, which was published as *Visuelle Autobiographien: Sammeln als Selbstentwurf bei Hannah Höch, Sophie Calle und Annette Messager*, transcript, 2009. She held doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships in the research groups "The Staging of the Body" and "Interart Studies" at the Freie Universität Berlin. Her current research project analyses modern and contemporary artists' travels to Italy with a focus on Italy's position within Mediterranean migration. She is the co-editor with Gabriele Genge of the *kritische berichte issue La Méditerranée – zeitgenössische Perspektiven auf den Mittelmeerraum*, vol. 4, 2017; and the author of "Objects of Migration: On Archives and Collections, Archivists and Collectors." *Visual Anthropology*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2021, pp. 385–404.

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Franziska Koch is a senior lecturer (akademische Oberrätin) for transcultural studies at the Department of Art History of Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf. From 2009–2023, she worked as assistant professor of global art history at

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the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies. Her habilitation project about N.J. Paik and transcultural collaboration in Fluxus was supported by a grant from the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung (2019–2024). She co-edited *Negotiating Difference: Contemporary Chinese Art in the Global Context*, VDG, 2012 and is the author of *Die 'chinesische Avantgarde' und das Dispositiv der Ausstellung. Konstruktionen chinesischer Gegenwartskunst im Spannungsfeld der Globalisierung*, transcript, 2016. She edited the thematic issue of the *Journal of Transcultural Studies* (vol. 11, no. 2, 2020) entitled *How We Work Together: Ethics, Histories, and Epistemologies of Artistic Collaboration*. Koch co-led Heidelberg's team "Worlding Public Cultures: the Arts and Social Innovation" (2019–2023; BMBF) and authored *Worlding Love, Gender, and Care. Shigeko Kubota's 'Sexual Healing'*, ICI Berlin Press, 2023.

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Fabrice Langrognet is a historian of migration and asylum. In 2019, he completed a Ph.D. in migration history at the University of Cambridge, where he was a Gates scholar, and he is now a Leverhulme fellow at the University of Oxford. His current research deals with refugee history, in particular asylum procedures at European airports in the 1980s and 1990s. Fabrice is also an associate researcher at a Paris-based social history lab, where he co-leads a museum project around migrant housing. Langrognet is a fellow at the Institut Convergences Migrations (Paris) and at the Global Public Policy Institute (Berlin). In 2022, he published his first book, *Neighbours of Passage: A Microhistory of Migrants in a Paris Tenement, 1882–1932*. Routledge, 2022.

* * * * *

Alessandro Mazzola is a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies at the University of Liège, Belgium, where he also obtained a Ph.D. in political and social sciences. Alessandro's research focuses on the cultural expression and participation of minorities, the function of music in contexts of ethnocultural conflict, and the public opinion and mobilisations concerning asylum seekers in Europe. His previous publications focus on the relationship between popular culture and power in contemporary societies and the integration of minorities, with a particular focus on migration and the refugee question and the political debate on populism, xenophobia, and the extreme right.

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Yana Meerzon is professor of theatre studies at the University of Ottawa and former (2020–2022) President of the Canadian Association for Theatre Research. Trained as a professional theatre critic in Russia, she holds a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. Yana is the author of three books, with the latest volume *Performance, Subjectivity, Cosmopolitanism*. Palgrave, 2020. She co-edited seven collections, including *Handbook on Theatre and Migration*, Palgrave, 2023 (with S. E. Wilmer). Her current research project is entitled "Between Migration and Neo-Nationalism(s): Performing the European Nation – Playing a Foreigner"; funded by The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Yana is the editor of the 'Essays' section of the journal *Critical Stages/Scènes critiques*.

*****

Kerstin Meincke is a researcher, curator, and lecturer focusing on photography and media arts in transcultural and migratory contexts. She is akademische Rätin in the field of Modern Art History/Art Science at the Institute for Art and Art Science at the University of Duisburg-Essen, where she also collaborated in the DFG research project "The Anachronic and the Present: Aesthetic Perception and Artistic Concepts of Temporality in the Black Atlantic" (2016–2019). Recent publications include: "A Side Note on Europe: Germaine Krull's Chandigarh Portfolio (1972)." *Photo Researcher*, no. 31, 2019, pp. 227–237; "An Alligator Escapes: Nico Joana Weber's Tropic Telecom (2020) and the Intersection of Modernism and Colonialism." *Tropic Telecom*, edited by Nico Joana Weber and Barbara Scheuermann, Kunstmuseum Bonn / Bonner Kunstpreis 2019, Brauweiler, 2020; "Peripheral Experiences." *Peripheren*, artist publication, edited by Katja Stuke and Oliver Sieber, Kettler, 2022. In 2021/2022, she co-curated the Chennai Photo Biennale Ed. III *Maps of Disquiet*.

