MeLa Books

THE RUINED ARCHIVE

edited by
Iain Chambers, Giulia Grechi,
Mark Nash

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area

funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

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MELA BOOKS 11 – RF02 CULTURAL MEMORY, MIGRATING MODERNITIES AND MUSEUM PRACTICES
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ENGLISH EDITING
Mark Weir

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Zetalab — Milano

LAYOUT
Mariangela Orabona

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Introduction

إنتاج
شركة الزاوية لتكرير النفط
شركة الزاوية لتكرير النفط ش.م.ل
أحدى
شركات المؤسسة الوطنية للنفط

Voices in the Ruins

→ IAIN CHAMBERS, GIULIA GRECHI, MARK NASH

Les monuments de l' homme ressemblent aux morceaux
de son squelette ou de n'importe quel squelette,
à de grands os décharnés: ils n'évoquent aucune habitation à leur taille.
Francis Ponge 1997

The image on the cover of this book—*Haunted House* (2006) by Zineb Sedira—shows a ruined French colonial building abandoned on the Algerian coast. From the southern shore of the Mediterranean it proposes the other side of Occidental modernity: as a relic from a colonial past it continues to haunt the present. It is the fundamental argument of this book that it is such a haunting that persistently interrogates the practices and the very premises of the modern museum. In its persistence, in its refusal to disappear, another set of histories are sustained and continue to swirl around the ruin. Such histories, inscribed in the violence of the European appropriation of the rest of the planet, not only form the complex configuration of the present. They also provoke another manner of telling, a diverse narration. Such an alternative, or counter-narrative, clearly interrupts and disturbs the manner in which we are accustomed to account for time and place. Viewed and lived from elsewhere the world acquires alarming angles, time is pushed out of joint, and the presumed uniqueness of our history as a universal point of view comes undone, splinters into further tellings, rolls away from its role in securing the centrality of the West.

The tendency to classify, collect and categorise reality, organising and institutionalising the play of identities and differences in a visual regime,

PREVIOUS PAGE — *Museum of Migration, Lampedusa (courtesy Iain Chambers 2013)*

can be seen as a prerogative of the West. For such activities are associated with the concepts of accumulation and preservation (rather than redistribution or dissolution), together with linear temporality and order which have their roots in Western culture. In this sense the construction of archives, that complex set of practices which includes collecting, accumulating, classifying, conserving and exhibiting can be identified as both "a form of Western subjectivity and a changing set of powerful institutional practices" (Clifford 1988, 218). It leads to the appropriation of other objects, images and meanings that involves "a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture, and authenticity" (220).

In its guise as a modern, colonial archival structure, the museum has provided the imaginative and performative resources, the cognitive scope and processes that have gone into constructing the modern European citizen. Here the citizen is duly instated as a "universal" subject, contrasted to an "otherness" against which the subject is measured via a series of founding dichotomies: other/self, nature/culture, deviant/normal. At the same time the museum is one of the elements in Foucault's dimension of "power through knowledge," constituting what Timothy Mitchell has called an "exhibitionary order" (Mitchell 2002). This is a fundamental of modern European identity which organizes and embraces reality in terms of a classificatory system of visual knowledge, translating and implementing it in those heterotopic expedients (Foucault 2006) whereby Europe began to organize representations of itself and diversity (the Universal Expositions, the documents of colonial administration, museums, tourism and the leisure industry, advertising, zoos, botanical gardens, theatre and the freak shows).

> The museum as a way of seeing, a staging, a Barnum's circus of modern life; as a means of transmitting political values and contents; as an officially sanctioned plundering with the aim of forming new bundles of ideas; museum-ised places, like Venice; museums as 'monuments to the fragility of cultures, the decadence of major institutions, the dwindling of rituals, the disappearance of myths, the destructive effects of wars, to negligence and corrosive doubts' (Drugman 1995, IX, X).

The museum institutionalises a manner of seeing, and more generally of perceiving: it organizes the space in which items are displayed, normalises and controls the bodies of visitors passing through that space, and constructs its referent (and indeed its visitors) through the activity of exhibiting itself. For some time now the neutrality of the museum structure, as of every form of archival structure, has been subjected to a critique starting precisely from the dual act of "exhib-action": that complex set of practices through which the identity of an exhibited object or subject is defined by means of the modalities of its exhibition. An exhibiting is at the same time an 'acting out,' an action performed in the very act of representation: it is an essentially performative act that reveals the articulation of processes of power that are dissimulated, naturalised

and rendered transparent by the alleged objectivity of the implementation (Danto 1988).

In the on-going deconstruction of the museum as a non-neutral, colonial structure of representation and construction of identity and power, much emphasis has been placed on the idea that the Museum is dead, or at any rate well on the way. But before declaring the irreversible passing of the museum structure, we should reflect on the possibility of reactivating some of its social functions in a new way. This would involve constructing narratives which are able to engage with an identification process, an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983), no longer envisaged in a national or colonial sense but in a postcolonial, intercultural and trans-national manner, proposing itself as a laboratory for new modalities of citizenship—a different "coming community" (Agamben 2001).

> I would like a museum in the not-so-new XXI century that abandons the idea of looking for the idea of activation; one that is not a building or even a fixed space but a series of events and a program; one where the institution gives up authority; one that is dedicated to research into the practical usefulness of art; one where art entails actual social transformation, instead of merely providing highly speculative strategies for bringing about such transformations. One where things are not excised from their contexts, where objects are contextualized instead of historicized. One where things are not exhibited but activated, given use-value instead of representing it. One that is not a structure but a moment; that is not a place to visit but a presence (Bruguera 2010).

The museum can uncouple itself from a predictable institutionalisation of the past to present itself as an activator of dynamics beyond its walls, in a wider territory and among various communities of "citizens." It is also a potential activator of memory processes which embody conflicting viewpoints on the past, and on how to narrate the past, and above all on how this past constitutes an uncomfortable memory for the present. This is to propose practices of identification in and through a public space that transforms the museum into a venue able to promote affective strategies of memorialization. Here the sensorial bodies of spectators are activated and takes us beyond the compulsion to exhibit into an altogether more porous political space.

→ AT THE EDGE OF THE ARCHIVE

It was Cornelis de Jong who drew my attention to the fact that many important museums, such as the Mauritshuis in The Hague and the Tate Gallery in London, were originally endowed by sugar dynasties or were in some other way connected to the sugar trade. The capital amassed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through various forms of slave economy is still in circulation, said de Jong, still bearing interest, increasing many times over and continually burgeoning anew. One of the most tried and tested ways of legitimising this kind of money has always

been patronage of the arts, the purchase and exhibiting of paintings and sculptures, a practice which today, said de Jong, was leading to a reckless escalation of prices paid at major auctions. Within a few years, the hundred million mark for half a square yard of painted canvas will have been passed.

W.G. Sebald 2002

...the strategies of European colonisation, the failures of the postcolonial African states, and subsequent patterns of migration (...) can no longer be ignored in debates about national and continental identities in Europe.

Chika Okeke Agulu 2013

The phrase the "landscape is the ultimate archive," pronounced recently in a seminar by the Libanese artist Akram Zaatari, brings us bluntly to earth to consider how we are placed. The articulation of memory, the past and institutional recollections, always occurs somewhere, in a location. And if there is a place where memories and meanings are sedimented and laid up that is the landscape. Of course, what is in the land is often unreadable, if not covered up and invisible. It is an archive that houses the inscrutable but nevertheless crucial conditions of our existence. However, in the landscape there also exist altogether more prosaic archives. These are social artefacts, taking the form of museums, galleries, exhibitions, text books, buildings, structures and practices that sustain the official inscriptions of time, together with the more fragile means of sound, photography, film and orality. These social archives, at least in their institutional format, seek transparency. What is represented and exhibited between the walls and among the pages of the catalogue and the guide book stands in for a particular order of sense. This is secured in protocols and premises that appeal to the universal neutrality of scientific research. The museum as an exercise in the rationalisation of time and space, driven by the desire to render these coordinates natural and universal is, very much like the overall configuration of the social and human sciences, an invention of European modernity. It draws its strengths and shortcoming from that precise constellation. But then the land, together with the circumscription of our limits and location, tells us something slightly different, alerting us to cracks in the edifice.

Unlike the rocks, soil and the sea, this cultural landscape is altogether more volatile. If the museum seeks to exhibit the timeless values of mankind, it is itself very much of a particular time and location. It expresses a desire, and exposes an unconscious, that has much to do with its place in a world that is neither neutral nor timeless. The constant re-telling of the past alerts us to continuing shifts in semantics and paradigms. In the conjoining of social and natural landscapes there emerges the mandate for an archaeology. This archaeology serves less to uncover a pristine object or definitive understanding of the past and more to trace the social processes of cultural burial and respond to the critical sense of exhumation where value lies not in the document or the lost object but in the processes

that the event of 'digging' releases. The research becomes an excavation of the sedimented landscapes of the present. Within these processes, and robbed of the stability of a timeless object (and interpretation), the premises of the modern European museum come undone. Here the question is not merely theoretical. In the epistemological fracture posed by shifting the assumed foundations of modernity, no longer secured in a single authority (the museum, the nation, the West), the colonial past migrates into our midst. As an uninvited guest, as a ghost, this past—just like the earlier Atlantic slave trade that emerges as a central factor in the present-day international art market in the Sebald quote that opens this essay—casts a persistent shadow over archive work, disrupting and dispersing the authority of the museum. In the performance of memory, as opposed to its exhibited definition, the narration operates a suspension promoted by seemingly extraneous bodies, voices and histories crossing and disrupting museum and gallery spaces.

These are the unexpected encounters with the past that perforate the pretensions of the present which wishes that the past were really over and consigned to the dead testimony of history. But then history, as Freud and psychoanalysis have taught us, is ultimately a narration of the present becoming future. It speaks of a past—negated, displaced, mis-recognised—that is yet to be told.

Such a situation promotes a ruin, a relic of the previous order of sense, and disrupts the physical and metaphysical premises of museum displays and gallery exhibits. The postcolonial dismantling of the historical formation and cultural constellation of the West impacts directly on such institutions of memory. Perhaps the concept of the postcolonial is most precise when it operates within Euro-American, or First World, coordinates, whereas it carries little purchase in Vietnam or Colombia, where its sense is irrelevant or only indirect. The postcolonial is rather about the First World interrogating itself, its past and present. This is precisely why there is little point in modern museum and art curators announcing that postcolonial theory has no resonance in Asia or Latin America in order to close it down in Europe and the United States. As though we could now simply step beyond the interrogations of Occidental authority and get back to working on the next theoretical turn with which to frame the world. To contest this possible exit we still need to respond to Gayatri Spivak's proposal of developing a "transnational cultural studies, colonial and postcolonial discourse studies" that pushes us beyond the confines of metropolitan canons and concerns, and the continual refurbishment of its authority and power through a "new orientalism" (Spivak 1990, 791).

To continue to insist on the interrogations disseminated by postcolonial criticism and practices is to shift radically the terms of the discourse. Let us take the case of the archive. Beyond playing on the critical resonance between museology, memorials and mausoleums—where 'infinity goes up on trial' (Bob Dylan)—we could stretch and rework our understanding of the archive to leave it open to the world of the uninvited guest. Today, for many uninvited guests, their first taste of European hospitality is

represented by the detention centre on the Italian island of Lampedusa. We are not simply on a rock covered by desert scrub some 200 kilometres south of Tunis. We are in the south of Italy, of Europe, of the so-called First World, where geographical distance is annulled by political and cultural immediacies. Again we could consider this particular landscape, as Akram Zaatari suggests, as an archive. Composed of ship-wrecked boats, fishermen, illegal migrants, state officials, tourists, shop and restaurant owners, this is a volatile contact zone where the over-developed world comes up, often violently, against the south of the planet. Here we are drawn into considering how different memories of migration cross and compose the liquid archive of the Mediterranean: yesterday Europe's rural poor crossing its waters towards the Americas, today those from Africa and Asia seeking a better life despite the obstacles raised by Fortress Europe. In its extra-territoriality the Mediterranean promotes a re-territorialisation of belonging.

Today the poor are not permitted to travel. They can only travel illegally, outside the confines imposed by First World law and the dictates of its version of the globe. The social injustices of the world are directly inscribed in the law, in the legal networks established by a colonial inheritance and its contemporary disciplining of the modern world. The contemporary migrant's story is precisely the exposure of this political economy. It cuts into all understanding of the museum, rendering its procedures of display and associated practices of knowledge problematic. In the summer of 2013 a temporary exhibition entitled a 'Museum of Migration' was held in a space provided by the Lampedusa town council. Here mundane objects—a packet of couscous, a plastic sandal, a rusting tea pot—washed ashore or abandoned, acquired a new density once they had been displaced from anonymous lives to the exhibitionary logic of the display case. What persists and resists in these objects is the violent interval or suspension that marks their passage from everyday life (and death) to this quayside building in the port of Lampedusa. These are the spectres of the neoliberal global order that cannot be accommodated in its logic and languages. On the edges and beyond the boundaries of institutional legitimacy and its representation, the objects housed in this temporary exhibition on this dusty island in the seas of Tunisia refuse to lend themselves easily to the fetishisation of art and propel us into what Claire Bishop would call a "situation," where we shift from the finitude of the isolated object to the processes of a project (Bishop 2012, 2). In this particular place, watching 'illegal' migrants receiving a plastic bag containing food, a 2 litre bottle of water, a packet of 10 cigarettes (for the men only) and a telephone card to phone home, before being shipped off to an identification centre on the mainland, the wound is too deep and too fresh. The colonial imperatives that seek to criminalise, racialise and denigrate the other in their modern mobility are too close to the comfort of our everyday lives.

How to narrate migration? Is it simply a social problem, an economic phenomenon, an individual tragedy? Or is it an integral part of an extensive trans-national history driven by a planetary political economy

that constantly reiterates the cruel archive of modernity in its practices of accumulation and exploitation? Today we live within the liberal fiction of 'intercultural dialogue,' as though there can be a dialogue between different, but equal, partners in a multicultural world. This negates the brutal injustice of asymmetrical relationships of power, together with the uneven and unjust distribution of economic and cultural capital that has shaped the planetary formation of the modern world. Some talk, some listen, and the majority are silent. Or, rather, that is the perspective framed in Paris, New York, Rome, Berlin or London. Of course, everyone, everywhere, is talking and interacting, but how much of that complex conversation gets to be registered, acknowledged and to acquire authority, is another story. Who, in the present political economy of the world, has the power to pronounce?

In the end, the narrative of those who are conceptually and culturally 'othered' is the tale of those subordinated to inferiorised histories and silenced lives. It is also the history of those rendered 'objects' by the critical and institutional apparatuses that sustain and reproduce our mechanisms of knowledge: from anthropology, sociology and the museum display case to government policy and the response of European Union legislation to contemporary migrations from the extra-European world. Outside these structures lies the untranslated and untranslatable world. For effective translation would undo and disperse the very mechanisms that seek to render that world transparent to its knowledge and will. To fully translate the other would be to do away with the historical and cultural mechanisms of power and knowledge that produce the 'other.' In a similar manner, if the abstract subject-object distinction of the visual and aesthetic experience is now recognised to be enveloped in the multi-faceted political economy of modernity, then the very autonomy of art history comes to be undone.

Here the exhibit inevitably finds itself coordinated in a critical net that stretches from planetary migrations to the new social media. It is also here that the concept of the archive is stretched to include other means and memories; for example, considering the sights and sounds of cinema and music as archives where we continually respond to the present of the past. These wider archives—altogether more flexible and mobile than the traditional institutions of official memory and recall—sustain the de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation that respond to the on-going historical processes of modernity as the site of perpetual transformation and unauthorised translations. In opposition to an abstract idea of globalised art, we here encounter altogether more immediate and material locations and affects. It also shifts the very premises of the archive and its mechanisms of collecting and cataloguing. Here the classical instruments of sociology, anthropology and art criticism frequently come unstuck (Zanardi 2013). Robbed of their grounding in the relative stability of disciplinary and institutional referents localised in a precise region of the planet, a diverse ethnographic practice is now required.

The spatio-temporal coordinates of the West are here torn apart to reveal

other horizons. The gaze and the position of the critical voice no longer arrives from a single location. It is in this sense, as Hans Belting has pointed out, that contemporary art is global art. The earlier confines associated with the canon and principles of modernism are crossed, confused and confuted. This undoing of the linear understanding of art history, its development and 'progress,' is clearly to be extended to the modern museum. Here the premises sedimented in a historicist approach in which the authority of the West is considered the apex of human advancement tumble into an altogether more complex set of rhythms and reasons as history is considered in the rougher terms of asymmetrical powers sustained in fractures, intervals, disjunctures and conjunctures We are here no longer looking to the West, but through it towards further times and spaces.

If the museum is not to be destroyed but to be renewed, it has to become a potential research institute of modernity. As a site of amnesia, with its catalogues of forgetting, the museum houses isolated objects that would now tend to disappear in processes in which the pertinence of such objects lies both in their presence and absence. Beyond the borderlands of indigenous museums where things are clearly on the move, this means to promote an ethnography not of the elsewhere, but of the West itself. It implies the explicit configuration of the why, what, where, when and how of collecting and exhibiting. It is no longer possible to remain within the security of the neutral exercise in scientific taxonomies of knowledge and historicist exercises in aesthetic taste. The museum guide and gallery brochure now have to respond, whether consciously or not, to the global colonial archive and its postcolonial catalogues. This would mean moving from the precise European custody and imperial capture of an overarching 'universal' towards the lateral details and specificities of a 'universality' that is ultimately irreducible to a single framing or explanation (Diagne 2013). And this brings us back to translation and the continuing montage of the modern world.

→ THE MONTAGE OF MODERNITY AND THE POLITICS OF DISPLAY

One of the main characteristics of modernism… was the play of allusion within and between texts… The effect is to break up the homogeneity of the work, to open up spaces between different texts and different kinds of discourses… The space between the texts is not only semantic but historical too, the different textual strata being residues of different epochs and different cultures.

Peter Wollen 1982

The montage form—with its philosophical display of distances, transitions and intersections, its perpetually shifting contexts and ironic juxtapositions—had become a favorite device in Benjamin's later investigations… What is distinctive about the Arcades Project… is the working of quotations into the framework of montage so much so that they eventually far outweigh the commentaries.

Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin 1999

One of the central themes of the MeLa research project has been to explore the disjuncture between the fact that whilst settled European nationals have a wealth of museums and libraries that facilitate the construction of a hegemonic national and European experience and identity, there are few institutions that represent, in however partial a way, the experiences of both recent migrants and older settlements from Europe, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. There is something of a crisis within the museum profession as to how to represent this ever-changing constituency. As long as this question remains unaddressed the museum looks increasingly partial, unrepresentative and politically and culturally suspect. Some national institutions such as the British Museum and the Louvre have recently begun to position themselves as global museums; that is, as the guardians of global cultures. This enables them to attract private donors from Asia and the Gulf states, while appealing to an international tourist audience and simultaneously whitewashing those histories by which they acquired their collection of objects—often as the result of colonial conquest.

So, not only what objects and histories are exhibited, but also why and how becomes important. Exhibition display was revolutionized in the 1920s by the historic avant-gardes. In El Lissitsky's 1928 Pressa exhibition in Cologne, a montage of film and photography, using multiple large screens organised within a constructivist architecture, immersed the visitor in the experience of a modernist socialist utopia emerging in the Soviet Union through the industrialization of the means of production. The language of architectural modernism continued to feature in international exhibitions, including the International Exposition in Paris in 1937, where the Republican Spanish Pavilion designed in the functionalist language of Le Corbusier by Josep Lluís Sert and Luis Lacas exhibited Picasso's *Guernica* for the first time.

The modernist aesthetic vocabulary of exhibition display was also mobilized by Fascist governments in the same period; one can think of the 1932 "Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista" in Rome. The organization of international exhibitions was clearly an ideological business that continued into the post war period as well. The point of these remarks, however, is not to develop a historical chronicle but rather to make the point that innovations in exhibition design, indeed avant-garde aesthetics tout court, have been put to ideological use on both the right and the left. Indeed aesthetic innovation often came from what we might regard as politically dubious sources.

The negritude movement, which transformed the language of painting in the first decades of the Twentieth century, was mediated through ethnographic exhibitions of 'primitive works.' In a similar manner, after 1945 visual anthropology (the films of Jean Rouch) transformed the languages of European art cinema (Jean-Luc Godard), painting and performance (the Viennese actionists). In this period cinema became a particularly important medium for exploring images of self and 'other.' It would eventually lead to the possibilities of questioning the inscription

of the European gaze towards indigenous populations in museum displays, transforming such objects of study into starting points for a re-organisation and re-consideration of the categories themselves. The gaze is returned, proposing a transversal exhibitionary aesthetic.

The visual cultures of museums and galleries today are deeply embedded in what we can call postcolonial problematics. As well as an unwillingness to reflect on the history of slavery and the movements of capital engendered by this formative moment in early industrial society, there continues to exist a blind spot regarding the challenge to national identities that struggles for independence and present liberation. Instead, national identities are reconstituted in homogeneous terms against a global backdrop, conveniently forgetting the various modalities of the formation of the national in recent history. Tate Britain for example rarely if ever collected or exhibited work by British subjects in the constitutive domains of the either the British Empire or Commonwealth, despite a network of Universities and art schools connecting these far-flung territories with the UK. Artists from Africa and Asia who were at some point in their lives in Britain, trained there and in some cases continuing to live there, were conveniently forgotten. This is part of the 'Other Story' which Rasheed Araeen and others continue to narrate (Araeen 1989).An apparent exception to this rule might be the recent exhibition at Tate Modern of Ibrahim El-Salahi, an artist born in the Sudan, who studied fine art at the Slade in the 1950s and settled in the UK. At that time Sudan was administered as a joint British and Egyptian protectorate. Today Salahi is presented as a 'visionary founder of African and Arab modernism' yet what strikes one about his work is rather its fluent immersion in the language of European surrealism and abstraction. In an important way, he is also a European modernist. It is apparently beyond the capacity of current museum professionals to cope with the challenges to ideas of national and artistic identity that the border crossings of artists such as Salahi present.

The response to the post-colonial challenge tends to be a retreat into provincialism, as if the imperial and colonial project had never occurred. Modernity is then left to be considered in its multiple and regional locations that apparently acknowledge the global while all the time leaving the over-arching hegemony of Euro-North American modernity uncontested.

Tate Modern has recently inaugurated a series of regional committees intended to facilitate the collection of works from around the world, so that it can be come to be a truly globally representative museum (Sherwin 2012). The fact is that the colonial education system of the British, French and Portuguese, as well as of the Soviet Union, included art, film and visual culture. This has ensured that the network of influence and dependency inaugurated by colonialism would continue long after independence into the post-colony. However, the politics and poetics of a planetary approach to globalization (Spivak, Glissant), with its insistence on the primacy of the local territory, provides an important resource for

challenging these projects which would simply align the existing art world circuits with those of neo-liberal capital.

Peter Weibel, theorist and philosopher of new media, highlights the importance of the art of the moving image while at the same time engaging with representations of the complexities of the contemporary world: "The real achievement of the twentieth century as relates to images was the radical change of the nature of the image, the development from panel painting to digital screen" (Weibel 2013).

Weibel argues that only the media are able to both construct and reconceptualise reality through their deployment of motion, time and space in four dimensions. For him 1913 represents a key year because the practice of representation (the presentation of things by means of figurative painting and sculpture, most importantly) was replaced by two diametrically opposed approaches. One was abstraction, as for example, Malevich's 1913 *Black Square*, that involved the self-representation of the means of representation, painting and canvas; and the other was reality, as in Duchamp's 1913 *Bicycle Wheel* where things are used to represent things.

Museums and galleries struggle with the presentation of the moving image perhaps because at an unconscious level they realize the challenge it presents to the categories established by the avant-garde a century ago, which continue to inform the museum presentation of modern and contemporary art. The development of artists' moving image work and the more recent exploration of performance as a category of contemporary art which can be presented in and collected by these institutions suggests that these tectonic plates are finally beginning to move. However a number of caveats are in order.

The quotation by Peter Wollen that opened this section focuses on a key avant-garde strategy of quotation in Jean-Luc Godard's 1970 film *Vent D'Est*. The examples of Malevich and Duchamp mentioned earlier could also be considered as quotations in Wollen's terms. But as well as an aesthetic of assemblage, collage and so on, Wollen is also pointing to the way such works can open up spaces between texts and discourses, spaces which enable the viewer to engage with them critically. Benjamin's writings and Brecht's theatre involved this aesthetic of quotation, developing a class analysis to distinguish different arguments and points of view.

What is important in our current discussion is whether museums, galleries and exhibitions make sufficient use of the avant-garde aesthetic tools developed in the first half of the last century and deploy spatial and visual registers in their display techniques to develop a critically engaged spectator, or whether in fact the dominant discourses in these institutions remain ideologically conservative. In relation to issues of migration and postcoloniality, we would argue that the new global dispensation we have been discussing represents a liberal position whereby the museum continues to muddle along, brokering representations, objects and experiences from within 'global' visual cultures. Paradoxical as it may seem, an earlier exhibitionary economy—the Wunderkammer or cabinet

of curiosities, that we can see today for example in the Sir John Soane's museum in London, and which has had somewhat of a renaissance in contemporary art—might be a more productive model (Hoare 2014). This display form developed during the Renaissance as collections of objects whose precise function and significance was obscure: their categorical boundaries were yet to be defined. Lacking clearly articulated themes organizing the materials on display, the objects can be read as a hotchpotch which today challenges the viewer to make sense in relation to the more ordered views of the world presented by dominant museum culture. It may indeed be that one of the main functions of museum display should be to confound interpretation, creating experimental experiences of categorical confusion rather than confirming an existing cultural doxa and the prevalent status quo.

At the risk of some generalization we would say that, at their best, international contemporary art exhibitions demonstrate such a transversal, rhizomatic aesthetic of display. The 2011 11th Istanbul Biennial is one such case. It comprised a series of solo exhibitions grouped around thematic sections derived from the parenthetical titles of works by the Cuban artist Felix González-Torres: (*Abstraction*), (*Ross*), (*Passport*), (*History*) and (*Death by Gun*). An architecture derived from the shipping container created a series of small gallery spaces, proposing a sense of precariousness, which many of the works dealing with migration, travel and marginality served to emphasise. It was possible for the visitor to construct a personal route or *parcours* through the exhibition, while interpretation was both stimulated and constrained by the thematic anchorage.

The difficulty facing artists and curators dealing with migration, postcoloniality and, ultimately, a migrated or uprooted modernity, is to create a critical space within the experience of the exhibition and individual works which challenge or disturb viewers' expectations. For example Bouchra Khalili's *Mapping Journey* series (from 2009) presents a series of single screen voice-over interviews of individuals trying to get into Europe from Africa. What is filmed is not their faces but their hands drawing the routes of their journeys, demonstrating the circuitousness of the travel (and travail), the many obstacles, both physical and legal, placed in their way by African border guards, crises and incidents which made the journeys so long, tortuous, dangerous and at times impossible. A multiple screen presentation of these works enables us to make connections between individual narratives while preventing us from over-identifying with any one individual. The lack of an authorial voice-over enables the viewer to treat these experiences as facts or phenomena occurring outside the gates of Fortress Europe but which are nevertheless constitutive of it.

The exhibition form is particularly ephemeral. It lasts only for a few weeks or months. The challenge for the curator is how to present works such as Bouchra Khalili's in relation to others in a single exhibition as well as to sustain a similar argument in other moments and localities. There is a further, more philosophical, point perhaps to be made regarding the

work of art, the exhibition, the art critic and theorist. Even if the aesthetic dilemmas presented by the avant-garde in 1913 might appear to have been resolved through the development of new media (assuming one accepts Weibel's argument), the fact is that we are still engaged in aesthetic and political struggles around means of representation where realist forms (which conveniently elide the relationship of form and content) continue to insist and repeat themselves: the 19th century Paris Salons; Soviet Socialist Realism; Neue Sachlichkeit photography and so on.

Histories continue to be rewritten. Eisenstein's project of an intellectual cinema or Vertov's attempt to construct the moving image as a social and political reality are still important projects today. One therefore has to insist that critical curatorial activity always involves returning to the 'now of nowability' of aesthetic projects, to use Benjamin's phrase; in other words, to return to the possibilities that the current conjuncture provides for revisiting key historical and cultural turning points. While we appreciate the arguments that Jacques Rancière develops in his recent book *Aisthesis,* where he explores transition points in aesthetic regimes, there is perhaps too little attention to the fact that many of these debates remain unresolved and are still current today (Rancière 2013). If we make the mistake of consigning such debates to the narratives of art history, we lose the argument and these histories will be abandoned to be re-written by those whose views we disagree with or oppose.

Many important works dealing with the experiences of migration, the postcolonial and the contestation of a monolithic modernity tend to fall back on essentialist categories of migratory or exilic aesthetics developed within a realist problematic, leaving too little space for the potential of anti- or critical realist positions which an engagement with the historic avant-gardes might provide. It is clearly important to start rather with the question of location and the differing aesthetic engagements that the politics of institution and place make locally possible. If we do this we discover that even in the most difficult of times—for example, during the Mengistu dictatorship in Ethiopia—artists were able to combine local aesthetic traditions (for exampe, the hieratic tradition of Christian orthodox murals) with politically dominant aesthetic vocabularies (Soviet Socialist realism) to produce important works. The fact that they are not in circulation today says more about the Eurocentric (and anti-communist) canon of contemporary art history than about the precise poetics such works promoted.

→ THE RUIN: UNDOING THE ARCHIVE OF MODERNITY

Perhaps this is the reason for our general fascination with decay and decadence, a fascination which goes beyond what is merely negative and degrading. The rich and many-sided culture, the unlimited impressionability, and the understanding open to everything, which are characteristic of decadent epochs, do signify this coming together of all contradictory strivings.

Georg Simmel 1958

The sensation of melodramatic bewilderment which the nineteenth century Romantic artists conveyed in depictions of ruins gives imaginative expression to the clash between culture and nature, reason and instinct, control and chaos, which the modern propensity for classification has confronted by producing the generalised and naturalised dichotomies underpinning modernity's construction and representation of reality.

At the beginning of the 20th century Georg Simmel evoked precisely this concept of ruins in his essay *Die Ruine* (1911), in which he analysed architectonic constructions in a ruined state and the way they undermine the project of modernity and its grand narrations. If architecture implies a formal project of bringing synthesis and order to the conflicting forces of nature and "spirit," making their pacification under the predomination of the "spirit" seem a natural outcome—intrinsically associated with the concept of progress—an architectonic project in ruins represents a liberating and subversive force. When both the form and the material of the architectonic project undergo a process of decay, the formal equilibrium is destroyed and, far from being ostensibly pacified, the conflicting forces explode in all their destructive potential, as if stone itself "shook off this yoke and returned once more into the independent lawfulness of its own forces" (Simmel 1958, 380).

Confronted by this destructive process (which can similarly assail the archive as a normalising institution), the human witness perceives "a cosmic tragedy which, so we feel, makes every ruin an object infused with our nostalgia" (379), as if nature was exacting its revenge on the "spirit" that sought to domesticate it, using violence by constraining it into a form or canon, even though the outcome was not the absence of form but a new, formless form which is "entirely meaningful, comprehensible, differentiated" (381). In this way the ruin subverts every order and hierarchy, going beyond the dichotomy of nature and "spirit" inasmuch as it proposes itself quite simply as a gesture of openness, escape, emergence of the conflicting forces that had been obscured, suppressed, made inoffensive, without making any claim to institute a new canon, merely remaining at the margin of an open wound. In this way the conflict that seeps out from this fissure is "something unfinishable, formless, breaking every frame" (384). And of course this obliges whoever witnesses this spectacle to end in ruins themselves, to renounce any position of security and contemplation (Gravano 2012), giving in to the pressure of the ethical and political gesture of positioning.

For all its dramatic nature the ruined archive, or better the actual process by which the archive becomes a ruin, is from the outset a ventriloquous process: "For this reason, the ruin strikes us so often as tragic-but not as sad-because destruction here is not something senselessly coming from the outside but rather the realization of a tendency inherent in the deepest layer of existence of the destroyed" (Simmel 1958, 382). Ruining the archive means unmasking the bad conscience, the authoritarian function of social and cultural control and construction, starting from positions of power, of regimes of "truth" and "falsehood," norms and deviance,

exhibiting and concealing—in sum the way in which it institutes and naturalises a whole regime of memorability: what is to be remembered in the future, and how it is to be remembered.

In fact the ruin exists in a dual temporality: of duration and of return. Reducing the archive to ruins involves desecrating, destroying the sacrality of, its hegemonic discourse, a "profanation" (Agamben 2005) of the coherent, formal project which asserts its power to name, feel and speak alongside the emergence of conflictual and suppressed stories and affects. This emergence can occur only in the present, precisely because this is the "place for enunciation" (Bhabha 1994) in which meanings can be contested, renegotiated and subverted. The dynamic, conflictual and emarginated present in which the ruined archive operates is a suspended temporality because it is involved in an operation of rewriting and enunciation: in Simmel's words, "between the not-yet and the no-longer" (Simmel 1958, 382).

But it is also a time of return, for the revenge of what had been subjugated (Speroni 2002). In this sense reducing the archive to ruins means opening up the suturing of History and restoring the past, revealing the zones of both light and shade, the outcome of a hegemonic discourse. What had been repressed is restored as "an immediately perceived presence" (Simmel 1958, 385)—in a phantasmagorical form, constructing the present tense of that past which, clearly, has difficulty in emerging but seeks to materialise and advance its claims.

→ BETWEEN THE NOT-YET AND THE NO-LONGER

A theorist is one who has been undone by theory.

Irit Rogoff 2003

Ruining the archive challenges another fundamental premise of modernity: the Cartesian distinction between mind and body. Simmel maintains that the ruin cannot be understood if we continue to separate off intuition and reasoning, the emotions and knowledge. Getting to the heart of what the neuro-psychiatrist Antonio Damasio has called "Descartes's error" (Damasio 2006) means calling into question the whole basis of the scientific and humanistic disciplines as they have evolved in Europe, including the social sciences—operating, as it were, on their "nervous system" (Taussig 1992).

Following this orientation, this volume takes the form of a montage of perspectives and reflections produced "in the field," poised between two paradigms that are constantly and productively superimposed: theoretical research and curatorial and artistic practices. It is in fact precisely this apparent asymmetry between theories and practices, both viewed as generators of knowledge, this haphazard approach, that could hold the key to the question: a crucial position from which to work on marginalisations as liminal places which can suggest original approaches and productive leaps of the imagination. In the first place there are the marginalisations between different disciplines which make it possible

to assume the radically interdisciplinary approach which is a sine qua non when it comes to analysing any cultural object or process. In the second place it is important to recognise that the distinction between doing (artistic or curatorial practice, for example) and generating knowledge by theorising has been becoming increasingly labile, as Irit Rogoff states: "the old boundaries between making and theorising, historicizing and displaying, criticising and affirming have long been eroded. Artistic practice is being acknowledged as the production of knowledge and theoretical and curatorial endeavours have taken on a far more experimental and inventive dimension, both existing in the realm of potentiality and possibility rather than that of exclusively material production" (Rogoff 2003).

In the spirit of Foucault, who maintained that, rather than promoting understanding, knowledge enables one to take up a position, this volume proposes a specifically positioned approach (in the marginalisation illustrated above) to an on-going and unresolved process. For decades now there has been a vigorous debate concerning the role and identity of museums, their representativity and accessibility as "public" spaces—questions which lead on to further vital issues concerning the definition of the concept of heritage, citizenship, the construction and narration of potentially conflictual cultural memories, and in general the authority of all those archival narrations through which stories are induced to become history.

Taking up the suggestions of Irit Rogoff, we present an approach that shifts "from criticism to critique to criticality–from finding fault, to examining the underlying assumptions that might allow something to appear as a convincing logic, to operating from an uncertain ground which while building on critique wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis". In other words, we pass from an approach based on categorical judgements and dichotomies to one based on an active deconstruction of discourses and practices, without however ever losing sight of the multiplicity of points of view and the instability of the grounds on which the analysis is being made. Above all we seek to enhance the potential of the cultural shift rather than its static features, rejecting binary perspectives and embracing broad fields of reference. It is also necessary to accept the risk of this approach, more calculated to raise questions than to produce straightforward answers, to recognise and make visible fractures rather than continuities, since we are working with the raw material of the present, and with a cultural processuality in the here and now that all too often eludes any clear, defined articulation.

J'eus un visage, un volume, un corps.
Je fus un plein, qui allait toujours de l' avant.
Mais voici que mon oeil s'est inverti.
Maintenant, je vois derrière, maintenant je suis creux,
et mon corps est à recommencer.

Bernard Noël 1956

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Territory as Theme and Strategy:

Geopoetics and the 8th Mercosul Biennial

→ FERNANDA ALBUQUERQUE

Fernanda Albuquerque is a curator and art critic who is a PhD candidate in History, Theory, and Art Criticism at PPGAV/UFRGS, Porto Alegre, Brazil. She was assistant curator of the 8th Mercosul Biennial (Porto Alegre, 2011) and visual arts curator at Centro Cultural São Paulo (São Paulo, 2008-2010). As an independent curator, she has organized exhibitions such as Ejercicios de Posibilidad (Galeria Gabriela Mistral, Santiago do Chile, 2012), Dois Pontos (Museo Murillo La Greca, Recife, 2010) and Campo Coletivo (Maria Antonia, São Paulo, 2008). In 2010 Fernanda received the prize Estudos e pesquisas sobre arte e economia da arte no Brasil from the São Paulo Biennial Foundation.

→ ABSTRACT

The 8th Mercosul Biennial—held in 2011 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, under the title Essays on Geopoetics—provides a case study to consider ways through which contemporary art and most particularly curatorial practice have been examining the idea of territory within the context of a globalised world. Notions such as nation and nationality, cartography, mapping, identity, colonialism and global/local relations are some of the topics discussed in the event. The essay focuses on two main points of this curatorial experience, with Jose Roca as chief curator: the idea of territory as a theme (namely the ways artists have addressed central issues related to territory) and as a strategy for curatorial action (namely the attempt to develop the project in intense relation and dialogue with its context). Local context is seen not as «passive receptor» but as an active agent deeply involved in the development of a cultural project.

PREVIOUS PAGE — View of the exhibition Hors-champs, MEN Ethnographic Museum Neuchatel, November 03th 2012 – October 20th 2013. (courtesy MEN)

My intention in this paper is to present a case study to consider ways through which contemporary art, and particularly curatorial practice, currently address the idea of territory. I shall be concentrating on the 8th Mercosul Biennial, which took place in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil, between April and December 2011, under the title *Essays in Geopoetics*. The chief curator of the project was Jose Roca, who worked with a team of six curators—in a very collective way of operating—which included myself as assistant curator.[1]

Two main features of this curatorial experience guide this presentation:

- the idea of territory as a theme: namely the ways in which artists have addressed issues central to this discussion, such as ideas of nation and nationality, cartography, identity, colonialism and global/local relations;
- the idea of territory as a strategy for curatorship: namely the attempt to develop the project in a close relationship and dialogue with the context in which it was mounted.

Before going any further, I think it is important to provide some contextual information about the event and the location. The Mercosul Biennial was created in 1997 in Porto Alegre, a city with a population of about 1.4 million in the extreme south of Brazil. The city is the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the fourth-largest economy in the country and one of the five states with the highest Human Development Index (HDI)—measured according to factors such as per-capita income, health and education. This means that it is a relatively wealthy region within the Brazilian context and it also has its own particular characteristics, such as a subtropical climate with four defined seasons, the important presence of European immigration (especially German and Italian) and a strong identification with the far south of Latin America, especially Uruguay and Argentina. The region shares its climate, the Pampa landscape, the identity of the gaucho, the culture of the *churrasco/parrilla* and even specific linguistic constructions with these countries: in fact inhabitants of the state generally feel that Rio Grande do Sul is "less Brazilian" than other states in the country. Although these features do indeed distance the region from a certain stereotype of Brazil (tropical, hot, with beaches, carnival and festivals), this opinion is clearly questionable in that it implies the existence of a "genuine and unique Brazilian identity" that is more-or-less fixed, homogenous and timeless. I do not want to spend more time on this aspect here, but I think it is important to mention this issue, since it is something that was also present in the development of a Biennial focused on the idea of territory.

Despite what its name may suggest, the Mercosul Biennial is not a project

1 The team was also composed of Pablo Helguera (education curator); Alexia Tala, Cauê Alves and Paola Santoscoy (adjunct curators); and Aracy Amaral (guest curator).

developed collectively by the member countries of the Mercosul trading bloc, nor is it based in different locations or focused solely on the artistic production of the region. The project was created by a private foundation, entirely financed by Brazil, with funds coming mainly from public sources through legislation offering financial incentives to companies interested in supporting cultural projects.

On the one hand, within the Brazilian context, the Biennial was created at an important time of re-valuation of the cultural context, a moment of intensive institutionalisation and professionalization on the art scene, although we should note the relative fragility of those processes, supported by the country's economic stability achieved with the Plano Real and the creation of cultural incentive legislation, among other factors. It was a time when the central position of the Rio-São Paulo axis on the cultural scene began to make way for other centres of production and dissemination in the country, such as Porto Alegre and Recife, and the Mercosul Biennial played an important role in this process.

On the other hand, considered in a broader context, the Mercosul Biennial was created amidst the proliferation of Biennials in various parts of the world during the final two decades of the twentieth century, particularly in places distant from the traditional centres. Many factors contributed to this process: the pursuit of political, economic and cultural affirmation, a search for legitimation in the face of the global, and an attempt to establish an "articulation of difference," to use Homi Bhabha's concept.[2] In other words, establishing another place for articulation of the discourse about the other, the outsider, the eccentric—an aim which, as we know, was not always achieved. It is therefore important to stress that at the time of its creation the Biennial as an exhibition model was already being questioned in terms of its nature as spectacle and tourist attraction, the ossification of its format and the difficulty of addressing an important sector of contemporary production which is more process-based and less adaptable to the exhibition format—just to name just a few aspects.

This is the context in which the Mercosul Biennial was created, with a special focus on art made in Latin America. It sought really to establish a discourse about this production from another place/point of view; with an important emphasis on its educational role; and with a format that was re-modelled with each edition, both in terms of the spaces in which the event takes place (there is a relatively fixed core, but the Biennial always explores different places with each event), or in relation to its structure: quantity, format and curatorial strategy of the exhibitions, how they function as a whole, the role of the curator and the artist, the presence of a historical section, etc. In this sense, the 8th Mercosul Biennial forms a dialogue with the two previous editions in particular, which in some way sought to "tweak" the Biennial format, testing ways of organising and articulating the event that do not just translate into exhibitions.

2 Bhabha, Homi K. 1998. *O local da cultura*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG.

The title *Essays on Geopoetics* refers to the various ways in which artists address the notion of territory and redefine it, based on geographical, political and cultural perspectives. The proposal was inspired by issues such as the tensions between local and transnational territories, the idea that local and global are related terms and not descriptions of well defined and isolated physical or symbolic territories; also by the connection between political constructs, geographical circumstances and the construction of narratives of identity, and finally the way in which cultural interchange and circulation of symbolic capital are articulated today.

On the one hand, the event proposed a discussion about the idea of territory, while on the other it also sought to investigate and act upon the actual territory of Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul, intensifying the relationship with the local—and it is worth recalling here the recurrent criticism that Biennials often turn their backs on local audiences and focus more on the international art community. The 8th Biennial therefore extended the action of the event in space and time, involving the organisation not just of exhibitions but also activation strategies.

A total of seven major actions were organised under the titles of: *Geopoetics, Travel Notebooks, Unseen City, Beyond Frontiers, the Eugenio Dittborn exhibition, Continents* and *Casa M.* An important aspect of the project was the participation of the education curator, Pablo Helguera, in defining the development of the curatorial proposal, which led to each component also being presented as a platform for connection with the education programme. As we shall see, this meant that instances of curatorship and education were not devised in isolation or in parallel, nor

IMG. 01 — *Warehouse spaces in Porto Alegre, by the Guaiba river (courtesy Fabio Del Re/VivaFoto)*

according to a kind of hierarchy in which the education programme only responded to the curatorial proposal.

Time—and space—prevents a detailed presentation of each component, so I have chosen to centre on three actions in particular: the *Geopoetics* exhibition, *Travel Notebooks* and *Casa M*.

The *Geopoetics* exhibition involved more than half of all the 105 artists in the event, with a greater concentration of participants from countries beyond Latin America. It occupied three warehouse spaces on the Porto Alegre quayside, which was one of the main locations of the event. That is probably the component that best exemplifies the treatment of the idea of territory as a theme. The show was centred on a discussion about the idea of nation within the context of a globalised world: How can nation be defined today? As a cultural construct (unlike the country, which is defined by geographical territory, and the state, defined by political organisation), to what extent is a nation also a fiction? And to what extent are the conventional concepts of nation/state/country being questioned by new forms of organisation that go beyond territoriality? These may be forms based on religious or political belief, ethnicity, customs, language, or forms of articulation that are not governed by political control or geographical boundaries, such as transnational entities with political or economic aims. What is the status of a fictional nation? Can there be cartography that is not at the service of domination?

In this sense, *Geopoetics* explored different aspects of the ideas of state, country and nation: their symbolic rhetoric (map, flag, anthem, passport), the ways they represent themselves and are represented by others,

IMG. 02 — *General image of Geopoetics exhibition (courtesy Fabio Del Re/ VivaFoto)*

IMG. 03 — *The New World Climax by Barthélémy Toguo (courtesy Camila Cunha/indicefoto.com) http://www.4shared.com/photo/vCUPDsVS/tarde5257.html*

IMG. 04 — *Manawa, Nicarawa by Jonathan Harker (video still) (courtesy Jonathan Harker) http://www.4shared.com/photo/fqjgPzMF/awaman6.html*

strategies of self-affirmation and consolidation of identity, processes of cultural hybridisation, or the ways they address and transform or are addressed and transformed by other nations and cultures, etc.

Barthélémy Toguo (Mbalmayo, Cameroon) showed a new version of his performative installation *The New World Climax* (Berlin, 2001). He made a series of huge carved wooden stamps, displayed on tables together with woodcut prints. The stamps relate to the very complicated process of visa application and immigration experienced by citizens from developing countries. Ironically, they take the form and materiality of typical African carvings commonly bought by tourists as souvenirs—and

easily transported from one place to another. The images are inspired by the markings in Toguo's passport and his own experience with constant migration. For the 8th Biennial, the images also referred to territories under dispute or whose political status is questioned, or again to identity narratives based on aspects other than territoriality. The work thus indicates the fragility of these constructions while at the same time pointing out the ambiguity of a world in which displacement and movement become constants, where being in transit means somehow belonging to this new order, and where, on the other hand, the circulation of people is more strictly controlled than that of services and goods.

Jonathan Harker (Quito, Ecuador) also addressed the relationship between hegemonic and non-hegemonic countries and the way in which narratives of identity are constructed by these relationships.

In *Manawa, Nicarawa* (2010), the artist presents a sort of video clip based on a famous foxtrot composed in 1946 by the Americans Irving Fields and Albert Gamse. A huge success during the heyday of the Nicaraguan capital, the song is still part of the national imagery nowadays. Its English and Spanish verses celebrate an idealised tropical paradise with a warm climate, abundant nature, easy women, little work and much partying "for a few pesos down." This satirical imagery full of clichés reflects foreign perception of the country—and to a degree Nicaraguans' perception of themselves—while evoking the exploitation and inequalities in the complex relationship between the United States and Nicaragua, which for decades experienced direct interventions by the North American government.

Relationships of domination and subordination between countries and territories are also suggested by *Hago mío este territorio / I claim this territory as mine* (2007) by Manuela Ribadeneira (Quito, Ecuador).

The piece symbolically and literally reclaims a territory through an implacable gesture of thrusting a knife displaying this statement into a wall, exploring the rituals of possession and conquest of territory and the various ways in which a kingdom, a government or a community declares a land as theirs.

Representations of territories were also present in *Geografia de encontros/ Geography of encounters* (2010/2011) by Mayana Redin (Campinas, Brazil). This series of drawings creates new cartographies based on the overlapping of places and landscapes—or the lines that outline their shapes and define their boundaries. Examples include bringing together all the countries without seas or the confluence of three coloured seas—the Black Sea, the Red Sea and the Yellow Sea. Geographical features, geopolitical issues, historical conditions and images suggested by words are the inspiration behind Mayana Redin's fictional geographies.

Among other works included in the Geopoetics exhibition were spaces known as *Zones of Poetic Autonomy*: small symbolic territories that represented a nation within the exhibition, sometimes a fictional one created by an artist, sometimes a real one inspiring an art project,

IMG. 05 — *Principality of Sealand (courtesy Principality of Sealand) http://www.4shared.com/photo/WT5UxLaB/guia_Sealand_-_Sealand_Setembr.html*

IMG. 06 — *Museu do Pão in Ilópolis, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil (courtesy Carlos Stein/VivaFoto)*

IMG. 07— *Artworks by Mateo Lopez at Museu do Pão (courtesy Fabio Del Re/VivaFoto)*

sometimes a nation that wouldn't fit into either category, such as the *Principality of Sealand*—a micro-nation created in 1967 on an old military base 11 km from the east coast of Great Britain in what were then international waters.

With a territory of less than 500m2, and a national currency, flag, anthem, stamps and passport, Sealand has never been internationally recognised, although some episodes in its history have reinforced its independence.
Travel Notebooks was another exhibition shown in one of the quayside warehouses, but one that developed through a series of journeys and activities in different regions of Rio Grande do Sul in an attempt to take the Biennial beyond the city of Porto Alegre. It offers a very good interpretation of the idea of adopting territory not just as a theme but also as a curatorial strategy, since it developed precisely through close contact with the region: at first, with curators doing research trips and, most importantly, with the artists themselves travelling and producing within this territory.

Travel Notebooks featured the work of nine artists travelling to different regions of Rio Grande do Sul from April to August 2011. Each journey lasted two to three weeks. Rather than a conventional research trip, the idea was that the artist should develop work during that time, allowing the experience of travel, the landscape and social or cultural interaction to indicate how the project would develop. At the end of the period each artist held an exhibition in a space at their destination, displaying the results of the art processes followed during the journey—their travel notebooks, in a way, which took the form of video, photographs, drawings, installation, etc. The participating artists also held workshops related to their projects and gave talks about their work. Having completed the journey and returned to their studios, they then developed the works to be shown in Porto Alegre.

Mateo Lopez (Bogotá, Colombia) travelled to a region known as Caminho dos Moinhos [The Mills Route], in the north of Rio Grande

IMG. 08 — *Marcos Sari intervention on Pampa landscape (courtesy Fabio Del Re/VivaFoto)*

do Sul, staying there for three weeks and developing a body of work concerned with the culture, history and meaning of bread in the region. Making notes and drawings and collecting small objects, the artist transformed the old mill of the Ilópolis Museu do Pão [Bread Museum], where he showed his work, into a kind of studio which visitors were invited to explore, discovering the artist's interventions in the place.

The installations combined architecture, objects from the region and drawings that sometimes recreated and sometimes imitated reality to produce three-dimensional constructions. During his stay Mateo Lopez ran a series of drawing workshops, held an open discussion with the public and took part in a museum-organised event in Ilópolis town square, teaching local inhabitants to make bread sculptures in the square's clay oven. Marcos Sari (Porto Alegre, Brazil) travelled to the Pampa region in the southwest of the state, developing a series of works based on the landscape of the region.

His particularly painterly way of seeing used the vastness and luminosity of the landscape as a kind of background for his works, investigating colour, planes, light, texture and depth through temporary interventions on site, which were recorded with photographs. The works involved fabrics that created kinds of marks in the landscape and ropes, fabric tape and metal bars to draw shapes in the location. Although from Porto Alegre himself, Marcus Sari had never previously visited the region. During his journey he also organized a series of activities with the local community, such as workshops on painting, intervention and landscape, a talk about his work and an exhibition in a local cultural centre.

IMG. 09 — *Casa M façade with window intervention by Tiago Giora (courtesy Cristiano Sant'Anna/ indicefoto.com)*

IMG. 10 — *Fernando Limberger intervention on Casa M garden (courtesy Cristiano Sant'Anna/ indicefoto.com)*

The work of Nick Rands (London, England) developed in a quite individual way in the context of the project. He often works using systems of counting (taking a photograph every so many paces, using a colour every so often in painting), and his project did not develop out of the experience of travelling or through contact with the places visited, but rather through a particular travel strategy (or approach to territory) and a system of collecting images and materials from the places visited. The artist drew the largest possible square on the map of Rio Grande do Sul and planned to visit every point at which the line of the square

intersected with a road: 80 in total, together with the four places at the corners of the square. At each location he collected earth from the ground and took a photograph of the sky—and at every kilometre of the journey (3600 in total) he took a photograph of the road ahead. At each corner of the square he also collected more earth and recorded a 360º panoramic video of the landscape. All the rules and procedures were defined before the journey began, indicating but not defining the final result of the work, which is always an unknown for the artist. The earth collected from the four corners was used to paint four large "spherical paintings," which were shown at the art museum in Santa Maria, more or less at the centre of the square travelled by the artist, together with a video of the four panoramic recordings from the corners.

If *Travel Notebooks* was the component that most extended the 8th Biennial in space, expanding the places of the event's activities and also allowing it to be fed from that space, Casa M extended the Biennial's actions in time.

As a cultural space in the format of a house, it opened in Porto Alegre before the main event and remained in operation after it had closed, with a total of seven months of activities. In addition to hosting discussions, workshops and courses about the 8th Biennial artists and themes, Casa M also had its own programme which featured interactions between art languages and fields of knowledge through the encouragement of encounter, debate and exchange and an emphasis on the art process and experimentation rather than presentation of results.

IMG. 11 — *Casa M bookshelf by Daniel Acosta (courtesy Camila Cunha/indicefoto.com) http://www.4shared.com/photo/lZg4h5cx/aicacasam0712.html*

IMG. 12 — *Limbo, by Cao Guimarães (film still) (courtesy Cao Guimarães)*

Although not an exhibition space, Casa M did have an exhibition programme, which was concentrated in the building's small vitrine—it had been a hat shop in the early twentieth century—for which a different artist each month produced a site-specific project. In addition to these small exhibitions, the building also had three permanent works which in some way merged with the architecture and the use of the space: the doorbell, which played different sounds throughout the building, to create a kind of symphony, by Vitor Cesar (Fortaleza, Brazil); the garden, which was covered with different tones of red sand and also had a cube made of burnt timbers, contrasting with the grey of the neighbouring buildings and the green of the vegetation, by Fernando Limberger (Porto Alegre, Brazil) [Image 11]; and finally the furniture housing art books and magazines from the Biennial Foundation's Research and Documentation Centre, available for public consultation for the first time in a kind of library, designed by Daniel Acosta (Pelotas, Brazil).

The internal architecture was elaborated to meet a variety of needs, creating flexible spaces and furniture, like the library itself, which was also used as a space for courses and discussions; the kitchen, which many times became a meeting room; the entrance space, which sometimes contained tables and chairs as a kind of café or could be transformed into a large hall for performances, music and theatre presentations.

As part of its programme, Casa M hosted a group of twelve artists from different art forms (theatre, music, literature, dance and the visual arts) who used the space during the seven-month period as a place for working

and research, giving workshops and developing joint proposals in pairs, which were presented to the public each fortnight. The works involved a wide range of formats: performance, installation, video, musical, puppet theatre. There was also a fortnightly discussion programme bringing together professionals from different fields to share experiences of projects in development and exchange ideas about their practice, be it artistic, scientific, curatorial, gastronomic, critical or whatever. Another important activity involved a series of curatorial residencies, in which four curators from different Latin American countries spent one week in Porto Alegre, visiting studios and activating the *Casa M* programme. Besides the activities offered, one of the key aspects of the project was that Casa M also took shape through how it was used, being effectively taken over and reinvented by the people visiting it. It could be considered as a space simply for being in. Like a house, it could be a place for reading a book, having a cup of coffee, meeting friends, making contact with new people, listening to music, taking the sun in the yard. It was a place that could be adopted as a kind of third place, outside the space of the home and of work, a place for social interaction and opening out other possibilities of relating to art, life, the other and the city.

In this sense, the first audiences for the project, besides the cultural and artistic community of Porto Alegre, were the Biennial team itself—particularly the 200 mediators of the education programme, who adopted the space as a meeting point and proposed numerous activities, such as evening get-togethers, workshops, video sessions, walks through the neighbourhood, picnics—and *Casa M*'s neighbours, who despite being more hesitant in their involvement also took part in the project, attending discussions, workshops, meetings and monthly tea parties. Many of these neighbours also took part in the "Fica Casa M" campaign at the end of the year, organised in favour of retaining the space as a permanent fixture. It should also be mentioned that the programme grew and diversified throughout the year as a result of suggestions from the community itself (not just from Porto Alegre but also from other parts of the country and Latin America) involving workshops, publications launches, video presentations, theatrical performances, etc. Even for us, as curators, it was surprising to see how much attention *Casa M* attracted in the cultural scene of the city in such a short period of activities and how the project began to take on a life of its own over the months.

The vegetable garden in the yard, music rehearsals in the basement, a kitchen transformed into a bread studio or into a classroom for university students, the library hosting a play, the garden converted into a children's playground, performances on the stairs and a studio improvising a dance floor: these are just some of the experiences that activated *Casa M* and brought other meanings into the place.

This was perhaps the action that most markedly achieved closer contacts with the local community and took shape through close dialogue with it, addressing the local context not as a "passive receptor" but as an active agent deeply involved in the development of the project. The idea

of territory as an action strategy here acquired its own special shape. Traversed by the different components, themes and artists of the 8th Biennial (in the courses and workshops or through the discussions with artists and curators), *Casa M* formed a kind of community around the event, a territory through which the project was offered to the public while at the same time sharing its development process and being infected and transformed through that relationship.

The other components of the Biennial involved two further activation strategies: *Continents* promoted residencies by six artist-run spaces from different places in Latin America in three separate towns in Rio Grande do Sul, with each host space loaning its facilities to the guest space for three weeks to develop a joint collaborative programme. *The Unseen City* project involved nine invited artists who developed works for places of historical, architectural or social interest in Porto Alegre city centre that usually went unnoticed by the local population.

The Biennial event was completed by two other exhibitions: a show of Eugenio Dittborn's airmail paintings, as the artist of honour for the 8th edition; and an exhibition that brought together different views about the frontier regions of Rio Grande do Sul: the Pampa (shared with Uruguay and Argentina), the Jesuit missions (shared with Paraguay and Argentine) and the canyon region (shared with the state of Santa Catarina). These are places where political-geographic boundaries become blurred by the contiguity of the natural and cultural landscape in particular.

If the 8th Biennial investigated different ways of addressing and defining the idea of territory today, considering the concept not just as a theme but also as an action strategy, it also proposed ways of seeing the territory in which it developed and from which it sought sustenance. This is a sort of "articulation of difference" involving not only art production but also the region itself. One example can be seen in the work of Cao Guimarães (Belo Horizonte, Brazil), made for the *Beyond Frontiers* exhibition. The highly attentive and sensitive eye employed in his film *Limbo* focuses on the context of country people in the Pampa region on the Rio Grande do Sul-Uruguay boundary. The images the artist recorded are permeated by a melancholy tone, extended tempo, broad horizons and a sense of disenchantment. The work creates a kind of portrait of this place that is neither one country nor another, but rather a region in itself. It is a place where Uruguayans, Argentinians and Brazilians call themselves "border people," identifying their origins in this "in between place" defined more by its interconnections than by its boundaries.

In Focus: Afghanistan

→ ELISABETH STANTON

Elizabeth Stanton is a Research Associate for Culture+Conflict, UK. Alongside Culture+Conflict co-director, Michaela Crimmin she is currently coordinating an AHRC research project exploring art and conflict in relation to the themes of memory, resistance, satire and resilience. She completed an MA in Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art in 2012. From 2008 to 2010 she was project coordinator for Artcell curatorial and collections management, Sydney. Elizabeth has worked with the Australian Center for Photography, Australian Galleries (Sydney), and the sector advocacy body, Museums & Galleries NSW.

→ ABSTRACT

This report discusses In Focus: Afghanistan, *a one-day roundtable and seminar convened in London on 3 July 2012 by the British Council in association with Culture+Conflict, UK. The day brought together Afghan and British cultural leaders and practitioners as part of a longer-term programme which aims to investigate and support the role of arts and culture, cultural leadership and cultural exchange and partnership in the future of Afghanistan, and secondly to explore the potential role of the UK, and particularly the UK's arts, cultural and creative forces, in the lead up to and beyond the end of the UK's military presence in Afghanistan in 2014. Speakers included Sabrina Saqib, formerly the youngest Member of the Afghan Parliament and head of the NGO Rethinking Policies; Professor Rahraw Omerzad, Founder and Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art, Kabul; Sayyid Hashim Alavi, Founder, Cultural and Development Centre, Kabul; UK Member of Parliament, Rory Stewart, Executive Chairman of the British initiative Turquoise Mountain Trust, Kabul; Jamshid Habib of the Aga Khan*

Development Network; Mohammed Fahim Rahimi, Chief Curator of the National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul; Jawed Taiman, Founder of Tora Bora Media; cultural activist Shahrbanoo Sadat, Project Manager for the Open Society Organization, Afghanistan; and Dr Ahmad Sarmast, Founding Director of the Afghan National Music Institute.

Convened by the British Council in association with Culture+Conflict, UK, and supported by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (IFA), *In Focus: Afghanistan* was a one-day roundtable and seminar held at London's Southbank Centre on July 3, 2012. The event brought together Afghan and British cultural leaders and practitioners to explore avenues for dialogue, exchange and partnerships at a time of critical importance.[1]

As the 2014 deadline for the end of direct NATO combat missions in Afghanistan approaches, facilitating the sustainable reconstruction of the country in this period of transition is addressed with increasing urgency by both Afghan and international stakeholders. Paul Smith, former Director of the British Council, Afghanistan, opened the roundtable by emphasizing that while the three pillars of governance, security and development have been the focus of both planning and some US$55 billion in international aid supplied since 2002, an essential fourth platform must be addressed to ensure stability: that of culture–a cornerstone of civil society that requires vision beyond "transition," and toward "continuity."[2]

Cultural practice in contemporary Afghanistan, a country at the crossroads of geopolitical conflict for decades, has received fragmented attention locally and internationally. Outside awareness is dominated by international media reports of war and violence, while internal factors such as the diverted attention of the government, discrepancies in access to education, the diverse ethnic population, the complex NATO-led repatriation of refugees and the wariness of Afghans toward foreign cultural influences, have impacted on an understanding of a shared national cultural identity.

The Southbank Centre provided an auspicious location for *In Focus: Afghanistan,* with the Centre's Artistic Director, Jude Kelly relating how the Centre, which opened in 1951, was born of a post-war desire to create a space where multiple voices could come together, harnessing the "propaganda of the imagination." Within this context, the day's discussions highlighted a common objective: to increase awareness both

1 The Afghanistan Roundtable was attended by 45 leading cultural players from Afghanistan and the UK, whilst the In Focus Afghanistan Seminar was attended by over 100 people. Afghan delegates included: Sayyid Hashim Alavi, Founder, Cultural and Development Centre, Kabul; Jamshid Habib, Project Architect, Aga Khan Trust for Culture; Orzala Ashraf Nemat, Academic; Prof. Rahraw Omerzad, Founder and Director, Centre for Contemporary Art, Afghanistan; Daud Rasool, British Council, Afghanistan; Fahim Rahimi, Chief Curator, National Museum, Afghanistan; Shahrbanoo Sadat, film-maker, cultural producer and alumni of the British Council's Cultural Leadership International programme; Sabrina Saqib, former Member of Parliament, Afghanistan; Dr Ahmad Sarmast, Founder Director, Afghan National Institute of Music; and Jawid Taiman, Film-maker and founder director, Tora Bora Media.

2 Unless otherwise cited, direct quotations in this article are taken from transcripts of In Focus: Afghanistan, Southbank Centre, London, June 3, 2012.

locally and abroad of the positive cultural achievements and associations already underway, in order to foster appreciation for, and inspire nationwide pride in, a diverse Afghan culture and identity. Most importantly, emphasis lay upon the need to add momentum to interest in cultural activities in order to generate sustainable local and international support beyond 2014.

This, it was acknowledged, is no easy task and the many voices heard over the course of one afternoon were but the beginning of a long conversation which must address questions of the role of government, civil society, education, participation, audience development, foreign aid and, importantly, the relationship between cultural heritage and contemporary practice. By providing examples of the work of practitioners and organizations currently in progress, *In Focus: Afghanistan* undertook a practical approach to initiating exchange and mutuality.

Speaking at the roundtable, Sabrina Saqib, formerly the youngest Member of the Afghan Parliament and head of the new NGO Rethinking Policies, described the current local situation, drawing attention to Afghanistan as an ethnically diverse country with a vast geographical environment that includes some fifty-six provinces. Culture is often seen as the preserve of an educated, English-speaking elite who live in the country's major cities, while much of the population outside of centres such as Kabul live in isolation. A high rate of illiteracy means many people live on the poverty line, their capacity for travel in order to gain knowledge of their own country extremely limited. With around sixty percent of the population under the age of thirty, recognizing the needs of this young generation—specifically in terms of education—was a crucial issue for all delegates, and Saqib expressed her hope that "knowing their own identity and those of other ethnic groups across the country can create peaceful coexistence."

