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TERMS. CIHA Journal of Art History publishes researches to jointly discuss the same major terminology of Art History by experts in different cultures, nationalities and languages. Through discussing the same terminology, different understandings can be correlated, reinvestigated, reexamined and the criticism of these major terminology within globalization can be presented. It is a double blind peer reviewed journal. Submitted articles are subject to a double blind review process that decides whether they will be included in the journal.

Cover illustration: Kaj Lehmann

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Issue 1　Terms of Engagement

Preface

LaoZhu

At a council meeting of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA) in 2012, Professor Thierry Dufrêne, Professor Peter J. Schneemann and I jointly proposed the restoration of the *CIHA Journal*.

The prototype of the journal is *Mitteilungen des K.K. Oesterreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* (*Communications of the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry*) published in Vienna in 1873. It is in this pioneering journal that *Fortsetzung*, the meeting minutes of the *Erster Kunstwissenschaftlicher Kongress* in Vienna (the 1st Art History Congress, held from September 1−4, 1873) was first released. The journal went on hiatus intermittently over the years. For instance, it appeared in the form of *Bulletin du CIHA* (*Bulletin of CIHA*, Paris) from 1965. But it eventually went into a prolonged suspension.

Having a journal is important to any learned society. What we hope to achieve is a sustainable journal of our own so as to bring societies and scholars of our member countries closer together.

In today's world of art history, there is clearly no shortage of journals. Therefore, we need to be extremely thoughtful when starting a new one. Our conception started to take shape during the preparation for the 34th World Congress of Art History CIHA in Beijing.

The holding of the Congress in China signifies that art history, a discipline mostly built on the Western understanding of art, ought to reexamine its concepts and methods so as to enlarge its disciplinary scope, which will expand

its universality and enable the discussion of phenomena and issues related to the entire human race's art practice—and form a global perspective.

Western art history usually studies history through the analysis of the recreation of reality by art and images and their correlations (mimesis); however, not all arts are documented in the form of historical images and phenomena, that is the visual evidence of history. In fact, those aspects of the functions, purposes, and significance of art which are not represented in images are often neglected or even concealed in the current framework of art history. With this in mind, the Chinese committee of the 34th Congress set the purpose of the Congress—to explore art and art history in different eras and cultures.

After consulting delegates of different nationalities, the CIHA secretariat accepted Peter J. Schneemann's proposal and adopted the theme "TERMS," intending to, under the guidance of the CIHA principles, expand CIHA's work to a global scale. While exchanges on the international level usually happen between countries with similar cultures, shared values, methods, and ideologies, exchanges on the global level mean the inclusion of individuals, arts, and art histories from every part of the world.

As a discipline, art history welcomes the solution of one problem with different methods. Therefore, CIHA strives to include all art phenomena from every culture, to highlight their differences, and, ultimately, to promote communication and exchange between cultures. And it is with this mission in mind that we restart the journal of CIHA, taking it to the future that we want to create.

The world is currently facing many emerging issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, to the extent that an anti-globalization trend is now spreading. At the same time, however, almost all the scholars in the field of art history agree that we should focus on, understand, and respect other people, their cultures, and their differences. It is exactly the differences that call for our concern, care, and respect: the greater our differences, the harder we should try to understand one another. With that common ground established, differences in art history ought to be foregrounded; the seeking of which ought to be an aim

of the discipline. It is therefore our job as art historians and art researchers to understand, respect, and share these differences, to manifest them and to promote their co-existence. This is also the main concern of our journal.

With this issue, our journey has begun. The theme Professor Thierry Dufrêne and Professor Peter J. Schneemann picked for this first issue is "Engagement." The contributors are from different nations and speak different native languages. In fact, the organization of such a multi-cultural dialogue had already been proposed in the 2004 Montréal meeting and again in Melbourne in 2008. The journal, guided by the spirits of these previous efforts, is a trend-setter for future research.

We need to understand different historical periods in human history and how different cultures create different art traditions. Those differences are so valuable, subtle yet profound. They are worthy of our research, our preservation and imitation, and particularly our yearning, respect, and appreciation. Only with such care for each other and mutual respect can humanity achieve peace and glory.

Introduction

Thierry Dufrêne & Peter J. Schneemann

"My art history has always been reactive. Its enemies have been the various ways in which visual imagining of the world has been robbed of its true humanity", wrote Timothy J. Clark in *The Sight of Death*. In this book, dedicated to Poussin, the art historian claimed that in the former part of his career, "the argument was with certain modes of formalism, and the main effort in [his] writing went into making the painting fully part of a world of transactions, interests, disputes, beliefs, 'politics'" [1]. But, later in his career, he came to the belief that the enemy was "the parody notion we have come to live with of its [art's] *belonging to the world*", being a practice "at any tawdry ideology's service" [2].

In this issue of the *CIHA Journal,* the reader will find diverse forms of engagement by artists and art historians on several matters and issues, with conflicting interests and solutions. Acting as an art historian (writing art history, teaching it, collaborating to make it more inclusive, more complex) is always an engagement. From the simple conversations between peers, between students and teachers, to the international research program and network, engagement is at stake.

When you open *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms* by Edward Lucie-Smith[3], you read "engagé — See ART ENGAGE", but when you refer to 'art

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1 Timothy J. Clark, *The Sight of Death* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 122.

2 Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 122.

3 Edward Lucie-Smith, *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 75.

engagé' after Art Autre (Fr. 'Other Art'), Art Brut (Fr. 'raw art') and Art Deco, you jump to 'Art for Art's Sake' ('L'Art pour l'Art'). It seems there is no place for engagement! Lucie-Smith simply forgot the term. If you rely on John A. Walker's *Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design since 1945* (1973), 'L'Art engage' means L'Art dirigé and is clearly linked to post-war years.[4] Nothing close to "Engagement" can be found in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff's *Critical Terms for Art History* (1996–2003), despite the fact that Gender / Identity / Gaze / Beauty / Ugliness / Value are all accounted for. Reading the texts gathered in this first issue of the *CIHA Journal* on the topic of engagement, it seems clear that the aim for art historians today is the responsible interconnection that art has always promised.

When we launched this issue on the theme of engagement, we had only one request: that contributors offer an expression, a word, which would be the basis for reflection — a "conversation piece", to borrow the excellent expression used by Dan Karlholm. Though we suggested some of the terms, the majority were sent to us by the contributors (sometimes neologisms, or expressions diverted from their usual meaning). This is why our introduction has all the freedom of discovery: it is a reaction to proposals that have modified or enriched our point of departure. We could highlight two 'themes' in this issue: speaking out (and the tension between speaking out and then doing something… or nothing) and collectivity — the tension therein between the individual and the collective (something important to art history, despite all the protestations and all the work to deconstruct this myth). In the framework of the emergency (which we all know very well), we could also focus on 'attitude' — an openness, a willingness to engage with difficult questions that cannot be, finally, answered.

The articles are of two main types. The first type analyzes the artists' commitment; the second, the commitment of the art historians themselves, in relation to the artists and to their own writing practice. In some articles, however, the two types meet: when our contributors have reflected on the art of

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4   John A. Walker, *Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design since 1945* (London: Bingley, 1973), 34.

collectives. Here, the art historian is just one speaker among many. We decided to divide the texts into two parts for the convenience of reading. The first part includes contributions that focus on action-oriented terminology, that examine and question its modalities. The second part includes texts that respond to an urgency, that are constructed in resonance with an injunction to react, "as if willed elsewhere" [5].

The proposed texts testify to a committed perspective that unites a critical attitude and the passage to action. This does not mean that the critical attitude, preceding the act, loses its importance. Questioning the place of the history of art in the exclusively human sciences, besides anthropology, our contributors want to resituate the history of art within the sciences in general, to approach questions related to the *Longue Durée* (long term). Many of the proposals examine transdisciplinary work — artistic and scholarly collaboration — or are themselves the result of such artistic research. Engagement is considered within, and through, diverse spatial scales, and our contributors resist the commonplace urge to make an exclusive, final pronouncement. This is the case, for example, among Inuit artists and art historians, who take into account the specificity of speaking out in and for their community and how this speaking out also addresses the planet.

The artist's work — the art historian's work — often constitutes a reaction to an emergency, to a violence, to a controversy, to a situation considered unbearable or unsatisfactory. To answer it appears to some as an absolute ethical requirement — and one notes the revaluation of the Kantian point of view: the notion of an "ecological imperative".

Engagement is first and foremost a way of speaking out. Not only a way of saying "yes" or "no", what one wants or doesn't want, but a reflection on the historical and social conditions of speaking and the way in which one exercises it. Thus, F. Duchemin-Pelletier explores what speaking means in different communities and what it means to speak about a community that is not one's

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5   Richard Tuttle, *Wire Pieces* (Bordeaux: CAPC, 1986), 20.

own. How can different modes of expression and knowledge be considered equivalent in quality and relevance when they do not have the same frames of reference?

Several texts in the issue mention an engagement within collectives: TETI group, Hyperimage Group, a Swiss National Science Foundation Sinergia project, REPSA. This commitment is accompanied by a reflection on the relationship between individual and collective responsibility. How can one say "I" in the middle of a group and, crucially, also *with* this group? How can we redefine the place and the rhythms of each individual in a community of thought and action? How can we preserve the critical independence, the "wander lines" of the individuals and the pragmatism of the action in common (Hyperimages)? This community to come, always unstable and in need of co-definition, will necessarily come from negotiation, which appears more and more essential as regards art in the public space: the inhabitants, the users, determine the meaning of public artwork (Mantoan).

Some contributors underline the importance of committed projects that give a voice to those who do not have it or have struggled to obtain it. If such projects are defined against, or counter, this or that thing, counter-archives (recall the "subaltern", archivists as Activists, the 2019 "Liberate the Image" manifesto, analyzed by Schweizer), counter-violence, counter-monuments, it is because they aim to overthrow a saturated and plethoric art history, weighed down by dominant discourses, with the levers of new documentation, interested in what was not recorded and judged worthy of memorialization and transmission (a history of the margins of which Enrique de Malacca, the world-traveler, slave of Magellan, quoted by two articles, is an emblem). The analyzed projects have been chosen, according to the authors themselves, because they do not aim at replacing one violence by another (Hildebrandt), one capitalism of memory by another (Schweizer), but, on the contrary, because, by their very openness and the mutability — voluntarily uncontrollable — of their process, they assert themselves as means-without-end, common instruments of emancipation.

The question of strategies and formats of engagement which are discussed in this volume is one of the most interesting aspects of this issue. If the presentation of works within the spaces which preserve them, and in the first place the museums, requires a critical vigilance (Dufrêne), the overflow of the museographic and historiographic discourse in the very places that require engagement (Krieger) is accompanied by a redistribution of the map of the artistic activities marked by both a voluntary fragmentation and by the relocalization of the stakes (Gee).

The art historian finds a new legitimacy to apprehend the questions which concern what Fernand Braudel called the *Longue Durée* by extending their expertise beyond the limits of their specialization and, especially, by experimenting with the competences of the artists — who have explored many formats and modes of expressing their commitment, including the manifesto (Schneemann), as well as with those of scientists from other fields. The art historian is thus led to analyze the impact of the *Longue Durée* on our modes of acting and creating: the notion of "Baroque" which, like the term "Renaissance", actively tries to destabilize, if not overcome, the established forms of an epoch, a "permanent revolution" (Flanagan); or that of "nostalgia", surfacing from eras which, such as the colonial period, are like the unconscious that artists bring to light for better and for worse (Radwan).

The relation to the world is at the same time cause and consequence of the activity of the artist and of art historians. This is why there is a fertile tension between the commitment towards others and the world (logic or ethics of the care, of the contract), and the liberation which results, for creative thought, in the disengagement of the self from the world-object, as seen in Chinese *shufa* or abstraction (LaoZhu). Or, going in the opposite direction, a liberation of the artistic and discursive contemporary: learning from the engagement of artists, learning from our resistances, learning from language itself by subjecting it to experimentation (Karlholm). Isn't this what a new symbolic power is all about? To better qualify it, we could borrow the word proposed by Gabriel N. Gee, "transportement"; the old French term translates a double process of displacement, in both physical and emotional space: to be carried away. To engage is to be carried

away: to leave one's comfort zone.

   Other words have been suggested in this issue of the *CIHA Journal*: ecological imperative, destitution of violence, nonviolence, *piliriqatigiinniq* (working in a collaborative way for the common good), catharsis, conversation, open access, occupation, communality, panic, multivocalities, re-diversification, *Wai* ("being of non-being"), *Kapwa* (recognition of shared identity) and experimentation, among others too numerous to count. The reader, we are sure, will add their own.

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Manifesto

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Artistic Articulations of Engagement

by Peter J. Schneemann

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Abstract

How do artists call for engagement and political relevance with regard to the "ecological imperative"? This contribution focuses on the revival of the Manifesto in contemporary art. This revival formalized an intertextual rhetoric of exclamation and polemic in service to a new ethical stand: a relational worldview. I argue that discourse analysis can identify a shift in format that ultimate touches upon the academic discourse as well.

The Revival of a Format

Something manifests itself in a material form and an aesthetic expression. By this operation, a force or idea turns real, becomes evident and obvious. In other words, the manifesto implies turning a vision into something palpable. But how does an idea, an artistic concept, gain *bindingness* — a categorical obligation? In the following essay, I want to discuss *the manifesto* as an artistic format of articulation, more precisely as a mode of claiming art's direct relevance to society, if not the world. In the long history and development of artistic discourse, the manifesto has become the rhetorical mode for voicing a concern, announcing urgency, and identifying the need to act.[1] There is no manifesto without the gesture towards engagement. This might be the reason for the revival of this avant-garde format.[2] To phrase it differently, the manifesto offers an opportunity to analyze the aesthetic constitution of engagement.

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1   The genre of the manifesto has received extensive treatment in research, especially in its position for the avant-gardes. Cf., for example, Karl Heinrich Peter, *Proklamationen und Manifeste* (Stuttgart: Cotta Verlag, 1964); Wolfgang Asholt and Walter Fähnders, *Manifeste und Proklamationen der europäischen Avantgarde (1909–1938)* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995); Hubert van den Berg, *Manifeste: Intentionalität* (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 1998); Friedrich Wilhelm Malsch, *Künstlermanifeste: Studien zu einem Aspekt moderner Kunst am Beispiel des italienischen Futurismus* (Weimar: VDG, 1997); Marjorie Perloff, "'Violence and Precision': The Manifesto as Art Form," *Chicago Review* 34, no. 2 (1984): 65–101; Burcu Dogramaci and Katja M. Schneider ed., *'Clear the Air': Künstlermanifeste seit den 1960er Jahren* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017).

2   Silke Peters, "Für klare Stellung: Neue Manifeste für die Kunst," 2009, http://manifeste.twoday.net/.

With 'manifesto', I want to extend the reflection of engagement to notions of rhetoric and speech acts. The verb 'to manifest' stands for a certain ideal of communication, commitment and the will to act. Moreover, the manifesto corresponds to a distinctive self-definition of artists and art historians alike. A close reading of the manifesto as format reveals several issues that touch upon developments in the tension between aesthetic design and the content-driven agenda, a tension that is also in the foreground of academic writing.

In the papers of Ad Reinhardt, one finds an undated note that deals with the typology of artistic discourses.[3] The abstract painter, a highly articulate voice of nineteen fifties New York, reflects on the link between the development of art and the paradigmatic formats of artistic articulation. Reinhardt's single sheet outline leads from the technical manual of the fifteenth century "handbook" on perspective and proportions up to the 'interview' — a format that started an unprecedented career in the middle of the twentieth century.[4] One thinks, of course, of Andy Warhol as the master of the interview, but also of Hans Ulrich Obrist, who built his career as a curator on the collection of interviews.[5] Reinhardt attributes the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the age of academic 'discourses'; the nineteenth century, in contrast, expressed itself in 'private writing' and 'letters'.

In 2008, Obrist organized a *Manifesto Marathon*, putting the format that, following Reinhardt's list, was the twentieth century's dominant genre before the interview, centerstage.[6] Obrist drew a line from the historic avant-gardes to the radical manifestos of the 1960s and 1970s and, further, proclaimed the manifesto

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3   Ms., Ad Reinhardt Papers, Microfilm, Archives of American Art. Washington, D.C.

4   Peter J. Schneemann, "Formate künstlerischer Theoriebildung," in *Theorie²: Potenzial und Potenzierung künstlerischer Theorie*, ed. Eva Ehninger und Magdalena Nieslony (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 33–48.

5   Michael Diers, Lars Blunck and Hans Ulrich Obrist, eds., *Das Interview: Formen und Foren des Künstlergesprächs* (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2013).

6   Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon* (London: Koenig Books, 2009). Cf. Nicola Lees, *Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon* (Köln: König, 2009); Viviana Birolli, "Manifestes à la carte: Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon," *Marges: Revue d'art contemporain* 21 (2015): 61–71.

the organ of the future. Finally, the event posited a link between the manifesto as a 'document of poetic and political intent' and a situation of urgency.

Why did Obrist celebrate the format of the historical avant-gardes, asking seventy artists to read, to sing or to perform statements? What kind of revival of the manifesto is this? Do we see a shift from the ego-document to a new negotiation of shared values and responsibilities? Certainly, the rhetoric of the manifesto indicates a specific understanding of the status given to artistic articulation. Today, the artist is aware of the clear differentiations between personal observation and documentation, analytical research strategy, theoretical reflection and activistic exhortation. In the art world, ranging from the academies to contemporary publishing culture, we have to acknowledge a complex typology of verbal articulation in which the discursive dimensions of art manifest themselves. The implications of the mode of speaking are fundamental because they reflect the different roles assigned to the players in the field.[7]

Since the long tradition of the artistic manifesto is experiencing a comeback, we have the opportunity to reflect on the interplay between two perspectives: the intertextual implication on the formal level and, on the content level, the aesthetics of articulation and communication — the issues at stake today and their implications about the function of art in society.[8]

A Format in Transformation

A manifesto has a strong formal quality, a clear set of rhetorical figures. These formal features are mirrored in visual compositions that translate language into graphic appearance. Distributed as pamphlets and flyers or posters, manifestos have to be reproduced as facsimiles to preserve their visual language. This important correspondence between rhetorical means and visual manifestation can be observed equally well in the variations of Futurist experiments as well as in typographic details like the use of small capitals.

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7   Matthias Michalka and Beatrice von Bismarck, *The artist as...* (Wien: MUMOK, 2006).

8   Schneemann, "Formate künstlerischer Theoriebildung."

Proclamations address the public directly. Descriptions and observations give way to calls and claims. Paragraphs get reduced to short and final statements; the incorporation of a rhythmic appearance of notions and idioms heightens the impact.

The manifesto as proclamation often goes together with numbered listing. The list, with its specific rhythm and repetition, creates a rule system, evoking canonical texts such as the Ten Commandments. Examples can be found from diverse artists: Ad Reinhardt's 'Rules', Sol LeWitt's 'Sentences'[9] or Thomas Hirschhorn's pronouncements.[10]

In the context of the avant-garde, an interesting formal feature of the manifesto and the call for change can be observed: the rhetorical figure of negation, of protesting a ruling system and rejecting an established order, a tradition, developed a strong intertextual marker. We will come back to the thesis that, historically, the manifesto is strongly bound to a dynamic, activist, and, in some cases, destructive drive.[11]

When we look at contemporary reinterpretations of the manifesto, the strong intertextual tradition is immediately recognisable. A prominent example of a strategic and informed use of the intensified statement is Jonathan Meese's extensive writings. His long manifestos, distributed as authenticated, *faksimilierte* "outbursts" or theatrically performed readings, overtly allude to the avant-gardes.[12] A manifesto attacks and negates the existing order. Deploying coarse language, allusions to fascist rhetoric and rhythmic repetition, often numbered, the artist calls for an art that represents itself as a radical force. Here, a term, a conviction or rule, as subject and even as label, becomes defined *ex negativo*.

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9   Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," 1967. Cf. Rosalind Krauss, "LeWitt in Progress," *October* 6 (1978): 47–60, accessed 11 July 2021, https://doi.org/10.2307/778617.

10   Thomas Hirschhorn, *Critical Laboratory: The Writings of Thomas Hirschhorn*, ed. Lisa Lee and Hal Foster (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013).

11   Cf., for example, manifestos like "Le Refus global," released on August 9, 1948 in Montreal by a group of young artists and writers.

12   Jonathan Meese, *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Diktatur der Kunst*, ed. Robert Eikmeyer (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012).

Die "Diktatur der Kunst" verneint jede "Machtwahl"

1. verneint jede ideologische Drecksmacht

2. verneint jede politische Kackmacht

3. verneint jede furzdemokratische Pupsmacht[13]

Just as the format of the manifesto has a close relationship with graphic design, there is also a complex relationship with performative expression, spoken language and theatrical performance. In recent years, these artistic strategies have become explicitly evident and differentiated in the development of the lecture-performance.[14] It is noteworthy that artistic research has led to an experimental interrogation of this genre, situated as it is in teaching institutions.

In 2015, the artistic investigation into the tradition of the political statement climaxed in Julian Rosefeldt's work *Manifesto*.[15] In a monumental 13-channel film installation, he presents a looped collage of historic artists' manifestos, translated into performance. Cate Blanchett's acting augments the artificial aesthetic and fictitious quality of this "restaged declamation". Although the paratextual discourse of the installation positions itself as a homage and as a kind of critical review of the political potential of the avant-garde rhetoric, a different, much more radical question surfaces. Through explicit play with the formal rule system of the manifesto, a certain aestheticizing, in the sense of *over forming* or *super shaping* becomes evident. The staged rhetoric, the acting-out of an attitude, empties the manifesto of its content and leaves us with a nostalgic mood of

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13   Jonathan Meese and Jan Bauer, *Diktatur der Kunst: Das radikalste Buch. Die Diktatur der Kunst ist die ultravisionärste Totalstutopie aller Zeiten!* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011). Cf. Harald Falckenberg, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Das Phänomen Jonathan Meese," in *Jonathan Meese: Revolution*, ed. Carl Haenlein and Carsten Ahrens (Hannover: Kestner Gesellschaft, 2002), 21–42.

14   Gabriele Klein and Wolfgang Sting, *Performance Positionen zur zeitgenössischen szenischen Kunst* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2015).

15   Julian Rosefeldt, *Manifesto* 2015, 13-channel film installation, Colour, 26-channel sound (13 x Stereo), Shot on HD, Aspect ratio 16:9, Loop, 4 min (plus 12 x 10 min 30 sec, 130 min total running time). Cf. Anna-Catharina Gebbers et al., eds., *Julian Rosefeldt: Manifesto* (Australian Centre for the Moving Image [ACMI], Melbourne; Hamburger Bahnhof — Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Sprengel Museum, Hannover, 2015). Exhibition Catalog.

remembering failure. The public no longer feels addressed but experiences, rather, their displacement from a lost language of utopia. One could observe a similar effect at the Venice Biennale 2015, Arena, where Okwui Enwezor staged a reading of all three volumes of the iconic *Das Kapital*. The reading by professional actors was directed by the artist Isaac Julien and was performed in the 'Arena', a stage designed by the architect David Adjaye for the celebration of the spoken word.