*****

Birgit Mersmann is a professor of contemporary art and digital image cultures at the University of Bonn. Her interdisciplinary research covers image and media theory, visual cultures, modern and contemporary East Asian and western art, global art and migratory aesthetics, and contemporary documentary photography. Recent monographs and co-edited publications include: *Okzidentalismen. Projektionen und Reflexionen des Westens in Kunst, Ästhetik und Kultur*, co-edited with Hauke Ohls, transcript, 2023; *Über die Grenzen des Bildes. Kulturelle Differenz und transkulturelle Dynamik im globalen Feld der Kunst*, transcript, 2021; *Bildagenten. Historische und zeitgenössische Bildpraxen in globalen Kulturen*, co-edited with Christiane

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Kruse, transcript, 2021; *Handbook of Art and Global Migration: Theories, Practices, and Challenges*, co-edited with Burcu Dogramaci, De Gruyter, 2020.

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Phi Nguyen holds a Master's degree in architecture from Harvard University, Graduate School of Design (USA) and a Bachelor's degree (summa cum laude, Wood Achievement award as one of two distinguished graduates) from Berea College (USA). She is currently working on her Ph.D. in the joint programme between the Laboratory of Urbanism, EDAR, EPFL and HEAD-Genève (Switzerland). Phi is a fellow within the research project Site and Space in Southeast Asia, organised by the University of Sydney and supported by the Getty Foundation. Together with a multidisciplinary team, she received the Graham Foundation grant to coordinate an exhibition at Huế City's Museum of Fine Arts on the city's local architectural heritage (2018/2019). Phi has experience working in both art/design research and practice from renowned firms and institutions around the world. She co-founded the architectural studio Atelier NgNg, whose built projects have been published internationally.

Recent publications include Philippe Rahm and Phi Nguyen, editors. *Decorative Arts in the Age of Global Warming*, Ediciones asimétricas, 2021; "Saigon's Colonial Architecture: Conservation in the Face of Rapid Development and New Identity Construction." *Preserving Transcultural Heritage: Your Way or My Way?*, edited by Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos, Caleidoscopio, 2017, pp. 734–743; "SESC Pompeia, Collective Memory Construction: The Building of An Other Utopia." *OBL/QUE*, vol. 1, 2016.

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Kerstin Pinther is a professor of African art history and is currently a curator for modern and global art at the Staatliche Museen Berlin. Prior to this, she held professorships at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU) and at the Freie Universität Berlin, where she co-founded the first department for African art history within German-speaking universities. Her research activities focus on twentieth and twenty-first-century art, global design issues, and fashion practices. As a curator, her most recent exhibition and book was *Flow of Forms/Forms of Flow: Design Histories between Africa and Europe*, edited by Alexandra Weigand, transcript, 2018. Together with Tobias Wendl, she is the author of a film about the Malian designer Cheick Diallo: *Cheick Diallo – ou la quête de rendre des chooses légères*. Her publications include *Design Dispersed: Forms of Migration and Flight*, edited with Burcu Dogramaci,

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transcript, 2019 and *Fashioning the Afropolis: Histories, Materialities, and Aesthetic Practices*, edited with Kristin Kastner and Basile Ndjio, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022.

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Anahita Razmi is a visual artist and a lecturer in fine art at Central Saint Martins College of Arts & Design, London. Working with installation, moving image, photography, and performance, and often using her own Iranian-German background as a reference, her practice explores contextual, geographical, and ideological shifts – producing testing grounds for possibilities of import/export, hybrid identities, and the constructions and ambiguities of cultural representation. Razmi's works were exhibited in international institutions like Museo Jumex, Mexico City; Halle 14, Leipzig; Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria; Sazmanab Center for Contemporary Art, Tehran; Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany; The National Art Center, Tokyo; and Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Germany. Among other grants and scholarships, she received the Tarabya Cultural Academy Fellowship, Istanbul (2020); the Goethe at LUX Residency, London (2018); the MAK-Schindler Scholarship, Los Angeles (2013); and The Emdash Award, Frieze Foundation, London (2011).