The challenges presented by a diverse population are made more complex by the structure of the transitional government, which is divided according to ethnicity. "They are not looking to create nationwide cultural values," Saqib noted, "the separate political groups focus on their own cultural values. There is not a single, unified nation to project to the world." Mir Ahmed Joyenda, Deputy Director for Afghanistan Research and the Evaluation Unit for Communication and Advocacy, shared Saqib's concerns noting that culture was not a priority for the government, with budgets already being cut. Later these comments were echoed in the seminar session, when Professor Rahraw Omerzad, Founder and Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art in Kabul, explained that contemporary artistic practice particularly suffers from a lack of government support in terms of both art education and opportunities for practicing artists. This has resulted in a reliance on support from NGOs and philanthropists, which in turn brings its own complexities.

The dependence on foreign aid for cultural activities not only sees predominantly short-term investment in culture, but this support comes with connotations of the imposition of Western models and ideas at the expense of local values. Sayyid Hashim Alavi, Founder, Cultural and

Development Centre, Kabul, spoke of the sensitivities of Afghan people toward Western support, and gave the example of the criticism of those who had established schools to teach English. Learning English, he said, is perceived as essential for building prosperity and provides a link to the international community within Afghanistan; however, it also creates a divide in terms of access to education.

UK Member of Parliament Rory Stewart, whose long standing association with Afghanistan includes his time as Executive Chairman of the British initiative, the Turquoise Mountain Trust in Kabul, noted that much foreign aid lasts no longer than six months to one year. Stewart shared his experience regarding the establishment of the Trust—an arts and architecture institute which began in 2005 with the objective of restoring Murad Khane, a small area of the old city of Kabul that was semi-abandoned, having been radically affected by recurring periods of war. The aim was to create a cultural precinct and regenerate the area that had a strong craft tradition and that once included a well-known silver street. Turquoise Mountain has worked with the government of Afghanistan, which allocated the area to the Trust and the focus of the Institute became woodwork, ceramics, miniature painting, and later jewelry, with the intention to teach skills to local practitioners and create a market for their products.[3]

Stewart described the many challenges behind the project that initially relied almost entirely upon private philanthropy. Diversifying financing remains difficult. Originally met with skepticism from the local community who questioned the Trust's motives, further difficulties lay with the inclusion of women in classes where traditionally male crafts such as pottery were taught, accessing quality materials for products to meet international standards for overseas export, and ensuring the self-sufficiency of the management of workshops. The success of the endeavor has been in the benefits brought to the local area, particularly the inclusion of a primary school and family clinic, and the subsequent relocation of small businesses to Murad Khane. However, despite training 150 craftspeople, the place of traditional Afghan crafts in an international market remains precarious, requiring an ongoing commitment of energy, money and time.

Creating precincts for the regeneration of both community and cultural knowledge was also addressed in a presentation by Jamshid Habib of the Aga Khan Development Network, who discussed its programs in Kabul and Herat, which focus on conserving and restoring built heritage to stimulate social and economic development. Their initiatives include an oral history project; a music program to record and share music from different parts of Afghanistan, to value its diversity; and, a plaques project to register historical heritage. Their largest project, the Baghe Babur (Babur's Gardens) initiative in Kabul, began with the archeological excavation of a site destroyed during the Civil War, which has since

3 Further information regarding Turquoise Mountain can be found on their website at: http://www.turquoisemountain.org.

become a park and garden for public use, involving the community and the local university across aspects of the garden's development and maintenance.[4]

Working with international partners has proven essential for the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul, facilitating a process of regeneration after decades of turbulence and uncertainty. Once the home of an enviable collection of artifacts dating back to the Bronze Age, following the Soviet invasion and the subsequent Civil War (1992 to 1996) some seventy percent of the museum's collection was lost and a further 2,500 objects were later destroyed by the Taliban. In his presentation, Chief Curator, Mohammed Fahim Rahimi considered the role of the museum in the current period to be to strengthen national identity and to unify the people, as well as to develop international cultural relations. Funded by the Ministry of Information and Culture, the current museum was initiated in 2002 and opened its doors in 2004, with the assistance of UNESCO-led foreign aid and expertise. Most recently, the focus of the museum has been on the recovery of artifacts from the US, UK, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland, a process that—in addition to the recovery of the collection heroically hidden by museum curators—has seen the collection grow to more than 100,000 pieces.[5]

Cooperation with European museums has assisted the rebuilding of both the collection and the reputation of the institution. Touring exhibitions such as, *Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World*, first shown in Paris in 2006 and later travelling to the British Museum in London in 2011, serve to recreate an image of Afghanistan as the historical center of the Silk Road, a rich hub of cultural heritage that included artifacts, the origin of which ranged from China to the Mediterranean, India to Mesopotamia.[6]The British Museum has been an important source of support during this process, contributing to the infrastructure of the museum by facilitating a new conservation laboratory, and overseeing the cataloguing and return of some 1,500 objects in 2009, and a further 850 items in 2012.[7] These included objects smuggled into the UK and intercepted by British authorities, and also notably the Begram ivories—a series of intricate carvings excavated in the 1930s and stolen in 1992. The British Museum was able to negotiate the repatriation of the carvings from a private collection, following their inclusion in the *Afghanistan* exhibition.[8]

4 For further information regarding the Aga Khan Trust's work in Afghanistan, please visit: http://www.akdn.org/afghanistan.

5 National Museum of Afghanistan, further information available at: http://www.nationalmuseum.af.

6 Tonkin, Boyd. 2011. "Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World, British Museum, London." The Independent, March 6. Accessed October 18, 2012. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/reviews/afghanistan-crossroads-of-the-ancient-world-british-museum-london-2233415.html (Tonkin 2011).

7 Johnson, Kay. 2012. "Afghan museum rebuilds with returned artifacts." Associated Press September 5. Accessed October 18, 2012. http://bigstory.ap.org/article/afghan-museum-rebuilds-returned-artifacts (Johnson 2011).

8 For further information on the Begram ivories, see: Simpson, St John. 2012. "Back to Kabul", The British Museum online, Friday August 3, 2012. Accessed October 18, 2012. http://blog.britishmuseum.org/category/exhibitions/afghanistan-crossroads-of-the-ancient-world/.

Within Afghanistan, ensuring there is broad public access to, and engagement with, cultural artifacts was recognized as vital and the *In Focus: Afghanistan* discussion addressed the challenges of reaching the diverse population beyond the educated elite.[9] Importantly, it is not only the National Museum's Kabul facility that strives to provide access to the collection, but also a network of seven provincial museums, including two currently in operation in Herat and Ghanzi. The National Museum's strategic plan includes the development of further cultural centres in all Afghan provinces. With visitor numbers for 2011 at around 28,000 the museum predicts growth to 40,000 visitors in the years to come. Striking a balance between maintaining cultural heritage and tradition, and encouraging new and innovative cultural projects in Afghanistan, was a concern for all. Zia Sharia, a young Afghan working for the UK-based BBC Dari Service, drew the attention of roundtable participants to the attitudes of a youthful population who wished to focus on the modernization of the country, and the need to consider that "there is some stuff we have to leave behind." "People are thinking differently," he said, "and need a new space to breathe culturally." While Jamshid Habib noted that change and tradition are not mutually exclusive, stating that "change *with* tradition" is the best means of achieving positive results, it must be recognized that there has been a generational shift in Afghanistan. Understanding the inspirations of this new, younger population—to whom the media plays a vital role—is important for cultural, political and economic development.

The afternoon presentation panel included two young independent film-makers, Jawed Taiman (Founder of Tora Bora Media10[10]) and cultural activist, Shahrbanoo Sadat, who also works as a project manager for the Open Society Organization, Afghanistan.[11] Taiman stressed that the medium of film and the power of media can be used to bring positive change to the country. Afghanistan had enjoyed a rich cinematic history, which reached its height in the 1960s and 70s; however, as Sadat noted, the funds intended to rejuvenate the Afghan film industry have recently rewarded only topical film-makers who lack professional skills. International support is central to development as projects are often initiated by NGOs and there have been significant achievements with Afghan filmmakers winning international awards. Sadat's own training in film came through the French documentary workshop in Kabul, *Ateliers Varan Kabul*, and now also Kabul University. Her work tackles issues to do with gender, education and migration and her most recent project, *Basira* (2012) looks at these issues through the eyes of a young Afghan girl.[12]

9 Organizations such as the Aga Khan Trust and the Open Society Organization are undertaking activities outside of the major cities. One such project initiated by Open Society is a mobile theatre and educational program that tours to rural Afghanistan to engage children and present their work to local communities.

10 Please see Tora Bora Media website for further information on recent activities: http://www.toraboramedia.com/co/.

11 Open Society Afghanistan: http://www.opensociety.af/. Further examples of their projects can also be found at: http://www.afghanhumanrights.com.

12 Festival de Cannes (Cannes Film Festival brochure), 2012. Accessed October 18, 2012. http://www.

Following his studies in the UK, Taiman returned to Afghanistan to undertake a project with the British Council in Kabul, where he initiated workshops in filmmaking. Demonstrating the level of local interest in the medium, his classes started with a group of five filmmakers and the numbers rose rapidly. The British Council was able to provide a room at their headquarters, with space for twenty students. However, this venue was lost following the bombing of the British Embassy in 2011, resulting in the cessation of the workshops. Despite such significant setbacks, Taiman emphasized that an air of positivity surrounded the potential new media (including a number of private TV stations and FM radio stations) has to reach audiences and to provide young Afghans with positive alternative activities to violence. His first film, *Addicted in Afghanistan* (2009)—an observational documentary looking at the lives of two fifteen-year-old heroin addicts and their families in Kabul—stands as a testament of the power of local film production to be highly engaging while drawing attention to key social issues.

Professor Rahraw Omarzad, Director of the Centre for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan, and Professor of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University, drew the practice of contemporary artists into the forum. "Contemporary art is a new movement in Afghanistan," he noted, and one that he has been a driving force behind for some years. He established the country's only art periodical, *Gahnam-e-Hunar* in 2000. The publication was met with caution when first proposed by Professor Omarzad, for fear of the reaction of the Taliban who were in power at the time. Undeterred, he privately funded the project and the magazine went on to serve as a means of forging a connection between Afghan artists forced to live abroad during the time of the Taliban.

Today, the situation for contemporary art within Afghanistan has only marginally improved. With no support from the government and no network of local galleries, curators or art critics, Afghan artists are further stalled in their development by the inability to obtain travel visas and thus rarely gain vital experience abroad. There is a critical lack of modern and contemporary art teaching in universities, with only two contemporary art schools in the country. With this in mind, Professor Omarzad established the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Kabul in 2002, the first and only center for contemporary art in Afghanistan. The Centre is independent and works with a number of young, mostly female, artists. Exhibitions are organized to show the work of Afghan artists abroad, and works by international artists brought to Afghanistan. In 2006 a women's center became part of the project and online studies have been created as an initiative to include women who are not permitted to leave the home or travel.[13]

Issues surrounding the inclusion of women in cultural practice were touched upon only briefly throughout the day's discussions. Orzala Ashraf Nemat, an Afghan academic and civil society activist raised the

festival-cannes.com/assets/File/Web/BROCHURES%20RESIDENCE/sharhrbanoo.pdf.

13 Centre for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan: http://www.ccaa.org.af.

gender issue during the roundtable meeting, pointing out challenge of addressing projects that women are prohibited from participating in. As previously mentioned, an example of this was provided by Rory Stewart in his description of the challenges that arose when training women as crafts workers at Turquoise Mountain, and the need for creating separate facilities for men and women. It was recommended that the difficulties facing women in terms of cultural practice and engagement should be explored in greater depth.

Further attention must also be given to establishing a clearer understanding of Afghan audiences and the applicability of European models and expertise to reach them. While audience was discussed in terms of youth (including the openness to media and technology of the younger the demographic), differences in an understanding of cultural concepts, such as locality, and a full understanding of the effects of conflict and displacement remain to be addressed. A recent working paper by Conrad Shetter exploring the effects of migration upon development in Afghanistan suggests that the administrative logic of the UN and NGOs does not take into account the trans-local patterns of many people within the Afghan population, and that rebuilding the country must "go beyond the dominant state-building model."[14] There is a danger of considering only recognizable successful models or misunderstanding local priorities and capabilities.

Creating projects that have the potential to both educate the local Afghan population and take the message of Afghanistan abroad is of vital importance. One successful example of local and international engagement is the Afghan National Music Institute, Afghanistan's only institute of music, established by Dr Ahmad Sarmast. "More than anything Afghanistan needs music," Sarmast asserted, explaining that historical taboos about music, enshrined in law under the Taliban, have largely disappeared and that he firmly believes in the power of music to bring about social, religious and economic change. The Institute teaches modern and traditional music and works with children (half of whom have been orphaned or come from street backgrounds) to provide them with training and support. Their aims are to break social barriers and open inter-cultural dialogues. The establishment of exchange and touring performance programs will see the students perform in schools and music festivals in Brussels, Washington, New York and the UK in 2013.

One of the aims of the July 3 *In Focus* event was to create an informal environment for networking between Afghan and British cultural organizations, and further contributions to the discussion came from Professor John Baily from Goldsmiths College, Jonathan Robinson of The HUB, Nick Kent, director of 'The Great Game' cycle of plays about Afghanistan at the Tricycle Theatre, London, and Carolyn Hayman of Peace Direct. Afghan music expert Professor Baily described his own research on the unifying role of music in Afghanistan and the

14 Schetter, Conrad. 2012. "Translocal Lives. Patterns of Migration in Afghanistan." Crossroads Asia: Working Paper Series 2, Bonn, January 3, 2012 (Shetter 2012).

establishment of the Aga Khan Trust music school—he emphasized the need for music to engage with the younger generation. Robinson described the establishment of The Hub, now an international network of spaces for collaboration between professionals from all fields, and his plans to establish a base in Kabul. Nick Kent expressed desire for tangible outcomes such as a register of names of people and organizations in the cultural field in Afghanistan and a mapping exercise to keep this register updated. Carolyn Hayman acknowledged that conflict tends to result from difference and culture can act as a powerful unifier. She spoke of the need to capture the creative and entrepreneurial spirit that already exists in Afghanistan and not import Western models. Many of the practical issues raised by the Afghan delegates were not dissimilar to British concerns, such as the legal rights of practitioners, access to funding and ensuring that culture is seen as relevant in the eyes of the government. While it remains to be seen how the people of Afghanistan will take hold of their own destiny post-2014, *In Focus: Afghanistan* was successful in bringing to light many positive examples of the powerful role that culture already plays in a country many know primarily as a site of conflict. The recommendations that emerged from the event include the establishment of artist residencies, the development of a database of experts and practitioners working in Afghanistan, and the need to further address key issues that were briefly discussed, such as the barriers and opportunities for women and the impact of conflict. Co-organizers, Culture+Conflict in association with the Royal College of Art, are in discussion regarding a major international conference on the subject of culture and conflict, which will provide a possible platform for such discussions.[15] It was suggested that a focus on youth engagement and the acknowledgment of the current and projected demographics of the country should inform future initiatives. It became apparent that most critical to developing a unified cultural identity is the need for contemporary culture to engage with cultural heritage, and for cultural education to include a broader audience, beyond the English-speaking elite. Ultimately, keeping the international focus on Afghanistan is of vital importance, and 'transition' must be augmented with commitment and continuity.

→ RELATED WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: :

Afghan National Institute of Music:
http://www.afghanistannationalinstituteofmusic.org

Aga Khan Trust for Culture:
http://www.akdn.org/afghanistan

British Council (Afghanistan):
http://www.britishcouncil.org/afghanistan.htm

15 Culture+Conflict: http://www.cultureandconflict.org.uk.

The British Museum (Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World):
http://blog.britishmuseum.org/category/exhibitions/afghanistan-crossroads-of-the-ancient-world/

Centre for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan:
http://www.ccaa.org.af

Culture+Conflict:
http://www.cultureandconflict.org.uk

The HUB:
http://www.the-hub.net

National Museum of Afghanistan:
http://www.nationalmuseum.af

Open Society:
http://www.opensociety.af/

Examples of their projects can be found at:
http://www.afghanhumanrights.com

Peace Direct:
http://www.peacedirect.org

The Southbank Centre:
http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Tora Bora Media:
http://www.toraboramedia.com/co/

And further information on the film, Addicted in Afghanistan:
http://addictedinafghanistan.com

Turquoise Mountain:

http://www.turquoisemountain.org

What Dust will Rise?

Toward a Postcolonial Sensitive Museum[1]

→ GIULIA GRECHI

PhD in "Theory and Social Research" at the University of Rome "La Sapienza," Giulia Grechi is currently a Research Fellow at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" as a member of the EU Project "MeLa—European Museums in an Age of Migrations." She teaches "Photography—Social Communication" at the School of Fine Arts of Brera (Milan), and "Cultural Anthropology" at the European Institute of Design (IED) in Rome, where she is also co-coordinator and Professor of the Master's Program in "Museum and Events Curation: Contemporary Arts and Performing Arts." Her research interests include Anthropology as well as Cultural and Post-colonial studies, with a focus on contemporary art and representations of the body. She is editor-in-chief of the online journal *roots§routes*—research on visual culture and works in a team of independent curators based in Rome, called the Routes Agency. She is the author of *La rappresentazione incorporata. Una etnografia del corpo tra stereotipi coloniali e arte contemporanea* (Bonanno 2010).

→ ABSTRACT

This essay proposes to call the museum into question as an agent of the political and sensorial management of modernity and its colonial mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion, registering the presence of other time spans, other narratives, other places and sensibilities which have been excluded from the economy of European consciousness. One of the challenges facing contemporary museography in its attempt to envisage a "postcolonial" museum is to play its

1 This essay is dedicated to Paolo Rosa, co-founder of the group of artists Studio Azzurro. In recent years I have shared with him the possibility of imagining a different way of taking museums "out of themselves" (Balzola, Rosa 2011).

part in the comprehensive "sensory turn" that for years has been affecting many disciplines. This would be to propose an expo-graphic practice, transforming the museum into a sort of sensescape, where not only the Western gaze but also Western sensibility is critically examined. I will analyse three examples of curatorial practices and/or artistic perspectives linked to a highly experimental approach to display which enables to propose a different, proactive critique concerning the cultural categories linked to the identity or role of the museum and its heritage. This sort of "breaking museology" will be analysed through the curatorial perspective of Documenta (13), curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev; the Musée d'Ethnographie Neuchâtel (MEN); and the group of Italian artists Studio Azzurro with the immersive quality of their museum displays.

→ THE MUSEUM UNDER SIEGE (OR ON RETREAT…)

Museum

Here are plates with no appetite.
And wedding rings, but the requited love
has been gone now for some three hundred years.
Here's a fan—where is the maiden's blush?
Here are swords—where is the ire?
Nor will the lute sound at the twilight hour.
Since eternity was out of stock,
ten thousand aging things have been amassed instead.
The moss-grown guard in golden slumber
props his mustache on Exhibit Number…
Eight. Metals, clay and feathers celebrate
their silent triumphs over dates.
Only some Egyptian flapper's silly hairpin giggles.
The crown has outlasted the head.
The hand has lost out to the glove.
The right shoe has defeated the foot.
As for me, I am still alive, you see.
The battle with my dress still rages on.
It struggles, foolish thing, so stubbornly!
Determined to keep living when I'm gone!

Wislawa Szimborska 1962

For some time now the apparatus of the museum has been under siege from deconstructivist scrutiny, and stands revealed as a non-neutral space of the construction and the representation of national and colonial "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the museum, in the broadest context of what Tony Bennett has defined as the "exhibitionary complex" (Bennett 1995), participated in the disciplining rituals of modernity, drawing on a range of devices. These rituals saw the formation of well educated citizens

conscious not only of their place in nations which were "evolved" and blessed with "civilization" in the highest degree, but also of being part of a new subject endowed with a particular power – that of the gaze (Duncan 1991). Whether in museums, the Universal Exhibitions, botanical and zoological gardens, theatres or city streets with their unprecedented hyper-stimulation of the senses, the "viewing subject" looks on and looks inwards, coming to perceive the self as the subject of modernity *par excellence.* In this case the eye is at the service of the conquest of a world "organized" as an image, and of the production of an awareness which is seen to be "the effect of a knowledge which 'tramples' and travels over the earth visually in order to fabricate its representation" (De Certeau 1988, 234). Calling the museum into question as an agent of the political and sensorial management of modernity and its colonial mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion means registering the presence of other time spans, other narratives, other places and sensibilities which have been excluded from the economy of European consciousness, or else used as a deforming mirror, instrumental in the definition of one's own "normality." It means transforming the museum into "an unsuspected site for the critical diagnoses of the modernity it seeks to exhibit and explain" (Chambers 2014, 242). For the museum that seeks to assume its role of cultural apparatus and reactivate its social functions in new ways, to produce processes of identification and imagined communities in a postcolonial, intercultural and transnational sense, to make the lute sound again, revive the appetite that empties the plates, the ire that moves the sword, to offer the hand a new chance and the shelter of its glove, in short to propose itself as an experimental laboratory for new *senses* of citizenship–of a different "coming community" (Agamben 2001)–the mirror has to be reversed, perhaps even shattered.

> If objects, histories, cultures, people were once wrenched out of their context in order to be put on display and exhibited as European knowledge, today this has to be unwound from its colonial premises and handed back to the world it once presumed to define and own. In the harsh light of the gallery space and the illuminated caption can the *impossibility* of a healing be exposed? Can the modern museum house what amounts to a historical and ontological cut when its collection and criteria are re-routed through a radically diverse accounting of time and space? Beyond mere adjustment and modification, the museum as a critical space needs to become something more, something else. (Chambers 2014, 243)

The siege that has been besetting the mechanism of the museum from several quarters seems to have something to do with the "positions" Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev laid down as the premises for Documenta (13), the five-yearly contemporary art exhibition founded in Kassel in 1955, which she curated from June to September 2012. She spoke of being "under siege. I am encircled by the other, besieged by others" (Christov-Bakargiev 2012a, 35). Although this is a decidedly uncomfortable

position, it can nonetheless prove productive: the fact of being besieged, being surrounded by onlooking "others," transforms the museum from an apparatus that sets up a visual regime and constructs the "objects" on show, its public and the production of knowledge-as-power, to being itself an observed entity, subject to criticism, vivisectioned, in an active approach involving inversion and transformation. The four positions identified by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev as possible conditions for the act of producing knowledge today (whether from an artistic, curatorial or theoretical viewpoint) also seem to me particularly apt to the crisis museums are going through, suspended between being "on stage," playing a role and continually displaying identities and differences, construing their own public but at the same time accepting that the gaze can be returned. While feeling besieged in the compressed time span of emergency and subject to critical pressure and to the demand for change, the museum *"on retreat"* works through the indecision between hermetic closure, the introversion of the institution's rigid practices, and exodus, striking out and going off the beaten track. Alternatively abandoning oneself to a *"state of hope"* and to an optimism in which "I dream, I am the dreaming subject of anticipation," becomes the starting point for exploiting unprecedented potential, exercising the gaze in a decompressed time span, projected into the future: the time of promise or desire.

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev describes Documenta as "a state of mind" (Christov-Bakargiev 2012a, 30). The history of this international exposition of contemporary art is indeed very different to that of the other periodical exhibitions or art markets, having more in common with the model of trade fairs or the universal exhibitions of the nineteenth century, which brought the presumed "heart of darkness" and the marvels of the rest of the world to the core of Europe. Documenta came into being after the Second World War, on the debris of a Germany that had been devastated not only by Allied bombing (Kassel was the hub of the German war industry) but by the trauma of the concentration camps and of the "unimaginable" Nazi scheme for mass extermination (Didi-Huberman 2008).

Documenta grew out of precisely the refusal to submit to the mechanism of dis-imagination, out of the emergence of the trauma as a space "where collapse and recovery are articulated" (Christov-Bakargiev 2012a, 30), out of a wound which is impossible to heal and yet which it is nonetheless possible to *cure*, precisely so that this "cut," which remains irremediably open, can become an intermediate space where, *in spite of it all*, it is possible to show pictures, reconstruct one's identity and narrate the ostensibly unspeakable. It emerges from the idea, or the hope, that art can be a language capable of rearticulating shared ideals and perspectives.

Documenta (13) recuperates and translates this radical demand into the present, penetrating (by exploiting scattered places and chronologies) the shock that follows from the trauma experienced by individuals or nations immediately after a dramatic conflict, "where the gaps in speech, the silences, and the words not even said under hypnosis find meaning. In

that silence, emotions emerge that are able to break through the clutter of our times. [Documenta] leaves space for the inoperative and the imperceptible, for the not-quite-appearing" (34).

The curatorial perspective of Documenta (13) is entirely informed by a procedure based on the choices of one hundred "advisors" who, taking a transdisciplinary approach, contributed to its construction over the five previous years. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev commences from the explicit absence of theme, from the "necessity for a sort of resistance to the transmissibility of a concept" (Christov-Bakargiev 2012b), thereby recognising the right to opacity as a conflictual practice (Chambers 2012), since it is impossible not to read in the "transmission" of knowledge an attitude which reinforces the capitalist reproduction of new forms of immaterial labour. However, this does not imply a strategic withdrawal or renunciation of the author-ity of one's own curatorial perspective; rather, it means articulating it in three fundamental and inter-related aspects: showing one's own positioning in its procedure; sharing the idea of "commitment"; and being open to other viewpoints, to the gaze and narratives of *others*.

With respect to the first two aspects, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev envisaged a section in the rotunda of the Fridericianum entitled "The Brain" which brings together "a series of elements which cannot be transmitted as information or concepts, nor do they express a precise theme" (Christov-Bakargiev 2012b). There is rather a constellation of art works, objects and documents coming from various parts of the world and belonging to different historical periods (from ancient Afghan sculptures to the photographs of Lee Miller in Hitler's bath, or Morandi's bottles). They were chosen by the curator according to a conceptual itinerary which however is not put into words. Visitors are asked to reconstruct their own *fil rouge,* to find affinities and contrasts between the various elements, to elaborate narrations starting from the biographies of the objects on display, to set up correspondences or conflicts between "art works," "documents" and "cultural artefacts" from different periods and cultures. This opens up a multiplicity of possible sense trajectories, questioning above all the status of the objects and the dynamics associated with the power to define their status in one manner rather than another. If, as the artist Paul Chan claims, "a thing is not a thing but an assembly of relations,"[2] this operation introduces the possibility of constructing a zone of transition, a "third space" (Bhabha 1994) in which the idea of commitment involves the search for an active, provisional, partial and shared sense, whether for the curator, the visitor or the artist. In fact this idea represents a summons to an ethical and political involvement and positioning concerning all the actors in the exposition process.

As for the third aspect, that is, being open to other gazes and narratives, Documenta has been de-localised, physically and symbolically taken out of the institutional exhibition venues in Kassel (while nonetheless still making

2 Paul Chan, interviewed during Documenta (13): http://d13.documenta.de/#/research/research/view/paul-chan. Accessed 16 March 2013.

extensive use of them). The overall display was not only scattered through the rest of the city, in places chosen for their symbolic and cultural value, but also transferred to other territories which were far away (although in certain senses only geographically) from Kassel and Germany.
The four possible conditions identified by the curator for exercising critical thought correspond to the four possible dislocations in space and time chosen for Documenta, in Kassel, Kabul, Alexandria/Cairo and Banff in Canada. Each of these positions involves other chronologies and narrations of micro-stories connected in some way with the histories of others set in a global, trans-national scenario involving receptivity and intense dialogue. It was not a question of "taking" Documenta to Afghanistan for a brief period of time (simply transferring part of the displays, for example), in an ingenuous, neo-colonial ritual. Rather, it was a more radical operation which involved forging profound relationships between the historical and cultural roots of Documenta and the scenario of conflict and destruction recently experienced in Afghanistan. During the five years' preparation for Documenta many meetings were held with Afghan institutions and cultural operators which led to workshops of various kinds, held by both "Documenta" and Afghan artists, and also long-term projects–the only time span, according to Arjun Appadurai, which can sustain the ability to aspire, with imagination and desire as the springs for profound cultural changes, requiring lengthy time spans and "a politics of patience, constructed against the tyranny of emergency" (Appadurai 2001, 30).

The Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz held one of these workshops in the area of Bamiyan, the site of numerous quarries, close to the site of the enormous statues of Buddha dating back to the sixth century which were destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban. Using stone from the quarries, the participants in the workshop reconstructed some of the books destroyed in Kassel in the fire that engulfed the Fridericianum during the bombing raids in 1944. Some of these volumes were exhibited by Documenta in the installation *What Dust Will Rise*, while others were donated to the Kabul National Museum to testify to the close link between these two acts of iconoclastic fury, to the common destruction of important cultural heritages, albeit occurring in very different conditions, times and places, and to the possibility of bringing to light, *from the dust*, a heritage (of scattered, multiple memories) for the future.

In this sense Documenta (13) proposes a "locational turn,"

> highlighting the significance of a physical place, but at the same time aiming for dislocation and for the creation of different and partial perspectives, (…) an exploration of micro-histories on varying scales that link the local history and reality of a place with the world. Like a matryoshka doll, it cracks open to reveal hidden spaces and narrations behind, inside, and underneath its surface. It speaks from the inside out in an act of ventriloquism – a second voice that comes from the belly, from inside the body. (Christov-Bakargiev 2012a, 35)

IMG. 01-02 — *What Dust Will Rise?, 2012, Documenta(13). Installation, including stone books, books damaged by fire during the bombing of Fridericianum in 1941, and other objects, drawings, etc. (courtesy Giulia Grechi)*

It concerns the possibility of intervening on the narration of history and the contemporary world by going beyond the constants, highlighting the ambivalences, the fractures and the breaking points, or again the possible affinities, the visions and narrations of *others* that can be expressed. It is a matter of recognising the archive as an apparatus that authorises a specific view of history in order to construct a different archive: one that is shared, diasporic, de-territorialised and yet soundly anchored in micro-stories, an archive in which the things that can be said, as Foucault puts it, "do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are

in fact close to us are already growing pale" (Foucault [1969] 1989, 146).

Lastly Documenta (13) explores an even more radical otherness, which is all the more disturbing because it appears in the form of a ghost–one of those ghosts which Michael Taussig sees as constantly stalking museums, and clearly not only ethnographic or national museums (Taussig 2004). For Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev it is important that the visitors to Documenta sense the presence of this ghost, that they feel ill at ease in the apparent neutrality of the institutional exhibition spaces, as if these were incomplete and at the same time besieged by an absence: "nervously lacking–at every step, one needs to know that there is something fundamental that is not known, that is invisible and missing–a memory, an unresolved question, a doubt" (Christov-Bakargiev 2012a, 36). At Guxhagen, about 20 minutes from Kassel, there is the twelfth century Benedictine monastery of Breitenau: turned into a prison in the mid-nineteenth century, it was used by the Nazis as first a work camp and then a concentration camp. In the 1950s it became a women's remand home, while today it hosts a memorial to the Second World War and a psychiatric clinic. Although Breitenau was not one of the Documenta venues, it was a fundamental point of reference for Christov-Bakargiev: everyone who was involved in one way or another in the construction of the exposition had first to visit Breitenau. Breitenau is the other-Kassel, its subconscious, at the same time familiar and alien (*unheimlich*), unresolved, invisible and yet present: it represents the will of Documenta (13) to explore its own internal otherness, its own trauma repeatedly put on show and played out each time on different levels of repression, whether physical, psychological, sexual, political or aesthetic. Documenta (13) is also the attempt to cure and heal those intractable memories, to give form to the trauma and cast light on the way it precipitates into the present and the elsewhere, to embody that ghost, one's own *othered* self.

→ LE MUSÉE CANNIBALE (MIND THE BODY!)

Faut-il brûler les musées d'ethnographie? [Must ethnographic museums be torched?]

Jean Jamin 1998

Welcome to the MEN, the extrapolating museum! We firmly believe that exhibitions exist not only to document reality obediently, but to shake it up a little too. Our visitors are left to their own devices here, to draw their own conclusions, which may or may not comply with those imagined by the designers, and may even reach further. Each field we present opens up different hors-champs, off-screen perspective, which itself leads to more hors-champs. Because the world cannot be defined solely in terms of classifications, instructions, reshaping, imitations and memories. It has to be looked at through, between, over and above the expressions of our common codes.

Hors-champs, Ethnographic Museum of Neuchatel

IMG. 03 — *La chambre double, View of the exhibition Le Musée Cannibale, MEN Ethnographic Museum Neuchatel, March 09th 2002 – March 02th 2003 (courtesy MEN)*

The poster for *Le Musée Cannibale* features a Mukuyi mask on a white chopping board with a cleaver sunk into the skull: a provocative warning that in museums "appetite grows the more you classify" (*"L'appétit vient en classant"*). In other words, the violent, carnal desire to feed on, and devour, the Other, is at the heart of the quintessentially European dynamic of museums to possess, catalogue, collect and display difference. In the exhibition Le *Musée Cannibale*, curated by Marc-Olivier Gonseth, Jacques Hainard and Roland Kaehr in the Musée d'Ethnographie Neuchâtel (MEN) in 2002 and 2003, the museum itself is put on display, turning its skin inside out and laying bare its nerves, stripping off the flesh of expographic practices and turning them back onto themselves, training the spotlight on their conventional invisibility through the paradox that they became obscene simply through their mise-en-scène. Stage and backstage exchange places and are combined, at once seriously and ludically, to be subjected to public scrutiny. Thus as the cannibal and narcissist par excellence, the ethnographic museum is made to display itself and its colonial rituals of collection, categorization and interpretation of "exotic" objects, frozen in the *ethnographic present* of the anthropologist together with the apparently timeless cultures they represent (Gonseth 2005). Here the entire construction process of ethnographic knowledge is placed in the limelight, from the field to the archive–the *Chambre froide* in which the objects in the collection are displayed in a freezer, sealed in plastic bags; then the canning process, La boîte noire or "black box" in which the museologists de-freeze part of the collection in order to exhibit/cook it according to a series of different display modalities/recipes.

Finally visitors are invited to enter the central exhibition hall, *Au bon vivant*, sumptuously decked out with mirrors, chandeliers and enormous tables laid for a banquet and covered over by glass domes, complete with buffet, illustrating all the different ways in which the cultures of

IMG. 04-05 — *La chambre froide, View of the exhibition Le Musée Cannibale, MEN Ethnographic Museum Neuchatel, March 09th 2002 – March 02th 2003 (courtesy MEN)*

others can be "consumed." The dishes and table centrepiece feature ethnographic objects belonging both to other cultures and to the visitors' own, whether ancient or in use today, African masks and little electronic devices, forming part of the museum's collection. They are waiting to be devoured by the visitors' gaze in a double, cross-eyed vision turned on the *unheimlich* otherness of the Other and on the no less *unheimlich* otherness of the self. On the walls of the room hang old engravings featuring scenes of cannibalism, a topos of anthropology but also an imaginary fantasy which goes beyond any actual reality and conveys the terror of being symbolically devoured by the Other (but at the same time also the desire, the obsession, of devouring and assimilating the Other into oneself). This, again, conveys the very practice of ethnography and the corresponding display practices in museums in its ambiguous relationship with otherness, lying somewhere between the desire to enter into a relationship, making the alien familiar, and closing it off in frozen, predatory representations.

In the last exhibition room, with white walls, stained glass windows and frescoes creating an atmosphere at once secular and religious, stands a long table "pour une communion cannibale (…), mêlant violence et

NEXT PAGE IMG. 06-11 — *Au bon vivant, View of the exhibition Le Musée Cannibale, MEN Ethnographic Museum Neuchatel, March 09th 2002 – March 02th 2003 (courtesy MEN)*

fantasme d'ingestion, peurs de l'enfance et délires de l'adulte, comme si le parcours ne pouvait se terminer sans un retour sur soi, sa propre idéologie, sa propre société, son propre imaginaire, sa propre violence réelle ou contenue. *Cannibale toi-même*, en quelque sorte" ["for a cannibal communion (…), mixing violence and the spectre of ingestion, childhood fears and adult frenzies, as if the itinerary could not be complete without turning back on itself, on its own ideology, society, imagery, violence–whether actual or suppressed. Cannibal yourself, in a manner of speaking"] (Gonseth 2005, 519).

In the intention of the exhibition curators this is where the symbolic significance of cannibalism emerges as a taboo that our culture rejects,

IMG. 12-13 (NEXT PAGE) — *Cannibal toi-même, View of the exhibition Le Musée Cannibale, MEN Ethnographic Museum Neuchatel, March 09th 2002 – March 02th 2003 (courtesy MEN)*

constantly putting it on display, in a paradox that is revealed in an ironic and disconcerting fashion. Museums (and not only ethnographic museums) are places in which this paradox emerges and is in certain respects resolved, to the extent in which they offer "un espace pour l'ingestion de l'autre et un simulacre d'ouverture à l'altérité en laissant penser que cet autre devenu même est enfin assimilable" [a space for the other to be ingested and a simulacrum of openness to otherness, suggesting that now that this other has become self, it can at last be assimilated] (Gonseth, Hainard, Kaer 2002, 13). Here the museum, in displaying its own anthropophagic tendency, offers itself as an edible body, exposing itself reflexively to its own vulnerability and ambiguities, and calling on the visitor–cannibale toi-même–to imagine a more carnal way to penetrate it, to literally "embody" it, soliciting a more wide-ranging sensibility with respect to one based exclusively on vision.

In identifying its own national and colonial community, the museum has also contributed to constructing and perpetrating the specifically European sensorial regime, based on the five senses, proposing it as a universal archetype, while in fact it "is only one such ordering, and it is relatively recent in European history" (Edwards, Gosden, Philips 2006, 5). The museum has naturalised this specific sensorial hierarchy, helping to enthrone a disembodied way of looking as the privileged approach of both scientific knowledge and the exploitation of museums. In this way it has institutionalised a series of prohibitions concerning other possible types of corporeal expression or perception, characterising the exploitation of the museum space as first and foremost a negative experience linked to prohibition rather than to taking pleasure in and expressing the self[3]

3 When private collections and Wunderkammer become public, the nascent museum apparatus begins to tackle the problem of the "security" of the objects on display, according to a normative model of public museum that asserts itself and acts on the display, the objects and the bodies of the visitors. This also brings into being a new professional community of curators and conservators who, "behind the scenes," can take a more relaxed attitude to the objects (Edwards, Gosden, Philips 2006). Visitors, too, have a power of their own: in ethnographic museums, by virtue of belonging to a (colonial) Nation which compensates them for any social injustices they may suffer, and thanks to a display organized in terms of evolutionist ideology, they "can assert their superiority to the collection (...). The visitors can come and go as they please: the collection remains trapped, captive–the canoe hangs still from the ceiling, the drum is silent on the wall, the amulet is powerless in its case" (Classen, Howes 2006, 211).

(O'Doherty 2000). (This despite the fact that in Foucault's perspective, the productivity of power-as-knowledge is verified not only by means of repressive modalities but also through induction to pleasure.) Criticising the negation of the complex embodied engagement with the world at the root of the human cognitive experience (and of the museum visitor) necessarily implies an understanding of the way in which the affirmation of a particular sensorial hierarchy has been at the service of the colonial power to define the self and the other in constructing and legitimising the superiority of the civilized-rational-European-male-viewing-subject over the smelling-touching-tasting-sexualized-irrational-Other. The colonial power has always also been the power to nominate, represent, and feel.[4]

In *Le Musée Cannibale* the objects on display form a sort of grammar which defies the concept of museum heritage in its conservative and disciplinary paradigm. Deconstructing the significance of the "ethnographic object" with its sacred aura linked to an exoticising or folklore-based approach, the MEN also exhibits (and, in the wake of the 1984 exhibition *Objets Prétextes Objets Manipulés*, acquired for its own collections) contemporary objects which may be industrial and apparently banal (Borsotti, Gonseth 2012), like the box full of symbolic objects which courting couples in Neuchatel customarily give each other on Saint Valentine's Day. Citizens were asked to donate to the museum objects from their everyday lives which they consider culturally significant. In fact the objects are not displayed as tokens of some truth concerning the culture they are supposed to represent, and this relationship between objects and the culture of reference, while ostensibly straightforward, is also challenged, for example, by the presence in the collection of industrial objects like the cup made in China featuring Mona Lisa… What "culture" does this object represent? They become "pretexts" for a narrative, "because they are becoming arguments of a history that is putting into perspective one or another of their characteristics, be they aesthetic, functional or symbolic."[5] This process discloses the possibility for visitors "to put into perspective their perceptions, to deconstruct their knowledge and to question their certainties in order to bring them to think over their reality."[6]

In this sort of auto-ethnography, the temporary exhibitions are often linked to a highly experimental approach to display, which enables the MEN to propose a different, proactive critique concerning the cultural categories linked to the identity or role of the museum and its heritage, trying out "a transversal relationship with knowledge, which links scientific disciplines with artistic approaches" (Borsotti, Gonseth 2012,

4 A dual repression of the sensorial regime is enacted in an ethnographic museum, concerning not only that of the spectator, as in other museums, but also the specific sensibilities of the cultures represented in the museum through the objects on display. In this sense source communities and indigenous activism have for some time now been problematising "the colonial and modernist empowerment of visual experience as the primary mode of understanding and pleasure" (Edwards, Gosden, Philips 2006, 2).

5 "Exhibit, that's to construct a specific discourse for the museum, made up of objects, texts and iconography. Exhibit, that's to put the objects in the service of a theoretical subject, of a discourse or of a story and not the contrary. " Gonseth, Marc-Olivier, and Jaques Hainard, *Principes d'exposition*. On line at: http://www.men.ch/expositions.asp/1-0-21285-99-5-4-1/. Accessed 16 March 2013.

6 Gonseth, Marc-Olivier, and Jaques Hainard, *Principes d'exposition*. On line at: http://www.men.ch/expositions.asp/1-0-21285-99-5-4-1/. Accessed 16 March 2013.

250). The MEN takes a decidedly artistic approach in experimenting with new expo-graphic practices, positioning itself at the productive interface between anthropology and contemporary art where illustrious predecessors have already made their mark. In producing the journal Documents the "dissident" surrealists, including Georges Bataille, maintained a long-standing collaboration with the ethnographers close to Michel Leiris (who were no less dissident): together they discovered in the relationship between alien and familiar (*heimlich/unheimlich*), as well as in the shock of perception, an exceptional space for experimentation. Then again the surrealists also experimented widely in the curatorial sphere, viz. the two exhibitions mounted by Duchamp in 1938 in Paris (*Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*) and in 1942 in New York (*First Papers of Surrealism*). Here the explicit calling into question of sight as the chief sense pertaining to perception in the museum involved various expedients to make visitors feel acutely uncomfortable about the relationship between their body and the exhibition space (Kachur 2003). They were literally forced to go beyond the expectations with which they entered the museum and come to terms with a relationship with the exhibition space that was more "embodied" and conscious. Drab, dirty sacks of coal hanging down threateningly from the ceiling in the *Galerie Beaux-Arts* in Paris, or the sixteen miles of string forming a gigantic cobweb strung up between the works in the Whitlaw Reid Mansion in New York, transformed the exhibition space into a venue that was unwelcoming and frustrating but also ludic, where the hindrance to sight was simply a tool for seeing differently, bringing the whole body into play and considering proprioception (i.e. the perception of the boundaries and the actions of one's own body in space) as a potent sixth sense. Duchamp's provocation served to trigger off an embodied, penetrating perception that was active not contemplative, whereby visitors were conscious at every moment of their gaze and of the position of their body, and the body had to move too, together with the pupil, to enable the eye to perform its function. In this way the exhibition space became a sphere of nervous excitation, of disquiet, or in the words of André Breton, a "zone of agitation which is situated at the confines of the poetic and the real" (Kachur 2003, 99).

By choosing to occupy this scenario the MEN continually shifts the viewpoint of visitors "off-screen," foiling their expectations and forcing them to displace their embodied eye elsewhere. The museum's most recent exhibition, *Hors-champs* (2012), focused on the use of pictures in anthropology, and more specifically on the gap between what is represented and what remains "off-screen." This dynamic too is akin to the one that prevails in a museum, where each exhibition involves the affirmation of one point of view, the construction of a framework, so that certain issues and certain objects are put on display and others remain in the background, present but invisible–after all, an archive functions as much by means of affirmation and illumination as by negation and blackout. Once again we encounter the metaphor of chilling, as in *Le Musée Cannibale,* but it is not only used in association with the process of

IMG. 14-17(NEXT PAGE) — *View of the exhibition Hors-champs, MEN Ethnographic Museum Neuchatel, November 03th 2012 – October 20th 2013 (courtesy MEN)*

"freezing" that museums apply to heritage. Here "chilling" is a metaphor that informs the whole exhibition.

In the first room, *Extrapole,* a series of cooling devices are displayed and used as display mounts or showcases. One fridge contains plaster casts of five objects from the collection, numerous copies of which were scattered throughout Neuchatel: all the citizens who find them are awarded a specific certificate of authenticity and informed that they have become proprietors of part of the museum's heritage. Another enormous fridge is in two parts: the lower part contains little models of each of the exhibition rooms, while up above an installation explicitly solicits visitors to participate by becoming a MEN curator for the day, "an apostle of the *muséologie de la rupture*," mounting their own exhibition using a series of objects from the museum's collection provided in the fridge's side compartments and drawers (a garden gnome, an African statuette, a strawberry-flavoured condom, a common manufactured household item, portraits of the Che and a few despots, a roll of ready-made sentences, a collection of quotes by Rimbaud and a couple of modernists).

As they enter the exhibition space through an enormous fridge door visitors find themselves literally immersed in a gigantic map of the Far North, stretching from the floor to the walls, with a few installations lying off the map. They are thus both inside and outside an imaginary cartography of the North, just as they are inside and outside the exhibition itself, continually obliged to orient themselves in a "beyond." The sense of displacement, clashing with the apparent order of the geographical map, is heightened by the fact that each installation is accompanied by a panel featuring the graphics of Google maps. This creates yet another hors-champs between the real and the virtual. The possibilities of extending the field of vision thanks to satellite mapping both raises fears concerning personal freedom and furthers the illusion of being able to map reality accurately and instantaneously, while accompanied by the sense of disorientation caused by the awareness that, to quote Gregory Bateson,

Transmit
more info
What's the experts' opinion ?
Give your opinion
Street view
In many contemporary museums, video games are seen as the ideal way to pass on the subtleties of cultural practices and techniques to the younger generation.
Directions
Search nearby
Save to map
more
30°
60°
120°
150°

the map is never the territory. In fact visitors are able to acquire a new awareness of themselves as embodied-viewing-subjects, and to immerse themselves both in the scenarios set up by the various installations, some of which are highly interactive, and in the museum space itself that features continuous spirals, paradoxes, multiplications of planes and startling perspectives. Visitors are literally *affected by* the museum display. In the contrast between the apparent lucidity of the exposition and the disorientation it provokes they are led to experience a vertiginous sense and to abandon themselves to the museum's psychogeography, "that is, the felt quality of its navigated space" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 4). This sort of "breaking museology" involves a sensorial involvement that goes beyond the mere field of vision, making visitors feel uncomfortable and undermining their cultural certainties, disturbing standard clichés by means of little perceptive shocks, so as to evoke the possibility of a cultural critique which can involve visitors within the museum space as embodied subjects:

> *Exhibit, that's to disturb harmony.*
> *Exhibit, that's to trouble the visitor in his intellectual comfort.*
> *Exhibit, that's to arouse emotions, anger, desire to know more. (…)*
> *Exhibit, that's to suggest the essential through critical distance, bearing a mark of humour, irony and derision.*
> *Exhibit, that's to fight against the accepted ideas, the stereotypes and stupidity.*
> *Exhibit, that's to intensively live a collective experience.*[7]

→ TOWARD A (POSTCOLONIAL) MUSEUM AS A SENSESCAPE

> *On peut voir regarder. Peut-on entendre écouter, sentir humer, etc.?*
> *[One can see look. Can one hear listen, smell inhale, etc.?]*
>
> Marcel Duchamp 1914

7 Gonseth, Marc-Olivier, and Jaques Hainard. *Principes d'exposition.* On line at: http://www.men.ch/expositions.asp/1-0-21285-99-5-4-1/. Accessed 16 March 2013.

For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning point of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone.
They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation
Walter Benjamin 1969

A museum display is bound to raise questions of power and misrepresentation. All the more so in the case of ethnographic museums, branded with their original sin of complicity with colonialism . One of the challenges facing contemporary museography in its attempt to envisage a "postcolonial" museum is to play its part in the comprehensive "sensory turn" that for years has been affecting many disciplines. This would be to propose an expo-graphic practice, transforming the museum into a sort of sensescape (Classen, Howes 2006), where not only the Western gaze but also Western sensibility is critically examined.

The exhibitions mounted at the MEN are "expo-graphic workshops" designed to set up environments in which visitors can immerse themselves via interactive technologies and in a reflexive manner. The approach involves constructing environments that are *immersive*, whether or not they are interactive: thus the model is not that of science museums, in which the experiment is directed by whoever set it up and the visitor is denied any eversive or imaginative scope. As the director of the MEN, Marc-Olivier Gonseth, has affirmed: "I have long resisted mechanical or electronic interaction with our visitors, convinced that real interaction with them must necessarily be both emotional and cerebral" (Borsotti, Gonseth 2012, 253).

For a number of years now the group of Italian artists Studio Azzurro has been working in the same direction. After creating "sensitive environments" during the 1990s, they began to introduce them into museums, gradually producing, together with historians, psychiatrists and veterans of the Resistance who commissioned them, museums as "learning ecosystems." Paolo Rosa, one of the founding members of Studio Azzurro, places their experimentation with immersive museum displays in a more comprehensive process linked to the need to pass from "museums as collections" to "museums as narration" or museums as "narrative habitats" (Cirifino, Giardina Papa, Rosa 2011). In such museums the objects, when they exist, have none of the sacred aura of the artefact or masterpiece but serve to interpret the story that is being narrated: rather than representing a "value" in themselves, they recall the value of the gesture that may have produced, used or indeed destroyed them. Museums as laboratories of memories, at times difficult to sustain, are where the narrative, often in the form of oral testimonies and interviews, lies at the heart of the project and is displayed using hypertextual and immersive modalities. These modalities are fragmented in just the same way as memories themselves reconstruct an episode by means of intermittent flashes and the voids of lapsus. In this way, opposed to being the "container" of an institutional memory, the museum becomes the venue for a collective re-elaboration of meanings and identity. This makes it possible to recover an evocative

modality for the narration of History through stories, fractures and gaps, through what does not fit in, what remains on the tip of the tongue, including viewpoints which may be conflicting:

> […] the hypertextual structure of the narration and the multitude of documentary fragments make it possible to evoke the story in a non-linear version that is not seen from a single viewpoint. The presentation of the events through the collating of original documents or oral narrations creates an accumulation of fragments which surpasses an organic, unitary explanation. (14)

The immersive quality of these museum displays gives expression to a narration that needs to be experienced rather than deciphered, a space in which visitors are required to play an active role by a display which solicits and extends their cognitive and sensorial capabilities. The activation of a specific community, both in the preparatory phase and in the museum's realisation, transforms it into a *participated* museum involving "one major change: it is forbidden not to touch" (31).

The Museo Laboratorio della Mente was created by Studio Azzurro in 2008 in Padiglione 6 of the ex Manicomio [Lunatic Asylum] in Rome.7 Here the challenge was to express a particularly difficult memory and the sensitive topic of mental illness. It involved people's relations with diversity, the way in which the mental institution itself constructs and produces "mental cases," and also the remarkable experience of Franco Basaglia, who succeeded in having the asylums closed down in Italy thanks to the introduction of Law 180 in 1978.

Visitors to the Museo Laboratorio were obliged to "embody," literally and publicly, some of the postures and ritual gestures of the psychiatric patient, because it was precisely through the repetition of these gestures–the rhythmic swaying of the torso forwards and backwards, withdrawing into oneself with hands over the ears because "I can hear voices"–that the installations were activated and became significant. In addition, enhancement of a reception that is collective, choral and shared, almost ritualised, can reactivate the function of the museum as "a place around which a community can come to recognise itself" (27). This incorporated and communal dimension highlights both the importance and the beauty of the visitor's gesture, which not only plays an active part in the museum narrative (when not actually serving to trigger it), but is also part of the museum's performative nature and indeed "aesthetic"–to recuperate the etymological sense of the term in its poetic, ethical and political quality, as "the disposition to sense acutely" (Gilroy, Howes, Kahn 2006). This sort of "performing museology" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000) opens up a metalinguistic and reflexive space capable of revealing the museum's institutional framework as a non-neutral mechanism, as well as a venue for embodied social practices where discomfort and (not childish) playfulness can be tools for visitors, enabling them to acquire awareness of themselves

IMG. 18 — *Tavolo (Table), Studio Azzurro, permanent installation. Museo Laboratorio della Mente, Rome (courtesy Museo della Mente)*

IMG. 19 — *Sentire voci (Hearing voices), Studio Azzurro, permanent installation. Museo Laboratorio della Mente, Rome (courtesy Museo della Mente)*

as "interpretative agents" (Rees Leahy 2012). In the museum they find traces of their own possible experience or their own living memory: "a performing museology makes the museum perform itself by making the museum qua museum visible to the visitor" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000, 11).

Furthermore this radically reflexive attitude requires the project designer, curator and indeed the institution to position itself *ethically,* far from any essentialism. The museum is rethought as a *cultural form* able to construct communities which may be temporary. In this way it becomes possible to revive an identification in and through public space, in a sort of "public dream-space" (Taussig 1992, 46). This would be a place which can contain the affective force of the strategies of memorialization, activate visitors' bodies and their sensibilities. It would go beyond constrictions to

display the working of the embodied dimensions of feeling and construct a porous space which is highly political. In this approach, which Paolo Rosa defines as *"anthropoetic"*, the poetical and anthropological inputs are combined and the emotional component is revived through narration and experimentation, so that the museum itself is transformed into an "art operation": *an affective art working*.

> The affective museum works with poetics to assist visitors to look through that which was hidden and rendered opaque in traditional linear displays […]. Poetics here demands physical, emotional and intellectual labour, from design, content and programming, and from visitors. It importantly moves us to reflect on the ethics of colonial encounters, the stories we tell about self and others, and to relate this to our lived experiences today and in the global future. (Golding 2013, 97)

Perhaps the "museums as narration" proposed by Studio Azzurro manage to translate into a set of practices what Viv Golding calls "the affective museum," and within it the process of "embodied meaning-making"–the *affect*. Immersing the visual in its sensory embeddedness can trigger that form of sensorial and affective reappropriation of the museum space (as opposed to contemplation) by visitors who will be conscious of themselves as embodied subjects and of their progress through the museum space as the place of embodied and political relations between bodies, space and objects. They would experience the more or less agreeable shock of finding themselves in a museum in which one is literally "touched."

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Illegitimate Writings

The Public Sphere and History in the Ethnographic Museum

→ MARÍA IÑIGO CLAVO

Maria Iñigo Clavo holds a postdoctoral Fellowship in University of Sao Paulo (FAPESP), is a researcher, curator and artist. Her theoretical work is focused on coloniality, migration, otherness, translation, and art in Latin America with special attention to Brazilian Art. She is part of the independent research group Peninsula, procesos coloniales y prácticas artísticas y curatoriales in collaboration with Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia. She was a researcher for the AHRC project Meeting Margins, University of Essex and University of the Arts London. She has organized exhibitions and events at CA2M, Matadero Madrid, at Universidad Complutense/Medialab Madrid, and at Le Cube in Rabat, Jaqueline Martins Gallery In Sao Paulo. She has also collaborated with a variety of publications, such as Versión/sur, Concinnitas, Revista de Occidente, Bilboquet, Re-visiones, Lugar Común, and others.

→ ABSTRACT

In the present essay, I look at some examples of artists who have critically reconsidered the Western perspective that focuses on the supposed 'Other,' invented and produced at the very moment of its representation: Anna Bella Geiger, Cildo Meireles, Iconoclasistas, Pedro Lasch. They all propose different perspectives for the critical display of cultures in the Museum.

"When cultural 'others' are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not. Exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and 'other'," states Ivan Karp in his now classical collection of essays entitled *Exhibiting Cultures* (Karp 1991).

This was also observed by Mieke Bal, who suggested that exhibitions constitute acts of self-exposing: "By exhibiting an object, one is exhibiting oneself, by the simple fact that the finger that points is connected to the body, and to the person" (Bal 1994, 94). And it is from this place that we begin to re-think works concerning otherness and ethnography. In the present essay, I will show some examples of artists who have critically reconsidered the Western perspective that focuses on the supposed 'Other,' invented and produced at the very moment of its representation.

I would like to begin by discussing the work of two Brazilian artists who have managed to highlight several aspects of this issue. It should not be forgotten that, being Brazilian, the way they look at the indigenous population of what is now Brazil, as well as the descendants of Africans, already embodies the debate about Brazil's own national identity. Yet, their point of view is not very distant from that of European intellectuals, whose descriptions of the primitive always imply definitions of civilization and progress. In the early twentieth century, the question at stake is always self-definition; but specifically, in Brazil, this also involves the production of allegedly inclusive official discourses. While the European attitude to indigenous populations sought some sort of separation—a definition by differentiation—Brazilian identity discourses from the 1920s and 1930s incorporated official speeches framed in concepts such as racial democracy or crossbreeding. Since the complexity of this issue would demand much more space in order to be developed in depth, we will now focus only on some aspects of this debate.

IMG. 01 — *Anna Bella Geiger, História do Brasil - Little Boys and Girls, 1975 a series of 6 photomontages paired in two groups of 3.*

In a number of her works, Brazilian artist Anna Bella Geiger employed stereotyped images of indigenous peoples of Brazil, some of them taken from tourist postcards, and others from ethnographic documents. Her works are often images within images. In *História do Brasil Ilustrada em Capítulos* (1975), the photographs of indigenous women take on greater weight as objects—much more so than the Western-style portrait to which they refer. They are worn, folded, old and used; they exude another type of femininity, one associated with the natural. The iconic female images blind the androgynous faces. Neither of these representations, that of the indigenous women (related to the natural) nor the Western portrait which serves as a base for the image (related to the artificial) seems to be complete. The first are damaged, and this damage highlights the superficiality of the photographs, their two-dimensional quality. The latter, the androgynous one, has been made opaque, sight being replaced by representation; we do not know whether she sees through the images or is blinded by representation, or both things at once. Indeed, the subject is no longer able to represent herself or fully represent the other. This is what Homi Bhabha termed "the metonymy of presence," the naming of a part for the whole. Bhabha suggests that it is the "impossibility of claiming an origin for the Self (or Other) within a tradition of representation that conceives identity as the satisfaction of a totalizing, plenitudinous object of vision" (Bhabha 2002, 68).[1]

Bhabha speaks of the I (the English first person pronoun) whose homonym in English is eye, the organ that sees, which links the place and the time in which the subject tries to see the Other, who is visible only intermittently. It is simultaneously the Eye/I that is unable to see itself, that cannot see how it is in the "impossible position of enunciation." This is why looking at the Other is like looking at oneself, both are insignificant to the Eye/I: "To see a *missing person* is to *transgress* that demand. The 'I' in the position of mastery is, *at that same time*, the place of its absence, its *re*-presentation" (Bhabha 2002, 68). The postcolonial bourgeois and the metropolitan intellectual share a fascination for otherness. Both of them, the Other and that which represents it, are doomed to the same bias:

> What confronts you, the reader, in the incomplete portrait of the postcolonial bourgeois–who looks uncannily like the metropolitan intellectual–is the ambivalence of your desire for the Other […]. That disturbance of your voyeuristic look enacts the complexity and contradictions of your desire to see, to fix cultural difference in a containable, *visible* object. The desire for the Other is doubled by the desire in language, which *splits the difference* between Self and Other so that both positions are partial; neither is sufficient unto itself. (Bhabha 2002, 72)

1 The point of departure of Bhabha's discussion is a poem by the Mumbai poet Adil Jussawalla telling of the missing person that haunts the identity of the postcolonial bourgeois. He also looks at the poems by M. Jin, "Strangers on a Hostile Landscape", in R. Cobham and M. Collins (eds.), Watchers and Seekers. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

I am particularly interested in how the colonial subject has become dissociated from its position of enunciationand reduced to an object of study. This is a classic mode of colonial mastery. It is through this operation that we negate the possibility of understanding otherness as a producer of knowledge capable of affecting and changing our knowledge constructs, and becoming part of our own history. We negate this possibility to such an extent that these representations have been condemned to pure bias. Their absence is evident in the silent gaps of history, what Bhabha calls "the secret art of invisibility" (Bhabha 2002, 68).[2]

There has been much discussion on how these objects should be exhibited, and on the various sins of ethnographic and anthropological museums. A key issue, in the context of this discussion, is whether we have the right to represent the Other at all; if we have the right to speak about or for the other.[3] We are asked to decide whether a priority should be placed on the object itself, so as to use it as a vehicle for aesthetic experience, or whether we should rather isolate it in order to analyse and historically place it, both formally and technically, or do just the opposite by contextualising these objects in some way. Another concern is how to free ourselves from exoticism and adapt our modes of understanding, representation and the way of looking at others, in order to speak of other cultures by way of their objects. Many have spoken as well about how important it is to compare and contrast objects and cultures, so that we do not make the mistake of replacing the meaning objects draw from their culture of origin with the meaning they acquire in our own culture. Others have been critical of our views about what the "Other" is, as seen from various perspectives—of sexuality, social class, race, and in particular colonial differences. These views often condition the way we look at and exhibit other cultures, a consideration that should be brought to bear on possible models of ethnographic exhibitions whose point of departure is a reflection on the nature of representation itself.

In this sense, I agree with Ivan Karp's conclusions regarding how these indigenous cultures, more than being the objects of study, should represent a starting point for a re-organisation of our own categories. Karp states: "Cross-cultural exhibitions present such stark contrasts between what we know and what we need to know that the challenge of reorganizing our knowledge becomes an aspect of exhibition experience. … Audiences are left with two choices: either they define their experience of the exhibition to fit with their existing categories of knowledge, or they reorganize their categories to fit better with their experience" (Karp 1991, 23). Concerns of this type were voiced as early as the 1960s by Cildo Mereiles when he alluded to that mythical, made-up world in his works that did not exist on the maps, known as *Cruzeiro do Sul*, in an allusion to extermination of the indigenous population during the Portuguese and Spanish colonization. Produced in 1969, Cildo Meireles' work Cruzeiro do Sul is a tiny wooden

2 "What is so graphically enacted in the moment of colonial identification is the splitting of the subject in its historical place of utterance" (Bhabha 2002, 68).

3 This also represents an age-old debate in art; since the 1980s, many artists have begun to showinterest in social groups, often collaborating with them.

cube (9 x 9 x 9 mm) made of oak and pine, which embodies, the idea of the dimension of energy contained in a tiny body. Accordingly, the piece must always be exhibited in the largest available room of the museum. As Meireles argues, for the Tupi people oak and pine trees are sacred: when pine and oak are rubbed together, they create fire, and are therefore sacred to the Tupi people, and there is a sacred sense of this knowledge.

This work is inscribed within a desire to understand the indigenous reality at a time particularly marked by large Amazonian projects implemented by the government. Meireles, who was raised in an *Indianista* family, explains his work through his father's experience:

> This piece alludes to a region known as Bico do Papagaio, which is located in a corner of the Goiás state and now goes by the names of Tocantins, Maranhao and Pará; it's a region that is connected to my personal story. One day my father received a telegram from a pastor that alerted him to a massacre occurring in the area. My father was sent there to report on it for the government. When he arrived, he ended up becoming involved in the cause, something which even affected his career. He found out that this was actually the second time this particular group of indigenous peoples had been massacred. The first had taken place fifteen years earlier, by a group of landowners led by Raimundo Soares. This group was interested in lands held by the indigenous population (a fundamental problem in the world, in Brazil and in other countries). These landowners joined forces, rented an airplane and flew over the area, dropping contaminated clothing onto the village below–it was full-blown germ warfare. In two weeks the population of 4.000 was reduced to 400 inhabitants. Of those who survived, half lost their minds, left, or became alcoholics. My father discovered that this crime had been committed not once, but twice. When he revealed what was happening, the government report became a matter for the Police, and the person responsible for the crimes was brought to court. He was tried and condemned, and for the first time in Brazil, a man was sentenced for killing an Indian. The aim of *Cruzeiro do Sul*, one of my physical artworks, was to talk about this. (Arantes 2002)

Some of the works produced by Meireles question the ways in which we scientifically map and measure the world; temperatures, weights, sizes and borders. *Cruzeiro do Sul* represents a logical step in his intent to test these Western parameters, which in this instance are viewed from another perspective. By juxtaposing the tiny cube with the immensity of the art space, the force of the diminutive is enlarged. The precarious cube symbolises a local, indigenous epistemology, holding within itself a condensed energy (Brett 2003, 108) which, in turn, holds the dangerous density of fire: the potential of another culture, of another way of thinking that defies all that is Western and its arena of power. While the cube bears the secret of fire, it could, at any time, blow up the Museum which houses it. We must remember that a museum is one of the most efficient epistemological agents of the Western world, the very institution which

imposes an order on and explains culture. And so Meireles' idea is that the cube is something that threatens our structures of knowledge. Rather than simply an object to be studied, the object itself is the producer of knowledge, providing a space of enunciation which calls into question the stability of our own common sense.