Like an echo of a past paradigm, the exhortation acquired a rhythm and melody in its own right. Indeed, one could refer to a number of other examples that demonstrate the complex play between formal mannerisms and urgency.[16] The emancipation of a format directs the focus to the tension between the 'message' and an artistic 'realisation'. In discussing instruments of engagement, one is confronted with the imaginative power of performative language.[17]

The Call to Act and to Care

There is, however, a species of manifesto that indicates a clear refusal of any aestheticization — neither a game nor deconstruction, it is instead an expression of urgency. Rasheed Araeen's contribution to Obrist's Marathon 2008 is one such example. He presented his widely acclaimed *Manifesto for the 21st Century* printed in *Third Text* 2009, albeit with a significant shift in the title: *Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century*.[18] Araeen, born in 1935 in Karachi, is the founder of *Third Text* and participated in *documenta 14*.

His contribution is interesting because we can read it as a manifesto about manifestos. More precisely, he deploys the key terms that define and, thus, redefine the manifesto:

Art today is also trapped by the facile idea of confrontation, which merely produces media scandals (…), its function is merely to provide the artist with success in the art

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16   See, for example, the discussions around the Berlin Biennale curated by Artur Żmijewski.

17   Cf. Boris Groys, "On Art Activism," e-flux Journal, no. 56 (June 2014).

18   Rasheed Araeen, "Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century," *Third Text* 23, no. 5 (2009): 679−684.

market. This inflates the artist's nar-ego further and turns him or her into a celebrity, providing spectacular entertainment for the public but without any significant critical or social function.[19]

Here, Araeen not only addresses the artists as a public figure but also reflects on the intrinsic rituals of the art world, the economy of attention. One could claim, however, that the value of 'scandal', which he laments as a problem of contemporary art, is a natural rhetorical *topos* of the manifesto. Since the Futurists, the rhetoric of the manifesto has played with the connection between the personal statement and the theatrical, inherently public claim that stirs up established values. Araeen's attack, tellingly, alludes to Dadaism, refusing to continue the manifesto tradition of the European avant-gardes.

> This manifesto (...) proposes that artists should (...) stop playing the silly games of the so-called neo-Dada confrontation. Instead artists should instead focus their imagination on what is there in life, to enhance not only their own creative potential but also the collective life of earth's inhabitants. The world today is facing enormous violence and this will increase in the rest of twenty-first century as the Earth's resources shrink due to the stupidity of the kind of life humans have been pursuing. Art can and should strive for an alternative that is not only aesthetically (…) productive but is also beneficial to all forms of life on our planet. We humans are the gift of mother Earth, and it is now our duty as its guardians to protect the earth from impending disaster.[20]

When the manifesto attempts to redefine the manifesto, there is a tension between a formalized rhetoric, where the manifesto could be called an aesthetic form, and its content/agenda, an ethical imperative to act. The new manifesto is one of the formats linked to the notion of an 'ecological imperative'—a stance

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19   Araeen, "Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century," 680.

20   Araeen, "Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century," 684.

towards human resource management built upon Kantian ethics.[21] Today, society is rethinking the use of visual and textual manifestations of human culture as crucial tools to mediate the ethics of the environmental crisis.

Araeen is attempting to use the avant-garde rhetoric beyond any *l'art pour l'art* attitude and to, by doing so, redefine the manifesto beyond its Eurocentric tradition. He uses the rhetorical power of urgency and concern, as well as a new trope of the appeal, to call for an attitude of caring and repairing. The 'new manifesto' demands engagement with nothing less than the world as such, the planet, and demands a radical shift in our orientation towards the world.

Heretofore, I have given an abbreviated reference to the central position of the manifesto in the narration of modernism and the avant-garde movements — both in the self-positioning of modernist artists and in the historiographical work of contemporary scholars. This helps us see a fundamental shift in some of the paradigms at stake: the modernist manifesto aggravated for change, negated the past and promised a future.[22] Deconstruction of existing orders, progress and speed shape the manifesto from Marinetti onwards.

However, the modernist manifestos concerned themselves with mere decades or centuries. The new manifesto, the 'Anthropocene manifesto', has a different time scale.[23] In the discourse around the Anthropocene, tomorrow and the promise of the future of the avant-gardes have shifted — now we speak about 'deep time' — and it is hardly possible to think on a larger scale than geological epochs. But this shift goes far beyond a simple question of scale: it poses the question 'how we can mediate the need for protection of the environment without referring

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21 Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of An Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). First published in German, 1979. Cf. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

22 Lawrence S. Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, eds., *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Elza Adamowicz and Simona Storchi, *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-garde and its Legacy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

23 Aleida Assmann, "The Future of Cultural Heritage and Its Challenges," in *Cultural Sustainability*, ed. Torsten Meireis and Gabriele Rippl (London: Routledge, 2019), 25–35.

backwards to a supposed (and ideological) unity and integrity?' A damaged environment urgently calls us to 'reclaim, restore, and remediate' [24]. But what does it mean when the cultural technique of 'deconstruction' is countered by a rhetoric of preservation, conservation and reconstruction? What happens, then, to the theatrical gesture, the call for utopian radicality? The postmodern quotation of and play with format itself? Ecocritical and activistic approaches want to judge art on its ability to change reality. A criterion like formal innovation has lost its unquestioned authority; ecocriticism now calls for judging impact, practical consequences or solutions achieved by artistic acts.

The most promising examples of the manifesto today do not negate the aesthetic quality of the format and its rich intertextual history. On the contrary, there is an interest in reflecting on the implications of the formats we use, up to a fictionalisation and a merger between reenactment and preenactment.[25] We become aware of the ideological traps of statements that claim moral superiority and legitimization on the basis of identity. The artistic manifesto demonstrates by means of aesthetic *evidentia* a reflective openness, fragility and even ambivalence.[26]

The reflection on the manifesto, taking into account the shift asked for by Araeen's manifesto, exceeds the established field of "Art Theory". The challenge of the 'ecological imperative' is inevitably bound to the question of 'formats'. How do the arts mediate responsibility? Which scenarios and courses of action, i.e, options to act, are evoked? How are the rhetorics of engagement addressing a wider public? Approaches in artistic research, in particular, mark ongoing shifts that can also be observed in academic writing. The supremacy of analysis and

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24 Sacha Kagan, "The Practice of Ecological Art," *Plastik* 4, 15 February 2014, accessed 10 October 2019, http://art-science.univparis1.fr/plastik/document.php?id=866. Cf. also Sacha Kagan, *Art and Sustainability: Connecting Patterns for a Culture of Complexity* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011); Susan Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991); and the categorizations used in Linda Weintraub, *To Life: Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

25 Charlotte Klink, "Yael Bartanas 'A Manifesto': Widerständigkeit und Entgrenzung der Kunst," in *'Clear the Air': Künstlermanifeste in Choreographie, Performance Art und Bildender Kunst seit den 1960er Jahren*, ed. Burcu Dogramaci and Katja Schneider (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017), 173–191.

26 Rachel Mader, *Radikal Ambivalent Engagement und Verantwortung in den Künsten Heute* (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2014).

deconstruction is interrogated by the imperative to voice a position. The rhetoric of critical distance is being supplanted by the desire to overcome analysis and get involved.[27] The way we communicate our motivations and our findings becomes constitutive for the role we take on.

A reflection on the formats we chose to communicate our work is crucial. Indeed, since 2021, an interdisciplinary research group, composed of art historians, literary scholars and anthropologists, has been studying how contemporary cultures grapple with the ethical demands of climate change.[28] Our objects of study are palpable examples of how culture prompts us to take action, to accept the demands of the ecological imperative — yet we find that it is only through collaboration, within and without the academy, utilizing our overlapping competencies and refusing to stay within the narrow boundaries of our 'discipline', that we come near to approaching these objects on their own terms.

In the final analysis, the manifesto, the trappings of which this essay at times adorns itself with, is a verbal *and* a visual object, and cannot be analyzed without recourse to these two related but different ways of thinking. As Neumann and Rippl point out, 'verbal-visual configurations frequently point beyond existing orders of the sayable and the visible' [29]. Although they speak here of ekphrasis and, therefore, of literature, the results of our interdisciplinary research — and of this essay — tell the same story about other cultural products, be they manifestos or academic essays. To tackle a problem of this scale, we must leave the old ways of thinking — of researching — behind. It is no longer enough to investigate solely the verbal or the visual; climate change is a problem that calls for new competencies and new formats of mediations and demands we struggle beyond the already-said and the already-seen. Artists have pushed the boundaries

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27 *A Farewell to Critique? Reconsidering Critique as Art Historical Method*, Copenhagen, 25–27 Oct 2018.

28 Cf. the Swiss National Science Foundation Sinergia project 'Mediating the Ecological Imperative: Formats and Modes of Engagement' (2021–2024), https://www.ecological-imperative.ch.

29 Birgit Neumann and Gabriele Rippl, *Verbal-Visual Configurations in Postcolonial Literature: Intermedial Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2020).

of representation and documentation, communication and participation, have developed strategies of engagement that investigate intertextual traditions like the handbook, the letter, the treatise or the interview. If this essay was a manifesto, it would conclude thus: Let us learn from them.

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Counter-Archive

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Abstract

This paper discusses theories and artistic practices that challenge classical notions of the archive. Since the early 1980s, postcolonial scholars alerted us to the fact that gaps and omissions form the problematic basis of any archive. Thus, counter-perspectives to hegemonic discourse, as well as new archives, have been established. Although alternative narratives came to the fore, the resulting multiplication of the archive followed more or less the same paths as before: Policies of restricted access led to a hierarchy of visibility. Currently, artists, filmmakers, and activists demand a far more radical archival policy. These models, which I group under the term "counter-archives", propose accessibility (a) as part of the Global North's commitment to decolonizing its institutions and (b) as part of a "Citizen Science" agenda that unbalances hierarchies between experts and laypeople.

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Introduction

"Migrant archives"[1], "queer archives"[2], "radical archives"[3], "partisan counter archives"[4], "decolonized archives" — as different as the theoretical backgrounds of these alternatives to classical conceptions of the archive are, they share a common goal: They aim to multiply the traces and voices of cultural memory production. While the conventional archive seems irrevocably discredited, guilty of reaffirming hegemonic power structures, counter-archives are said to have activist, utopian potential. Whether conceived as a physical location or a digital site, counter-archives are attributed to a specific agency — "empowerment" of communities.[5] Two strategies for possible counter-archives are widely debated in artistic and academic fields, both following the political plea of multiplying voices: Counter-archives should either follow a radical open access-policy — and in this way

1   Arjun Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration," in *Information Is Alive: Art and Theory on Archiving and Retrieving Data*, ed. Jake Brouwer and Arjen Mulder (Rotterdam: V2 Press, 2003), https://v2.nl/files/2017/pdf/information-is-alive-pdf-part-i.

2   Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press 2003); Charles E. Morris III, "Archival Queer," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2006).

3   Mariam Ghani, "'What We Left Unfinished': The Artist and the Archive," in *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*, ed. Anthony Downey (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015).

4   Gal Kirn, *The Partisan Counter-Archive: Retracing the Ruptures of Art and Memory in the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2020).

5   [Participants of the workshop "Everything passes, except the past,"] "Call for Action & Reflection on Decolonising Film Archives," (Lisbon 2019), https://www.goethe.de/prj/lat/en/spu/21885042.html.

contribute to a decolonization of institutions — or its holdings should be radically enlarged, updated and diversified by local communities and laypeople. The common thread between both methodological approaches is accessibility.

Parallel to a theoretical questioning of the archive, artists have used archival documents and restaged its architectures.[6] This ubiquitous physical presence of "quasi-archival" infrastructures in exhibitions is known to art history through Hal Foster, who identified an "archival impulse" in contemporary art.[7] With this concept, Foster summarized the art production of the established Western visual artists Tacita Dean, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Sam Durant; their installations are evidence of a fetish among contemporary artists for the aesthetics and formal dispositions of the archive. Updating the analysis from today's perspective would include artists such as Kader Attia, Susan Meiselas, Walid Raad, Vivan Sundaram, and Akram Zaatari. This broadening of the canon, however, foregrounds a second perspective on the notion of the "archival impulse" that highlights it as more than a playful, innocuous preference for an archival aesthetic. Such a view is at the heart of the current debate in the arts: Artists, archivists, curators, activists, and scholars are calling for action as they grapple with the archive's current and future role. Rather than viewing the archive as a place of storage and an exhibition format for objects from a foreclosed past, they envision it as a place of engagement and interaction. The counter-archive is such an institution of actualization, one that connects the (re)construction of diverse histories with people's contemporary experiences.

Engaged Art History and the Multiplication of the Archive

The goal of social art history — to confront artifacts with the social realities by which they are surrounded — has relied heavily on available sources to strengthen

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6   Cf. the exhibition catalogs: Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen, eds., *Deep Storage. Arsenale der Erinnerung: Sammeln, Speichern, Archivieren in der Kunst* (Munich: Prestel, 1997). Exhibition Catalog; Elisabeth Madlener and Elke Krasny, eds., *Archiv X: Investigations of Contemporary Art* (Linz: O.K. Center of Contemporary Art Upper Austria, 1998). Exhibition Catalog; Okwui Enwezor, ed., *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (Göttingen: Steidl 2008). Exhibition Catalog.

7   Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Autumn 2004).

research on the position of minorities in history, whether workers or women: Contracts told the discipline about the value of labor in the Italian Renaissance, police files provided insight into everyday life in late 19th-century Paris, and letters and diaries mapped the networks of German women artists. But since the late 1980s, researchers became more suspicious of the records that former empires, rulers, and states had kept over the centuries. Archives thus became the object of a general overhaul: Postcolonial scholars asked about documents of the "subaltern" who, despite all the efforts of social history, had been excluded from historiography. The *topos* of the archive as a neutral container with collections being accumulated by the accidents of history was criticized. The gaps — or rather forced omissions — of the archive were carved out as its structurally inherent but problematic base. Scholars showed that, throughout history, non-Western archives have been marginalized or even actively destroyed. Scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Griselda Pollock, Ann Laura Stoler, and many others have since pointed out that the sources preserved in the archives are the result of deliberate choice based on the "desires of selected classes, cultures, and genders"[8]. They provided explanations as to why the stories of slaves, non-Western empires, and, again, women — this time from non-Western countries — had previously had no voice in the records or in the hegemonic discourses that had emerged from them. Calls for decolonizing the archive were made, with the aim of presenting sources that reconstruct histories outside of dominant historiographies. Postcolonial archive theories thus conquered nation-state archives by establishing historiographical accounts based on existing or decentralized counter-archives. Thus, the problem of a lack of alternative historiographies was marked as one of the sources.

A second outcome of the postcolonial discourse was a multiplication of archives founded by artists, filmmakers, art institutions, and NGOs, sometimes

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8 Griselda Pollock, "Trouble in the Archives," in *Griselda Pollock Essays: Looking Back to the Future. Essays on Art, Life and Death* (London: G+B Arts International, 2001), 31; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

within, but more often outside, existing institutions. This led to the acceptance of a wider range of memory techniques and media as valid historiographical sources. With this expansion, it became clear that dominant historiographies lacked not only alternative sources but also recognition of archival records beyond written sources. Thus, postcolonial archive theory seeks to equally integrate and account for a variety of artworks, oral records, poetry, documentary film practices, and other ephemeral worldviews. They are regarded as non-linguistic "documents" that preserve the subjugated knowledge and social realities of minorities. At times, a work of art itself becomes a counter-archive: US-artist Susan Hiller's video and sound installations *The Last Silent Movie* (2007/2008) and *Lost and Found* (2016) represent dying or dead languages as well as their translations into the language of their suppressors. The subtitles recall the colonial crimes of the erasure of cultural heritage, the shifting of meaning as well as the failure of translation that accompanies erasure.

Only recently, however, has the claim been made that the mere proliferation of archives does not better the unequal power relations on which they are based. Ariella Azoulay argues that if we want to challenge hegemonic histories, we need to get rid of the very archival terminology that would sell minority perspectives as a perspective to be *discovered*.[9] Thus, we need to think about methodologies and anti-colonial ethics that would allow us to counter archives in the first place.

Archivists as Activists: Radical Dissemination

Visual media such as photography, film, video, and, ultimately, digital media are kept in focused sections of archives, which gives them the status of special collections. As films, videos, slides, audiovisual and digital files do not reveal their contents at first glance, requiring apparatus to come to life, they are often left untouched or even abandoned for years. The parts of archives devoted to visual documents follow protocols that differ from the usual archive order, often

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9   Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019), 197.

queering the regulated system of archival order. Others, such as photographs of colonial heritage, are even seen as threats to contemporary institutions, according to Elizabeth Edwards. They can disrupt the narratives of contemporary nations that claim to be part of a multicultural present. In this respect, the archive unfolds as a troubling "dystopia" for former colonizers.[10]

This unruly, unclassified, and sometimes even forgotten visual media collections have recently provided a starting point to re-interrogate archives for their colonial and omitted histories, thereby proposing visual counter-archives within already existing infrastructures.

A high percentage of visual sources documenting colonial injustice are still kept in the archives of former colonial powers.[11] They have not yet returned to the liberated countries where they were once shot, thus repeating the imbalance of power. The joint initiative of a group of filmmakers, archivists, activists, scientists, and artists recently published the collective paper "Call for Action & Reflection on Decolonising Film Archives"[12]. A central demand is that archives make colonial and anti-colonial material fully accessible, available to researchers worldwide. In this way, access is granted not only to researchers who can work at the physical location of the archive, but to all those who cannot afford to travel to consult an archive — the reasons for this are manifold, whether economic, environmental, or due to visa regulations. Free accessibility, it is hoped, is a first step toward decolonizing archives. In 2015, artist Mariam Ghani called this commitment to open access a "radical archive" practice. She proposes a fundamentally democratized culture of sharing: "[T]he radical approach to preservation is projection: use it or lose it."[13]

This new archive policy goes hand in hand with a debate on de-regulated property, on free publication and reproduction rights. It does not come as a

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10   Elizabeth Edwards, "The Colonial Archival Imaginaire at Home," *Social Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (February 2016): 53.

11   A current overview of film archives with holdings of colonial and anti-colonial origin is provided by Teresa Alten and Nancy Schneider's map for the Goethe-Institut, https://www.goethe.de/prj/lat/de/spu/21879035.html (Jan. 27th, 2021).

12   [Participants of the workshop "Everything passes, except the past,"] "Call for Action & Reflection on Decolonising Film Archives."

13   Ghani, "What We Left Unfinished," 62.

surprise that visual and audiovisual archives are at the center of such a debate. Films are a highly mobile heritage that could easily become a shared heritage through the circulation of copies. The "Liberate the Image" manifesto, launched in 2019 by a second group of filmmakers and academics, points to the economies of archives: Visual material of the Global South and the Arab World is in the possession of institutions and corporations that monetize its circulation, thereby consolidating their status.[14] Maintaining control over access through monetary means is intricately linked to maintaining control over narratives told primarily from a privileged perspective. This second manifesto calls on archives to make their holdings freely accessible. Such a liberal open access policy will only be possible through a rigid digitization of existing archives and through the establishment of non-commercial, de-centralized platforms that allow the sharing of digital/digitized copies.

Crowdsourcing the Archive: Open Access, Citizen Archiving, Instant Historiography

Open access (OA) is the central ethical and political obligation for counter-archives. Thus, highly mobile documents from the past, such as film, that are still tied to the archive's location, are put back into motion. The physical boundaries of the archive are dissolved in order to re-mobilize cultural heritage: A counter-archive will no longer necessarily be tied to a building, as nation-state archives have been.[15] Instead, non-commercial platforms can serve the purpose of counter-archives, allowing for accessibility, portability, and supranational exchange. They enable crowdsourcing techniques, allow mass uploads and the storage of archival content. Regardless of their status as professional archivists or one-time visitors,

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14 Liberate the Image Collective, "Liberate the Image. A Manifesto to Restitute Collective Memory," 2019, https://themanifesto.documentary-convention.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Liberate-The-Image.Engl_.pdf.

15 Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publication, 2002).

people should be able to share archival finds on specified platforms. However, OA policies will not only apply to the publication of finds. Ariella Azoulay argued that a future archival strategy needs to establish OA policies to acquire content. People must be granted "the right to be involved in producing and depositing material in the archive" [16]. This challenges the notion of the archive as a highly protected place that provides insight primarily to — and is maintained by — experts. Instead, online communities shape and update archives according to their needs. The diversification of archives through crowds would thus be the programmatic core of a future archival strategy, ideally leading to a re-calibration of the archive's categories of order. The circulation of material online will diversify existing data sets and films, videos, and digital content of unknown authorship will circulate in the same channels as the objects designated as artworks.

This vision of a future counter-archive is part of a broader debate about a necessary shift in the role of archivists toward online communities that complement their role.[17] The Citizen Science movement has been thinking about methods to engage communities online and offline, to make the archive a place "of acting and interacting" [18]. Various degrees of public involvement have been tested, from minimal freedom in co-creating topics to maximum. I will briefly outline the two poles of debate. One of the first collaborative projects to pilot crowdsourced transcription of documentation for an art institution was "AnnoTate" by the Tate Gallery. The project launched in 2012 and aimed to recruit volunteer transcribers for the Tate Archives. Here, citizen participation was limited to assisting the archivists and the entire transcription process ended with a verification of the

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16   Azoulay, *Potential History*, 198.

17   Bastian Gillner, "Archive im digitalen Nutzerkontakt: Virtuelle Lesesäle, soziale Medien und mentale Veränderungszwänge," *Archivar*, no. 66 (2013); Per Hetland, Palmyre Pierroux, and Line Esborg, eds., *A History of Participation in Museums and Archives: Traversing Citizen Science and Citizen Humanities* (New York: Routledge 2020); Anssi Jääskeläinen and Liisa Uosukainen, "Citizen Archive: My Precious Information," *New Review of Information Networking* 26, no. 1–2 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/13614576.2018.1537800; Denny Becker, "Citizen Science in Archiven: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen von Crowdsourcing bei der archivischen Erschliessung von Fotografien," *ABI Technik* 40, no. 1 (2020).

18   Azoulay, *Potential History*, 178.

volunteer's work. This is an example of minimal freedom in co-creation of research topics: The expert provides tasks and an online community of laypeople delivers.