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Annabel Ruckdeschel, Ph.D., is a staff member at the chair of modern and contemporary art history at the Justus-Liebig-University Giessen. She wrote a dissertation on *'Montparnasse, carrefour du monde' The Invention of Paris as Centre of Art – From the Café Exhibitions in Montparnasse to the International Exhibitions of the 'École de Paris', 1921–1946*, which was among others awarded the Deubner Prize of the Deutscher Verband für Kunstgeschichte e.V. During her doctoral studies, she was a one-year fellow at the German Forum for Art History (DFK Paris), research assistant at the chair of modern and contemporary art history at the University of Zurich, and a fellow at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture in Giessen. She studied art history and philosophy in Heidelberg and Berlin (B.A.) and completed a master's degree in Curatorial Studies at the Goethe University Frankfurt and the Staatliche Hochschule für Künste Städelschule.

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Martin Schieder is a professor of modern and contemporary art at the University of Leipzig. His research focuses on French art (eighteenth to twentieth centuries), cultural transfer, exile, the art market, exhibition and studio studies, and

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political iconography. He is currently working on the book project *The Transatlantic Ocean Crossing Into Exile, 1914–1945: From Heterotopic Experience to Aesthetic Reflection*.

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Mona Schieren is a professor of transcultural art histories at the University of the Arts, Bremen. Topics of her current research of transcultural studies in modern and contemporary art include fibre art, the history and theory of body practices/technologies, as well as history politics and trauma theory. She is part of the DFG Network "Entangled Histories of Art and Migration: Forms, Visibilities, Agents." Her book *Transcultural Translation in the Oeuvre of Agnes Martin: The Construction of Asianistic Aesthetics in American Art after 1945* (2016), was awarded the CAA International Publication Prize to be translated into English. Recent publications include the co-edited volume with Katrin von Maltzahn *RE: BUNKER. Erinnerungskulturen – Analogien – Technoide Mentalitäten*. Argo, 2019; "On Breathing. Impulses from Charlotte Selver's Sensory Awareness in the Work of Lenore Tawney." *Breath. Formative, Ecological and Social Dimensions*, edited by Linn Burchert and Iva Rešetar, De Gruyter, 2021; together with Oscar Svanelid "Structuring of the Self: Lygia Clark and the Therapeutical Trajectory of Brazilian Modernism." *Modernism, Art, Therapy*, edited by Suzanne Hudson and Tanya Sheehan, Yale University Press, 2024.

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Mareike Schwarz, M.A. art history, addresses questions of public art and public interest. She has studied economics, literature, and art history in Berlin, Buenos Aires, Cambridge, Hagen, and Munich. After graduating with a master's thesis on commoning through public art and landscape design at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), which won the University Prize of the City of Munich, she conducted an oral history project on curating contemporary art in memorial places at the Universidad de Buenos Aires in 2020. At present, she teaches art theory at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Before that, she held a doctoral position in the ERC-funded research group "Relocating Modernism: Global Metropolises, Modern Art and Exile" (METROMOD) at LMU. Her dissertation is dedicated to the effects of art in the public sphere and commons. Current publications include"(Re)routing and (Re)rooting in Urban Exile", *Urban Exile* edited by Burcu Dogramaci, et al., Intellect, 2023, pp. 287–310.

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Sholeh Shahrokhi is a professor of anthropology at Butler University. She received her Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley in 2008. In the same year, she began teaching at Butler in the Department of History, Anthropology and Classics, and across interdisciplinary programmes such as race, gender and sexuality studies; peace and conflict studies; international studies; and global and historical studies. She is the author of "Life Jackets on Shore: Anthropology, Refugees, and the Politics of Belonging in Europe." *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2018, pp. 11–33; "Gender and Sexuality: An Anthropological Approach." *Ethnology, Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology* edited by Paolo Barbaro, EOLSS, 2017; "Iranian War Cinema: The Art of Remembering Pain." *Iranian War Cinema: National Identity, Ethnic Diversity, and Gender Issues*, edited by P. Khosronejad, Sean Kingston, 2012.