Lavine and Karp provide a number of examples of exhibitions held in the Western world on indigenous peoples or what we like to call "other cultures." In some instances these groups asked to participate in these exhibitions: "We need to begin designing exhibitions in which the displayed artworks are organised in keeping with the aesthetic categories of their cultures of origin" (Karp 1991, 7).[4] In this sense, it becomes important to examine other ways of understanding how we see. In an article for the journal *Visual Studies,* Matthew Rampley explained that for cultures that feature a specific hierarchy of visual practices, such as that of the Baule people of Ivory Coast, the visual is understood differently; the objects that are most important to them have to be hidden, put away, and as a result they are not on display (Rampley 2006). Another example is the art that is produced in the Sepik River region, in New Guinea. For the inhabitants of this area, it is not the specific production of sculptures (*gwalndu*) that is important, but the wider social sphere in which they are produced and then employed. Therefore, to understand each *artefact* necessarily involves a "situational analysis." Rampley claims that "a commitment to ethnographic observation that is more rigorous" is required in order to understand the visuality of specific cultures. I would say ethnographic studies could even draw upon visual studies and other disciplines to help *understand* the political implications of the manner in which museums exhibit.

All of us agree that, as Mignolo (2000), Anibal Quijano (1997), or Castro-Gomez (1996), and others have stated, coloniality is part and parcel of modernity. It is not merely consigned to a historical past, but rather endures in geopolitics, modernity's own condition of existence, and is still very much alive in our time. Therefore, our first task is to understand how ethnographic museums uphold these structures. This is particularly relevant if we consider that their very existence is a direct result of our colonial past. A good example of this is seen in Pedro Lasch's project *Black Mirror/Espejo Negro*, shown at the Nasher Museum of Art in North Carolina simultaneously with an exhibition of Velázquez and El Greco paintings. For this installation, the artist used some Pre-Columbian pieces taken from the museum's collection, placing them on pedestals, with their faces turned away from the spectator. The objects faced black mirrors in whose reflection one could see the portraits of *conquistadores*, priests and other images from the Spanish Golden Age. In the middle of the exhibition space there was a Claude glass, or black mirror, commonly used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by naturalists and painters to capture landscapes. In his installation, Lasch equates this quest for the

4 "For example, we need experiments in which the art work is organized according to the aesthetic categories of the cultures from which it derives" (Karp 1991, 7).

IMG. 02 — *Pedro Lasch, Liquid Abstraction / Abstracción líquida [S3BM1A] from Black Mirror / Espejo Negro: The Photographic Suites (2007-2008) 17 ¾ x 34 inches, Cibachrome print, Edition of 5.*

picturesque with our vision of cultures.

I would like to touch upon a few interesting aspects of this exhibit. Walter Mignolo, who for the last decade has defended the de-colonisation of knowledge and power, discussed this installation in a conversation between an art historian, an archaeologist and Mignolo himself. This was a dialogue between various disciplines and distinct ways of understanding history and societies (Mignolo 2009). The usual isolation of each one of these disciplines fosters blind spots in our understanding of history. Mignolo also stresses the importance of "unlearning" processes for the museum. To do this, Lasch's installation establishes a confrontation between the Velázquez and El Greco exhibition and images from the Spanish Golden Age captured in his black mirrors, highlighting not only the genocide and plundering committed during Spanish colonisation, but also the pillage committed by the museum institution itself in its determination to isolate objects of study. In his dialogue between two worlds, Lasch broadens the spheres in which our readings take place and the associated separation of artefacts from time. He does this not only by discussing Spanish history but also by subtle reference to the histories of the Mayan and Aztec peoples, thereby linking times and chronologies that used to be separated in museums. In brief, Lasch opens up the frame of modernity, which until now has been narrated in an incomplete fashion. Enrique Dussel speaks of "transmodernity." This would be a reconfiguration of the idea of modernity, hitherto understood as emanating outwards from Europe to the rest of the world, when, in fact, it was a joint endeavour that would not have been possible without the existence of Latin America (Dussel 1993).

The fact that Lasch's exhibition was held concurrently with and in a room adjacent to the Velázquez and El Greco retrospective constitutes a metaphor for the important position held by museums: they are institutions which deal first-hand with issues concerning our colonial past. The lack of acknowledgement of colonial history can also be seen at the Museo del Prado in Madrid, where Spain's colonial past remains invisible in the captions. This attitude is also evident in the Museo de las Américas, also in Madrid, whose aim is actually to explain such a colonial

ILDO MEIRELES

SERÇÕES EM CIRCUITOS IDEOLÓGICOS
bril/Maio 1970

PROJETO COCA-COLA.

rcuito é uma repetição. Circuito é a circulação cria-
pela repetição. Circuito é a repetição cíclica da
jetória de uma informação através de um veículo.

vidindo os vários tipos de circuito em dois grupos,
sicamente, teremos: circuitos de controle centrali-
do e circuitos de controle descentralizado. Entre
es últimos interessa-me particularmente o circuito
bebidas e refrigerantes em garrafas de vidro. A
oca-Cola, por exemplo.

pois de beber uma Coca-Cola, você devolve o cas-
vazio ao comerciante. Em troca ele lhe dá uma
rafa cheia. E envia o casco vazio para a fábrica.
, através de processos automáticos, ele é lavado,
infetado, e torna a ser cheio de Coca-Cola. Após
ue esta garrafa cheia é novamente enviada para o
merciante, que a venderá a outra(s) pessoa(s).
sim, sempre que você compra e bebe uma Coca-Co-
e devolve o casco vazio ao comerciante, você está,
r meio deste ato, criando e alimentando este cir-
to. Você e outras milhares de pessoas que também
bem Coca-Cola.

erções em circuitos ideológicos neste caso: gravar
niões críticas e informações nas garrafas de Coca-
la e devolvê-las à circulação. As opiniões devem
gravadas, em tal caso (refrigerantes e bebidas),
garrafas. O processo de gravação pode ser o da
alcomania por silk-screen (serigrafia sobre plástico)
resso com tinta branca vitrificada. A mesma tinta
a fábrica usa para imprimir o nome Coca-Cola na
rafa. A inserção é mimética, pois a tinta sendo
nca, só aparece quando a garrafa torna a ser cheia.

icobrir novos circuitos, descobrir melhores manei-
de gravar as inserções, executar e divulgar cons-
temente inserções em circuitos ideológicos é a rea-
de deste trabalho.

SERÇÕES EM CIRCUITOS

ando numa definição filosófica de seus trabalhos,
DUCHAMP afirmava que, entre outras coisas,
objetivo era libertar "a Arte do domínio da mão",
tamente não imaginava a que ponto chegaríamos
1970. O que à primeira vista podia ser facilmente
alizado e efetivamente combatido tende hoje a
alizar-se numa área de difícil acesso e apreensão:
érebro.

evidente que a frase de DUCHAMP é o exemplo,
je, de uma lição mal aprendida. Muito mais que
ntra o domínio das mãos, DUCHAMP lutou contra
artesanato manual, contra a habilidade das mãos,
ntra enfim, o gradativo entorpecimento emocional,
cional, psíquico, que essa mecanicidade, essa habi-
alidade, fatalmente provocaria no indivíduo. O fato
não ter as mãos sujas de Arte nada significa além
que as mãos estão limpas.

uito mais do que contra as manifestações de um
nômeno, luta-se contra a lógica desse fenômeno. O
e se vê hoje é um certo alívio e uma certa alegria
n não se usar mais as mãos. Como se as coisas esti-
ssem, até que enfim, O.K. Como se nesse exato
omento, a gente não precisasse iniciar a luta contra
m adversário bem maior: a habitualidade e o artesa-
to cerebral.

estilo, seja das mãos, seja da cabeça (do raciocínio),
uma anomalia. E anomalias, é mais inteligente
bortá-las do que assisti-las vivendo.

bril de 1970

Blind Hotland nº 3. Múltiplo. 1971/1973
Fotos Luiz Alphonsus

Inserções em circuitos ideológicos.
Projeto Coca-Cola. Abril/Maio 1970
Foto Jeferson Silva

ARTE— CULTURA

Se a interferência de M. DUCHAMP foi ao nível da Arte (lógica do fenômeno), vale dizer da estética, e se por isso preconizava a libertação da habitualidade de domínio das mãos, é bom que se diga que qualquer interferência nesse campo, hoje (a colocação de DUCHAMP teve o grande mérito de forçar a percepção da Arte, não mais como percepção de objetos artísticos mas como um fenômeno do Pensamento), uma vez que o que se faz hoje tende a estar mais próximo da cultura do que da Arte, é necessariamente uma interferência política. Porque se a estética fundamenta a Arte, é a Política que fundamenta a Cultura.

Inserções em circuitos antropológicos.
Black pente. 1971/1973

IMG. 03 — *Cildo Meireles, Revista Malasartes, nº1 año 1975 Inserções em Circuitos Antropológicos: Black Pente (1971/1973)*

past. It is particularly telling that the location of this museum is on the outskirts of Madrid.[5]

In 1975, Cildo Meireles published this image in the magazine Malasartes,[6] giving his intervention the title of *Inserções em Circuitos Antropológicos: Black Pente* (1971/1973). The very title displays a chain of meanings which alternate between the history of art, anthropological space and political dissidence. *Pente* is the Portuguese word for "comb", but… What

5 Much more could be gleaned from this example. Esther Gabara is conducting a study on this interesting issue, which will help understand Spain's position, and the position of its museums, vis-à-vis its history and its current relations with coloniality.

6 *Malastartes no. 3*, Rio de Janeiro, 1976.

is meant by "black pente"? "Black comb", "comb for black people", or even, stretching the play of words that the pronunciaton of this word could give raise to in a sentence that combines several languages, "black paintings"? Or perhaps "black painter", or "Black Panthers"?

In Meireles' production, this work was preceded by the now classic *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos* that he created in the Seventies, in which he wrote anonymous messages on dollar bills and Coca-cola bottles. The messages would then circulate widely, simultaneously with the circulation of currency and of refreshing drinks. In the case of the dollar bill, Meireles wrote the famous phrase: "Who killed Herzog?", in reference to the death of the TV journalist Vladimir Herzog. It was allegedly a suicide, but actually the result of torture while he was being questioned by the military. In 2002, *Black Pente* was re-published in Item magazine issue no. 5, accompanied by the following text:

> Project for the wholesale production and distribution of prize combs for blacks. In the series *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos*, the fundamental point is to confirm the existence of the circuit(s), and the verbal insertion which interferes with that flux of circulation, that is, it suggests an act of ideological sabotage against the established circuit. In *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos*, the notion of "insertion" is more important than that of "circuit": the creation of objects, as analogues to those in the institutional circuit, has the aim of inducing a habit, and from there, the possibility of characterizing a new behaviour. In the specific case of Black Pente, the object works towards the affirmation of an ethnicity. (Item Magazine, Rio de Janeiro, no. 5, February 2002, p. 61)

The comb, therefore, was not inserted in the social ideological circuit (like the messages on the Coca-Cola bottles or the dollar bills), but introduced into a discipline: that of anthropology. The currency of the comb is almost anti-anthropological, and that is the reason why, in my opinion, it creates an interference within the values of this discipline, directly related to the neutralization of the Other who has been denied history and subjectivity. The neutral manner of presentation of the Comb in the magazine is close to the anthropological method of object classification, that is, out of context in relation to the original medium and recontextualized again in a showcase, where time and space will take the form of empty technical data. Such neutrality constitutes an ironic comment on the scientific proofs that transcend the present, that deny its contemporaneity—in other words, that are presented as anachronistic. In doing so, the image of the Afro comb mocks that quest for the ancestral, the original elements from the remote past with which to identify a negritude that is still quite alive in the Brazil of today.

Meireles' work was produced at a time when Afro-Brazilian groups were showing greater concern for politics, an endeavour which is still questioned today by those who defend the idea of *mestizaje* as a

IMG. 04 — *Iconoclasistas, La trenza insurrecta http://iconoclasistas.com.ar/*

patrimonial value of Brazilian culture. Very often, such homogenizing categories hide inequality below a layer of nostalgic, narratives which refer to tradition. And yet, *mestizaje,* or cross-breeding, in and of itself, constitutes a homogenising force. As the Quetcha-Ecuadorian Armando Muyolema argued (Muyolema 2001), the idea of *mestizaje* within national discourse also constitutes a negation of identity for some indigenous groups who wish to preserve their specific traits as well as their particular way of life.

The sensuality of the comb's shape establishes a dialogue with the exotic nature of black European paintings from the beginning of the century, which were linked with the anthropological colonial dream. But, going beyond exotization of the black painter, as well as the resemblance of the

comb to a paintbrush and to its historical/political and, of course, artistic agency, the comb is finally disclosed as a symbol which, once again, condenses a political potential that is yet to be released. During the 1960s the Afro comb, with metal teeth and with a fist carved in its handle, was a symbol for Black Power, and was even considered to be a weapon in some instances. It was, therefore, an ancestral linking sign which also circulated in the street as a sign of defiance. It embodies the confrontation between "scientific" methods, which evoke original African combs dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, turned into archival objects within an archive, and the emergency of a community as political agents.

The neutral placement of the Comb is revealed as being the diabolical sign of a political presence, as the appearance and emergence of a social group in struggle. According to Veeda Das, when an anthropologist has no choice but to accept these moments of rebellion, he/she can no longer consider these communities as "living a natural existence" (Das 1989, 314). It is from this point onwards that he/she accepts them as historical and political entities. This is the reason why the main objective of historians entails the historical legitimization of non-official documents, and the combining of local and colonial histories. "It is no longer possible to think, for instance, of tribes or inhabitants of the hill regions deprived of their rights to forests (Guha) as simply inhabiting a world of nature. This is because it is their very relation to nature that has been destroyed by the enactment of new laws, which favour the commercial use of forests rather than their preservation as the habitat of tribes" (314). This is why subaltern studies, before considering people who live harmoniously with nature as being subject to divine law, consider the group's past as antecedent to the current "contracts" that they have been forced to sign with institutionsfocus on legal reports, records and a whole manner of bureaucratic documents.

And now we come to the last object in our collection: the *quipu*, which helps us introduce a proposal for a new model for the Ethnographic Museum. The world's largest collection of *quipus,* found in the Berliner Ethnologisches Museum, consists of 298 pieces. The *quipu* is another example of an object that, like the wooden cube, can condense a large amount of poetic and political content, both past and present, into a tiny space. It was used by Andean civilisations (Inca Empire) to represent quantitative data, but also served as a system of writing; and it consists of a series of colour-coded strings made of cotton or wool. In the Quechua language, *quipu* means "knot," and it is through these knots that the main string or cord branches out and joins cords of other colours, shapes and sizes. Some *quipus* are quite simple, while others are complex. In some studies (those by William Burns Glynn in particular), these knots were thought to be markers that served to record events, because the number of colours, string types and knots can be combined in millions of ways. Distances between strings may be interpreted as Incan writing. The Spanish *conquistadores* destroyed or burned *quipus*, because they believed they were being used to send secret messages. Right from the outset of colonization, *quipus* were thought to be the "handiwork of the devil."

There is still much about the quipus that eludes us, even today.

A number of postcolonial thinkers, in particular those from India, have shown an interest in the rumours and signs that circulate prior to a colonial rebellion. Homi Bhabha studied this phenomenon, and examined how rumours and panic interrupted historical discourse, how indecision emerged as social discourse, and in particular considered their performative power and enunciative aspect. Circulation and rumour appear, they are the material manifestation of that space of colonial enunciation:

> Its intersubjective, communal adhesiveness lies in its enunciative aspect. Its performative power of circulation results in a contagious spreading, "an almost uncontrollable impulse to pass it on to another person." The iterative action of rumour, its *circulation and contagion*, links it with panic–as one of the *affects* of insurgency. Rumour and panic are, in moments of social crises, double sites of enunciation that weave their stories around the disjunctive 'present' or the 'not-there' of discourse. (Bhabha 2002, 95)

Oral culture will be one of the privileged fields of the intransitiveness of rumours. Quoting Gayatri Spivak, it is the space of "illegitimate writing, rather than the authoritative writing of the law" (Spivak 1985). The popular can also be a space where there can appear what has been left unacknowledged by opaque, inscrutable official discourses. The oral, the popular, are therefore other spaces for the preservation of memory, of a past which is still in confrontation with the official discourse, and which pushes through the informal spaces of discourse and everyday performativeness. It is not about the historians' task of preserving the most relevant facts, but a memory which resists dissipation. This is the terrain chosen by the Argentinian duo Iconoclasistas in order to produce the maps of unsubmissive history which they developed in 2010, the year when several Latin American countries celebrated two centuries of independence. One of Iconoclasistas' maps took as its formal axis the *quipu*, "the insurrectionary braid."[7] Through conversations with various groups and social agents, Iconoclasistas established a new chronology of African-Indian-American rebellions:

> It's a timeline of popular uprisings starting from the conquest of America in 1492 to present day and the advent of Pachakuti, the mythical moment when "the world turns around," when the masculine transforms into the feminine, up becomes down and history is no longer linear. People will wake up to a new consciousness that will bring about a cycle of political and social transformation. We believe that the past should act as a living memory which serves to update the present. We are referring to a context in which the connection between the land and its peoples—a connection that existed 500 years ago and still exists today—is an integral part of the lives

7 http://iconoclasistas.com.ar

> of these minorities. Indigenous peoples and African slaves wrenched from their homes in Africa were exploited here, in pits and ditches, their hands forced to gouge out and pillage these lands. And now, rampant, globalised capitalism, with its internationalised production of goods and services, has set its sights on our lands as a source of natural resources, and plunders them under the approving eye of the Argentinean state, leaving misery, poverty, environmental damage, etc. in its wake.

Iconoclasistas' proposal promotes the creation of collective spaces where history can be rescued to produce spaces, in short, for the production of a public sphere. It is precisely through the recovery of such spaces that it becomes possible to rename the present. This is not a new display strategy in terms of the relation between art and politics which has been explored since the 1960s, but it could indeed be new in terms of the epistemological negotiation with cultures which are not hegemonic. This could be, in fact, a point of departure for making the renaming of the museum possible.

In a paper written jointly with Yayo Aznar (Aznar and Clavo 2007) on the intersection between art and activism, we discussed the way various works relate to the public and political spheres. In order to do so, we took as a point of departure a reflection on homeless people, a social group that lives on the margins of citizenship. An example often quoted in forums concerning curatorship and the relation between art and politics is *If you lived here,* the work by Martha Rosler on the homeless. Instead of showing a series of works on homelessness, the exhibition project consisted of a space where people could meet and learn not only about the topic of homelessness, but also about the housing issues faced by a wide range of society. The show was divided into a number of rooms which dealt with different issues, and the exhibition space was used for inviting social groups to take part in discussions about each issue; that is, there was a public programme of workshops and meetings alongside the show. For us, this exhibition constitutes a good example of how to participate in and create a public sphere. The "public sphere," according to Alexander Kluge's and Oskar Negt's definition (Kluge and Negt 1993/2001, 227), "can be thought of as the factory of the political: the place where politics are generated." Many believe that this arena, which generates politics and facilitates communication, as it was traditionally defined, is disappearing or has actually been lost. In theoretical terms we cannot deny that this is happening: for these activist groups, the public sphere is *the* fundamental political product. In terms of community, in terms of what I have in common with other people, the public sphere lies at the root of social change. In the words of Kluge and Negt, this means that if I reject the production of a public sphere, then I may as well forget about politics of any kind. Not only does activist art produce within the public sphere, but it also, and above all, produces the public sphere itself. And that is, exactly, the proposal of Iconoclasistas, when they produce collective cartographies based on workshops and group experiences.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that if ethnographic museums are to be used as places for the production of public spheres, it is not enough to consult the collectives or peoples we represent. It is also important that our aims go beyond the mere vision of these peoples as objects of study. We must endeavour to understand their culture and presence today as part of *our* history. Only then will the debate transcend the idea of whether we should contextualise objects within history as opposed to anachronistic visions, or whether we should exhibit them in isolation. The real issue is how we understand these histories and cultures in relation to our Western history and our collective imaginations. Not only would this expand their narrative frame, but ours as well. In brief: in order to reorganise what we know about the world, it is important that we generate new maps of history and knowledge, that is, that we rename history in the Museum.

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Relocating the Remains of the Archive

→ MICHAELA QUADRARO

Michaela Quadraro holds a PhD in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World from the University of Naples "L'Orientale," where she is a researcher and a member of the Centre for Postcolonial and Gender Studies. Her research interests focus on contemporary art and cinema through the critical approach of postcolonial theory and visual culture. Among her works, are *L'arte digitale postcoloniale. Uno studio sull'opera di Isaac Julien e Trinh T. Minh-ha* (2012) and the co-editorship of *The Postcolonial Museum. The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History* (2014).

→ ABSTRACT

Rapid contemporary transformations and cultural complexity highlight the critical importance of the debate on the archive and the challenge it poses to the composition and transmission of meanings. This essay develops a theoretical discussion on the formation of archives and their ability to shape our reception of historical narrative, as well as a practical investigation of the subversive potential that emerges in the work conducted by the British artist Keith Piper. His research in the contemporary institutional collection of the Birmingham City Archive articulates a concatenation of forgotten and haunting experiences of migration, and intervenes materially in the gaps between the rigid limits of conventional and systematised archives. In positioning his art practice next to photos of the so-called Dyche Collection, Piper registers the liminal space of the archive, its porousness, its permeability, and the silence of the spectres who have been concealed. What we have is an "in-between" space, an interval that connects heterogeneous memories or, to put it differently, the unconventional registration of a rich imagery in the heart of Europe that follows the traces of the passages and not the pre-ordained shelves of Heritage.

→ UNSETTLING QUESTIONS

> In reworking the archival material, I am calling attention to the holes, fissures, and fringes of history, and hence to the need of rereading historical events with the omitted, the neglected, the marginalized, the misclassified, or else with the absent, the "nonevent," and the nonarchived.
>
> Trinh T. Minh-ha 2013

The question of the archive in its contemporary and multiple formations is deeply rooted in the debate about the necessity of archiving, the theoretical configurations, and the challenge to reconsidering the ways whereby meanings are composed and transmitted. Therefore, the attempt to foreground a critical evaluation of the archive—closer to the cultural and political complexity of the contemporary world—needs also to take into account the different belongings and the manifold visions of modernity. This seeds globalisation with interrogations arising from the violent exercise of power inscribed in the Eurocentric narratives of history and the colonialist projects of exploitation of distant places and human lives (Said 1994; Spivak 1999).

As Homi Bhabha highlights, the past is always a contingent, interstitial and intermediate space that intervenes in the present, bringing newness with it. Remembering cannot be a quiet and introspective recollection. "It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (Bhabha 1986, xxiii). Although the great Empires of the past have officially ended, migratory transits continually unveil tensions and function as perpetual reminders not only of the past, but also of present and future narratives of border-crossings. Consequently, transcultural movements necessarily undermine conservative paradigms of national identity and also interrogate questions such as cultural heritage, providing an opportunity to look critically at the idea of the preservation and conservation of culture and the arts in specific sites of interest, art galleries, collections and museums that provide the archive for the traditions and the history of a nation. "Whose Heritage?" is the question addressed by Stuart Hall in relation to the on-going transformation of such powerful sources of meanings coming from the perspective of cultural diversities and migrant communities (2002). Heritage, as a discursive practice, is always constructed with the authority of those whose versions of the past matter, those who belong to a homogenous and specific "imagined community," to put it in Benedict Anderson's words.

It is in this re-consideration of planetary history that we recognise how deeply intertwined are the experiences of colonialism and migration with the formation of modern Western nation-states. It is here that the postcolonial challenge occurs. Rather than referring to what comes after, the prefix "post" denotes a critical analysis that deconstructs Western hegemony and reveals the consequences that are at the very heart of

modernity. As Edward W. Said acknowledges, the Western archive has to be analysed "contrapuntally," considering both the grand narratives and the marginalised histories (1994). This is to stress the active production of cultural forms in a global process that registers an ever-changing world, traversed by the "overlapping territories" of porous passages and "intertwined histories" of transcultural movements. Specifically, this essay will explore past, present and future experiences of transit that emerge in the work conducted by the British artist Keith Piper in a contemporary institutional collection. His art practice articulates a constellation of forgotten and marginalised experiences of migration, intervening materially in the gaps of archiving strategies.

→ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The need to collect the memories and traces of the past represents a powerful human drive. On the individual level this is translated into the act of collecting diaries, letters, photographs, personal belongings or, more recently, digital repositories; on the social level the urge to preserve public records or historical documents is embodied in the official spaces of museums, city archives and libraries. However, what happens to the act of archiving when the theoretical composition includes the communities and the memories that were marginalised by a tradition that is primarily white and Euro-centric? What is produced when conservative practices of archiving come to be unsettled by interlaced and minor narratives generated within the shared social, cultural and political complexity of the contemporary world?

Forms of the archive have been explored in several critical paradigms engaging with fragmentation and non-neutrality, and questions of power and selection, and the generalised propensity for the search for origins and preservation of the past. In *L'archéologie du savoir* Michel Foucault states that the archive is neither an accumulation of documents nor a complex of institutions: it cannot be defined in its totality, but only in fragments and levels that reveal why so many realities cannot emerge (1969). Foucault destroys the innocence of the archive and pushes us to think about the dynamics through which all traces are produced. Following in his footsteps, Said examines the construction of the borders between centres and peripheries (the inside and the outside), and describes the sort of intellectual power that is Orientalism in terms of an "archive of information," unquestionably drawn upon for the explanation and predictability of the "others" (1978). What is distinctive about this archive, according to Said, is the ineradicable distinction between a Western superiority and an Oriental inferiority, subsequently deepened and consolidated in the archives of colonisation.

The question of the origin of the archive has also been investigated by Jacques Derrida, who insists on the irrepressible human drive for the archive, the interminable search for the origin, for a past to preserve. In *Mal d'archive* (Archive Fever) the Algerian philosopher investigates the meaning of the word "archive," coming from the Greek arkheion

that indicates the house of the archons, the superior magistrates who represented the law and stored the official documents. The guardians of these documents also had the power to interpret the archive and to decide what could or could not be preserved, what could be inside or outside historical transmission (1995). This dynamic is regarded as necessary for a possible comprehension of the logics of the archive, even if, according to Derrida, nothing is more troubling than the concept contained in the word "archive." Moreover, when psychoanalysis analyses the question, it further intensifies it. In the obsessive and rigorous attempt to find the origin, psychoanalysis augments the control and the oppression of the archive, the "place of consignment," the division between an inside and an outside. The drive to chase after the archive—the compulsive and nostalgic desire for the place of absolute beginning—seems to be an inescapable modality that prevents any reconfiguration. Consequently, how can we outline any critical frame that re-imagines the paralysing pattern of the archive to include unauthorised voices? How can the colonising force of the archive be diverted from the preservation of only certain past memories and begin to concentrate on the imagination of a future archive, on the elaboration of archives yet to come?

Intervening in this debate, Arjun Appadurai has evoked a possible reconfiguration of the archive by those future generations produced by globalisation and the transcultural experiences of diaspora, hybridity and exile. These intuitions relate to Appadurai's strong interest in "collective memory" and in the horizons opened up by the arrival of the electronic archive, with its digital and non-hierarchical characteristics (2003). In the humanist project the archive is considered as a social and neutral tool animated by the spirit of a nation; an empty box that contains significant traces of the past, or a site that preserves the conservation of cultural heritage. What Appadurai proposes is a reflection on a kind of memory, engendered collectively by human beings who are interconnected on the Net or in the endless encounters of globalisation. The challenge lies in the imagination of an archiving practice that, instead of looking back at the institutional sacrality of the past, welcomes personal memoirs and libraries, family photos and recordings, and all other records that are part of everyday life. An archive as a project, an intervention, an anticipation of intentional collective memory is an "aspiration rather than a recollection," as Appadurai puts it (2003, 16). This is the age of the electronic archive, with its modalities of manipulation and interactivity, interaction and dissemination. Personal websites, storage sites, the continual uploading of data and information, together with all the new social forums, materially constitute an open-ended and active construction of archives beyond the confinement of the official systems of the sovereign state.

Globalisation and movement create disconnections between identity and location. There emerge alternative worlds of imaginative selves, and the recombination of lives under the condition of migration. The work of imagination and aspiration, therefore, is not a privilege, but becomes the essential condition for sharing new debates and narratives of loss. In this sense, interactive media play a special role because they allow new forms

of agency in the construction of imagined communities, and contribute to building up living diasporic memories. According to Appadurai, for migrants the archive is a "map," an on-going research tool (and not a pre-ordained place), a space where collective memory offers an ethical basis for the construction of cultural identities in the often unfavourable conditions of a new society. In the spirit of Foucault, Appadurai's proposal offers us the opportunity to view the archive less as a container and more as a socially produced project producing forms of everyday intervention: "conscious sites of debate and desire."

The daily experience of migrants envisions the possibility for the archives to become material sites of desire and future transformation; moreover, enhanced by the digital forms of mediation and technology, archives are capable of engendering concrete strategies of collective memories. In this sense artistic practices—documentaries, videos, audio-visual installations—play a crucial role in the creation of new digital archives of migration. As an alternative, or in proximity to official sites entrusted with preserving the past, their perspective critically visualises unconventional appropriations of storage places and collections. We are thus forced to identify other buildings, other dwellings, where a compelling challenge takes place. This is the risk of "circulating memory," as the British artist Isaac Julien would say.

→ HAUNTING THE ARCHIVE

Elizabeth Grosz defines art as experimentation with reality and the material forces of the world: artistic practices are sites of imagination and possess the potential to express unseen and unheard realities. Art addresses problems and provokes not so much the elaboration of images in which the subject might recognise itself, but the real exchanges of elements, vital forms that impact with their resonances and silences. In this sense, "art is intensely political": it elaborates alternative possibilities and provokes a perceptual anticipation of the future (Grosz 2008, 79). Within the complex cartography of global modernity, the encounter with art proposes a critical reflection on the intertwining cultural, geographical, historical and economic contexts of the contemporary world. This is to propose an ethical–aesthetical cut or interruption "across and within an inherited Occidental art discourse that leads simultaneously to recovery and renewal" (Chambers 2012, 22). Artistic practices that emerge from experiences of migration and hybridity question forms, canons and genres, and explore the relation between identity and difference, geographical locations and dislocations.

The focus is on the question of migration and its relation to artistic practices, not so much to be read and interpreted as the objects of a political and social analysis, but rather as the sites where previous statements are unsettled. For example, Keith Piper—a multi-media British artist, curator, researcher and academic, born in 1960 to Caribbean parents—aesthetically develops the condition of living in the interstices. His work appears in the simultaneously political, historical, and theoretical

conjuncture of the diasporic experience, and calls into question the notions of cultural authenticity and a stable national identity.[1] Piper is a member of a new generation of Black British artists, activists, image-makers and intellectuals (whose parents moved to Britain after World War II), that emerged in the UK in the 80s, in a social environment characterised by daily inequalities and racialized regimes of information. Like Piper, artists such as Isaac Julien, John Akomfrah, Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers, and Chris Ofili among others, created a critical space for intervening in the struggle for representation and the visual imaginary of race and difference. This was a Britain whose cultural identity, observed through a postcolonial lens, was displaced by the migratory movement of subjects who came from former colonised countries and made their home in the once imperial centres of the metropole.

It is Birmingham, the city where Piper was brought up, that comes to be re-framed in the motif of the journey, in the incessant movements between departure and return, separation and belonging, that contribute to the constitution of transnational and diasporic global spaces. It is Birmingham Central Library, the place chosen by Piper for a residency, that allows him to develop his interest in institutionalised collections, in particular in the narratives of the archive, its physical architecture and categorising mechanisms. In 2005 he produced the short video *Ghosting the Archive*, as part of a bigger Arts Council project called *Necessary Journeys*. He physically opened the boxes of Birmingham City Archive and developed a new work practice that reacts to the material he finds, reactivating the traces of the stories that lie in the collection.[2] In particular, he unpacked the boxes housed in the so-called Dyche Collection. The collection refers to the studio of the white Birmingham-based professional photographer Ernest Dyche (1887–1973), who was active as a commercial portrait photographer in the suburbs of the inner area of the city and became very popular within the communities of migrants arriving from the Indian subcontinent, African countries and Caribbean islands from the 1950s to 1970s.[3]

These photos had different purposes: they were private, personal, commemorative, but also destined for circulation. As Gen Doy points out, these images took part in what could be called a "reverse immigration": they were indeed sent back to the Caribbean, India or Pakistan, to family members, friends or for marriage arrangements and also "lightened," if necessary, in order to move toward an ideal whiteness (2000, 131).

1 Diaspora, as a specific framework of transformations and dislocations, gains a historical specificity in the moment of post–war global migrations (Hall 2012). However, diaspora refers also to an emergent field of inquiry and an interesting critical frame for exploring the political, economic and cultural ramifications of the conditions of migrancy. Always in formation, this is the context where the politics of gender, class, and race form together a new, powerful and unstable articulation that does not provide easy answers, but raises "new questions, which proliferate across older frames of thought, social engagement and political activity" (30). In particular, the contemporary idea of diaspora involves not only earlier imperial settlements and older structures of power, but also the experience of the vulnerable minorities, the refugee camps, the detention centres, and the invisible economies of modernity.

2 The video is available at: http://keithpiper.info/ghostingthearchive.html.

3 This archive has also been extensively discussed in Tina M.Campt's *Image Matters. Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012.

Many of the pictures convey messages about the migrants' success in Britain. The images show black people as glamorous and good-looking, wearing either elegant outfits or work uniforms, as if the continuous discriminations, registered by the black residents of Birmingham in those years, were absent from the immutable and fixed set of the studio. Further, these photos were personal and at the same time collective memories that counterbalanced the traditional depiction of migrants as a social problem.

By the time it ceased operating in the mid 1980s, the studio had documented the development of the first and second generations of post-war waves of immigration to the UK. As Piper narrates in his video, Dyche generated a unique chronicle of the evolving demographic conditions of Birmingham and its evolution as a multicultural society. In this collection he discovers boxes of negatives, content sheets and equipment that refer to vast historical resources. His engagement with the archive is further heightened when he discovers images of his parents within the collection. As Caribbean migrants who had settled in the suburb of Sparkbrook, his parents used Dyche both as a portrait photographer and as the official photographer at their wedding. Piper's work with the boxes of negatives could be defined as being "archaeological" where, as he states in his video commentary, each plate becomes a fossil fragment with an indexical link to the moment where it was exposed to life by Dyche's lens.

In *Ghosting the Archive* the negative plates, held by Piper in a white gloved hand, are reframed one after the other in the contemporary space of the City Archive by a digital camera. A shutter click presents each time a different negative plate that, bearing a ghostly presence, slowly morphs into something else: family groups, women with newly born children, men seated on the chairs provided at Dyche's studio wearing elegant outfits or work uniforms, new coats or borrowed ones. In other words, the whole digital image gradually morphs into a negative one, while the negative plate in the centre of the frame progressively changes: the light areas of the image on film become dark and dark areas give way to the light areas of the photograph. In this way, the original subjects of the picture emerge from obscurity and have the chance to appear again within contemporary time-space.

With the click of the camera shutter, Piper's finger suspends a vacillation between the multiple subjectivities intersecting and mixed in the photographic archive (the framed subjects, Dyche, Piper himself, us the viewers). As Jean-Luc Nancy suggests in his work on images, imagination and aesthetics, images should be analysed in a dynamic approach and considered as ontologically constitutive rather than mere representations. Images are vital forms with creative and energetic qualities and not simply the reproduction of already existing objects: images not as "things" but as force, energy, pressure, intensity that convey a quality of being or, to put it differently, an ontological "excess." As soon as we hear the click and see its result—the original subjects of the photos that come out—an imperceptible alteration becomes present and unquestionable. By taking the photograph Piper suspends the subjects

IMG. 01-02 — *Keith Piper, Ghosting the Archive, 2005 (courtesy Keith Piper)*

of the picture in a wavering hesitation, but in the same instant "others" are suddenly exposed and determined.

What comes into the light of *Ghosting the Archive* is certainly an absence out of which Dyche's clients express a singular and collective presence. They bring distance into proximity. Their portraits are not the mere reproductions of their faces and traits, but a force that has been drawn, pulled, or extracted. "And, to extract it, it subtracts or removes it from homogeneity, it distracts it from it, distinguishes it, detaches it and casts it forth" (Nancy 2005, 4). We ourselves—as viewers, spectators—are carried away by the ontological excess of the images; and rather than being represented by the image, this intimate force is sustained and activated in it, thrown in front of us, touching us, making a mark, a trait, a line, a scar, a signature.

The images projected by Piper in the Birmingham institutional archive cast an intimacy that touches us and the artist himself as he opens the boxes. Their absence refers to a past that irrupts into the present with the entire burden and consequences of its abolition. This is the scar they

leave between the pre-ordained shelves of the archive: preserving in the context of archival classification is closely associated with a process of profound forgetting. In the silence of the archive multiple histories emerge. How can one register these memories consigned to oblivion? How can we—as theorists, researchers, curators, and people working in the arts and education—incorporate these forces without seeking to conclude and complete them? The question is how to circumvent an act of violence that undermines the "inherent fragility" of the images, or seeks to perpetually fix them in order to prevent them from moving continuously like tears, blood, fluxes of light, photons, pixels, just like memories, passages, encounters, which are the same routes that led Piper to open the boxes in Dyche's archive. These images do not need an observing and analysing gaze, but a fluctuating attention, like the glimpse we have before falling asleep or, as Nancy would say, "between night and day, between vigilant watchfulness and somnolent watchfulness" (2009, 37). These images do not require many words. Their excess is already overwhelming and beyond assignation. They touch us and emerge anew.

→ THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEAD OR THE ARCHIVE AS SEPULCHRE

In *Ghosting the Archive* there is no attempt to get inside the subjects of the photos and to understand what they express. Piper's artistic practice does not intend to grasp or transmit fixed meanings, rather it engages in a relation to knowledge in which the indefinite questions fixed identity and belonging. In her documentary, film and theoretical work Trinh T. Minh-ha has elaborated on the issue of alterity in relation to the definition of an image and the encounter with a spectral "otherness" that can be extremely disturbing (2013). This affects the knowledge of the self because the encounter with one's double can be a sinister event, an encounter with the dead one(s). In *Ghosting the Archive* the families, the couples and the doubles of the photos mirror and repeat themselves endlessly. The harsh sound of the camera shutter solicits the ear and marks a new phase in which a photo turns out to be another one, where an ending becomes a new beginning.

The work on Dyche's archive certainly calls for mourning for those who have died and particularly for the indifference their stories have been consigned to. Every archive, in its architectural dimension, its organisation and divisions, is always something of a cemetery, of a place where fragments of lives are preserved but also placed in a tomb, in other words concealed and set apart from the visible. Archives rest on the burying of remains, on a sepulchre where, in the words of Achille Mbembe, the historian and the archivist manipulate fragments in "an intimate relationship with a world alive only by virtue of an initial event that is represented by the act of dying" (2002, 25). Assigning the archives to a consecrated place of burial and sepulture makes it possible to unveil their undisputed authority because, since no existing archive has the possibility to preserve an entire history, we are always confronted by a selection, an assemblage of pieces that are put together in an illusion of coherence.

Dealing with dying also means dealing with spectres and the condition of their silence, and addressing the power relations involved in the practices of naming. Piper's project, however, does not presuppose a position of authority. It avoids the trap of speaking about—of giving voice to—the underprivileged subjects of global migrations, and insists on what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Trinh T. Minh-ha have articulated as speaking "with" the other or "nearby." This kind of research maintains a productive openness that always depends on the creative force of multiple encounters. It is a precarious ground, where established positions, methods and materials are unsettled by the "now," where the researcher enters the "yet-to-be-named" in the very instance of encounter.

In the double perspective of ethics and aesthetics Trinh T. Minh-ha explains that this concept is not so difficult to understand in everyday reality. When someone very close to us is the object of our discussion, speaking in his/her presence changes significantly; it requires a different attunement to the way this person negotiates the space and a radical shift in the practices of naming and framing (Trinh 2013). It does not matter if this subject is listening or not. What is important in the context of power relations is that meanings can always be expanded and developed when speaking nearby. Therefore, the photos that emerge in *Ghosting the Archive* are not presented for an explanation. In positioning his voice, his ears, his eyes and his hand next to them, Piper registers the liminal space of the archive, its porousness, its permeability, the confusion of all the histories that are made by and come from it. What we have is an "in-between" space, an interval that connects heterogeneous memories and continually encompasses all of them. Or, to put it differently, there exist a series of gaps and holes, fissures and frictions between the rigid shelves of conventional and systematised archives. In such a process we ourselves as viewers are involved. In seeing and hearing the voids left by the loss, we learn to register and explore the empty spaces each time anew.

In *Ghosting the Archive* photos, like Dyche's clients, appear, disappear and re-appear with no apparent continuity, except for the uninterruptedness of the movement of the images themselves and for the persistency of the sound of the shutter click. As Trinh T. Minh–ha argues, the digital video image is an image constantly in formation, in a process of appearing and disappearing that highlights transformations and transitions: "D" in "D-cinema" stands for "digital," and for "dissolve" that is the technical principle used to connect the scenes (to allow the images slowly to vanish and change into the following ones). However "D" is also the first letter of "Death," the departure, the separation (2013). The inherent mutability of the digital image, where movement does not finish, affects our sense of time. Indeed, *Ghosting the Archive* intimately addresses the question of mortality because death is inextricably linked to a return to life. The video renders tangible the passing of time in the comings and goings of the photos, their infinite repetition and continual morphing, their vanishing into darkness and their return anew on screen. Here, digital technology demonstrates that it is invisibility that allows the visible to emerge: in every movement there are so many passages to be registered, and every

obsession for preservation inevitably brings a process of forgetting with it. In his project Piper interacts with these profound mechanisms in a mediation on photographic technology. He explores the creative aspect of a personal narration that simultaneously addresses questions of identity and representation in visual culture, of personal and collective memories, situated in the contexts of production and conservation. Notions of classification and display are foregrounded here. This is not a question of visibility, but rather exemplifies the capacities of Piper's photographs: their potential to advance in darkness, illuminating the creative territories of art practices in a political debate of multiplying possibilities.

Opening the boxes of Dyche's collection challenges the governing assumptions inflected by the power and authority of those who colonised the past. These premises are neither timeless nor natural, but open to contestation and negotiation. Going back to the question "Who is the Heritage for?", we could say that Piper's work provokes a crisis of authority and shifts the common conception of value, of what is and is not worth showing. As Stuart Hall reminds us, going back to their earliest histories in western societies, collections are the successors of cabinets

IMG. 03-04 — *Keith Piper, Ghosting the Archive, 2005 (courtesy Keith Piper)*

of curiosity and relate to "the symbolic power" to order and classify knowledge, to interpret and impose, to compare and evaluate. Even if a rising cultural relativism and a growing decentring of western-oriented grand-narratives have recently marked conceptual shifts in the rights to representation, much has still to be done "to challenge institutions, shift resources, change priorities, move practices strategically in the right direction" (2002, 79).

A radical shift in the cultural agenda takes into account the cultural complexity and the inherent differences of so-called "ethnic minority communities" whose presence has changed the landscapes of contemporary cities and which featured, long before contemporary migration, in the multiple frames of colonisation. Creative productions arising from such "minorities" in all the arts have exploded in recent decades. They breach the boundaries of what is permitted, and query what is to be considered "heritage." They are only occasionally exhibited in mainstream venues, and when this happens they are consigned to ethnic, minority, marginalised spaces. The huge patrimony of oral memories and poems, artefacts and documents, personal diaries and photo albums that represent an invaluable record of the historical formation of the black diaspora in Europe largely remains elsewhere, in the silence of the margins.

Dyche's archive is also a notable example of the scale of a living memory that is often largely restricted to just the memory of its participants, rather than associated with more extensive communities and their national engagement. The boxes opened by Piper need to be recorded and explored, but not identified and interpreted according to the criteria of archivability. Rather, they require alternative tools for understanding the transformation of contemporary global spaces and for giving careful thought to a rich imagery that lies in the heart of Europe and is still waiting to be registered and acknowledged. More than this, Piper's video/art project/personal research *Ghosting the Archive* becomes the sign of a molecular revolution in the practices of cultural representation as it demonstrates how culture, while related to identity, is an on-going process of transformation and active production, not necessarily in contradiction with preservation. The photos that Piper frames anew in the Birmingham City Archive need to be "heritaged" in as much as they constitute a precious record of the formation of a black diaspora in Europe and an unacknowledged refiguring of both Europe and Britain. These images contribute to the imagination of a future archive, one yet-to-come and yet-to-be-named. This might perhaps be a digital archive of migration, capable of following the traces of the passages rather than remaining locked in the pre-ordained shelves of memory conservation and display. Ultimately, they provide an inspiring source for re-imagining the idea of Heritage in a post-national and cross-cultural world.

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...the ruins...

It Is Still Snowing

→ CLAIRE PAJACZKOWSKA

Claire Pajaczkowska worked as psychiatric nursing assistant in the UK Home Counties before becoming part of the *Heresies* editorial collective in New York in 1978. She made a 16mm film *Sigmund Freud's Dora* and taught filmmaking at St Martin's School of Art. Completing a PhD thesis 'Before Language', on theories of the origins of language, at Middlesex University's School of Humanities, she became Reader in Psychoanalysis and Visual Culture in 2004. She has been Senior Research Tutor in the Royal College of Art, school of Material since 2008. Recent publications include *Shame and Sexuality: Psychoanalysis and Visual Culture*, ed. with Ivan Ward (Routledge Books, 2008), The Sublime Now, ed. with Luke White (Cambridge Scholars Books, 2010). Participant in the MeLa research project and the AHRC project Cultural Value (2014).

→ ABSTRACT

It Is Still Snowing is an essay on the theme of the Ruined Archive which explores the relationship between the nineteenth century's Comtean positivist project to arrange knowledge in a hierarchy of scholarly disciplines, and current encounters with the museums of Vienna. A journey, starting with the museums of art and of natural science, through the museum of ethnography provokes thoughts on the classification of matter in taxonomic hierarchies. The relationship between names and things is discussed. The journey through the three museums that refer to the Vienna of Jewish cultures then brings the focus of attention to consider the relationship between conscious and unconscious

(PREVIOUS PAGE) - Matteo Fraterno. Un vesuviano a Tokyo (A Vesuvian in Tokyo), 1985-86. Oil and lava sand on canvas, 200 cm x variable width. "Razza Vesuviana", October 2013 (courtesy SUDLAB, Portici, Napoli)

systems of knowledge, experience and behaviour. Thoughts on the absent contents of 19 Bergasse, now the Freud Museum, raise the question of the historical determinants of the presence and absence of objects, artefacts and people. Reflecting on the patterns of absence that structure the taxonomies of matter, it is suggested that the methodological principle of the reflexive process has become the twentieth century's greatest contribution to the empirical tradition. The essay considers the etymological derivation of the concept of methodological 'rigour', from the biological definition of the inflexible rigidity said to charcterise dead organic matter : 'rigor mortis'. Snowing is the context for consideration of the transformations of nature and culture.

→ VIENNA, JANUARY, 10 AM

The snow falls silently from the leaden grey skies of Vienna.[1] Watching from the huge windows, opposite the plate glass vitrines of the dark mahogany display cabinets of the Naturalhistorisches Museum in the city's Museumsquartier, on the 1870 Ringstrasse, I see the snow fall. Unhurried and unvarying, the snow indiscriminately and effectively transforms the great polychrome outdoors into a scene of perfect monochrome uniformity. As systematic as writing on paper, the great outdoors now looks like a strange script. The snow cleans the city, silencing footfall, tyre tracks, muffling the clatter of the trams. The formal parks lose their darkness and become as radiant as the silver screen of silent cinema: Vienna is restored to its simulacrum of early urban modernity. The snow, a safety curtain of tact, screens the abrasive arrogance of Franz Josef's imperial architecture. Two identical museums, one of Fine Art, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and one of Natural History, the Naturalhistorisches Museum, face one another across the ornamental gardens, identical twins vying for supremacy and pleased with the mirror image. The snow veils the imposing buildings, covers the outside world and invites us to seek out a warm inside, a busy café, the scores of museums and galleries and the self-reflexivity within the interiority of mind.

Within the two identical museums, the absolute magnificence of the marble staircases offers the complete Baroque illusion of infinite grandeur. The fascinating complicated marble surfaces play havoc with the illusion of depth. The architectural impression of an endless space of new thresholds, dizzying, impossible ascents, sightlines through archways offering choices between opulence and extravagance, vertiginous promise of the entire world of the 'outdoors' brought to the spectator's gaze. All objects, samples, artefacts that are arranged, named and labelled. Taxonomies of art history and science are locked in a silent combat for exhaustive control of their data. Which system offers the greatest explanatory power? It is impossible to say whether it is art or science that is the more compelling, the more omniscient, and offers the greater range. If this is a national struggle then art, perhaps, is somehow

1 The leaden grey skies noted by Carl Schorske (1981).

compromised by the Italianate and French aesthetic, whilst science seems to permit the Austro-Hungarian imperial genius for taxonomic rigour to irradiate the darkest realms of doubt. The art museum staircase spirals upwards towards the portraits of the great masters, from Michelangelo to Gustav Klimt, gazing down benevolently from the sublime height of the domed cupola, the staircase summit. The science museum offers a mountainous ascent towards the encircling summit of the great minds of classification: Pliny, Linnaeus, Cuvier, crowning the aspirant pilgrim citizen of late nineteenth-century Vienna. Every citizen emerges from the street crowd as a scholar, ready to assume his rightful place at the apex of civilisation. The art museum organises its collection as a chronological narrative in which Medieval and Renaissance art is seen as a precursor to the Baroque, the Mannerist, the Rococo, the Neoclassical, the genre and still life of the Northern Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, each a step upwards towards the triumph of the late nineteenth-century bourgeois culture. Hidden in the attic are the naively supremacist frescoes celebrating European supremacy over black slaves. The narrative ends as the empire is about to be toppled. Modern art is displayed in a nearby museum of concrete and post-industrial architecture as if a page is turned and an entirely new chapter begins. The museums offer no comment on the afterlife of imperial triumph; no comment on the difficulties of the Hapsburg descent; the First World War; the Balkan crises nearby; the complicated chaos of the twentieth century, the meeting of art and science within a history of brutality at the heart of civilised society.

The science museum offers some historical perspectives. A nineteenth-century lecture theatre is preserved as a gallery. It tells the story of technological progress and the leading methodologies of science. The displays are, of course, of optical technologies of calibration, measurement and discernment. The Willendorf Venus is magnified through a complex system of mirrors and lenses, framed within a dark cubicle, to maximise both the access and the mystery of the only nude in Vienna belonging to the temple of science rather than art. Within the animal kingdom, *homo sapiens*, represented as a sequence of ever-increasing brain size, takes its modest place alongside the more spectacular bodily magnificence of dinosaurs, giant whales, elk, buffalo, eagles: all set within austere, but infinitely controlled, mahogany cases. Not for the Viennese the friendly, but unmistakably amateur, dioramas of its contemporary, the New York Museum of Natural History, with wild animals made to look more at home in a domesticated wilderness, curatorially furnished with dead tree trunks, prairie grass, rocks and artfully naturalistic skies. Nineteenth-century Austria would settle for nothing less than order, accuracy, exactness, rigour. Here we do not admire, as Darwin did, the 'tangled bank' of nature. Visitors to the museum are invited, above all, to acknowledge the system through which nature's wild and disorderly dynamic of natural and sexual selection has been described. The Linnaean system of taxonomy, with its family, genus and species, descends, inexplicably and without explanation, like a comforting hierarchy from above, as unquestionable as the classificatory Latin terms that remind us

that while God and Jesus may well have conversed in Aramaic or Hebrew, when it came to the serious business of scientific method they sat up straight and spoke Latin, ceding to the Logos of classical antiquity and to their Enlightenment offspring. Latin names infer that the schoolmaster is king, that the vernacular, like simple curiosity, is a form of insolence, and that hierarchy is an undisputable reason for deference. The silent, vertical taxonomic hierarchy descends from above, as natural as a blanket of snow, to render the infinite heterotopias of nature into the uniform monochrome of the Logos. The complex vulgarity of evolutionary reproduction is veiled in Latinate words, and removes knowledge from the vernacular. This is simultaneously the seductive, because euphemistic, aesthetic and the deadliness of the archive. Le *Mal d'Archive*, or the 'troubled' archive, offers rich pickings for the artist.

When we translate Derrida's *Le Mal d'Archive* as 'Archive Fever' we infuse heat and colour into the silence of the death instinct of repetition. Freud notes that unconscious aggression is 'stumm,' silent, until tinged and suffused with libidinal cathexis, which makes it audible and polychrome. Fever makes Derrida's archive concept more febrile than it was originally meant to be. Certainly the archival fantasy has a libidinised and romantic presence in current art practices, both as an aesthetic and as a curatorial theme. The substitution of 'fever' for *mal* also eradicates much of Derrida's thinking on the essentially nostalgic quality of the archive concept. *Le mal de mer* is the vertigo of seasickness, the effects of undulating movement on a mind that is used to stasis and stability. Le *mal* of the malediction is present in Derrida's text in a way that is simply elided by the vogue for curatorial installations which revive the retro nostalgia of heritage culture. In the UK the heritage cinema cycle of films, brilliantly deconstructed by Andrew Higson, gave rise to the still more odious TV drama *Downton Abbey* and a spate of Jane Austen revivals. The history of the Tate Gallery in the sugar trade, explored by David Dabydeen, and the parody of Dorian Gray by Yinka Shonibare (2001) currently in London's Guildhall Art Gallery's exhibition *Victoriana: the Art of Revival* (2013), offer a more incisive challenge to the legacy of British empire.

Nationalism and patriotism is never far from the museum display. Whilst British science museums favour geological exhibits of rocks and technological models of the Spinning Jenny, Michael Faraday's basement workshop, the George Stephenson steam engine, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's tunnels and bridges, aircraft, the mathematics of Ada Lovelace, Charles Babbage's difference engine, everything by Darwin (except his theory of Sexual Selection), and the machine that Alan Turing used to break the Enigma code at Bletchley Park in World War II, the Franz Josef Museum of Natural History is proudest of its classificatory rigour which can, like snow, extend itself to all objects until the entire environment appears as a satisfactorily uniform system of marked and ordered things. Everything in its place: all the objects are possessed, with no relation between subject and object other than of distance and proximity calibrated through the Logos of property relations. This is the archive.

In the nineteenth-century era of the formation of nation-states it is interesting to trace the emergence of what Benedict Anderson has analysed as 'imagined communities' of the nation (Anderson 1983). It was also with the nineteenth century that the concept of science was formed in the way it is used today. Natural philosophy preceded science as an experimental discipline of hypotheses tested by experimental method. In the 1830s France Auguste Comte developed a new branch of the empirical methodology proposed by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and George Berkeley. The new empiricism proposed a radical distinction between observing subject and the observed object. Comte's positivism proposed to bring to this empiricism the rigour of the scientific method. Arranging sciences into a hierarchy of knowledge, Comte placed mathematics at the apex of the cultural pyramid, followed by Physics, then Chemistry and Biology. These 'hard' sciences, in which the subjectivity of the observer was absent from the method of observation, were then followed by what Comte called 'Social Science.' 'Social Science' was to bring to the human investigation of society the imaginary rigour of the empirical method, with its quantitative statistical data, its mathematical formulae, principles of calibration, methodology and classification. While Darwin was at this time questioning the objectivity of biology, with his principles of natural and sexual selection, Comte, in France, continued to pursue the Enlightenment ideal of a systematisation of knowledge organised in a hierarchy of control going from 'hard' to 'soft.' Arguably this Comtean ambition is what laid the foundation for Emile Durkheim's sociology, for the French *Annales* School, for Arnold Van Gennep's concept of *rites-de-passage*, for Marcel Mauss' concept of the gift, and for Lévi-Strauss' Structuralism.

However, the heritage of Comtean positivism did not only lead to further intellectual innovation. Much of the positivist order remained trapped and sclerotic in the capitalist bureaucratic need for control, order and repetition that characterised the early nineteenth-century French economy of its origins. Much venerated in the *bureaux* that spawned the concept of bureaucracy, the fetish of order as a scientific system guaranteed the illusory control pursued by the ruling class beneficiaries of an emerging economic system. It spread beyond the production line of the factory floor, the walls of the head offices, the bank tellers, the serried ranks of secretarial and clerical scribes, the mechanisation of manufacture and industries to become hegemonic. It was applied in the management of institutions such as the army, police, schools, hospitals, asylums, poorhouses, prisons, orphanages, and organisational systems such as the postal system, libraries, churches, archives, and most of all in colonial administration. It is a political truism that an ideology will assert itself most emphatically and virulently wherever the power of the underlying political order is least stable. Althusser remarked that the Ideological State Apparatuses assert their authority wherever the Repressive State Apparatuses are least in control. In a constantly dynamic tension, the two forms oppose the tides of resistance and revolutionary uprising. The *Mal d'Archiv*e, noted by Derrida, parodied by anti-authoritarian humour, and

romanticised by Heritage Culture, is only very weakly explored in the febrile quality of artistic installation work in museum collections.

If the *Mal d'Archive* is the nausea that overwhelms any sane modern citizen when confronting the history of shameless exploitation and coercion, it is not the same as the febrile frisson of nostalgic delight that seduces visitors to the Cabinet War Rooms. Nor is it that which fed the Filofax fever of the pre-digital organisers of the 1980s that still animates the quinquennial Inquisition of the Research Excellence Framework exercise in UK higher education's search for 'rigour' as the leading value in new knowledge.

Perhaps the Frankfurt School's interpretation of the authoritarian personality that led Europe from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust in one uninterrupted sweep, charting an integration of capitalism and Protestantism, is not enough as an explanation. Perhaps the fantasy and compulsion that fuelled positivism's need for the clenched grip of taxonomies was not born of capitalism alone. The protests, struggles and *refuseniks* of the 1960s fully exposed the military-industrial complex, which integrated the interests of capitalism and the military that stitched together the semantics of US foreign policies and wars. Then feminism in the 1970s brought in the analysis of patriarchy as an element of the institutionalisation of control and authoritarian systems. But the critical concept of patriarchy is, perhaps, not complex enough to explain the persistence of the protocols of systematic ordering, classification, naming, and taxonomising of the world. It might be that the very concept of patriarchy is too imitative of the system it seeks to resist, overthrow and dissolve. To imagine that the drive to classify and control is a system that arrives 'from patriarchy' out there, to be internalised within the nuclear family, the education system and workplace, may be an ideological illusion. What if the idea of the world as a discernable 'systematic' order is in itself an illusion? The patterns that may indeed govern nature may not be the systems that we seek to impose. This is the conclusion reached by the neuroscientist Simon Baron-Cohen, whose research into autism leads him to describe gendered differences between minds that 'systematize' and minds that 'empathize' as exemplars of a spectrum of neural formations. Loosely gendered as 'extreme' masculinity and femininity, neurology in Cohen's approach can be extended to analyse cruelty and empathy within social formations (Baron-Cohen 2012).

There is something more to be loosened from the archaeology of the ruined archive; the compulsion to order and systematize is a drive that operates independently of the objects ordered and classified. The museum seems to assert: 'Look at all this stuff we've got. How shall we arrange it?' Whereas the question might be reformulated as 'What is the relationship between me and you/this/that/stuff?' According to Baron-Cohen the feminine mind is less driven to control, measure, calibrate and order, and is more driven to empathize, relate, interact with and protect its 'objects.' How does this rigorously scientific analysis of the systematising mind affect our encounter with the archive? Baron-Cohen suggests that

the veneration of orderliness, when it outweighs and invalidates the relational, the empathic and the concerned, is, indeed, a malady: a high-functioning autism, which is a form of obsessional neurosis. To this we will return when we visit 19 Berggasse, the Sigmund Freud Museum, at 6pm this evening.

→ 2PM: IT IS STILL SNOWING

If Comte's positivism inaugurated the discipline of social science, it is one of the roots of archiving and ethnography as well. The first ethnographic artefacts ever archived were Charles Haddon's collection of 'string figures,' collected in the 1870s when Haddon made his first field trips to the Torres Straits Islands. Watching natives play complicated games with string looped in circles that groups of participants could form and transform by inserting and moving their hands, Haddon tried, with difficulty, to archive the string once it had been removed from the tacit choreography of the moving hands. The string went limp, hung idly and, like bad taxidermy, lost its living shape. So Haddon had to stick the sagging string shapes to sheets of cardboard, and these remain the very first ethnographic artefacts in the British Museum. This clearly shows the impossibility of separating the dancer from the dance, the singer from the song, the object from its subject, without losing the meaning and the value of culture. The most compelling thing about ethnographic collections is the way in which the collectors tried so hard to compensate for this impossibility of separating object from subject. We murder to dissect.

Vienna's Museum of Ethnography (Weltmuseum), on a different site, offers a chilling architectural and museological manifestation of this predicament of European ambivalence. First the embarrassment and shame of a dawning awareness that the things of which we were most proud are revealed to us as the most toxic and shameful. Then there is the pitiful smallness of the narcissism that shored up the imperial illusion of cultural superiority. The Weltmuseum has it all. Entering the hallway, the visitor is trapped within a geometric space of immaculate white marble, as cold and shiny as a laboratory/bathroom/morgue. The staircases lead to balconied tiers from which the visitor looks down onto the central hall. The hard surfaces reflect, reverberate and therefore amplify sounds from the hall, inducing everyone to speak in a whisper. The crushing feeling of suspicion, mistrust and fear is contagious. What is it about this flawless white marble jewel box of a magic castle that is so intimidating and unfriendly? There is something of the sense of being exposed and offered up to an omniscient gaze from above, which seems immediately to elicit the sense of being turned into a specimen on an antibacterial slab of marble. If the Kafka transformation of self into infesting insect had not been set in Prague, it might well have been set right here. The same Baroque staircases offer sightlines down to lower balconies and upwards through rotunda to flights above. Each landing has a gallery on three of the four sides of the building, leaving the elevation as a diagrammatic rendition of a cutaway plan. This monument to the *Aufklarung* is the

very antithesis of the Gothic. Nothing is secret, unknowable, merely divined or hidden, except the unfathomable sadism of scopophilia and epistemophilia. Hiding in the light is the unconscious of nineteenth-century Austrian ethnomethodology. The darkness is to be found precisely in the blitheness of the gaze turned outwards, towards the other races of man, and away from the imperial and colonial self which derived such satisfaction from its gaze and its magnificent obsessions. As I scurry away from the glaring whiteness of the hall, like a cockroach scuttling into a corner, I come to the terribly heavy doors guarding the entrance to the galleries. The oversized handles on the massive dark wood doors once again affect my body ego so that, like Lewis Carroll's Alice, I suspect that I must have inadvertently drunk from a phial of some psychotropic liquor. Struggling with these handles I am confused and overcome by the feeling that the gallery must be closed, locked, and that I will be accused of trespass or breaking and entering. The act of wanting to give physical expression to my curiosity is, instantly, transformed into uncertainty, doubt, guilt, shame. In fact the gallery of oriental artefacts and material culture, despite being empty and dark, is open for visits. The darkness is part of the conservators' techniques for preserving textiles and paper, and a uniformed guard helps me to open the doors. He seems happy to meet another person. Curators walk about, not uniformed but carrying the insignia of the tablet, talking quietly to one another about their plans for a new display within the gallery. My German is not fluent enough to listen and the volume and tone of their exchange is emphatically professional and private.

→ 4PM: STILL IT IS SNOWING

Downstairs, the main exhibition is on Brazil: Brazil as an object of the Austrian anthropological gaze in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Then comes a brilliant section, by contemporary anthropologists, on the reflexive gaze of Structuralist and Post-structuralist ethnographers, starting with Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, and extending into a sustained exploration of the significance of the hammock in local and global cultures. Whilst contemporary First Worlders think of the hammock as a holiday-time experience of being 'suspended,' relaxed from the strictures of the reality of the work ethic, in local cultures in the Brazilian rainforest any member of the tribe who wants to disappear lies down in a hammock and is immediately occluded from the social gaze. It is not only the fact of horizontality that signifies this liminality from society, but the fact that the horizontality is placed within the hammock. Then the exhibition extends to interviews with contemporary inhabitants of the cultures documented by Lévi-Strauss and others, who express their own ambivalence about the respective strengths of their native and modern societies. With acoustic headset commentaries the exhibition can be customized to the depth of knowledge and curiosity of the individual visitor, and its underlit atmosphere offers further immersive, and therefore contemplative, half-light.

→ 6PM: IT IS STILL SNOWING

The Sigmund Freud Museum, at 19 Berggasse, is an apartment house: the Freud family lived on the first floor, and Sigmund Freud had his consulting room there. It is now the site of the archive, exhibition space, gallery, viewing theatre and offices of the museum. It hosts cultural and academic events as well as individual visits and tours. The entrance hall to the family apartment is conserved in the original sombre gherkin green of the 1930s, and the coat racks and umbrella stand still have the garments and sticks of the inhabitants, alongside an evocative travelling trunk that reminds us of the premature departure of Sigmund and Anna with the servant and dogs in 1939, and the tragic delay for Freud's sisters, who died in concentration camps: Mitzi, who died of starvation in Theresienstadt, Pauli and Esther (Dolfi) in Treblinka and Rosa in Auschwitz.