The other side of the pole opts for a more radical understanding of co-creation and takes the notion of crowdsourcing further: The source literally is the crowd. For Citizen Science projects to satisfy the needs of a community, not solely those of the archivist, the research field must be co-defined by communities and reflect aspects, themes, and formats of popular memory — such as content that would be found in social media. It helps the successful development of a Citizen Science project in the arts if interest in a topic is initiated by a community; there has to be a public interest first. Only then is volunteer engagement grounded and only then can it feed into genuine, high value counter-archival narratives. If these conditions are taken seriously, insights that are markedly different become possible and, ultimately, provide true counter-narratives. That, after all, is what Citizen Science is for: to bring perspectives to the fore that are different from those of experts.

The crucial point, however, is who will own and maintain these platforms. The restricted rules of conduct and a current critical debate in art history about content moderation and the data agenda of platform companies make it clear that the initial euphoria towards social media platforms has now recognized their commercial reality.[19] Thus, archives today urgently need to address the question of how they will handle the highly ephemeral data already in personal collections on social media platforms and those yet to come. For future generations of art historical research, this data will provide invaluable insights into the visual culture that shapes public opinion today. This is based on archiving strategies and methods that run parallel to events of public interest, thus to a concept of simultaneous, instant historiography. To simply let this data drift into the social media abyss ignores its potential as valid counter-archives for future generations.

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19   Katja Müller-Helle, ed., *Bildzensur: Löschung technischer Bilder*. Bildwelten des Wissens, vol. 16 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020).

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Negotiation

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Abstract

The term *negotiation* is investigated in its shift towards positive connotations for Public Art, while much art theory in the second half of the twentieth century was focused on defining the solipsist existence of contemporary art. The long queue of Modernism pressed artists to impose their persona on the artworks, though with Public Art practitioners projecting their work decidedly beyond the art field and *negotiation* became the essence of strategies engaging with the audience and their context. The term poses a methodological challenge, implying a paradigm shift from Pierre Bourdieu's idea of a "closed art field" to Howard Becker's open concept of "cooperating art worlds", thus addressing the passage from an art history focused on adamantine interpretations to one open to participatory dynamics engaging with environmental and societal issues. The ecologist projects by Gayle Chong Kwan and Sasha Vinci are presented as recent examples.

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The Shift from Closed-Circuit to Open Engagement

Some time ago, while quarrelling with the director of an artist estate of a late European abstract expressionist, it became clear to me how the shift in meaning making — from the artist to the wider audience — truly constitutes the backbone of postmodern developments in contemporary art. My counterpart argued that it was ridiculous how artists like Joseph Beuys, John Latham, Barbara Steveni or the wider Fluxus collective pretended that everybody could be an artist. In his view, the privilege of artistic creation and sense building rested with the artist alone, taken as a heroic being with thaumaturgical abilities. I was hardly in the mood to engage in a verbal fight over the contribution to Postmodernism that arose from George Maciunas' concept of anti-art, which pushed towards a complete entanglement of creator and spectator, of art and life.[1] Participation was then a matter of art's democratisation, with some artists pushing participants to become necessary co-creators.[2] Today, Public Art engages the audience in the artwork's process and outcome, often moving beyond the art field to address wider

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1   George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art (1962)." In *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Realisme: Eine Dokumentation*, edited by Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1965), 192–195.

2   Georg Jappe, "Not just a few are called, but everyone: Interview with Joseph Beuys." In *Studio International* 184, n. 950 (1972), 228–229.

societal issues.[3] This does not mean artists are renouncing their creative freedom; rather, they involve the public in the artistic process to *negotiate* its outcome. In the social arena, meaning must adapt to the balance emerging between the artist's intentions and the audience's expectations. For many public artists, the principle of *negotiation* steers their effort towards earnest community engagement, fostering a process of reflection, exploration and reckoning with societal, political, environmental or economic malfunctioning, far beyond the isolated art world.[4]

Although participatory practices expanded the concept of art, much art history and theory in the second half of the twentieth century remained focused on — perhaps even obsessed with — the need to define the conditions of existence of contemporary art. Such was the ontological attempt by George Dickie to theorise the institutional dynamics of art legitimation, referred to as a normative act by a higher authority.[5] On the sociological side, Pierre Bourdieu singled out the art field from ordinary life; a specialised domain which strives autonomously and finds its meaning inside a closed circuit.[6] It appears the long queue of the Modernist view still pressed theoreticians to identify artists as subjects who impose their will or persona on the products of creativity, thus prefiguring the existence of a definitive meaning for every artwork strictly laying within the artwork itself. From this perspective, the term *negotiation* can only take the negative trait of the artist renouncing his or her own character and freedom, as if going back to the Pre-Modern Era when painters and sculptors were subject to the demands of patrons

3   Chris Crickmay, "'Art and Social Context', its Background, Inception and Development." In *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 2, n. 3 (2003), 119−133.

4   Ruth Wallen, "Walking with Trees." In *Dark Matter: Women Witnessing*, Issue 9: "Extinction Illness: Grave Affliction and Possibility" (2019). Available online: https://darkmatterwomenwitnessing.com/issues/Oct2019/articles/Ruth-Wallen_Walking-with-Trees.html. accessed on 26 June 2021.

5   George Dickie, "Institutional Theory of Art." In *Theories of Art Today*, edited by Nöel C. Carroll (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 107.

6   Pierre Bourdieu, "The Intellectual Field: A World Apart (1990)." In *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, edited by Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 15.

and clients.[7] However, as practised in Public Art, *negotiation* takes on the opposite meaning, that of a proper engagement with the spectators or participants. The term poses a methodological challenge for art historians and theoreticians since it implies a paradigm shift from Bourdieu's idea of a "closed art field" to the concept of "cooperating art worlds" as postulated by Howard Becker. In the writings of Bourdieu, an idea of an autonomous art system emerges, defined as a space of positions where cultural meaning and artistic predominance are at stake, though strictly within the field itself.[8] To the contrary, on Becker's view the art world is an open set of interrelated people *negotiating* their reciprocal roles, activities and meanings, thus presenting art as the result of a convention, a bottom-up process of collective engagement.[9] *Negotiation* addresses the passage from a kind of art history focused on adamantine interpretations to one open to participatory dynamics reaching out into the wider world. As seen through the lens of *negotiation*, an artwork acquires meaning not for what it represents, but for what it stands for.

Blurring the Distinction between the Artist and the Public

At some point in the waning twentieth century, the term *negotiation* shifted towards positive connotations as a form of deeper engagement with the public. In the first instance, it was site-specificity, inside the museum or gallery space, that helped the artwork exit its solipsistic existence in order to respond to the elements of a given place.[10] Land Art, in particular, disrupted Modernist paradigms by harmonically integrating with a site or drastically reacting to its spatiotemporal dimension.[11] The terms "site" or "place" opposed the Modernist idea of the artwork as an ontologically independent object existing outside of any possible

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7   Peter Burke, "L'artista: momenti e aspetti." In *Storia dell'arte italiana* 2, edited by Giulio Bollati, Paolo Fossati, and Giovanni Previtali (Torino: Einaudi, 1979), 101.

8   Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 12−36.

9   Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 39.

10 Elizabeth C. Baker, "Artworks on the Land." In *Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art*, edited by Alan Sonfist (New York: Dutton, 1983), 75.

11 Rosalyn Deutsche, "Tilted Arc and the Uses of Public Spaces." In *Design Book Review* 23 (Winter, 1992), 22−27.

relationship.[12] Suddenly, the "disembodied eye" was questioned and substituted with an embodied encounter, that of the spectator engaging in an aesthetic experience with the artwork or the artist.[13] Referring to Public Art, Latham once maintained that context was half the work; it constitutes the nurturing ground for the public to build relationships and meaning.[14] However, the artist and the public remained distant until public artists concretely involved their community in the artistic process.[15] Not all art-making underwent this transformation, of course, just artists who deemed public involvement an essential element of the aesthetic experience, especially those who felt art had the moral imperative to engage with societal issues.[16] The principle of *negotiation* then made its entrance into art education, prompted by reformed study courses across the Western world that entailed student placement in the wider social context. In the United Kingdom alone, such experimental training started in the late 1970s at Darlington College of Art, Glasgow School of Art, East London Polytechnic, Bradford College, Central Saint Martins and Newcastle Polytechnic, where students undertook a residency in a setting where art was not normally practised; the terms of their intervention had to be *negotiated*.[17]

Today, only an earnest *negotiation* of means and meanings with a self-aware public can deliver an artwork that makes sense in a particular situation.[18] As *negotiation* occurs between two willing parties, the artist has to abandon a patronising attitude and confront an audience made of emancipated spectators,

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12   Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 17.

13   Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity (1997)." In *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, edited by Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 34−35.

14   Diego Mantoan, *The Road to Parnassus: Artist Strategies in Contemporary Art* (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2015), 88−91.

15   Su Braden, *Artists and People* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 1−15.

16   Moira Roth, Suzanne Lacy, Julio Morales, and Unique Holland, "'Making & Performing Code 33': A Public Art Project with Suzanne Lacy, Julio Morales, and Unique Holland." In *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 23, n. 3 (2001), 61.

17   Mantoan, *The Road to Parnassus*, 91−93.

18   David Harding, "Another History: Memories and Vagaries: The Development of Social Art Practices in Scotland from the 60s to the 90s." In *Art with People*, edited by Malcolm Dickson (Sunderland: Artist Information, 1995), 26−30.

that is, people participating with their own beliefs, intentions and expectations.[19] Socially-engaged practices, in particular, promote a "dialogic" understanding of the artwork, setting the artist and the public at an egalitarian level, engaging in an act of sharing contents and *negotiating* meaning.[20] Abandoning the pretension of universal truths, this discursive character implies the accomplishment of a provisional consent — which is the outcome of a negotiation — that more or less allows the coexistence of different perspectives, be they the artist's or those of the public.[21] As if at a bargaining table, the "dialogic" principle in art produces relationships based on empathy, interconnections, expectations as well as forms of "connected knowing" [22]. The true sense of *negotiation* becomes clear when artists do not take the audience for granted, but instead envision the public as a self-aware actor that engages in a relationship among equals.

Thoroughly trained in public strategies, young artists in the 1990s embraced open-endedness to produce works that incorporated engagement as a natural component of artmaking. Such was an installation like Liam Gillick's *Big Conference Platform Platform* (1998), a mere canopy suspended in the gallery space, which intended to foster autonomous conversations among the audience. Even more engaging were Gillian Wearing's *Signs that Say What You Want Them to Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You to Say* (1992/93), where she gave casual people met in the district of Peckham absolute freedom to draft their own message. A similar attitude informed Christine Borland's collection of *Small Objects that Save Lives* (1992), when she asked friends to provide her with

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19   Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), 10−15.

20   Grant Kester, "Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art (1999)." In *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, edited by Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 155−157.

21   Jürgen Habermas, "Justice and Solidarity: On the Discussion Concerning 'Stage 6.'" In *Philosophical Forum* 21, n.1−2 (1989), 47.

22   Patrocinio Schweickart, "Speech is Silver, Silence is Gold: The Asymmetrical Inersubjectivity of Communicative Action." In *Knowledge, Difference and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, edited by Nancy Rule Goldberger, Jill Mattuck Tarule, Blythe Mcvicker Clinchy, and Mary Field Belenky (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 317.

lifesaving or life-changing items from their personal experience. Open-endedness and public engagement were epitomised in such artworks, though to critic Claire Bishop they were by no means enough to democratise the art world or address societal issues.[23] In a written response to Bishop, however, Gillick opposed the claim that art becomes interesting when it does not try to patronise the audience, but rather when it addresses the *negotiating* processes that shape the contemporary environment.[24]

Two Modes of Engagement as Participation as Negotiation

Engaging the spectators is hardly worthwhile *per se* for artists who embrace public strategies because the *negotiating* attitude bears profound consequences for the methodology and practice of Public Art, especially in connection to Eco-Activism, community art and gender debates. Public artists work at the fringe of the art world, carving their own niche that responds to broader society, sometimes even disregarding established art institutions.[25] *Negotiating* the terms of intervention, encountering prospective audiences and designing participatory practices all constitute means of engagement that bring the artistic action into the midst of society, far beyond the artistic field. Cast away from the limelight of the art world, many of today's public artists engage with the audience and their context to produce works meant as the start of a public discussion, not as the solipsistic crystallisation of the artist's persona. In this regard, the participatory projects of London-based Gayle Chong Kwan and the environmentalist interventions of the Sicilian artist Sasha Vinci emerge as two possible manners of engaging with the public through the principle of *negotiation*. Over the last two decades, both have

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23 Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." In *October* 110 (2004), 59−61.

24 Liam Gillick, "Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.'" In *October* 115 (2006), 100.

25 George Baker, Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, Andrea Fraser, David Joselit, James Meyer, Robert Storr, Hal Foster, John Miller, and Helen Molesworth, "Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism." In *October* 100 (Spring, 2002), 202−203.

concentrated on creating works that combine a genuine ethnographic attitude in the sense of Hal Foster with a pronounced passion for public engagement centred on activating communal experiences and shaping collective meaning, particularly with regard to ecological issues.[26]

An eclectic artist with a broad cultural background, Gayle Chong Kwan's projects question the consequences of deeply rooted production and consumption paradigms of the post-industrial era. She frequently resorts to participatory activities inside a specific community that lead the public from the everyday to fantasy, such as confronting them with the practical consequences of its history, habits and beliefs. Starting from common objects or discarded items, she imagines the afterlife of these materials through a process of formal transformation and physical preservation, often resorting to techniques of the Victorian age originally used for collection, study and display. In doing so, she retrieves the artifices of the *Wunderkammer* to create marvellous reflections of the familiar by physical miniature, artificial illumination, optical enlargement and aesthetic resemblance.[27] In public installations for subways and underpasses, such as *Wastescape* (2012), Chong Kwan draws the passer-by into unfamiliar surroundings produced from the remains of collective consumption, like a cave of stalagmites and stalactites made of empty milk cans.[28] The audience is invited to put its own beliefs and recollections into play, especially through acts of collective food consumption and narrative entanglement that allow participants to connect to their surroundings and behaviour. Her mobile *Memory Tasting Unit* (2004) or her microclimate sensory banquet *At the Crossroads* (2018) are two such examples. Discarded food becomes the privileged material of her communal actions, inviting the public to collect the remains of edible items on the streets and come to terms with their consumption habits. In *Paris Remains* (2008), discarded food is turned into urban reconstructions and gothic landscapes, while, in *Waste Matters* (2021), participants

26 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 1–71.

27 Adalgisa Lugli, *Museologia* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1992).

28 Amanda Boetzkes, "Plastic, Oil Culture, and the Ethics of Waste." In *RCC Perspectives* 1 (2016), 51–52.

walk through Venice collecting food waste, which is then photographed and transformed into fashionable hats taken again through the streets of the city.

Another perishable natural element is the core material of Sasha Vinci's art activism, as he uses flowers as an empathetic metaphor of beauty and transience in his collective processions. In most human cultures, blooms embody nature's energy and frailty while simultaneously constituting a powerful symbol of environmental and societal rebirth. Drawn from the Sicilian tradition of decking horses in flower garments for the patron saint festivities at the beginning of spring, the artist first adopts this deep-rooted technique to cover objects of individual or collective memory and then leads participatory parades that stir environmental and socio-political consciousness in local communities. For the project *Mutabis* (2016) in his hometown Scicli, he wore a mantelpiece of flowers and wandered like a shaman along natural landscapes and historical buildings soon to be doomed by human greed, either to be turned into landfills or exploited for commercial purpose.[29] The visual and symbolic power of this action spilled over to other endangered territories, such as with collective processions that drew attention to the illegal landfills of Caserta in *La terra dei Fiori* (2017) or the overwhelming impact of tourism on Venice in *La Repubblica delle Meraviglie* (2018). Participants joined in an open lab for the collective *re-negotiation* of the social, political, economic and environmental foundations of a truly sustainable future.[30] The true moment of sharing and community building is neither the parade nor the workshops, but the so-called "infiorata" (decorated with flowers or flower carpet), when the public comes together to cover signs, carpets and garments with

29 Paola Tognon, "Trilogia del possibile." In *La Repubblica delle Meraviglie*, edited by Maria Grazia Galesi, Diego Mantoan, Paolo Tognon, and Sasha Vinci (Venice/Caserta: Ca' Foscari Sostenibile and aA29 Project Room, 2018), 15−17.

30 Lara Gaeta and Diego Mantoan, "Sustainable Art for Sustainable Cities: A Performance and a Screening Afternoon at EDRA50 Brooklyn." In *Proceedings of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) 50th Conference, Brooklyn*, edited by Amy Beth, Richard Wener, Betsy Yoon, Ruth A. Rae, Jessica Morris (New York: Environmental Design Research Association, 2019). Available online: https://cuny.manifoldapp.org/read/sustainable-art-for-sustainable-cities/section/97029364-bf7b-4715-96fb-60c02dd8388a. accessed on 11 July 2021.

flowers for an improvised demonstration for nature by means of natural elements. The signature example of "infiorata" was *A Human Flower Wall* (2019) in New York, where thousands of coloured gerberas applied on the rally instruments were brandished in the streets for societal transformation. Such art activism sparks the communal *negotiation* of new values that challenge consumerist culture and make the Earth bloom, again in harmony with humankind.

As exemplified by the public projects of Gayle Chong Kwan and Sasha Vinci, recycling waste, restoring communities and reclaiming nature are not just artistic gestures; they become means for citizens to *negotiate* a new relationship within society and towards the environment. Their works speak of liberation from economic exploitation and cultural imperialism via the reversal of a Western view or even an anthropocentric perspective, thus contributing to a shift in paradigms within the community of participant public. Engagement is thus sought through the participation in an open *negotiation* of artistic means and cultural meanings, as well as of our relationship with the environment.

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Taking the Floor

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by Florence Duchemin-Pelletier

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Abstract

The inherent dynamics and challenges of speaking up vary from one context to another. Depending on both cultural expectations and socio-political history, local voices have sometimes remained unheard on the global stage. Drawing on the example of the Canadian Inuit, this paper considers the strategies undertaken by artists and activists when it comes to "taking the floor." It first focuses on the genealogies of struggle, both internal and transcultural, before examining the question of multivocalities. Finally, it addresses the role of local epistemes and suggests shifting perspectives so they can be part of a global art history.

❧

Introduction

"How do we do it when our anger is too quiet and soft to get anyone's attention?" asks filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril in her 2016 documentary film *Angry Inuk*. By doing so, not only does she address the specific impact of anti-sealing protests on Indigenous economic sustainability, she also raises the issue of whether non-radical discourses can be heard and legitimated on a global stage. Indeed, in the wake of critical theory, history has been more inclined to retain patterns of struggle and emancipation that favor strong gestures, ruptures, and revolutions and that leave middle grounds, small achievements, and failures behind. Such a tendency has contributed to the invisibilization and silencing of unspectacular engagements both historical and artistic.

Indigenous peoples, for they represent the "unfinished business of decolonization,"[1] are most particularly affected. It should be noted that a distinct form of colonialism characterizes their situation, one that has not been acknowledged by postcolonial studies nor integrated into global narratives.[2] Usually referred to as "settler colonialism," it is defined as the rapid outnumbering of Indigenous peoples in their own land, denying them the possibility to build

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1   Franke Wilmer, *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics: Since Time Immemorial* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1993), 5.

2   Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

national structures or fight for national independences. This incomplete state of decolonization ultimately excludes them from a linear model of history, one with a beginning and an "end," that would normally spur the retracing of its many steps.

Absences, therefore, do not equate to silences and lack of protest, but rather to realities "actively produced as nonexistent."[3] Let us search and we shall find Sámi, Ainu, and Inuit committed movements in the 1960–1970s or Chukchi and Nenets activism in the 1980–1990s, to name but a few circumpolar examples. Their symbolic invalidation is not only symptomatic of Eurocentric epistemes, but it also reinforces primitivist frameworks that deny critical thought and militancy to certain peoples without examining how local cultural expectations might influence means of expression. Considering all of this, *taking the floor* in such contexts where no militant history has been made audible appears particularly challenging.

How can artists and activists get out of this state of inaudibility? Which strategies and prerequisites must be undertaken? Drawing on the example of the Canadian Inuit, this paper argues that *taking the floor* is less about speaking up than taking the lead and shaping springboards in advance. It shows that multimodal strategies of enunciation do not necessary depart from local epistemes and are even able to strengthen them. Lastly, it examines the place of non-Indigenous art historians in this process and suggests necessary shifts.

Building Genealogies and Transcultural Solidarities

One of the first challenges Indigenous artists face is the non-native forging of their art and culture. In the case of the Canadian Inuit, the art market is a Southern construct[4] that incorporated prejudices that were smoothly converted into markers of a so-called cultural authenticity. A large number of collectors expect Inuit contemporary art to be devoid of any foreign encounter and to

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3   Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014).

4   In light of Inuit geography and linguistic uses, the West is named "South" and Inuit Nunangat (homeland) "North."

provide "positive vibes." These expectations leave little if no space for anger or contestation. However, even in the early days, artists produced nonconformist works, sometimes outside the art market, that were unnoticed by art history. Although Alootook Ipellie's cartoons and caricatures published in the 1970–1980s periodical *Inuit Ullumi* have recently gained recognition, Paulusi Sivuak remains, for example, acclaimed for his depictions of Arctic wildlife, but not his dissident drawings.[5]

It might be thought that present artists and activists seek to uncover this specific critical history, but, in reality, their agenda aims at something else — maybe because the 1970s schism between the Inuit of Nunavik left traumatic marks.[6] Given that consensus (*aajiiqatigiingniq*) is one of the key values of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit[7], they would rather pick figures who act with self-restraint and get everyone to agree. In other words, the need to establish a critical genealogy that prepares the ground for speech does not translate to the unearthing of the forgotten combative, but rather in the reevaluation of the best-known and consensual as resistant and engaged.

Napatsi Folger's recent work is indicative of this process. In 2020, she dedicated a series of 6-panel comics strips to 6 iconic Inuit artists. In one of them, she depicts a subtly subversive Jessie Oonark making good use of the critical function of laughter while navigating through a maze of injunctions – let us recall that laughter responds to the social imperative of self-discipline and control of emotions for Inuit.[8] Napatsi comments: "Jessie Oonark is the ultimate

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5 Paulusi Sivuak was part of the dissident movement Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini, which opposed the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement and the Inuit delegation who signed it in 1975. The split extended to whole families and communities in Nunavik, see Lisa Koperqualuk, "Mouvements politiques des Inuit," *À babord!* 54, April–May 2014, https://www.ababord.org/Mouvements-politiques-des-Inuit and Caroline Hervé, *Le pouvoir vient d'ailleurs: Leadership et coopération chez les Inuits du Nunavik (Arctique québécois)* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005).