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Angela Stercken, Ph.D., is a senior researcher, curator, and author. Research fields lie in transcultural/postcolonial art history, the theory of image, time and space, in phenomena of transmediality and temporality in (maritime) spaces of transfer and migration, and modern and contemporary art in the Transatlantic. Lecture and granted research projects led her to the Universities of Düsseldorf, Munich, and Duisburg-Essen, where she lastly completed the DFG-funded research project "The Anachronic and the Present: Aesthetic Perception and Artistic Concepts of Temporality in the 'Black Atlantic'" ("Aesthetic Temporalities") and recently holds a deputy professorship for contemporary art history. Younger contributions focus on phenomena of space and surface, contemporary performative and conceptual African art and photography, African American art, and their processes of exchange from the 1960s until today. Recent book publications include the co-edited volumes *Art History and Fetishism Abroad: Global Shiftings in Media and Methods*. transcript/Columbia University Press, 2014; *Aesthetic Temporalities Today: Presence, Presentness, Re-Presentation*. transcript/Columbia University Press, 2020; and the forthcoming monograph *Temporality and Aesthetic Regimes in the Black Atlantic*, vol. 2: *Blackness in Conflict: Pictorality and the Making of a shared Present and Future*. transcript/Columbia University Press, 2024.

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Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service, and the Stuart D.B. Picken Memorial Fund. Her research fields are Muslim diasporic fiction, Black studies, intersectionality, and anti-Muslim racism. Recent publications include "Junge Muslim*innen in der superdiversen Migrationsgesellschaft Deutschland." *Antimuslimischer Rassismus und Muslimische Jugendarbeit in der Migrationsgesellschaft*, edited by Ansgar Drücker and Philip Baron, IDA, 2019; "Academic: Teaching in Enemy Territory." *Race and Racism in American Studies in Germany*, edited by Mahmoud Arghavan et al., transcript, 2018, pp. 153–176.

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Susanne Wernsing is a freelance historian and curator. Her research and exhibition fields are body politics, collections from racist, colonial contexts, politics of history/history of science, and museum and exhibition studies. Recent publications include "Fallen der Affirmation: Kuratieren kolonialer Sammlungen und rassistischer Archive." *Das Museum im kolonialen Kontext*, edited by Pia Schölnberger, Czernin, 2021, pp. 358–379; "Antisemitische und rassistische Objekte und Bilder in Ausstellungen? Ein Gespräch über erprobte Strategien und offene Fragen", with Maren Jung-Diestelmeier and Sylvia Necker, *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, edited by Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, vol. 29, 2020, pp. 26–53; "'Modell DDR': Performative Memory as Curatorial Practice." *The GDR Today: New Interdisciplinary Approaches to East German History, Memory and Culture* (Studies in Modern German and Austrian Literature 6), edited by Stephan Ehring et al., Peter Lang, 2018, pp. 263–283.

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Kea Wienand, Ph.D., art historian, lecturer at the Department for *Art and Visual Culture*, Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg. Research fields: postcolonial and cultural gender studies, politics of memory. Recent publications include *FKW // Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur* special issue: *Taking Positions on the 'Refugee Crisis': Critical Responses in Art and Literature*, co-edited with Liesbeth Minnaard, no. 66, 2019; *Nach dem Primitivismus? Künstlerische Verhandlungen kultureller Differenz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1960–1990: Eine postkoloniale Relektüre*. transcript, 2015.

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Mi You is a professor of art and economies at the University of Kassel/documenta Institute. Her academic interests are in the social value of art, new and historical

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materialism, as well as the history, political theory and philosophy of Eurasia. She works with the Silk Road as a figuration for re-imagining networks and technologies and has curated exhibitions and programs at Asian Culture Center in Gwangju, South Korea, Ulaanbaatar International Media Art Festival, Mongolia (2016), Zarya CCA, Vladivostok (2018), and the research/curatorial platform "Unmapping Eurasia" with Binna Choi. Her most recent exhibitions include the *13th Shanghai Biennale* (2020/21), *Lonely Vectors* at Singapore Art Museum (2022) and *Clouds and Power: Roving Central Asia* in Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile, Hong Kong (2023). On the social front, she serves as chair of committee on media arts and technology for the transnational NGO Common Action Forum. She is a Berggruen Institute Europe fellow in 2023.

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ENTANGLED HISTORIES OF ART AND MIGRATION

THEORIES, SITES AND RESEARCH METHODS

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