From the window looking onto the courtyard shared by the apartments at the back of the building one can see a tree, emphatically visible as the only part of the environment not made of stone or steel. Like the tree visible to Anne Frank in Amsterdam, it is poignantly symbolic of a people betrayed. The tiny waiting room leading to Freud's office and consulting room, now reconstructed at 20 Maresfield Gardens in London, still has a sofa in red velour fabric, recognisable from the home movies of Princess Marie Bonaparte sitting on it, as if unobserved. The digitised video copies of the Freud family home movies testify to the strange mixture of tradition and modernity that made up the family's domestic culture. The silent films, with their characteristically accelerated pace, have a voiceover from an elderly Anna who brings the power of hindsight to the innocence of the documented scenes. Only when the films record the elevation of the apartment block, seen from the street in 1939, after the Anschluss, is the voice steely in tone. Indeed we are shown the home of psychoanalysis flying the swastika from its windows, draped with banners welcoming Hitler, and the irony is unbearable. Certainly there were members of the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society who found no conflict between psychoanalysis and Nazism. However, the museum is a special archive to a history. According to Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, history is what transforms documents into monuments. The museum is the place in which the documents of Freud's absence are transformed into a monument that testifies to the power of Freud's theory. The fact that he left, and that the contents of his home are also elsewhere, is of value to 19 Berggasse, and requires the curatorial team to place the reasons for this absence 'on the couch.' The museum could be a monument to the catastrophic effects of antisemitism in European history, and it could be an opportunity to invite analysts, artists, filmmakers, cultural activists to find, in Freud's work, the reasons and explanations for this. This would not be in La Rochefoucauld's spirit of "*Tout comprendre c'est tout pardoner*" but in the sense that the only way to welcome Freud back to Vienna is by taking the trouble to see that his work itself offers the explanation of the origins of the sadism, systematic cruelty, and management of a machine for the thoroughly effective extermination of a people on the basis of their difference.

→ IT IS STILL SNOWING

This year the Sigmund Freud Museum has an exhibition of contemporary art in the form of a site-specific intervention. The space of the apartment is a strange and awkward mixture of original features, relics conserved, and some postmodern exhibition fittings. The Freud study is empty save for a small mirror that Anna Freud gave as a memorial. The mirror is not in any way extraordinary or idiomatic as an object, but its symbolism, as a gift from an inhabitant forced to flee for her life, is poignant. The little domestic mirror speaks in a still, small voice. It has the power of the monstrous Sphinx that plagued Thebes. The riddle of the Sphinx, writes Freud, is that of self-knowledge. If the riddle is solved the Sphinx is defeated and the city set free from its terrible affliction. The mirror that Anna Freud, like an Antigone to her ageing father, and a sister who must bury her brother, brought as a gift to Vienna, is a potlatch. It is a gift that requires a return gift. Marcel Mauss describes this dialogical dynamic in his anthropology, and Freud analyses this logic of call and response in his analysis of the ego as a discursive structure. When we view the empty room, which was for decades the study where Freud wrote his revolutionary essays, and we wonder why there is nothing left except some photographs, the mirror emerges as a response. Know Thyself. If self-knowledge is the Freudian alternative to Comte's positivist division between subject and object, it is also the cure for Derrida's *"Mal d'Archive"*. The self-reflexivity that confounds the power of the 'controlling and curious gaze' is the gift that Freud asks us to make in return.

→ IT IS STILL SNOWING

There are two Jewish Museums in Vienna. One is in Judenplatz, the excavated site of the medieval synagogue at the centre of the Jewish district that thrived in early Vienna. The excavations take the visitor beneath the foundations of the cobbled *Platz* and of more recent adjacent buildings. It is a handsome, minimalist, spare building with a permanent display of the history of the presence of Jews in Vienna, with a gallery on the ground floor showing, in January 2013, a series of contemporary photographs of the lives of the Orthodox Jewish community in the city today. Outside, a sculpture by Rachel Whiteread stands on the edge of the Judenplatz. Characteristically it is a concrete cast of an interior space. Unknowable, because it cannot be entered, it stands as a testament to the inhospitable climate of xenophobias of all kinds: the solid refusal to 'give space to,' and the sheer 'blocking out' of indifference. The concrete cast shows us two doors, but these are fused in permanent closure, as if a document of the wilful refusal of empathy, or of reception of the uninvited guest. Whiteread described her early concrete cast interior House, a plaster cast of the interior of a three-storey Victorian house at 193 Grove Road, London E3, as a response to her feeling as a child sitting at the family dinner table that the atmosphere was dense and solid. From the child's receptiveness to the nuclear fusions that create 'an atmosphere' for this monument to a feeling that resulted in the worst genocide of

the twentieth century, Whiteread's work is a powerful document of the capacity for interiority and empathy which Baron-Cohen identifies as intrinsically feminine.

The second museum houses all the artefacts collected and given to it by the residents of Vienna. It is especially moving as a record of the personal possessions of Jewish people in the city. The museum has three floors. The ground floor houses an interactive work. There is a recording booth in which visitors are invited to film their comments and responses to the museum, and a small screen and headphones with which other visitors can view the collected responses of the thousands of respondees. The first floor, at the time I visited, had an impressive exhibition of works by women photographers of the mid-twentieth century, with a reading room and catalogues.

The upper floor is the archive, a large space with professional mobile steel archive shelving behind glass walls, so that rhe storage technology becomes the mechanism of display in a poetic and compact integration of form and content. We see the history of the Jewish community through this historical collection of the artefacts that are part of the domestic, religious, working and cultural life of that community. A collection of grotesque figures, thin heads with huge hooked noses like the handle of a walking stick, a crouched boy clasping a vat as a beer mug handle, an old crone as a folkloric figure, are antisemitic caricatures that are especially interesting, locating the culture within the melting point of the Holocaust era. The Jewish community is presented neither in terms of timeless scholars nor as eternal victims, but as a lively, thriving world that was savagely set upon as scapegoats whenever history was tough for the middle-class European.

The Freud Museum has not, yet, collaborated with the two Jewish Museums, nor with the third, more difficult, memorial to unconscious sadism and the malady of the well-ordered, bureaucratic, rigorous systematising mind, the Mauthausen Concentration Camp nearby which claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Jews.

The characteristics of obsessional neurosis are, according to Freud's analysis of 'The Ratman,' rooted in an ambivalent relation to authority which is libidinised as a perpetual oscillation between abject compliance and grandiloquent fantasies of control and mastery. The ambivalence is manifested in compulsive doubts that generate obsessional ritual obeisances to guarantee safety and control. The oscillation between attack and restoration of the object leads to a systematisation of repetition.

Two of the Freuds were to return to Austria as members of the Allied Forces. Walter Freud was parachuted behind enemy lines as a member of the British Special Operations Executive (the secret service that placed foreign agents abroad) in April 1945. Advised to change his name in case of capture by the enemy he refused, declaring "I want the Germans to know a Freud is coming back." He narrowly survived separation from his comrades, and single-handedly secured the surrender of the strategically-positioned Zeltweg aerodrome in southern Austria (Fry 2009, 161-163).

Alexander Freud's son Henry returned to Vienna as a US army officer to investigate the death of his aunts and to bring before the courts Anton Sauerwald, the Nazi-appointed official who took control of Freud's assets and those of the *International Psychoanalytic Association* (Cohen 2009, 2).

The psyche that the Sigmund Freud Museum might put on the couch, and to which it could offer the privilege of Freud's wisdom, is the malady that afflicted the Nazis in their drive to sort, measure, calibrate, classify, systematize and eliminate the other. When this *Mal d'Archive* is seen not only as another manifestation of 'patriarchy' and the 'authoritarian personality,' or the ideological apparatus of a capitalism in crisis, but also as a malady of sadistic obsessional neurosis, with the related maladies of religious fundamentalism, which Freud also analysed as an obsessional neurosis, then the strategies for resisting its widespread presence in contemporary society will be more effective and more productive. It is futile simply to oppose, as opposition is a form of imitation, and the obsessional seeks to multiply by eliciting compliant imitation in its objects. It is futile to try and outmanoeuvre the obsessional systematising by trumping its bureaucracy with a still more magnificent system. Parody is lost on the obsessional ego. If understood as a malady of the attempt to impose an imaginary uniformity onto the heterotopic glory of 'dappled things,' then the compulsion to control, even in its violent, sadistic form of imposing 'orderliness,' is revealed as a defensive mechanism, a delusory narrative, an illness. Without diminishing our admiration for the courage of the young Freuds who returned to Austria to sabotage the Nazi narrative and to restore justice through the courts, surely the gift made by Anna, the small mirror that hangs on the wall of the Freud study in Berggasse, also requires a response. It is an encounter of the systematising self with its empathic, relational, analytic other. Whilst the new research by Baron-Cohen gives an entirely new account of gender differences in the neurological structure of the brain and offers plausible evolutionary perspectives on the origins of these indisputable biological facts, it is only the psychoanalytic perspective that recognises the Oedipal, unconscious dynamic of obsessional neurosis and Obsessive Compulsive Disorders. Martin Wangh, responding to the Eichmann war trial in 1962, published his study 'National Socialism and the Genocide of the Jews' in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (1964). Tracing the historical and biographical origins of the generation that propelled the Nazis into power in 1933, Wangh proceeds to offer a lucid and devastating analysis of the mental illness that was the Holocaust.

If only the Viennese archives of the Mauthausen concentration camp, the Jewish Museum, the Holocaust Museum, the Freud Museum, the Ethnographic and Natural History and Fine Art Museums could get together and consider the Mal d'Archive, its effects, its powers and its alternatives. Commencing with Derrida's thesis that the archive is not about the past, but is totally and utterly about the future, it would be illuminating to have a city exhibition on the theme of absence. Why is Freud absent from all but his own archive? Why is Freud's kabinet in London NW3? What if we placed Freud's absence on the couch

and analysed it until the universality of transference and projective identification is revealed throughout culture?

The fantasy of obtaining an encyclopaedic knowledge through collecting data and classifying it through systematic taxonomies is revealed as a specific symptom of obsessional neurosis. The rigour that was the cornerstone of its methodological edifice emerges as a fantasy of control, of exact and precise knowledge that is 'murdering to dissect.' In the place of an imaginary empire of objects we have discovered a universe of relationships. There is no object without the subjectivity that projects it into existence. The concept of rigour, still ubiquitous within the intellectual culture of the academic universe, comes increasingly to be seen as the latest iteration of the original concept of *rigor:* the coldness, pallor and immobility which characterises organisms after death. The search for rigour is animated by the haunting presence of its precursor: *rigor mortis.*

It is still snowing.

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Penny Siopis' *Three Essays on Shame*

Questioning the Psychoanalytical M(a)us(ol)eum through Postcolonial Female Art

→ ALESSANDRA DE ANGELIS

Alessandra De Angelis is a Researcher for the EU International Project MeLa* - European Museums in an age of migrations at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She holds a PhD in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World ("L'Orientale", 2010), with a dissertation on the memories, histories, narratives, myths and arts focused on the female figure of the Rainbow Mother/womb in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. She has taught Postcolonial English Literature from 2007/8 to 2010/11 ("L'Orientale") focusing on female migrant literature from the African world. She has published on English speaking writers and visual artists from the former British colonies, and on the relationship between memory and museums; with Iain Chambers and other MeLa Researchers she has recently co-edited the volume *The Postcolonial Museum: the Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History* (2014, Ashgate Publishing).

→ ABSTRACT

This essay intends to explore the ways the South African born visual artist Penny Siopis, through the installation Three Essays on Shame *(2005), deconstructs and questions the premises of the psychoanalytical archive in Sigmund Freud's last house, study and mausoleum in London, the Freud Museum in Maresfield Gardens. Invited to celebrate the centenary of Freud's essays on female sexuality (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, *1905) and explore the issue of "shame", she deeply affects the viewers and enhances reflection. By linking personal, gender-biased and social circumstances to deconstruct and re-frame different issues at the same time, she suggests abrupt interconnections with radical, layered and long-standing political dynamics which still urge museums and psychoanalysis, as well as the viewers, to confront the hidden, silenced ghosts of modernity and psychology. Through the use of*

collected objects, artworks, paintings, recordings and video materials, Siopis invites the public to join the unsettling experience of a multi-sensorial journey inside the archive of western psychoanalytic modernity, suggesting unexpected connections between its premises and limits and the political situation of apartheid South Africa on one hand, and the genderization of border-crossing emotional states on the threshold between public and private, such as shame, on the other.

> *The Freud Museum is a vibrantly living organism. It is a fascinating cult site, a place of mythic memory, a shrine, a monument, a haunted house. But it also continues to pulse to a lively current of problems and challenges.*
>
> Marina Warner 1998

As soon as one enters quiet, discreet and green Maresfield Gardens Road, the Freud Museum appears as a serene, hospitable red-brick house, with numerous large stained-glass windows capturing the feeble light of London Autumns and Winters, and storing the triumphal sunshine of Summer and Spring for the harsh days. Although Freud appreciated British efforts in luminous architecture he was nonetheless proud of German efficiency remarking on the drafts of cold air penetrating through the sash windows and observing the deficiency of British heating systems (The Freud Museum 1998, 8). It seems to me (it is just an amusing fantasy) as if he were warning us, somehow, against the excesses of scientific optimism, whose insistence on light—the pretence of making everything clear, unambiguous and manifest through the maniacal rituals of scientific observation—has its counter-effects. Freud firmly believed in his ethologically derived theory of sexuality and the unconscious, and scientifically applied his method, talking based on free associations as well as the analysis of dreams, lapses, fantasies and desires. Yet he concluded that it was still impossible for him to spread light on all the mysteries of human unconscious drives, especially, needless to say, for what he explicitly called the "dark continent" of female sexuality (Sigmund Freud 1926).[1]

His last family house, which was at the same time his private studio and his *wunderkammer* of antiquities—Freud being a devoted and meticulous collector of many kinds of religious, pagan, archetypal and mythological statues, images and other memories from ancient times and distant places—also became the museum of this last 'mystery'. Here, hidden

1 "We know less about the sexual life of little girls than of boys. But we need not feel ashamed of this distinction; after all, the sexual life of adult women is a 'dark continent' for psychology." in Sigmund Freud (1926, 212). Freud borrowed this adventurous expression from the language of the explorer John Rowlands Stanley, who used it to describe an obscure, virgin, impenetrable forest in Africa. The association between women and virgin savage lands to be discovered, explained and displayed (just like the "archival fever" of museums) appears evident. It seems to me that this very well-known expression is still a reminder of the bond between archive, memory and psychoanalysis, as Jacques Derrida made clear in *Archive Fever* (1994 [1995]).

among the quiet little gardens and terraces, which lie everywhere behind the facades of the elegant bourgeois houses in Maresfield Gardens, a challenging artistic turmoil has taken place around the unresolved archives of orthodox psychoanalysis. The secret apparatuses, or "technologies of the self" as Michel Foucault would put it (1972 [1969] and 1998),[2] that construct the narrative or mythology of the unconscious human mind derived from sexual drives and traumas, together with the notion of Western linear heritage and civilization as collected and constructed by Freud in his wunderkammer, are here questioned and re-interpreted in attempts to create new and different orders out of apparent chaos.

When speaking of Freud and his archives (both the humanistic 'heritage project' of his cabinet of rare and valuable antiquities, and the more challenging, extensive and unfinished work of his analytical method), Jacques Derrida's notion of *mal d'archive* immediately comes to mind; archive fever or 'sickness' (see Claire Pajaczkowski's essay in this collection) as the compulsion to collect, store, define, in conformity to the law of the *arché,* as well as of the *archaeion* (the place where it is kept and preserved; thus, extensively, memory as a prosthetic medium), is inseparable from *death-drive,* the unconscious desire, in this case, to destroy memory by fixing it (Derrida 1995 [1994]). Freud's 'double archive'—his home/studio and his scientific passion for the human mind and culture (which between curing and collecting also implies a traditional form of 'curating', namely staging and displaying things for study and observation), appears at the same time his tomb and his museum, a m(a)us(ole)um: "specialised and authoritative institutions," as Joan Gibbons observes, where "knowledge and data, as aspects of memory, are ordered and stored" (2007, 118). This approach appears in open contrast with what Freud himself wrote about memory as continually re-organising the mind, "restless and ever-expanding" (Freud, in Gibbons 2007, 141).

→ SHIFTING FREUD TO THE THRESHOLD

Some great women artists have exhibited in the Freud Museum, such as Susan Hiller, with her counter-archive of "misunderstandings, crises, and ambivalences that complicate any such notion of heritage" (*After the Freud Museum*, 1994),[3] Penny Siopis, who subverts Freud's notions of female sexuality and subjectivity by confronting them with other suggestions coming from South African women resisting apartheid (*Three Essays on Shame,* 2005),[4] and Louise Bourgeois' exposure of her own fears, desires and ambivalences toward analysis (*The Return of the Repressed,* 2012).[5] It is precisely the link between the psychoanalytical

2 By the word 'archive' I mean here the epistemological structure, validated and reconfirmed by its very discontinuities, which allows for the possibility of definition, recognition, realization, acceptance and refusal, storage, accumulation, dispersal, and, above all, the reproduction and multiplication of invented realities and dogmas. Put simply, this is the hegemonic construction of the self, the others, the world, as well as the so called "disciplines" and the barriers separating them.

3 http://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions/10535/after-the-freud-museum/, accessed September 26, 2013.

4 http://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions/10524/three-essays-on-shame/, accessed September 20, 2013.

5 http://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions/74492/louise-bourgeois-the-return-of-the-repressed-/, accessed

archive/arché, memory as a living organism connected to the future of unpredictable messianic events on one hand, and the female human mind with its unconscious drives, phantasms and neuroses on the other, which is still being re-experienced and reworked. Rather than answering Freud's call (to illuminate, while avoiding drafts of threatening cold air infiltrating the system), they penetrate this discourse, and strive to open it up to other ideas of memory, trauma, subjectivity. Above all they expose it to the vexed question of exhibition and artistic practices that involve viewers in the process of de-construction of the archive and its meanings. In this essay, I draw on the South African visual artist Penny Siopis' 2005 exhibition and installation. Mounted to mark the centenary of the publication of Freud's three essays on sexuality, her work shows how the museum faces the challenge of postcolonial and female art. It accepts the risks of re-opening, re-configuring and even ruining its archive (as both the material locus of storage and display and the frame of thought) posed by the gazes and words of others: in this case, those of African women from an apartheid-torn country.

Three Essays on Shame (2005) clearly paraphrases Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*. Why this insistence on "shame" rather than "sexuality?" Why shift attention from the private, intimate psychodynamics of children to the more liminal territory of shame, an emotion on the threshold between the private and the public where one encounters the other's gaze and judgment and one's own self-perception and evaluation? What does this turning point imply, in terms of artistic engagement with psychoanalysis, the arts and even museums? Well, to begin with we need to take into account the partial role that shame plays in Freud's work, and the orthodox psychoanalytical interpretation of this emotion.

According to Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, especially in volumes II ("Infantile Sexuality") and III ("The Transformations of Puberty"), shame is described merely as an inhibition of perverse or polymorph sexuality developed in the latency period, a little earlier and deeper for girls than for boys.[6] Later on, in "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (Freud 1925), the author, more extensively defines shame as a consequence of so-called "penis envy." This is a reaction to a woman's painful psychic representation of her lack of the male sexual organ: a form of negative narcissism. In her parodist paraphrasing of Freud's pseudo-scientific terminology, Luce Irigaray remarks through the mimicry of *Speculum* that for a woman "the castration complex does not serve to protect the narcissistic cathexis of her sex organ(s), but to subject it to a total denarcissization! […] For the little girl, the woman, has to recognize the wound to her narcissism as a 'scar'. She must resign herself to the 'disadvantage' anatomy has in store for her." (Irigaray 1985 [1974], 87). The little girl is but a little man, yet more envious, ashamed of her hurtful lack, and this loss. Her psychic

September 26, 2013.

6 Freud specifies that "the development of sexual inhibitions (shame, loathing, sympathy, etc.) ensues earlier and with less resistance in the little girl than in the little boy." In Sigmund Freud (1920, 78).

condition, her subjectivity, is doomed to a perpetual attempt to recover what has been lost. Her narcissistic impulses will always be impaired by the greater or lesser awareness of this original loss, hence the scars and wounds of her "dark" and impenetrable sexuality and psychic reality. No wonder then that shame appears as the pivotal female affect of the latency period, even when hidden behind envy, frailty or rage.

The little girl, together with female subjectivity, disappears from Freud's map. Her desires, profound fears, expectations and affects, are all reduced to the trope of envy. Irigaray concludes that for Freud the little girl is but "a *little man* who will suffer a more painful and complicated evolution […] more modest because more ashamed of that unfavorable comparison." (Irigaray 1985 [1974], 26, emphasis added).With this in mind, Siopis begins to figure out her intervention in the museum. It leads to a possible reconfiguration not only of the psychoanalytical archive but also of the role of art and museum immersed in the scopic field of the gaze, desire, display and judgment.

Siopis neither refuses nor neglects Freud's theories; rather, she confronts them with more contemporary psychological and political interpretations of the affects. In *Three Essays on Shame*, she investigates a far too easily dismissed emotion, which in Freud was barely linked to the reactive formations of the latency period, as we have seen. As an artist, she chooses to work on the threshold between the private and intimate "inside" of subjectivity and the outer circumstances that frame and often constitute it, and which, at the same time, are unpredictably modified by the encounter with different subjectivities. As an engaged anti-apartheid, anti-racial, anti-sexist intellectual, she frames her reflections in a wider postcolonial perspective which may subvert orthodox assumptions on the very notion of subjectivity.

From the psychological and sociological perspective she draws on more contemporary theories, which also work on the borders between the inside and the outside of the human psyche, moving beyond the limits of an exclusively dynamic interpretations of affects. Erik Erikson (1994 [1968]), one of the fathers of psychotherapy, denounces how shame has been misunderstood and neglected in favour of the seemingly similar emotion of "guilt" (Erikson 1994 [1968]). He claims that this affect is not the result of internal psycho-dynamics but, conversely, of the encounter, in the scopic field, between a self-perceiving subjectivity and the world which is staring at it. This gives rise to the awareness of being upright and exposed, especially during the delicate and frail life-phase of adolescence, where the self is striving to find its place in the world and its own strength. Michael Lewis (1992) takes the discourse a little further by viewing this affect in a sociological perspective. He connects shame to the sense of nakedness, of perceiving oneself exposed and vulnerable to the judgment of others and especially to one's own self-judgment, linked to the idea of not fulfilling social standards. Women, Lewis observes, are more likely to suffer from shame and transform this emotion into self-contempt and depression, blocking rage and indignation, because of

the desire to fulfill society's expectations and not risk being emarginated. The sociologist Ervin Goffman (1963 and 1967), binding shame to stigmatization and prejudice, and identifying three different kinds of "stigmas" (character traits, physical traits, group identity), distinguishes two basic forms of shame: one is linked to the sense of being un-masked, and thus revealed by the others' gaze in one's real self or intention, or even in one's own personality, and the other is that of being *un-veiled*, which is even more intimate and private, and derives directly from the condition of being looked at, exposed and vulnerable in the so called "scopic field," in the words of Jacques Lacan (1977 [1964]).[7] Here, the subject is simultaneously constituted and violated by the other's gaze and "stigma," precisely in what he/she is striving to assert as his/her own intimate subjectivity. Shame connected to sexuality seems to be halfway between these two forms of shame, because it implies the sufferance of being exposed in one's own frail body and desires, and the pain deriving from the unmasking of one's own behavior, which the subject herself judges as deviant from the norm, inconvenient, awkward. If we shift the perspective to a wider political and postcolonial point of view, and consider the norm as the white, Occidental, patriarchal, heterosexual standard in the force field of colonial and hegemonic forces, we must agree with Frantz Fanon (1952). Here shame is the reaction of the coloured subject (poor, illegal migrant, homosexual, transgender, and so on) to the white man's gaze, that leads her/him to an abyss of de-subjectivation and the dismemberment of the self-image. Shame, thus, stems from the relationship with another in a field of forces. On this threshold between the private and the public, the social and intimate dimensions, Siopis engages and allows the viewer to engage with shame, sexuality, and gender biases.

In 2005, one hundred years after the publication of the "Three Contributions" (1905), the Freud Museum celebrated the centenary with a series of events, lectures, and artistic exhibitions, including a performance by Siopis. She had already engaged Freud's theory of sexuality in her 1987 pastel drawing on paper *Dora and the Other Woman*. In this work she questioned the basic assumption of the orthodox psychoanalytical interpretation, represented as a violation through the normalizing, penetrating gaze of the Western, white, bourgeois intellectual on the other as woman and coloured. During the 1980s, she had openly taken part in the artistic and intellectual battle against apartheid, racism and sexism, focusing on the urgent social themes of her country. Her work commences as a representational, almost didactic one. Then, in the Nineties, it turns into a marvellously suggestive, upsetting and disquieting oneiric fantasy, almost entirely devoted to female corporeal and psychic subjectivity as well as to 'objectivity': woman as an object of social expectations, fears and stereotypes. It results in a sensuous work which stems, unpredictably, from the encounter of fleshy and bloody

7 As regards vulnerability and exposure, which is a pivotal issue not only in Siopis's work, but also in museum display practices—from ethnography to performance—see Judith Butler, who claims that the political, corpo-real and psychical condition of being human is a relational one made of vulnerability and exposure, whereas "to be a body is to be given over to others" (2004, 20).

materials and colours (like red and pink coloured glue), with ordinary yet embarrassing and complicating themes and violent events involving chance and control, personal and political themes (De Angelis 2011). The artist always involves the viewers in a bodily, affective and almost visceral relationship, seducing and yet, at the same time, scaring them through a symbiotic, disquieting and deeply transforming firsthand encounter with the work of art. When facing the sensual beauty or the frightening violence of her reddish, viscous materials on canvas, viewers are rendered permeable and vulnerable to her stimuli, and asked to set out on a sort of psychoanalytical journey along a path of political, social, and emotional suggestions merging into each other and revealing the bonds that maintain these apparently separated realms of human existence. In this manner, the artist confronts topics of female sexuality and subjectivity, linking them to more extensive political circumstances, re-opening the psychoanalytical archive to further complications.

→ CHAOS AT FREUD'S HOUSE

Three Essays on Shame is a site-specific intervention comprising various found objects, paintings, films and sound materials, scattered around three rooms in the house, one for each "essay": the private studio, the dining room and the former bedroom, which is now an exhibition room. The entire private and public dimension of the house is enveloped in the work.

The first room is the studio, haunted by an awkward atmosphere owing to the sense of death and disease, compounded by the red, dark, thick tissues, carpets and the blankets on the couch for Freud's patients with their neuroses or psychosis, but where the psychoanalyst himself lay in his last days of pain (the father of the talking cure paradoxically died of mouth-cancer). In this space Siopis disposed audio materials with voices from seven important public South African figures; among them Antjie Krog, author of *Country of My Skull* (1998), the most touching and detailed documentary on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings, the moving beauty and the horrific shame of which she reported in these recordings;[8] Edwin Cameron, a homosexual HIV positive magistrate, who strove not only against apartheid but also as an anti-Aids activist, speaking of shame connected to his personal situation in a difficult, stigmatizing society such as South African, immersed and constituted by the cult of skin colour and social belonging; Pumla Gobodo–Madikezela, a clinical psychologist who spoke of gender violence and harassment, especially of shameful sexual assaults by young white soldiers on old black women.

Their voices literally submerged the viewers who enter the studio to look at Freud's collection of antiquities, as well as his books and personal objects. There in the room where the private grief of patients, their sense of guilt and deepest shame were confessed and transposed into words, the visitors were also bound to feel ashamed hearing something private while trying to observe something else. As Siopis writes, they are rendered as

8 From now on, TRC will be the acronym for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"uncomfortable participant, voyeur or witness" (Siopis 2010, 242). The extraordinary experience of the TRC was here repeated, rendering public the most hidden secrets and disgraces of the apartheid era. Yet it also retained an aura of a somehow intimate encounter between those who most directly took part in this process of renewal. The seven voices are first heard through loud-speakers and then transmitted through headphones, leaving each listener alone with her/his experience of reception. Not only the stories, but the tones, the rhythm, "the materiality of the voice, the glosses and hesitations in searching for words" (242) were essential to this process, which disquieted those visitors who were perhaps expecting to follow a pre-determined path through a museum-mausoleum. Searching for the classical elements of Occidental heritage and culture, from the Greek, Roman, Near-East objects of civilization collected by Freud to the modern discoveries of psychoanalysis, the visitors were instead invited, sometimes almost compelled, to engage in a deeper encounter with stories, emotions and secrets reaching them from an uncertain territory. These unexpected narratives brought them to dwell on an unpredictable threshold between the most intimate and the very public. This, the artist seems to suggest, is also the experience of the TRC. Shame is here immersed in the public and political scopic field of South Africa, investigated and lived as an upsetting affect whose resources are yet to be discovered, and whose subtle consequences and shadows are far more complicated than a mere psychodynamic covering a sense of personal diminution. Here the museum is already becoming something more than a shrine, something alive, challenging and upsetting.

The dining room, hosting the second "essay," is entirely dedicated to phantasmagoric, monstrous and real images of the female sex, linking shame to the indecipherable threshold that exists not only between public projections and private feelings but also between fantasy and reality, nightmarish objects, archetypes and real events. At the centre of the dining room there is a tiny ancient mythological Greek statue, a terracotta figurine representing Baubo. She is a sort of apparently ridiculous goddess of fertility and prosperity, according to ancient Elysian rites, modeled as a naked old fat woman, with a huge smile as she gestures towards her genitals. The legend tells us that she was the only one who could make an anguished, exhausted and worried Demeter laugh, when the goddess seemed to have lost all her power, spirit and hope in finding her daughter Persephone. The simple gesture of showing her old vagina gave fresh energy to Demeter, who recovered her spirit and continued the chase, this time with success.

As Siopis notes, there is strangely no hint of this statue in Freud's detailed and almost obsessive inventory, although the figure was mentioned in a 1916 essay titled "A mythological parallel to a visual obsession" (in Siopis 2010, 240). It is almost as if Freud were somehow repressing this theme—the matriarchal power of the laughing yet powerful and scary female body—which is nevertheless a widespread mythology not only in ancient Greece, but also in other cultures; for example Sheila-na-gig, a female ancient medieval statue, showing a huge vulva, is very widespread

IMG. 01 — *Penny Siopis, 2005. Three Essays on Shame. Baubo (courtesy Penny Siopis)*

in Norman and Romanesque churches in the UK. In feminist thinking such as that of Helene Cixous (with Catherine Clement, 1986 [1975]) and Luce Irigaray (1985 [1977]), as well as in feminist Jungian psychoanalysis as practicised by Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1983), archetypal figures such as these are re-narrated as powerful spiritual and creative resources mediated through the specific subjectivity of the female body, spirit and thought. They are considered healing goddesses, protecting women's creativity and freedom against interiorized patriarchal 'predators.'

The original terracotta Baubo figurine is isolated in a glass case; nonetheless, in relation with the numerous, 'floating' objects scattered through the room it somehow invades and disseminates chaos in Freud's house and archives. There are also other figurines in the many nineteenth century cupboards that are left deliberately open to show alongside Siopis' own artefacts other artworks, newspaper cuttings, films, documents, photographs, found objects. These are all connected to themes and real episodes of racial and sexual violence in South Africa. They all involve

shame. Artistic and everyday objects combine to further the process of estrangement and engagement, fostering new mental associations that enhance inquiry into the topic.

Although Baubo is naked and exposed, her facial expression is not in the least ashamed. Later, however, Christian uses of this image have negative connotations, and cover this statue with shame for its exposed genitalia. Siopis underlines the liberating psychic power of this image, but at the same time she hints at more complex circumstances, such as the social and political situation of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. In a deeply racist and sexist country marked by forced internal migrations and removals, there is an obsession with the scopic field, incarnated in the dichotomy between the different degrees of blackness for the coloured body and purity for the white one. This is especially so in the case of the black woman's body, marked by shame and exposure: a dark continent

IMG. 02 — *Penny Siopis, 2005. Three Essays on Shame. Interventions in Freud's cupboard in his dining room (courtesy Penny Siopis)*

of mysterious sexuality and depravation and yet made transparent to the (white) other's repressed sexual desire and repulsion. In the schizophrenic logic of a divided country, marked by a taxonomy of colour and desperate attempts to preserve difference and private and public boundaries, shame is generated from both sides, and for different reasons.

It is precisely the role of museums and display practices that are at stake in this game played on the black woman's body. The South African icon of this obsessive fixation on black women's skin, body and bones is, as Zoe Wicomb observes, the Khoi woman Sarah Baartman, also known as the 'Hottentot Venus,' exhibited in London and Paris for her physical, sexual characteristics from 1810 to her death in 1815. Transformed into an object, Saartje Baartman exemplifies "the inscription of power in *scopic* relations; the construction of woman as racialized and sexualized other; the colonization and violation of the body; the role of *scientific discourse* in

IMG. 03 —*Penny Siopis, 2005. Three Essays on Shame. Interventions in Freud's cupboard in his dining room (courtesy Penny Siopis)*

bolstering both the modernist and the colonial projects" (Wicomb 1998, 93, emphasis added). The role of the gaze, which is already underlined in the first of the "essays" (where many pairs of blue eyes stare out from the cupboards and 'look back' at the visitors, making the scopic field of the exhibition explicit), is here questioned and related to active strategies of resistance. Part of the second installation is in fact the documentary film "To walk naked," showing an episode of the anti-apartheid resistance of black women protecting their houses and their districts from forced removals and house demolition, imposed by the government and carried out by the army. The women lift their skirts and show the soldiers their breasts and vaginas, making them feel ashamed, and stopping them from pulling down their homes.

Shame, the artist is telling us, is a relation happening in the scopic field. It involves both viewers and the object of their gaze, binding them, not without ambiguities. "Teatofilia", as Goffman calls it (1963), is the scopic drive intimately connected to shame and unveiling dynamics. It occurs not so much in the psychic dynamics of attachment and oedipal love, but rather in the field of dominance, where one's own bodily and psychical subjectivity is exposed and unveiled in the asymmetry of power relations, generating shame. If Baubo laughs, as a symbol of agency, freedom and emancipation from the serious gravity of the patriarchal rules and bonds that separate mothers and daughters, she is nevertheless the servant of Demeter and it is her genitalia being exposed and partly ridiculed, not those of the goddess. In much the same way, those South African women who walked naked towards the soldiers, even though successful in their aims, are forced through a lack of political power and agency to use and expose their bodies and most intimate subjectivity to protect their rights and affirm their political life. To support Siopis' reading of the event and her criticisms of the social conditions of racial and patriarchal societies, as well as of Western feminism and the psychoanalytical archive (both of which ignore or underestimate the role of the environmental and political circumstances in forging subjectivity or impeding its development), there is also an image of the "Hottentot Venus" Sarah Bartmann. In the pastel drawing *Dora and the Other Woman* (1987)—a re–elaborated self-portrait of the artist as an ashamed, violated Venus herself—personal, political, gender, racial themes are interrelated under the mark of shame, violence and power, and cannot be separated, archived, or disciplined. This is also the case for the public. Their relationship with the work of art and the many uncomfortable challenges it promotes is a complex, ambiguous one. It generates multiple and uninvited affects that compel viewers to engage with the arguments, experience shame, feel it on their skin.

As the artist herself puts it, "if the anxiety of being looked at is distinctive in shame, then the viewer is not a passive onlooker, but an uneasy witness; the feeling of embarrassment rises from a sense of complicity in the act of seeing: 'I should not be seeing this' " (Siopis 2008, 153). Thus the boundaries between the display and archiving practices (whose curatorial taxonomies risk freezing the unpredictable dynamics of art), the objects of the gaze and the subjects who are looking are blurred and confused.

IMG. 04 — *Penny Siopis, Three Essays on Shame. To Walk Naked. 2005 (courtesy Penny Siopis)*

The third "essay," in the bedroom, is made of tiny paintings, orderly disposed in a frieze all around Freud's deathbed, almost surrounding it, and yet, never threatening. Images of baby girls and teenagers, immersed on white canvas in bloody, thick colors and coloured glue emphasise the effect of wounded bodies and souls, as well as the fine, sublime beauty of the trait and the seduction of matter and colour, which apparently collide with the violent, visceral, sad or melancholic subjects. The use of glue creates unpredictable effects of lacquer and colour out of sheer fluidity and sudden thickenings. It is a way to leave colours free to dry and become fixed without the intervention of the painter. At the same time, it amalgamates, creating bonds and symbiotic effects that are evocative of the viewers' deeper involvement in the traumatic matter, hence rendering the artistic experience both public/political and personal: "I'm interested

IMG. 05 — *Penny Siopis 2005. Freud's deathbed and "shame paintings". Glue, ink, and lacquer paint on paper (courtesy Penny Siopis)*

in trying to evoke the image of trauma—or wound as it is understood in its original context—in a material amalgam suggesting both individual and collective experience" (Siopis, quoted in Nuttal 2001, 293). Painful memories, shame, guilt complexes, fears, the need of love and comprehension, all experienced by a baby girl. The reds and the naked figures touching or showing their genitals, the covered mouths, the cries for help, the desperate, lost facial expressions of sheer terror and frailty, the veiled/unveiled bodies, the ambiguous utterances, all hint at sexual themes, just as the lost gazes implore affection. This emotive intensity collides with the common-sensical, even postcard or advertising slogans, that accompany some of the paintings. It mirrors the silencing and misunderstanding of pubertal female problems, masking, as Sarah Nuttal observes (2001), the innermost intimacy and secrets of a girl's thoughts

IMG. 06-10 (NEXT PAGES) — *Penny Siopis 2005. Shame paintings (courtesy Penny Siopis)*

and emotions. All around Freud's couch, this little frieze of paintings pulls down the walls that separate the public sphere from what happens in that secret, coloured, comfortable and yet very well organized studio.

→ SCRIPTED BODIES AND RUINED ARCHIVES

The *scripted bodies,* as Nuttal defines them, are those upon which public and personal emotions and affects are inscribed. They are also the place of trauma scars. Here, the vulnerability of a child is marked by intimacy, tenderness, beauty, while at the same time violence, both physical and psychical, always frames a wider political context. Siopis explicitly hints at rape and gender violence, which are both widespread in South Africa, and make the woman's body a territory where there are ambiguities and conflicts at stake which go far beyond a woman's reach. The disgraces of a whole country are lavished on the female skin, generating shame from all sides, from the ones who are violated and pushed towards self-exposure,

and from those who perpetrate violence or look at it, just like the public in a museum, who can perceive the shame and the embarrassment of being exposed to scenes and stories which also go beyond the viewer's comprehension, or at least beyond her expectations.

It is the body, here, that makes the boundaries between outside and inside, public and private collapse and dissolve into wider themes and perspectives such as race, gender, class, vulnerability, exposure. The artist crosses the boundaries between the disciplines, such as art, sociology, psychoanalysis and politics, confronting viewers with images that generate unpredictable affects. The viewer is caught gazing at another woman's shame, and is consequently affected by the same, and urged to experience transformation. Re-opening the psychoanalytical archive to matters of race and politics, as Fanon does, or gender (the way it is

constructed or mediated by politics), and thus partly freeing the female body from the wounds of passive exposure, through a simultaneous shift to the margins and the centre of the scene (*around* Freud's deathbed, but as a *central* topic), the artist not only disseminates a little chaos in the discipline—re-contextualizing the discourse of female subjectivity and sexuality inside wider and deeper colonial practices—but also contests the museal archive, the mausoleum, which now hosts more than antiquities and reliquaries, and itself becomes the site of postcolonial questions and challenges. The synergy between the postcolonial artist and the museum unmasks connivance with official discourses and archives. It urges both to

confront the secret or hidden phantoms of Occidental modernity, which continues to marginalise the other, even when apparently hosting him/her as a subject/object of study, dissemination and even evaluation, rather than fostering a real engagement for fear of the earthquakes that would ensue.

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The Uncertainty of Display:

Exhibitions In-Between Ethnography and Modernism

→ OLGA FERNÁNDEZ LÓPEZ

Assistant professor at the History and Theory of Art Department (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) and visiting lecturer at the Curating Contemporary Art Department (Royal College of Art). She previously worked as a curator at the Museo Patio Herreriano (Valladolid, Spain). She has published, among other works, *Symmetries and Slight Anachronisms: Speculating on Modern Art in Latin America* (Museo Reina Sofía, 2013), *Travesia site-specific: Institutionalidad e imaginacion* (Matadero, Madrid, 2011), *Just What is it that Makes 'Curating' so Different, so Appealing* (oncurating.org, 2001). She co-convened the course Coloniality, curating and contemporary art (Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, 2012). Her research focuses on the specificities of the exhibition medium and its critical possibilities for curatorial practice.

→ ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many non-western artefacts underwent a reallocation from material culture to sculpture, from Natural History and Ethnographic museums to Fine Art collections, an operation made possible by the underlying colonialist ideology. The aestheticisation process was emphasized whenever they were displayed together with modern art or even staged as modern art. However, if the average public was not prepared for the avant-garde, what kind of legitimacy could it bring to so called primitive art? Contrary to the reassuring vision of modern art framing non-western art, modern art's frame was itself unstable, as noted by Constantin Brancusi and Marcel Duchamp, artists who imposed a deliberate indeterminacy in the public

presentation of their works. At the same time, the joint installation of modern and primitive art was not a homogenous practice with the same implications. Rather there were different agendas behind discursive and curatorial intentions, as can be seen in the North American, Soviet and French cases between the 1910s and 1940s. These different display strategies were revised in the late 1980s, when the new context demanded a reconsideration of the still prevalent prejudices, recognizable in the concurrent exhibitions, Rooms with a View: The struggle between culture, content and the context of art *(Longwood Arts Projects, 1987);* We The People *(Artists Space, 1987) and* Art/Artifact *(The Center for African Art, 1988).*

The relationship between modern art and non-western cultures continues to be celebrated in art history narratives as one of its most important myths of origin. The fact that this asymmetric relationship was made possible and sustained by colonialism, even if progressively acknowledged in academic and museological debates, does not seem to have affected the way in which we frame a now fixed picture. The evident appropriation of objects and forms established a linkage that, although based on an imbalanced power relation, have tied modern and non-western art together, and determined the simultaneous entrance of both in a presupposed universal history of art.

Following the developments in artists' studios at the beginning of the twentieth century modern artworks were soon exhibited together with an imprecise category of 'primitive' arts, made up of antiquities from archaeological sites and material culture from worldwide communities assembled after scientific and anthropological expeditions.[1] In their displacement from International Exhibitions and Natural History and Ethnographic museums to Fine Art collections and temporary exhibitions, these objects were exhibited with no indication of the purposes they served in their original contexts, while their formal qualities and aesthetic values were highlighted under new strategies of display. This re-contextualization positioned them in an a-historical, non-functional, universalist plane and gave an aesthetic alibi for instrumentalizing voiceless objects. The phenomenon emerged particularly in the years 1912-1914 in exhibitions in Germany, Czech Republic and the United States.[2]

The easiness with which this relationship has been naturalized tends to conceal the unresolved tensions that lie beneath this process, causing a symptomatic return of ever new exhibitions that is still on-going. In this respect, the repetition of this historiographical and museological

1 I understand the notion of primitive as a constructed category that inaccurately groups different types of objects (artworks, artifacts and material culture with very different geographical and temporal provenances). Therefore I use inverted commas throughout the article.

2 Museum Folkwang Museum, Hagen, 1912; Neue Galerie, Berlin, November 1913; Kunstsalon E. Richter, Dresden, January 1914; Group of Fine Artists, (Skupyna Vutvarny Umelcu), Prague: third exhibition, May 1913 and forth exhibition, February 1914; *Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Root of Modern Art*, 291 Gallery, New York, November 1914.

myth of origin could be read as a repetitive gesture that the narrative of modern art must cyclically perform, perhaps in order to hide its own original instability. This article will examine some of these exhibitions, introducing new examples that complicate the established genealogy and illustrate a confusion in curatorial intentions. The uncertainty about display decisions, which has usually characterised these exhibitions, is brought into play as an opportunity to explore the ambivalences that underlie institutional and personal agendas, but also as a possibility to interrogate museums as sites of ideological authority.

→ KITCHEN UTENSILS, HOSPITAL SUPPLIES AND THE TALISMAN EFFECT

A review published in the *Brooklyn Eagle* on January 27, 1918 of the exhibition *African wood carvings*, held in Marius de Zayas' Modern Galleries, stated that "modernists claim that, inasmuch as these statuettes were talismans in the past in which they were made, they have exerted a talisman's effect on modern art." The magical spell coming from African sculpture had been a cliché ever since Picasso's account of his own experience at the Musée d'Éthnographie du Trocadéro in Paris, where his formal quest acquired a supernatural brushstroke. He recalled that "the masks weren't like other kinds of sculpture. Not at all. They were magical things. (…) The Negroes' sculptures were intercessors. Against everything; against unknown, threatening spirits. I kept looking at fetishes. I understood: I too am against everything" (Flam 2003, 33). The spiritual surface symbolically displaced the obvious formal plunder, initiating the well-known mechanism by which the West starts a process of 'safe' *self-alterization* that, at the same time, constructs and excludes the Other. The fact that this alteration is narratively associated to magic involves a certain Machiavellian touch.

The association of "primitive" and modern art took place through two main strategies of display. On the one hand, as in the exhibitions in Germany and the Czech Republic, African art was presented together with modern art. On the other, as in the 1914 exhibition *Statuary in Wood by African Savages–The Root of Modern Art,* African art was staged *as* modern art. The only existing installation shot of this exhibition, a Stieglitz black and white photograph of Edward Steichen's installation, does not show the full scale of the space, as we can see in the following description from *The New York Times* on November 20, 1914, significantly entitled "The Sun of Africa on Paper," reporting that:

> The exhibition of African sculpture at the Photo-Secession Galleries has been rearranged. Large sheets of red, bright yellow, and black paper, the kind used for weaving and so forth in kindergartens, have been placed on the back of the sculptures with a certain patterning of the colors. The result is brilliantly barbaric, and is said to be a substitute, the best one could get under the deeply discouraging circumstances, for the sun of Africa.

Leaving aside the journalistic tone, what we do see in the black and white image is the dynamic display style based on pedestals of different heights that played with the overlapping sheets on paper producing a geometrical and spatial meta-composition which framed the African masks and objects. The modernist backdrop provided a context for interpretation, even if African art was presented on its own. In both cases—'primitive' *with* modern and 'primitive' *as* modern—western art operated as a self-evident framework where modern art was the host and African art the subaltern guest. Far from the supposed talismanic effect of African sculptures on modern art, we can assume that it was surely the other way around.

It is highly ironic that this 'magical' effect was taking place just when art's exhibition value was in the process of displacing its previous cult value, as Walter Benjamin was soon to assert in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.* Actually, it was not a talismanic effect from objects that was to play a role, but the exhibition value, engendered by the modern artistic field, which was to constitute the talisman. No matter if the objects becoming 'high art' were African or Cubist: what they really needed was legitimacy, not magic. Technologies of aesthetics, as Brian O'Doherty calls them, were a fundamental tool to produce the new magic (O'Doherty [1976] 1986, 15).

In the mid 1910s, especially in the New York art scene, modern art did not have a legitimacy beyond a small *élite*, so it could hardly sanction the enforced guest. Modernist and "'primitive'" art shared a number of uncertainties and faced the distrust and often distaste of art critics and the public. Therefore, the appropriation and re-framing of 'primitive' art situates it in an ambivalent situation. The cohabitation suggests a reference to a sort of unclear aesthetic origin that ends up in a paradox, as Elisabeth Casey expresses in her The *New York Times* article on November 8, 1914: "One is tempted to think that the Primitive, the first barbarian moved to express himself in terms of art, has never existed. The further back we go, the further he recedes until suddenly we come to something that looks so 'modern' as to seem of today." This mise en abyme in which modern is primitive and primitive is modern indicates a fundamental fault in the nature of their relationship, being and not being simultaneously in the same plane.

Contradicting what the *Brooklyn Eagle* critic had said a few lines before, the article continues saying that, in relation to other 'primitive' work, such as archaic Greek bronzes or ancient Christian wood carvings, "the African carvings are only a little bit more crude, and with the crudeness of a people who have, in their native state, not developed beyond the savage." Defending modern art with African art and inventing a discursive justification to be able to place them together was not an easy task, considering the deeply racist assumptions of the United States cultural milieu. This was even the case for some of those instrumental in promoting this relationship, such as Marius de Zayas (Grossman 2009, 30). From a different perspective, Harlem Renaissance writer Alain Locke, conscious of the transatlantic and European orientation of

African-American modernism, thought of African art as inspirational, something representing the cultural past, but not an ahistorical projection determining the present of American-African artists (Patton and Honey 2001; Diedrich and Heinrichs 2011).

291 Gallery was also the space where Rodin, Matisse and Picasso exhibited their works in the first decade of the twentieth century. Like the African art, these too were frequently received with disdain by conservative critics. Picasso's 1911 exhibition was described by Arthur Hoeber in the *New York Globe* as "the most extraordinary combination of extravagance and absurdity that New York has yet to be inflicted with" (…) and "the results suggest the most violent wards of an asylum for maniacs, the craziest emanations of a disordered mind, the gibberings of a lunatic!" (Norman 1960, 108). J. E. Chamberlain in the *New York Evening Mail* in 1909 described Matisse's drawings as being "most appalling and haunting, and that seems to condemn this man's brain to the limbo of artistic degeneration" (74). It is worth noting how, five years later, the same critic praises African art from his very conservative point of view, while dismissing modern art:

> We do not think of the wild African tribes as great sculptors, but the exhibition of their work which Mr. Stieglitz has been holding at the Photo-Secession gallery proves that they are real artists, expressing a definite idea with great skill–inherited, traditional skill. Their use of rich, dark wood sculptures is remarkable. Forms are rude and conventional, but the expression is quite as successful as that of the archaic Greek sculptures. Everyone should see these African carvings. They are one of the few very real things now visible in this town. (De Zayas 1996, 61)

The question is then: if the average public was not prepared for avant-garde, what kind of legitimacy could it bring to primitive art?

The reception of Brancusi and Duchamp's artworks in New York, in this moment, is illustrative of the same ambivalent background. In the case of Brancusi, in 1913 critics referred to Mlle Pogany, a sculpture of a woman's head exhibited in The Armory Show, as "a hard-boiled egg balanced on a cube of sugar" (Brown 1988, 139). In 1927, his *Bird in Space* originated a famous trial (*Brancusi v. United States*) when Edward Steichen appealed against the customs' decision to consider the sculpture a manufactured object of metal and not a work of art, which implied the payment of a different category of taxes (De Duve 1986). The *Bird in Space* could only bypass the customs under the classification 'Kitchen Utensils and Hospital Supplies.' In the case of Duchamp, the rejection of his *Fountain/Urinary* to be exhibited in the Society of Independent Artists in 1917 is not only a well-known affair, but another of modern art's foundational myths (De Duve 1996).

It is not my intention to deal with these aesthetic and epistemological turns, or with the underlying colonialist ideology, but to draw attention to

how 'primitive' art, abstract sculpture and the ready-made's interrogation of the status of the art object shared a question about how such perplexing works are to be displayed, indicating a moment of instability, doubt and openness. Contrary to the reassuring vision of modern art framing non-western art, modern art's frame was itself unstable. In both Brancusi and Duchamp, there is a deliberate indetermination about the public presentation of their works. Duchamp was aware of the importance of the exhibition value having replaced the cult value, and of the role that the symbolic spaces of/for art (galleries and museums) played as the conditions of possibility (the givens) of art in the aesthetic regime. Frequently, Duchamp forced the gallery spaces into self-evident stages, in order to highlight the representative attributes of both objects and spaces, and altering the established modes of display (Kachur 2001). In the case of ready-mades, the displacement of everyday objects was correlated with their dis-location in the gallery and in his studio. For instance, his ready-mades were exhibited and photographed suspended from a doorjamb, from the ceiling, or just laid directly on the floor (Molesworth 1998). If we examine Stieglitz's photograph of R. Mutt's *Fountain*, published in *The Blind Man* in 1917, the small plinth seems at odds with the urinal, which stands unsteadily on it. The urinal casts a shadow on the pedestal that reinforces the feeling of instability. Even the composition, a bicycle wheel on a chair, transformed the relationship between plinth and object.

Brancusi also blurred the boundaries between pedestal and object, constructing interchangeable pieces that could play different roles, and situating combinations of them ('kitchen utensils and hospital supplies?') directly on the floor. Even the *Column Without End* is a vertical superposition of a repeated geometrical figure that he had sometimes used as a base. The ambivalence of the part/whole relationship creates an unsolvable instability, extensive to the studio/gallery distinction, to such an extent that they are still undissolved in the Atelier Brancusi at the Pompidou Centre. The blurring of these proceedings were, as we have seen, familiar to Stieglitz and Steichen, responsible for the installation of the African art exhibition at 291 Gallery, where the plinths appeared more as columns or vertical accumulations of different size squares, with a strong similarity to Brancusi's exhibition that had taken place in the same gallery seven months earlier.

For these four artists/installers, there is continuity between the fundamental question about the status of the objects and the way in which they are displayed and installed. As a matter of fact, there was no previous answer as to how either a displaced artifact or a decontextualized ready-made should be displayed in an artistic context. This elusiveness draws attention to the different lines of tension present in the exhibitions: what is 'primitive'/modern, ethnographic/artistic, everyday object/art, part/whole, pointing towards a new question: not what is art, but *when* is art? This perspective dissolves the double binds, as it breaks the underlying aesthetic and epistemological episteme and focuses on the examination of contexts.

→ CURATORIAL INTENTIONS: INTERWAR NORTH AMERICAN, SOVIET AND FRENCH MODELS

The joint installation of modern and 'primitive' art was not a homogenous practice with the same implications. Rather there were different agendas behind the discursive and curatorial intentions, as we shall see in the following examples. Stieglitz and de Zayas' pioneering exhibitions aimed not only at an artistic expansion of the canon, through the inclusion of photography, modern art and African art. As gallery owners, they were also concerned with its commercial side. Marius de Zayas' assertion about this interest is well known: "When the First World War was declared (…) Paul Guillaume was only too glad to let me have all the African sculpture I could put in a trunk and bring to New York. This was his first contribution to exhibitions of modern art in New York; many others followed—if not with the same intention of making propaganda pure and simple, with the hope of opening a market for them, which was just as legitimate" (De Zayas 1996, 55). Gallery owner Paul Guillaume was also a key figure in this context and illustrative of the liaisons of the incipient market. Guillaume did not come from a wealthy family, and got his first job at 18. This was in an automobile garage that received free gifts from Gabon (African sculptures) along with the raw rubber sent to make into tires. He soon understood the possibilities of these sculptures and developed a network of sources in France's African colonies (Harriss 2000). The sale of African sculpture allowed him to open a small gallery of modern art and build an extraordinary collection of his contemporaries' works, while also selling African sculptures to collectors (Martin 2010).

The entwined aspects of art and the market were soon transferred from galleries and collectors to institutions. After Stieglitz and de Zayas' seminal exhibition, the display of 'primitive' and modern art together was to become a recurrent strategy in the New York artistic milieu throughout the twentieth century. As Shelly Errington has argued, in the United States, specifically in New York, the collecting and promotion of modern and 'primitive' art were closely entangled (Errington 1998). Errington examines how between the two world wars the MoMA was the major venue for the first historical and discursive appraisal of modern and 'primitive' art exhibitions, showing how its trustees, especially Abby Aldrich and Nelson Rockefeller, were instrumental in the process.[3] The MoMA invested great effort in exposing and educating the public to these two new forms of art. In close relation to these museological practices, photography was also an important tool for the construction of a modern gaze that had the additional effect of helping photography

3 One of the MoMA's founders was Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, a promoter of modern art who also collected American folk art, both very advanced tastes for the time. The major collector who made visible and legitimised objects from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas as primitive art was Nelson Rockefeller. For Errington the fifty years between 1935 and 1985 saw the emergence and institutionalization of authentic primitive art, in a period beginning with MoMA's 1935 exhibit African Negro Art, whose catalog was written by James Johnson Sweeny, and ending with the 1984 exhibition *"Primitivism" in Twentieth Century Art*. For her, parallel to the secure establishment of modern's art, primitive art's legitimacy crystallized institutionally with the 1957 opening of the Museum of Primitive Art (situated, perhaps significantly, directly behind MoMA on 54th Street). Nelson Rockefeller's collection formed its core. With the opening of the new museum, MoMA ceased exhibiting primitive art, with the exception of *Art of the Asmat* in 1962 (Errington 1998).

to be considered as high art, as Wendy A. Grossman has established (Grossman 2009).[4]

This aesthetisation was inversely mirrored in the historicisation of Soviet exhibitions. During the first Five-Year Plan (1928-1933) Soviet Russia developed a complete reorganisation of public museums, which were transformed into spaces for artistic denunciation and religious defamation (Akinsha 2000; Salmond 2002; Jolles 2005). Closely related to El Lissitzky's innovations and oriented towards a propagandistic transformation of museums, Stalin's 'Talking Museums' (*samogovoriashchie muzei)* started what they called 'experimental Marxist exhibitions.' Under the promotion of a Marxist understanding of history, aiming at the broad education of the masses, museums adopted a completely new approach, involving new display techniques and an elaborate outreach programme. In this new Soviet museology, exhibitions such as *Art from the Age of Imperialism* (1931) or *The Art of the Great Industrial Bourgeoisie on the Eve of the Proletarian Revolution* (1932) adopted an installation format based on the dynamic graphic and exhibition designs of El Lissitzky.

The new display language was also applied to the 'atheist' museums, such as the Central Anti-Religious Museum in Moscow and Leningrad's Saint Isaac's Cathedral reconversion in 1933, oriented to what one contemporary American observer called 'comparative idolatry.' The Central Anti-Religious Museum provided the model for synchronic Marxist installations, presenting a juxtaposition of idols, fetishes, Christian images and black-magic objects (Paine 2010). The Moscow museum stressed the social bases of religious institutions and the ritual objects they employed, relying heavily upon supplementary communication media and unconventional juxtapositions. Effective communication design was applied to every kind of 'supplementary' illustrative exhibit, such as maps, designs, plans, drawings, and photos, according to the Soviet curator Victor Grinevich (Jolles 2005, 439).

The anti-religious museum in Leningrad, installed in Saint Isaac's Cathedral with an extensive array of documentation and an anti-religious library, assumed a more scholastic focus. Developed according to a diachronic Marxist model, as opposed to the synchronic model of comparative idolatry in Moscow, the Leningrad museum stressed the cultural and political status of various organized religions throughout history in addition to their social origins. Designed by Vladimir (Tan) Bogoraz, a former Narodnik turned ethnographer and specialist in Northern folklore, the Leningrad museum placed considerable emphasis on the chronological evolution of the exterior signs of religious belief, as opposed to their structural similarities. The anti-religious museum in

4 Charles Sheeler, for example, had a significant role in bridging African aesthetics and American modernism. Although Sheeler photographed African art only briefly (1915-19), his clients were quite influential. Sheeler photographed sculpture for Marius De Zayas's exhibit *African Negro Wood Sculptures* (1915) and documented the collections of art patrons Walter and Louise Arensberg and John Quinn. De Zayas, the Arensbergs, and Quinn were all drawn to African objects for their formal properties rather than ethnographic values. Man Ray's photographs of African and other non-western art over the course of two decades is the main focus of Grossman's examination (Grossman 2009).

Leningrad seems to have functioned equally as an ethnographic museum. Several Western visitors to Leningrad noted its installations devoted to conveying the history of religion through the historical manipulation of the human body (Paine 2010).

Marxist exhibitions lie behind *L'exposition anti-impérialiste: La verité sur les colonies* (*The Truth about the Colonies*), a counter-exhibition organized in 1931 by the French Communist Party (which played down its participation to avoid political opposition) and some Surrealist artists and writers (Aragon, Éluard and Tanguy, among others), as a protest against the celebratory *Exposition coloniale internationale de Paris.* The exhibition was preceded by two pamphlets in which the Surrealist group denounced the exploitation of colonized people and questioned the official Colonial Exhibition (Mileaf 2010). The *Truth about the Colonies* took place in a leftist identified neighbourhood near the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, in the former Soviet Pavillion built for the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs.* There are only two remaining installation shots, published in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* and also descriptions of the exhibition by Aragon and the PCF.[5] The installation included statuary, objects, masks, totems and photographs juxtaposed with textual documentation, such as captions and banners, like the one in the photograph, proclaiming Marx's dictum: *un peuple qui en opprime d'autres ne saurait être libre* (A people that oppresses others cannot be free).

In this exhibition, the strategy was to exhibit western and non-western art and artifacts together. This was in contrast to exhibitions that aimed instead to highlight the formal resemblances/appropriations or to universalize art production and reception, or that questioned colonialism and religion as the products of concrete historical conditions. The exhibition was organised under categories, such as *art nègre, ocenean, peau rouge and fétiches européens,* with ironic comparisons of liturgical and tribal statuary, thus problematizing cultural hierarchies. For Aragon, this critique aimed to emphasise the relationship of indigenous arts to the class struggle, and to advance political consciousness and action. In this case, we could say that for communists, art from the colonies could serve as a 'talisman' for the revolution. Although this exhibition is an exception in the general western exhibitionary context, we need to re-inscribe it and connect it to an expanded history of exhibitions, in which canonical and hegemonic models need to be continuously contradicted by counter-genealogies and other possible histories.

The singularity of this exhibition can be measured against two other exhibitions that took place in Paris, *the Exhibition of African Art and Oceanic Art* at the Pigalle Theater Gallery in 1930, and the *Surrealist Exhibition of Objects* at the Charles Ratton Gallery in 1936. These

5 The description of the PCF stated: "there are propaganda tools of the Church, innumerable images of piety in colour, ingenious adaptations of Christianity for each race: a baby Jesus and black virgins. Amusing photos reproducing the sculptures that one church built through a big exploiter from Java and where saints and all the sacred characters are of a more purely Asian type and present faces and profiles of Buddha. Other photos show the exploitation of indigenous peoples in work sites or enterprises belonging to religious missions" (Mileaf 2010, 131).

were representative examples of 'primitive' art as and with modern art, respectively. Contrary to the exceptional politicisation of *The Truth about the Colonies*, for Janine Mileaf, the Ratton exhibition's curatorial intention was to disrupt bourgeois society, affecting the individual consciousness. For her, the juxtaposition of 'primitive' and surrealist artworks, especially provocative materials and disagreeable objects, were intended to provoke intense reactions from the viewers. For the Surrealists, disturbing the unconscious and upsetting the body was a different way to gain awareness and challenge the status quo. For Mileaf, as markers of fantasy, 'primitive' objects inserted in this discourse were placed in an ambivalent situation, somewhere between aesthetics and functionality and closer to the new ritual experiences that characterized the group (Mileaf 2010, 155). The convergence between anthropology and modern art, especially in the connection of French ethnography and surrealism, examined by James Clifford, helped discursively to support the connection, particularly on the shared ground of collecting and exhibiting. As Clifford suggests, the interwar artists tried to make familiar objects look strange, just as museums were forcing strange objects to become familiar (Clifford 1981). 'Primitive' and modern art shared the contradiction of being, on the one hand, alternative to western high art as something other than it—enforced and self-constructed, respectively—and on the other, progressively considered as high art. However, the apparent mutual reinforcement of the modern and the 'primitive,' promoted by an artistic *élite,* was only a sign of the instrumentalization of the latter. In this respect, it needs to be said that, in addition to the artistic aspirations of the organizers, a commercial side was also present in the Ratton Gallery show (Mileaf 2010). As we have seen, for a brief period of time the challenging uncertainty about display was transformed into a conscious curatorial language that helped to convey various agendas. A last instance can show us the maturity of the process. In the 1930s and 1940s the MoMA, in its laboratory years, explored a variety of display techniques that went hand in hand with the contemporaneous construction of a narrative for modern art, helping to establish its own legitimacy. In these years the primitive modern evolved into a native modern, in exhibitions such as those curated by René d'Harnoncourt (*Indian Art in the United States* and *Arts of the South Seas*). Mary Anne Staniszewski highlights the fact that d'Harnoncourt was very aware that there was no such thing as a neutral installation and shows how he used different display strategies in a single exhibition in order to produce an institutional re-inscription of 'primitive' art. Installation played a vital role in *formal* legitimacy (Staniszewski, 1998).

Jackson Rushing talks about three different strategies used by d'Harnoncourt: aestheticization, contextualisation, and recontextualization that come synthetically together for different purposes (Rushing 1992, 218). In *Indian Art in the United States*, nation, market and modernity, disengaged from historical processes and addressed to the North

American viewer, were perfectly intertwined in a complex system of installations.[6] For *Arts of the South Seas*, an exhibition less driven by political or commercial goals, d'Harnoncourt tried to re-address (and erase) the ethnographic/artistic divide through a new encompassing visual synthesis that he called *vistas*. The audience could visually flow over the different oceanic territories and make formal/functional connections and visual comparison between the objects of the different regions (Staniszewski 1998). Contextualisation and aestheticisation worked together in a conciliatory spirit, trying to produce a suture. What the *vistas* could not address, being in a blind spot, was precisely the historicisation of the divide.

→ CONTEMPORARY DIVIDES

It is interesting to note that, during the anticolonial struggles and the decolonization that followed the Second World War, there was a hiatus in the exhibiting of modern and non-western art together. The residual belief in an artistic horizontal universality was present in the entrance of Documenta1 in the shape of a photomural, but the example is an anomaly (Grasskamp 1994). Perhaps other types of exhibitions, such as *The Family of Man*, were historically more adequate to celebrate a humanist vision (Ribalta 2009). The postwar was also the key moment in the definitive establishment of modern art museums, in which the epic narrative of the avant-garde turned into a self-sufficient explanation. It is not until the mid 1980s that the symptom re-appeared in exhibitions, such as *"Primitivism" in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and Modern* (MoMA, 1984), *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965-1985* (American Museum of Natural History, 1986) or *Magiciens de la Terre* (Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989).