6 Zebedee Nungak, *Wrestling with Colonialism on Steroids: Quebec Inuit Fight for their Homeland* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2017).

7 This term describes Inuit knowledge or "what Inuit have always known to be true."

8 Michèle Therrien, "Les exigences du célèbre rire inuit," in *Paroles à rire*, ed. Éliane Daphy and Diana Rey-Hulman (Paris: Inalco, 1999), 211–222.

representation of the kind of strength and agency that I have always associated with Inuit women. […] I hope that someday I am able to provide that same example of fortitude and independent thinking to younger generations of Inuit."[9]

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, for her part, chooses to reassert the role of Kenojuak Ashevak in Canada's art and political histories. In her performed poem, *I Am the light of happiness* (2018)[10], she states that Canada was hand-drawn by the artist. Using a proper transcription and pronunciation of her name, more importantly, she draws a line between Kenojuak, the neutral and popular icon, and Qinnuajuaq, the resilient figure who "used art to heal."[11]

Challenging the idea that Inuit have always been isolated, artists extend this inner filiation to renowned anticolonial models in order to build new transnational and transcultural solidarities. While First Nations and other Indigenous figures are evoked, the most interesting recent development has been the integration of Black activism. Only a handful of artworks explore this association as of yet, but on social media, where speech circulates, Inuit do not hesitate to multiply the references. Among others, multimedia artist Jesse Tungilik, renowned for his critical approach to colonialism, has mentioned Aimé Césaire, Martin Luther King Jr., and W.E.B. DuBois. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, singer and activist Becky Han posted a short video in which she translated "Black Lives Matter" into inuktitut ("Qirniqtait Inuusingit Atuutiliit"); emerging artist Dayle Kubluitok designed a poster with Black and Inuit raised fists for the Nunavut Black History Society and Katherine Takpannie documented the meeting of Black and Indigenous women in Ottawa in her 2019 series of photographs *Katiniakusii* ("Several of us coming together").[12]

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9   Napatsi Folger, "Jessie Oonark. Inuit Art Icons in Comics," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, August 12, 2020. https://www. inuitartfoundation.org/iaq-online/jessie-oonark.

10   Laakkuluk performed this poem as part of the Art Gallery of Ontario's 2018 retrospective *Tunirrusiangit: Kenojuak Ashevak and Tim Pitsiulak*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxOlm5hO_Tc.

11   Anna Hudson, Jocelyn Piirainen, and Georgiana Uhlyriak eds., *Tunirrusiangit: Kenojuak Ashevak and Tim Pitsiulak* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2018).

12   Takpannie exhibited this series as part of the 2020 exhibition *They Forgot We Were Seeds* at the Charleton University Art Gallery. https://cuag.ca/exhibition/they-forgot-that-we-were-seeds/.

These new alliances, though, should not flatten singular histories — the pitfall for art historians would be *to indiscriminately apply* a postcolonial perspective to Indigenous works and discourses. As Jean-Philippe Uzel has shown, the paradigms of hybridity, *métissage*, or creolization are ineffective in the context of settler colonialism, where sense of belonging and cultural singularity are often the driving force. Conversely, local epistemes offer keys for comprehension. In our case study, Inuit do not seek to emulate outside models: they build bridges that enlighten their own history and reveal the extent of their commitment. In forging such prospective tools, they subscribe to the principles of *piliriqatigiinniq* (working in a collaborative way for the common good) and *qanuqtuurniq* (being innovative and resourceful).

Multivocal Strategies of Enunciation

In 2014, throat-singer Tanya Tagaq won the prestigious Polaris Music Prize for her album *Animism*. Her acceptance speech was memorable: on a national stage, she said, "Fuck PETA." Even though she did it with a hint of humor, this strong gesture aroused controversy. While it ironically overshadowed her performance and its visual display unit linked to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement, the backlash gave her the opportunity to further expand on colonial issues.

However, such an approach can also enflame tensions in Inuit communities. If the Inuit generally believe that things should not be kept hidden, speech is supposed to remain under control: above all, one should not disrupt the collective harmony and give a negative image of the group. Tanya Tagaq's improvisations, because they express pain, rage, and sexuality (forced or consensual), have a radical tone that some judge foreign to Inuit culture and reprove. Therefore, and because most artists also want to raise awareness among their Inuit audience, Inuit artists are careful to balance visible gestures with quieter actions.

To achieve this, and to gradually standardize their presence on the global stage, they adopt a strategy that consists in covering a large territory, in terms of both

space and practice. Not only have they increased their virtual presence on the Internet, but they also intend to join mainstream pop culture and high-flying art events. In collaboration with the First Nation curator Candice Hopkins, media art collective Isuma represented Canada at the 2019 Venice Biennale, when Taqralik Partridge's installations were shown at the 22nd Biennale in Sydney — editions where Indigenous artists have been more present than ever.

In terms of cultural sovereignty, several artists work towards the normalization of Indigenous skills, reindigenization of words or objects that have lost their precolonial meaning, and reappropriation of archives. Mark Igloliorte with his *Seal Skin Neck Pillow* (2019), Nala Peter with her sealskin lingerie (2016) or Couzyn Van Heuvelen with his faux *Sealskin Rug* (2021) all seek to counter animal rights advocates' long-standing narratives with unexpected, stylish or kitschy everyday items.[13] Borrowing from meme aesthetics, Mark Igloliorte took inspiration from a series of 1970s drawings by Luke Anguhadluq, sketches of miniature *qajait* held at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, and a written statement that gives its title to the work: *Kayak Is Inuktitut For Seal Hunting Boat* (2019). Adding a clever use of the unstretched canvas — similar to drying animal skins — he reminds Qallunaat[14] that, before being a leisure activity, the *qajaq* is an Inuit technology whose form stems from its purpose.

Jesse Tungilik and Glenn Gear, for their part, rearticulate Indigenous temporalities by associating the precolonial past and a futurist imagery. Jesse Tungilik's *Seal Skin Spacesuit* (2019) alludes both to his childhood imagination and the fact that *angakkuit* (shamans) used to travel to the moon long before

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13   Mark Igloliorte explained that he felt his neck pillow had the potential to become a "popular thing" that people could travel and cross borders with (Toronto Inuit Association 2021). Igliorte's *Seal Skin Neck Pillow* and *Kayak Is Inuktitut for Sealing Hunt Boat* are from his project *Traverse* (https://markigloliorte.net/traverse 2016−2019); Peter's sealskin lingerie was shown at AXENÉ07 Gallery's *Floe Edge: Contemporary Art and Collaborations from Nunavut* (2016); van Heuvelen's *Sealskin Rug* (2021) was shown at the Winnipeg Art Gallery's *Inua* (https://www.wag.ca/event/inua/).

14   Qallunaat refers to white people and, by extension, can be used to name non-Inuit. The address to Qallunaat is here visible through the transcription of the word kayak instead of *qajaq* (plur. *qajait*) or *kajak* (Labrador dialect).

Qallunaat did, while Glenn Gear's *Iluani/Silami* (2021) offers a meditative space where the time of the myth and the visible world can reunite, where igloos have satellites and ravens enjoy hip-hop fashion.[15] In doing so, they both deny the backward-looking image of Inuit, showing that the Inuit have always been capable of creativity and flexibility and that they have a legitimate place in global discussions.

This illustrates that taking the floor does not lean on a unified and monovocal strategy, but on multiple determinations and singular experiences that embody Inuit epistemes. This diversity allows simultaneous, amplified speech acts that oblige art historians to step out of their comfort zone and observe what happens in the fields of music, cinema, theater, design, and fashion, through which Inuit artists navigate with ease. Such fluidity jeopardizes Western verticalities and partitionings but also demonstrates the appearance of new art worlds that reshuffle inherited colonial art systems.

Shifting Perspectives

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* has become one of Indigenous artists and scholars' favorite texts.[16] And for good reason: in this seminal book, the Māori academic defines concrete issues encountered by her peers and provides recommendations rather than simply deconstructing Western scholarship. In doing so, she underlines the necessity of a proactive engagement: "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions."[17] While suggesting the outline of a "researching back," she insists on the addressee of the book: "[It] is written primarily to help ourselves."[18]

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15 Tungilik's *Seal Skin Spacesuit* (2021) was completed at a residency at Concordia University; Gear's *Iluani/Silami* (2021) was shown at the Winnipeg Art Gallery's exhibition *Inua*.

16 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

17 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 5.

18 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 17.

For its part, Western research has continuously tried to revise its hegemonic gaze, from Clifford Geertz's interpretive anthropology, to Pierre Bourdieu's participant objectivation, to reflexive anthropology.[19] However, even when interviewers put on their facilitator cap, they remain prisoners of the paradox described by Gayatri Spivak, opening spaces while remaining in control of them.[20] To put it another way, focusing on the question of space conceals what is being made of it: where does it start and end? is it temporary or permanent? is what is produced inside given any validity? Instead of expedients, activists demand mastery of their ways of action and awareness of their knowledge.

If Torres Strait Islander thinker Martin Nakata, leaning on Sandra Harding's strong objectivity, postulates that Indigenous reflexive approaches can happen at the cultural interface — a lived and theorical space of negotiation between epistemological tensions[21] — Boaventura de Sousa Santos' sociology of absences maintains that silences result from the invalidation of certain forms of knowledge.[22] It is this very shift between the questions of space and modes of enunciation that appears necessary.

Heather Igloliorte, associate professor at Concordia University, is currently the only Inuk to hold a Ph.D in art history. Her work, building an *Inuit* art history, is nonetheless pursued collectively with her fellow artists, essayists, and curators. When it comes to taking the floor, all address Inuit epistemic requirements: speaking from one's experience and preferring nuance to any so-called objectivity. First person singular and personal recollections are an integral part of papers, talks, and curatorial practices. Essayist Leanne Inuarak-Dall sees herself and her mother "reflected in the ulu [knife] of Kiugak Ashoona's sculpture" she

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19   Christian Ghasarian ed., *De l'ethnographie à l'anthropologie réflexive: Nouveaux terrains, nouvelles pratiques, nouveaux enjeux* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2002).

20   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

21   Martin Nakata, *Savaging the Disciplines: Disciplining the Savages* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007).

22   Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*.

comments on.[23] Co-curators of *INUA* — Qaumajuq's inaugural exhibition[24] — Heather Igloliorte, Asinnajaq, Krista Ulujuk Zawadski, and Kablusiak each choose to exhibit an artwork made by a relative, displaying their intimate relationship to the collection.

However, subjective enunciation is not the only Inuit trait of this taking the floor: the alternative shape given to discourses also plays a part. The production of art history often departs from academic essays, as poems and performances by Taqralik Partridge and Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, as well as drawings by Napatsi Folger, demonstrate.[25] In her *Karoo Ashevak* (2020)[26], the latter offers a critical commentary on the categories assigned by Western art history that contributes to a globalized art history — her final panel "Mic Drop" places the act of taking the floor and writing another art history as a masterful performance.

When Spivak finally stresses that "who will listen" is more crucial than "who should speak," she also alerts us to the risk of being left outside of global academia or trapped in a neoprimitivist bubble as soon as these local modes of enunciation are used: "the real demand is that, when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously; not with that kind of benevolent imperialism."[27] As Santos puts it, it is not a matter of relativism, but of admitting different kinds of knowledge as equally valid *as knowledge*.[28] Even more than sharing or opening spaces, the challenge for non-Indigenous art historians, as allies, is to engage in an "alternative thinking of alternatives"[29] from which counter-narratives can arise and be recorded in a new, polyphonic, art history.

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23   Leanne Inuarak-Dall, "Seeing Myself Reflected in the Ulu of Kiugak Ashoona's Sculpture. Uqallaqatigiinngniq: Sharing Voices," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, May 28, 2021. https://www.inuitartfoundation.org/iaq-online/seeing-myself-reflected-in-the-ulu-of-kiugak-ashoona-s-sculpture.

24   Qaumajuq ("it is bright, it is lit") is the Inuit Art Center that opened in March 2021 at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

25   Let us note that the first two are also curators and that Napatsi Folger is a contributing editor for *Inuit Art Quarterly*.

26   Part of Folger's series, published online, Inuit Art Icons in Comics (https://www.pressreader.com/canada/inuit-art-qu arterly/20210315/281505048955834).

27   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 59.

28   Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*, 190.

29   Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*, 42.

Conclusion

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang assert that "decolonization is not a metaphor."[30] For Indigenous peoples, it is not only about decolonizing the mind[31], but also about reclaiming lands, economic sovereignty, and about securing a future for youth.[32] Artists and activists are aware of that and the fact that their militant history has not been recorded makes speaking twice as difficult. Taking the floor, indeed, is not self-evident when nothing seems to precede the act. Rebuilding critical genealogies, both foreign and local, participates in this effort to affirm that the struggle for emancipation was always part of one's history, and that a practice is now being perpetuated. If this approach has been called revisionist[33], and even though strategical rewritings do exist, it mostly responds to the fact that discreet, but significant, expressions of engagement have escaped Western models.

Artists, however, recognize the need to address multiple audiences and temporarily move from their own cultural requirements to create a grand gesture, crush stereotypes, or reach new generations — at the risk of disapproval from their elders. In societies where restrained speech is valued, such a rhythm cannot continuously be held and must be cadenced with quieter actions. Occupying the media stage and incidentally expanding art categories is part of this strategy. The multiplication and diversification result in a rich chorus that amplifies voices.

On the other hand, non-Indigenous scholars can benefit from "learning to learn" from Indigenous epistemes, whether these have remained strong or been affected by colonial assimilation.[34] Acknowledging the conceptual frames of

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30 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1−40.

31 Wa Thiong'o Ngũgĩ, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth: Heinemann Education Books, 1986).

32 Peter McFarlane and Nicole Schabus eds., *Whose Land Is It Anyway? A Manual for Decolonization* (Vancouver: Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC, 2017).

33 Vine Deloria Jr., "Revision and Reversion," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 84−90.

34 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2−3 (2004): 523−581. Rauna Kuokkanen, "'To See What State We Are In': First Years of the Greenland Self-Government Act and the Pursuit of Inuit Sovereignty," *Ethnopolitics* 16, no. 2 (2017): 79−195.

Kaupapa Māori, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, Sumak Kawsay (quechua for "good living") or Ainupuri[35] is a real challenge for global art history, yet they can offer keys to understanding artistic dynamics of present and past works. Taking them into consideration also permits other ways of building knowledge, going beyond the authoritative paradigm of reconciliation, and establishes a dialogue between art histories that have their own needs and priorities: "Our questions are important," Linda Tuhiwai Smith says. "Research helps us to answer them."[36]

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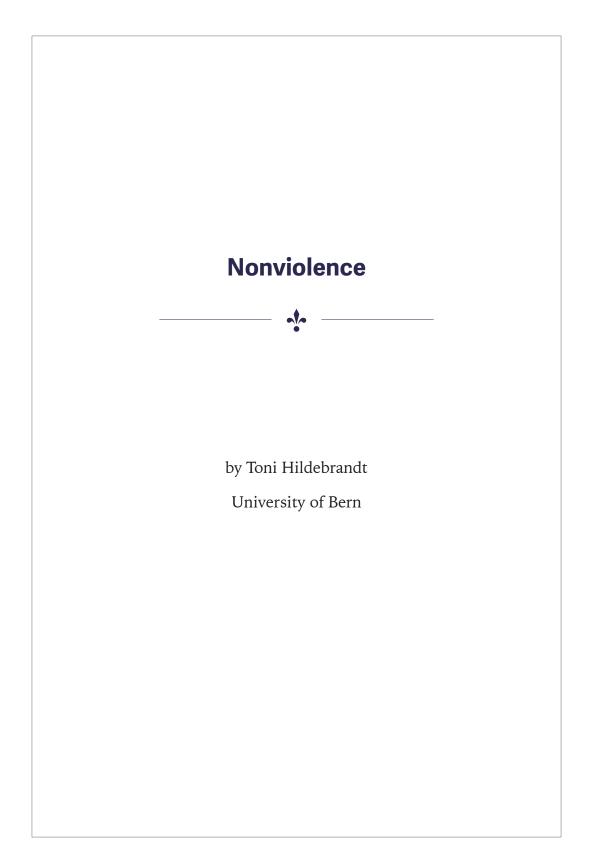
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35 Lucien Clercq, "La revalorisation socioculturelle aïnoue par la construction de marqueurs identitaires originaux: deux exemples cérémoniels de réappropriation ethnohistorique (Prolégomènes: 2e partie)." *Media and Communication Studies* 71 (2018): 1–36. http://hdl.handle.net/2115/68771.

36 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 199.

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Nonviolence

<div style="text-align:center">❖</div>

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Abstract

Nonviolence resembles the aporetic structure and ambiguity of many works of art or our conceptualization of them. As a term of engagement in the arts, *nonviolence* is insightful as an operational and comparative concept: *operational* insofar as it unfolds performative strategies in the arts and *comparative* insofar as those strategies often resemble the aesthetics of political gestures, e.g., Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent approach to political engagement and change. This essay examines the potential of the term *nonviolence* in three short case studies—three performances by Akira Takayama (*McDonald's Radio University*, 2017), Kandis Williams (*Eurydice, Orpheus, and the Maenads*, 2019) and Petr Pavlensky (*Lightning*, 2017).

There is no simple definition of *nonviolence*. *Nonviolence* must, rather, remain a complex and persistently disputable term, especially given the fact that *violence* itself has a complex conceptual history in addition to a complicated etymology (consider, for example, the German term *Gewalt*). As Judith Butler has recently argued, "[b]oth violence and nonviolence arrive in the fields of moral debate and political analysis already interpreted, worked over by prior usages."[1] As a term of engagement in the arts, *nonviolence* ought to be insightful as an operational and comparative concept: *operational* insofar as it unfolds performative strategies in the arts and *comparative* insofar as those strategies often resemble the aesthetics of political gestures, e.g., Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent approach to political engagement and change.

As the negation of violence, *nonviolence*, too, is, of course, always politically motivated, although—and in distinction from violence—its performance does not necessarily adapt or imitate the goal-oriented structure of political activism. However, nonviolent acts are also not just passive or simple "peaceful" gestures; rather, they must be understood as *forces of nonviolence* or gestures that operate, as Butler puts it, always already in a "force field of violence."[2] Different forms of violence—structural racism, violence against refugees, immigrants and

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1   Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (London/New York: Verso, 2020), 7.

2   Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence*, 7.

homeless people, violence against women, the violence of exclusion in fascist and competitive capitalist societies—are here not confronted with structurally similar counterviolence nor with simple forms of protest, but with forces that are inherent to problems and histories of performance, theatricality and representation. I will examine these problems and their respective nonviolent proposals in three short case studies. Two are, I will argue, successful instances of *nonviolence*, whereas the third examines an artist who fails to perform a "destitution" of violence.[3]

In Akira Takayama's "hidden theatre" *McDonald's Radio University* (2017), clandestine knowledge is exposed to a wider audience and a different politics of studying. The Japanese performance artist and writer Takayama makes use of several situationist strategies of détournement and appropriation. With official permission from the McDonald's corporation, he compiled a lecture program with so-called "professors": refugees, immigrants or homeless people, mainly from the Middle East and Africa (Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Eritrea and Iran), who had sought shelter inside McDonald's restaurants. The lectures were given inside the restaurants, ordered alongside a burger and coke, and broadcast on the radio. The nonviolent force of *McDonald's Radio University* consists, first of all, in its *occupation* of an everyday (non-)space. McDonald's restaurants are seen less as capitalist working spaces of exploitation than as sites where it is relatively easy to access basic human and social needs in a metropole (toilets, free WLAN, sockets, cheap food, heating). Takayama thereby profanes the neoliberal model of the "coworking space", creating an absurd, but nevertheless communal, space for an unexpected common use. Secondly, *McDonald's Radio University* profanes and parodies the institution of the University; an institution

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3   The term *nonviolence* can be outlined with the help of the concept of *destitution*. The term destitution is often exemplified with actions such as "studying", "reading" or "playing" [*spielen*]. These are actions free of a constitutive moment, *means without end*, where no work or final goals are necessarily envisioned and established within the process. If a play [*Spiel*] ends, it is over, and thus playing ends. While these examples may provide, at first glance, minimal force for engagement or social change, it is nevertheless possible to conceive of destitution as a genuine political force. For an extensive theory of *destitution* see Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of the Bodies* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2018).

which for most of his "professors" is often not accessible to study or visit (e.g., the gated campuses of Tokyo universities). Since all of the refugees and immigrants have special competences (e.g., the refugee Fusein Franck, a former professional runner from Ghana, thus became a "professor" of Sport Science and the "Phenomenology of Running"), the legitimation and supremacy of institutional competences are questioned while the misery and the exclusion of certain members of society are protested in an overtly nonviolent way.

In Kandis Williams' *Eurydice, Orpheus, and the Maenads* (2019), nonviolence traverses theatrical scenarios, silent gestures and a politics of racialized bodies. The politics of oppressed bodies in a metropole is experienced as a cinematographic scenario. A single black body dances from the late Baroque Spittelkolonnaden to the Artspace that commissioned the work. At one point, the audience, following the performance along the rainy highway of Leipziger Strasse in Berlin, sees the black body framed by the white Cube of "Julia Stoschek collection." Inside the Artspace (named "Fragile"), nonviolent gestures of withdrawn aggression, such as the iconic biting of the fist or the covering up of tears, are performed in the midst of a mainly white (and seemingly indifferent) audience. The systemic violence of racism in a western metropole and, more specifically, inside a predominantly white artworld, is here confronted with an abstract yet clearly legible counterforce; Hannah Black aptly comments that Williams' performance "traverses the real violence of social systematization."[4] However, during these traverses through the latent aggressive atmosphere of an urban landscape, *nonviolence* is performed from within the force field of violence precisely as a form of resistance. *Nonviolence* may, in light of Williams' performance, be characterized as a weak force; a force that does not attempt to constitute an equipollent counterviolence, but instead finds hope in the force of destitution and deconstruction.

In contrast to Takayama and Williams, it occurs to me that in the work of

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4   Hannah Black, "Openings: Kandis Williams," *Artforum* (March 2020), https://www.artforum.com/print/202003/hannah-black-on-kandis-williams-82222.

Petr Pavlensky this idea of *nonviolence* as a *destitute* force fails, precisely because it lacks the consistency of a non-goal-oriented plot. While many of Pavlensky's actions (hunger strike, self-mutilation) do stand in the tradition of nonviolent political protest, his artistic interventions are, without doubt, also concerned with a final iconicity and a certain martyrlike heroism. If we consider the performance *Lightning* (2017), the effort of documentation clearly reveals that Pavlensky was setting fire to the Federal Security Services (FSB) in Moscow and the Bank of France at Place de la Bastille in Paris with the intention to pose in front of these burning buildings. In fact, Pavlensky seems most concerned with the finality of his performances, with one single documentary image, as well as with statements and, not least, with manifestos.[5] In this sense, Pavlensky's performances differ from the means-without-end performances of Takayama and Williams.

Since Walter Benjamin's highly influential essay *Critique of Violence* [*Kritik der Gewalt*][6] and up until Judith Butler's extensive actualization of the problem, *forces of nonviolence* were mostly analyzed in light of political movements or the philosophy of law, but seldom paid attention to aesthetic gestures. The term *nonviolence* should, thus, be a useful key term undergirding a series of questions that art history and art criticism—in dialogue with other fields, of course—can pose, enfold and answer. Questions arise such as: Is there an aesthetics of *nonviolence*? Is there a political iconography of images of *nonviolence*?[7] Furthermore—and perhaps more importantly for the urgencies of our time—is there an ethics and politics of *nonviolence* that is carved out by or inscribed in the form, materiality, practice and performativity of art?

Nonviolence resembles the aporetic structure and ambiguity of many works

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5   See Petr Pavlensky, *Gefängnis des Alltäglichen: Gespräche* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2016) and his manifesto: Petr Pavlensky, *Der bürokratische Krampf und die neue Ökonomie politischer Kunst* (Berlin: Merve, 2016).

6   Walter Benjamin, *Toward the Critique of Violence: A Critical Edition*, ed. Peter Fenves and Julia Ng (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2021).

7   Towards such a political iconography of *nonviolence* see, as an example, the exhibition catalogue by Josef Helfenstein and Joseph N. Newland, ed. *Gandhi and Images of Nonviolence* (Houston: Menil Collection, 2014).

of art or our conceptualization of them.[8] In this sense, it could be especially insightful to think of *nonviolence* in the arts and in art history alongside a set of oxymoronic figures of thought: "rageful love, militant pacifism, aggressive nonviolence, radical persistence."[9] The term *nonviolence* would thus point to forms of engagement wherein ethico-political aporias are sustained rather than resolved. Such an understanding of *nonviolence* would, above all, insist on the complex aporetic situation of engaging in a world full of violence via the weak forces of the arts and historical thinking.

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8 See Hans Blumenberg, "Die essentielle Vieldeutigkeit des ästhetischen Gegenstandes," in *Kritik und Metaphysik, Festschrift für Heinz Heimsoeth zum achtzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Friedrich Kaulbach and Joachim Ritter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1966), 174–179; Toni Hildebrandt, "Vorahmung und Kosmotechnik," / "Pré-mimèsis et cosmotechnique," *Regards croisés: Deutsch-Französische Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, Literaturwissenschaft und Ästhetik/Revue franco-allemande d'histoire de l'art, d'esthétique et de littérature comparée* 9 (2019): 101–124.

9 Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence*, 203ff.

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Garbage Wall

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Environmental Engagement and Transdisciplinary Controversies in Contemporary Art: Abraham Cruzvillegas' Garbage Wall in Mexico City

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Abstract

This article revises how garbage is used as a material for a contemporary art installation which unfolds a provocative enviro-political potential, and thus determines different modes of engagement. Such a transformation and stimulation which will be explained with a paradigmatic on-site installation of the Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas who conceived and realized the "Garbage Wall" in the stony desert natural reserve within the territory of the National University in Mexico City (*Reserva Ecológica del Pedregal de San Ángel*, REPSA). Four itemizations of actors and key terms of engagement will be analyzed: first, the artist as the principal actor; second, the support of the university administration; third, the criticism and resistance of some scientists at the REPSA; and fourth, the discursive intermediation of art historians, guided by the contents and methods of environmental aesthetics. The selected case study shows how epistemic routines can be broken by transdisciplinary debates on contemporary eco-art.

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Garbage is an often neglected, but nonetheless essential substance of human civilization. It is a material which reveals the consequences of production and consumption. Its accumulation in garbage dumps, landscapes, and cities forms a new stratum on the surface of planet Earth. This makes garbage an emblematic material and a philosophical issue for the (still unofficial) geological era known as the Anthropocene.[1] Examined in terms of the so-called geological turn[2], the aesthetic dimensions of garbage also claim discursive importance, not only because of the widely circulating eco-critical press photography, for instance, of plastic trash in natural landscapes and oceans, but also in contemporary works of art. In this article, I present a paradigmatic artistic installation as a micro case study which allows us to make deductions about the enviro-political potential of contemporary art and determine its modes of engagement: the "Garbage Wall" which the Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas conceived and realized (together

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1   Paul Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415, no. 3 (2002): 23; Bernd Scherer and Jürgen Renn, eds., *Das Anthropozän: Zum Stand der Dinge* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2015); Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, eds., *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015); Jan Zalasiewicz, Colin Waters, and Mark Williams, *The Anthropocene as a Geological Time Unit: A Guide to the Scientific Evidence and Current Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Jan Zalasiewicz, *The Earth After Us: What Legacy Will Humans Leave in the Rocks?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Bruno Latour, *Où atterir? Comment s'orientier en politique* (Paris: La Découverte, 2017).

2   Elizabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse, eds., *Making the Geologic Now: Responses to Material Conditions of Contemporary Life* (Brooklyn: punctum books, 2013); Davis and Turpin, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 256.

with the architect Pablo Pérez Palacios) in 2015/2016 in the Pedregal de San Ángel Ecological Reserve (in Spanish: *Reserva Ecológica del Pedregal de San Ángel*, or REPSA), within the vast campus of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), located in the southern part of Mexico City.[3]

This micro-site can be contextualized on different scales: the non-sustainable 20-million-plus-inhabitant megacity that sprawls across the volcanic highlands of central Mexico, or as the University City (*Ciudad Universitaria*), planned and realized in the mid-twentieth century on a lava stone desert (*Pedregal*), and integrated into the REPSA, which in 1983 became a protected site for autochthonous flora and fauna. The "Garbage Wall" is an unfinished process-based work, 300 meters long and 10 meters high. The base was erected during the construction of the *Ciudad Universitaria*, when a surveyor made an erroneous topographic calculation while tracing the limits of the University's territory. Cruzvillegas used the abandoned foundations of this Kafkaesque ruin, overgrown with wild vegetation, and bricked up the contours of the wall with cement, lava stone (*tezontle*, in the native Mesoamerican language) and garbage collected at the site: cans, condoms, cigarette filters, construction rubble, plastic bags. When the budget ran out in 2016, 270 meters of the planned wall remained unfinished. Since then, the "Garbage Wall" has lain in an incomplete state. But the fragmentary presence of the "Garbage Wall" still provokes questions and stimulates multiple modes of engagement. It deploys an epistemic potential, fosters (sometimes difficult) transdisciplinary coworking at the university, and even stimulates environmental and political debates about the condition of Earth in the Anthropocene.

In order to understand the discursive impact of this site-specific work of art, I will itemize the complex interrelations of the actors and the key terms linked to engagement.

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3   To see the photographs of the "Garbage Wall," please try the following web link: https://www.perezpalacios.mx/es/arte-instalacion/milpa-ritual-imprescindible/.

First, the artist as principal actor, operating within the conceptual framework of eco-art. Abraham Cruzvillegas represents the figure of an artist educated in the Global South who won recognition and success in the Global North, trespassing in this way the frontiers of the globalized commercial art world with its traditional centers of Europe and the US. His artistic trademark, which he calls "Autoconstrucción," and which has developed since his first international exhibitions in 2007 (New York, Jack Tilton Gallery) and 2008 (Glasgow, Centre for Contemporary Arts), refers to self-built, informal housing. In his sculptural work, Cruzvillegas transforms his own experience growing up in Mexico City's slums in a house consolidated over many years into a stable place of residence via "improvisation and instability, and a constant process of learning: about materials, people and himself."[4] His autobiographical writings reveal his cultural entanglement and social engagement with the slum dwellers. Yet biographical truth and fiction, attractive for the art market in the Global North, merge together[5]—a well-known discursive construction for many artists both historical and present-day.

The artist appears as an ethnographer[6] who claims authenticity as the conceptual basis of his art production. Cruzvillegas' assemblages of local material (repeated with modifications in many other exhibitions of the "Autoconstrucción" series all over the world during the last decade) fulfill the expectations of the Global North public: they materialize the stereotypes of a violent, dirty, chaotic mega-city in the Global South. His trademark operates both with the artistic notion of ingenuity and the artisanal criteria of truthfulness.[7]

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4   Chris Dercon, "Foreword," in *Hyundai Commission: Abraham Cruzvillegas. Empty Lot*, ed. Mark Godfrey (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 11.

5   Franz Krähenbühl, *Depicting Mexico City: Eine Untersuchung zur Darstellung der Stadt* (Masterarbeit IKG Universität Bern, 2010), 76.

6   Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

7   Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 96–97. Originally written in German: *Handwerk* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2008).

In the case we are examining here, the "Garbage Wall," the artist also bolsters his concept with empirical experience. When the eastern part of the Pedregal area was invaded by thousands of squatters in September 1971 in the wake of a presidential speech which announced the toleration of illegal settlements[8], its eco and geo-diversity was thoroughly erased. Cruzvillegas' family participated in this material transformation by installing their home and related infrastructure on the volcanic rocks. However, the "Garbage Wall" is neither an apology nor a plea for repair. Returning to the western part of Pedregal and installing an eco-critical work about the contamination of a highly valuable ecosystem reactivates a site-specific tradition of artistic engagement.

Until the late 1940s, when architect Luis Barragán began planning a residential quarter in Pedregal which promoted the preservation of certain landscape features such as lava stone and cactus vegetation, this zone was regarded as badlands (*malpaís* in Spanish).[9] Barragán invited Mexican poets (Carlos Pellicer), painters (Dr. Atl[10] and Diego Rivera), and photographers (Armando Salas Portugal[11]) to the area and together they discovered the sublime beauty of the harsh and complex lava formations. Through artistic sublimation, they even proposed a nationalist codification of these badlands.[12] With the construction of the University City,

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8   Ale Betán, "El Pedregal de Santo Domingo. La invasión de territorio más grande de América Latina," January 17, 2019, https://savinarte.com/2019/01/17/el-pedregal-de-santo-domingo-la-invasion-de-territorio-mas-grande-de-america-latina/?fbclid=IwAR0EpnUXH2p6dJP6y7oxcex_vowvCqUo_SkZwfgO-8A-k5EJ8cTQrp0dY4E; Francis McKee, "Mutable y mutuo," in *Textos sobre la obra de Abraham Cruzvillegas* (Mexico: Secretaría de Cultura, 2016), 48−54; Abraham Cruzvillegas, *La voluntad de los objetos* (Mexico City: Sexto Piso, 2014), 16−17.

9   Alfonso Pérez-Méndez, "Conceptualización de la ocupación del Pedregal. La teatralización del espacio público en el plan maestro de la Ciudad Universitaria," in *Habitar Ciudad Universitaria 60 años: 1954−2014*, ed. Salvador Lizárraga Sánchez and Cristina López Uribe (Mexico City: Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM, 2014), 49−53.

10 Peter Krieger, "Las geo-grafías del Dr. Atl: Transformaciones estéticas de la energía telúrica y atmosférica," in *Dr. Atl, Rotación Cósmica: A cincuenta años de su muerte* (Guadalajara: Instituto Cultural Cabañas, 2015), 12−47. English translation "Dr. Atl's Geo-graphies: Aesthetic Transformations of Telluric and Atmospheric Energy."

11 Felipe Leal, ed., *Morada de Lava: Armando Salas Portugal* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006).

12 Rocío López de Juambelz and Alejandro Cabeza Pérez, "Ciudad Universitaria, un paisaje con identidad," in *Habitar Ciudad Universitaria 60 años: 1954−2014*, ed. Salvador Lizárraga Sánchez and Cristina López Uribe (Mexico City: Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM, 2014), 292; Amaya Larrucea Garritz, "La construcción cultural del paisaje del Pedregal de San Ángel," in *Habitar Ciudad Universitaria 60 años: 1954−2014*, ed. Salvador Lizárraga Sánchez and Cristina López Uribe (Mexico City: Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM, 2014), 86.

where the *tezontle* stone was used for many of the façades, and then, in the late 1970s, with the extension of the University Cultural Center (*Centro Cultural Universitario*), where a vast work of land art emerged from the wilderness[13], the Pedregal became a catalyst for artistic engagement with environmental protection, at least in terms of the aesthetic production of collective consciousness. In this sense, the "Garbage Wall" is ecological art, if we follow the popular standard definition used by Wikipedia as "an art genre and artistic practice that seeks to preserve, remediate and/or revitalize the life forms, resources and ecology of the Earth."[14]

Cruzvillegas' "Garbage Wall" — and this is my second point in the itemization of actors and key terms of engagement — was made possible by the university administration. Special units and commissions of the UNAM are responsible for all artistic works on the campus and its extensions. The original architectural concept of the campus buildings in the early 1950s proposed painting murals on the modular façades, such as David Álfaro Siqueiros' mural on the Rector's Building. However, since the 1970s, a drastic conceptual shift, promoted by artist Mathias Goeritz, towards abstract sculptures in open spaces occurred. With Cruzvillegas' "Garbage Wall," conceptual art was introduced to the University City. This artistic intervention was inserted into the Ecological Reserve in 2016.

On October 3, 1983, the then Rector declared 124 hectares of the lava desert to be a protected zone where no new construction was permitted. To date, this reserve has been extended to 237 hectares, which is about 33 percent of the entire University City and about 7 percent of the original Pedregal. It is a unique example of an ecological reserve in a mega-city, as well as in a university campus, and has one of the highest levels of biodiversity in Mexico. The UNAM authorities created a legal instrument for protection within the limits of the autonomous territory (i.e.

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13   The Espacio Escultórico is a circle with a diameter of 120 meters, structured by 64 modular concrete elements, 9 x 3 x 4 meters, which reveals the solidified lava flows. http://www.fundacionunam.org.mx/donde-paso/conoce-el-espacio-escultorico-de-la-unam/ (accessed September 1, 2021).

14   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_art (accessed September 1, 2021).

the Mexican state has no legal power in the University City). However, there is permanent pressure to expand the existing buildings, even if this means invading the protected areas.[15] As a result, the construction of a wall as a work of art raised legal questions, which were resolved by the authorities in favor of this artistic expression. The "Garbage Wall," which takes the existing environmental problem of using protected wilderness as a garbage dump as its theme[16], is an installation which inspires ecological consciousness and engagement, but is made possible by complex administrative and legal processes.

However, and this is the third item in my analysis, there was criticism and resistance from a number of scientists involved with the REPSA. This reserve serves as a vivid laboratory for the UNAM's biologists and geologists, where they can study the evolution of endemic plants and animals in the dark basaltic lava rock formations. This specific geological condition evolved after the eruption of the nearby Xitle volcano in the fourth century of the Common Era.[17] However, as a consequence of hyper urbanization in Mexico City[18], the original extension of about 80 square kilometers was reduced to a mere 2.37, delimited and preserved by the university campus. Confronted with external and internal pressure of development, i.e., the increasing number of nearby office buildings, the expanding

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15   Some statistical data may illustrate this pressure of expansion: originally, in 1954, Ciudad Universitaria was planned for 25,000 students, when Mexico City had about 3.5 million inhabitants. In 2021, the university has 366,930 students and 41,542 academics (http://www.estadistica.unam.mx/numeralia/), while the city (including the peripheries) has more than 20 million inhabitants. The UNAM maintains campuses in other parts of the country and in the US. At present, Ciudad Universitaria consists of one-third educational buildings, another third sports complexes, and the last third is the Pedregal.

16   The topic of my forthcoming book.

17   Claus Siebe, "La erupción del volcán Xitle y las lavas del Pedregal hace 1670 +/- 35 años AP y sus implicaciones," in *Ciudad de México: Biodiversidad del Pedregal de San Ángel, UNAM* (Mexico City: Reserva Ecológica del Pedregal de San Ángel y Coordinación de la Investigación Científica, 2019), 43−49; César Carrillo Trueba, *El pedregal de San Ángel* (Mexico City: UNAM, Coordinación de la Investigación Científica, 1995), 22−49.

18   Peter Krieger, "Ecohistoria y ecoestética de la megalópolis mexicana—conceptos, problemas y estrategias de investigación," in *El historiador frente a la ciudad de México: Perfiles de su historia*, ed. Sergio Mirando Pacheco (Mexico City: IIH/UNAM, 2016), 257−277.

zones of illegal settlements, and the recent new university buildings[19], the biologists working in the REPSA are defending their "island" under the motto "not a single sack of cement more" — and that included the cement used for Cruzvillegas' "Garbage Wall." They saw the artistic intervention as a threat to the autopoietic ecosystem.

In the debates on the construction and completion of this work of art, the opposed biologists were forced to acknowledge the contradiction inherent in the notion of "preserving" nature when it is undergoing a permanent process of evolution[20], as well as the fact that the Reserve is already suffering multiple interferences from the outside world: in the 1950s, exogeneous trees, such as the eucalyptus and the Australian pine, were planted at the site and the African grass from the main campus has expanded into the REPSA. The wide urban avenue of *Insurgentes*, which cuts through *Ciudad Universitaria*, produces acoustic and atmospheric pollution in the Reserve. And, worse, for a long time, the Pedregal was abused as an illegal — i.e. cost-free — garbage dump. Amid the wilderness, many traces of building rubble and other waste can be spotted. In fact, the Faculty of Medicine dumped its trash, such as gauze bandages and syringes, in these adjacent natural territories until 1983.

Trash and air pollution are inevitable human interferences, as they form part of the so-called technosphere which now weighs more than the entire biomass of planet Earth in the era of the Anthropocene.[21] These traces can be observed in

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19 Peter Krieger, "Ciudad Universitaria al límite. Implosión y explosión de un patrimonio sobresaliente en la megalópolis," in *Habitar Ciudad Universitaria 60 años: 1954–2014*, ed. Salvador Lizárraga Sánchez and Cristina López Uribe (Mexico City: Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM, 2014), 261–271.

20 Hansjörg Küster, *Das ist Ökologie: Die biologischen Grundlagen unserer Existenz* (München: Beck, 2005), 65–71.

21 Jan Zalasiewicz et al., "Scale and diversity of the physical technosphere: A geological perspective," *The Anthropocene Review* 4, no. 1 (2017), http://doi.org/10.1177/2053019616677743; Jan Zalasiewicz and Mark Williams, "Anthropocene: human-made materials now weigh as much as all living biomass, say scientists," *The Conversation*, December 9, 2020, https://theconversation.com/anthropocene-human-made-materials-now-weigh-as-much-as-all-living-biomass-say-scientists-151721, accessed August 28, 2021; Emily Elhacham, Liad Ben-Uri, Jonathan Grozovski, Yinon M. Bar-On and Ron Milo, "Global human-made mass exceeds all living biomass," *Nature* 588, no. 7838 (December 2020): 442–444.

the REPSA, where natural processes are entwined with human-made impacts. In any case, a preserved natural site is an artificial human construction grounded by an ethical imperative to attend to its ecology; this conceptual argument can be supported by the humanities.

The fourth item is the discursive intermediation of art historians, guided by the contents and methods of environmental aesthetics, also referred to as "eco-criticism." The REPSA is not an isolated biological laboratory; rather, it is a cultural construction. Establishing a reserve in a polluted mega-city is an act of human understanding, political intention, and agentive capacity. It needs conceptual justification, not only biological and geological expertise. Thus, art and visual historians may explain the concept of landscape as a human construct[22], and categorize the historical dimensions of the "Garbage Wall" in the preserved eco-system, tracing artistic, sculptural constructions with garbage as topic and material. To give just two (of many) examples: in April 1970, the New York artist Gordon Matta-Clark compressed urban detritus in a wall raised in front of St. Mark's church in the East Village of Manhattan. His critique of the American "throw-away society" remained for three days and was then disposed in a container, trash again — an ephemeral, metamorphic installation which influenced Cruzvillegas' concept for the REPSA "Garbage Wall." Five years after Matta-Clark's intervention, the British artist Tony Cragg erected a cubic "Stack,"[23] compressing domestic refuse and confronting the visitors of London's Tate Modern gallery with an unappetizing view of their own consumption. The short cycles of the consumer goods industry end up as a pile of trash.

These two examples of an extended conceptual genealogy behind Cruzvillegas' intervention were apt for familiarizing the REPSA scientists with different, and in this case artistic, modes of environmental critique. Furthermore, nearby

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22   Peter Krieger, *Transformaciones del paisaje urbano en México: Representación y registro visual/Transformations in Mexico's Urban Landscape: Representation and Visual Record* (Madrid: El Viso/Mexico City: MUNAL, 2012).

23   John Scanlan, *On Garbage* (London: Reaktion, 2005), 116.

archaeological excavations of the Mesoamerican Cuicuilco culture illustrated how abundant vegetation and solidified lava flows are interspersed with monumental human artifacts, namely pyramids—thus legitimizing this challenging spatial dialogue of nature and culture.

To conclude with the most vital item: the breaking of epistemic routines in transdisciplinary research is able to generate productive and innovative modes of engagement, in spite of the fact that the vocabulary of artists (item 1), administrative officials (item 2), scientists (item 3), and art historians (item 4) differs considerably. As the selected case study of Cruzvillegas' "Garbage Wall" confirms, trespassing into isolated spheres of thinking and acting gives rise to conceptual stimuli for engagement. Works of art can catalyze such synergetic power. Art historians translate this inherent potential into schemes of interpretation which explain the difference between information about and communication of a provocative installation.[24] Although the concepts, terms, objects, images, and imaginations of the mentioned actors do not completely overlap, and controversies arise and persist, it is undeniable that the insertion of the "Garbage Wall" in the REPSA, when explained by art historians, exhibits an environmental political impact and triggers stimulating debates on the relation between city and nature. The micro-site in the mega-city invites us to initiate a process of transdisciplinary learning and collective engagement in environmental matters.