It is surprising that these exhibitions took place in a decade in which the deconstruction of museums as sites of knowledge, power and representation, where hegemonic discourses were produced and reproduced, was especially intense. In the 1980s, anthropology, museology and cultural studies had started to look at the politics of representation and at the way in which the gathering of artifacts and the display techniques, loaded with ideological routines, had played a role in the formation of non-Western identities and their system of meaning and values. The heated debates that triggered these exhibitions can be considered an indicator of certain changes, but they also marked the persistence of previous hegemonic views (Foster 1985; Clifford 1988; Fisher 1989 and 1992; Steeds et. al. 2013). The alternative to the exhibitions discussed could be represented by three exhibitions that took place simultaneously

6 For *Indian Art in the United States* d'Harnoncourt devised three sections, named Prehistoric Art, Living Traditions, and Indian Art for Modern Living. For each d'Harnoncourt explored a diversity of exhibition techniques, experimenting with spaces, atmospheres, display props, materials, reproductions and re-enactments of rituals (Staniszewski 1998).

in New York at the end of the decade: *Rooms with a View: The struggle between culture, content and the context of art* (Longwood Arts Projects, 1987); *We The People* (Artists Space, 1987) and *Art/Artifact (*The Center for African Art, 1988). All of them shared the same strategy, based on the certainty/uncertainty provoked by different installation systems, in order to re-address the artistic/ethnographic divide and its meaning in the contemporary museological debate.

Art/Artifact, curated by Susan Vogel, questioned the way African art had been installed historically in Western museums, and similarly exposed display and installation as non-neutral mediums.[7] In the exhibition, four different presentational approaches were put together (Faris 1988). In one section, objects were grouped together in display cases following anthropological models, with explanations about their technical, social and religious functions. In a second section, the 'Contemporary Art Gallery,' objects were arranged as if placed in a modernist sculpture gallery, without explanations or identifications (only small numbers referring to the catalogue). The third section was set up as a diorama, with three life-size mannequins surrounded by artifacts. In this section, material culture and environment as a whole was highlighted. Finally, there was a recreation of the Hampton Institute's first display of its ethnographic collection in the 1870s, as an example of a curiosity cabinet. In this area, artifacts were placed in dark wooden cases and frames.

Comparing the different approaches that framed similar kinds of artifacts, Vogel underlined the historicity of the appropriation process. She also suggested that this uncertainty about how to display could be used to undermine museums as sites of authority. The interest in Vogel's exhibition was not only as evidence of historical methods but as an experiment in how they actually worked in the contemporary exhibition space and how they could be re-staged and tested. Regarding how 'primitive' pieces would look under an aesthetic gaze, Vogel proposed different examples. For instance, an Abomey repoussé brass head passed as modern, installed in a manner that recalled Brancusi's sleeping-head position; a Zande hunting net invaded the spectator's space, resembling contemporary art installations. This 'game' offered the anthropologist Alfred Gell the opportunity to imagine himself as a curator and to write an article describing how an exhibition made from real traps would look, based on ethnographers' drawings, along with contemporary art works resembling traps (Gell 1996).

The exhibition had a catalogue, with texts from different authors including the art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto (Danto 1988). In his philosophical essay Danto attempted to conceptually distinguish art works from artifacts. The final aim of his essay was not to interrogate the ethnographic/artistic divide or what he understands by artifacts

7 Vogel stated in the catalogue: "'Most visitors are unaware of the degree to which their experience of any art in a museum is conditioned by the way it is installed. (...) Installations color the viewer's estimation of what he sees. This conditioning begins with the selection of what is to be displayed. (...) The museum exhibition is not a transparent lens through which to view art, however neutral the presentation may seem'" (Vogel [1988] 2006).

(confidently placed in the realm of functionality), but to reflect on what is art, a topic that he had extensively developed in his institutional theory of art (Danto 1996). Danto's questioning did not affect 'primitive' objects, since they could be inscribed in other disciplines. Rather, his argument reinforced the idea that contemporary art only assumed meaning under an aesthetic regime, moving it into institutional relativism. The article elicited a vigorous reaction from anthropologists who contested his "ethno-aesthetic fantasy," his conventional categorisation, and the relevance of comparing 'primitive' art and Andy Warhol's Brillo boxes (Dutton 1993). The comparison reproduced the old instrumentalisation of 'primitive' art by contemporary art, but this time not to support each other but to re-establish the divide under (paradoxically) aesthetic arguments. Ironically, as Alfred Gell suggested, the way in which Vogel's exhibition tried to question the Western ethnographic gaze towards African objects, in Danto's argumentation it served to cast a shadow on contemporary art (at the price of maintaining artifacts under a conventional category). In addition, for Gell, Danto's institutional view can be considered the extreme of an over-idealized distinction between art and artifact, between functional artifacts and meaningful artworks, which Gell suggests is a legacy of post-Enlightment philosophers, such as Hegel (Gell 1996).

Besides the debate triggered by the catalogue, Vogel's exhibition helped to make visible the cultural instability of both modern art and non-western artifacts and their different double binds. On the one hand, once outside of their institutional context, modern and contemporary art are always in danger of symbolical disappearance and dissolving into life. In this paradigm, the museum of modern art is seen as a self-validating sphere, trying to pass as a transparent institution. On the other hand, displacement and re-inscription in an occidental syntax are the conditions by which non-western objects have performed various discursive roles in and for the western context. However, in spite of the acknowledgment of its historical configuration, there is still a divide in the relation between art and artefact, material culture and sculpture. If we look at ethnographic objects as aesthetic artworks, we renounce relating them to their context. If we contextualise them in their original culture, we will probably overlook their aesthetic side.

Each turn that this double bind takes is related to contextual conditions. As we have seen, in the late 1980s the questioning of museums as sites of power and knowledge led the debates. This inquiry not only affected museums but was symptomatic of some conditions of the contemporary art scene, as artists would demonstrate. The exhibition *We The People* drew attention to the conventions of display of Native American artists' works. The exhibition was jointly curated by Jean Fisher, an artist, art writer and scholar who has looked extensively at artists emerging from cultures historically disenfranchised by colonialism, and Jimmie Durham, a visual artist, poet, essayist and political activist, whose work deconstructs national narratives and the stereotypes of Western

culture.[8] For Fisher and Durham, exhibitions such as *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art, 1965–1985* proved that a modernist and imperialist view was enduring in relation to cultural difference, in spite of the contemporaneous postmodernist aesthetic discourse, with its emphasis on pluralism and polyvocality (Fisher 1992). *We The People* tried to highlight the persistence of the 'ethnographic gaze' in aesthetics, scholarship and artistic institutions. The whole project interrogated the notion of 'authenticity,' and the concept was displayed as a masquerade. The main strategy for the exhibition was 'us looking at them looking at us,' an approach already present in Durham's work. The exhibition presented artworks of contemporary Native American artists as if they were being looked at with an exploratory ethnographic gaze.[9]

Rooms with a View. The struggle between culture, content and the context of art was curated by Fred Wilson, a North American artist whose practice is based on the rearrangement of museum's collections in order to critically examine and question how Western museum displays reinforce beliefs and behaviours in relation to the representation of minorities (Farmer and Gardner 2004). In *Rooms with a View,* artworks created by contemporary Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American artists were presented in different rooms and staged as distinct historical exhibition spaces. Wilson narrates the origin of the idea as follows: "When I was at Just Above Midtown I wanted to organise an exhibition [of contemporary artists] that was at three different museums. (…) I wanted to do a show at the Frick, the Metropolitan, and the American Museum of Natural History" (King-Hammond 1994, 31). These venues stood for a salon space, a contemporary art space and an ethnographic museum space (González 2008, 65). Wilson invited thirty artists and each of them had two pieces in the show.[10] One of the two works was always installed in the white cube, so everyone had one work there, while the other was placed in one of the two paired spaces (salon or ethnographic museum).

The centrality of the white space, which the visitors had to enter after going through each of the other spaces, had a symbolic significance. Wilson was very conscious of the importance of activating the viewer's response: "It would not be nice just to have their work in the ethnographic unusual spaces. (…) But it also made it very clear that all the spaces affected the viewers' way of thinking about the artists."[11] The white cube was not only

8 Contributing artists were Pena Bonita, Jimmie Durham, Harry Fonseca, Marsha Gomez, Tom Huff, G. Peter Jemison, Jean LaMarr, Alan Michelson, Joe Nevaquaya, Jolene Rickard, Susan Santos, Kay Walkingstick, Richard Ray (Whitman). Catalogue essays were written by Emelia Seubert, Jimmie Durham, Jean Fisher and Paul Smith.

9 As Fisher says: "We faced economic limitations, but the design of the first room was intended to evoke an 'ethnographic' display, while the second space attempted to override the modernist white space through the curved placement of sculpture pedestals and Jean LaMarr's mural, which helped to flooding the space with colour, and sound provided by John Rainer Jr.'s flute music" (Jean Fisher 1992, 249, n 3).

10 The show included the following artists: Barton Benes, Willi Birch, Serena Bocchino, Marina Cappeletto, Paul Capelli, Sunjoon Choh, Albert Chong, Pawel Cortes-Wodtasik, Jimmie Durham, Robert Hawkins, Noah Jemison, Alexander Kosolapov, Nina Kuo, Paul Laster, Larry List, Manuel Macarrulla, James McCoy, Tyrone Mitchell, Sana Musasama, Gloria Nixon, Lorenzo Pace, Linda Peer, Lise Prown, Jewel Ross, Robin Ryder, Elena Sisto, Eva Stettner, Ken Tisa, Alvin Toda, and Peggie Yunque.

11 Fred Wilson, Interview with the author, New York, February 10, 2009.

a source of legitimacy for contemporary art practices, but it made clear that its configuration was also historical and it could only work in relation to the other spaces. The homologation of the white cube to the other two spaces through its historicisation also projected a shadow of uncertainty on it. The white cube acted not as a canonical space, but as one among several Other spaces, questioning its apparent neutral supremacy.

Contrary to what Vogel was simultaneously doing, displaying 'primitive' art as contemporary art, Fisher, Durham and Wilson presented contemporary artworks as 'primitive' art, inverting the historical convention. The display spaces of the three exhibitions reflected different modernist inflections of this exchange, in which everyone was situated as an Other. Moreover, the three exhibitions were asking a common question about the present. Vogel was asking how African objects should be displayed in the here and now. The other two cases provided evidence to New Yorkers that the colonial and racial issue persisted for contemporary artists in the U.S. and could be observed every day (Pindell 1988). Vogel opened her catalogue with the statement that "this is not an exhibition about African art or Africa. It is not even entirely about art. *Art/Artifact* is an exhibition about the ways Western outsiders have regarded African art and material culture over the past century." Perhaps I can rephrase her statement in relation to the exhibitions of Wilson, Fisher and Durham: *We The People* and *Rooms with a View* were not exhibitions about Black, Latino and Native American artists. They were not even entirely about art. *We The People* and *Rooms with a View* were exhibitions about the ways (white) American curators have regarded Black, Latino, Native American artists over the past century. The curators of all three exhibitions were acutely aware of the divide between what Wilson calls 'mainstream American culture' and the 'peripheral' art scene.[12] Therefore, the exhibition was not only a reflection on how display systems framed artists and artworks, but a full investigation into the conditions according to which artists were still being classified.

Twenty years later, artists such as Pedro Lasch (*Espejo Negro*, 2007-2009), Willem de Rooij (*Intolerance,* 2010) or Kader Attia (*The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures,* 2012) are revisiting strategies of collecting, juxtaposing and overlapping in relation to colonialism. This recent turn is concurrent with other artists investigating past display systems, such as Goscha Macuga or Haris Epaminonda, indicating a renewed interest in the poetic and political value of exhibitions as medium. In the above mentioned cases, the well-known grouping/contrast of 'primitive' and modern is given a disturbing twist, overcoming the museological debates and looking at the broader political implications of colonialism and how its historical processes were articulated and manifested through and also within Western art. In order to disrupt

12 Fred Wilson states: "'At that time artists of colour –Black, Latino and Asian and Native American artists– were not in the mainstream at all, we were very outside the mainstream, just in our galleries, in our communities, or in the galleries that we had created just for us. So we were in dialogue with each other, but not with the mainstream American culture'." Fred Wilson, Interview with the author, New York, February 10, 2009.

old iconic associations, such as Picasso and African masks, Kader Attia refracts the mirror and correlates wooden sculptures with the archival photographs of the deformed faces of French soldiers in the First World War. In this way artworks and images, shaping and shaped by a colonial imaginary, are re-activated from a political and affective standpoint. In a world still pierced by the colonial wound, I dare to think that the relationship between ethnography and modernism, even as outdated categories, still brings unexpected returns.

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Othering: Art Ecologies and (Im)possible Repairs

→ CELESTE IANNICIELLO

Celeste Ianniciello holds a Phd in Cultural and Postcolonial studies of the Anglophone World from the University of Naples "L'Orientale". Her research analyses the visual (auto)biography of female artists from Mediterranean countries (Mona Hatoum, Zineb Sedira, Lara Baladi and Emily Jacir) as a contrapuntal example set against the epistemology of geographical, cultural and sexual borders. She is interested in public art practices coming from the experience of migrations as 'living archives' of postcoloniality. She has participated in national and international conferences and has produced articles on literature, cinema and, above all, the visual arts. She is a researcher in the Mela project.

→ ABSTRACT

My essay focuses on the relationship between historical and natural archives evoked in some examples of postcolonial and so-called eco-art. I will reflect on the theme of historical removal, of loss, but also of extinction and disappearance, and on the problematic possibility of "reparation" solicited by contemporary art in historical, ecologic and epistemic terms. I will consider some examples of postcolonial art as processes of othering, analysing artworks by Zineb Sedira, Kader Attia, Emily Jacir, and Mona Hatoum. Then I will move on to different examples of eco-art, focusing in particular on Ursula Biemann's video, Egyptian Chemistry, *in order to stress the relevance of post-humanism and postcolonialism as two possibilities to reconfigure our economic, ecologic, cultural and political relationship with the world.*

This article analyses how some examples of postcolonial art, coming from experiences of migration and cultural hybridisation, question and reconfigure such institutionalised identitarian notions as heritage, the historical archive, cultural patrimony and memory through images and practices of breaking, ruination, fragmentation, and, simultaneously, of recomposition, recycling and recreation. These are exercises of aesthetic and ethic reappropriation that can also be understood as processes of othering or as materialisations of difference, which confer on this art a strong ecological connotation. This is evident in the way such aesthetics rehabilitates and provocatively valorises figures and images related to loss, excrement, exclusion, asociality, waste, decay, debris, remains and ruins, in contrast to the logic of plenitude, purity and conservation traditionally produced by nationalism and practiced by modern museums and heritage management. Reverberating against the taken-for-granted confines of memory and history, this aesthetics of ruins becomes a potential agent of disruption and "actualisation," revealing the gaps in the unilateral construction of history as the progress of a continuous narrative. Such art brings forth the abject memories that both the recollective and the habitual have displaced.

→ BREAKING THE FRAME

As a first example of the artistic process of othering I will consider some artworks by the postcolonial French-Algerian artist Zineb Sedira. Directly emerging from the artist's culturally mixed biography and migrant background, divided between Algeria, France and England, and playing down nationalism by insisting on visual, perceptual and cultural ambiguity, Sedira's aesthetics can be defined as an interruption, an erosion, or a fissure in the borders established by the nation-state and its neocolonial transnationality. In this sense, it evokes the idea of a "cut into the force field" elaborated by Ranjana Khanna in her book *Algeria Cuts* (2008).

Khanna commences from Jacques Derrida's concepts of "frame," "supplement" and "hospitality," analysing the complex historical colonial and postcolonial relationship between France and Algeria and the pre-eminent role played by women in that history. In his book *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida speaks about the loss of the frame determined by the irruption of an external element (e.g. the theft of a picture, where the external element is the thief) which represents a constant menace for what lies inside the frame rather than for the frame itself. The existence of an external element, or a hostile, inhospitable "supplement," which threatens the frame/border's protecting function, shows the fragility of what is enclosed inside but, at the same time, it also shows the transformative and subversive potency of what is enframed when it loses its protection and comes into contact with the outside. Applying Derrida's argument to nationalism and its intrinsically fallacious identitarian and protectionist logic, Khanna maintains that the protecting frame corresponds to a "force field" which encloses the community, protecting it from the menace of a hostile supplement, namely the migrants, whose spectral presences

haunt the borders of the nation. Those that emerge and advance from the margins of the nation and nationalism bring with them a breach, a rift, or in Khanna's words, a cut into the force field of the nation, which she also defines as the "virile community." In this sense it is possible to recognise in migrant women, those marginal and "subaltern" figures in the nationalist narrative, a particularly "damaging" potentiality.

> If one exists at the margins of community, it is as a frame that causes damage to the interior. If a community is revealed as virile, than it is damaged by the supplement of woman, and other forms of political coming together need to be examined. … If the femminine subaltern has been inassimilable to civil society, it is largerly because of the apparently invisible modes of femminine production internationally. (Khanna 2008, 56-57)

Similarly this can be said for the othering processes of postcolonial art practices, as exemplified by Zineb Sedira's art: women and art "on the border" act like a hostile and erosive supplement in the male chauvinistic structure of the nation-state and its stagnant self-referential archive made up of fixed, monolithic ideas of belonging, history and memory.

Looking at the ways Sedira figures herself may help to shed light on the concept of the hostile supplement and its damaging relationship with the nationalist narrative of both community and the individual's cultural identity. In the photographic series *Outlining Myself* (2001), the artist produces the sense of a limit concerning both the self and the very possibility of a self portrait. It decomposes the portrait's cultural meaning given, according to George Clarke, by space, posture, dress, marks of social distiction, reflecting "a world of significance which has, in turn, already framed and fixed the individual… the terms by which the culture itself confers status and meaning on the subject, while the subject as image hovers problematically between exterior and interior identities" (Clarke 1992, 3). The image reflects the multiple meanings of the title "Outline," standing for "delineate, take shape," and "shape, silhouette, contour." The pictures, in fact, do not show the artist's face, but just the outline of her body, in a black shape silhouetted on a white background. A black sign on white, the artist presents herself as an autography without a proper name, an appearance of the self without a definite identity, partial yet plural, thus evoking what Derrida defines as the trait's withdrawal in the portrait, the mark left by the ruin of the eye. In his text *Memories of the Blind,* Derrida deals with the question of blindness, deconstructing the idea of a distinct and clear vision through a discourse on the portrait, which is characterised by two paradoxes. One consists in the transcendent invisibility at the origin of the drawing, so that whoever draws remains blind with respect to his/her drawing. The other concerns the trait's constant return to something else, other memories, other blind visions, its withdrawal from itself, from a "proper" identity: "there's nothing more to see, even black or white, nor the figure/shape… as it [the trait] never relates to itself unless immediately splitting itself" (Derrida 1990, 70).

For Derrida the graphic trait escapes from the field of the visible and retreats into diverse facets and returns but, paradoxically, this withdrawal reveals an otherwise invisible move toward the others, other memories, even other senses, beyond sight, toward the possibility of a historiography of the unseen. In this sense it is possible to find in Sedira's series the sense of the graphic trait as formulated by Derrida in his aesthetics of blindness. The artist's photographic portrait can be considered as the writing of the shadow and light (literally a *photo*-graphy) of the self, a portrait of the self as a spectre, a trace, a fragment, a blind spot, a dark image that recalls the memory of a ruin. The self-portrait here indicates a void in the look, a ruin of sight before the face as the place of an identification. The face finds it impossible to see itself and its identity as a whole. We are left with the portrait of the self as a ruin, the site of a framed memory.

> The self-portrait is a ruin, the face fixed as a memory of the self, what remains or returns as a spectre as soon as at first glance on the self a depiction is eclipsed. The figure, then, sees its visibility damaged, loses its integrity without disintegrating, as the incompleteness of the visible monument depends on the ecliptic structure of the trait, just remarked, unable to reflect itself in the self-portrait's shadow… the ruin, this is not a theme inasmuch as it ruins the theme, the position, the presentation or the representation of anything. Ruin: the memory opened as an eye… the break of a bony orbit that allows vision without showing anything at all. (Derrida 1990, 89-90)

Through the eclipsing silhouette of the self, the memory of a displacement is evoked. This is the way the artist draws the exilic path of her own experience, the route of her passages, in a dark image that emblematically

IMG. 01-05 (NEXT PAGES) — *Zineb Sedira, Framing the view, 2006, C-prints 76,2 x 50,8 cm each (courtesy Zineb Sedira and galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris)*

returns in the portrait of some Algerian migrant women, *Les éxilées d'Algérie* (2002). In the reflection of a shadow lies the truth of an identity impossible to frame and assimilate. If the black space where the self is drawn and withdrawn can recall the conflicts and the contrasts of being on the border of any neat vision and essence, it also reflects the space of an arrival, the possibility of an alternative, the announcement of something still to be seen. Such an artwork articulates the memory of one's ruin and simultaneously of one's own becoming. It is both mourning and prophecy; the drawing of one's own decentralisation and point of departure together with the memory of the observer's blindness.

A confrontation with another photographic series by Sedira, *Framing the View* (2006), showing the Algerian coastline and its seemingly abandoned landscape, allows us to catch the sense of proximity between the framing of the Mediterranean scenario and the vision of the self. Both series produce the sense of a biographic and geographic reality in fragmentary and exilic rather than in inclusive and totalising terms. In *Framing the View*, the artist draws on the ruins of Algiers.

Contrary to the title, where a framing is indicated, the sense of the image reiterates the impossibility of framing, of delineating the sight and the site

within clearly set boundaries. It seems impossible to see unless registering with this act an incompleteness, a ruin, something that exceeds the vision. A hostile supplement comes to disturb and break the limits of our look. This recalls once again Derrida's observations about the (im)possiblity of framing, along with blindness, the ruin or the mourning of the look in the very act of framing the vision in conclusive terms.

Of course, the question of blindness highlighted by Derrida invests not only vision but also and critically knowledge, as well as inherited notions of history, memory, belonging, identity. The architectonic ruins of Algiers depicted by Sedira speak of a material living archive where the present is constellated by fragments of the past which disrupt any conclusive and linear framing of history and place. A Mediterranean postcolonial archive is inscribed in those archeological remains. Iain Chambers, for instance, looks at the Mediterranean as a region whose history is composed of silences and fragments: an open archive that confronts us with a constellation of broken, interrupted, dissonant narrations, exceeding official maps and institutional accounts. In this picture, the sight of the ruin, the discovering of past in the present, allows for the emergence of what has been excluded, submerged, unrepresented and archived. This, as Chambers points out, does not contribute to completing the picture, and framing history, but rather to undoing the frame, provoking a damage in the protecting structure, to use Khanna's approach. This opens up the way towards alternative accounts of history and memory, and hence of identity and belonging:

> a return of the excluded clearly offers far more than a series of additions to fill the gaps in the already established historical mosaic. The forgotten do not complete the picture; rather, they query the frame, the pattern, the construction and advance what the previous representation failed to register. (Chambers 2007, 59)

The ruins of Algiers, as they are framed and proposed by Sedira's lens, can be understood differently than the image of a mummified myth of colonialism and the site of a fetishised *"éternelle romanité,"* which nostalgically reminds us of a lost hegemony. Nor is it simply indicative of the helpless search for a difficult heritage, registering the open wound of the colonial trauma that awaits recovery. These ruins propel us beyond morbid attempts at historical reconstruction. In Sedira's aesthetic, the articulation of Algiers' ruins disseminates the signs for a new archeology of knowledge. As in the case of the dark silhouette in *Outlining Myself,* through which Sedira delineates and at the same time erases the boundaries of her identity/identification, we are invited to look through the cut produced in the inherited frame, to travel beyond mourning and nostalgic fetishim, toward the sea as a liquid archive. There past and present memories of migrations, passages, border-crossings, and cultural intermixtures coalesce and explode the monolithic narrations of history and the present, not to cancel them, but to rewrite them in critical terms.

IMG. 06-09 *(NEXT PAGE) — Kader Attia, The Repair: From Occidental to Extra-Occidental Cultures, 2012 (courtesy Kader Attia)*

→ FRAGMENTING TO REPAIR

From the breaking of the frame to (im)possible repairs: to remain in the liquid landscape of the Mediterranean, I would like to shift the focus to other examples of art as a process of othering. Let me start from the installation *Repair: From Occidental to Extra-Occidental Cultures* (2012) by the Algerian artist Kader Attia. Shown at Documenta 13, in Kassel, this artwork brings us directly into a decomposed archive. Actually it presents itself as a sort of fragmented and random collection of objects

coming from the past and elsewhere, gathered to form a subterranean and silent dialogue amongst themselves, where the temporal and spatial coordinates of their belonging and provenance interlace and multiply. Attia's work shows a series of different objects and images from some ex-colonised African countries. Collected by the artist over 15 years, they are now exposed on iron shelves, similar to those used for storage, and in wooden showcases. The aesthetic material exhibited is highly variegated: from traditional wooden sculptures from Dakar and Senegal to marble ones from Carrara, Italy. Alongside these are old newspapers, books, magazines, original photographs, and repaired African artifacts, photocopies, metallic objects; from vitrines and mestizo objects (objects of extra-Occidental cultures integrating an element of occidental cultures) to Trench art (objects made in the trenches by soldiers in World War One using cartridges and artillery shells) and a slide show. The latter displays images of the so-called *"gueules cassées,"* an expression indicating the Great

War veterans who suffered irreparable physical damage, in particular to their faces. Recalling the monstruosity of war and the absurd violence exercised by men on other men, these mutilated combatants, identified as "broken faces" and thus reduced to their corporeal wound, were allowed little social visibility or historical recognition. In France, for example, they were assigned by the French government a house some forty kilometers from Paris, and often excluded from public commemorations of the war dead. Their status as damaged survivors, of disfigured individuals, of being damaged but not yet dead and thus reminders of an open wound on/from the past, prevented them being hailed as "heros" of the homeland.

So, what do the images of those broken faces tell us? Is the broken faces slideshow in Attia's Repair a "resurrection," activating a form of historical restitution? Is this an attempt to recompose a lacking historical mosaic with the inclusion of the missing parts? Maybe there is all of this at play in this installation, but also even more than this, especially if one considers that the work evokes not so much a sense of historical pacification and reconciliation as a sense of disturbance and a problematisation of any attempt to produce a simple historical account. This is evident in the juxtaposition of objects of beauty like the African and Italian sculptures with war objects like pieces of artillery, cartridges and trenches; and then, in between the repaired artifacts, there are other recovered objects such as old magazines, pictures, books, and images of dismembered and irreparable bodies.

Actually what can, at first glance, be perceived as being juxtaposed displays a dynamic of cultural interplay. This is an archive of the ruins produced by colonialism and war, but it is also a museum of cultural exchange between the African continent and the former colonial powers of Europe – from the well-known references to traditional African sculpture in Modernist art to the jewelry that African artisans made from cartridge cases – suggesting a critical dialogue between them. If a possibility of repair is in play here, it relies precisely on a work of fragmentation and re-collection which functions as a "healing" method of historical "reconstitution", yet without any guarantee of rehabilitation. The interplay of these objects results in a very complex picture not only of reciprocal influence between colonial and post-colonial cultures but also of radical questioning. Attia's installation activates a disruptive encounter with a repressed historical narration and materiality, confronting the spectator with the possibility of repair as an exercise in cultural reappropriation, and above all with the problematic existence of "incurable images" (Elhaik 2014) of history.

In this sense, avoiding the risk of reducing art to an expedient for inclusive and moribund accounts of the transcultural present, postcolonial aesthetics invites us to consider art as the possibility through which our connection with otherness, with present and past, belonging and memory–even with science and nature–is problematised and activated, in unexpected and unpredictable ways.

For example, at *Documenta 13* the Palestinian artist Emily Jacir created a kind of personal museum from some Palestinian literary remains,

where history, memory and belonging are intimately interconnected and interrogated. In her photographic installation, *ex libris* (2012), the artist showed images drawn from more than thirty thousand books coming from Palestinian homes, institutions and libraries looted by Israelis in 1948 and then kept and catalogued as A.P. (Abandoned Property) in the Jewish National Library, West Jerusalem. Jacir took the pictures with her cell phone in the course of many visits. They show the internal pages of those books, where the Arabic writing is both in handwriting and typescript, sometimes clear in bold characters, while elsewhere it has almost disappeared or is superimposed with other writing and hardly legible. Sometimes English words mingle with Arabic. In Kassel, where *Documenta* was hosted, the artist created a register of the traces and fragments she found, and translated some handwritten inscriptions of the former owners into German and English, exhibiting them on billboards, weaving a dialogue with history and place. *Ex libris*, in fact, was put on in the Zwehrenturm, the area of the Fridericiarum Museum where manuscripts were stored and that survived the 1941 American bombing that destroyed other volumes kept in the Museum library. Jacir also concentrated on the postwar period when the region of Hessel–Kassel was occupied by American forces. Here the Offenbach Archival Depot, which housed the books and manuscripts looted by the Nazis, instituted a process of restitution, the largest in a US zone up until then. Interlacing past and present experiences of siege and destruction (perpetuated by the United States and Israel), and transcending the borders of different histories and geographies (North America, central Europe, the Middle East), the artist appears to re–actualise the process of restitution, giving it a disruptive meaning that questions the very idea of ownership. The Palestinian books that were once brutally appropriated are now registered in a public vision and space, through a creative gesture that renders them unappropriable and uncontainable. What the artwork produces is not simply a recuperation of what was lost, but the transformation of the loss into a possibility of a power that goes beyond the colonial instance towards a different re–collection that activates memory as difference.

The intricate relationships between private property, archiving, public and cultural memory activated by Jacir's installation recall alternative possibilities of memorialisation that produce a disruption, a break, an unpredictable crisis in the institutionalised logic and practices of archiving. This is what happens, for example, in the installation *Interior Landscape* (2009) by another artist with a significant connection with Palestine, Mona Hatoum. The installation, comprising old and new works by the artist, is hosted at Fondazione Querini Stampalia, a 16th century house-museum in Venice, once the mansion of the aristocratic Querini family. The Palace still maintains the characteristic Renaissance magnificence, with the luxurious rooms covered in frescos, showing ancient collections, precious furniture, paintings, porcelain, globes, fabrics and sculptures. "The museum is presented as an historic dwelling that maintains its ancient atmosphere but opens its doors to novelties," as stated on the

museum website.[1] In fact, the presence of Hatoum's art in this Venetian house-museum constitutes not only a novelty but, paraphrasing a famous sentence by Salman Rushdie (1988) that epitomises the disrupting effect of postcolonial difference on Occidental cultural monolithism, shows "how newness enters the world," and the museum doors. Art here is a disturbing and questioning presence, or again in Khanna words, a "damaging supplement."

Hatoum introduces some strange and quirky objects into the museum's precious collections and furnitures: *T42(gold)* (1999), two white gold-rimmed china cups for tea are added to the delicate porcelains of various periods and styles; they are fine and precious but clearly unusable as they are attached to one another, thus interconnecting and inseparable, like communicating vessels or alembics. Other similar disrespectful and metamorphic "intruders" feature in another showcase and are called *Natura morta* (2009): colorful Murano glass bombs, shifting ambiguously between mortal weapons and sensual fruit – as their original working title *Pommes et granades* suggests – from objects of death to sources of nourishment. Again, a showcase containing classic musical instruments is invaded by incomprehensible elements: balls of hair, a bolted colander and spoon, a china riddled brain glasses with nets in place of lenses. Hatoum disseminates these and other indecipherable objects in this prestigious Renaissance palace, casting a shadow of perceptive anxiety and uncertainty concerning not only the past splendour, so carefully preserved, but also the practice of cultivating memory as a process of collecting and museification of (luxurious) private objects in (luxurious) private places, abstracted from historical contingencies and contemporary reality. Hatoum recalls the importance of considering cultural memory as an "interior landscape" inextricably connected to, or even haunted by, an exterior landscape and its social, cultural, geographical, historical, economic variables. Memory is a hybrid, conflictual, critical landscape.

This is evident in the material and symbolic reconfiguration that Hatoum proposes of the Martyrs' Monument in Beirut. Here the artist draws on the ruined archive of her native city, touching, as Chiara Bertola observes, "on this thorny subject of memory of the past to be reconstructed and the complex redefinition of places and monuments in the new hermeneutic panorama of a destroyed city" (Bertola 2009, 31). Hatoum decontextualizes the Monument from its original place and function, transforming it from a public war memorial into a private ornament, a little statue, *"Witness (2009)"*, put on the aristocratic Querini table alongside the "Triumph of Beauty," the centerpiece in bisque of the Sèvres porcelain dinner service from which the artist took her inspiration. The poignant irony of the difficult dialogue between the harmonious and graceful centerpiece and the *"Witness"*, triumphant gesture of "Liberty" is accentuated by the fact that the Martyrs' Monument statuette has been reproduced mutilated and martirised as it is in reality, with all the holes and disfigurements produced by bullets and shells during the fifteen year civil war that divided Beirut.

1 http://www.querinistampalia.org/eng/museum.php, accessed May 16, 2014

In Hatoum's art, where evocations of colonial power in which the artist's original land, Palestine, are emblematically persistent, it seems impossible to enjoy aesthetic beauty by defusing conflict, just as it seems impossible to reconstruct private memory without recalling its complex relationship with collective and historical memory. Hatoum invites us to negotiate the "difficult heritage" inscribed in our cultural memory and above all to connect with the irrepressible vital elements lurking beneath the conflict. There is not so much a question of repair and recovering in place here as the possibility of transformation and regeneration stemming from artistic experience as an experience of sensorial affection, provocative thinking, cultural mobility, material and organic change. As one of Hatoum's recent artworks, *Hanging Garden* (2008), suggests, even a trench can turn into a garden. Everything is subject to the ecological law of difference and maybe an alternative relationship between the self and the world and a sense of belonging that comes from a revaluation and recovering of our ruined relationship with nature.

→ THE ART OF NATURE AND THE NATURE OF ART

I now shift the focus to the political value of the relationship between art and nature. In particular, I analyse the relation between what can be considered as a border-crossing art (emerging from experiences of migration and border-crossing, displacement and the production of re-positionings) and nature in the sense of a material archive of mobility. I therefore pay attention to the ways art and aesthetics articulate the relations concerning matter, nature, territory and memory, through a theoretical approach based on the combination of two perspectives, the postcolonial (which uses border-crossing thinking as a critical method), and a Deleuzian feminist materialist philosophy, with particular reference to the theoretical elaborations about nature, art, territory and movement by Elizabeth Grosz (2007).

Engaging with the philosophical tradition of becoming (from the Presocratics to Spinoza and Deleuze), and to evolutionary Darwinian theory, Grosz's feminist perspective unhinges the classic opposition between nature and culture, underlining how nature itself is the condition of possibility for culture. Nature is viewed as a force that expands in matter and thought, in mind, senses and imagination, in the individual and the community, through the encounter of bodies triggering new encounters, movements, relations, transformations. "No one knows what a body can do" (Spinoza). It is notable that Spinoza here uses the indefinite article, indicating that bodies aren't to be restricted to human or living bodies, but to all bodies. If, then, no one knows what a body can do, this is because the assemblages into which bodies can enter are limitless. And in entering into an assemblage or a network, the body's amount of acting is increased or diminished, assisted or checked. We can thus think of a body as being akin to a field of potentials, such that in entering into an assemblage with another body, potentials of the body are drawn or pulled forth from the body, manifesting themselves for the very first time.

Grosz underlines how the creative process (both in nature and art) is independent from any purpose or intentionality, and explains how, for example, animal courtship has something intrinsically excessive and artistic, something gratuitous with respect to the mere function of survival. Similarly, art is not functional, it has nothing to do with any representative function. It does not represent that which is already given, rather it produces newness in the form of sensations and vibrations. Art and nature are transformative forces and as such they are political. They are political in themselves because they are based on differentiation, mobility, profusion and intensification of life. In this sense, Grosz refers to an "unlivable power" that passes through the body and connects human and non-human, organic and inorganic.

> Art is the most vital and direct form of impact on and through the body, the generation of vibratory waves, rhythms, that traverse the body and make the body a link with forces it cannot otherwise percive and act upon. … Art is the most direct intensification of the resonance, and dissonance, between bodies and the cosmos, between one milieu or rhythm and another … art is the way that universe most directly intensifies life, enervates organs, mobilizes forces. (Grosz 2008, 23-24)

IMG. 10-12 *(NEXT PAGE) — video still from Egyptian Chemistry by Ursula Biemann, 2012 (courtesy Ursula Biemann)*

This is the transforming power of art: an immanent power that nonetheless goes beyond the phenomenological, beyond representation.

It is possible to retrace this discourse about art and nature as processes of othering in some contemporary artworks and art experiences. This is the case of the famous silhouettes by Ana Mendieta, who used to define herself as an "earth-body" artist. Her corporeal art, a material and simultaneously spiritual practice, could be defined as a "becoming-landscape." Mendieta's body mingles with the natural elements, the land, the flowers, the trees, the fire, the water; it is there in her flesh and bones or it is evoked through its traces in the ground. The relationship between body and landscape emerges also from the recent photographic project by Jean Paul Bourdier and Trinh Minh-ha entitled *Bodyscapes* (2007). Both works reference a combination and reciprocal determination of body and milieu, and hence also of architecture and nature, reality and imagination. This recalls the intimate connection between nature and artifice, as for example evoked by the photographic series *Bird* (2008) by Roni Horn, where the artist plays on the perceptive and material ambiguity between human and animal.

Some examples of bioaesthetics present at Documenta 13 are worth citing here, such as the installation *Doing Nothing Garden* (2012) by the

Chinese artist Song Dong, consisting of a grassy hill in front of the Fredericianum museum, where seemingly nothing happens, as the artwork's title suggests, but actually a life in ferment is hidden beneath the surface, inside, out of sight, activated by the composting material which constitutes the living core of that hill. A field of action and revolution, a territory of living movement, almost invisible, as is the case in another installation, *The Lover* (2012) by the German artist-biologist Kristina Buch, consisting of a garden that, through the daily care of the artist herself, favours the creative process between the flowers and the butterflies hosted there. The fence of nettles and thistles delimiting the garden suggests that the artistic experience of nature implies a desire of border-crossing that concerns not only the physical space but also visual

and perceptual limits. Besides evoking an interlacing bewteen visible and invisible, action and inertia, art and artifice, these artworks, in their transitory and impermanent nature, recall the fact that nature can be understood as a living archive of bodies in transit and migrant matter, as an uncontrollable space of border-crossings and hybridisations, which produce life and death. The human is only one of the different bodies that participate in the material plane of composition, in a web of relations and assemblages that cannot be reduced to dynamics of inferiority and superiority, even when the creative process concerns knowledge. As the Swiss artist and video-essayist Ursula Biemann observes, human beings are not the privileged subjects of knowledge because what they know and practise is part of a "hybrid ecology" (Biemann 2014). This is what Biemann articulates in her work *Egyptian Chemistry* (2012), which consists of a collection of videos where the artist explores the hybrid ecology of the Nile, that is, the coalescence of water and other organic, natural elements with human, social and technological components. The art project is based on fieldwork where water samples were taken in sixteen locations along the Nile and around the Delta wetlands. Their chemistry was probed and the locations documented in their socio-ecological configuration. In a series of short videos, *Egyptian Chemistry* brings the knowledge from multiple sources – from atmospheric physics to hydraulic modelling, peasant activism, agro-science, metaphysics and ecology – into a single forum, forming an epistemogram or a sort of epistemological cartography. This is the production of an ecological paradigm in stark opposition to the neo-liberal, capitalist one produced by the Egyptian government.

The core motif in *Egyptian Chemistry* is the collection of water samples taken at specific sites along the Nile, some of them rural, some industrial, others urban. Another video, directly related to the first one, documents the same young Egyptian, this time in a white coat, as he brings the Nile water samples into the installation of *Egyptian Chemistry* at the Contemporary Art Forum in Alexandria where he rebottles them in chemistry lab glasses. Each sample represents an archive of multiple histories where human and non–human realities emerge in a variety of formations. Biemann underlines the extraordinary, but often neglected, proximity between scientific naturalism and social sciences, but also between nature, chemistry and poetry, aesthetics and the mythic imagination. It is not by chance that she uses the word "al kemia" to describe her aesthetic and epistemological approach:

> This more wholesome approach goes back to an ensemble of practices encompassing chemical, biological, metallurgical and philosophical dimensions, represented by the original name of 'Al Khemia', long before the epistemological division into disciplines and subdisciplines set in. Al Khemia happened to be the ancient word for Egypt, meaning the Black Land, possibly due to the muddy Nile floods periodically fertilising the land. The term alludes to the vision that, before anything else, the earth is a mighty

> chemical body where the crackling noise of the forming and breaking of molecular bonds can be heard at all times. (Biemann 2014, 217)

Egyptian Chemistry confronts us with a living archive of hybrid matter and a hybrid consciousness of the world. It may represent an invitation to consider the possibility of an alternative cartography of reality as well as a new archive, able to account for a different humanism, a different political economy. The archives of the future should be able to register, as Biemann's video-essay suggests, the elements of an untameable and unrepresentable ecology that reconnect to life as difference, unfolding from the encounter between nature and culture, bios and zoe, matter and technology, chemistry and magic.

The hybrid ecology of reality suggests epistemologic and economic paradigms which are often in radical conflict with the current ones. By contrast, the ecofuturist video *The Radiant* presented at Documenta 13 by the Otolith Group explores the dystopian landscape of Fukushima after the nuclear disaster. What is most striking here is the almost total absence of bodies, of living beings, both human and animal, an absence evoking the danger of extinction produced by nuclear energy. What is important here is not a *memento mori* effect nor a moralistic recall of our finitude, or death, as it is after all part of the vital cycle and process of "becoming other," or as Rosi Braidotti puts it, of a "becoming imperceptible" (2006). The critical point pertains instead to what can be defined as a politics of death, characteristic of both our past and present political economy. This can be referred to as a "necropolitics," the term used by the Cameroon postcolonial scholar Achille Mbembe (2008) to describe the racist colonial power as a force that exchanges life for death and death for life, and which is responsible for the violence, abuses, silences, absences and gaps on which our modernity has been constructed, and which still largely remain buried in our institutional archives.

The encounter with art and the natural and historical archives brings us into another encounter with a certain impact. For more than an encounter it is actually a challenge. This is represented by posthumanism as a cultural and political project that brings our colonial past directly into focus, and its role in the construction of the asymmetrical and oppositional relationships between human and animal, history and nature; and, on the other hand, our postcolonial present, in its various forms (migratory processes, critique, theory, aesthetics, ethics), positing the possibility of a reparation and reconfiguration of those ruined relations.

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Stones, Lava, Sand, Water

From the Archives of the Land to the Languages of Art

→ LIDIA CURTI

Lidia Curti is honorary professor at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She is a member of the editorial board of *Anglistica, New formations, Parol, Estetica* and *Scritture migranti*. Her recent books are *Female stories, female bodies* (1998) and *La voce dell'altra* (2006), and the editorship of *The postcolonial question* (1996), *La nuova Shahrazad* (2004), *Schermi indiani, linguaggi planetari* (2008), *Shakespeare in India* (2010). She is currently preparing a book on women's diasporic writings in Italy and in the Mediterranean, and on this subject has published essays in *DWF*, *Feminist Review, Lettera internazionale, Postcolonial Studies, California Italian Studies*, and in various collections of essays.

→ ABSTRACT

From the incorporeal to the corporeal, and vice versa; from earth to seed and bread to blood and body; from man to corpse and then again to earth; a pantheistic unity, linking men and nature to infinite matter (Giordano Bruno). I intend here to give examples of this process, starting from an exhibition of land art and a diffused museum. I then go on to consider works and installations by individual artists who use stones, sand, lava and water as their means of expression, often in combination and sometimes in an indistinguishable whole moving from immutable to mutable, solid to fluid and vice versa. This can be observed particularly in the relation with the female body in women's contemporary art. In these projects, towns, woods, mountains, lakes, rivers and sea, as the sites of the circulation and migration of elements

and people, open up the invention and reinvention of subjectivities. The artists I quote are seeking not so much to push art out of the closed space of the museum into the open as to interact with the natural environment, with traditions and communities that have their roots and routes in the soil, in a human, vegetal and animal humus that creates a resonance with what is both ecological and social (Félix Guattari, Bracha Ettinger).

→ INTO THE CONTINUUM

Non vedete voi che quello che era seme si fa erba, e da quello che era erba si fa spica, da che era spica si fa pane, da pane chilo, da chilo sangue, da questo seme, da questo embrione, da questo uomo, da questo cadavero, da questo terra, da questa pietra o altra cosa, e cossì oltre, per venire a tutte forme naturali?

Giordano Bruno [1584] 1973[1]

Pietra: è l'arte.

Maria Lai 2006[2]

Essere liberi da tutte le collocazioni spaziali possibili: parete, spazio, iperspazio. Quadro, installazione, performance. Sperimentazione e massificazione. Aperto e chiuso. Dentro e fuori. Qui e ora, solo Ora.

Francesca Alinovi 1982[3]

…the artificiality I elaborated earlier, in which everything caught in the cycle of visibility and invisibility or of life and death is artificial, including our own bodies, our existences. Nothing is "natural" in the usual sense of the term. Perhaps the only "natural" element or event is this energy, this force that exists in no single material form, but thanks to which things materialize, take form, mutate and disintegrate.

Trinh T. Minh-ha 2005

From the incorporeal to the corporeal, and vice versa; from earth to seed and bread to blood and body; from man to corpse and then again to earth; a pantheistic unity, linking humans and nature to infinite matter. In the diversity of forms and figures and of all measures and dimensions, there is a whole "excluding all particular being" as Giordano Bruno says ([1584] 1998, 79). Centuries later, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and

1 "Do you not see that what was seed becomes stalk, what was stalk becomes an ear of wheat, what was an ear becomes bread, what was bread turns to chyle, from chyle to blood, from blood to seed, from seed to embryo, and then to man, corpse, earth, stone or something else, in succession, involving all natural forms?" (Bruno 1998, 57).

2 "Stone: it is art" (my translation).

3 "Being free from all the possible locations: wall, space, hyperspace. Picture, installation, performance. Experimentation and massification. Open and closed. Inside and outside. Here and now, only Now" (my translation).

Guattari speak of a flux of desire not needing a choice between the one and the multiple:

> Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point! [...] A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and... and... and..." ([1980] 1987, 44-45)

They also write of an incorporeal transformation that is, however, always related to the corporeal; the transformation of substances and the dissolution of forms in favour of fluid forces, like flows, air and light, constitute the very power of this intense matter. Later Guattari speaking of the three ecologies—environmental, social and human—will lament the loss of the relationship between subjectivity and its exteriority, what is inside and what is outside "be it social, animal, vegetable or Cosmic" (Guattari [1989] 2000, 27).

The crossing of human, animal and vegetal/mineral, the threshold between the animate and the inanimate (in the fabric of the earth birth and death are intertwined), can be found in art, in its forms and languages. This is particularly the case in forms of art that work in nature and with nature, where this continuum is directly reconstituted both in the open or in the closed space of a museum.[4] Nature and art are likewise producers of objects, things hidden beneath things or inside things, moving from surfaces to roots and viceversa; like the voyage to the unconscious. Their languages share the metamorphoses of modes and routes, through superimpositions and stratifications. With art comes the importance of the discontinuity and interruption that is also part of natural cycles and returns, movements and migrations. Art like nature can give origin to new worlds and can be conceived as cultivation. Félix Guattari speaks of eco-art as the essence of his three 'ecologies,' considering 'eco,' from the original Greek sense of *oikos*, as the continuum of 'house, domestic property, habitat, natural milieu.'[5]

I intend here to give examples of this process through the analysis of works and installations by artists who use stones, sand, lava and water as their means of expression, often in combination and sometime in an indistinguishable whole moving from immutable to mutable, solid to fluid and vice versa. This can be observed particularly in the relation with the female body in women's contemporary art. In these projects, towns, woods, mountains, lakes, rivers and sea, as the sites of the circulation and migration of elements and people, open up to the invention and reinvention of subjectivities. Most of the artists I quote are seeking not

4 Its more established forms are known as land art and are largely excluded from the following discourse that, alongside the influences coming from philosophical and critical thought, is tied to personal experiences and encounters in the field of ecological art.

5 "The principle common to the three ecologies is this: each of the existential Territories with which they confront us is not given as an in-itself [en-soi], closed in on itself, but instead as a for itself [...] opening up processually from a praxis that enables it to be made 'habitable' by a human project. It is this praxis opening-out which constitutes the essence of 'eco'-art" (Guattari [1989] 2000, 53).

so much to push art out of the closed space of the museum into the open as to interact with the natural environment, with traditions and communities that have their roots and routes in the soil, in a human, vegetal and animal humus that creates a resonance with what is both ecological and social.

Bracha Ettinger, in her figurative and philosophical elaboration of trans-subjectivity, develops the concept of "art working," that is art as process, in action and movement, and not an object finished in itself. This configuration of a time-space-event she calls "Event-Encounter" (Ettinger 2006). The interaction between nature and art is the subject matter of the following discourse analysing some art-works as well as considering how art works.

→ THE MEMORY OF THE LAND: VOLCANOES AND FEMALE MYTHOLOGY

A good example of the continuum described above are the Campi Flegrei near Naples, a land of volcanoes, a space with rich historical, geological and mythological characters. As a site of perennial transformations, rendered alive by the active passages between solid and liquid, emersion and sinking, where fire turns into stone and stone into fire, this is also a mythological space where the superimposition of past and present signals the coming and going of memory. Here we find instances of Mediterranean appropriations of the myth and its symbols in combination with the local flora and fauna.

This volcanic terrain is, according to Georges Didi-Huberman, only seemingly lifeless. It is composed of latent things, of sleeping images that secure the survival of the past in the present. After the experience of walking on the Solfatara crater, he observes: "We must ourselves be the seismologists and the archaeologists of our field of knowledge. Whether we walk on a ruin, or on a stone that is emitting fumes, there is always something to extract from the ground on which we tread" (2012, 11).[6] This is where the exhibition *Natura naturans. L'arte come processo creativo* (May-June 2013) was located, precisely in the Astroni Crater.[7] The title of the exhibition was meant to draw attention to the process of creation/destruction present in both art and nature, and refers to the philosophical tradition that from Bruno to Spinoza proposes to go beyond the dichotomy of human and natural creativity. The artists were a heterogeneous group, moving between land art, sculpture, painting, theatre and dance. The

6 In his work he recalls that 'survivance,' in Amy Warburg's use of the term, is what is apparently dead, but comes to the surface in other historical moments. Bringing to light what is surviving, resisting in an elsewhere, against the imperatives of the 'actual,' means accepting anachronism as the necessary survival of the past in the present (see Didi-Huberman 2010).

7 The Astroni Park is a State Natural Reserve, situated in Agnano, Napoli, the largest crater among many characterizing the area in and around the town of Pozzuoli, denominated Campi Flegrei (fields of fire). One of them is the Solfatara, a still active crater whose rocks emit sulphur fumes and are interspersed with boiling pools of mud yielding the image and the feeling of a kind of valley of hell, and Monte Nuovo that appeared between the 28th and the 29th of April 1538. The whole area is subjected to the active phenomenon of bradyseism as witnessed by the Temple of Serapide in Pozzuoli, a *macellum*, the ancient market place of the Roman period, whose columns are marked by the different levels of sea water due to the rise and fall of its foundations.

sixty proposals that were accepted, while not necessarily referring directly to the archaeological and geological character of the Astroni, were all inspired by its natural environment. The call for works insisted on the necessary link with the local flora and fauna: organic materials from the park's rich vegetation were to be used, and those materials allowed from outside were to be biodegradable and eco-compatible.[8]

The continuum described by Bruno and by Deleuze and Guattari is recalled in many of the works, through the proximity of birth and death, construction and destruction, as most of them will naturally be decomposed by the wear of weather and time. Fallen trees are reshaped in animal forms, a crocodile among them, and other animals made of lightwood or grass appear. The earth is modelled by circles and furrows, recalling the female body. Human silhouettes lie on the surface of the lake, or can be seen amidst the foliage, like the painted red trees across the water. Footprints in multiform ways are a reminder of human traces, like the cobweb trapping cardboard human puppets, cobwebs being a recurrent theme among the installations. Natural colours are used to paint a totem, or an anthropomorphic humanoid target on trees ("this is where it all started from" says the artist). Colours transform boulders into natural sculptures and sometime dancers' bodies during performances. Paths are created or underlined by colours or stones. Sound and movement were added to the show with audio installations, performances and poetry readings.

IMG. 01 — *Paola Di Celmo and Maria Antonietta Robucci. "Land Art Campi Flegrei Astroni". May 2013 (courtesy Michaela Quadraro)*

8 The project intended to promote "... works, realized with natural-biodegradable materials, offering the possibility of building a mental map of the place, a poem, a new orientation of man in nature in the collective imaginary" (see Land Art Campi Flegrei IX Edition. https://www.facebook.com/groups/422246587801363/, accessed May 16, 2014).

IMG. 02 — *Carla Robalino Aguirre. "Land Art Campi Flegrei Astroni". May 2013 (courtesy Michaela Quadraro)*

IMG. 03 — *Michele Iodice. Cardboard outlines. "Land Art Campi Flegrei Astroni". May 2013 (courtesy Michaela Quadraro)*

It is impossible here to give an exhaustive account of the works of so many artists; words are hardly the best instrument for such a multiform show.[9] Some collective female projects were of some note. One by the group OT consisted of an excavation in the earth that, apart from the reference to female anatomy, implies a metaphor of the journey into the self, bringing to light the unknown that is inside us. The whole process was intended to be a female performative action rather than a finished

9 Antonio Mele's video catalogue gives an excellent overview of the exhibition. see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNGsPSuZvxk&feature=youtu.be, accessed May 16, 2014.

IMG. 04 — *OT GROUP (Elena Averardi, Selvaggia Filippini, Maria Fontanella, Donatella Guarino, Marina Iodice, Marianna Mendozza, Marina Sarracino, Anne-Katrin Schmid). "Land Art Campi Flegrei Astroni". May 2013. Tree branches found in situ, natural fibre yarns, natural colours. 5 x 3 x 10 mt. (courtesy the artists)*

IMG. 05 — *LALOBA Anna Crescenzi &Renata Petti. Il punto della formica nell'erba (The point of the ant in the grass). Galvanised iron structure, straw and hemp shape, walnut branches, 330 x 141 x 60 (h) cm. "Land Art Campi Flegrei Astroni". May 2013 (courtesy the artists)*

work in exposition. It started from the temporary encounter of eight women artists meaning to reflect collectively on the forms nature can assume through art's cultural and artificial status. The work is a "sculpture" working through the subtraction of natural matter, while adding completely "re-absorbable" materials.[10] Another was *the Ant* by Anna Crescenzi and Renata Petti, representatives of the collective LALOBA.

10 The red wool 'spun' from one side to another of the oblong excavation stitching the two parts together is a reminder of a female skill; the sphere, hanging over it in midair as a symbol of perfect unity, creates a link between the high and the low, letting water fall, each drop producing a sound and introducing the dimension of time.

IMG. 06 — *Metamorfosi di colori, forme e suoni per il gioco degli elementi (Metamorphoses of colours, forms and sounds for the play of elements). Works and performance by Antonio Bossa, Silvana Campese, Luminita Irimia, Teresa Mangiacapra, Luigi Montefoschi, Elena Pandolfi, Ughetta Parisio, Manuela Vaccaro, Umberto Vocaturo. For the fifth element: Cynthia Fiumano. "Land Art Campi Flegrei Astroni". May 2013 (courtesy the artists)*

Here the element of migration, connected to the threat coming from the volcanic nature of the place, is underlined: the ant, made of straw, is in transit, ready to migrate, always sensitive to the minimal variations of magnetic fields and therefore able to receive any signal of terrestrial movement. According to some scientific theories, the abandonment of ants' nests may be the precursor signal of impending quakes.[11] The third collective of artists and dancers I wish to mention is the one led by Teresa Mangiacapra. In this case there is a space marked by four circles/elements and a star for the fifth element, made of branches and leaves around a tree, where a performance was to take place; called *Il gioco degli elementi: metamorfosi di colori, forme e suoni*, it was a combination of colours, forms and sounds, with the four elements (earth, water, air, fire) represented by performers, each with a different instrument and marked by a different colour. The fifth element, red for love, put colours on the ground and the bodies before a collective dance involving the public ended the action.

I would finally like to mention at least one of the individual works, Rosaria Matarese's *The failure of the Scarecrow* (2013). Here we encounter a cardboard silhouette of birds alighting on the open arms of the scarecrow, made of wooden sticks, who is turning to the sky his own big frightened eye, rather than frightening the birds away. In her presentation of the work, Matarese writes: "[…] the reasons of its failures, apart from its necessary ugliness, are that there is no motive why it should frighten

11 A small ant looking for refuge had already appeared in their installation of a house made of nuts branches, with which the collective won the competition ART I CARE (2002). In 2006 they participated in the project 'Villaggio dell'arte' (see analysis of this event below) with the installation Pesce Fossile, a reproduction of a large fossil fish made with the branches of surrounding trees.

IMG. 07 — *Rosaria Matarese. Il fallimento dello spaventapasseri (The failure of the Scarecrow). Wooden sticks and cardboard silhouettes. "Land Art Campi Flegrei Astroni". May 2013 (courtesy the artists)*

IMG. 08 — *Rosaria Matarese. Fallo per Olimpia. Omaggio alla Olimpia di Manet (Fallus for Olympia. Homage to Manet's Olympia) 1993. Waxes on wood, Tunisian find, diam: 125 cm.(courtesy the artists)*

IMG. 09 — *Rosaria Matarese. La femme fontaine. 2009. Oil colours, burnt plastic. 40/40/13 cm. Collection Foundation IRCCS Milano (courtesy Rosaria Matarese)*

inoffensive sparrows that need the food they have a right to. I have strongly wished that the scarecrow should fail in its role [...] by accepting the birds in its open arms–and they will shit on it too! With its eyes turned to the sky in fright, more failed than this!" The work connects to some of the characters of her art, her iconoclastic irony and demystifying style.

The art of some of these artists had already revealed a tendency to relate the human body, particularly women's, to stone, wood or other materials. In her paintings and sculptures Matarese recovers materials that have been discarded and abandoned (from which space and time are they dispersed and lost?) and assembles them alongside female bodies. By the body of Dido or Olympia we find a phallic wooden object from a Tunisian beach, thrown up by the sea. In other pictures wood, nails and brass are superimposed on a disassembled female body, as in Garotte. In *La Femme Fontaine*, a more traditional representation of a woman is

IMG.10 — *Rosaria Matarese. Garotte. 2006. diam: cm100. Oil colours, wood, nails, bolts from discarded railway tracks, brass sculpture (courtesy Rosaria Matarese)*

IMG. 11 — *Teresa Mangiacapra. Daphne. 2007. Tufo, wood, clay (courtesy Teresa Mangiacapra)*

IMG. 12 — *Teresa Mangiacapra. Schegge di memoria (Splinters of memory). 2013. Installation Basilica Santissima Annunziata Maggiore, detail. Iron, plexiglas, clay, pvc, hand-painted fragments of tiles (courtesy Teresa Mangiacapra)*

broken in a self-reflective mirror and adorned with a heart in synthetic material.

In her works Teresa Mangiacapra—whose pseudonym as an artist is Niobe, the mythological character transformed into a rock—uses wood, iron and tufo to represent Daphne, the nymph who in her pursuit of freedom is transformed into a tree. For her female angelic bodies that are recurrent figures in her work, she assembles multiple materials often adding fragments of hand-painted tiles she finds on beaches during her wanderings. The transformation and transfiguration of materials from one state into another is best found in the work of one of the artists of the collective Laloba: Renata Petti. Her manipulation of clay or of papier-mâché into forms that, assuming the state of other materials, lead to an introspective journey back into the circular process of creation, which is

IMG. 13 — *Renata Petti, In-vaso. 1998. Ceramics, 53x11x32 cm (courtesy Renata Petti)*

IMG. 14 —*Renata Petti, Libro (Book). 2010. Papier-mâché, 25 x10 x 30 cm (courtesy Renata Petti)*

IMG. 15 — *Renata Petti, Spleen. 2010. Papier-mâché, 45 x 10 x 160 cm (courtesy Renata Petti)*

IMG. 16 — *Lina Mangiacapre. From the film Didone non è morta (Dido is not dead).1987, 98' (courtesy Lina Mangiacapre)*

also one of separation. Artists create through differentiation: clay for Petti is the synthesis, or rather the mother matter, of all the other elements.[12]

All of this cannot but recall the famous *Maman* by Louise Bourgeois, the gigantic sculpture-installation representing a bronze spider with a number of white marble eggs in a sack underneath her belly, that has appeared at the entrance of famous museums, starting from the Tate Modern in London. Once again, it was a refusal of the closed space of institutional museums. There is here the motif, recurring throughout her work, of a powerful and disquieting maternity as well as the symbol of a femininity uniting the human and the animal, the beautiful and the monstrous, a mythology of origins together with a vision of the future. The many versions of 'spider women' in Bourgeois's drawings recall the creative goddess central in Native American mythology and nature. Flesh turning into stone and stone into flesh is one of the motives in contemporary female art.

In leaving the Campi Flegrei and the connection of the female figure to stone, the Sibilla Cumana comes to mind, the prophetess hidden in a grotto in nearby Cuma. Her prophecies, written on palm leaves, emerge from the vertical splits in the rock and are swept away by wind and rain. Broken and then recomposed, her enigmatic language is at one with natural and supernatural forces. Sibyls, amazons, sirens, and witches: female mythology is tied to magic. The Sybil, like Cassandra, is a prophetess that nobody understands—sibylline is an adjective in use—or wants to listen to, as Lina Mangiacapre, founder of the feminist group *Le Nemesiache* (1970), shows in her film *Le Sibille* (1977). In a later film *Didone non è morta* (1987), Dido, the founder of Carthage, re-encounters her great love Aeneas in the Campi Flegrei to lose him once again together with her dream of the unity of Mediterranean civilizations. This is a dream, pursued in the mythological universe between past and present, in parallel spaces and time, that inspires Mangiacapre's works. The filmmaker evokes her metamorphoses: being transformed into stone she is then returned to flesh by the doings of the many women who have accepted her inheritance.

Other female figures are linked to stone: Medusa with her petrifying power, Niobe transformed by grief into a statue, Andromeda chained by her father to a rock, and Antigone, whose voice, recalling the Sibilla Cumana, emerges from the subterranean cave to which she has been sentenced by Creon. Many male philosophers and poets have sought to re-interpret her, while female philosophers and artists have subtracted her from the male tradition. In Maria Zambrano's *La tumba de Antigona,* she is described as being alone, closed up in a hole in the rock, speaking

12 She defines herself 'architect, sculptress, ceramist' in the first dialogue of a series contained in a catalogue on her works (2002). On her recent exhibition "La scarpa spaiata" ("The odd shoe," Sarajevo Supermarket, Naples, September 2013), she says: "we cannot identify our memory and need images to discover other possible worlds." The social denunciation in her work shows in the title picture of the exhibition, representing the odd shoes found on the beach after one of the Lampedusa shipwrecks. Dario Giugliano's presentation of the show underlines this and other aspects, among them the element of 'difference' in her work. Her works often express the melancholy and sadness in front of a nature that men are destroying, as in *Spleen*.

IMG. 17 — *(NEXT PAGE) Matteo Fraterno, A quota 3.400 (At the height of 3.400). Oil and lava sand on canvas, 450 x 200 cm. "Razza Vesuviana", October 2013 (courtesy of SUDLAB, Portici, Napoli)*

amidst the stones. From the stone her words cross centuries, not unlike the sybil (see Zambrano 2001; Wolf 2008). As Luce Irigaray says, "This figure, who according to Hegel, stands for ethics, has to be brought out of the night, out of the shadow, out of the rock […] " (Irigaray 1993: 119).

Like Antigone, the Sibilla Cumana is in the middle space between life and death, on the threshold to the underworld. At one time a tunnel connected the grotto to the Lake Averno, another volcanic crater in the area that is considered to be the entrance to hell. In Virgil's *Aeneid* it is used by Aeneas under her guide. Her role as the mediator between two worlds is common to all figurations of the Sybil, existing in many parts of the world, from the Roman, the Phrygian and the Phoenician to the Eritrean and the Libyan. They mostly appear with a black or dark face as described by Lucia Birnbaum in *Black Madonnas* (1993).

→ LANGUAGES AND LANDSCAPES OF STONE

Volcanic matter returns, amidst other materials, in the works of two artists, the 'Vesuvian' Matteo Fraterno and the Native American Jimmie Durham. Fraterno, originally from Torre Annunziata (Napoli), lives in a farmhouse called 'Giardino Fraterno' (also a play on his name), on the slopes of the Vesuvius. It is not far from Terzigno, one of the many small towns that, outside any law and common sense, have flowered too close to the crater of the volcano overlooking the bay of Naples. The volcano is currently silent but still active. The cottage built of lava stone unites a sense of stability and tranquillity in contrast to the constant risk and menace of the Vesuvius. Volcanic sand, sifted and softened with water, is in fact the main material of the artist's works alongside the wood of the broom plant covering the park: the natural elements described by Leopardi in his poem *La ginestra*:

Fragrant broom,
content with deserts:
here on the arid slope of Vesuvius
that formidable mountain, the destroyer,
that no other tree or flower adorns,
you scatter your lonely
bushes all around.
.....
These fields scattered
with barren ash, covered
with solid lava,
that resounds under the traveller's feet.[13]

13 "Qui su l'arida schiena/ del formidabil monte / sterminator Vesevo, / la qual null'altro allegra arbor

In *Crateri & Criteri,* Fraterno himself says that his abode is an extension between the villa Le Ginestre, where the poet lived at the end of his life, and the Terzigno quarry of lava stone that provides the elements of his inspiration (Fraterno 2013, 2). Sometimes the broom branches are burnt black and constitute a sculpture in themselves, or are contrasted, pale and tender as they naturally are, to the slates of lavic stone, reproducing the coexistence of life and death: "Thus the porous and dead lava is joined to the soft live wood, the cutting form with the delicate ornament" (Fraterno, 2013: 9). In the book there is a minute description of how the volcanic solution of mud is thrown and fixed on the canvas and sometimes painted over with ink, with the effect of black on black through which red glimmers faintly appear.