Finally, as a side-effect: such an installation succeeds in dragging contemporary art and the related art historiography out of their self-referential circles.[25]

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24 Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).
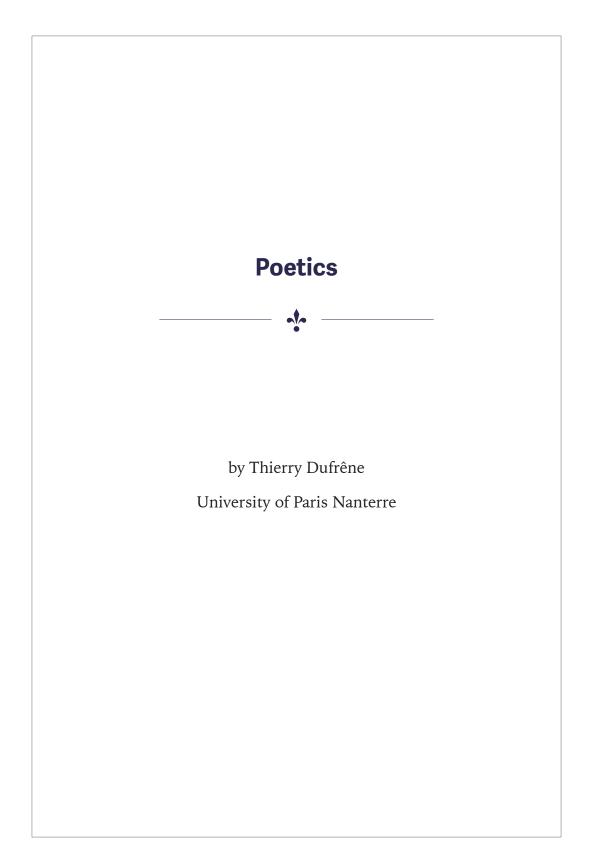
25 Peter Krieger, "*Words don't come easy*: comentarios a la crítica y exposición de las artes plásticas actuales," *Universidad de México*, no. 597–598 (October/November 2000): 25–29.

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Poetics

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Abstract

Does engagement have a particular poetics? Every artist is committed in and through his work, if only because expressing oneself as an artist, and in a certain way, is always a choice. When an artist like Urs Fischer and institutions like the Venice Biennale, the Pinault - Bourse de Commerce collection (Paris) or the Luma Foundation (Arles), choose to engage the history of art through one of his key works, the *Rape of the Sabine Women* (1583) of Giambologna, by inscribing it in the poetic register of melancholy or tragedy (abduction, violence, rape), they raise the question of the writing of the history of art today, with the return of looted works, the colonial past, the relationships of violence. This article proposes to question the staging of art history as a tragedy played in front of the media or in front of the public in museums and exhibitions.

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Because it is a science, the history of art is an epistemology. Because it is a language, it is a poetics. The semiologist Gérard Genette calls *poetics* the study of the forms of writing.[1] From this point of view, there are several types of art histories. The observation of the museum scene and of the exhibition constitutes for the historian of contemporary art an inexhaustible source of reflection on the presentation of the history of art and on the writing practice. From Stephen Bann[2] to Dario Gamboni[3], the poetics of the museum has become a fruitful field of exploration. The will that drives such studies is to show the emergence of a self-critical museum, the "ironic museum," according to Bann, or singular "author museums," according to Gamboni. However, the policies of major art museums and recently opened foundations and collections, such as the Pinault collection in Paris or the Luma Foundation in Arles, seem quite removed from these heuristic

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1   The term *poetics* derives from the Ancient Greek: ποιητικός *poietikos* "pertaining to poetry." See Gérard Genette, *Essays in Aesthetics,* trans. Dorrit Cohn (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 14.

2   Stephen Bann, "Poetics of the Museum: Lenoir and Du Sommerard," in *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 77–92.

3   Dario Gamboni, *The Museum as Experience* (Brepols N.V., 2020). The romantic aesthetics of an August-Wilhelm Schlegel (*Die Gemälde*, 1799), using the fictional dialogue between three characters who share their vision of the art work, either by conversation in front of it, or by *ekphrastic* recreation during an outdoor walk, finds an unexpected echo in the dialogue between cousins Dario and Libero, the art historian skillfully and maliciously distributing the observations between the remarks of the neophyte and the observations of the scholar, one of which ends up reinforcing the other.

models. In general, there has been a tendency over the past decade to portray art history as a tragedy. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defined the tragedy thus:

> Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action which is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude — in language which is garnished in various forms in its different parts — in the mode of dramatic enactment, not narrative — and through the arousal of pity and fear effecting the *katharsis* of such emotions.[4]

Tragedy's emotional power results from the plot-structure: reversals and recognitions are its primary methods. Now, if we consider the history of art as it has recently been shown in exhibitions and museums, it is in a way played in front of spectators-visitors as a plot made of reversals and recognitions, against a backdrop of a bad conscience and a desire to buy back the former predatory colonial powers, of ecological and political catastrophe and of melancholy.

Engaging the Rape of the Sabine Women by Giambologna

The Pinault Collection has just opened at the Paris Stock Exchange. The rotunda looks like the scene of a Shakespearean theatre. Under the glass roof, the mural of Mazerolle (1826–1889), which celebrates the European colonization and exploitation of the world, was restored for the occasion to the great joy of the defenders of the heritage. In the middle of the rotunda, Giambologna's gigantic group *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (1574–1582), housed in Florence, Loggia dei Lanzi, is reproduced in pigmentary wax under the title *Untitled* (*The Rape of the Sabine Women*, 2011) by the Swiss artist Urs Fischer, whose parodic irony never leaves the viewer indifferent. In front of it, another wax figure — like the Tarpeian Rock near the Capitol, the Grévin Museum is not far from Parnassus — is the artist Rudolf Stingler (Rudi), a friend of Urs Fischer, playing the spectator. Placing the wax figure of the observer and that of the *Rape of the Sabine Women* together,

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4   Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. Stephen Halliwell (London: Duckworth, 1987), 37.

which the gaze of the first on the second invites, the artist holds out a mirror to the visitor. A common destiny unites them, a disappearance via a slow combustion (caused by the flame that consumes the wick planted at the heart of each of the sculptures), an image for the viewer of the passing of time.

Although Fischer's work is a revival of the Venice Biennale, where it was first seen in 2011, it is different and larger (from three to ten elements), related to its new environment, a new ensemble with elements placed around it: while only one office chair (also burning) was next to the statue and its viewer in 2011 in Venice, there are now eight seats around the sculpture perched on a high pedestal in Paris. Next to an airplane seat and a garden chair, there are six other seats, inspired by cultural artefacts from colonized lands in museums such as the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum. Among them were a throne, a seat from a house of worship, one from which to watch a spectacle; objects of appropriation and use, in other words. Wax is the ultimate ductile material, in which, literally everything can be cast (and melted, too, like gold or silver into one war treasure).

Bringing together art works and commodities, all destined to return to a mass of indistinct matter, Urs Fischer realizes a *Vanitas*, a rare genre in sculpture. To have done it in a Temple of Commerce, the temple-ness reinforced by the architect, Tadao Ando, as well as by the mural at the base of the glass roof, which shows the colonial conquest and the triumphant trade of Europe (the figure of a white woman sitting, sheltered under a red umbrella by a black woman, while a young Indian kneels before her), sets the tragic scene and poses the question: can the link between Western art and colonization be deactivated?

That goal was only achieved in *trompe l'œil* by Fischer's work, which suggests that, since *The Rape of the Sabine Women,* a symbol of European culture, will be consumed exactly like African stools, all civilizations are equal since mortal; the Western would fall even higher if it were perched on a pedestal. Who would dare to claim that the exploitation of man by man is justified by the fact that all men are mortal — and that therefore all situations are equal?

At the same time that Act I of the tragedy of Western art faced its colonial

history and the Pinault Collection opened to the world, another copy of Urs Fischer's work was presented in *The Impermanent Display*, the display of the Maja Hoffmann collection at the opening of the Luma Foundation in Arles in 2021. The heiress of one of the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies, converted to the ecological cause, wanted to open her foundation with an exhibition that emphasizes the ephemeral character of our world: *Untitled (The Rape of the Sabine Women,* 2011*)*. Meanwhile, at the edge of kitsch, Isa Genzken exhibited *Nofretete* (2014), seven plaster busts reproducing the famous sculpture at the Neues Museum in Berlin, with sunglasses and wooden pedestals on wheels, to suggest a return to her original Egypt. Nefertiti is clearly an emblematic star in the tragedy of works whose ownership is disputed between their country of origin and their current possessor.

The reenactment of the *Rape of the Sabine Women* — and in minor of the sculpture of Nefertiti — is a symptom, if not a syndrome, of the exhibition of the history of art in the 2010s: a Tragedy. Giambologna's work combines, to a level of expression rarely reached, the violence of abduction and forced displacement, the brutal exercise of military force and rape. The *katharsis* seems to be achieved by the virtuosity of movement, the diversity of points of view and the exorcism of violence through the sublimation of bodies. The reactivation of the sculptured group, in the iconoclastic form of its programmed destruction (by consumption), seems to be conceived by contemporary artists and curators as the cathartic form of the contemporary presentation of the history of art.

Violence that Replaces, the Only Possible Catharsis?

Iconoclasm in the years 1960–1990 (post-independence, post-communist, art of the 1960s and performance in the 1970s) imaged the overthrow of the dominations, whether political, colonial, social, religious, sexual, gender, etc. Today, we are faced with the return of iconoclasm, which is everywhere attacking statues for what they represent, the violence of the colonial and slave past. These wrongs have not been atoned for, if they ever could be, and the injustices of the present continue to revive them.

Yet the violence that replaces must be preferred to the violence that destroys. Let us borrow the football metaphor. A fault puts a work of art *out of play*; a player who is no longer in the game is replaced, substituted. We can decide that controversial sculptures will be put in a park, in a museum or any public space with the necessary texts to provide context. The sculptures will thus be deactivated.

The Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Brussels), which has recently been renovated — it would be more correct to say *rethought* — offers an example of such an out-of-play operation without destruction, and at the same time as several statues of King Leopold II were destroyed in Belgium. The sculptures of the last century, commissioned from Belgian artists to punctuate the course of the display of collections from the founding of this museum in Congo in 1908, were 'put out of the way' in a room in the basement of the museum (dedicated to pedagogy, in 'preview' of the visit), behind a metal barrier. Piled up voluntarily without aesthetic display, some are placed on low-end storage shelves that make us think of the work *The Repair* (2012) exhibited by Kader Attia at *Documenta* 13 (Kassel) in 2012. The artist put the genre of the Western ethnographic museum, often animated by a colonialist spirit, 'out of play' by disqualifying it, juxtaposing the ethnographic collections to the 'broken faces,' colonial victims taken by force during the First World War by their metropolises. In Tervuren, a placard on the wall stipulates that the sculptures taken *out of play* no longer have a place in the museum and that they "are displayed as if they were in a depot. They bear witness to deep-rooted prejudices and stereotypes that contributed to racism in our modern society."[5] Some of these sculptures, seen by the cartoonist Hergé, inspired the most questionable scenes of his graphic novel *Tintin in the Congo* (1931). The forced 'storage' of the sculptures in the new display of Tervuren is, in a sense, comparable to the recovery of the Paul Landowski's statue *Le Pavois* (1928) in the

5   Thierry Dufrêne, Photo of a placard at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Brussels, 2018. Author's personal collection.

center of Algiers, encased in a concrete sarcophagus at the initiative of the artist M'hamed Issiakhem in 1978 after Algerian independence. Simply decorated with two monumental hands tearing off their handcuffs and with bas-reliefs showing the development of the new free nation, this cement chest expresses, *in situ* and without destruction, the victory of a Revolution that has rebuffed the colonizing power while reserving in the future the possibility of a physical and semantic apprehension of the monument as an Archive. But let us return to Tervuren: by the explicit condemnation — large glass walls blocking the old entrance and certain circulations — the museum, built thanks to the exploitation of the Congo, is itself taken as a testimony of, by remaining at a critical distance, the colonization. Finally, during a residency in 2016, the Congolese artist Freddy Tsimba (1967–) created acephal sculptures with hands against the wall and legs spread like migrants kept in a transit camp from scrap recovered from the renovation.

Another example of an attempt to take sculptures out-of-play is the modification of the title of the works in the Musée d'Orsay's (Paris) exhibition *Le Modèle noir, de Géricault à Matisse* (2019). The idea was to question the titles of the works by giving the models, often confused and rendered anonymous by titles such as "Noir" or "Nègre," their names back and by proposing alternative titles more in line with the meaning of history and our contemporary ethical choices. The piling up of names on placards — reproduced by a Wikipedia site — led the public to question the persistence of racist content. So *Why be born a slave?* was the title inscribed on the pedestal of the marble bust presented by Carpeaux at the 1869 Salon under the title *Négresse*. Charles Cordier's famous *Buste de Nègre du Soudan* (1857) was titled *Homme du Soudan français. Une Négresse*; Cordier's *Vénus noire* (1851) was retitled *Vénus africaine*. Retaining the old titles alongside new ones kept the historical questioning open, unlike a similar exhibition in the Rijksmuseum in 2015, where new titles downright replaced the old titles. In a sense, the exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay, a perilous but interesting attempt, echoed the concerns of artist Victor Burgin, who said he tries to make the "works" difficult for the viewer:

Why make things so difficult for the viewer? We are a consumer-society, and it seems to me that art has become a passive 'spectator sport' to an extent unprecedented in history. I have always tried to work against this tendency by producing 'occasions for interpretation' rather than 'objects of consumption.' I believe that the ability to think/produce rather than consume meanings, and the ability to think otherwise — ways of thinking not encouraged by the imperative of commodity production, ways condemned as 'a waste of time' — is fundamental to the goal of a truly, rather than nominally, democratic society. I believe art is one of the few remaining areas of social activity where the attitude of critical engagement may still be encouraged — all the more reasons then for art to engage with those issues which are critical.[6]

The tragedy of reversal and recognition is never more salient than when audiences are blind to the intentions of artists. The hashtag #RhodesMustFall on Twitter and Facebook led to the unbolting of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (1910) at the University of Cape Town in 2015. At the same time, the students attacked a sculpture purchased by the university in 2000 that depicts Saartjie Baartman, the famous Venus Hottentote, made by artist Willie Bester (1956–) from salvaged metal. Without destroying it, the students dressed it in traditional clothes and covered it with denunciations: "It's not just a sculpture… It's not just a piece of cloth... It's centuries of trauma." One placard mentions the "psychopathy of colonialism" but, on that libel, someone added: "by a Black man/artist Willie Bester," for indeed Bester is mixed and wanted to pay homage to Saartjie Baartman. The ignorance regarding the artist's intentions and the context of the purchase of the work, two years after the restitution of Baartman's remains, resulted in a blind attack. But Bester wanted to *replace* humiliation with triumph, a deterioration (as evidenced by the salvaged materials) through rehabilitation.

After the removal of the statues in the communist world following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, their plots remained empty. The dismantling of the

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6   Victor Burgin, *Between*, 2nd ed. (London: Mack, 2020), 138. First published in 1986.

statues of the colonial era gave birth to a completely different dramaturgy. Thus, in September 2017, when the rains had temporarily felled the statue of General Faidherbe in Saint-Louis, Senegal, many Senegalese spontaneously posed on the pedestal, regaining their identity. The theatrical gesture recalls that of the Angolan artist Kiluanji Kia Henda (1979–), winner of the 2017 Frieze Artist Award, who stages himself on the empty pedestals of old monuments dating from the colonial era and encourages others to do so. People adopt attitudes of power, comic and derisory: the cathartic effect is certain. If the artist materializes an ephemeral dream, they, by doing so, draw our attention to the possibility of creating new memories. We really only destroy what we can replace. Haven't Senegalese social networks praised the Sufi theologian Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba for taking Faidherbe's place?

The staging of art history as a tragedy played in front of the media or in front of the public in museums and exhibitions, with a relatively naive form of catharsis at play, must be evaluated by the art historian as a highly questionable way of presenting art history. Alexandra Pirici and Manuel Pelmus did otherwise with the *tableaux vivants* of their excellent *An Immaterial Retrospective of the Venice Biennale* in the Romanian pavilion of the 2013 Biennale. One of the past episodes of the biennial they had chosen for *reenactment* referred to the first exhibition of African art in this international setting, in 1922: A human pyramid mimicked Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine Women* in front of a single, hieratic *performer*, who embodied a baluba statue, while an actor read a 2013 article from an Italian newspaper which, contemptuous of African art, said that only the first work, Giambologna's, the model, deserved to be considered a work of art. The history of art, or at least art criticism as it is prejudicially written, was questioned in action but without the search for catharsis, except perhaps by the disarticulation of the *Rape of the Sabine Women* when the human pyramid composed by the dancers was disassembled while the performer continues to 'hold' the position of the baluba statue. Something of Rancière's *communauté* émancipée (emancipated community) was played out between the spectators and the performers:

Les artistes, comme les chercheurs, construisent la scène où la manifestation et l'effet de leurs compétences sont exposés, rendus incertains dans les termes de l'idiome nouveau qui traduit une nouvelle aventure intellectuelle. L'effet de l'idiome ne peut être anticipé. Il demande des spectateurs qui jouent le rôle d'interprètes actifs, qui élaborent leur propre traduction pour s'approprier l' 'histoire' et en faire leur propre histoire.[7]

We are very close to what Eluard called for in *Poetic Evidence* (1937), what could be called a right to artistic interference: "The time has come when all have the right and duty to affirm their profound engagement in the lives of others, in ordinary life."[8]

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7   Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2008), 28−29.

8   Paul Eluard, "Poetic Evidence," in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (New York: Routledge, 1982), 221−226. First published in 1937.

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Baroque

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The Baroque: A Term of Art

by Tim Flanagan

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Abstract ————————————

The spiritual torsion and material complexity so characteristic of Baroque aesthetics is something that extends to (or perhaps, better, issues *from*) the intension of the term itself. This much is evident in the sense that, since the twentieth century, various projects have proposed such notions as a medical-baroque, a postcolonial-baroque, and a digital-baroque. Beyond any given object of analysis, then, in this way the Baroque adduces the concepts by which any inquiry into objects might take place. As such, the Baroque can be said to be that which signals the ongoing relation of thought to the world, of 'the inside' to 'the outside' (while at the same time problematising the priority of either side over the other). Indeed, following certain post-Kantian readings of Leibnizian philosophy, the Baroque is to be regarded not so much as something to be understood but rather as a frenzied development of the understanding itself.

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No matter the putative object of any art-historical classification — whether a period, a general style, or an individual artefact — one reason why the term 'Baroque' continues to provoke interest is that it is at once something encountered with regard *to* things, and, at the same time, something employed in the discussion *of* things. Indeed, in this way — when "thought ceases to move in the element of resemblance" [1] — the Baroque could quite literally be said to be both (*à la fois*) *une Mot* et *une Chose*.

As has been shown, support for such a conceit (of the legible *together with* the visible, for example) finds support from no less an undertaking than the great study of the *concetto* undertaken by Emanuele Tesauro in his 1654 *il Cannocchiale aristotelico*[2] — a work which evidences the Baroque realisation that language itself is not simply a vehicle for thought but rather its very motor or orientation. Accordingly, while the Baroque may well involve received and familiar questions of cognition, as the homonymous problem of *philosophical* aesthetics its

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1 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 1970), 56.

2 Umberto Eco, "The Scandal of Metaphor: Metaphorology and Semiotics," trans. Christopher Paci, *Poetics Today* 4, no. 2 (1983): 217−257; Eugenio Donato, "Tesauro's *il Cannocchiale aristotelico*," *Stanford Italian Review* 5 (1985): 101−114; Jean-François Groulier, "Concetto," in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin and trans. Steven Rendall, Christian Hubert, Jeffrey Mehlman, Nathanael Stein, and Michael Syrotinski, translation ed. Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, and Michael Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 166−169; Herbert H. Knecht, *La Logique Chez Leibniz: Essai Sur Le Rationalisme Baroque* (Lausanne: L'Age D'Homme, 1981).

understanding is one that is not only occupied by the (transcendental) relation of concepts to objects but also with the requirements and very nature of this relation — in other words, with the sheer generation of concepts (the reality of which is not given according to the conditions of possible intuitions).

To be sure, Kant himself, with a passing reference in his third *Critique* to "the Baroque taste in furniture", attests to a certain "free play of presentational powers" whereby the imagination is unconstrained by any rule required by the understanding.[3] And yet, Kant continues, although we may be charmed by such encounters when the mind is "continually being aroused by the diversity [*Mannigfaltigkeit*] that strikes the eye" — just as "when we watch, say, the changing shapes [*Veränderlichen Gestalten*] of the flames in a fireplace or of a rippling brook" [4] — variability itself, strictly speaking, precisely insofar as it admits of no constraint by any rule of cognition, cannot be an object of experience. The reason for this, Kant insists, rests on an important distinction: "we must distinguish beautiful objects from beautiful views [*Aussichten*] of objects (where their distance [*Entfernung*] prevents us from recognizing them distinctly)" [5].

As something that draws upon but ultimately exceeds any Kantian warrant, then, the Baroque may well be recognized as the iconic characterization of variability even if, in the end, this cannot legitimately be said to designate anything beyond its own mesmerizing labyrinth (one that includes not least of all its very name) — a sensibility that is only ever impressionistic and constituted by certain discursive associations that are "either words, or visible (algebraic or even mimetic) signs and they merely *express* concepts" [6]. What remains, then, is to remark upon the field of such concepts (concepts not of objects of possible experience but of sheer associative variability) and how the distance [*Entfernung*]

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3   Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment, Including the First Introduction,* trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 93. First published 1790.

4   Kant, *Critique of Judgment, Including the First Introduction,* 95; Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Stuggart: Philipp Reclam, 1963), 132–133. First published 1790.

5   Kant, *Critique of Judgment, Including the First Introduction,* 94; Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 132.

6   Kant, *Critique of Judgment, Including the First Introduction,* 227; Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 306.

brought about by our outlook [*Aussicht*] on objects is something that involves the generation rather than the privation of cognition.

To be sure, the canonical understanding of the Baroque is the archetypal expression of the agitation so characteristic of the seventeenth century sensibility. This much, at least, is what has conventionally been recognized in the emblematic works of Bernini, Borromini, and Caravaggio which exhibit and give dramatic figuration to the frenetic tension between, on the one hand, a providential or redeemed order of things and, on the other hand, their profane subjection to this world's caducity: an utter entropy. This much can be seen in the "use of limestone to produce spongy, cavernous shapes, or to constitute a vortical form always put in motion by renewed turbulence, which ends only in the manner of a horse's mane or the foam of a wave; matter tends to spill over in space, to be reconciled with fluidity at the same time fluids themselves are divided into masses", as Deleuze writes[7], after Wölfflin.

Yet no matter how acute the actual historic experience of the challenge to traditional (theological) Reason brought about by the burgeoning empirical sciences — that is to say: regardless of the ubiquitous cherubs, clouds, and divine rays of light — the singular tension expressed by the Baroque is not one whose definition is exhausted by that century's own paroxysms of religious art. Instead, and noting the functionalism taught by Kantian transcendental thought, perhaps the inveterate questions that the Baroque occasions[8] might be rephrased and thereby understood in such a way that what is to be proposed is an account of its roles rather than its essence.

Indeed, even since the neo-Baroque revivalism of the late Nineteenth-Century, a *Digital Baroque*[9] has recently been proposed for the anxiety of our very own

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7   Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* trans. Tom Conley (London: Athlone Press, 1993), 4.