Solidified magma is also present in Jimmie Durham's exhibition *Wood, stone and friends* (Sala Dorica, Palazzo Reale, Napoli 2012-13). Here the natural lavic stone keeps its original form and is not manipulated or worked upon. The expressive strength of its physical presence (as seen for instance in the Campi Flegrei) has no need of human intervention. In the sculptures, the stone boulders are coupled with the wood of trunks, from

né fiore, / tuoi cespi solitari intorno spargi, / odorata ginestra, / contenta dei deserti [....] Questi campi cosparsi / Di ceneri infeconde, e ricoperti / Dell'impietrata lava, / Che sotto i passi al peregrin risona" (Leopardi 1937-1949: 42; English transl. by A. S. Kline. 2003). *La ginestra* o *Il fiore del deserto* (Wild broom or The flower in the desert) is a long poem written in the Torre del Greco villa in 1836 and published posthumously in 1845 in the first edition of *I canti*. In the first part of the poem, the fragility of the broom, and of human life, is opposed to the invincible power of nature. The broom is also a metaphor for poetry.

IMG. 18 — *Jimmie Durham. Maurizio's Gift. "Wood, stone and friends". 2013, Sala Dorica Palazzo Reale, Napoli (courtesy Jimmie Durham)*

four different kinds of trees, and with fragments of industrial metal. The ancient tree-like columns of the Sala Dorica around which the sculptures are assembled complete the surreal scenery, midway between a forest and a factory. As the presentation of the exhibition states, the richness of the wood, with its smell, knots, and the variety of its consistency, is meant to communicate the essence of its being; the stratifications of time inscribed in the wood transfer into space the history of its origins and the events it has witnessed in the course of the years. On the whole, the emphasis is not on the symbolic meaning that objects may acquire after being shaped by the artist but on their organic nature and on their

IMG. 19 — *Jimmie Durham. The forest for the trees. "Wood, stone and friends". 2013, Sala Dorica Palazzo Reale, Napoli (courtesy Jimmie Durham)*

power. In his works Durham has explored all the possibilities of wood, and has devoted himself to refining the art of stoning, "or letting the stone impact on diverse objects."[14]

This exhibition was also a concrete reflection on the effects of weather and time on the materials of art, inspired by the stones and styles of Naples.

14 See Anthony Hubermann 2012. It would be reductive to speak of Durham's art in this necessarily brief account, and impossible to describe his wide-ranging personality as an artist, an activist, a writer and an educator. The site *Collected Stones* (1995-2002) is a useful overview of his work, with a specific reference to a series of videos. See https://www.google.it/search?q=Jimmie+Durham+Collected+Sto, accessed May 16, 2014.

Walking in its historical centre is like treading on art and going through the succession of different architectonic styles not only figuratively. It is possible to observe its disorderly, unforeseen juxtapositions of different epochs, uncodified and unannounced: half-hidden arches, ancient structures or domes obstructed by recent buildings, unprotected and forgotten frescoes, many of them subjected to external damage, to casual interference, to a temporal and spatial stratification close to natural cycles. Our gaze is disturbed, interrupted, obstructed, drawn into a winding and baroque trail that is the essence of Neapolitan art. As the artist says, " [...] it is sufficient to linger in silence observing murals as well as hanging clothes, to realize how powerless is human control or that of any form of culture in comparison to the natural evolution of things" (see http://www.undo.net/it/mostra/151282). Here it is a short step for an art based on the materials of nature to connect to the urban environment.

With the Sardinian artist Maria Lai we move to a total landscape of stone. Sardinia itself is a rocky island, dotted with stone monuments, both natural and archaeological, such as the ancient nuraghi—seeming like a 'prehistoric lizard.'[15] Her installation *Legarsi alla montagna* (Tying ourselves to the mountain) was preceded by a collective happening organized by her in 1978 with the inhabitants of Ulussai, her birthplace to which she had returned after a long absence.[16] The installation proposed to tie together all the Ulussai houses with a long blue ribbon (27 km) terminating in a loop that included Monte Gedili, the high mountain looming over Ulussai. It was meant to link past and present by recalling the local legend of a girl who had saved herself from an avalanche, a common natural event in the village, by following a blue ribbon that had appeared floating in the wind in front of a cave where she had taken refuge, with others, during a storm.

After a year and a half of a difficult preparation, the community overcame their doubts, fears and reciprocal hostilities and began working together, young and old people, children and shepherds. Women were the first to come forward as Lai remarked. Over three days, they prepared and cut the cloth, forming spools that were distributed to each participant, who then tied the ribbon between and through the houses hanging typical bread called "su pani pintau" from the lines as a sign of love. Where old feuds were not resolved, the ribbon only marked the border of the house. On the evening of the third day, climbers intervened to connect the tied-up village of Ulussai to the mountain.[17]

15 This is how George Steiner describes it in *A millenium of solitude* (Steiner, 7): "Sotto il caldo bianco e intenso, le colline rocciose della Sardegna sembrano la spina dorsale di una lucertola antidiluviana. Nel primo sole, l'aria manda bagliori e mette a nudo lo sterile scisto." (Under the white and intense heat, the Sardinian rocky hills appear as the spinal back of a prehistoric lizard. In the first sun, the air glimmers on the naked surface of the sterile schist," my translation).

16 After the years of her formation in Venice under the guide of Arturo Martini and her artistic activity in Rome, she was summoned by the mayor of Ulussai to build a war memorial and proposed a monument to life and solidarity instead.

17 The event was accompanied by music and recorded in a video documentary by Tonino Casula, (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rVoN64Fz-o, accessed May 16, 2014) that has become a Super 8 film enclosed in the book *La pietra e la paura*. It was ignored by art critics for over twenty years to be later revalued as a seminal art event where the artist and the artwork are framed by the spectator ultimately

IMG. 20 — *Maria Lai. Legarsi alla montagna (Tying ourselves to the mountain). 1978 (courtesy Stazione dell'arte, Ulussai, OG)*

Maria Lai had already worked joining stone with textiles and cloth as can be seen in some of the works at "The Art Station" ("Stazione dell'arte"), founded in 2006 to house over a hundred of her works. It was a donation of the artist to the town. The museum itself, located in the abandoned railway station, offers an astounding experience in the middle of a mountainous expanse, rich with external installations and sculptures. It houses paintings, sculptures and textiles, some showing the coexistence of different languages in the same work, the threads of cotton or wool often hanging out of the canvases or off the sculpture superimposed on drawings and paintings. It also includes some of the 'libri cuciti,' books with writing sewn in and long threads falling out as a connection to the invisible. "The threads do not reproduce finished forms but fall out of canvas or cloth, are unpredictable, have neither beginning nor end, hanging loose like superhuman hair arrived from other worlds" (Gandini 2013, 23, my translation).

On the other hand the relationship to the Sardinian landscape is alive in all her works, in particular to the Ogliastra hills that offer a majestic picture of a world of stone. It comes true in the sculptures, paintings and graffiti she has inscribed on the walls of houses, on lawns and roads, rendering Ulussai an open-air museum. Among the natural paths listed in the Ogliastra territory, there is one named after her ('Sentiero Maria Lai' C-504, three kms. long) that, apart from the spectacular view of the natural stone monuments called tacchi, offers a territorial itinerary through her works. Alongside *La strada del rito* (Street of Ritual), *La strada delle capre cucite* (Street of sewn she-goats), *Il Muro groviglio* (Wall maze) and many others, it is worthwhile mentioning *La scarpata* (Escarpment), a great open air geographical vision of the world, and *La*

becoming author of the happening.

IMG. 21 — *Maria Lai. La scarpata (Escarpment). 1993. Dark blue painted cement, aluminium, stones (courtesy Stazione dell'arte, Ulussai, OG)*

IMG. 22 — *Maria Lai. La Casa delle inquietudini (The House of restlessness). Detail. 2005 (courtesy Stazione dell'arte, Ulussai, OG)*

Casa delle inquietudini (The House of restlessness), a fantastic creation inspired by one of Salvatore Cambosu's short stories.[18] Most noticeable is the old wash-house, recalling Sardinian women's hard daily labour, that was restored with the addition of works, among others, by her with *Il telaio soffitto* (The loom-ceiling) and by Costantino Nivola, the internationally known Sardinian artist, with his *Fontana sonora* (Sound Fountain), which is the name now commonly given to the washhouse. Maria Lai can be considered a storyteller of stone, as the book-interview *La pietra e la paura*, a poetical rendering of another tale by Salvatore Cambosu, shows.[19] The story speaks of a mother who becomes stone to rescue her child from death. Thanks to her expertise in bread making, she creates bread-children in order to bring him back, commencing a

18 Many of these works are directed to the re-qualification of marginal anonymous areas. See Altea and Magnani 2013.

19 Cambosu, whose short tale *Cuore Mio* is reproduced at the beginning of the book, is a Sardinian writer who in his own turn reworks ancient legends "in the search for the primordial" (Di Castro and Lai 2006, 15). The interview is interrupted by poems and illustrated by beautiful images from the pencil drawings sketched between 1941 and 1985. See Lai 1988.

IMG. 23 — *Maria Lai. Detail of the glazed-iron gate of the House of restlessness. 2005 (courtesy Stazione dell'arte, Ulussai, OG)*

IMG. 24 — *Maria Lai. Il telaio soffitto al lavatoio (The loom-ceiling at the Washhouse). 1982. Tempera, wood, iron, thread, 11x4 mt; below, Costantino Nivola. Fontana Sonora (Sound Fountain), 1987, copper tiles (courtesy Stazione dell'arte, Ulussai, OG)*

voyage in the abyss of magic: "art is generated by fear, by the conscience of an abyss, as Apollo and Daphne's story shows" (Di Castro-Lai 2006: 19). When he finally comes back to life, unlike Orpheus she cannot even turn to look at him, as she has become stone: "Her becoming stone is her victory over death" (ibid., 41). She knows her child is happily playing in the garden with the animals she also brought back to life but he does not belong to her anymore—like the artist with her work of art, I would add. "Stones […] contain unmemorable stories, they are charged with magic [….] Stones are the true images of the world. The sculptor should make them breathe like bread when rising" (ibid., 43, 45), and again: "Stone is art, with its concrete weight it is within grasp and at the same time unreachable. It both reveals and hides the history of the world. It comes from chaos, from magma, from the deserts" (ibid., 49). The intertwining of history and magic is to be found in the sculpture she dedicated to the great Sardinian thinker Antonio Gramsci and the fables he wrote or translated in jail, sometime referring to Sardinian nature and the devastation it was subjected to. The monument rises outside the Stazione dell'arte against the Ulussai mountainous landscape.

→ THE SPATIALIZATION OF MIGRATION

This last quotation brings us back to the magma I have spoken about and to the desert we find in Ursula Biemann's video works and installations. What Biemann calls research-creations are offered in both *Sahara Chronicle*, on the subversive practices of space and mobility of clandestine migrants across the desert, and *Egyptian Chemistry*, on the political and economical maze of transformations around the river Nile. The latter concentrates on the violence perpetrated on what she identifies as 'a hydraulic civilisation' where water is at the centre of an entire ecosystem. Her artistic practice proposes a complex interweaving of scientific naturalism and the methodologies of the social sciences with poetry, aesthetics, and the mythic imagination, creating a different kind of spatialization for art, as suggested by Francesca Alinovi above. In the wake of Henri Lefebvre, she considers space as an agent of change playing an active role in the unfolding of events. Her post-humanist discourse turns to the manner in which the difference that separates us humans from the world emerges.

Sahara Chronicle, a video–research (2006-09) on the clandestine transit–migration across the Sahara, from West Africa to the Mediterranean, constructs a map linking economic factors, historical conditions, cultural specificities and ecological developments: "I use the video camera as a cognitive tool to write counter-geographies, geographies which, rather than affirming and reinforcing control regimes, document patterns of subversion and transgression of imposed borders and obstacles" (Biemann 2014, 3). Fieldwork is central to her work where observation witnesses a direct material engagement with the phenomenon she is trying to represent, even when this complex video cartography enters the

museum.[20] Speaking of migration in relation to the museum, she observes that a museum "[…] is not simply a place to store, represent and exhibit previously existing facts and artefacts on difference, it is the apparatus through which difference comes into being" (ibid., 6). A museum is the place where matter and meaning intersect, an intersection she pursues in all her artistic practice. It is not a matter of inclusion or exclusion but of its discursive-material apparatus.

Art itself presents elements of transformation and transmutation even when it is framed within the institutional museum. One example was an exhibition of contemporary Indian art in Rome (*Indian Highway*, Maxxi 2011), where the works invaded ceilings and entered walls, were diffused on dispersed objects or even, with N.S. Harsha's figurative 'mantra,' painted on the plaza floor outside the entrance.[21] The accent on memory and migration, on the mobility of bodies and objects, can suggest possible alternatives in archival and exhibition strategies and their opening towards the future. A potential "counter-archive" is attentive to differences of gender, race, geography and culture. 'Public art' does not consist in a simple movement from the museums or gallery halls to a natural or urban space but rather in the creation of works as site-specific to the territory. The importance of site specificity—the relation with a community and its context—brings us to the open air museums and artworks that begin, in the planning and thinking process, from a precise physical location in relation to the social environment and to political action, such as the diffused museums tied to a space and a place.

Events that led to a museum of this kind took place in the Matese mountains near Naples between 2005 and 2008. It was an artistic project on the themes of memory, migration and mobility, stressing the symbiosis between being rooted and uprooted.[22] The ephemeral activities (theatre and performance, films, songs and sounds) that took place in that period were joined by the work of national and international artists who created, together with the local inhabitants, an open-air museum. Some of them inscribed their art on stones and pavements as well as drawings and painting on walls. Feld72, an international group of artists/architects, transformed an abandoned castle into a place of dreams, "the gateway of hospitality" through a laborious, collective building process—a creative laboratory—where students from the university of Vienna worked with many local residents. Floating wooden structures were constructed by

20 "The installation is a direct reflection of these aesthetic strategies in that the videos are exhibited simultaneously as an arrangement in the museum space, some on monitors, some projected. So there is a temporal dimension of synchronicity as well. With its loose interconnectedness and its widespread geography, *Sahara Chronicle* mirrors the migration network itself" (Biemann 2014, 3).

21 Movement and flux, transit and exchange were underlined by the prefix trans- exemplified in Tejal Shah's and Pushpamala N.'s pictures and installations. See Curti 2012, 194-98.

22 The collective project was devised within the program elaborated by the research group Pae*(se)* saggio and financed by the European Union with the cooperation of the Matese Regional Park between 2005 and 2008. It explored the phenomenon of migration in the five municipalities of Gallo Matese, Letino, Capriati al Volturno, Fontegreca and Prata Sannita, in their historical, geographical, and cultural dimensions. The substantial waves of emigration, particularly since the 1950s, had led to a crisis in the local economy and the subsequent abandonment of the town centres, and the project intended to promote their economic and cultural revitalization.

IMG. 25 — *Maria Lai. Fiabe Intrecciate. Omaggio a Antonio Gramsci (Intertwined Fables. Homage to Antonio Gramsci). 2007. Stainless steel and stones (courtesy Stazione dell'arte, Ulussai, OG)*

IMG. 26 — *Jimmie Durham, Gilgamesh. 2003 (courtesy Jimmie Durham)*

Giuliano Mauri, the carpenter/artist as he defined himself, as symbols of migration on the Gallo Lake, overlapping the theme of mobility and uprooting with that of writing on the landscape. During the Stalker-ON workshop, national flags were put on empty houses to signal the countries of destination of the former inhabitants. With the "urban lacework" (*tombolo urbano*) woven between one house and the next, the same group constructed a possible trajectory of redevelopment and of new beginnings between women's traditional art and the future. The encounter between wilderness and architecture, nature, and culture was traced through the rediscovery of an ancient path, considered as an interchange between physical, biological and social/aesthetic systems. This was the project *Dominio del Sentiero* (Dominion of the Path) by the Californian eco-architects Helen and Newton Harrison.

The five villages involved in the project were peopled with images of past memories and of their 'becoming.' The program privileged the concepts of the archive, the relation between migration and memory, and the articulations of tradition with the transformation generated by modernity and technology. It tried to formulate ways of narrating migration by developing communicative strategies and means, such as videos, music, guided and unguided interviews, territorial analyses and digital interaction (see Chambers 2007; Curti 2008 and 2009).

It may be fitting at this point to return briefly to Sardinia, to another open-air museum in Orgosolo, the largest of several in smaller villages in the heart of Barbagia. Murals describing both international and local events cover the town walls and houses, in a kind of historical and affective archive, however ephemeral. The themes are mainly those of social and political protest, particularly against wars and violence, and of emigration and immigration; the reference to the emargination of Sardinia within the nation and its use for military purposes is recurrent. The style, inspired by Mexican and Chilean murals, shows the influence of Cubism and Surrealism, not without personal and local touches. Picasso and Joan Miró are recalled beside popular political icons like Che Guevara or Antonio Gramsci, the latter also present with his words and comments. After an initial start in 1969 by a group of artists from the mainland, the murals became an on-going activity for the students from the local school guided by the art history teachers. The work is ephemeral: as it decays it can be either revived or abandoned as part of the creative process.

There is a different kind of inscription on the territory, one that rather than representing migration is meant to stop it, given by the so called border walls that from the second half of the last century have cut into two countries, towns, deserts and even seas; these obstacles and barriers, mostly constructed as a result of wars or as an obstacle to migration, have caused desolation and death. Though born as signs of oppression and discrimination, they have become part of the territory as well as art works through the inscription of graffiti and drawings: Berlin, Mexico, Palestine and many others. Ursula Biemann has paid attention to the border sphere and, in the years preceding the two projects outlined above, worked at length on what she calls 'border videography' in many parts of the world (see Biemann 2012), and particularly on the gendered division of labour.

The wall built between Mexico and the U.S., separating Tijuana and San Diego, was reinforced by the Gulf war and its successive events, a bulwark of the new emerging geopolitical order. It has been the object of many narratives, among which a video-essay by Fiamma Montezemolo, a cultural anthropologist and artist.[23] "Traces, meditation on border life"

23 Not unlike Jimmie Durham and Ursula Biemann, she works with various media, including installation, cartography, video, digital photography, industrial materials, performance, archival documents. Her art practice straddles various disciplines, sensibilities and methodologies, including social art, anthropology, cultural geography and visual studies. She has conducted a long ethnographic research on the areas on both sides of the border, and particularly on Tijuana, a factory of dreams, a hybrid town constantly assembling and disassembling itself, a major stop for the migrants moving towards the American dream. See Kun and Montezemolo 2012.

IMG. 27 — *Askavusa Association of Lampedusa. Con gli oggetti dei migranti (With the objects of the migrants). "Lampedusa Museum of Migrants", 2013 (courtesy Iain Chambers)*

is a dialogue between a female voice and the wall itself, the result of a twenty-four hour continuous shoot. The wall emerges majestic and implacable as a link between a stormy sea and the desert space, its presence occupying space and time. The incessant flow of images, words and stories runs over 'stone, sky, liquid, soil,' in the artist's words, recording a history of war and exclusions, but also of attempts at crossings or openings only dreamt of, represented by a door painted on it. This door reminds us of another wall that is at the centre of Jimmie Durham's sculpture *Gilgamesh* (1993), proposing itself as 'the true story of the Berlin wall,' with a reference to the Gilgamesh epic. The wall is also a door, and it focuses on the wild man who is a necessary alter ego of the king "who

cut down the forest in order to build the city wall" as the artist says in the essay "Gilgamesh and me: the true story of the wall" (Hubermann 2012).

Another wall is the one begun in 1992 by Israel along the border of the West Bank in the Occupied Territories, recorded in many photographs by seven artists shown in a recent exhibition in Paris, "Keep your Eye on the Wall. Paysages palestiniens" (2.9-2.10 2013).[24] The wall, known on one side as a 'barrier of security' and on the other as 'the wall of apartheid,' isolates the inhabitants of the West Bank from the rest of the country, placing them in a state of reclusion and breaking their family and social links. The photographs of the seven artists interrogate the complexity and the violence of its presence as an imposition on the territory and its inhabitants.

There are other walls of exclusion, some of them creating imagined and arbitrary borders across the Mediterranean between Spain or Italy and North Africa. In this case the material composition of the barriers is not stone or iron but water and sand, as can be seen in the works of the artists, photographers, film and video makers, poets and novelists, describing the tragedy of death and unprotected exile in this and similar theatres of migration: Zineb Zedira, Dagmawi Yimer, Isaac Julien, the Milan group Multiplicity just to mention some of the visual artists. They have given rise to installations or museums showing the relics of the drownings, mostly ruined ships or boats but also remains of the life before the voyage. One major example is the Lampedusa Museum of Migrants organized by the Askavusa association of Lampedusa with the artist Giacomo Sferlazzo (Gatta and Muzzopappa 2012; De Angelis 2012; Curti 2011, 2012) that had a quasi-institutional phase in the exhibition "With the objects of the migrants," organized with the participation of the migrants themselves (Lampedusa 19-23.7. 2013).[25]

→ CONCLUSION

Stones, lava, sand and water have brought me here, back to the ephemeral art I started from, an art that changes with the seasons, the passing of time, which is true not only for the artworks in a natural environment but also for the so called eternal art, as in the streets of Naples or of 'eternal' Rome. In the beginning the link between the materials of nature and artistic creation was given by the vicinity of life and death, of destruction and regeneration; later by the discourse of art that in its relation to the territory denounces the political and social violence perpetrated

24 The artists are six Palestinians, Taysir Batniji, Raed Bawayah, Rula Halawani, Noel Jabbour, Raeda Saadeh, Steve Sabella, and the German Kai Wiedenhofer. The exhibition of parts of their works took place at Photoquai 4, Espace Central DUPON Images, Paris. For all the images and the critical commentaries, see Snaije and Albert 2013.

25 Originally it was a one-room museum, or rather an anti-museum, with the relics of shipwrecks and of the objects forgotten or lost by the migrants. The island of Lampedusa—so central above all for migrants from the Italian ex-colonies—has inspired narrative and visual works, transforming the Mediterranean journey into a theatre of shipwrecks and deaths, thus becoming part of our "heritage," as a sort of counter-narration. The exhibition was organized by the Documentation Museum and Centre of Lampedusa and Linosa Migrations; apart from the objects of everyday life, it showed various writings, letters, diaries, documents and even informal glossaries.

on nature and the violation of ecological systems, and then the final overview of an art that can only record ruins and wrecks. The works described here have followed a movement from nature to technology, from psycho geography to videography.

Art is artifice as Trinh Minha-ha says in the quotation at the beginning of this essay, and that by definition is a word that seems to be in opposition to what is natural. Nature stands for many different things in these artistic activities; they are however all crossed by an energy and a force that goes from material elements to art events, from the natural to the artificial. The materials became art/ifice through a cognitive and emotional circuit, a topography that led back to feelings and life: "Like poetry, music, / visual art is artifice / constructs bridges on reality. / It helps to traverse life" (Lai 2006, 13).

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...of an archive

Oklahoma-Nararachi, Peyote Road Landscapes

→ FRANCISCO CABANZO

A visual artist aware of his in transit "mestizo" (mixed-blood) identity, Cabanzo works on trascendental and ephemeral urban arts, native and popular space appropriation strategies and landscape archetype patterns as instruments of syncretic creative resistance. Architect from FAU - Bennett, Rio de Janeiro; PhD in Fine Arts by U. of Barcelona; MSc in Urban and Regional Planning from IUAV-Venice University of Architecture. Professor at Fine Arts Faculty, UAN-U. Antonio Nariño, Bogotá. Member of POCS contemporary artists association of Barcelona. Global Dialog of Barcelona—postcolonial studies and decolonial horizons observatory researcher and teacher.

http://franciscocabanzo.blogspot.it

→ ABSTRACT

The Oklahoma-Nararachi project, previously presented in several artistic and scientific institutions, has adopted diverse languages and formats in order to adapt to different cultural containers such as museums, film festivals, university congresses and academic public lectures. In the following article it is the crucible for three authors' landscapes created during an "on the road" trip through Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona, California, New Mexico, the American/Mexican border and Chihuahua. The emerging images, sounds and words, video art and photography of Francisco Cabanzo, the documentary films of Federico Lanchares and the poetry of Lance Henson speak about memory and identities in transit, constructions of self-consciousness, travel and trance as imaginary or material

IMG. 1 (PREVIOUS PAGE) — Oklahoma city art show piece, Motel letter to be posted, El Reno, Oklahoma City (Oklahoma), photography by Francisco Cabanzo, 2006.

IMG. 02 — *Oklahoma-Nararachi (2006-2010) installation by Francisco Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy.*

cultural landscapes. Contributions to the project—documentaries, public art installations and publications—are part of the native and mestizo artist's role as a political activist, opposed to capitalistic western homologation when engaging with occidental culture management institutions and mainstream aesthetic values. Consequently, the authors deliberately adopt hybridizations, contaminations, adaptations and appropriations to encourage a reflection on how this syncretism embodies a strategy to avoid stereotypes and the subculture classifications of art. The article concludes that such a project belongs to the traditional American knowledge rooted in techniques of the ecstatic together with contemporary transcendental art.

IMG. 03 — *As years before by Francisco Cabanzo. Henson's trip notebook poem, 2006, facsimile.*

→ INTRODUCTION

An interdisciplinary artwork named "oklahoma-nararachi"[1] by Cabanzo, Henson and Lanchares, (2006/2010) contains traces of an "on the road" trip made by *mestizo* Colombian-Italian visual artist Francisco Cabanzo and Cheyenne-Oglala-French native poet Lance Henson, accompanied by Argentinian video maker Federico Lanchares. This article focuses on the project's theory and methodological background, its artistic-scientific preliminary research, the final art show and the syncretic aesthetic strategy that conditioned the exhibit layout.

In terms of syncretism, extreme differences are upheld but aligned such that likeness is found amongst unlike things, the power of each element enriching the power of all others within the array of their differences.

[…] Of the myriad universes of discourse that constitute whole cultures and countries, only those open to change and adaptation are likely to survive the step change in evolution exerted by scientific development and technological innovation (Ascott 2005).

Results of this "work in progress" have been presented in several artistic and academic spaces. Consistent with the author's syncretic strategy, they

1 Cheyenne poet Lance Henson as part of his literary style and ressistance expression avoids the use of capital letters in his writings.

IMG. 04 — *Tepee, plastered modeled sculpture (totem I) 18x18x18 cm. by Francisco Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

have been "dressed" with diverse Western aesthetic languages and formats depending on the conditions established by each cultural container or academic space. It has featured in three academic meetings: the MeLa* International Conference *The Postcolonial Museum: the pressures of memories and the bodies of histories* in Naples, Italy;[2] *Cinema and cultural diversity* at the XVII International Cinematographic Studies Seminar in Rome, Italy;[3] and the Summer School Seminar *Knowledge as collective experience*

2 "oklahoma-nararachi, peyote road landscapes", paper presented by Cabanzo Francisco, at the MeLa conference held in Naples, the 7th of February 2013, as part of the Cultural Heritage and Heterotopic Spaces roundtable.

3 Cabanzo, Francisco, Lance, Henson. 2011. *oklahoma-nararach*i [visual art performance and poetry

in Barcelona, Spain.[4] The work has also appeared in one collective art show–*Haeretici Mostra d'arte contemporanea* in Barletta, Italy[5]–and in two film festivals: the *OVNI-Rizomas Archives* in Barcelona, Spain[6] and The *32nd American Indian Film Festival* in San Francisco, California.[7] Finally, it was also elaborated in a postgraduate research thesis: Fine Arts Doctorate in Arts and Thought at Univesitat de Barcelona.[8]

→ KNOW HOW TO KNOW, OR THE BATTLE OF COSMOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES

The epistemological relationship between knowledge and ecstasy plants in American native tradition developed through the work of the shaman. The ceremonial mastership full of sacredness integrated what disciplines in Western culture have separated out into the specialized knowledge of healers, botanists, artists and priests.

> The first cup steams on my lips and in my throat. The second one violates my loneliness. The third penetrates my bowels moving thousands of rare ideographs. The fourth one bathes me in mild sweat eliminating all the sorrows of my life through my pores. The fifth cup purifies me. The sixth one transports me to the abode of the immortals. The seventh… Ah, the seventh! However, I cannot drink any more. I feel the breath of a cold aura swelling my sleeves. Horaisan, where is our paradise? Oh, let me incarnate on this sweet breeze mixed in waves and she leads me there. (Lu Song Wu, in Kakuzo 1978, 31)

Kokuzo Okakura, the first author to present the Japanese sacred tea ceremony to the West, describes the effects of tea as an ecstatic drink. Within American Native cultures there are similar testimonies. They show how the consumption of tobacco, peyote and many other ritual techniques involving hallucinogenic or stimulating substances drive shamans towards knowledge and spirituality. Unfortunately, many of those substances, after their discovery by colonial capitalism, have become hedonistic or harmful toxic traded goods.

According to recent interpretations of the ancient Mayan Popol Vuh

lecture]. *XVII Convegno Internazionale di Studi Cinematografici*. Cinema & Diversità Culturale. Università Roma Tre, Teatro Palladium, Rome.

4 Cabanzo, Francisco. 2000. "Saber saber" (Know how to know). MATERIALS del COPC 11. pp. 16-22.

5 Cabanzo, Francisco, Henson, Lance and Lanchares, Federico. 2012. *Haeretici, mostra d'arte contemporanea Barletta*, Italy, dicembre 2011 – gennaio 2012. (Catalog), Barletta. Online, available in: http://franciscocabanzo.blogspot.it/2012/05/oklahoma-nararachi-cabanzo-2012-video.html (Accessed April 12, 2013).

6 Lanchares, Federico. 2009. *Impressions from Peyote Road* [Documentary]. *Festival Archivos OVNI*. Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona – CCCB. Online, available in: http://www.desorg.org/autors/lanchares/ (Accessed April 12, 2013).

7 Lanchares, Federico and Henson, Lance. 2007. *Words form the edge* [Documentary]. (17 min. Color). 32nd American Indian Film Festival of San Francisco – FAISF. Screened on November 6th at the Embarcadero Center Cinema, San Francisco: American Indian Film Institute - AIFI. (program) p. 27.

8 Cabanzo, Francisco. 2010. "oklahoma-nararachi, paisajes del camino del peyote (oklahoma-nararachi: peyote road landscapes)". PhD thesis research – "Arts and thought program", (vol I – part one, vol II – part two, three), in Universitat de Barcelona, Fine Arts Faculty.

(Douglas 1997), the creation was not just accomplished by gods for the Mayas. It was the continuous task of artists. The arts were a form of "knowledge" possessed by priests and healers of the tribe, persons of high social standing: the artist-shaman and wise men. Despite what one might suppose, the Maya did not disdain scientific thought in opposition to artistic, or rather to magic, knowledge. Mythological-Cosmological thought reveals itself in the countless material traces of the shaman's abilities in artistic, scientific and magical knowledge, subsequently used to develop disciplines such as astronomy, medicine, mathematics, sculpture, religion, art, architecture and land-planning. Integral relationships occurred owing to the shaman's mastery of ecstasy techniques and his ability to manipulate *itz*, the divine substance that made it possible to gain prosperity, plan or predict the future, and ascend towards higher spirituality through resurrection and metamorphosis.

IMG. 05 — *Rock, plastered modeled sculpture (totem II) 18x18x18 cm. by Francisco Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

Gillette says Mayan art scholars learned to recognize all forms of divine creation. First, *raptus*, the vision or rising of the aesthetic gaze beyond (human) reason as a projection beyond logical rationalization. Second, the poetic act or narration of creation, in which words become facts, including the act of giving names to things and the act of writing and saving records of them. Third, the artistic expressions of the tribe's wise men depict the phases of a new world deployment, in which the verb *itz* applies as the 'creation' manipulated by men. Fourth, was sexual expression. Mayan rituals or sacrifices in the fluids of ejaculations or blood (blood was *itz*, to which phallic symbols and the tree of creation belonged). Fifth, giving birth, which means resurrection or recreation coming from

the depths of the earth. Sixth, penetration or powerful bursts happening through violent and emotional processes such as the monstrous divine forces of fire, water, wind, magma, earthquakes and tempests that create new orders through destruction. The latter included personal inner hell: deep dark passions and orgasms as creative-destructive forces, invasive and violent enough to shake the foundations of lives and identities.

The cosmic order renews itself through mythological-magical rituals undertaken as cyclic experiences. This is not just to reproduce social order or to revisit a collective worldview, but, rather to reconnect people's lives with a wider cosmic system in which the shaman, with his super-human work, acts as the cosmic artist-guide-designer. He propels the people and himself through ecstasy that operates again and again on the supernatural and cosmic creative order.

Western culture prejudices tend to consider plant-induced ecstasy in the Americas as "witchcraft," a perverted practice and sinful evidence of the devil's presence, not just for Christianity but as an overall moral issue. Ultimately, this becomes an epistemological oppression and violence against shamanic knowledge:

> …certainly, when it comes to madness, Europeans are wrong about the problem […]. It should be noted that the pejorative sense of madness within Christianity is a peculiar fact of our civilization and not a universal feeling. In many other civilizations, in almost all others, madness appears as the limit for the highest of all facts related to the mental and to the artistic creation. (Dubuffet 1995, 112-113)

Western tradition sees mental sanity and rational thinking as guarantees of epistemological quality; mental clearness and lucidity directly relate to rational procedures; mental illness and madness are synonyms of "losing the self-mind." In terms of epistemological paradigms this equation has enormous implications in relation to ecstasy, dreams, fantasies and hallucinations (Jaspers 2001). Healers and shamans seemingly lose control of their minds under the effect of illusory or hallucinatory fantasies, taking them in the direction of illusions and illness.

For similar reasons, Western culture has also placed art in a minor category of knowledge. Prejudices against both art and shamans express Western horror towards those who fearlessly plumb the depths of human mysteries, descending into the abysses of the inner world of the cosmos and spirit.

→ META-NARRATIVES THROUGH POST-COLONIAL ENLIGHTENMENT

The studies of James Clifford on Franz Boas, Marcel Griaule and Bronislaw Malinowski's anthropological fieldworks highlight the observers' Eurocentric-gaze as evidence of cultural prejudices and stereotypes, no matter how objective those social scientists were supposed to be (Clifford 1995, 226). His analysis becomes crucial for the

comprehension of how the anthropological meta-discourse, under the epithet of "scientific knowledge," seems to achieve monolithic objectivity.

The use of dichotomous judgments (accuracy/falsity) made by observers when interpreting informants' testimonies, employing invasive paraphernalia intended to cover "reality" with the use of all-pervasive technology (alien to informants), captures images of all situations and times. It expresses arrogant colonial behaviors of domination. As the synonym of cultural superiority, these are all juridical-police control procedures implemented by scientific meta-discourses and methods. Everything becomes part of a punishing-surveillance machine enacted for cultural domination. Anthropologists (followed by geographers, missionaries and officers) and their scientific paraphernalia work as a colonial advance task force designed to maintain and control social behavior (Foucault 2004).

Clifford's accurate analysis of Franz Boas' photographic testimonials reveals how observed day-by-day actions become a theatre. Cameras require artificial light, stillness or simulated stop motion. As a result, frozen action pictures are distorted, false, enacted to meet ethnographic purposes. In one of them there appears by mistake a black neutral curtain raised by an assistant which is meant to hide the "real" context, and fragments of a colonial landscape that appear in the backstage: a wooden white regular fence enclosing a garden, white columns in front of a colonial Victorian house. Space abduction, framing and other cinematic techniques validate the colonial narratives of "otherness." To describe, explain, observe and name things is part of this theatre. Relationships of power are built into the technology, economy, politics, science and aesthetics to configure the dominating (veiled) gaze behind the scientific objectivity that presents itself as a truthful representation of facts. Clifford's analysis inverts the ethnographic knowledge machine as he becomes the ethnographer of the ethnographer (Clifford 1995, 226).

Cronotopos, the space-time configuration built through literature proposed by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (Clifford 1995), is crucial to understanding the museum's meta-discourse, its time-space treatment and aesthetics (words, texts, images). Through graphic-visual treatment or object-space-display, accurate space-behavior-control abduction machines come to manipulate the original symbolic signification of objects contained and exposed in museum collections. Museums become artificial-sacred-knowledge-temples. There is no reference to the original owner's subjectivity or affection; no sensation of dizziness can happen, no looseness followed by a "selfness" enriched sensation, accompanied by the echo of "otherness". There is no ecstasy, no soul. Refined scene-setting techniques (objects in isolation, lighting, sound and climate treatment), plus the curator's (alter ego) narration act together to produce the spectator's perceptual disconnection to the object's original context.

Colonialist domination enables the celebration of the self-identity of Western-Eurocentric-Encyclopaedic-Illuminist-Humanist-Colonial-Scientific culture in the form of an institutionalized cultural management

system called the Museum. This pervasive ethnographic-meta-discourse device works to enact knowledge control and cultural supremacy. The *Panopticon* acts for the political-moral-ethic-social Law. In the very same manner, the Museum-*Panopticon* meta-discourse assembles highly refined communication strategies (gatherings, descriptions, explanations, guides, catalogues and exhibitions) to reproduce the colonial relationships of oppressors/oppressed. The "Big-Brother" ethnographer works hand in hand with the curator's alter ego: the discursive realization of historical "truth" and aesthetic "beauty" becomes absolute.

→ SPACE ARCHETYPES AND LAND APPROPRIATION PATTERNS

Artistic gestures through spatial archetypes and landscape appropriation patterns exceed the decorative and representational spheres. Commonly confined in the field of aesthetics, the arts still embody the formal expression of cosmological values and thoughts that allow the metaphysical and abstract depths of human existence to emerge.

> The Apache landscape is full of named locations where time and space have fused and where, through the agency of historical tales, their intersection is "made visible for human contemplations." It is also apparent that such locations, as charged as they are with personal and social significance, work in important ways to shape the images that Apaches have—or should have—about themselves. (Basso 1996, 44)

Landscape and space appropriation patterns made through migration processes after the colonization of America become a matter of historical and geographical studies (Noble 1992). Despite the knowledge provided by ethnographical landscape studies explaining the relationship between society and nature, as well as its effects on landscapes, something still does not work. Pre-existent native landscapes and native colonial and post-colonial space appropriation and adaptation patterns are part of biographical historical studies (Halaas, Masich 2004). Connecting information contained in such studies, one can arrive at a model of how ethnic-historical processes of colonization depicted a varied and complex array of territorial landscape and space patterns:

- French *fluvial-slavery-agricultural* appropriation and transformation landscape patterns, showing south-north colonial migratory movements, in conflict with *buffalo-hunter-gathering* native tribes' north-south seasonal migration (Cheyenne and Arapaho).

- British *shepherd-agricultural-mining* landscape patterns of groups moving east to west, in conflict with pre-existent native patterns and people.

- European multicultural *woods-hunters-shepherds* atomized patterns, dispersed in a sort of jeopardized territory pattern from the northern east coast towards the northern lakes and forests.

These space appropriation patterns and conflict dynamics explain the collapse of native relations with the landscape and the explosion of the Civil War between "White" Americans fighting for territorial domain and supremacy. On one side, native people moved into reserves or "forced west-south migration towards deserts and canyons." The origins of the Civil War may lie not just in theological, ideological or political differences, as argued by many historians, but fundamentally in multicultural-Eurocentric conflicts due to incongruences in their migratory strategies. Native territories linked to seasonal ecological migration disappeared when people moved into reserves (ghettos), while landscape appropriation strategies between river-agriculture-slave-land-pattern people against prairie-shepherd-pioneer-land-pattern people exploded. Both processes changed the American cultural landscape.

Changes also meant unexpected landscape variations and innovations. Migration and settlement-models identify how the traditional Navajo "hogan," Tarahumara "patio" or Cheyenne "tepee" developed for ritual purposes, each elaborating variations of ancient space archetypes linked to different cults. Through the unexpected cultural exchange brought about by subsequent peyote-liturgy diffusion, miscegenation and creative adaptions enabled the renewal of native cosmologies under the single cult of the peyote. These three hogan, tepee and patio space archetypes survived sharing the peyote religion diffusion, being all three part of a fragile, ephemeral but persistent and powerful renaissance of old native spiritual tradition. They could thus count on a new "common" identity, while maintaining their differences, as part of an adaptive resistance against oppression, fear, alienation and acculturation caused by colonization.

They persist behind the diversities that apparently divide them, or even worse, that supposedly disappeared under imposed colonial space and land patterns. New settled natives now living in farms, villages, reserves and the ghettos of anonymous houses, just like the natives who gather in churches, barracks and communitarian halls, or who play and drink in casinos, bars and malls, and who dig their lands for petroleum or God knows what, keep their souls alive in traditional cosmologies. Some of these cosmologies are only visible through cyclic-ephemeral configurations that appear and disappear leaving only a few subtle traces.

Hybrid	*Pure*
Compromised	*Clean*
Distorted	*Straight (aligned)*
Ambiguous	*Articulated*
Twisted-impersonal	*boary-interesting*
Conventional	*Designed*
Integrated	*Exclusive*
Redundant	*Simple*
Irregular-mistaken	*Innovative*
Juxtaposed-confused	*Direct-clear*
	Unity-transparency

Table 1. "Modern-Postmodern canon oppositions order" by Francisco Cabanzo (2010: Part II, 85) based on *Complexity & contradiction in architecture* (chapter: 6. Adaption and limits of order: the conventional element) by Robert Venturi (1992, 64-72).

Hybrid	*Pure*
Compromised	*Clean*
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	Unity-transparency

Table 2. Post-colonial syncretic hammock, adaptive canon ambiguous values order[9].

American architect Robert Venturi (2002) opposes classical modern/post-modern aesthetic values to express a dichotomist system. It fits almost perfectly the description of the syncretism of post-colonial native aesthetic values: the vertical-opposition divided line changes into a swinging double arrowed hammock line. This apparently subtle change is not secondary, given that instead of opposition it enables ambiguity: swinging from one end to the other between two sets of values performing syncretic strategies, one end becomes appearance, hiding the veiled values on the other end. Sacred aesthetic principles present in shamanic religious history manage to survive even under the opposite's aesthetic model in a very original way: a model of hidden souls under opposite appearances.

> The sacred is qualitatively different from the profane. Should it manifest in any way, anywhere in the secular world as it has the ability to transform any object into a cosmic paradox through hierophany (in the sense that the object stops being the same, while remaining unchanged in appearance), this dialectic of the sacred is valid for all religions and not only for the alleged primitive forms. This dialectic is verified both in the worship of stones and trees as in the altar design or in the Indian capital of the incarnation mystery (Eliade 1995, 52-53).

Mircea Eliade's hierophanies do not submit to sacred/profane oppositions. Instead, they relate to a syncretic-mythological-magical-shamanic aesthetic system. "Magical flight" in Eliade recalls the shaman's peyote-road journey and his heroic metamorphosis into an animal that flies above

9 "Post-colonial syncretism hammock, adaptive canon ambiguous values order" by Francisco Cabanzo (2010: Part II, 85) based on *Complexity & contradiction in architecture* (chapter: 6. Adaption and limits of order: the conventional element) by Robert Venturi (1992, 64-72).

the human condition, seeing, watching, feeling and understanding in a way which implies deification. Both day-by-day and after-life dimensions interweave all the time. Reality and metaphysical existences are crucial for the success of syncretic-aesthetic adaptation strategies; material and virtual existences interweaving apparently contradictory elements do not operate under unity-opposed aesthetic models.

IMG. 06— *Oklahoma city art show piece, Motel letter to be posted, El Reno, Oklahoma City (Oklahoma), photography by Francisco Cabanzo, 2006.*

→ TRANSCENDENTAL ART TRIP

Compromised in fixing human significant inner world experiences, human awareness, consciousness and self/other identity recognition, art has always been distant from any attempt to fix or capture reality and appearances despite the Aristotelian thought that still persists in Western tradition. Art has always dealt with deep significant human life experiences (Younghood 1970, 75).

The mythological, both epic and literary, appears in the journey of the Greek hero *Ulysses*, perhaps the most famous self-conscious identity trail in Western tradition. Along the same lines, Ulysses written by James Joyce in 1918 proposes a reiteration.

History, however, identifies with the chronicles written by the Spanish priest Fray Bernardino de Sahagún describing a Maya peyote ceremony witnessed by him in the 16th century at Nayarit in Mexico. During the colonial period and throughout the Enlightenment, expeditions functioned as strategies to build systematic and objective scientific observations about "new worlds" (Pratt 1992). Describing, cataloguing and classifying, in a manner coherent to the humanistic universal knowledge project of the encyclopaedia, were also applied in writing reports about the landscape and the catalogues of species and peoples in the Spanish colonies.

These are trips as scientific journeys, as is the case of Alexander von Humboldt's expedition in 1799-1804, when he studied the peyote-cactus presence in Central America, or the American Botanic Expedition, in which European and *"criollos"* travelled through South and Mesoamerican continents studying nature, landscapes and peoples. However, these are not the only two. In 1930, the French surrealist writer Antonin Artaud made a trip to Mexico arriving at Nararachi, in the state of Chihuahua. He had come from Europe: a continent he believed had already lost its "magic" soul. Based on his experiences, Artaud wrote the *Tarahumara* and created the *Theatre of Cruelty*. In 1979, Richard E. Schultes and Albert Hofmann published *Plants of the Gods: origins of hallucinogenic use,* containing results of their ethno-botanic expedition from South to North America. In 1982, the Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar drove with his partner along French highways for a literary experiment lasting 32 days without leaving the road or the trailer, registering the traces of the journey in *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* (The Cosmo-highway Argonauts). In 1939, John Steinbeck travelled North America's legendary Route 66, writing afterwards *Mother Road*, which became the subject for a film directed by John Ford in 1940.

Between 1944 and 1954, Frida Kahlo wrote *Diario*, a book containing inner landscape paintings and drawings of her fragile and suffering body-captured existence. In 1953, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, members of the Beat Generation, had an epistolary exchange through a yajé-road journey in Colombia and Peru, which became *Yajé letters,* published by City Lights Books in San Francisco. In 1995, On Kawara performed, coherently with Situationism postulates, a series of journeys

IMG. 07 — *Monument valley – sacred monument, near Kayenta (Arizona), photography by Francisco Cabanzo, 2006.*

through New York after being a voyager for several years. The trails were registered and documented in *Got up*, a series of sealed postcards exhibited later on in Berlin.

In 1964, German artist Joseph Beuys wrote his *Idiosyncratic CV*, telling his life story by interweaving historical events, metaphorical and mythical episodes. Later, in 1974, he presented *The secret block for a secret person in Ireland*, containing drawings from 1948 to 1972. Both books are evidence of a biographical journey that began with Caucasian shamans who healed him after an aircraft accident in the Crimea during World War II. Twice he suffered psychological and physical crises; twice he went through a traveling-art-healing process through Germany, Spain and Italy. In 2008, French photographer Raymond Depardon went around the world to conceive a documentary methodology that became *Le tour du monde en 14 jours: 7 escales, 1 visa.*

The trip—journey, expedition, pilgrimage—regardless of the modality of dislocation through space and time chosen, becomes a valuable epistemological device, a knowledge-construction strategy to learn about others and oneself. Known as field study trips in science, these dislocations in the arts experienced by architects, painters and sculptors come across as learning/exploratory exercises (Mancilla Moreno 2002). In an effort to save traces of those trips, to preserve, communicate and leave testimonies of the mental and disciplinary "on the road" work—observations, interviews, impressions, memories and insights—evidence has been deposited in many ways: notes, tables, lists, photographs, drawings, sketches, books, tapes, films, albums and diaries.

Trips in art are also understood as metaphors for the creative process, as testimonies of transcendental relationships with space and place. For shamans, for instance, transcendental and metaphysical displacements achieved through "knowledge-plants" have taken them into after-life dimensions traversed for healing and blessing purposes, as in the case of the "peyote-roaders."

→ THANKSGIVING PILGRIMAGE AND RITUAL HUNTING TRIPS

The first archaeological evidence of the peyote cactus, *Lophophora williamsii* (Lem), is about 5,700 years old. It was found in rock caves and house ruins located on the lower Pecos River in Mexico (El-Seedi et al. 2005, 238-42). The first historical written description of a peyote ritual comes from the already mentioned missionary Spanish priest Bernardino de Sahagun The ritual trip of the peyote liturgy in the American plains commenced in the pre-Columbian period in what is now Mexican territory, and gradually spread across the southern Plains of North America: "Texan Karankawas moved south towards the Tamaulimecan-Carriso territory in Coahuila in 1848; Seminole, Kiapoos, Lipans and some Mezcaleros settled in Tamaupilas and Chihuahua in 1854" (Martinez in Garduno 2004, 41-60).

The Peyote road has historically connected peoples on both sides of the frontier between Mexico and the United States. Some historians, however, argue that peyote entered the North American plains due to migratory and miscegenation processes after colonization, and forced mobility of indigenous people who abandoned their lands. Forced migration caused cultural exchange and miscegenation between Mexican and American tribes. Natives also lost their rituals, colonizers forbade the traditional Sundance, and lastly they abandoned the Ghost Dance. Weston Le Barre (1980) conceived a tree-shaped peyote ritual dissemination scheme, based upon personal interviews with tribal members, in which he attributes the diffusion of peyote ritual use towards the north to Tonkawa and Lipan groups. Mythological-heroic legends among Native American Church members talk about an epic trip made by Quanah Parker in the 1880s, the mixed-blood son of Comanche chief Peta Nocona and Cynthia Ann Parker. Peyote healed Quanah Parker and he brought it to his people in the plains. Further cross-cultural influences came later, especially those introduced by roadman John Wilson (Lee Marriott and Rachlin 1971), through cinema in *Peyote road*,[10] and by the official US National Congress recognition on April 14 1994. Finally peyote ritual evolved into the Native American Church.

Peyote-road trips depend on the fact that the cactus grows spontaneously far from the actual territories of most of the tribes that use it either in Mexico or in the USA. Huichol peyote hunters maintain the most traditional practice of peyote seasonal pilgrimage: tribesmen cross their Wirikuta lands towards the Zacateca desert seeking the "ritual deer," peyote (Schultes and Hofmann 1982). Native American Church members with identification cards authorizing them to buy peyote for medicine ritual purposes in Texas perform a similar pilgrimage with different cultural traits.

Henson connects to Oklahoma by way of his Tsitsistas (Cheyenne) history, but also through his personal biography. Bertha and Bob Cook,

10 Rhine, Gary (producer) & Moreno, Fidel; Rhine, Gary & Cousineau, Phil (directors). *Peyote road* [Documentary]. (USA: Kifaru Productions, Inc, 1993).

founders of the Cheyenne-Arapaho southern tribes Native American Church, raised him. He is Dog soldier clan headman, seven times Sundance ritual dancer, and a NAC member. He earned a Master's degree in Creative Writing at Tulsa University. Nararachi's significance for Henson is, firstly, religious, but also literary, since Tarahumara, Huichol or Tamaulipecan peyote people represent the ancient Mexican people who gave peyote medicine to Native American people. Nararachi relates literally to French writer Antonin Artaud and his experience with the Tarahumara people and peyote rituals (Artaud 1972). The pilgrimage from Oklahoma to Nararachi crosses those political frontiers separating peoples that someday the peyote road may unite again.

Cabanzo's trip starts among the Inga and Sibundoy people from the Putumayo forest and the Andean Cordillera in South America. Having grown up in Western culture, a foreigner himself, he was lucky enough to receive blessings and healings from the sacred plant for him and his family. In 2005, he began to conceive a documentary project about the Inga "ayahuasca road" and yajé taitas (healers). He found himself stuck in a dead end, without being able to start his PhD thesis research, as Colombia suffered the violence of civil war between guerrilla, drug traffickers, the regular army and paramilitary forces especially in the upper Putumayo basin, a strategic territory for illegal coca crop growing. Fortunately, he met Henson in Italy, who invited him to join him on a peyote road trail as a thanksgiving testimony that Henson wanted to enact. The same year Lanchares came from Mexico where he met the *Raraimuri sipaame* (Tarahumara healer), Felipe Flores, and joined the POCS11 contemporary arts association group.

→ FROM A DOCUMENTARY TO A MUSEUM INSTALLATION

French semiologist and philosopher Roland Barthes states that the Japanese *haiku* is capable of dissolving the unity of language between the given sense and the written word. Breaking the logic of words produces a loosening of meaning. The sense of the *Haikus* comes not from meaning linked to words but from people's inner voice speaking while silencing their conscious mind, interrupting it, failing in any attempt to pronounce those words and falling into a meaningful babble.

Barthes explains the interruption of sense in *haiku,* allowing the mind's insights to reach the surface of consciousness, while a subconscious or spiritual presence traverses the emptied mind, drawing out human souls. For him, this is a small battle in which the mind loosens sense, leaving space for emptiness.

There occurs a return to reality with new eyes, with no precise ideas or certainty, but wiser, full of vague intuitions, reminiscences, illuminations, feelings and deep emotions. *Haiku* landscapes do not paint reality and the language of *Haiku* does not relate to a unitary sense. The artist draws on the fragmented, dispersed and unrelated elements of *Zen* landscapes. The essence contained in each fragment does not recompose a full image.

IMG. 08 — *Tepee, 50x50x70 showcase containing plastered modeled sculpture (totem I) by Francisco Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

IMG. 09 — *Totem 3 - rock, interactive multimedia installment tower containing plaster sculpture, DVD projector/ reader and sound speaker for color sequences (totem III) 18x18x18 cm. by Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

IMG. 10 —*Hogun, 50x50x70 showcase containing plastered modeled sculpture (totem I) by Francisco Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

IMG. 11 — *Totem 2 - tepee, interactive multimedia installment tower containing plaster sculpture, DVD projector/ reader and sound speaker for color sequences (totem II) 18x18x18 cm. by Francisco Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

Language weaves sense with brief integrity, from what Barthes defines as the "dust of events."

Henson's poetry links directly to ritual NAC shaman's songs, performed during the peyote liturgy in the form of prayers and chants. The poetic transcendental structure underlying the *Haiku,* as described by Barthes, has been defined by Henson as equivalent to peyote ritual songs developed through the centuries by wise roadmen. The same "sense-breaking" structure shared by *Haiku* and peyote songs underlies Henson's contemporary poetic compositions. The three share similar spiritual power and therefore could be defined as transcendental landscapes: fragments of a place in which a sensation, a situation, an action or a feeling achieve formal sense while breaking down meaning. Fragments belonging to different dimensions break sense-continuity and space-place correspondence. They rationalise confusion in the presence of perceptual excitement.

Archaic "memory crystals" cross the surface of conscience producing a significant shock experience, an explosion of feelings that emerge from deep, emotional archetypes. This is ecstasy. Peyote intoxication and refined archetypical chanted prayers lead to a transcendental religious ecstasy that has nothing to do with the secular hallucinatory and psychedelic experiences lived by the Beat Generation or with the automatic *Haiku* writing developed by Jack Kerouac.

In cinema, perceptions of virtual reality composed of lights and shades in motion create virtual narratives through technical editing procedures. On one hand filmic compositions allow time, space and action re-composition and therefore memories and factual realities can potentially come together to achieve transcendence. On the other hand, archetypes as the metaphoric crystallizations of archaic human perceptions illuminate the transcendental potentialities of the contemporary visual work, as happens with modern cinematographers such as Antonioni, Fellini, Schrader, Ozu, Dreher, Godard, Ruttmann, Robbe-Grillet, Bunuel and Rouch, or also in the experimental cinematic works of Warhol, Cohen, Ackerman, Jorda, Bong Joon-Hu, Keaton, Greenaway and Viola. The capacity of integrating diverse languages and perceptual stimuli (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) generating several simultaneous multi-leveled meanings, recombining sounds and images through editing, altering the message through film editing processes, mingling different spaces and time-frames, and modifying time-space virtual dimensions seems to make it possible to achieve ecstasy sensations as those described by Roland Barthes in Japanese *haiku* poetry, leading modern cinema towards Trance Cinema or Transcendental Cinema.

The Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky was the first to proclaim transcendental values in modern art. In literature Artaud, who subscribed to the postulates of surrealism, believed cinema should stimulate the senses to help people achieve metaphysical self-awareness through audio-visual experiences (Artaud 1972). Paul Schrader lectured about transcendental style in cinema, arguing that conventional dramatic scripts follow a narrative structure of concatenated facts sequenced in a crescendo to conclude in a final showdown. Transcendental cinema structures present in Ozu, Bresson and Dreyer's films used composition strategies and treatment devices in a particular way, allowing spectators to achieve higher levels of self-awareness not linked to film contents but to the spectator's insights and self-consciousness.

The structure of a transcendental composition contains a series of events, one succeeded by another, without following any dramatic or narrative purposes. Neutral facts, plain and boring sets of non-dramatic actions happen (acted often by neophyte actors) to become the *documentary facts* (the grey surface of factuality/actuality). *Codas* articulate with these documentary facts to allow the elements creating the disparity effect to emerge. New emotional elements appear and disappear unexpectedly, without any regular rhythm or cadence, leaving the spectator again immersed in the grey surface of actuality. A fragmentary process of

densification then follows the *Codas*, a rupture that fires an explosion, a moment of ecstasy that transcends the everyday and closes with a visual poem: the *Haiku Coda.*

The complete structure would therefore correspond to a four-tempo basic structure made up of everyday facts: densification *Coda* (tail), *rupture Coda, Ecstasy,* and *Haiku Coda.*

A third reference of transcendental art comes from sculpture, this time from the work of Joseph Beuys. Beuys's awareness of the sacredness of contemporary art spaces and especially museum layouts appears in his *Palazzo Regale* installment, also known as "Beuys' Egyptian tomb," built at the Naples Capodimonte Museum in 1978, a few months before his death (Nienhaus and Pensato 2008). The reference alludes in particular to his ready-made sculptural compositions contained in two metal-glass showcases. The impossibility of touching the gathered handmade objects in an isolated presentation underlines the capacity of museums to turn objects into almost sacred totems and high-value collection pieces. Museums, personal collections and other cultural containers have become the new temples of contemporary Western society and its aesthetic values. Beuys uses the sacred/profane ambiguity of contemporary art to enhance his powerful shamanic installations, performances and visual artworks.

The hypothetical trial for the oklahoma-nararachi project described in his pre-production research by Cabanzo, follows the principles of transcendental cinema, haiku poetry and installations, in the form of a multi-disciplinary visual arts composition. The adopted layout-script scheme consists of:

- *Day-by-day grey surface images*: black/white photographic images of the trip (Cabanzo).

- *Densification totems:* totemic sculptural elements and trip-gathered objects enclosed in glass showcases (Cabanzo) accompanied by poetry texts, manuscript images and transcriptions from trip notebook compositions (Henson), instead of museum descriptive texts and explanations associated with showcases content.

- *Rupture-explosion-ecstasy sequences:* in front of totem-interactive devices, sensors perceiving the spectators' presence trigger the projection of polarized digital color image sequences (Cabanzo), which contaminate the whole space with color and sound juxtaposition, altering the spectator's perception.

- *Synthesis visual poems*: near the exit, a hollow black box would allow spectators to live the travel experience through the alternate projection of various non-repetitive variations of the "on the road" trip documentaries (Lanchares).

→ IN-CONCLUSIVE IMPRESSIONS

During our Oklahoma-Nararachi pilgrimage along the peyote road trail, joining places on both sides of the Mexican-American border in

IMG. 11 — *Nararachi sequences, interactive projection (totem I) by Francisco Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

a metaphoric way, and having participated in several ritual ceremonies such as a sweat lodge, a NAC Tepee peyote liturgy, and syncretic peyote blessings, it seems that continuity and resistance takes place in spaces with no clear or unique aesthetic.

Archetypes belong to mythological-magical and performative spheres, or to hallucinatory iconography, more than to formal landscapes and spatial patterns. Almost all of the ceremonies were performed by different native groups—Cheyenne-Arapaho, Navaho and Tarahumara—in different, ambiguous, ephemeral or juxtaposed structures and places. Therefore, it appeared clear to us foreigners—F. Lanchares and F. Cabanzo—that without the presence, explanation and performance of native people—M. MacAbee and L. Henson or F. Flores—we would not have been able to perceive nor to understand them through our naïve senses. Each native cosmology and iconosophy expressed its connection to places and landscapes not in a scientific, rational manner but through a metaphoric,

IMG. 12 — *nararachi sequences, interactive projection (totem I) by Cabanzo, 2011-2112, Barletta, Italy (artist's collection).*

allegoric, artistic and magical way that was linked to a transcendental peyote road.

Henson's poetic construction revealed itself to us in a pure, subtle and powerful, almost gentle, immaterial way. It came out with astonishing naturalness, day by day during peregrination, manifesting itself in an incredibly striking persistent and syncretic manner of re-appropriating words, space and time. Its syncretic and ambiguous character mixed episodes of confusion, almost ironic and iconoclastic pagan moments, that switched amazingly from one to another (even within the same), into a beautifully sacred and meaningful landscape.

Landscape transcendental compositions emerged from enemy forces living inside him: English, the imposed language, the twists and exercise of the sense contained in those same words. Colonial words emptied and re-connected came to fit the author's own native cosmological purposes.

IMG. 14 — *Mexican cowboy cuauhtemoc, "Cuauhtemoc highway" (Chihuahua), photography by Francisco Cabanzo, 2006.*

Henson leaves a legacy for native future generations in his poetry, a powerful weapon to fight against alienation, alcoholism and suicide, enhancing the significance of places and landscapes. Western material culture, imposed via syncretism, becomes a renewed native ancient and meaningful landscape. Without even physically touching them, just by walking through, passing by, writing on, awakening its deep soul through remembrances, memories, evocations, hallucinations, dreams, insights, experiences, thoughts and impressions.

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Other Spaces/Other Selves:

Museum Encounters & Foucault's Heterotopia

→ JESSICA FIALA

Jessica Fiala is an independent scholar and performer based in Minneapolis, USA. She completed an interdisciplinary Master's degree through the University of Minnesota concentrated in Museum Studies and Cultural Studies in 2008. Her thesis, *Ordering "the Other": Heterotopias and the Musée du Quai Branly,* and current research span spatial theory, colonial/postcolonial museum practices, and performance studies. She is a company member of Ragamala Dance and has toured with the company throughout the United States and internationally. She is the International Research Coordinator for Forecast Public Art and volunteers as a docent and performing arts blogger for the Walker Art Center.

→ ABSTRACT

This essay explores the bodily nature of Michel Foucault's heterotopias as a means of delving into the complexities of access to and representation in museums today. Informed by contemporary debates around postcoloniality and museum histories and practices, this essay is situated at the ambiguous intersection of embodied experience, spatial theory, and physical museum spaces. Predominately considered in relation to spatial difference up until now, adding a corporeal element to the analysis of the heterotopia both connects the theory to Foucault's accompanying lecture, "The Utopian Body," and provides a bridge between this concept and pertinent issues of memory, identity, agency, and the plurality of voices that orbit museum collections. In this respect heterotopia is a space of possibility as well as a reminder of boundaries, borders, and limitations. To get to the intimate vantage point of the mobile and multifaceted individual,

this essay proposes viewing the heterotopia via distinct, yet simultaneous and intertwined levels of scale. Providing a flexible structure, these levels enable the analysis of spatial difference as emerging from and embedded within broad social landscapes, internal spatial ordering, and individual encounters. Within this frame, material, conceptual, and interactive discourse is made manifest in the "other space" of the museum. Neither structure nor static archive, the museum is a potential forum or nexus, a threshold, and the starting point for conversations that expand far beyond its doors.

> On ne vit pas dans un espace neutre et blanc, on ne vit pas, on ne meurt pas, on n'aime pas dans le rectangle d'une feuille de papier. On vit, on meurt, on aime dans un espace quadrillé, découpé, bariolé.
>
> Michel Foucault[1] 1966

> We live enmeshed in this web of borders and boundaries.
> Most are out of sight and conscious awareness,
> yet they all impinge in some way on our lives and integral parts
> of our real and imagined geographies and biographies.
>
> Edward Soja 2005

As physically anchored, bounded spaces, museums are far from static. Engulfed in movement, implicated in and influenced by continuous cultural flows, they are evolving stages for rituals of citizenship (Duncan 1991), (post)colonial imaginings, echoes of voyages out, and reflections of voyages in. This movement has a long past, but in recent decades its pace has been quickened by new technology, its momentum propelled by increased global migrations, and its visibility heightened by debates emanating from the local and enmeshed in larger cross-cultural histories, conflicts, and merges.

Situated within this changing landscape, this paper delves into the meeting of a pair of active phenomena—the ever-evolving physical museum and the variable crowds that convene around and through it. In exploring the dynamics of this relationship, my interest is also to highlight its unfixable nature. To do so, I use a contested theory introduced by Michel Foucault in the mid-1960s. In the construction of ordered societies, Foucault proposed that extremes are also created—sites that provide moments of disjuncture, idealized order, or marked *difference*. Drawing from the Greek *heteros*, other, another, different, and *topos*, place, he dubbed such sites *heterotopias*, "these different spaces…these other places" ([1984] 1986, 24).

More than a label to designate spatial difference, the concept of the heterotopia provides a malleable tool for engaging with the nuanced developments of contemporary museums, as these institutions, and the

1 "One does not live in a neutral, white space, one does not live, one does not die, one does not love in the rectangle of a sheet of paper. One lives, one dies, one loves in a space that is gridded, partitioned, multicolored." Translation by author.

societies in which they are embedded, continually transform. Within this frame, I focus on the body as both a means of entering the complex relationships of stability and flux that surround the heterotopia and the museum and a method for exploring knowledge-making in museums as a *process* with the potential to generate forums for meaningful engagement and dialogue. Informing this work are on-going museum engagements with colonial pasts and the complexities, debates, and new social terrains of a questionably postcolonial present.

→ THE OUTSKIRTS OF ORDER

Foucault first introduced the heterotopia as a spatial metaphor to denote a literary phenomenon. In the preface to *The Order of Things*, he described encounters with fantastical literature, made jarring due to the limits, habits, and assumptions inherently created in the ordering of knowledge. Recalling how a passage by Jorge Luis Borges describing *The Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, an invented Chinese encyclopedia described through an incongruous, nonsensical listing, made him laugh out loud, Foucault was struck not solely by the seeming absurdity of the entry, but by a previously unnoticed conceptual ordering underlying and driving his initial reaction. Reflecting upon his response, he commented that, "[i]n the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" ([1966] 1971, xv).[2] In contrast with Foucault's primary focus on changing foundational epistemes that influence the ordering and articulation of knowledge, the heterotopia historicizes the present. Through the mirror of absurdity the text by Borges not only hinted at manifold possibilities for ordering knowledge, it problematized any such order, underscoring that all modes of ordering are contingent, arbitrary, constructed, and imperfect.[3] In this manner, the heterotopia unnerves through its own strangeness, but more so through making the familiar strange (Rice 2007, 127).

While utopias were presented as offering consolation, "fantastic, untroubled region[s]…countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical," heterotopias disturb "because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things… to 'hold together'" (Foucault [1966] 1971, xviii).

These ordering processes, these connections of words and things, unfold

2 As Daniel Defert has noted, this context serves as a reminder of the culturally based construction and relational quality of "the limits of our thinking, limits that we still encounter before the classifications of cultures that are radically 'foreign'" (1997, 275).

3 After the passage quoted by Foucault, Borges commented that, "it is clear that there is no classification of the Universe not being arbitrary and full of conjectures. The reason for this is very simple: we do not know what thing the universe is…The impossibility of penetrating the divine pattern of the universe cannot stop us from planning human patterns, even though we are conscious they are not definitive" ([1942] 2006).

and hang together in space. Order in this manner constructs the physical. By comparison, the encyclopedia's *impossibility* is posed as a spatial lack, an inability to viably exist as an ordering system outside the realm of literature. As an "other space," however, the heterotopia in *The Order of Things* remained a "literary/discursive site" (Genocchio 1995, 37).

→ WITHIN AND APART FROM

In a radio broadcast, "Les Hétérotopies" (1966), and a re-mount of the lecture presented to a group of architects, "Des Espaces Autres" (1967), translated as "Of Other Spaces" (1986, 2008) and "Different Spaces" (1998), Foucault used the term heterotopia to designate physical places.[4] As counter-sites embedded in the fabric of the social landscape, heterotopias bear a relationship with "all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them." In this manner, heterotopias are locatable, but in character, "outside all places" (Foucault [1984] 2008, 17).

Foucault began "Of Other Spaces" by contrasting his perspective with the nineteenth century's focus on history: "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition… our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" ([1984] 1986, 22). He proceeded to underscore the changing nature of social spaces, informed by an array of political, cultural, and discursive practices, played out in and through constructed environments. In "Les Hétérotopies" this concept was expressed through the analogy of a blank sheet of paper where social spaces are not simply open voids but deeply etched palimpsests, in a continual process of change, yet punctured by "other spaces" that resist absorption and are crafted to advance an array of ideals, orders, and extremes.

In both lectures, Foucault described heterotopias via six principles, situating their contrary formation in the very founding of societies. These principles covered a range of spatial types and practices. The first focused on spaces of crisis, manifested as ritual sites, and spaces for the containment of deviants, such as prisons, psychiatric hospitals, or rest homes. The second emphasized the changeability of heterotopias, each with a particular function, yet subject to modification and reinterpretation. The third highlighted sites such as the cinema that juxtapose disparate locations within one place. The fourth established heterochronies, where time is magnified—fleeting as in the ephemeral carnival or extended as

4 Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene chose the title "Of Other Spaces" for their translation, yet acknowledged the validity of the alternative choice in their end notes, citing editor James Faubion's explanation of Robert Hurley's translation, "Different Spaces": "(1) the world 'heterotopia' contains the root 'hetero-', derived from the Greek and meaning 'different' rather than 'other'; (2) the placement 'autre(s)' after rather than before the word it qualifies typically requires or favours translation into English as 'different', to distinguish between 'des autres espaces' and 'des espaces autres'; and (3) a clear interpretative choice that argues against a view of heterotopia as radically other than the spaces of ordinary life" (2008, 22).

in the museum or archive. The fifth described spaces that "presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable," where entry may be compulsory or require rites or purifications, where the heterotopia "is not freely accessible like a public place" ([1984] 1986, 26). The sixth principle, perhaps the most intriguing for interpretations that associate heterotopias with resistance, stated that:

> [heterotopias] have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is portioned, as still more illusory… Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled ([1984] 1986, 27).

The concept of the spatial heterotopia circulated with the notes from Foucault's presentation, published just prior to his death in 1984. Covering a range of spatial types, qualities, extremes, and variations, the heterotopia has both inspired manifold applications and been haunted by questions and critiques. If heterotopias represent difference, one may ask "different in what sense" (physical, experiential, discursive) and "different to whom"? If heterotopias exist in contrast, what characterizes the generalizable sameness against which they stand out?[5] Furthermore, how might users balance the determinability of a heterotopology, of "classification as heterotopia," with the relational, positional, contextual, and intangible qualities of "difference" or "otherness?"[6] As a brief sketch not intended for publication, Foucault's work on heterotopias was left open-ended, the impetus for a range of possible trajectories for theorizing social spaces.

Despite its challenges, the heterotopia serves as an apt means of exploring the dynamics of museum spaces—these sites that are physical, yet involve the flow of crowds, that engage in the telling of contestable histories, that place representation itself on display, that are themselves ever-changing responses to and manifestations of the societies that create them. My focus is not to attempt to establish a single interpretation of the heterotopia, but rather to present a framework for its elaboration and to develop the concept as a ductile tool, an adjustable lens for engaging more deeply with the dynamic fields constituted by museum spaces. Through focusing on the intersection of the body and the heterotopia, I examine the role of museums both as stages and actors in larger contemporary debates.

5 Arun Saldanha associates the distinction between heterotopic difference and an assumed stable whole with structuralist tendencies, identifying this as a central flaw of the theory that limits it to engaging with an imagined "slice of time" isolated within a "bounded territory," in contradistinction to the expansive interconnections that unfold within both space and history (2008, 2093).

6 This presents an interpretive crux: are heterotopias "classifiable as different" within the context of a diverse social landscape, or are they "other," aligned with concepts outside of accepted orders and, in this manner, potentially transformative, baffling, unnerving, or able to provoke new ways of seeing, interpreting, or being in the world?

IMG. 01 — *Musée du Quai Branly, 2006 (courtesy Jessica Fiala)*

→ SCALING "OTHER SPACES"

Drawing on Foucault's principles, I propose three distinct, yet intertwined, levels of scale as a means of dissecting the theory. From the sixth principle's exploration of a heterotopia's function at extremes of reinforcing or undermining larger social orders, I form an overarching level focused on a heterotopia in relationship and in situ. From the third principle's juxtaposition of disparate geographies in one location and the fourth principle's heterochronies where collections and time accumulate, I develop an internal perspective that focuses on the physical and discursive ordering of a site. From the fifth principle's preparations for and barriers to entry and the first principle's attention to ritual and deviance, I develop a level focused on the embodied individual.

Offering different trajectories for analysis, these levels of scale are nevertheless inter-related, inter-dependent, a site functioning as multiple heterotopias all at once, continuously playing simultaneous, yet distinct, roles at different levels of scale. Pierced by horizontal flows, these vertical layers are connected with myriad spaces and histories. Heterotopias are distinct ("not superimposable") (Foucault [1984] 1986, 23), yet they intersect with time, movement, and expansive webs.[7] In this vein, the

7 In the field of Human Geography, scale has been questioned as an organizing principle, where it functions both as a useful construction for conceiving of "nested" fields of inquiry ranging from the local to the global, and as a creation of discourse that drives what discourse sees. As Sallie Marston, John Paul Jones III and Keith Woodward have noted, "[o]nce these layers are presupposed, it is difficult not to think in terms of social relations and institutional arrangements that somehow fit their contours… a given site

IMG. 02 — *Musée du Louvre, Pavillon des Sessions. In the foreground, Yagere slit drum, 19th century, Central African Republic or Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2013 (courtesy Jessica Fiala)*

museum is a dialogic space, responding and contributing to discourses unfolding beyond its doors and interacting with visitors who are themselves continuously constructing and reconstructing their own identities.

These levels of scale provide a framework for developing questions pertaining to the broader discursive, structural, and experiential implications of social spaces which have been developed in recent debates. The origin of this paper can be traced back to a decade ago in Paris, near the entrance to the Musée de l'Homme. At that central node in the history of French ethnography, a crowd had gathered to protest the removal of the museum's ethnographic collections from public view, prior to their relocation across the Seine in a new museum under construction—the Musée du Quai Branly (MQB). At that time, the museological landscape of Paris was shifting. The Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie had closed, its collection being sent to the MQB. Its building, a former colonial museum put up for the 1931 Colonial Exposition, would reopen in 2007 as the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration. In 2000 the Louvre mounted a now permanent exhibit of art from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas in its Pavillon des Sessions, a precursor to the 2006 opening of the MQB, dedicated to these same cultures.[8]

is always an emergent property of its interacting human and non-human inhabitants" (2005, 422, 425).

8 See, for example, Sally Price's *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly* (2007), Benoit de l'Estoile's *Le Goût des Autres: De l'Exposition Coloniale aux Arts Premiers* (2007), and Dominic Thomas' compilation *Museums in Postcolonial Europe* (2010). For a consideration of the continued chal-

This paper focuses on the intersection of heterotopias and museums at the level of the mobile and multifaceted individual, but the shifts, debates, and questions surrounding the changes outlined above serve as an influential background. Given the on-going interchange between levels of scale, I will approach the level of the individual via a brief detour to the other two, illustrating select questions that can be developed at each, stimulated by the debates that emerged from France's recent museological changes.[9]

Viewed from afar, the *otherness* of heterotopias is centered on impact, with the form and nature of spatial difference secondarily informing symbolic, physical, and political relationships and significance within a larger social context. Through prestige, visibility, and governmental associations, museums provide central platforms for the unfolding, retelling, and renegotiating of inter-social relationships, "other spaces" for rethinking and representing selves and "others."

At the opening of the MQB, the then President Jacques Chirac spoke to this capability, framing the museum as a space that would:

> pay a rightful homage to peoples to whom, throughout the ages, history has all too often done violence… Peoples still now often marginalized, weakened, endangered by the inexorable advance of modernity. Peoples who nevertheless want their dignity restored and acknowledged (Chirac 2006).

Yet for many the MQB reinstated retrogressive divisions, grouping diverse cultures into a panexotic "Other" to the West, set in a dramatic primitivist ambiance. In the context of France grappling with its colonial past, diversity, via the MQB, seemed comfortably cast and celebrated on the global stage, eliding internal debates over difference and hybridity.[10]

Through these poles, one can see the extremes of Foucault's sixth principle—the ideal of a space that undermines existing orders, as opposed to the reinscribing of such orders in space. Stepping back from these debates, at this level, broader questions arise. To what degree can creating spaces intentionally aligned with cultural difference promote empowerment and visibility, and to what degree might this rely upon or reinforce assumptions and divisions? Given that center, margins, and communities are all internally diverse categories, how can museums represent and participate in dialogues about relationships, histories, traditions, and cultures without implying that any of these elements are fixed?

In addition to the overarching socio-political implications, the MQB was

lenges and opportunities posed by the museum, see Sally Price's "Return to the Quai Branly" (2010).

9 The framework of levels of scale and an analysis of the Musée du Quai Branly via this lens was completed by the author in 2008 as a Master's thesis for the University of Minnesota titled "Ordering 'the Other': Heterotopias and the Musée du Quai Branly."

10 In a similar manner, Homi Bhabha speaks of the "creation of cultural diversity and the containment of cultural difference," the celebration of diverse cultures in a removed, universal *musée imaginaire* and yet a suspicion of the actuality of social difference (1990, 208). For a more in-depth exploration of difference and diversity at the MQB, see Nélia Dias' "Cultural Difference and Cultural Diversity: The Case of the Musée du Quai Branly" in *Museums and Difference* (2007).

also widely examined at the internal level of the creation and ordering of the museum itself. Internal order takes many forms, from disciplinary classifications and discursive frames to architecture and mise-en-scène, to determining what and how cultures and histories coalesce. Through these processes, there are simultaneous choices regarding elisions and absences, the unsaid, the not included.

Language alone carries weight and reflects larger historical shifts and perspectives of self and other. Objects now at the MQB have been variously deemed tribal art, artifacts, primitive art, and masterpieces. They have been elevated for their aesthetic beauty, ethnographic function, and the inspiration provided to Western artists. Briefly renamed *arts premiers* before that moniker, too, faded due to pejorative associations, the objects are now a collection without a genre. They have been used to "speak for" cultures and they have, through many discourses, been "spoken for." Placed in architect Jean Nouvel's fantastical jungle, disparate time periods, geographies, and artists known and anonymous, contemporary and long deceased, all converge. In the museum's artificial, ordered space, objects are followed and framed by histories and discourses here made physical, yet also laid bare, vulnerable to a mode of seeing that questions the lenses through which it peers.

Internal order sets the stage for the third, human scale from which, in the museum setting, two foci for interpretation can be developed—the experiential component of the embodied individual and the institution that "hails," situates, and addresses this visitor. This analysis is based on Foucault's description of the mirror in "Of Other Spaces," which serves here as a metaphor for the museum encounter:

> In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy… Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" ([1984] 1986, 24).

The museum is a fantastical landscape to meander through, a realm for developing nuanced modes of interacting with, perceiving, and conceiving the world and one's place within it. Here rhetoric and representations of "the Other" are manifested in direct relationships, resonating and

perturbing at a range of immediate emotional, habitual, and associative registers. Manifold histories, dichotomies, comfortable assumptions, and taken-for-granted orders also pass through the museum mirror, both "propelled into the distance" and made strange (Korff 2002, 29), as well as present and tangible. The museum in this momentary, intimate encounter holds a potential to destabilize or reinforce which is made personal, distinct from the grand social implications of major institutions.

→ EMBODIED ENCOUNTER

> The body is the zero point of the world. There, where paths and spaces come to meet, the body is nowhere. It is at the heart of the world, this small utopian kernel from which I dream, I speak, I proceed, I imagine, I perceive things in their place, and I negate them also by the indefinite power of the utopias I image. My body… has no place, but it is from it that all possible places, real or utopian, emerge and radiate.
>
> Michel Foucault 1966

The first of a pair of radio lectures, "Les Hétérotopies" introduced the notion of a systematic methodology for analyzing "other spaces." Foucault's accompanying lecture, "The Utopian Body," took a poetic, self-reflexive tone to meditate on the experience of being bound within or to an imperfect body, yet imagining and reaching towards worlds, ideals, or experiences that stretch beyond the limits of one's own physicality. Such a personal, intimate experience of space was acknowledged in "Of Other Spaces" in Foucault's reference to Gaston Bachelard: "Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogenous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic" ([1984] 1986, 23). Foucault thereafter shifted the focus for his analysis of heterotopias from this intimate, "internal space" to "external space" ([1984] 1986, 23), yet his brief focus on the body complements his work on heterotopias and engages with the paradox of simultaneous identifiable materiality and experiential flux. With "Les Hétérotopies" and "Of Other Spaces" Foucault outlined qualities of spatialized difference inserted into the social landscape; with "The Utopian Body" he connected the physical body with virtual displacement via memory, emotion, or fantasy.

In "The Utopian Body" mind, body, and space are variously connected and disconnected. Through the meanderings of the mind, the body, too, is "always elsewhere… tied to all the elsewheres of the world" (Foucault [1966] 2006, 233). Yet the body does not disappear in these imaginings, indeed it is through the body that the personas and identities one invents and envisions are translated and made manifest. Wherever the mind may wander, the body remains embedded within the physical world, and yet

IMG. 03 — *L'Autre Marche (The Other Walk) Installation by Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jean-Paul Bourdier in the Musée du Quai Branly entry passageway, 2006-2009 (courtesy Jessica Fiala)*

IMG. 04 — *L'Autre Marche (The Other Walk). "Illusion of a stable trace in the river." Installation details, translations, and images available at trinhminh-ha.com (courtesy Jessica Fiala)*

outside of it, in that it is in relation to the body, or around it, that the world unfolds (Foucault [1966] 2006, 233). Entity, environment, and body are in this manner both fused and distinctly intertwined in an unending, overlapping cycle of experience, reflection, reaction, and response.

The body may be projected elsewhere through wistful imaginings, but it is also both connected and displaced through tangible and far-reaching transnational flows. A nexus where "elsewheres" meet an active construction of self, as Achille Mbembe has described, the body inhabits multiple worlds simultaneously (2010). In this manner, new hybridities and identities are crafted that draw from inspirations and restrictions ranging from the local to the global. Expansive and situated, for all its intimate nuances, protean identities, virtual and physical travels, the body remains externally coded and categorized. It is located within hierarchies, politics, and policies, invited, excluded, and confronted with the immediacy of its placement in relation to a constellation of norms, expectations, and practices. As Bryan Turner has described, "The body is at once the most solid, the most elusive, illusory, concrete, metaphorical, ever present and ever distant thing—a site, an instrument, an environment, a singularity and a multiplicity" (1984, 8).

→ THE SPACE OF DISCOURSE

"The Utopian Body" serves as a reminder of the constant internal/external interplay of embodied subjects, one node of the visitor-museum relationship. Turning toward the "other space" of the museum, one encounters objects and discourses set out in space, woven together with the aura of the original object, the intentional spatialization of order, and an immersive experience that engulfs the visitor. Conceptual frameworks create emplacements for the objects on display—art history, the spectacle of governmental power, a coded "other"—that permeate and unfurl within the demarcated "contact zone" (Clifford 1997) of the museum.

Foucault's work offers fodder for analyzing this dynamic, not solely in terms of discourse manifested in disciplines, statements, and underlying ordering principles, or made physical through institutions, architectures, or gazes, but through the corporeal and spatial nature of experiences with discursive practices. In a number of instances in the mid-late 1960s, Foucault explored spatial aspects of language and discourse that contribute to an interpretation of the physicality of discourse within the museum heterotopia.

In "The Language of Space," Foucault emphasized that "language is…a thing of space." Not merely the time-based linearity of a narrative or the practice of reading experienced through time, for Foucault, "it is in space that, from the outset, language unfurls… where things and words come to us in the moment where they go toward their meeting point" ([1964] 2007, 163-4). In this short essay, Foucault focused on the spatial dimensions of literature, but his comments on language are relevant to museums as well. Language here layers meaning upon the physical world,

guiding encounters and framing objects with classifications, descriptive text, and titles. Taken further, such interpretation leads words and things to a teleological meeting point, language providing a name and logic for the object that serves as its example.

Yet museums are more than sites or display windows for discourses created elsewhere; they participate in the creation and actualization of the discourses that, in turn, inform them. Indeed, it is in part through its materiality that discourse is produced, reinforced, and articulated. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault emphasized the context of statements by underscoring their materiality: "The statement is always given through some material medium… And the statement not only needs this materiality… it is partly made up of this materiality… a statement must have a substance, a support, a place, and a date" ([1969] 2010, 100-101). Museums enact this process, making physical interpretative frames, philosophies, histories, and ideologies. In this manner, Kevin Hetherington has explored the museum as a space that connects the "seeable" and "sayable," a visual apparatus that makes possible certain ways of seeing, thereby both producing objects of discourse and performing as their staging site (2011, 460). Discourse in this regard entails multiple forms of siting—isolating and naming the object of inquiry, creating space for articulating or basing knowledge developed, and even effacing this work by relocating the object within the "natural" world as a self-evident inevitability.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault's focus on the ordering and classification of knowledge was grounded in the spatial. Described by Robert Topinka, in this perspective, "order requires a space for constitution… humans need to place things on particular sites in order to make sense of them" (2010, 62). Foucault connected this materiality of order to its use, not just the production and ordering of knowledge, but also the more subtle influence of the "pure experience of order and of its modes of being" ([1966] 1971, xxi).

In Foucault's writings outlined above, language, discourse, and ordering principles bear spatial components, brought into dramatic relief in the museum context. Drawing out the experiential component, embodied subjects simultaneously interact with discourses, materialities, and visual apparatuses as they actively navigate the museum space. As creators of the terrain upon which one stands, museums could be argued to have inevitable influence, an influence that seeps beyond logic to the "creative process" that drives conceptions of self, described by Kevin Hetherington as the imagination that informs "how we understand the world and our place(s) within it as subjects" (2011, 458).

→ UNDERMINING PREDETERMINATION

The body was central in Foucault's work—the gaze upon it, its confinement and sexuality, its creation through discourse and the internalization of discourse—yet, as stated in "Of Other Spaces," he

IMG. 05 — *Musée du Quai Branly, 2013 (courtesy Jessica Fiala)*

turned his focus primarily toward "external space" ([1984] 1986, 23). In so doing, he focused on *the individual*, a constituted subject, a mobile point within a shifting network of relations, as opposed to *an individual* imbued with emotional, psychological, biographical, and motivational gradations. Although useful for conceiving of roles allotted and influences acting upon populations and offices, this approach has been critiqued for interpreting relationships between power, knowledge, and spatial structures as "processes… conceived without subjects" (Thrift, 2007, 53-54), that transform "the bewitching world by which one [is] 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes" (de Certeau, 1984, 92).

In selecting *the individual* as a level of scale for analyzing Foucault's heterotopia, this paper therefore cannot help but be shadowed by the kaleidoscopically fractured perspectives, memories, histories, and responses of *individuals*. There is an autophagistic component in the framework of levels of scale whereby the agency of individuals produces a tension with attempts at broader theorizing. In this manner, analysis provides contours, but remains open.

Individually and en masse, subjects are engaged in on-going processes of making and being made by histories, discourses, and practices. Participating in this process, museums lie at the intersection of Foucault's spatial and literary heterotopias, combining the creation of order in "other spaces" with the disturbing quality of the literary heterotopia through the dynamic, indefinable and potentially transformative experience of encounter. The heterotopia in this regard comes into play at the border between the newness of experience and that which has already been set into classifications and binaries. Entering into the discursive space of the museum, with innumerable orders already assumed and in-place, what marks the ambiguous moment at which an encounter is enveloped by

existing discourses; what might break or rewire the habits of this taming of experience?

For Beth Lord, a significant aspect of the museum's heterotopic nature is each visitor's experience of interpretation, the gap between museum representations and individual responses stimulated by exhibitions (2006, 4). Recalled from the past and manifested anew in the present, memory reveals how dynamic this interaction can be. Here empirical experience meets the production of history in public institutions. Not merely spatial, this interaction develops through time, and is neither static nor absolute.

To consider museums as heterotopias at the level of visitors means to accept visitation as an embodied, dialogic experience, prompted by, but not inherently limited to, set narratives. Connecting heterotopias with rites of passage, Kevin Hetherington highlighted the changeability of notions of self "associated with a transgressive middle stage of a rite—marked out spatially as a threshold or margin" (1997, 27). This (re) forming of identity, embodied and spatialized, aligns the heterotopia with transformative potential, a space where assumed identities are positioned as processes—being either reinforced or dismantled.

Applying this aspect of heterotopias to museums, one can see the significance of identity, as Stuart Hall has described, constituted within representations and in relationships. Identity is both an on-going production and "the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past" (1990, 225). In this manner, the museum offers much more than a site for the abstract meeting of words and things. Stepping into the constellation of stimuli set forth in the museum space, visitors enter a stage for the possible reimagining of relationships to an array of self- and externally-imposed narratives. The contrary could also be argued. Within the museum, there is a triangulation of objects, discourses, and visitors—a circuit of signification with the possibility to close and reinforce categories, divisions, and perceived fixities.

The implied fusion of words and things serves not, however, as a predetermination, but as a starting point for practices that might break apart such equivalences, increase institutional transparency, and establish platforms for discussion. In recent decades, many museums have undergone their own transformations—architecture disengaging from the grand image of pillared temples, exhibition technologies enabling enhanced interactivity, diverse programming for families and communities, and institutional practices informed by a range of voices. Such projects turn the focus of the museum outward, both placing museums on display and situating them as "other spaces" embedded within and actively contributing to contemporary cultural debates. The impact of a museum heterotopia therefore cannot be determined solely by the positioning of bodies and objects, but must be regarded in its active components—interactions, dialogues, and debates.

New technology has further blurred the boundaries of the physical heterotopia. Housed in a site, a museum can now be portable, convenient,

and personal, with virtual exhibitions, recorded lectures, and blogs. Through social media and mobile technologies, the "other space" of the museum can be actively appropriated, incorporated into the performance and representation of self. Here heterotopias, postmodernity, and postcoloniality overlap, as institutions and individuals reiterate, reinvent, and explore their identities anew through an array of forums. Museums continue to extend their boundaries, developing new programming and avenues for visitor engagement, but amidst this expansion and experimentation, what barriers remain in place?

→ OUTSIDE LIBERATORY "OTHER SPACES"

> A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge.
> A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created
> by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.
> It is in a constant state of transition.
>
> Gloria E. Anzaldúa 1987

The above changes represent significant developments, yet they remain potentialities rather than guarantees. Accessibility, social justice, and the

IMG. 06 — *Musée du Quai Branly, 2007 (courtesy Jessica Fiala)*

diversification of audiences are increasingly becoming topics of importance for museums, yet they are also matters to be balanced with numerous other exigencies and goals. Museums thus construct spaces of possibility, but they remain bounded in many ways.

The broad category "other spaces" includes potentially radical sites, but on a different trajectory, it also contains regions of marginalization. In this vein, Don Mitchell associated the spatiality of homelessness with relegation to the "other space" of skid row (2001, 64) and Gloria Anzaldúa compared the borderlands along the U.S.-Mexico divide to a raw wound (1999, 25). If the vantage point is reversed and one speaks not

of "other spaces" marked by difference perceived from stable ground, but otherness as a condition experienced across social terrains, the borders that might seem to demarcate "other spaces" break down. If perpetually marginalized, an entire region may become a heterotopia where, although present, one remains excluded.

Viewed in this light, accessing a museum may entail traversing multiple "other spaces," numerous social, physical, and economic barriers. Entry here becomes more than presence beyond a threshold, it implies participation, belonging. In underscoring the performative and social nature of belonging or being cast out, Vickie Bell emphasized, "one does not simply or ontologically 'belong' to the world or to any group within it. Belonging is an achievement at several levels of abstraction" (1999, 3).

In this light, Terence Turner has lamented the "tendency to ignore or misrecognize the social nature of the body" and the propensity to turn the material body into an "object of discourse" (1994, 28-29). To forget the social nature of the body is to neglect the degree to which different bodies are allotted disparate opportunities—welcomed or barred from entry, listened to or silenced, relegated to the margins or accepted as neutral or "normal." Theorizing the body in the museum heterotopia either through the generalization of the *individual* or through the assumption of liberation alone belies a privilege that involves removing the body from direct and subtle limitations and assumptions based on class, race, gender, age, culture, etc.

The hope that might be associated with the radical impact of a heterotopia is hedged by Foucault's own warning, in a 1982 interview, that "If one were to find a place… where liberty is effectively exercised, one would find that this is not owing to the order of objects, but… owing to the practice of liberty… Men have dreamed of liberating machines. But there are no machines of freedom" (1984, 246-247). The museum heterotopia as transformative site or ideal of inclusion does not emerge through building alterations or inward facing practices alone. It necessitates larger processes of facilitating participation in its forums. In this manner, Simone Bodo has called for "strategies and programs aimed at creating "third spaces," enabling *individuals*, through museums and with one another, to both cross barriers and engage in self-representation (2012, 184). For both museums and visitors, such work may entail moving outside comfortable borders, from established "other spaces" into territories unknown.

→ UNENDING "OTHER SPACES"

Museums are in many ways heterotopias caught in a dynamic of stability and flux, as physical sites in the process of continual change, settings for the dynamic exploration of personal and social identities, concrete entities with virtual tentacles, and terrains for the spatialization of discourse. It is in this reflection upon the museum as simultaneously concrete and metamorphosing that this paper revisits the Musée du Quai Branly and Foucault's second principle, that heterotopias can always be made to function differently. Still the subject of valid critiques and persistent challenges, as well as the initiator and impetus for discussions, debates, publications, and convenings, the Musée du Quai Branly presents neither an end-point nor a finished product, but another node within a network of ever-altering "other spaces."

For Edward S. Casey, "what is most important" in the theory of the heterotopia "is Foucault's claim that fundamental ideas of place and space vary widely from era to era—and from society to society… 'space' and 'place' are as variable as time is usually taken to be: ever-altering, never the same" (298). Museums are enmeshed in movement, their collections, practices, and forms reflecting and contributing to discourses still unfolding. As they increasingly seek to actively engage visitors with exhibitions and one another, as they explore roles as forums, gathering spaces, and centers for debate, museums relinquish some authoritative power and the character of a particular museum heterotopia becomes both an issue of space and a question of modes of interaction. In this manner, the heterotopia is spatial, but it is also a lens for analyzing, a frame for developing questions, and a means of generating new ways of understanding the social landscapes we inhabit and create.

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The *New Barbarians* as Living Archives

Inci Eviner's Artwork

→ MARIANGELA ORABONA

Mariangela Orabona is a research member of the MeLa* RF02 "Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernities and Museum Practices". She holds a PhD in *Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone world* (University of Naples l'Orientale, Italy). Her main research interests concern visual aesthetics, theories of difference and race, post-representational theory and new media arts practices. Her recent publications include "Sensing Race and Gender in Contemporary Postcolonial Art" in *American Multicultural Studies, Diversity of Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality*, edited by S. O. Pinder. SAGE (2012); with Iain Chambers and other MeLa Researchers she has recently co-edited the volume T*he Postcolonial Museum: the Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History*. Ashgate (2014).

→ ABSTRACT

This essay explores the borders and boundaries of migration both in their limits and expansions, looking at the body as an unwanted matter of Europe in the context of a ruined archive. It also investigates the margins and limits of museum practices through a series of artworks by the Turkish artist Inci Eviner. Her work is inscribed in an extensive territory, building bridges between Turkey and the rest of Europe, problematising the concept of territory and earth by creating unstable cartographies of European space. Eviner's artworks exceed the European consensual and inherited maps, reassembling them as fragmented technologies of a ruined archive while showing the incapacity of producing and reproducing stable maps of migratory fluxes towards Europe.

Body and universe (…),
floating/falling, folding/unfolding
are directly touched by that outside now enframed,
creating sensation from their coming together.

Elisabeth Grosz 2008

This essay explores the borders and boundaries of migration both in their limits and expansions, looking at the body as an unwanted matter of Europe in the context of a ruined archive. It also aims at understanding the margins and limits of museum practices through a series of artworks by the Turkish artist Inci Eviner. Her work is inscribed in an extensive territory, building bridges between Turkey and the rest of Europe, problematising the concept of territory and earth through creating unstable cartographies of European space. In particular, three of her artworks traverse the Occidental corpus: *Broken Manifestos* (2011) presents some image-scapes from historical engravings and is addressed to the European body politic through a representation of violence in action. The museum space itself is addressed in *Co-action Device: a study* (2013), where the Turkish artist transforms a classroom into a museum space. *Fluxes of Girls on Europe* (2010) proposes unstable cartographies through dance as a performative act of making and unmaking maps.[1]

→ MUSEUM SPACES AS MICRO-POLITICAL DEVICES

Art makes its presence felt by unfolding the ties with the past, by dismantling its archives, by approaching the complexities and contradictions of social reality. Eviner's artworks aim at unveiling archiving as a process rather than considering and analyzing the archive in terms of an order of things. The whole approach is set within the contradictions of our migrating present. She approaches migration, especially of women, torn between East and West Europe, by linking the materiality of the body with the question of citizenship. Her productive devices–drawings, video and sound installations–are suspicious and meticulous dispositifs of sensory perceptions. The artist expresses *micro-political* dynamics through different media devices. The use of video and sound installations, drawings and live performance, serves to reinvent both memory and history. They bring out the unexploited potential of their hidden regions as well their relation to the present composition of the changing economic, political and social landscape in Europe. Through the virtuality of the screen she narrates the narrow border between citizenship and migration, exposing the central role of the limits and expansions of borders in the geopolitical and cultural transformation of Europe. Her artworks can be considered as attempts to problematise the European corpus by exceeding its consensual and inherited maps, reassembling them as fragmented technologies of a ruined archive.

1 www.incieviner.net

Both *Broken Manifestos* and *Fluxes of Girls on Europe* focus on the old geopolitical divisions between European national territories and the "new" phenomenon of human flows–the *new barbarians* (Negri 2001)–coming from elsewhere; those subjectivities excluded from the Occidental corpus even though they are the raw material of the European economy. All the unwanted matter of history, the bodies of migrants, features as rows of figures performing a choreography of violence in *Broken Manifestos*. Such an approach allows for a discovery of "new bodies of material that have gone unrecognized or misunderstood, up until now; that is to say, they have been excessively (*violemment*) concealed or marginalized" as Jacques Derrida argued (Derrida 1982).

Broken Manifestos comprises ink on paper drawings and a video installation (3 HD videos & 6 channel sound). The artwork depicts a multitude, showing small figures in the act of demonstrating, dancing, moving in a burlesque or solemn way. Like suspended lives, a series of silhouettes in a row, a grid of body parts mostly seen from behind, are all taking part in a game of power and violence in all of its guises and manifestations on the social and political level. The work is divided into three main groups: demonstrations, immigrants and violence. It uses a specially designed surround sound and HD picture-in-picture techniques, and sets the stage for the third and final installation: *Parliament*. All the videos, as well the ink drawings, stage rows of different figures with a playful lightness on a dark wall, miniatures of real bodies in the act of protesting, dancing and engaged in such daily activities as chatting, eating, meeting and feeling compassion, love, sexual desire, violence, jealousy, hope and shame. This packed world is a toy model occupying fifteen meters of the museum space, like a frieze or wallpaper.

The bodies in a row, together with sporadic animals, participate in an ambiguous meeting until the final stage represented by the institution of the European Parliament that should eventually let Turkey join the European Union. It is a beautiful dark landscape made of three adjoining parts where white silhouettes emerge from a black void. The video installation is accompanied by the sound of the Portuguese musician DJ João Pedro Veloso Rodrigues, who developed for *Broken Manifestos* an involving, unsettling, hypnotic installation that consists of environmental sounds such as a dog barking, laughter and screaming. These sounds disseminate an unexpected critical challenge that creates an unsettling environment and allows for a reflection on the production of bodies through sounds, on "how the materiality of sounds is affectively sustained in individual and collective bodies" (Chambers 2012).

The second example explores the museum space as a new *territory* of social and political encounters where old practices of displaying and archiving are set aside in favor of collaborative practices that enter the museum space in order to change its exhibitionary function. *Co-action Device: a Study* (2013) might be said to epitomize a certain tendency of dealing with these kind of collaborative practices. The artwork is precisely an interactive multi-media work where students of different subjects,

IMG. 01-03 — *Inci Eviner, Broken Manifestos, 2010, 3-channel HD video installation with 5.1 sound, 3 min loop (courtesy Inci Eviner and Galeri Nev Istanbul)*

together with the artist and the audience, explore different spaces within a museum-like context. Recently, to counter the neoliberal economy, a search for solidarity in terms of the coexistence of different singularities has been actualized by collaborative actions. Co-working activities and newly-formed communities, informed by a collective "set of relationships" (Virno 2002), propose a social engagement of being in common in response to the economical and political shifts of capitalist society. Within this overall frame, the museum encounters new conditions of artistic production. These lead to stressing the importance of the transformative centrality of social production as a sharper separation between the artist as producer, the institution as hegemonic model of social organization, and the consumption and circulation of the artworks, comes into play (Chambers et al. 2014).

> During the forty days, viewers who came to the "Device" sometimes encountered an empty installation. Sometimes the visitors saw people searching for themselves, groveling on the floor in despair, leaving, hiding within the space, positioning themselves as a refugee tent, doing nothing except sitting and reading a book, sleeping, falling in love, chiseling a femur bone in plaster, or maintaining the actions they have been doing. Sometimes they witnessed the enthusiasm of a crowd reciting, shouting, reading, and dancing in every corner with extraordinary vivacity. And when they joined us inside the "Device", they drifted from a viewer's sheltered position to the chaos of the uncanny.[2]

Eviner's *Co-action Device: a Study* (2013) can be considered an attempt to deal with economic issues as well as with the transformative potentials of the museum and the limits of certain museum practices. The artwork was presented for the first time in the *13th Istanbul Biennial* in 2013. It has no specific subject but presents a collective assemblage of enunciations:

2 Inci Eviner's website: http://www.incieviner.net/en/articles/co-action-device-a-study/

IMG. 04-07 *(next page)* — *Inci Eviner, Co-Action Device: A Study, 2013, performative research and performances, site-specific installation view from Galata Greek School, 13th Istanbul Biennial (courtesy Inci Eviner and Galeri Nev Istanbul)*

IMG. 08 *(next page) — Inci Eviner, Fluxes of Girls on Europe, 2010, HD video, 3 min loop (courtesy of the artist and Galeri Nev Istanbul)*

dancing, chatting, writing, working interactions are all mixed up and the audience together with the artist and her art students participate in these points of co-existence, a kind of non linear collective encounter in Deleuze's terms. This work is also informed and influenced by the recent protests in Istanbul.[3] A new geography is hence established by this multitude as the productive flows of bodies define new spaces and new directions.

→ CHANGING PLACES THROUGH DANCE

The joyous disturbance of certain women's movements,
and of some women in particular,
has actually brought with it the chance for a certain risky turbulence
in the assigning of places within our small European space.

Jacques Derrida 1982

We are all in the epoch of space, as Michael Foucault reminds us, living in an age of juxtaposition, of the near and the far, of the *side-by-side*, of the dispersed (Foucault 1986). Commencing once again from the collective female body, this time from a dancing one, in *Fluxes of Girls on Europe* (2010) Eviner creates affective alliances intertwining simultaneously dance and sound, poetry and music through a video-sound installation. Her work reconnects the centrality of the borders in geopolitical and cultural transformations with the exploration of all the contradictions and difficulties in dealing with such a topic. The urge to map as a human instinct is rearranged in a cartography that has no formal material boundaries but is composed of bodies occupying spaces. In this artwork *fluxes* and *flows*, two keywords of contemporary global processes (Balibar 2004; Mezzadra 2002), become female bodies in an apparently healthy Europe. The entire installation could be considered a sensory journey through the collective experience of women who have left their own country and feel themselves migrant in another country, women who are considered "foreigners." As Derrida reminds us, "the dance changes places" and these women are dancing a revolutionary act in order to change places. In their journey they create discontinuous and fragmented paths by means of movement.

These spaces are more territories than maps as they were filmed from above using Google Earth. Europe seems a virgin territory, unexplored and unexploited, where some of these blossoming bodies affirm the urge for explosion (eg. over Sicily, France and Turkey). Some other

3 The title of the Istanbul Biennial "Mom, am I barbarian?" is a quote from the Turkish poet Lale Müldür's book of the same title. [Müldür, Lale. Anne, Ben. 2006. *Barbar Mıyım?(Mom, Am I Barbarian?)*, Istanbul: L&M Yayınları]. The "barbarian" reflects the "absolute other" in society says the curator Fulya Erdemci. The title of the 13th Istanbul Biennial reminds what Negri says in *Empire* about the migrants as the "new barbarians" invading the Empire, as the phenomenon that is haunting the world: an uncontrolled force accelerating the decline of the system (Negri 2001, 214-218).

bodies are encapsulated like silkworms over North Africa with a clear allusion to the condition of women in those countries. Others seem "archeologists of movement," as the choreographer Mathilde Monnier defines the dancer, because they need to excavate gesture in order to open an inquiry (Monnier 2005). Some others are sleeping outside the European space (eg. over Russia). In this sense the memory of movement can also contaminate the collective memory of the territory to become an unfolded space rearticulated in a different manner: an open horizon made of fragmented memories, a living archive elaborated on its ruins.

"Territory frames chaos provisionally and in the process produces extractable qualities, which become the materials and formal structures of art" (Grosz 2008, 16).

IMG. 09-10 — *Remote Sensing. A film by Ursula Biemann. 2001, 53 minutes (courtesy Ursula Biemann)*

Discovering a movement, framing chaos and producing qualities are all features of Eviner's artwork. The constant movement of the bodies, their interaction with each other, as well as the silent stillness of some other bodies, are the resulting qualities of chaos: unfolded counter-geographies disoriented in a space full of contradictions and ambiguities. In dealing

with such chaos Eviner's work promotes a rearticulation of the margins of European space and its process of archiving, together with the future memory of living archives, through a reconfiguration of a different territory composed in the flows and fluxes of suspended migrant lives. Those flows are utterly embodied in migrant bodies laid on a green map. She shows the impossibility of producing and reproducing stable maps of migratory flows towards Europe as her work reiterates and reassembles the fragments of a ruined corpus. Like silkworms, some of these women hide their body in a private and inviolable land, a territory not yet explored and endlessly migrant, a becoming earth of the body proposing a deeper reflection on our migrant modernity, on Occidental premises of neutrality and respectability, and on Europe as a ruined archive continuously interrogated by fluxes of bodies traversing its territories.

On a more global level the mobility of the female bodies is a source of economic growth claimed by a small portion of the population which has economic power. The production and reproduction of the borders, as typical female spaces, is also one of the most interesting themes of *Remote Sensing,* a one-channel video essay by Ursula Biemann. In its political and cultural implications this video essay explores the politics of the border as a global phenomenon. This is a work dealing with the female body, the border and migration. Here migrant female bodies are small X-ray portraits moving through blue landscapes. The blue space is mixed with green electronic maps following womens' planetary paths from Salvador to Paris, from California to Thailand. These fluxes are in endless movement, narrating female migration as a contemporary capitalist event sustained through the new technologies. They also highlight how the intensification of surveillance over migrant fluxes and all the border activities is strictly linked to new media technology.
On a planetary dimension Biemann talks about a critical space where the relationship between economy and sexuality is strictly linked to the subjectivation processes of female bodies exploited by global capitalism, especially through prostitution. She tries to understand the productivity of the border as a space where parameters and definitions are in crisis. What happens on the border? What kind of economic systems have been built upon national infrastructures in ruins and on its borders? The border economies need the movement of the female bodies to produce a surplus: still bodies do not produce any kind of growth. The flow of capital in one direction is strictly linked to the movement of bodies in another.

Borders as exploited territories are the site of the "stratification and sedimentation of movements, of flows, and are made out of arrival and departures, of hybridization and linkage," as Lazzarato reminds us when talking about the "minor" languages, knowledge and techniques of culture such as video using deterritorialized voices, instruments and practices (Deleuze Guattari 1975; Lazzarato 2005). This is the case in Biemann's video essay *Remote Sensing* or Melitopoulos's video *Timescapes.*

While interlacing the production and reproduction of collective and affective bodily fluxes with the ambiguous flexibility and mobility of the

border, the aesthetic attempts made by Eviner are able to create an anti-representative series of territories that allow for a profound reflection on collective de-spatialized female fluxes. This is to consider the word *flux* from a geopolitical point of view as a physical *flow* and from a feminist point of view as a *mater* reality, a fluid, incorporeal passage. In the visual and sonorous space of the museum the borders of this fluid materiality are in a regime that totally negates freedom of movement.

Eviner's bodies are therefore counter-geographies, linked to the borders between two or more nations and designating a totally renewed and mutuable critical scenery. This is a postcolonial perspective on the continuous redefinition and despatialization of geopolitical space where bodies productively personify the border. Who are those bodies? What is their nature? Elizabeth Grosz proclaimed the urgency of interpreting how culture inscribes the bodies but also how their nature makes possible a productive cultural transcription, which is also a political, cultural and conceptual evolution (Grosz 2005). In Eviner's works this double space—the geopolitical reassembled European map, on the one hand, and the material female body, on the other—are both de-spatialized. We find this echoed in Fatema Mernissi's novel *Dreams of Trespass*, where the appropriation of the national map makes the nationalist utopia impossible. Mernissi refers to the appropriation of the European borders in order to denounce the alleged European aim of free circulation and mobility within its borders.

Each body is a cartography in itself, producing a new subjectivity in its relation with another body. To produce a new subjectivity means mobilizing the heterogeneity of all the cartographies involved, so that the European map can be experienced as an affective assemblage of intersections and encounters. Those corporeal encounters sketch a wider cartography, a fractured European corpus, a ruined archive, where political and cultural divisions are engaged in a broader project of social and economic exclusions.

Europe is a problematic corpus in which other bodies coming from elsewhere claim the right to move freely. A blossoming explosion of body fluxes occupies the European space, overcoming inherited and consensual maps and reassembling them through the fluxes of new fragmented territories. The body exposes itself as a living archive proposing the porosity of national and post-national borders, cutting across and undoing political and economic differences that grant the right of citizenship to some subjects and deny the same right to others.

At another, more technical, level of analysis, the simultaneous coexistence of action in space is implied. Here the European map presents itself like a canvas. On its surface there appears image after image, body after body: a composite becoming that draws on the sonic element of a voice-over as a lament that not only enters the space between different moment-actions but also becomes part of the actions themselves. Both time and narration are equated with movement through space. This *tableau vivant* is endlessly time-based, a continually unmade narrative that commences

and concludes within the borders of Turkey. The voice-over, as an instrument of narration, allows a reflection on how history is heard in the museum space. The pulsing chant echoes traditional chants, reminding us of the oral tradition of ancient cultures. It presents itself as an aesthetic provocation, a reconstructed historical lament of the past, a sound journey into the history of sensory perception, bound to the performative act.

As Grosz argues: "[…] visual and sonorous arts capture something of the vibratory structure of matter itself; they extract color, rhythm, movement from chaos in order to slow down and delimit within it a territory that is capable of undergoing a reshaping and a new harmonics that will give it independence, a plane of stabilization, on which to sustain itself." (Grosz 2008, 16) In the same manner we could argue that there is always a sharp opposition between the constructed space (Lefebvre 1992) of Occidental national powers and an open-ended, indeterminate chaos emerging from the same space. A delimited territory with precise spatio-temporal coordinates "nonetheless always open to the chaos from which it draws its force" (Grosz 2008, 19). Grosz called this territory "a coming together both of spatio-temporal coordinates (and thus the possibilities of measurement, precise location, concreteness, actuality) and qualities (which are immeasurable, indeterminate, virtual, and open-ended), that is, it is the coupling of a milieu and a rhythm" (Grosz 2008, 19). She also stresses "how rhythm [as a refrain] stakes out a territory from chaos that resonates with and intensifies the body" (Grosz 2008, 20). Art lives within this chaos and the artist is called to focus on discovering and recapturing the dynamics and fundamental function of art. More than ever before the artist lives in this crucial historical juncture where the continual economic and social transformations of European "territory" are continuously defining who we are.

The video is accompanied by a chant. A female voice narrates her path, maybe towards Europe. A subjective experience is collectively repeated all over the European map; after all the title seems to deal with a collective movement, a widespread spatialization of fluxes. In the impossibility of mobility the artwork registers that the only possible escape seems to be the repetitive performativity of the gesture. A social fact, Butler would argue, helps the body avoid the body-sign trap. In this breath the body discovers parodic forms where it is free to repeat performatively subjective practices that remain open to interpretations or possible re-significations (Butler, 1993).

The repetition of movements, as a *refrain*, shows the fixity of the bodies involved, seemingly confined to rigid positions on the virtual map. Gestures and movements are articulated through immobility. There is no relocation: the still or moving bodies always occupy the same space, without ever gaining ground. Women are not forced to define paths as in Biemann's *Remote Sensing*. They dance incessantly over a stagnant Europe, a small piece of land geopolitically circumscribed by post-national borders that dictate exclusion. But these borders also act as inclusive differential techniques, as Sandro Mezzadra defines them,

where migrants, especially migrant women, are relegated to caring roles and are controlled and regulated in a more strict way by the economic logics of exploitation (Mezzadra 2013). As a feature of the political economy of modernity, migration exceeds the boundaries of national and post-national legislations, becoming the "new" political problem. In this frame Mezzadra underlines the appearance of a new regulation of the borders with a structural hybrid regime of power regulated by different actors: European nations, the European Union at the post-national level and the International Organization for migration at a global one. All these old and new actors agree that a negotiation of the borders implies a rigid regime of regulation. They put aside the idea of possible channels of solidarity, leading from the south and east of the Mediterranean towards Europe, that would prevent the accumulation of thousands and thousands of dead bodies that is filling up the sea.

Eviner's choreography unveils the consensual maps of Western culture, drawing on the proliferation of these borders, their heterogenization, as instruments of economic and political power, together with their juridical enforcement. Europe becomes an unaffective archive, a blank map over which other bodies claim the right to move freely and eventually acquire a right of citizenship.

In *Fluxes of Girls on Europe* there is a chaotic proliferation of female bodies popping up all over Europe and beyond. Each performer works from a specific location with distinct artistic modalities, yet does so in relation to the other performers. Gestures, poetry and sounds impinge upon each other, interrupting and recomposing the ways in which we all think about each European nation. Every nation has its own dance. Usually the bodies dance in pairs: there are four bodies lying down on England and two bodies dancing on Turkey. An explosion of fluxes occurs all over the European space, a choreography of stillness and mobility. A sleeping materiality on the one hand, and a vital energy on the other, fragments the historical maps as territories occupied by living archives experience the memory of the earth. Some of these bodies act as though they felt impeded and frustrated by the reality of European law denying entrance into the Union or free movement within its territories. As wasted items scattered on the ground, most of these bodies appear in a moment of transformation, some of them are forgotten on their small piece of land, others are in play along with the narratives of other bodies and acquire a different appearance after their interaction with one another. There is a continuous sequence made up of gaps, frictions and redundancies of the sound which cuts across and undoes the whole scene, composing and recomposing the ways in which all the bodies participate in the fragmented deterritorialized space.

Turkey, in particular, as a transit zone between East and West has been previously screened by some artists and theorists in collective projects on the European space as the *A* zone, the global center of late capitalism in opposition to the *B* zone, the margins full of scattered counter hegemonies. Ursula Biemann, Angela Melitopulous and Lisa Parks

have all looked from various perspectives at the collective mapping of a Europe-to-come, at that "massive constellation of corridors and vectors to the East". They critically register the production of "contradictory lines, nodes of displacements, untranslatable stories from the present and the past in the region and beyond" (Franke 2006, 405).

This assemblage of lines, nodes and stories, in defining the future memory of a Europe *yet* to come, interrogates our present where migrants, escaping from their dramatically difficult conditions, simply demand the right to live. Eviner confirms her intention to create spaces between "the concepts of human and national identity, grudge and affection, inside and outside, unheimlich and heimlich, and the ambiguous, variable structure of these spaces" (Eviner 2013, 124-125). Each country has its own body at work. There are few blind spots on the map as the Turkish girls travel all over Europe and beyond, leaving their home behind in search for freedom. Soon there will be no more bodies on the map as they disappear, leaving the European space as a patchwork of disappeared bodies, a living matter forced to leave this territory. These disappeared bodies offer multiple viewpoints of the dismembered European corpus. They suggest different stories. They dance mortality, decay, exile and migration as well as chanting laments of trauma, hope and rebirth. Their laments open up a free and transformative territory in the critical space in which bodies emerge, change and are no longer confined to the continuous transit between past, present, and future. This implies a reconfiguration of the past now actualized in the present: an ambiguous space that interrupts the course of events, an empty territory that fills a critical space. This, as Iain Chambers puts it, is always a border thought: "critical thought as a discourse of the border is consistently haunted and interpellated by the invisible, by what fails to enter the arena of representation, or simply falls off the rigid radar screens of a solid consensus " (Chambers 2006, 47).

Time is sculpted through these loaded and unfolded spaces in an ensemble of explicitly contested border crossings, where female bodies become fragmented constellations of diverse heterotopias offering an escape from consensual Occidental maps. Such bodies are explicitly re-narrating time and territory, uprooting their habitual accounting through collective counter-geographies.

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Powers of Secrecy (Ruins, Silences and Fogs).

Some Reflections on *Companionable Silences*, an Exhibition Curated by Shanai Jhaveri

→ BEATRICE FERRARA

Beatrice Ferrara (PhD in "Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World", 2011) is Local Project Manager and Appointed Researcher at the Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" within the EU Project "MeLa* - Museums in an Age of Migrations" (FP7). Her research interests include the sonic-cultures and cyber-cultures of the black diaspora; theories of affect and post-representation through images and sounds, especially in relation to race; the relation between images, sound and pre-emptive power; the production and circulation of images of migration across different media platforms. She has published several essays and articles on sound, art and new media from a post-colonial perspective. She is the editor of *Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernities and Museum Practices* (Politecnico di Milano DPA, 2012).

→ ABSTRACT

Using a critical toolbox developed at the intersection of cultural and postcolonial studies, this essay develops a series of reflections around the changing premises of archival institutions, touching on the debates on "global art" and "inclusion." More specifically, the essay advocates the necessity for museums and archives with a post-colonial vocation to engage in the possibility of the refusal of the other to appear. The argument unfolds through a critical investigation of a curatorial practice and an artwork, in which the question of "secrecy" (as silence and as a form of foggy vision obfuscating the regimes of representation) is strategic. These are, respectively, the pavilion Companionable Silences, *curated by Shanay Jhaveri at the Palais de Tokyo in 2013 and the 2012 film-essay* I See Infinite Difference between Any Point and Another… *by The Otolith Group, dedicated to the painter and poet Etel Adnan and included in* Companionable Silences.

→ FOREWORD. RUINS AND REMOVAL

A ghost arrived with a handful of roses. "No other flower is a flower," he said. He left them on a table and quit; the more the place darkened, the more they glowed.

Etel Adnan 2012

An exhibition organized by 21 young curators from 13 different countries revolving around the emergence, in the last years, of the figure (and the related *discourse*) of the independent curator, *Nouvelle vague* was held at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (21 June – 8 September 2013).[1] Composed of several pavilions, each animated by a specific research question relating to the practices of *curare*—"to take care of" and "to attend to"—*Nouvelle vague* compelled the visitor to take very earnestly the specificity of each single pavilion.[2] To step into the purposely-reorganised exhibition space of the Palais de Tokyo was to accept an invitation to reflect on, be exposed to, and engage with, the multiple ways in which each curator had inflected the question of *curare* by intervening in and acting upon accepted museum practices and archival codes. Moving through the pavilions, the visitor could ideally reiterate—in the living matter of her own body, solicited by an overwhelming proliferation of artworks and exhibition display possibilities—the gestures by which each curator had performed and played with the museum's inherited languages. In this way, the visitor could repeatedly *perceive* the exhibition precisely as a complex *mise-en-scène*.

As Lidia Curti has suggested, to pay greater attention to the language of the museum and therefore to the performance of the carefully orchestrated arrangements of its practices may be a promising act. From this change of perspective—"from mere exhibition to complex rite" (Curti 2012, 189)—it follows that a critical and affirmative disposition towards the exhibition as dramatization would also engender the possibility of playing with the language of exhibiting itself, in order to acknowledge—and counter, by interrupting its workings—the normalising effect of exhibition practices and codes. In this sense, a particularly suggestive aesthetic intervention in *Nouvelle vague* was Leyla Cárdenas' *Removido*—a site-specific intervention presented in the *Collective Fictions* pavilion, curated by Artesur.[3] Almost imperceptible, except from a distance, *Removido* consisted in an outline of the profile of the Palais de Tokyo's monumental

1 For the *Nouvelle vague*'s exhibition concept, see http://palaisdetokyo.com/en/exhibition/nouvelles-vagues-in-the-palais-de-tokyo, accessed 21 September 2013. For the sake of precision, it should be added that the Palais de Tokyo was the main but not the only scene of *Nouvelle vague*, which was also disseminated in thirty other Parisian galleries. This essay refers, however, to the specific exhibition held at the Palais.

2 The reference to the Latin etymology of *curare* as a premise to the whole exhibition is drawn from the *Nouvelle vague*'s press release (http://palaisdetokyo.com/en/exhibition/nouvelles-vagues, accessed 21 September 2013).

3 *Artesur. Collective Fictions* is the curatorial manifestation of a collective project existing online – a collaborative and free electronic living archive presenting and disseminating contemporary art from Latin America. See: http://www.collectivefictions.com/presentation/, accessed 25 August 2013.

IMG. 01 — *Leyla Cárdenas, Removido*, 2013. Site-specific peeled drawing, accumulated paint. Part of the exhibition "Artesur, Collective Fictions," in "Nouvelle vague" (21.06.13 - 09.09.13), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (courtesy Palais de Tokyo Press)

IMG. 02 — Leyla Cárdenas, detail from *Removido*,2013. Photo: Santiago Tovar (courtesy of Cárdenas and Tovar

IMG. 03 — Leyla Cárdenas, *Removido*, 2013. Photo: Santiago Tovar (courtesy Cárdenas and Tovar.

external front, where the artist had scratched off the white paint covering one of the walls of the *Artesur*'s exhibition space.

More an art-working process than an artwork as such, *Removido* was largely present by its own latent absence. In fact, over the weeks, it encountered its own obsolescence, with the beginning of an inevitable and semi-autonomous process of the peeling away of the paint. Starting from Cárdenas' first scratches, piece after piece of paint fell off the artwork, leaving the floor covered in layers of paint.

This process of obsolescence would only make *Removido* more visible. As it was progressively *removed* from the wall—by the artist, by time, by the wider conditions of a room in which so many visitors would pass by the artwork every day—*Removido* became a trace, a signal, a suspended reminder of a deeper *removal*. The removal of the untold *secret* at the heart of every exhibition: the constructed character of the exhibition's normalising codes, embodied in the "white wall." The ghostly double of the Palais de Tokyo—a palace built, not incidentally, for the 1937 "World's Fair"—*Removido* works as a reminder, and simultaneously a gesture towards the possibility, and inevitability, of transformation. As Anca Rujoiu writes, talking of the *material* conditions of the artwork and its ruined character:

> [*Removido*] tak[es] us to the inherent destiny of a ruin. [Here] residuals, fragments, discarded structures are used as material for sculptures and installations, yet the new context and re-use does not completely defuse their previous history. […] The strategy of removal is as much destructive as constructive. The act of erasure of an existing entity carries the potential of a new production. Artistic production meets exhibition-making. [P] reparations for an exhibition start and end the same: painting and cleaning the walls, removing carefully the previous traces and their related references and narratives, bringing the space back to a fictional white-impeccable status quo. In Leyla Cárdenas site-specific intervention, it's a reversed process. (2013, n.p.)

Intensely evoked in *Removido* through the inevitable and urgent obsolescence of established practices and categories—and the necessity to face the removal that regulates the normalising process by which a "complex rite," as in Curti's words, becomes 'simply' an exhibition—were the common *issues* making themselves transversally evident in the majority of the discourses and practices animating *Nouvelle vague*.[4] At the same time, as *Removido* proves, obsolescence is only a step on the

4 Different elements addressed in *Nouvelle Vague* included the event of the digital turn (relating to new media, affective experiences, audience research), the new configurations of "the informatics of domination" (Haraway 1991 [1985]), the persisting and the new planetary asymmetries of power (relating to gender, race, resources, ecology and health status), the composite territories of global politics and policies. See especially the pavilions/installations *Ada* (curators Ken Farmer and Conrad Shawcross), *Artesur, Collective Fictions* (curators Albertine de Galbert et al.), *File Not Found* (curators The Black Ninja Factors), *This House* (curators Anthea Buys and Mikhael Subotzsky), *Henrique Oliveira. Batogogo* (curator Marc Bembekoff).

path towards transformation—a step in a process in which the artwork is always in relation with what lies outside it, metaphorically and materially at the same time. To unravel this process entailed, in each single pavilion in *Nouvelle vague*, a proliferation of different practices, each of them facing a different aspect of what lies at the limits of the art discourse: i.e. its cultural, technological, geopolitical, racial, gendered and economic levels of articulation.[5] In the diverse aesthetic-political curatorial statements/performances composing *Nouvelle vague*, the "inherited palimpsest" of the museum and the archive was performed as an exploded matter, under the pressure of the contingencies and conjunctures of contemporary planetary conditions.

This is precisely the overtly ruined—and therefore future-oriented–matter that Kylie Message dubs "the new museum" that lies "beyond the mausoleum" (2006, 7). Following Judith Butler's cautionary remarks on the need to consider cultural productions as other than "merely cultural" (Butler 1998, 42), Message addresses the new museums not simply as theoretical projects, but also as a series of practices: "cultural-centre model[s] […] in relation to the shifting currencies of trade, capital and meaning connected to globalisation" (2006, 39). For Message, a particularly relevant, urgent and important impact on the museum is that of the *postcolonial interrogation*. As the author warns, when dealing with the ruins of archival institutions in order to transform them, it would be a mistake not to acknowledge the centrality and persistence of the postcolonial question—especially since the museum and the archive have been the privileged loci of authority in the patriarchal and racialised ordering of the world under the Western episteme. As she writes, great importance is still to be given to "the *representation* of postcolonial forms of cultural diversity in these public spheres […] and the *technologies* that speak directly to (and in some cases attempt to delimit) these spaces" (2006, 39; my emphasis).

The question of the technologies—those of representation and memorialisation, their languages and operations—is crucial here. As Iain Chambers has put it, once exposed to its own obsolescence and vulnerability, the "inherited palimpsest […] remains to be reworked and rewritten in the light of other histories; in the light thrown by others crossing its spaces, languages and technologies" (2012, 17). However, as he continues, "[t]o undo that particular historical inheritance is not to cancel it" (17). Rather, the question is—What to do with these *ruins*? Would it be enough to merely adjust or enlarge the inherited frame of understanding—to incorporate the critical encounter with the postcolonial, or is something more at stake?[6]

This is in fact the central question of this essay. In these pages, I will try

5 This is exactly what Okwui Enwezor has elsewhere defined as art's "affiliations in other domains of practice" (Enwezor 2009 [2003], 232).

6 For a first critical elaboration of these questions from a post-colonial perspective within the EU Research Project "MeLa* - European Museums in an Age of Migrations", see the contributions in Ferrara 2012a.

to think *with* two practices–one curatorial and one specifically artistic–that acknowledge the inevitable obsolesence of the inherited languages of archival institutions in the light of the histories that these institutions of memory have structurally marginalised and removed through their normalising technologies of exhibition, representation and display. At the same time, the practices this essay confronts articulate such concerns from a very specific position. They do not advocate an 'amendment' of the marginalising technologies of memorialisation mentioned above, for example through the realisation of the objectives indicated on the cultural agendas of archival institutions that are often predicated on the universalising projects of multiculturalism or inclusion. On the contrary, in my opinion[?] there is an altogether more radical questioning of the concepts/praxis that *incorporate* difference while making it the object of knowledge—as when the objective is to "make visible," "give voice to," "make room for" or "comprehend" (literally to "take in" and to "enclose") the 'Other.' Going against the grain, the practices presented in this essay play with their power to exercise what I would call 'the powers of secrecy.'

The expression I use here is of course indebted (indeed is a fond yet humble homage) to the theorisations of the philosopher Édouard Glissant and specifically to what he calls "the right to opacity." This is a fundamental element in his philosophy of relation and a strategy to favour the survival, the potential to become other, of difference. Against the reifying projects of new and old humanist universalisms, he writes of the necessity of fugitive gestures of escape from the possibility to be understood. He thus addresses the impossibility of reducing the 'Other' to 'me,' or for me to simply 'turn into' the 'Other.' In his words, "[t]he poetics of relation presuppose that each of us encounters the density (the opacity) of the Other. The more the Other resists in his thickness or his fluidity (without restricting himself to this), the more expressive [it] becomes, and the more fruitful the relation becomes" ([1969] 1997, 24).

The reason why I do not retain the word "opacity" in this essay, while proposing instead the use of "secrecy," is to avoid a straightforward linking of the quality of opacity to the visual register–of which it is only one of the many modalities. Although visual opacity will be accounted for in my argument, I will also work with the use of the concept of silence or better 'aural opacity,' or more generally with forms of theoretical opacity. Since most of the artworks composing the exhibition I refer to are by feminine and feminist artists, this is also a way to point to the wide and large genealogy of the use of 'silence' as 'absent presence' in feminine and feminist art and thought. I refer here to the arts of affirming life through bodily opacity, within and beyond the register of the written word and the transparency of the eye (Spivak 1988, Djebar [1980] 1999). Moreover, I use "powers" to refer to secrecy in a way that is consistent with a Foucaultian theory of power, in which power is a two-fold relation that is always reversible and complex. In this sense, I shall see how 'the power to keep a secret' is simultaneously the power to keep silent or invisibile, to normalise, to reduce to a black space *as well as* the power to affirm a presence by deviating the workings of normalisation.