8   Jean Rousset, "Peut-on Définir Le Baroque?" in *Actes Des Journées Internationales D'études du Baroque du Montaubon* (Toulouse: La Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Toulouse, 1965), 19–23; Pierre Mesnard, "Existe-t-il Une Philosophie Baroque?" in *Actes Des Journées Internationales D'études du Baroque du Montaubon* (Toulouse: La Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Toulouse, 1965), 37–42.

9   Timothy Murray, *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

times — an era in which the new media proliferation of data and networked-communications have sought to respond to, or even compensate for, the loss of 'metanarratives'[10]. In this way, recasting Wölfflin's seminal analyses, perhaps it is as much the case that the Baroque is a contrast between the *high and the low*, *light and shadow*, or *inside and outside* as simply the fact of the dissimulation of the *here and now*. And if this is in turn a question of how the infinite might be given finite expression, let alone determination, then perhaps the Baroque is the (apprehensive, and inescapable) comprehension, or even the *realisation*, of the ungroundedness of things; a fragmentary, dissipative or metastable unity, as noted by the early German Romantics ("no longer… ontology but 'logology'")[11].

In much the same way, classically speaking, to speak of the Baroque as a 'unity' is to speak at once of a *pan* and a *holon*[12] (an "odd" or "peculiar term" indeed[13], for even if "the cosmic spectacle of matter jostling in the void is unsettling in the extreme… it also happens to lend itself to poetic description"[14]). The reason for this is that the Baroque is not so much a concept (*for* an object) as the *name* of a concept or, as Sauvagnargues has suggested in Kantian terms, the production of an original rule[15]. Further to this, and even if Kant would have abjured as much as an ontological claim, the Baroque could be understood to be a concept *without* an object — a pure predicate, an unschematised intuition, or, once again, after the ancients and since Panofsky, an 'Idea'.

For even though the project of a Critical development of thought would ultimately discount the impudence of such an understanding, Kantian

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10   Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics,* trans. Dorothy Z. Baker (Athens, Oh: Ohio University Press, 2013); Gregg Lambert, *The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture* (London: Continuum, 2004); Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

11   Barbara Cassin, *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 2.

12   Cassin, *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism*, 45.

13   Ada Bronowski, *The Stoics on Lekta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 348–349.

14   James I. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Greece: Matter, Sensation, and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 166.

15   Anne Sauvagnargues, "Le Goût Baroque Comme Détermination D'un Style: Wölfflin, Deleuze," *Appareil* 9 (2012): 5.

terminology might yet be repurposed to serve as a propaedeutic for philosophy (a prolegomennon, as it were, for any future transcendental philosophy). In this way, the familiar aesthetic register of the Baroque would be extended to obtain in terms of philosophical analysis and dialectics. In other words, rather than being understood as a canon for art-history — that is, as some sort of measure or standard (κανών) which might be applied to *objects* or used to relate thoughts (of objects) to *one another* — the Baroque is itself would be understood as an organon for making sense of things at all.

Key to this employment of signature Kantian vocabulary in the recalibration of transcendental philosophy is the figure of Leibniz who, according to Deleuze, can well be considered as the Baroque thinker *par excellence* — the one who "provides the philosophy it lacks"[16]. The reason for this is that Leibniz's understanding of predication is as much metaphysical as logical. Significantly, a similar observation is made by Walter Benjamin in the study that Deleuze cites as being so integral to the understanding of the Baroque as an allegorical development of concepts *without* objects. What strikes Benjamin[17], just as it would Deleuze, is §8 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* where Leibniz held "that all true predication has some basis in the nature of things… so that one who understands perfectly the notion of the subject would also know that the predicate belongs to it"[18]. For both Benjamin and Deleuze, then, neither the subject of any thought nor (the ontology of) any thinking subject enjoys a unity of representation or cognition with regard to objects since the latter has become hallucinatory; instead, concepts are discursively replete with predicates which are oriented no longer simply according to what can be proposed in any logical order but rather and quite simply (in the sense of being indivisible) to the *metaphysical* order of things.

As an organon of thought, then, in this way it can be said that the Baroque is not just a term of art-history but also one of natural-history — indeed as Benjamin

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16   Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* 33, 126.

17   Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* trans. John Osborne (New York: Verso, 2003), 47.

18   G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays,* trans. and ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 41.

held, developing an analysis by Hausenstein, "Baroque naturalism is 'the art of least distances'"[19]. The import of this is that, rather than being just another term 'of art', the 'Baroque' is, as the phrasing goes, 'a term of art' — that is to say, an indivisible unity of thought in the sense of such seminal philosophical notions as 'substance', 'knowledge', 'perception', 'understanding', '(sufficient) reason', and 'transcendental' — although, unlike the symbolism of Kantian thought, one that is not governed by analogy.[20] In other words, as the name of that form of predication which, according to Leibniz, involves the "nature of things", the Baroque is quite literally, or rather, etymologically, *poetic*, in that its very concept is to be forever created or *made* anew ("because of the poverty of the language and the novelty of the matters", as the author of *De rerum natura* wrote at the outset of his own project[21] or, as has been observed more recently, since "the more technical the vocabulary of a philosophy, the closer that philosophy seems to come to [*s'orienter*] art"[22]).

That many art-historical commentaries on the Baroque have been vexed not only by the application of this concept but even by its very definition (an irregular pearl, a figure in the scholastic nomenclature of the syllogisms) attests to the frenetic, hallucinatory, and poetic character of its predication; for what makes the Baroque itself significant is less a case of whatever it 'is' but what it allows us 'to say of' things. This is why, for Deleuze, the remarkable quality of Baroque perspective or point of view is that it involves the "truth of relativity (and not a relativity of what is true)"[23]. For following Leibniz's formulation, and as Tesauro noted in his kaleidoscopic reading of Aristotle, subjects are to be truly understood only in variegated relation to everything that can be said of

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19   Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* 66.

20   Kant, *Critique of Judgment, Including the First Introduction,* 227−228.

21   Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 15.

22   Yvon Belaval, *Philosophers and Their Language*, trans. Norbert Guterman (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1966), 132; Yvon Belaval, *Les Philosophes et Leur Langage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), 193.

23   Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* 21.

them (their *praedicatorum*): an atomic or elemental, rather than straightforwardly propositional, or even combinatorial, syllogistic.[24]

Moreover, and at the same time, it might be said not only that the Baroque requires this conception of things but that (in an era of acute, complex, and unpredictable ecological change coupled with inter-connected convulsions of political turmoil) so do we. As the name for the predicative relation of various subjects to the "nature of things", the Baroque provides an example of how certain identities might yet be conceived. For rather than seeking to propose a definitive account of humans' relation to the environment or even of various types of human (according to received understandings of, say, ethnicity or gender) these definitions are themselves to be forever formulated rather than thought according to certain already understood forms. What can be 'said of' things is not regulated by the logic of what these things are (thought to be); rather their very understanding is *yet* to be thought or conceived since, metaphysically, "all true predication has some basis in the nature of things" — and the latter, at least for humans, cannot be known without the perfection of an infinite understanding.

This much is seen in various postcolonial readings of the Baroque[25] but also, as indicated, in various critical re-readings of antiquity. To do so, to stress the contested character of identity, in this way not only avoids the philosophical chauvinism about thinking order according to certain received categories and intuitions of precedence but so too equips the political affirmation of other, radical, categories with the resources to be more than just a protest. Moreover, in so doing, the originally aesthetic tenor of the Baroque is rethought — following the transcendental insight that the conditions of experience rather than objects of experience are primary — rethought so as to no longer obtain only logically but,

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24 Marko Malink, "Aristotle on Principles as Elements," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Volume 53, ed. Victor Caston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 176; Michael Wigodsky, "Homoiotetes, Stoicheia and Homoiomereiai in Epicurus," *Classical Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2007): 525.

25 Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997). First published 1990; Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup, eds., *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

rather, also metaphysically (as having "some basis in the nature of things" which is not the same as what is, has, or can be claimed of them).

To think of the Baroque, then, may well involve the acquaintance with a familiar estimation of certain long-standing tensions inherent in the human condition, or of Reason's ultimate justification, which is manifest so strikingly in seventeenth century arts. But the Baroque itself is not simply a term of literary or art-historical taxonomies. For it names the concept of a subject's yet-to-be-thought relation to the world, it names the understanding whose very predication identifies a subject as 'this' and 'not-that' — and stresses that such an identity is always in a process of formation. This much has been recognized in the recognition of a digital-, postcolonial-, and even a medical-Baroque.[26] Rather than simply a further classification or description of cultural artefacts, then, in this way a uniquely philologico-aesthetic (or logological) understanding of the term 'Baroque' serves as a metaphysical illustration of how our relation to the world and to one another (the allegory, or conceit, of a "predication" which has "some basis in the nature of things") can yet inform our concepts.

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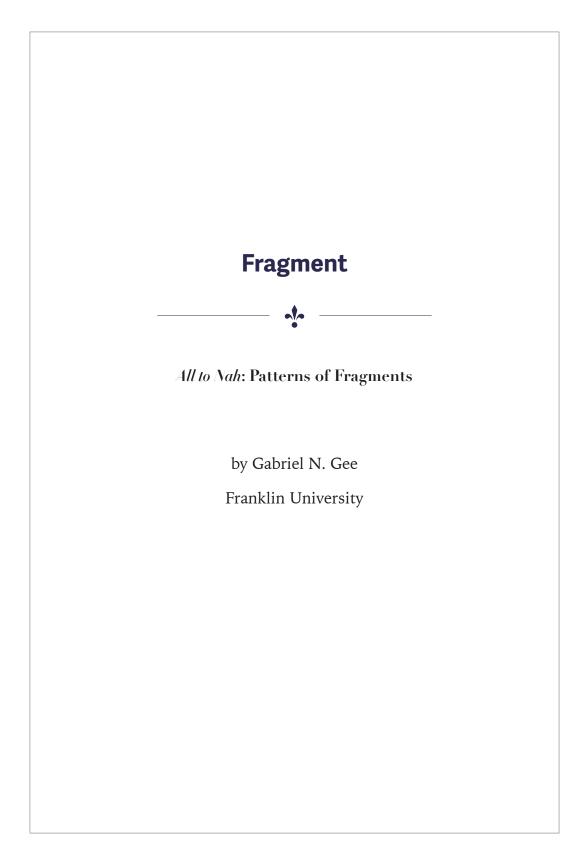
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26 Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological,* trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett in collaboration with Robert S. Cohen (New York: Zone Books, 1989); Henry E. Sigerist, "The Historical Aspect of Art and Medicine," *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 4, no. 4 (1936): 271–297.

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Fragment

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All to Nah: Patterns of Fragments

by Gabriel N. Gee

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Abstract

This text begins on the *Altonaer Balkon* overlooking the river Elbe and the busy container terminals that have taken over Hamburg's lower network of islands. The standardisation of shipping containers in maritime transportation in the 1960s, 'made the world smaller' and increased global interconnectedness across the orb. Watching the world come to your door remains mysterious; containers are small units that belong to a larger entity, cells within a great piece of machinery. They are also opaque. Amongst the enforcers, emblems, and symptoms of planetary globalization, containers are partly rational logistics, partly inscrutable pits. To secure one's footing on this '*terra mobile'* requires site-specific excavations. Beneath the curtain of measurable grids, turning on the light in pitch dark corridors reveals particular topographies, a '*theatre of fragments'* in the puzzle of exponential connectivity. To reflect on this pattern of fragments, this text takes as a starting point a series of artistic research projects co-developed by TETI group in recent years. TETI (Textures and Experiences of Trans-Industriality) aims to bring artists and researchers from different disciplines together, to engage with the transformations of the present in the context of accelerated globalisation and to consider the modes through which diversification can be imprinted in the machinery of homogenisation. The discussion evokes in turn the figures of the *lighthouse, chantiers, transportements,* and *arrière-cuisines.*

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In 1536, two counsellors of the city of Hamburg were walking by the riverside when they noticed a new settlement, right across the border, in the land of the count of Pinneberg. A fisherman, Joachim von Lohe, had opened an inn, which was attracting a bustling trade. Looking at this newcomer, right on their doorstep, the Hamburg citizens commented that it was 'All to nah', a little too close for comfort. So goes one of the foundational legends of the wall-less city of Altona, whose preferable tax laws favoured growth and fostered a rivalry with its older Hanseatic neighbour.[1] Today, when looking over the Elbe from the Altonaer Balkon above the ancient fish market, one sees the busy container terminals that have taken over Hamburg's lower network of islands. The standardisation of shipping containers — the introduction of modular rectangles — in maritime transportation in the 1960s, 'made the world smaller'[2] and increased global interconnectedness across the orb. Whereas spheres may be unfolded like onions, containers evoke the layering of bricks. On the terraced *Altonaer Balkon*, watching the world come to your door remains mysterious; containers are small units that belong to a larger entity, cells within a great piece of machinery. They are also opaque. Amongst the enforcers, emblems, and symptoms of planetary globalization, containers are

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1   Holmer Stahncke, *Altona: Geschichte einer Stadt* (Hamburg: Ellert & Richter Verlag, 2014), 13–16.

2   Marc Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

partly rational logistics, partly inscrutable pits. In the caves of the late Paleolithic, hunter-gatherers adorned the walls with incisions, imprints, depictions of animals, such as horses, bulls, and mammoths, in a swirling matrix of signs.[3] Behind the doors of planetary globalisation, conductors explode in infinitesimal routes: a fragmented cosmos of circulation and intentions. To secure one's footing on this *terra mobile* requires site-specific excavations.[4] Beneath the curtain of measurable grids, turning on the light in pitch dark corridors reveals particular topographies, a *theatre of fragments* in the puzzle of exponential connectivity.[5] To reflect on this pattern of fragments, this text takes as a starting point a series of artistic research projects co-developed by TETI group in recent years. TETI (Textures and Experiences of Trans-Industriality) aims to bring artists and researchers from different disciplines together, to engage with the transformations of the present in the context of accelerated globalisation and to consider the modes through which diversification can be imprinted in the machinery of homogenisation. It begins with peering once more into the shadows.

Lighthouses

A familiar scene: turning on the light in a pit will reveal a stage in which the visible is balanced by *tangible* shadows. As part of the *All So Near* exhibition at Faktor Künstlerhaus in Altona (April 2018), Amélie Brisson-Darveau produced clothes based on historical maps of the city (*Wearing Altona*, 2018).[6] Hanging over metal bars reminiscent of both industrial infrastructure and textile archives, these urban-patterned fabrics could be activated by visitors, who were invited to try them

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3   Alain Testart, *Art et religion de Chauvet à Lascaux* (Paris: Gallimard, 2016).

4   Paolo Perulli, ed., *Terra Mobile: Atlante della società globale* (Turin: Einaudi, 2014).

5   Anton Bierl, Gerald Siegmund, Christoph Meneghetti, and Clemens Schuster, eds., *Theater des Fragments: Performative Strategien in Theater zwischen Antike und Postmoderne* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).

6   *All So Near: Textile Bodies, Chinagirls & Archi-Finance*: works by Amélie Brisson Darveau, Cora Piantoni, Johanna Bruckner, curated by Gabriel N. Gee, Faktor Kunstlerhaus 20–22 April 2018. Such mapping strategies echo the 'multifaceted mapping' explored in Hamburg by the Kunstverein and the Galerie für Landschaftkunst in their project *Mapping a city* (Krause 2004).

on. The patterns incarnated *textile bodies*, and fierce projectors cast their shadows on the floor. In earlier pieces such as *Pars mais prends bien soin de revenir* (2012), Brisson-Darveau explored the textures of shadows, materializing the elusive traces of a collective corporality in fabric. *Pars* was shown in a former jail, peering into the *tenebrae* at the heart of surveillance systems. The walls were not homely, the clothes took a sinister uniformed appearance.[7] In revisiting the ancestral gesture of the potter's daughter, leading to both the representation of the departed lover and the 'vertical erection' of his shadow in Butadès sculptural addition[8], the textiles bodies fused spectral presences with fleeting tangibility in foldable fabric.

For, in response to the question in incarnation of 'what is lost', the fragmentation at play in the light and shadows is paralleled by the proactive search for invisibility: not everyone wants to be seen in *the Eyes of the Lighthouse*, the subtitle of an exhibition held at Corner College in 2018.[9] The attention shifts to the projectors, to the point of seeing — the perspective — as well as to that which remains unseen, unlit by the beaming rays. In the show, Cliona Harmey offered visitors the opportunity to go inside the Poolbeg lighthouse, located at the end of the Great South Wall in Dublin Bay. The repetitive alternating light system of the lighthouse was originally accessible through an earlier on-site intervention, in which the artist settled on the pier and offered to connect passers-by to the upper chamber of the tower.[10] Ancient lighthouse technology improved considerably in the nineteenth century with the adoption of the Fresnel lens[11], increasing the security of vessels and sailors at sea and accompanying the acceleration of

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7   The work was shown at "Sinopale 4: Wisdom of shadow, art in the era of corrupted information," Sinop, Turkey. It was inspired by the work of German literary romantics such as E.T.A Hoffmann, De Chamisso and Hugo von Hoffmanstahl. In the context of Altona, it makes a subtle allusion to the film *The Condemned of Altona* (1962), directed by Vittorio De Sica, based on a 1959 play by Jean-Paul Sartre.

8   Victor I. Stoichita, *Brève histoire de l'ombre*, 2nd edition (Geneva: Droz, 2019), 11–20.

9   *Hinterland Part 1, The eyes of the lighthouse*: works by Cliona Harmey, Monica Ursina Jäger, Salvatore Vitale, Jürgen Baumann, curated by Gabriel N. Gee & Anne-Laure Franchette, Corner College, Zurich, May 2018.

10   Alice Butler, Daniel Fitzpatrick, and Cliona Harmey, *Port, River, City* (Dublin, 2017). Exhibition.

11   Theresa Levitt, *A Short Bright Flash: Augustin Fresnel and the Birth of the Modern Lighthouse* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).

globalisation that bound distant lands closer through trade. Furthermore, Harmey noted that the principles of the Fresnel lens migrated into a range of media devices, including barcodes.[12] The sculptural piece *Inside his master's voice* (2010) by Conor McFeely captures the dilemma of the lighthouse: it takes the form of a plastic Elizabethan collar, which is used to prevent dogs from scratching wounds as they heal but, by doing so also limit vision. McFeely first became interested in the object because it separated head and body[13]; the ruptured acephalic evoked a disembodied self. The title of the piece evoked both the name and logo of the old music label, as well as a science-fiction novel by Stanislaw Lem, *His Master's Voice*, in which a scientific team unsuccessfully tries to decode a message from outer space.[14] In the global age, the world converges, yet options to invest in *partial objects* remain.[15]

Chantiers

In nineteenth century port cities, a caesura developed between residential areas and new infrastructure dedicated to the handling of goods.[16] The development of

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12 Harmey expanded on the work in a text entitled From lighthouses to barcodes, which was first presented in a TETI research workshop organized by the author with the support of Franklin University and the Swiss Research Foundation in May 2017, which led to a co-edited publication: *Maritime poetics: From coast to hinterland*. See Cliona Harmey, "From lighthouse to barcodes," in *Maritime poetics: From coast to hinterland*, edited by Gabriel N. Gee and Caroline Wiedmer (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021).

13 Conor McFeely and Gabriel N. Gee, "Partial Objects: A conversation between artist Conor McFeely and Art historian Gabriel Gee," *Intervalla* 2 (2014−2015): 98−107, https://www.fus.edu/intervalla/volume-2-trauma-abstraction-and-creativity/conor-mcfeely-partial-objects-a-conversation-between-artist-conor-mcfeely-and-art-historian-gabriel-gee. accessed 22 November 2021.

14 Stanislaw Lem, *His Master's Voice,* translated by Michael Kandel (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983). First published in 1968.

15 Conor McFeely responded to queries regarding the partiality of objects and motifs in his works; he refers in particular to the post-Atomic condition, undercurrent plotting and impossible narratives. The terms also have a specific meaning in computing which brings the separation from the whole to the fore: "A partial object is an object whose state is not fully initialized after being reconstituted from the database and that is disconnected from the rest of its data." (doctrine-projects)

16 Brian Hoyle, "Development dynamics at the port-city interface," in *Revitalising the Waterfront: International Dimensions of Dockland Redevelopment*, edited by Brian Hoyle, David Pinder, and M. S. Husain (London: Belhaven Press, 1988).

the *Speicherstadt* in early twentieth century Hamburg provided warehouses to store coffee, tea, tobacco and spices in the free port of the city.[17] These were serviced by smaller barges, which were made redundant in the 1960s by the standardization of shipping containers. The elegant city of spices was abandoned until redevelopment in the late 20th century following a global trend. *All so near* also featured in the work of Johanna Bruckner's *Total algorithms of Partiality* (2018), which combines readings, conversations, drawings, sculpture and dance in a filmed investigation of "finance-driven deregulation of space"[18]. In particular, the piece considers the exploitive working conditions and the façade of socially diverse housing policies in the city's architectural redevelopment; algorithms mathematically bind the set of probabilities on which the living are to be housed.[19] Alluding to the pioneer dance groups of the 1930s which Bruckner explored in *Rebel Bodies* (2016−2018), the script articulates the intrusion of unforeseen and incontrollable externalities into the planned realm of capital architectonics.[20] A break into the pattern.

The performative gestures in *Total algorithms of partiality* take place on a construction site, which looks akin to a wasteland. In a TETI group collective project on *Mobile Soils*, painter and gardener Errol Reuben Fernandes reminisced on his childhood adventures on disused land in West London, where broken porcelain, glasses and burnt tires could be found; this former Victorian refuse tip became a source of inspiration to the artist and botanist.[21] This is 'modern

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17 Gert Kähler, *Von der Speicherstadt bis zur Elbphilharmonie: Hundert Jahre Stadtgeschichte Hamburg* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 2009), 17.

18 Johanna Bruckner, "The future of work: scaffolds and agencies," in *Maritime poetics: From coast to hinterland*, edited by Gabriel N. Gee and Caroline Wiedmer (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021).

19 The architectonic role of algorithms is explained in the film's voiceover: "Algorithms can be identified as the structure of the scaffold, the vertical and horizontal lines of the scaffold are found on construction sites, which essentially support the building process, correlating to the form and structure of an algorithmic instruction; what is the algorithmic probability of social mix, the probability of accountability, what factors does it derive from?"

20 Marius Henderson, "Embodied enquiry and insurgent research creation in Johanna Bruckner's Total Algorithm of Partiality." 10 June 2021. https://johannabruckner.com/research/embodied-inquiry-and-insurgent-research-creation-in-johanna-bruckners-total-algorithms-of-partiality/. accessed 22 November 2021.