This means to deploy partial invisibility and creative silence as tools of liberation from the grip of the violence animating the appetite for transparency, which—as Gilroy says—is always an oppresive "appetite for sameness and symmetry" (1993, 97).

→ SECRECY AS SILENCE

The first practice of 'secrecy' I shall discuss is a curatorial act presented again in *Nouvelle vague*, at the pavilion *Companionable Silences*, curated by Shanay Jhaveri, a young curator living and working between London and Mumbai. *Companionable Silence*s is a pavilion whose curatorial premises precisely "attend to" and "take care of" the persistence and crossing of *other* memories and histories within the spaces of the contemporary museum in ruins. It consists of a selection of artworks by non-Western women artists who all worked and spent part of their lives in Paris during last century: Saloua Raouda Choucair, Tarsilia do Amaral, Zarina Hashmi, Amrita Sher-Gil, Etel Adnan. The display of the artworks in this pavilion is rather traditional when compared to several other pavilions in *Nouvelle vague.* It unfolds into two small rooms: an actual exhibition space and a screening room. The exhibition space hosts the artworks (paintings,

IMG. 04 — *View of the exhibition "Companionable Silences," in "Nouvelles vagues" (21.06.13 - 09.09.13), Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Photo: Aurélien Mole (courtesy Palais de Tokyo Press)*

IMG. 05 — *View of the exhibition "Companionable Silences," in "Nouvelles vagues" (21.06.13 - 09.09.13), Palais de Tokyo, Paris. In the foreground: Zarina Hashmi, The Ten Thousand Things, 2009-2010, Courtesy of the artist and of the gallery Jaeger Bucher, Paris. In the background: Amrita Sher-Gil, Self Portrait as Tahitian, 1934, N. and V. Sundaram collection. Photo: Aurélien Mole (courtesy Palais de Tokyo Press)*

drawings, sculptures, handwriting on paper) by the above-mentioned artists, interspersed with kindred artworks by Camille Henrot, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil and Adolf Loos. The screening space erodes the primacy of the visual and the plastic dominating the exhibition room by embedding the visual in the materiality of the audio-visual, with the voice and poetry of Etel Adnan reverberating from The Otolith Group's essay-film *I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another…* I will return to this work later in this essay.

I propose that the opacity specific to such a practice is a form of *theoretical* opacity, and lies in an overt refusal—on behalf of the curator—to make the exhibition smoothly fit into the overarching, and nowadays very popular, category of "global art." Jhaveri's curatorial act proposes instead a proximity without identification, leading to the use of the idiomatic expression "companionable silence" in the exhibition's title. It refers to a pleasant intimacy of two or more singularities sharing a common situation but remaining irreducible to one another.

As the pavilion's blurb explains, the artists featured in *Companionable Silences* all shared what could be described—in a rough generalisation that is employed here in full awareness of its limits, and I will return to this—as a "migrant life."[7] It reads:

> [they all] led distinctly cosmopolitan lives, actively arbitrating between disparate cultural and geographical spaces, demonstrating a remarkable self-consciousness of their own changing identities, navigating with confidence amongst issues of assimilation and acculturation. Artistically, they interrogated paradigms of Western authority, negotiating with established modes of representation, while devising room for their own formal approaches.[8]

7 What are – after all – the implications of using the words "migrant" or "global" as overarching paradigms? As notably claimed by Spivak, amongst others, it is important to be aware of a new epistemological function of power that she calls "new orientalism," which sees "the world as immigrant" (1993, 64).

8 See http://palaisdetokyo.com/en/exhibition/collective-exhibition/companionable-silences, accessed

Indeed, upon first consideration, this curatorial statement might easily fit the paradigm of "global art"—a label, or better a discoursive framing that has emerged alongside economic globalisation, which is increasingly spoken of in relation to contemporary art. As Susanne Leebe et al. (2013) outline, this is a very slippery concept, whose exact implications are still under critical scrutiny.

> Does a global world need Global Art – or – does a globalized world produce globalized art? What, precisely, is the difference between these two phrases, between making a political claim and the economic structure? When did the term "Global Art" become the assertion of a "contemporary world art" that is composed along the lines of global economization, and what possible alternatives and other historiographies exist? [...]Is the current pervasiveness of "Global Art" in exhibition titles, conferences, funding programs, and their implementation in study courses symptomatic of a (self) surmounting of the Global North? Or does it indicate a universalization of its concepts of art that remain linked to capitalism's colonizing power of definition and does it therefore finally have more to do with globalizations than with the global? (6)

However, aware of the risk of such a framing, in an online interview accompanying the launch of *Nouvelle vague* Jhaveri decidedly rejects this possibility, by affirming that *Companionable Silences* is actually "not a survey to say 'Here is a global art history.'"[9] At the same time, Jhaveri seems to encourage the listener to acknowledge the subtle connection between a universalising notion of "global art" and the limits and risks of what is called the 'turn' towards "inclusiveness," upon which the transformations of European cultural agendas in the age of migration are increasingly modulated. In fact, as the curator claims, *Companionable Silences* is not even predicated on supposedly enlarged visions of European identity, whose aim would be to attest to the uninterrupted presence of the 'Other' in European art and advocate his/her inclusion in an enlarged artistic paradigm.

I propose to take this clarification as a direct engagement with a 'power of secrecy': indeed, it would be possible to consider "inclusion" as one of the names of *removal*—a foreclosure of difference, in which difference itself is domesticated and therefore rendered silent and invisible in the very instance that it is evoked or made visible. According to Leebe et al., in order to avoid the risk of "global art" only being the symptom of a new universalization:

> […] it is necessary both to question the self-historicizations of European culture and art histories and to develop curatorial and artistic models which construe the global within contemporary art beyond a mere hegemonic

24 August 2013.

9 See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSuTEI6ZZvo, accessed 28 August 2013.

> discourse. In searching for a differentiated and multiple global that brings disparities and contradictions as well as the inner perspectives of the actors to the fore, one must discuss art and its production conditions in regard to shared colonial and postcolonial histories, economic and geopolitical relationships of dependence, as well as different cultural traditions and conditions of reception. (6)

In fact, as Jhaveri suggests, *Companionable Silence* is an attempt at acknowledging precisely the political and epistemological framing of similar '(self-)historicisations' of identity. Resisting inclusion and capture within the "global" paradigm as a hegemonic discourse, *Companionable Silence* adopts exactly another mode of 'secrecy' as a critical tool: the strategy of 'silence'. This 'silence' is materialised through different modalities, in order to evoke certain specific theoretical implications. The first of these modalities is to propose that—since it is not enough to build an enlarged artistic canon able to 'contain' difference—the more radical option is the questioning of the historicisation of artistic canons in themselves. As Jhaveri explains, one of the aims of *Companionable Silences* is to bend and inflect, by blending and inflecting the historicisations of Modernist art, the very notion of modernity itself, engendering the presence of a series of co-existing modernities, whose difference sustains productive power. Indeed, in *Companionable Silences* this inflection is not proposed as a plea for inclusion, for example, by asking that these women artists and their artworks be welcomed into an already existing pantheon of male Western "fathers." They do not even construct a 'we' among themselves. On the contrary, as the title of the exhibitions suggests, their presence seeks to establish a relation of 'proximity without identification,' in which the right to be present, to be acknowledged is predicated on the autonomy and *difference* of these artistic practices. It is an attempt to 'provincialise' the Western canon and endlessly pluralise the notion of 'migrancy.'[10] In Jhaveri's words, "It is not about including them in a Western canon, but rather just talking about or focusing on their practices as such."[11]

This relates to the second 'power of secrecy' of *Companionable Silences,* which works more specifically on the theoretical-political level of aesthetics. As Jhaveri explains, the presence of these artworks in the exhibition—their present in-difference that does not ask for re-cognition—serves to signal more forcibily their absence, and thus to pose a political question: "Why are certain material histories or artistic practices forgotten or not accounted for?"[12] This exhibition therefore suggests that in the current moment it is this form of specifically post-colonial inflected historical art research and analysis that is required. As Jhaveri claims, the artworks presented in *Companionable Silences* should be considered *aesthetically* as such, thus implying a retrospective and a deconstruction of the inherited languages of the art canon in itself.

10 The concept of 'provincialisation' draws its specific use here from Chakrabarty 2007.

11 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSuTEI6ZZvo, accessed 28 August 2013.

12 Ibidem.

Not incidentally, and this is the third and last modality of the 'powers of secrecy' I shall suggest, the reluctance to fit easily into the paradigms of "global art" and "inclusion" is undoubtedly a matter of aesthetics in which the conceptual use of "opacity" becomes extremely relevant. Most of the artworks exhibited in the pavilion are in fact formally very abstract and seem to defy facile attempts at being 'communicative.' Although the arrangement of the exhibition (the distribution of the artworks in space, the lighting, the dimensions of the artworks exposed, which often require the visitor to get very close to them) is very welcoming, communication is not immediate. It requires a modality of attention that is lengthy and profound. This allows the material presence of *mediation* to emerge from the surface of each of the artworks. The 'secret' of every *mise-en-scène* and representation is evoked and rendered perceptible, as a resilient excess which is only partially disclosed to the visitor, attracting her with the invitation to partake in the construction of *a* sense.

→ SECRECY AS FOG

I shall now look more closely at one of the artworks presented in *Companionable Silence,* the film-essay by The Otolith Group *I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another...* (2012).[13] I propose to analyse a particular example of the ways in which the *theoretical* opacity of the pavilion's curatorial premises as a whole is echoed in the aesthetical *audio-visual* opacity of its artworks. From 'silence' as a 'power of secrecy,' I here move to 'fog' as another modality of opacity. The kind of opacity specific to this film-essay is that of a 'foggy' *vision*—a camera technique employed to defy the transparency of the eye—which opens onto the voice of the Other as the place of memories.

Fully aware of the impossibility of reducing the variety of feminine and feminist art presented in the pavilion curated by Jhaveri to the study of only one of its examples, I must clarify the precise reasons that motivate my choice to focus specifically on *I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another*.... Presenting a series of reflections on this artwork complements my previous engagement with the poetics of the British art collective The Otolith Group as poetics of 'the secret.'[14] As claimed by Demos (2013), all the activities carried out by the Group since its foundation could be said to be under the sign of "opacity," since they all partake in the evocation of a semi-fictional global narration whose contours are blurred and declivous. They are 'trembling audio-visual images,' apparitions always on the verge of mystery. They summon the

13 HD video, colour, sound (stereo), 33' 32".

14 See http://otolithgroup.org/index.php?m=information, accessed 19 September 2013. Founded in London in 2002, The Otolith Group is a collaborative entity, pivoting around (and generally identifiable with) the figures of Kodwo Eshun (British-Ghanaian theorist and artists) and Anjalika Sagar (British-Indian anthropologist and artist). The Group is engaged in filmmaking, curatorial activities and theoretical writing. Its artistic practice aspires to the "integrated practice" of the British cine-cultures of the Eighties, such as The Black Audio Film Collective. This is a concept Mercer used when referring to the mixing of artistic practice with the participation in educational-pedagogical activities and experimentation with grassroots participatory aesthetic-political modalities that characterised the black British artistic collectives of the Eighties (1994).

spectator to decipher them through what the Group itself calls a form of *"participation mystique"* (2011).

The Group's curatorial and artistic experimentations have already provided me with suggestive elements to single out some key issues relating to a re-thinking of museums in an age of migration from a post-colonial perspective (Ferrara 2012b). These I will briefly recapitulate here, in order to introduce the authors and pave the way for the study of the 2012 artwork presented in the exhibition in Paris. The most distinctive aspect of their practices—and the reason of my interest in this context—is their constant focus on the archives of the 20th and 21st century. Having absorbed the Foucaultian lesson on the archive as what, simultaneously, creates a (normative) memory and blocks (other forms of) memory ([1966] 1991), The Otolith Group excavates official archives looking for their unconscious removals while collecting unofficial archives such as personal photographs, drawings, collections of lyrics, records and sounds. These are considered as traces of alternative modes of memorialisation: nodes of a dispersed intimacy, personal yet collective, minor yet part of a resilient "aspiration" to remember and create (Appadurai 2003).[15] In its work, archives are *performed*—re-presented, recuperated and re-actualised—in ways that are stimulating both for their conceptual premises, and for the specific attention given to the mediated character of experience and thus to the centrality of the body and its perceptions in making sense of the exhibition and the artwork. Mixing documentary and fiction, its productions are disseminated with conceptual enigmas, chronological overlapping between present, past and future, elusive characters and dis-jointed sounds and images. The Group's aim is to disorient and displace common sense assumptions. As Demos writes,

> [for the Group,] within the image there emerges an excess, which disturbs visual perception […] where the image transforms into a multiplicity of threads […]. By assembling constellations of historical fragments set within newly imagined scenario, they recover what they term 'past-potential futures'—arrangements of the sensible that loosen representation's incrustations, breaking open its sense of finality and historical closure, simultaneously redirecting the outmoded and forgotten as newly determinant forces on reality. (2010, 69)

More precisely, the displacement of assumed chronologies and historicisations is carried out with the precise intention of de-naturalising them in the light of the post-colonial question. As Sagar of The Otolith Group explains, they are interested in "opening up the question of the postcolonial to a series of complex interlinkages which are *implied* but which need to be *unfolded* project by project so that what emerges is a

15 The Group calls this approach "archaeologies of the future," borrowing the term from Fredrick Jameson: "[what] allows us to think about the writing of public histories in a private mode" (qtd. in Jhaveri 2010, 73).

complex and baroque aesthetic of constellations" (qtd. in Power 2010, 92; my emphasis). This dwelling in, and unfolding of, 'the (colonial) secret' takes place through a fragmentation of the grand narrations of the colonial archive, which are re-opened through the quasi-autobiographical gesture of recollecting personal memories and passing them on, in an attempt to turn the "big story" into "a whole series of smaller tales" (Power 2010, 93).

In this sense, *I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another…* is no exception. The film revolves around the figure of the very influential Lebanese women poet, novelist and painter Etel Adnan.[16] Adnan—now 88 years old—embodies in her own story and physical presence, particularly her body and specifically her voice–the mixture of displacement and productivity that lies at heart of a migrant life, a life *in translation*. In the visual essay, the poet is filmed in her house, reading aloud passages from her latest book of poetry, *SEA* and *FOG* (2012). Images and sounds of cracking ice are interspersed in the frames of the poet's fragile yet intense appearance, alternating with the sound of her faltering yet touching voice. Queer silhouettes of what seem to be flowers–or algae, or sporae, little eggs, seeds–appear and disappear on screen, stretching, drawing away, extending, retracting…

Choosing to pay homage to Adnan, The Otolith Group performs a triple action on the archive. In one respect, the film *fragments the Archive* of colonial history (his-story) through the biographical and lyrical narration of a story (her-story). In an other respect, the film *creates an archive* through a gesture of care, of holding, of be-holding from oblivion, as far as it gives a permanent digital life to the rhythm of her voice, her English-French inflections, the breath from her chest and the long pauses in her reading. At the same time, the act of archiving, preserving a new life from the ruins of the colonial archive and the peril of oblivion, does not gives us back a fully framed, totally saturated, complete portrait of Adnan. Attesting to the impossibility of archiving without framing, *I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another…* reclaims the need to archive, to re-open the frame and re-frame, only to retreat repeatedly to the im-possibility of a total framing. What survives are always *remains* that signal something other that exceeds the archival gesture.

To emphasise this im/possible framing, The Otolith Group adopts its own particular aesthetical 'power of secrecy,' making Adnan at the same time visible and invisible. From the point of view of cinematic technique, what dominates the film is *fog*—visual, aural, textual and conceptual fog. Respectful close-ups of Adnan's skin and flesh, her thumb on the book, her spectacles, a glass of water from which she needs to take a sip from

16 Adnan was born in 1952 from a Muslim Syrian father and a Christian Greek mother. She has spent her life amongst different continents and languages. Educated as a young woman in French in a mostly Arab-speaking country she grew up speaking Turkish and Greek. Later, she became a student and then a lecturer in the United States. Her first compositions as a writer were in French, while the later ones are in English. Her being caught amidst languages and cultures is what she identifies as the source of her painting activities as well. As she explains on her website, abstract painting became her mode of expression during the tensions between France and Algeria, when she – a supporter of Algerian independence – felt split between two languages and two worlds. See http://www.eteladnan.com/, accessed 25 September 2013.

IMG. 05 —*View of the exhibition "Companionable Silences," in "Nouvelles vagues" (21.06.13 - 09.09.13), Palais de Tokyo, Paris. The Otolith Group, I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another, 2012, © of the artists. Photo: Aurélien Mole (courtesy of Palais de Tokyo Press)*

time to time, her short white hair, the texture of her clothes, her reflections in the mirror, pieces of writing, pieces of print, pieces of paintings, bottles of paint, items of furniture. This is all we can see of her. Her image in full only appears a couple of times. Moreover, the images of I *See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another…* are always slightly out of focus and, on a few occasions, the eye of the viewer almost unwillingly mimics the eye of the camera seeking to establish the focus. In the film, this also results in a conceptual approach to mediation and representation, to "dramatisation" as the secret heart of every re-telling of reality. The presence of mediation—a body behind the camera that frames a body in front of the camera—is in fact strongly emphasised not only through those images that do not fit into the principal narration of the film-essay (such as the cracked ice), but also by the presence of the film crew on screen (adjusting a microphone, composing the set…).

All of this frustrates the desire of the eye for sharpness, echoing an aesthetic trend that, according to TJ Demos, is a common feature of diverse contemporary artistic works dealing with migration. According to the scholar, contemporary artists situated in Europe, North America, the Middle East and North Africa have engaged with mobility bringing about a radical and still ongoing reinvention of the conditions of the moving image through a continuous and productive blurring of representation and the strategic failures to represent narration and the tactical disruption of linear accounts. This is an attempt to confront the ambiguous yet prolific conditions of migration, which is also an expression of the emergence of a very strong and compelling politicisation of the aesthetic domain.

However, the Otolith Group's 'power of secrecy,' their 'foggy' approach is not limited to the visual register. It also extends to the relation between the strictly textual (the writing) and the aural (the reading). The text which Adnan reads presents an entire section dedicated to *fog* as a way to *translate* memory in a visual register. Fog, relating to water, evaporation,

the sea, becomes the figuration for the coming and going of memories: the mobility of the sea and the movement of thoughts. Its impalpable yet heavy presence, in terms of the perceptive displacement it provokes, inflects language and semantics. In fact the same fogginess the film adopts as a visual language lies in the structure of Adnan's written text, as well as being the topic of her writing.[17]

As Selcer remarks in a delicate short essay entitled "Reading" (2013), in *I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another…* the poetry constrains, or frames, the movement of thought and the dimension of orality, and reading—as a gesture and as meditation—doubles the text and infuses it with life.

> If the act of writing bypasses orality, reading aloud resurrects something that exceeds the voice. There is a rhythm of reading that is different from the rhythm of speaking. It contains a has-been, a telling, a reaching into permanence and re-enacting it. […] The voice's multitude of frequencies, which had been transmitted silently to paper during writing and which echo while the reader is in the book, get resurrected. It's the text, deprivatized. This is when the body of the writer becomes significant—in the moment when one body comes into the collective body. […] Etel's gender (and age perhaps) inflects all this. […T]he camera records this body with so little distance—the wrinkle of the neck, hair wisp, a confluence of freckles—that it is an obvious specificity, not standing in for any desire of the viewer the way the filmed female usually is. The body is not on display; it's one texture among the others […] Filled with itself, presencing. (n. p.)

Again, in the archival gesture of the camera recording and making permanent the impermanence of a voice, which itself is resurrecting a life from the permanence of the written text, The Otolith Group's film-essay does not propose transparency, but opacity. In the singular, specific inflection of Adnan's voice there is an excess of potential meanings, which constitutes its secret power, the power of its allure—in the echo and reverberation of other voices. I wish to suggest that *Companionable Silences* and *I See Infinite Distance between Any Point and Another…* can be seen as reflections on the necessity to rethink the languages of the archive, not merely in order to advocate the inclusion of difference but to question and interrogate the limits and potentialities of escaping from representation. As artworks as diverse as those selected by Jhaveri and the one by The Otolith Group seem to propose, it is not possible to take care of the memory of 'the Other' without acknowledging the languages that have excluded him/her from representation. At the same time, it is necessary to contemplate the Other's inalienable right to *refuse to appear*. Silences and fogs bear testimony to this right and to the effort of memory-making, notwithstanding the inevitability of the desire to fully frame and comprehend.

17 See http://otolithgroup.org/index.php?m=project&id=144, accessed 20 October 2013.

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Quotidian Transcendence, Ephemerality and the Inertia of the Nation-State:

Notes on the Work of Joar Nango

→ JAN-ERIK LUNDSTRÖM

Jan-Erik Lundström is Director of Norrbottens museum and a professor of photography theory at Aalto University. He is the former Director of the Sami Center for Contemporary Art and of the BildMuseet. Curatorial projects include *Surviving the Future, The Map: Critical Cartographies, Politics of Place, Socialisms and Same, Same, but Different.* He also curated the 1st Thessaloniki Biennial, the 3rd Bucharest Biennale and the Berlin Photography Festival. He is the author/editor of many books, including *Thinking Photography/Using Photography, Nordic Landscapes, Ursula Biemann: Mission Reports, Looking North: Representations of Sami and Irving Penn.* Other publications include *Towards a Global Africa, The Oxford Companion to the Photography* and *The History of European Photography of the 20th Century*.

→ ABSTRACT

The question What is a Sámi artist? initiates a discussion on contested definitions of indigenous and artistic practices and the identity of the indigenous artist. Sápmi, a work by artist Katarina Pirak depicting a proposed Sámi nation, articulates the intricacy of cultural identification and political authority. Following this discussion comes a review of Joar Nango's transdisciplinary artistic practices that involve such diverse ingredients as ephemeral architecture, performative interventions in the social field, cartographic and archival projects of global phenomena, investigations of specific local knowledge traditions, and site-specific projects. The project Meahccetrošša/Matatu, which

temporarily establishes a "bush taxi" in the Sámi capital of Karasjok, weaves cultural import with activities of translation, reappropriation and recoding. Land and Language is, equally, a transcultural project, marrying music and clothing design while developing into a global exploration of indigenous hip-hop music. The recent project Den norske Romambassade (The Norwegian Romani Embassy) is a powerful political and social intervention that extends the insistence of cultural autonomy and multiplicity. Joar Nango's work consistently crosses borders and links opposites: urban and rural; tradition and modernity; contingency and transcendence, indigenous and diasporic.

Joar Nango's transdisciplinary, and often extradisciplinary, artistic practices involve ephemeral or temporary experimental architecture, performative and practical interventions in the social and the political field, cartographic and archival projects of global and/or local cultural phenomena, investigations of specific tacit and/or local knowledge traditions, cross- and transcultural exchanges/dialogues, as well as site- or context-specific projects dedicated to exploring intermediate positions between object and event, research and activism, or the "white cube" and in situ operations. Furthermore, Joar Nango's practices are pursued and realized in various constellations: individual projects, which often engage with a range of local or topical informers, experts, artisans, or, simply, representatives[1]; dual projects with other artists (such as *Indigenuity*)[2], or work with the three-member collective FFB[3] that Joar Nango co-founded. Of particular import in Joar Nango's work, in all its manifestations, is the ability, and insistence, in embracing apparent opposites, in crossing and straddling cultural or other borders, such as: urban and rural; tradition and modernity; contingency and transcendence; nomadic and site-specific; dominant cultures and minority issues; indigenous and diasporic; to name but a few.

→ WHAT IS A SÁMI ARTIST?

Joar Nango, born in 1979 in Alta in northern Norway, is a Norwegian citizen of Sámi origin and identity. He received a degree in architecture from the University of Trondheim, and since leaving the university his practice and projects have consistently both linked and transcended the fields of architecture and art. To just indicate one of the cultural complexities that emerge in articulating Sámi cultural issues, Joar Nango himself is of a generation of Sámi that did not have immediate access to the Sámi language. Although a Sámi, Joar Nango's first language is

1 For example, Sami shelters – see below – engage local textile artists/craftsmen, commissioned to knit the sweaters of this project.

2 *Indigenuity* was produced together with Sámi/Kvæn artist/designer Silje Figenschou Thoresen. See www.indigenuityproject.com

3 FFB - For a denser concentration of the city (Felleskapsprosjektet å Fortette Byen) is a group of young architects based in Oslo and Tromsø, Norway. The group is an idealistic think-tank governed and established by the three architects, Joar Nango, Eystein Talleraas and Håvard Arnhoff. Projects such as Meachetrossa/Matatu and The Norwegian Roma Embassy have been carrried out by FFB. See below. See also www.ffboslo.com.

Norwegian, a dramatic and powerful fact that immediately opens up the colonial and post-colonial chiasms characteristic of the contemporary context of this singular indigenous people of Europe and post-colonial contexts.

Joar Nango is, obviously, a Sámi architect and a Sámi artist, but what, in effect, is the meaning or significance of such a tautological designation today? Where does the need to mark this particular identity spring from? Why make an issue of the prefix Sámi? The formula is simple: If you are a Sámi and an artist, then you are a Sámi artist. Yet, these indicators, especially when linked, bring us upon charged and contested territory.

As one of Europe's marginalized or suppressed groups (be it ethnic or migrant or subcultural or gendered or religious or sexual or…), and given the invariable lack of attention to the colonial and post-colonial histories of the Scandinavian nations—the home territory of the Sámi people—to be a Sámi artist remains a vexed and charged term. Thus, attitudes prevail that predetermine or categorize the work of Sámi artists in particular and limiting ways. Again, to be clear from the start, in this text *Sámi artist* means simply this: A person who is Sámi and who is an artist. The first term—Sámi—is a designation or specification of ethnic identity, in this case of being part of the Sámi ethnic minority of northern Scandinavia.[4] The second term—artist—signifies being somebody who pursues a particular vocational and professional practice within the world of art. *Artist* signifies in this case exclusively a vocational identification. The term makes no assumptions regarding the quality or the nature of the artistic practices the designated artist might be involved in. Just as the term Sámi is a blunt ethnic denotation signalling membership of this particular ethnic group. In fact, the application of the term *Sámi artist* implies no further assumptions at all. It is—very literally and very squarely—nothing other than the conjunction in one person of these two characteristics or properties: to be Sámi and to be an artist. The conjunction as such offers no additional proclamations as to, for example, the relationship between the two terms. This could be a conditioned or a haphazard or random relationship. We could say that Sámi artist, just to further suggest some of the issues of power at stake here, is perfectly analogous with Swedish artist or Norwegian artist, where for example Swedish or Norwegian signifies citizenship and membership of a particular national culture, and where artist again signifies a particular vocational practice. The analogy could be extended to, let's say, a Sámi electrician. Following our scheme, a Sámi electrician is a person who is Sámi and who works as an electrician. We might add here that it would seem highly peculiar or perhaps unorthodox to imagine that the Sámi electrician would engage in an electrical practice that would be seen as being derived from his/her *saminess*. Likewise, the use of the term Sámi artist does not invoke any assumptions whatsoever regarding the kind of art produced by the Sámi artist. It is semantically limited to this: art made by a person who is Sámi. No light has been shed upon the kind of art in

4 The issue of the Sámi artist is further discussed in *Same, Same, but Different* (Lundström, 2002)

question and no further explications have been made through the use of this term. Sámi art as such, the art made by Sámi artists, extends across the entire spectrum of contemporary artistic practices.

The distinctions above may be and seem both self-evident and tautological. Nonetheless, they remain useful, even necessary, in order to avoid tokenisms, exoticisms or stereotypical generalizations. Such as the still much too common trope of inscribing generalized representations, the notion of some kind of automatic or naturalized transfer from the individual to the collective, in minority cultures, where the Sámi artist, by default, represents Sámi culture as a whole, and where Sámi art manifests particular properties because of the ethnic identity of the artist; the Sámi artist being an intermediary and agent of Sámi culture, authenticating his/her art in a kind of tautological correspondence or equivocal deadlock. Sámi artist = Sámi art = Sámi culture. This reductive fallacy is certainly not exclusive to Sámi art; it appears in most contexts of unequal power, of tendentious and defunct hierarchies, where the subaltern (the woman, the Sámi, the African, the indigenous…) or the generalized Other is attached to a relentless and immobilized destiny. However, this also means that to thwart or neutralise this particular reductionist fallacy is to work at the redistribution of power, at the renegotiation of meaning and identities, at the redefinition and re-articulation of cultural practices.

→ SÁPMI AND *SÁPMI*

Working from and with a variety of geographical, institutional and disciplinary situations, the political context of the work of Joar Nango is both specific and general. Some works do directly and explicitly address a particular Norwegian context, both local and national, yet with global repercussions. Other projects engage with or are located in other geographical and/or cultural contexts, again opening up dialogues and exchanges between the local and the global, intracultural and intercultural. Thus clearly Joar Nango's work opens up as well to particular and urgent contemporary European conditions and issues – in its attention to transnational cultures such as the Sámi or the Roma, in the exploration of nomadic living and migratory practices, in its attention to "travelling cultures" and dialogic encounters, in its linking of indigenous and global practices and identities.

A work by fellow Sámi artist Katarina Pirak-Sikku provides a sophisticated and complex guide to this immediate political and historical context of the traditional geographical territory of the Sámi people and of the Scandinavian nation-states, mediating knowledge and perspectives upon this particular context, including the sharp edges confronting the work of a Norwegian Sámi such as Joar Nango.

Sápmi is a small pencilled map on a plain piece of white standard copy paper, no larger than an A4-sheet. Conceived and drawn by Katarina Pirak-Sikku in 2004, *Sápmi* depicts the territory of a nation, a nation named Sápmi. It is a map that, thus, performs a political and historical

fantasy regarding the existence of a Sámi nation, of a nation unifying Sámi culture and the Sámi people under one roof and one political entity. The nation represented—and invented—in the map by Pirak-Sikku embraces the geographical spaces where the Sámi people have lived historically and live today (except for major communities living, as it were, in exile in Stockholm, Helsinki, Oslo…). *Sápmi* suggests—simply and strikingly—the translation or transformation of this lived territory—inhabited for millennia—into a political nation, linking and wedding territory and identity.

In addition to such a political conceit, *Sápmi*, is also an intervention in the conventions of mapmaking, most significantly replacing north with south and south with north (just like Torres-Garcia's well-known map of the Americas made in 1948, inverting these continents in order to promote or upgrade the position of Latin and South America), while calling attention to such cartographic conventions as the placement of north and south. Indeed, the small-scale and discreet map of Pirak-Sikku is revisionary in its unfolding of historical practices while restorative as well as refractory in its focus on restaging and articulating physical/emotional/social/political experience and identity.

In fact, *Sápmi* is a surprisingly complex work. At first, it reads primarily as a celebratory map, announcing the—fictive or sought—unity of the Sámi people, embodying a fantasy or dream or hope that the lived territory of the Sámi could, would or should become a political entity, a nation, a Sápmi nation. Yet, given the seemingly straightforward nature of this dream, the closer we look, the more complex and multi-faceted this map becomes.

Sápmi marks a nation called Sápmi, which has Romsa (the Sámi name for the (now) Norwegian city of Tromsö) as its capital and has 4.5 million inhabitants, and Sámi as the official language. Moreover, this proposed or imagined nation borders Sweden in the Southwest and Finland in the Southeast. The fate of the two other nations that today exist and historically have been actors in this region of the world, Norway and Russia, is unclear in the map. Or, rather, Norway has simply been eliminated. What today constitutes Norway is in *Sápmi* either part of the proposed nation of Sápmi or of an enlarged Sweden. Why, then, the disappearance of Norway? I would suggest that the brutal, but relevant, answer is that while postcolonial practices certainly have to do with redress, reclaim and reconsideration, a new nation is nonetheless never established without consequences. More precisely, Pirak's *Sápmi* is not only a territorial proposal. It is also a work that addresses the complexities of territorialisation or nationhood. Its particular example suggests that the historical creation of the nation Sápmi would have or would have had—if we propose this imagined nation as an event which antedates the present—repercussions and import for the other nations in the region, in this case that the creation of a new nation would mean that another nation would have other parameters and boundaries. The struggle for territory is never innocent and any restitution on account of historical

second thoughts is bound to resettle the geopolitical balance in complex and unforeseeable ways. As such, this small cartographic intervention in fact maps Scandinavian history, not the least the specific histories of Norway that are played out and counter-mapped in the work of Joar Nango. The disappearance of Norway not only identifies the complexity of redress or the failed innocence of any historical redemption, but it also narrates the history of Norway. While it outlines the lived territory of the Sámi people, usurped by the nation states, it also, in its disappearance of Norway, points to the intracolonial experiences within Scandinavia (such as Norway being Swedish territory until 1905, or Finland being both part of Russia/Soviet Union and Sweden; i.e. all countries have their colonial histories and narratives, in particular in relation to the Sámi people).

→ MEAHCCETROŠŠA/MATATU

The recent project by the FFB collective *Meahccetrošša/Matatu*[5] is characterized by elements of cultural import as well as export, by ingredients of translation as well as recoding. It involves a range of artistic gestures including exchanges between text and image, recycling and assemblage. Simultaneously, it is a project of social organization and events including physical transport and the re-programming of public spaces. The central work in *Meahccetrošša/Matatu* is a site-specific project (in the sense that it both inherits **and** generates properties and values in relation to its context, the site of its presentation) inaugurated in Karasjok in inland Finnmark, Norway's northernmost province. However, this local project emerges out of and is inspired by that global phenomenon of collective transport and communication infrastructures most often known as "shared taxis", i.e. local and informal or pirate taxi/minibus systems often found in metropolises in the developing countries.

In this particular case, the starting point is a journey to the north (from Trondheim in central Norway to Karasjok in the north). The journey is to be understood as the beginning of the remodelling and reprogramming of a slightly rusty, well-used Toyota Hiace, the most common brand globally in the transportation systems mentioned above. This Toyota Hiace, purchased for the project, is not only to be relocated geographically and given new uses but will also be physically—and aesthetically—transformed, externally as well as internally. In fact, here is a layered and sophisticated cultural dialogue in process: the Toyota (this Japanese export success) is imported to the heart of Sápmi, remodelled and, so to speak, rerouted (from civic use in Trondheim to semi-public and semi-informal use in a radically different cultural context), performing shopping rounds for materials for the exhibition/event/project that it itself is part of, bussing people to the opening and after-party which again it is part of. Its redesign is in the end discreet, but a kitschy yellow-

5 *Meahccetrošša* is Sámi for bush or wilderness taxi, a relevant name for the Norwegian north. And Matatu is the term used in Kenya and Uganda mainly for the privately owned, often sophisticatedly decorated, minibuses which are the major transport mode for intra- and intercity travel. The project was carried out by the group FFB, see footnote 3.

red lit sign on its roof signals its new identity as a novel node in the global network of transportation/communication, now stationed in the polar North and on Sámi territory. In fact, as the *Meahccetrošša* aesthetics turn out to be a low key version of those of its West-African colleagues, perhaps adapted to Arctic austerity or the circumpolar landscape and the resolutely non-urban setting where its use is more pedestrian, a key element of this project turns out to be the chameleon quality of the Toyota Hiace, lending itself obediently to new styles and new uses. And, in the end, it continues to redistribute its energies generously, turning out also to be the starting point of another on-location project, at its new home in an abandoned and re-programmed petrol station at the heart of Karasjok.

"They don't follow ordinary routes, they don't obey orders" says the text work now adorning the roof of the disused petrol station, most easily legible by car passengers passing the roundabout at which the station is located. Just like the sign on the *Meahccetrošša* itself, which was made out of scrap pieces from the remnants of this gas station[6], this text is a kind of metonymic displacement of the recoded Toyota Hiace. Here is its praxis spelled out in a phrase in Sámi language, importing or translating a cultural practice, briefly sampled, in fact enacted, by the *Meahccetrošša*, into a text monument (or a monumental text), constructed out of simple wooden sticks, painted white, cut and adapted from various left-behinds at the gas station in question, now displayed on the most public site—at the central roundabout—in Karasjok (one of two municipalities in the world where Sámi is a majority language). Indeed, *Meahccetrošša* insists on articulating cultural import and export (Sámi language expressing a Matatu practice), translatability and mutability, dialogue and exchange, in its ability to both cross and disregard borders. In the end, the *Meahccetrošša* project is remarkably precise in its ability to insist on the encounter, the exchange, and the infusion across so many borders, divisions, and differences. As no context or site is ever completely isolated, fully autonomous, or unquestioningly original, *Meahccetrošša* enables the cohabitation of change and origin, the continuous swapping of positions of signifier and signified; how we, paraphrasing Kristeva, are strangers also to ourselves. At core is the play with materials and meaning, with objects and places, with identities and expectations, reworking, replacing, recoding, and redefining. A bush taxi, a Matatu practice, all spelled out, in the heart of Sápmi and Finnmark. And as for the Toyota, the car, the plan is to eventually put it back on the market in south Norway, where there is a good chance it will be picked up by Gambian car dealers looking for Hiaces to be upgraded, remade, resignified and taken to operate in a West-African urban setting, in all ways imaginable the opposite to its stint in Karasjok. And yet, the dialogue has been established, and the vehicle remains the same and different.

6 In fact, reutilized pieces from the large traditional red-and-yellow sign that once lit up the station. Equally, parts of the same sign were reutilized – and recoded – as minimalist sculptures/objects displayed in the gallery. The recoding of this petrol industry signage is evidently ironically and symbolically relevant to the numerous conflicts between petrol exploration and indigenous cultures.

→ FORGING THE TRANSCULTURAL

The transdisciplinary and transcultural ingredients are equally present and elaborate in other projects of Joar Nango. *Sami Shelters* involves traditional Norwegian wool sweaters, which instead of the familiar striped and chequered pattern display a knitted image of a particular Sámi *lavvu*, the original nomadic architecture of the Sámi. Each sweater being different, the lavvu imaged on the sweater is always a particular lavvu, identified and documented. And the sweaters are knitted by local Sámi woman, each sweater by a woman with a particular relation to the lavvu of her sweater, mostly often simply being a lavvu from her local village or family context. Here, again, exchanges and transformations take place across media and across cultures—from object to image, from signified to signifier, from house/home to a piece of clothing, all in an interweaving of "Norwegian" and "Sámi" cultural practices. The lavvu reappears as a piece of clothing, becoming wearable, mobile, like its original function. But now also as image, and thus simultaneously liberated from its objecthood, its usefulness. And a Norwegian marker, the characteristic sweater, is appropriated by a Sámi cultural phenomenon, the lavvu, at the heart of Sámi culture.

Architecture is indeed present as an ingredient in much of Nango's work and architectural practice. In the photographic projects *Dog Shelters* and *Roadside Gardens* he continues to pursue an informal and improvised architecture involving temporary, make-shift constructions, in clear association with the nomadic architecture of the lavvu. *Dog Shelters* is photographed in Greenland and visualizes the practice of using various kinds of debris (given for example the complete lack of wood in Greenland) to build a shelter for one's dog. What emerges is ad-hoc and informal buildings or constructions, where waste-materials are recycled and recoded into new objects and products. *Roadside Gardens* identifies the practice of organizing small gardens in the Canadian arctic right next to the highway, making use of the fact that theses are exclusive places with a more substantial layer of fertile soil, sufficient for cultivating simple crops.

Equally transcultural, *Land and Language* again employs the lavvu as a concept and as a source of both design and actual material. The *Baggy Lavvu Jeans,* which are indeed actual wearable jeans, designed and produced as part of this project, are made with the used and weathered cloth from the lavvu, a robust and enduring canvas material. Fashioned in hip-hop style, these trousers also incorporate design elements from the lavvu. Furthermore, the *Baggy Lavvu Jeans*, in their linking of Sámi and hip-hop elements, opens up to an extensive music project, which eventually becomes the central part of the *Land and Language* project. Joar Nango embarks on an exploration of the presence of hip hop music among indigenous cultures on a global scale, uncovering a vast production where the globalized language of hip hop (creatively reproduced in all its aspects—lyrics, dress, body choreography, rhythm, music and attitude) is anchored and recharged in particular local contexts, often involving for example bilingual songs, or producing rap/hip-hop songs directly in

one's own mother tongue. Nango produces mixtapes and vinyls from this assembled hip hop archive, allowing indigenous hip-hop to emerge as a global phenomenon in its own right. Obviously, also *Land and Language* is a transcultural and transdisciplinary project, marrying music and clothing design, while allowing a panorama of inter- and transcultural exchanges. Indeed, at the core of Joar Nango's multi-faceted and resourceful practice is the ability to identify and articulate such movements across cultures, languages, genres, media and disciplines, consistently finding new places/sites for dialogue and exchange. Solidly anchored in Sámi culture as a living and changing entity, Nango is able to animate this tacit knowledge within a mode of sharing and inviting. The art of Nango redistributes and reorganizes, recycles and reassembles, just as it generates and produces anew. It is an artistic practice able to demonstrate that no culture is an island while engaging viewers, visitors, and participants in various fascinating and fertile travels across cultures.

As such, the recent project *Den norske Romambassade* (The Norwegian Romani Embassy) extends the insistence on cultural autonomy and multiplicity, as well as clear articulations of solidarity and empathy through an architectural intervention in central Oslo. In the Tullinløkka area, a centrally located public square, The *Norwegian Romani Embassy* is constructed and inaugurated, a temporary edifice and house of culture for the Romani peoples with the expressed goal of visualizing their presence and manifesting their lack of a house of culture, a place for gathering and being together on their own premises.

The *Norwegian Romani Embassy* also clarified the continued colonial structures. Even if the history of Norway lacks major external colonial interventions, the Romani Embassy painfully unfolds the contemporary inability of Norwegian society to manage its multicultural present. Given the dramatic immediate past, with the Breivik tragedy as a living wound in the Norwegian and European present, the Romani Embassy points to the continued lack of integration, acceptance of a transnational culture such as the Romani (whose presence in Norway actually goes back centuries) or to the continued maltreatment of and xenophobic opinions vented concerning asylum seekers, refugees, Muslims, migrants, immigrants. Post-Breivik xenophobic and racist incidents, the Sámi not excluded, paint a grim picture of the present.

Given that Scandinavia is part of the post-colonial present, the indigenous artist, as seen in the work of Joar Nango, attuned to the crossfires of hybridity and multiple identifications (and carefully avoiding ethnicity to simplistically override class, gender, sexuality, etc.), has extraordinary access to the inauthentic as much as the authentic, to the hazards of all reductive identification processes and, thus, to the generative nature of signifying practices, to the ways of performing—and thus making—the present. By mapping the authentic/inauthentic divide, enabling dialogues and exchanges across and in between cultures, Joar Nango open doors to that beguilingly grand task: How to live in the present, with the past stubbornly chasing us as we reach for an evasive and entrenched future?

The Liquid Museaum

Culture Hybridization on Mediterranean Shores

→ CHIARA BARAVALLE, GIUSEPPE BISCOTTINI

Chiara Baravalle is an architect born in Rome, Italy in 1987. She graduated in 2013 with a Master's in Architecture at Politecnico of Milan. Her thesis project, "Liquid Museaum, Hybridization through the Mediterranean coasts", regards a travelling museum featuring meetings and contamination in the Mediterranean. During her studies, she collaborated with Am progetti in 2008 and studio Albori in 2011 in Milan and took part in international workshops in collaboration with the Macba Study Center of Barcelona and spent a year in Lisbon as an Erasmus student at the Universidade de Lisboa. She is currently working as an architect in barreca&lavarra studio in Milan.

Giuseppe Biscottini is an architect born in Milan, Italy in 1988. He graduated in 2013 with a Master's in Architecture at Politecnico of Milan. His thesis project, "Liquid Museaum, Hybridization through the Mediterranean coasts", regards a travelling museum featuring cultural meetings and contaminations of the Mediterranean. As part of his studies, he completed internships and international workshops in Milan and Piacenza, and spent a semester in Copenhagen as exchange student at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. He is currently working as an architect in Milan.

→ ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the process beyond the conceptualization and design of a migratory museum in what has been defined as the Postcolonial era. Starting from critical studies of the Mediterranean developed by several scholars over the last decades, and its definition as a "liquid archive" by Iain Chambers, the design process was ignited by the challenge to find new ways to represent Mediterranean cultures as being strongly cross-fertilized by other cultures.

Moreover, the proposal elaborates on ways to express the open and multi-faceted nature of the Mediterranean that has collected the migratory histories of its people, goods, cultures, and their mutual cultural influences throughout the centuries.

The design process deployed here has focused on avoiding the typical closed structure of museum institutions in order to face the challenge of an open archive. This is seen not only as a place of preservation–as the mission of museums set out by ICOMS states—but also as a place of research and, above all, of production: a place where the contamination of cultures is not just taking place but is strongly promoted. This is precisely the specific character of what we have called The Liquid Museaum: an active platform for promoting intra/cross-cultural dialogues within the Mediterranean area.

On the other hand, the proposal has focused on the migratory character required for such a structure, due the fact that cultural encounters happen in relationship to the migration and movement of people, goods, narrations and belonging: this is what the story of the Mediterranean is all about. A story of migrations. Navigating around the Mediterranean Sea and its shores, therefore, became an integral part of the design proposal, stressing even further the fundamental concept of the open archive and its performative nature: permanently and constantly under construction, endlessly augmented by intertwined histories and networks collected during its stay in different ports.

The mobile structure used to host The Liquid Museaum is a decommissioned oil tanker, symbol of a world of exchanges, meetings, trade and commerce, extended with mobile platforms that float out from the ship and sustain an archipelago of events and experiences related to art, music, food, literature and architecture: discourses and disciplines that are all hosted in the Liquid Museaum research departments and archives aboard the vessel.

→ THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AS LIQUID ARCHIVE

The Mediterranean is often considered a category for social and historical studies. In the past, when it was called "mare nostrum" and the power of the Roman Empire extended to nearly the entire Mediterranean region, this was perceived as a unified space. Because of its geography, often described as a "closed sea," and the sea traffic along the commercial routes and the exchanges that enriched this area, different cultures could easily migrate from one coast to another, exemplified by traces of Arab culture in Spain and Sicily, or of Jewish communities in the thirteenth century Arab world. As Iain Chambers explains in his book *Mediterranean Crossings*, "it was a commercial and cultural system sustained by travel, correspondence, and kinship and suspended in a hybrid Arabic-Hebrew dialect that included the transliteration of written Arabic in Hebrew characters" (Chambers 2007, 39).

It is interesting to see how the Mediterranean Sea is described by historian Fernand Braudel in his book *"The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II,"* not as a unique sea but as different realities fitting together, as a sea that "speaks with many voices," as "a mosaic of all the existing colours." Braudel`s "Méditerranée" had an immense impact on this field of research, advocating a distinctiveness for Mediterranean geography. His concept of *longue durée* led in many ways to a deterministic conception of its landscapes and seascapes, which produced a historical understanding of the sea as a principal actor in interregional contact through the ages. Subsequent research (Horden & Purcell 2000, as well as others) has modified Braudel's general approach by emphasizing the diversity of Mediterranean landscapes and its different resources as important factors for the formation of an interregional connectivity, although his central idea has tended to prevail.

The Mediterranean has always been considered the origin of Europe and the Occident, but it has also been a "container" for other histories and cultures: Arab, Jewish, Turkish, Greek and Latin cultures have left their mark on this particular space, not only through literature and history, but also in music, food and intellectual concerns. We could consider the Mediterranean Sea as a "gateway," a place of continuous exchange providing a simultaneous perception of division—the sea as a boundary between Europe and the modern North on one hand, and Africa, Asia and the South of the planet on the other—and connection (Chambers 2007). The fact that the sea acts as a border among different cultures does not mean it represents a barrier between North and South, for it is able to connect all the cultures it touches, acting as a confluence of meetings and currents. It evokes movement of people, histories and cultures in a hub of historical transformation and cultural translation.

This idea of a multifaceted Mediterranean, where "the Occident and the Orient, the North and the South, are evidently entangled in a cultural and historical net cast over centuries, even millennia" (2) is a theory proposed by Iain Chambers, who considers the Mediterranean as a "liquid materiality," where the borders are "porous" and its surfaces are "criss-crossed" by cultures and histories. The sea is considered "not merely as a surface that permits movement and migration between terrestrial referents, but becomes the site of migrating histories and intertwining cultures" (Chambers 2010, 3). The focus here is to re-imagine the cultural geography of the Mediterranean as a fluid, inclusive, porous space of overlapping exchanges among diverse peoples, languages, and sources of creative imagination. The sea is considered both a passage and a bridge, linking a complex heterogeneity in an archipelago, as Massimo Cacciari suggests and for which Iain Chambers supplies evidence.

We were inspired by Chambers' interdisciplinary effort to conceptualize the Mediterranean as a collection of hybrid flows, cultures, and places and by his description of the Mediterranean Sea as a region, as an interconnected diverse political-cultural space, as a liquid archive. Through diverse texts—historical, poetic, cinematographic, culinary,

musical—a Mediterranean topography is deciphered in which the North, South, West and East are interlinked in a historical and cultural network without established borders.

The Mediterranean as a melting pot, with its hybrid and multicultural identity, is the Mediterranean that we discovered during this investigation of its history, geography, trades and exchanges. It is the Mediterranean described by Braudel who described it as "a mosaic of all existing colours" or by Matvejević in his *Mediterranean Breviary*: a network of different fluxes and peoples, goods and ideas that have all gone to form this "big lake." Its strength is in its physical appearance, a "liquid continent" that brings together the history of its inhabitants. As Derek Walcott says in a poem, "the sea is history." It is vitality, a continuous flow, a vibration of actions and daily events.

→ A MIGRATORY MUSEUM: THE LIQUID MU*SEA*UM

Our project links the idea of the Mediterranean as liquid archive with a conception of the postcolonial museum. In contrast to colonial era research, which evidences the differences between Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries, research in postcoloniality concentrates on analogies between different cultures. In his research on the postcolonial museum, Chambers investigated the institution as a site of cultural powers and traditions through the lens of a postcolonial critique. "How to conceive and conceptualize museum spaces and practices in the light of the histories, cultures and lives that such institutions have structurally excluded in the course of their formation?" (Chambers 2012, 142).

The key concept for such a configuration of the museum could be summarized in the deliberate passage from the museum "as a national crypt and cemetery of commemoration to a migrating network of traces and memories." In capturing the identity and liquidity of the Mediterranean, and then projecting a postcolonial era of multiculturalism, "contamination," flux and migration, a different type of museum emerges. This is not a solid sacred temple representative of a society, but a liquid narrator of material stories, a Liquid Mu*sea*um.

The "Liquid Mu*sea*um" is a seaborne ship that carries and gives a voice to all the stories "picked up" from the sea and from its people. Its role is to express, display and study the Mediterranean in terms of a "liquid archive." In the contemporary epoch of mass migration, the ship's voyage becomes a metaphor of exchanges and meetings, and as such has an important role in the configuration of the museum. With this in mind we conceived of a mobile structure that travels on the Mediterranean and docks in its ports. A fixed locale would simply not be appropriate to the needs of a postcolonial museum of the Mediterranean. Thanks to its migratory nature, the museum would be continuously enriched by interactions such as exhibitions and conferences infused with the identities of the places it visits.

As a container of this "Liquid Mu*sea*um" we choose an oil tanker,

IMG. 01 *(next page) — Mediterranean as liquid archive, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 02 — *Oil tanker, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

symbol of a world of exchange and meetings, of trade and commerce. The selected oil tanker is 324 m long, 50 m wide, and has a hull of 25 m; while maintaining the external shell of the tanker and its structure, we decided to redesign the interior completely. Nonetheless, the new design elements remain true to the naval world: cranes used to transfer operations inside the ship, a LNG carrier, that is a tank ship designed for transporting liquefied natural gas with spherical tank we supposed to use as a theatre, or a scaffold structure used for the ship's archive. The materials themselves embody the original characteristics of the ship, keeping intact its marine engineering.

→ EXISTING MEDITERRANEAN REALITIES

We studied existing models that conduct research into and investigate the Mediterranean's identity. We found the methods and approach to the Mediterranean topic to be as numerous as they are different, and thus divided these case studies into three different categories: the MUSEUM, the RESEARCH CENTRE and the EVENT.

We mapped each case study and highlighted its nature as well as the type of research and ongoing activities. The case studies led to a draft of the programme. To have a complete vision of the Mediterranean, we conceived the Liquid Mu*sea*um as embodying each of these categories, a place that is at once a research center, a digital archive where objects and stories are collected together mapping other Mediterranean realities, and a theatrical stage.

The museums we have analyzed display physical objects or tell stories about the Mediterranean with an educational and historical purpose. This category was important in understanding what type of objects are exhibited and how the exhibitions are prepared today. The proposed Research centers perform studies on the Mediterranean from diverse points of view, organizing conferences and international meetings. It is fundamental that the Liquid Mu*sea*um have a research department with laboratories, workshops and lectures in order to keep the Mediterranean's past and present alive for the visitors. With the concept of Events we refer to live performances that change periodically and attract different publics during their museum visit.

→ LIQUID MU*SEA*UM PROGRAM

The Liquid Mu*sea*um travels the sea and docks on different shores to show the multiple identities of the Mediterranean Sea and the common elements between different cultures. Music, food, and other performing arts are the vehicle to represent multiple Mediterranean identities. The nature of the museum, open and flexible, reflects the concept of the liquid archive, leaving visitors free to "navigate" on their own. So a mutual interaction between the mainland and the platform is established through an exchange of experiences, identities and cultures in both directions: the mainland absorbs the stories narrated by the Liquid

Mu*sea*um while the latter is enriched by the landscapes and the identities of the particular place where it docks. The stories and the Mediterranean identity are narrated and expressed through three different but equally important parts present on the ship and strictly linked to one another: the ARCHIVE, an instrument of collection and multimedia narration, the PERFORMANCE AREA platform of new connections and exchanges, and the RESEARCH DEPARTMENT.

With open spaces for events, concerts, performances and markets, the Liquid Museaum will provide the theatre for new kinds of hybridization. These will be recorded in order to become part of the archive, thereby enriching it in a continuous circular relation between the archive, the research and the performances. The migratory nature of the Liquid Mu*sea*um lets the ship alternate between periods of navigation and periods of docking; activities change according to the status of the ship. When the Liquid Mu*sea*um is docked, all its parts (archive, research department and the performance area) are active: laboratories, workshops, conferences and lectures, exhibitions and performances take place on the ship all day long. The museum and the archive are open to the public and the theater puts on shows and musical performances. The platform becomes an active and dynamic Mediterranean market-suq where sellers display their wares on different on-board stalls. During navigation, only the research area and the archive are open and the Liquid Mu*sea*um and its crew hosts students, researchers and artists that can use the spaces to prepare upcoming shows and presentations.

The Liquid Mu*sea*um is an open system that stimulates dialogue and hybridization between different cultures. To analyze its principal components and understand their role, we can now take a closer look at the archive, the research department and the performance area. The Archive is open and always under construction. It is dynamic, not static, and grows via new hybridizations. It is the part that most identifies the Mediterranean in the sense given by Iain Chambers as a "liquid archive." It consists of two parts: a Multimedia library and a Sea Memory Museum that collect objects found in the water as a memory of the past. The multimedia archive collects digital objects such as videos that tell different stories. It is a virtual and intangible planetary collection that provides an interactive experience that is totally missing from a "normal" museum. In this area it is possible for visitors to learn about an object by reconstructing its story—for example a musical instrument or foodstuff—to listen to an unfamiliar melody or recreate a regional specialty. It is possible to know about its origin, where and when it was born, how its significance has changed over time or whether it still exists. It is a narrative habitat where the visitor plays an active role, choosing what to see, in which order or language to experience it and with which kind of technology to sustain the experience. This digital approach is a way to discover material things without their physical presence.

IMG. 03 — *Liquid Mu*sea*um (NEXT PAGE) Program, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

The museum becomes a more dynamic place, not just a place for collecting and exhibiting: this is a distinguishing feature in the passage from an idea

SERVICES
bedroom
kitchen
common room
engine room
ACTION
performance
video
projection
market
plaza
theater
RESEARCH
lecture
workshop
lab
ARCHIVE
sea memory museum
multimedia library

of a museum as a collection to a museum as narration, as Studio Azzurro express so well in their exhibitions. Since 1994, through interactive technology, Studio Azzurro have developed an artistic environment that stimulates all the senses in bringing out an open dialogue between physical elements and intangible aspects. The concept of the sensory environment in the museum project is a place where the virtual and physical elements coalesce.

The Sea Memory Museum is the second area of the "archive." It is an open and flexible space without a clear purpose that constantly grows with objects found in the sea that are exhibited as the memory of a story. The history and identity of the Mediterranean is formed through exchanges, fluxes and migrations of people that travel around its coasts, arrive in other lands, and carry their cultures with them, resulting in a melting pot that creates new cultural hybrids. Each of these migrations can be represented by the objects that, whether assembled or simply thrown together, become the collection of the museum, like the Sea Memory Musée in Zarzis, Tunisia.

The Performance area is the vital and dynamic part of the museum. The performances express the contemporary migrations and creolisations that will be recorded in the archive. On stage the nature of the Mediterranean is elaborated: an open and flexible surface that simultaneously promotes different activities, from a big market and the exchange of goods that express the trades of the Mediterranean to different spaces for performances and exhibitions. Musical exhibitions and performances will take place on the ship in a kind of open theatre that floats on the water. It proposes a Mediterranean full of sounds that have changed and mixed over time. We imagine that close to the performance area there will be a proper market-suq, a typical Mediterranean place of exchange and meeting, of encounter and dialogue. It can be seen as the center of a city, where there is a market-suq and people meet, enjoy shows, and exchange products, identities and realities.

The Research center studies the archive materials and exchanges on the Mediterranean, investigating new possible interactions. Inside the Research department people can discuss, study, experiment and do research on the Mediterranean. The research will have multiple focuses and support the liquid archive. Its spaces are more closed and structured and are used by researchers, students, artists and people who want to experiment with and investigate Mediterranean hybridization. To support this research, we imagine conferences, lectures, laboratories and workshops taking place on the Liquid Museaum so that it becomes a real system to discover new cross-cultural interactions.

IMG. 04 — *(NEXT PAGE) Vision concept multimedia library, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

The experience in the Liquid Mu*sea*um changes depending on whether you are a visitor, a researcher or a crew member. It can be a visit of just a few hours, or can last days, maybe even weeks. Researchers can conduct studies for long periods, thus requiring the existence of a "village" on board. The village takes into consideration the migratory phenomenon typical of the Mediterranean region. In fact we imagine, in a utopian

fashion, fostering this community by providing apartments inside the ship that host "migrants" and families that want to work as part of the "crew" on the ship.

→ THE PROJECT

The village, the archive, the performance area and the research department are united by interconnected modules occupying two levels. The modules are located inside the hull of the ship and, starting from the lowest point, spread over 2 floors, each of them 5 meters high, and extending up to sea level. All activities linked to the Research, such as the laboratories, workshops, lectures and conference rooms, are inside the modules two floors below sea level. The research department is an open space where the different rooms and functions are divided by mobile walls and panels, or curtains. Depending on whether they are closed or open, they modify the perception of space: the space can be more private and contained, or more open and common.

The Archive is located inside the modular structure with the Multimedia Library but, unlike the Research Department, it comprises multiple floors, like a never-ending building in a structure formed of ship containers. The reversibility of the archive structure, which can be expanded over time by adding containers, responds to the liquid nature of the liquid archive described by Chambers.

The village is situated in the stern and consists of two "buildings": the superstructure present in all oil tankers that from stern level rises six floors, and another building in front of it that we have designed to create more apartments that rise from the first level of modules to the top of the hull, 20 meters above the sea.

The performance area is hosted at the top of the modular structure at sea level. It is designed as an open air space where all the performances and exhibitions take place, and provides a concourse for a sustainable food market. From this level it is also possible to enter the tank-theater and listen to Mediterranean music, or take the stairs located on the hull and reach balconies high above sea level.

The modular structure contains numerous patios with different characteristics and different shapes, as in Mediterranean architecture, some of them with fluid forms that host trees and vegetation, evoking the medieval "hortus conclusus." These enclosed gardens are a way to bring light inside the hull, as for example for the research department, which is below sea level and would not otherwise receive natural light. These patios reach different floors: the smallest ones are just one floor high while the biggest ones carry the light to the lowest floor of the structure; their size exposes people to natural light and allows them to go outside and be surrounded by typical Mediterranean vegetation. Other patios bring salt water inside the ship; in this case the hull of the tanker is perforated at the bottom to allow the passage of water. In some cases thick walls surround the more regular patios, hosting market activities. And in others

the thickness of the roof is shaped in order to become an open theatre for performances and concerts. Performances also take place within the ship on barges that can be put in the water when the Liquid Museaum is at sea. Once the barges are in the water, the performances can reach the shore or float on the water.

→ CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of our research on the Mediterranean Sea, its multicultural identities, hybrid elements and its history of encounters has always fascinated us. What we have tried to underline with our project is its nature and potentiality. The tanker Liquid Mu*sea*um travelling around the Mediterranean Sea could be considered as a "sponge" that absorbs all the stories from one shore to the other, reproposing them through its archive, research and meeting spaces.

The Liquid Mu*sea*um tries to interpret through a physical project the Mediterranean Sea as a location of migrating histories, of diverse meetings and currents, as suggested by Chambers. His interpretations of this sea as a liquid archive that connects rather than divides, has led us to propose a project of architecture that could be considered flexible, new and innovative as it seeks to respond to the needs of a Postcolonial Mu*sea*um. The Liquid Mu*sea*um is considered in all its parts with reference to the fundamental premises of Postcolonial studies. The idea of migration, of culture plurality, of participation and of new conceptions of archiving, have determined and influenced every design choice we made; for example, the functional and typological choices like the flexible spaces in the Liquid Mu*sea*um with its simple internal structure and its associated barges. Together with our ideas and design approach, and following the technological aspects of the maritime world, we arrived at the final configuration of the Liquid Mu*sea*um as an architectural project that seeks to respond to the critical and theoretical challenge of Postcolonial Studies.

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IMG. 05— (NEXT PAGES) *Vision concept market performance, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 06 — *Vision concept performance, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 07 — *Vision concept village, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 08 — *Archive, Sea Memory Museum, picture maquette made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 09 — *Research department picture maquette made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 10 — *Archive, Multimedia Library, photomontage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 11 — *Vision concept Research Department, collage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 12 — *Research department photomontage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 13 — *Performance, picture maquette made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

IMG. 14 — *Market, photomontage made by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.*

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MeLa* - European Museums in an age of migrations

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examines the historical and contemporary relationships between museums, places and identities in Europe and the effects of migrations on museum practices.

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transforms the question of memory into an unfolding cultural and historical problematic, in order to promote new critical and practical perspectives.

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explores the work of artists and curators on and with issues of migration, as well as the role of museums and galleries exhibiting this work and disseminating knowledge.

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RF06: Envisioning 21st Century Museums
fosters theoretical, methodological and operative contributions to the interpretation of diversities and commonalities within European cultural heritage, and proposes enhanced practices for the mission and design of museums in the contemporary multicultural society.

Partners and principal investigators:

Luca Basso Peressut (Project Coordinator), Gennaro Postiglione, Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Marco Sacco, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy
Bartomeu Mari, MACBA - Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain
Fabienne Galangau, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France
Victoria Walsh, The Royal College of Art, United Kingdom
Perla Innocenti, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom
Jamie Allen, Jacob Back, Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Denmark
Christopher Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason, Newcastle University, United Kingdom
Iain Chambers, l'Orientale, University of Naples, Italy

MELA BOOKS 11 – RF02 CULTURAL MEMORY, MIGRATING MODERNITIES AND MUSEUM PRACTICES
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THE RUINED ARCHIVE

How does the modern museum respond to the movement, migrations and mobilities of the modern world that exceed its practices and premises? The essays in this volume circulate in the constellation of cultural, postcolonial and museum studies to propose a series of intersecting perspectives promoting critical responses to this ongoing interrogation. Memory, the archive, and the politics of display, are unwound from their institutional moorings and allowed to drift into other, frequently non-authorised, accounts of time and space. Called upon to negotiate unplanned encounters with unsuspected actors and the obscured sides of modernity, the museum becomes an experimental space, a laboratory for a cultural democracy yet to come.

With contributions by: Fernanda Albuquerque, Chiara Baravalle, Giuseppe Biscottini, Francisco Cabanzo, Iain Chambers, Maria Iñigo Clavo, Lidia Curti, Alessandra De Angelis, Beatrice Ferrara, Jessica Fiala, Giulia Grechi, Celeste Ianniciello, Jan-Erik Lundström, Olga Fernández López, Mark Nash, Mariangela Orabona, Claire Pajaczkowska, Michaela Quadraro, Elizabeth Stanton.

EDITORS

Iain Chambers teaches Cultural, Postcolonial and Mediterranean Studies at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". Giulia Grechi is a curator and teaches Visual Anthropology and Contemporary Art at the Fine Art School of Brera in Milan. Mark Nash is a curator and teaches at Birkbeck College, London and in the Whitney Independent Study programme, New York.

COVER IMAGE — *Zineb Sedira, Haunted House, 2006 (courtesy the artist)*

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