21 Errol Reuben Fernandes, "An unearthed identity," in *Mobile Soils*, edited by. Anne-Laure Franchette, Jose Cáceres Mardones & Gabriel N. Gee (Zurich: TETI press, 2021, 103−110).

nature', to refer to Derek Jarman's journal and garden[22], as well as to curator Elise Lammer's investigation of artists' roles in such fragmented landscapes.[23] Building sites more generally appear to be *interstitial* spaces, where interrogation as to past and future arrangements of the present are suspended. Akin to the artist's studio, the building site is a laboratory where the architect comes wearing protective gear.[24] In the novel *Les Jardins Statuaires*, Jacques Abeille tells the story of a visitor to imaginary sculpture domains, where gardeners cultivate statues that cyclically emerge from the ground.[25] While order seems to prevail, it requires constant dedication. Offshoots of the sculptural plants are broken down and thrown back into the earth to feed the next generation. Should the gardeners become distracted, or fail, the sculptures will grow into monstrous creatures. Anne-Laure Franchette explored this state of possibility in *Grands Travaux Urbains* (2021), foraging '*mauvaises herbes*' from selected construction sites, which were then dried and fixed in resin on temporary signal structures used on such working grounds. In the blind spots of the city, an unwanted species might find a home in a celebration that queries the categories through which socio-natures are historically processed. The temporary structures evoke a remark by Michel Serres, who, having underlined that in the past preference for enclosure the contemporary age favors apertures, wonders if it is possible "to think, to draw a garden of wandering?"[26]

'*Transportements*'

The third artist participating in *All So Near*, Cora Piantoni, researched the history of the Hamburg cinematographic company Atlantik Film. In looking at

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22 Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1994).

23 Elise Lammer and Anne-Laure Franchette, "Derek Jarman's garden. Anne-Laure Franchette and Elise Lammer on the queering of nature." *Nero*, 8 September 2020. *Modern Nature: an homage to Derek Jarman* is a three-year project (2019–2021) curated by Elise Lammer in collaboration with La Becque Artist Residency, Switzerland.

24 *L'art du chantier: construire et démolir du XVIe au XXIe siècle*, Paris, Gand: Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine (Snoeck, 2018).

25 Jacques Abeille, *Les Jardins Statuaires* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982).

26 "Peut-on penser, dessiner un jardin de l'errance ?" See Michel Serres, *Statues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989).

materials held by former employees, she wasn't interested in the films produced by the company, but rather in images of the 'China Girls'. In the analogue era, film labs checked the color tones of photographs by combining color panels with figureheads of women, whose skin served as reference for a 'natural' rendering.[27] These images disappeared from the final cut, though archival repositories today hold these silent witnesses from another era. For the 'China Girls' were, in many ways, screen-like, a pure reflection of a technical requisite informed by normative standards. Thus, little is known of the actual persons who lent themselves to the tonal operation. Piantoni, however, was able to get in touch with one such *accidental* model, who had been working for Atlantik Film at the time and was living in Altona. The conversation led to an interview, which was shown along with the series of photographs. In effect, the encounter opened the image to the experience beneath it. The silent repetitive cinematographic fragment gained a voice of its own, a unique story unfolding in the script of history.

The shipping container, at first glance, appears to be a ubiquitous channel of homogenization. Colors might vary, blue, red, or green, the name of the company on the side, perhaps, but otherwise its success stems from its capacity to simplify transportation on sea and on land through its normative bland regularity. The art of folding goods of all shapes, textures and sizes disappeared alongside the docker communities who practiced it. Nevertheless, one may be cautious when assessing the universal fortunes of this conductor and symbol of totality: Huang Yong Ping's monumental installation *Empires* at the Grand Palais in Paris (2016) was composed of an architecture of containers interspaced by the skeletons of long-lost creatures, and a bicorne Napoleonic hat, an evocation of the transient nature of power.[28] Additionally, shipping containers have been re-appropriated in various contexts beyond their maritime vocation, including semi-permanent shops and houses and as receptacles for artistic displays, such as at the Kaohsiung Container

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27   Sarah Laskow, "The Forgotten 'China Girls' Hidden at the Beginning of Old Films," *Atlas Obscura*, 30 January 2017. The term might have alluded to the porcelain chinaware.

28   Huang Yong Ping, *Empires* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2016).

Festival in Taiwan. The 2017 BIG biennial of independent arts spaces from Geneva also used maritime containers but sought to resist their inherent standardisation by using them to house non-prefabricated cultural practices (BIG 2017). Visitors could look at independent films in Spoutnik's 'movie-in-suspension' (the screening was projected on the ceiling of the container), take part in 'seed-bomb' workshops organized by the Picto association with compost from the studio's garden, climb the wooden supra-structure designed by Ripopée to present its independent publications, all, along with other sixty exhibitors, under the silent gaze of artist Abraham Poincheval, who remained for three days atop a mast above the grounds under a scorching sun.

In the installation *La Bibliothèque à déplacer des Presses* éditables, visitors entered a book, passing into the container through a very large panel styled like a book cover, to discover a library where four constellations of twenty-four books were arranged on the walls, a selection of bookish references responding to the four LPE publications.[29] These ranged from crime stories to philosophical essays and hiking guides; visitors were thus confronted with a diversity of affinities, to which they were invited to contribute, by displacing the book they had picked up to create new associations and new readings. The *Sitterwerk* library in St. Gallen is another example of such creative reordering. Books can be rearranged on the shelves as readers see fit, a Warburgian approach that encourages novel and constantly evolving connections.[30] Such strategies point to the possibility of 'destabilizing the parameters of a library', of embracing mis-shelving, in an effort to reflect on "how we travel from one book to another" [31]. The LPE installation, with its four concentric yet constantly reshaped book constellations, echoed

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29 *La bibliothèque des Presses éditables* was designed by Vincent Fradet and the author, curated by Volumes, a platform for independent publishing in Zurich.

30 Ariane Roth and Marina Schütz, *The Dynamic Library: Organizing Knowledge at the Sittewerk — Precedents and Possibilities* (Chicago: Soberscove Press, 2015). An electronic system enables books in the catalogue to be located on particular shelves.

31 Heide Hinrichs, Jo-ey Tang, Elizabeth Haines, eds., *Shelf documents: Art library as Practice* (Berlin: b_books Verlag, 2020), 15.

the modern Stonehenge orientation of the BIG Biennial, forming "a circle of fragments" [32] in which the heterogenous mixes of writings/readings bodies/objects embraced the traditions of cut-up, montage and bricolage frequently espoused by artists in the 20th century.[33] One crossed the thresholds of the containers through "a half-opened door, […] leading to *experience*, opened onto an exterior. A door akin to a harbor"[34]. One crossed the thresholds to another story, other stories, a multiplicity hidden behind the neutral doors. I called this movement a 'transportement'; the term from the old French conveys a dual process of movement in both physical and affective space: to be carried away.[35]

Arrière-cuisine

In the last of his 'American lessons' dedicated to the future of literature, Italo Calvino, focusing on *molteplicità*, refers to the writings of Carlo Emiliano Gadda, to a text revolving around a recipe for *risotto alla Milanese*. The profusion of details encapsulates, for Calvino, the writer's capacity to locate and embrace the network of relations that stem from a singular object, as well as to get lost in its infinite web.[36] Artistic research, in its early twenty-first century form, is not dissimilar to this way of being-in-the-world, in which every 'object' offers an opportunity to unfold multi-faceted histories, materials and topographies in a lively 'disciplinary cannibalism' that knows few taboos.[37] The particular focus on risotto is telling, in its evocation of Smithsonian entropic inevitability, that

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32 Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

33 Jean-Pierre Mourey, "Le fragmentaire dans l'art du XXe siècle," in *Del Frammento,* edited by. Rosa Maria Losito (Naples: Univ. Orientale, 2000), 59−78.

34 Michel Serres, *Statues,* 91. The words by Michel Serres derived from a discussion of Auguste Rodin La Porte de l'Enfer (1880).

35 Transportement is also the title of a forthcoming publication from TETI press (2022). The post-production of the LPE installation involved a collaboration between six authors (three artists, three writers) in which four mixed genre stories describe the improbable displacement of four 'objects'.

36 Italo Calvino, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 1993), 106−107.

37 Thierry Dufrêne and Anne-Christine Taylor, eds., *Cannibalismes disciplinaires: quand l'histoire de l'art et l'anthropologie se rencontrent* (Paris: Musée du Quai Branly, INHA, 2009).

balances the poetic fragmented oscillation between wholeness and partiality.[38] In a fragmented narratology, accidents complexify the smooth account of the world. Ahmad Fuad Osman calls Enrique de Malacca an *accidental* navigator: enslaved on Fernand de Magellan's ship, he ended up circumnavigating the globe, part of a momentous event in the history of globalisation, and survived.[39] In his *Memorial to Enrique de Malacca* (2016), Osman includes interviews with contemporary historians who provide informative but conflicting accounts of a historical figure who remains elusive to this day. Ignored by Western historiographical narratives, the surviving navigator is a rallying point for modern national identity building in Southeast Asia; yet, precisely because of the dearth of details on background and fortune once he became a freeman following the death of Magellan on the Mactan islands, Osman can enter an uncertain space and highlight the fleeting nature of history. This is a fragmented narratology, where clear-cut descriptions of the real dissolve into a rich humus of vivid and haunted socio-scapes. In a similar vein, Wu Mali brings together residents for communal dinners at Cijin kitchen, a former military barrack in Kaohsiung harbor, in an effort to document the stories of a migrating and ever-changing community.[40] Singular stories tell a polyphonic tale of interconnected narratives at maritime crossroads in East and Southeast Asia, where the global forces of history meet the uncertain trajectories of collective and individual destinies. Such artistic engagement with the pot-au-feu of the present is inspiring to an art history in dialogue with the grains of rooted differentiation. The aim is not to provide the absolute recipe of world history, but to recognize both the industrial and artisan parties involved in it, both of whom are containers capable of revealing an infinite pattern of fragmented histories: a proactive embrace of re-diversification.

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38   Pierre Garrigues, *Poétiques du fragment* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995).

39   Ahmad Fuad Osman in conversation with the author, 2 May 2019.
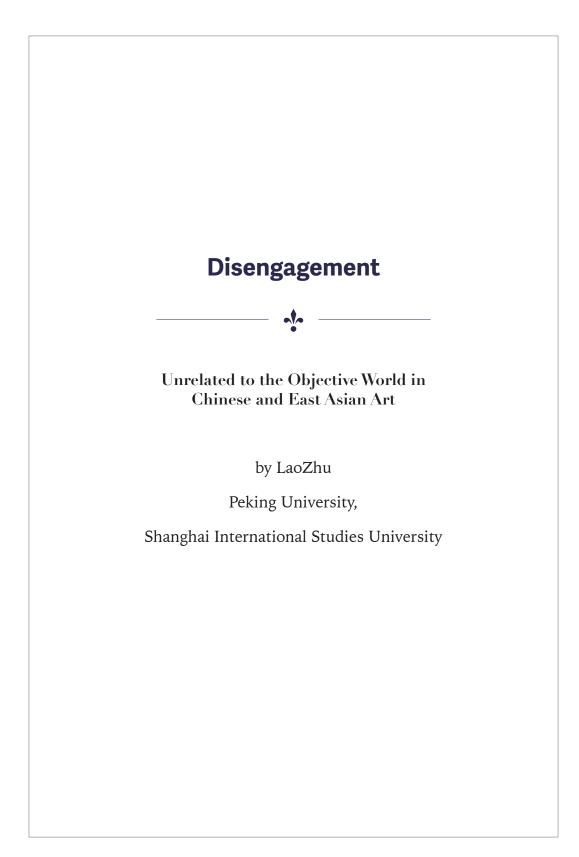
40   Wu Mali in conversation with the author, August 2018

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Disengagement

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**Unrelated to the Objective World in
Chinese and East Asian Art**

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Abstract

Distinguished from representation, another kind of art of "Word-Writing" finds echoes in Paleolithic art (e.g. the Lascaux cave), which features a type of "drawings" of lines and dots, in addition to mimetic images and patterns as signs and symbols in art history. Not being fully explained so far, this kind of "drawings/traces" can be a research subject if approached from the perspective of *shufa* (Chinese traditional art of Word-Writing which highlights spontaneity/freedom of expressing moods or feelings and also refers to a kind of freehand brushwork correlating) and *xieyi* (Chinese traditional painting which becomes similar to a kind of "Word-Writing").

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At the 34th World Congress of Art History in 2016, the first forum focused on how the ideation of Art differs in cultures across historical eras. In fact, the issue of engagement in Art varies greatly and has been in constant transition.

Art has been taken as a vehicle of studying History because the Artwork represents phenomena and conveys meanings — literal, symbolic or metaphorical, etc. But if the Artwork bears no "content" (meaning), with no tangible association with the Object, or, so to speak, the real world, can it still be seen as "artistic"? The question draws our attention to *shufa* 书法 (word-writing art) in Chinese and East Asian art[1], which disengages from specific events or objects and has established its own aesthetic system as well as a rich repertoire of creative methods. In the late 13th century (the early Yuan Dynasty), Chinese painting underwent a fundamental transformation, which led to the advent of *xieyi* 写意 painting (*xieyi* literally means

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1   Each Chinese character can be designed and modified in two ways. The first way is through graphic design, termed *meishuzi* (美术字 decorative Chinese characters) in Chinese, and "calligraphy" in English. The font variations can amount to as many as 251 in modern computers. The second way is *shufa* 书法, word-writing art (also generally translated as calligraphy), which is distinguishable from Abstract Expressionism through its applied methods of the Chinese art of writing. This pictographic latter approach does not seek to convey motions and emotions through the formation of shapes and strength forms like *meishuzi* (calligraphy); instead, it focuses on the modification of lines of strength, and trajectory remaining within the same shape, or free to transform the form of each character in writing, strength, and trajectory.

"writing of intent"), derived from and grounded upon *shufa*.[2] Although not yet totally severed from the representation of the Object, *xieyi* painting features highly individualized expression and becomes a kind of Art independent from the visible world and real-life events; a kind of writing of "the Heart" in non-verbal form ("writing" here means release, escape, spontaneity, and transcendence). Subsequently, a whole set of theories emerged and developed along this line. This kind of Art becomes a pure expression of humanity in an abstract sense, not as images circumscribed by specific timeframe and space. In the field of Art History, this kind of Art can no longer be treated as historical material in representational forms. Such poetic expression of human perception is "ethereal" in the sense that it bears no association with social circumstances and specific existential states. Hence, it is not a reflection of History but only conveys the profundity and intensity of humanity, comparable to absolute music. This artistic tradition, which first originated in China and then spread to other East Asian cultures, has formed a self-sufficient/autonomous system in spirit transition and boundless exploration. All in all, it does not correspond to politics, society, or history.

Engagement, generally concerning the content of art, also pays attention to the question of what art is (what is Art), so it may involve more than "content". Previously, studies of Art History had by and large hinged upon "representational art", which is drawn from ancient Greek philosophical and epistemological ideas as explicated in the Germanic context (If we put on hold the habitual way of thinking in new art history that focuses on studying the Artist and historical eras, e.g., politics, economy, culture, psychology, and gender, etc.) Even with no immediate/unmediated association with the Object, the Artwork as image can still arouse complex mental reactions through the mechanism of illusionism (as E. H.

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2   Zhao Mengfu 赵孟頫, a famous Chinese painter from the Yuan Dynasty, wrote a postscript on his painting *Xiushi shulin tu* 秀石疏林图 (*Graceful Rocks and Sparse Woods*), which makes clear that the aim of painting lies not in representation of the Object but in appliance of the creative principle of *shufa* for the end of self-expression. Portraying subjects such as stones, trees, and bamboos shall deploy the brushwork of *shufa*. Judging by his personal experience and creative work, Zhao had adopted the *shufa* style that had been well established since Wang Xizhi 王羲之 from the Eastern Jin Dynasty (See *Zhao Mengfu shu lanting xu* 赵孟頫书兰亭序 (*Zhao Mengfu's Transcript of the Lanting Preface*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2010). From Zhao Mengfu, a creative line of Chinese painting swiftly took shape, shifting from representation to immediate self-expression through adopting the *shufa* brushwork.

Gombrich has discussed).[3] If Art does not function as a link between humanity and the real world (If art is not about relationship with matter, relationship with the world, and relationship with essence/existence), then what can art be? how shall we define and assess the Art? Indeed, what other ends can it serve?

Shufa 书法 (word-writing art) has, indeed, no mimetic or representative association with the Object. *Xieyi* 写意 painting, which derived from and is grounded upon *shufa*, uses the method of spirtual expression in *shufa* (especially the feeling that can be felt to oneself, but cannot be clearly conscious, let alone resort to speech, could be stored in and vent off), rather than the approaches of representation. *Shufa* depicts the characters, which serve the basic function of expressing meanings, but every single character owns different physical forms. Chinese hieroglyphic characters are fundamentally different from alphabetic writing. As graphic characters, they are independent images, do not directly correspond to their pronunciation. (Chinese dialects are born in diversity, most of which are embedded with too much discrepancy from each other to communicate easily. But Chinese characters have had unified form since the beginning, meaning that Chinese people could understand compatriots from other places and that texts from thousands of years ago could be read, even if the original pronunciation is unknown.) Each Chinese character can be designed and modified in two ways, *meishuzi* and *shufa* (see footnote 2), which were both roughly translated as "calligraphy" in English. *Shufa* functions in a different way: it records the psychological fluctuations of writers in their handwriting. The variations are subtle changes, unconscious outpourings of mind; *shufa* as art turns the variations of personal body and mind changes into an intentional pursuit. The intentional pursuit in *shufa* comes from two aspects: 1. the instantaneous expression during writing; 2. the perennial accumulation of habitual nature. The instantaneous expressions reflect the momentary mood, mental state, passion, and the generated movements, or happen in certain emotional states (therefore, artists usually trigger or accelerate the passion by means of alcohol or drugs). In contrast, the perennial accumulations relate to the individuals' long-term experience and memories and

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3   E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960).

the delicate alteration they evoke, as well as to the experience and temperaments gleaned from their predecessors (this requires unremitting practice and persistent copying of the ancients' work, like how sportsmen and musicians practice their skills). The moves and variations in one piece of writing are completed at one time, with Chinese brush pen, on Chinese *Xuan* paper (宣纸, a kind of Chinese rice-paper), using Chinese ink (墨, *Mo*, a special pigment), to present the particular subtle and delicate results.

But the two artistic forms of Chinese characters (*meishuzi* and *shufa*) are totally different from the phenomenological concept of characters as image-demolishing. Therefore, the problem of *shufa* 书法 and *xieyi* 写意 is not a phenomenological issue, but a problem of philosophical anthropology; to address this problem more systematically, I will soon publish an ontological research paper.

Although *shufa* is a kind of script, the artistic asset doesn't lie in its status as a written document but in its status as an artistic form that presents signs or any kind of object, i.e., *xieyi* painting. This requires us to rethink the distinction between *shufa* and language. In a phenomenological sense, language, be it hieroglyphic or alphabetic, always features a kind of physical presence registered by human consciousness; while reading, the physical form from the language written into words is then demolished. This physical presence no longer matters and ends in a sort of mental oblivion, but meanings from the text generate new images and other things. The physical presence of alphabetic language leaves no traces in human consciousness when the end of conveying meanings is fulfilled, with only two exceptions.[4]

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4   Chinese scholar Zhang Xianglong 张祥龙 has used the theory of phenomenology to study Chinese *shufa*. As he argues, "if we think along the line of phenomenology as proposed by E. Husserl, our attention will be drawn to the sign as an autonomous/self-sufficient entity, e.g., words in print…then we perceive it from outside, i.e., its external appearance immediately seen. Such an appearance as an object has erased the innate character of the word, i.e., to convey meanings. Provided that such an appearance still bears a verbal function, its nature then changes fundamentally. The presence of a word as an entity is immediate to us, but our attention is not drawn to it, and it is no longer a register of our 'mental activities'. Our interest and intention only point toward what meanings it conveys and further toward the Object as the signified. Our association with it is elusive in the sense that our intentional action is not riveted on it, yet also does not utterly dispense with it. From it we gain access to meaning and, thereby, approach the signified, i.e., something or some situation." Zhang Xianglong, "Why can Chinese Calligraphy Become an Art" 为什么中国书法能成为艺术. In Zhang Xianglong, *Cong xianxiangxue dao Kong Fuzi* 从现象学到孔夫子 (*From Phenomenology to Confucius*) (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2011), 455.

Firstly, such physical presence of language has become a kind of image, meaning "figural" — be it poetry or prose. As Michel Foucault has argued,

> Pursuing its quarry by two paths, the calligram sets the most perfect trap. By its double function, it guarantees capture, as neither discourse alone nor a pure drawing could do. It banishes the invincible absence that defeats words, imposing upon them, by the ruses of a writing at play in space, the visible form of their referent. Cleverly arranged on a sheet of paper, signs invoke the very thing of which they speak from outside, by the margin they outline, by the emergence of their mass on the blank space of the page.[5]

But this is not what matters about *shufa*. Chinese characters can be combined and made into signs of a pictorial nature and single characters can also be made into figures like pictures. Ample cases of the kind can be found in Chinese tradition. "Modern *shufa*" as a subdivision of contemporary Chinese art already runs against the traditional ideation of *shufa* and has been described as "writing/non-writing" by Wang Dongling 王冬龄. Among the 13 categories of modern *shufa* outlined in Wang's discourse, there are five[6] featuring how Chinese

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5 Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe,* trans. and ed. by James Harkness, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 22.

6 Among these categories are: 1. The calligrammatic school, i.e., recovering the hieroglyphic form of the Chinese language as in its infancy, which constitutes a long-running legacy in the *shufa* tradition. In the 1980s, many Chinese artists explored the imagistic asset of Chinese characters and rendered them "pictorial", even with added coloration. 3. The geometric school, i.e., rendering the characters in highly structured geometric forms with stunning visual effects and aesthetic flavors. Repeated renditions can make the character like a kind of conceptual writing. 7. The ink school emphasizes the way of ink-appliance, with wash and splash the key method that renders the brushwork blotchy with white traces. 8. The semantic school pivots on the meaning of characters, mainly featuring phrases both hieroglyphic and symbolic at once. Characters of varying functionalities are collaged to evoke a kind of ambience which does not draw on any singular noun or verb but on the holistic unity of all characters (Gestalt). 9. The syntactic school focuses on the evocative connotation of words, generally related to the tradition of Romanticism, but to feelings and sensations of mundane life in modern time. The latter has induced a kind of poetics of modernity. LaoZhu, "Zhongguo xiandai shufa de cengci yu fangxiang" 中国现代书法的层次与方向 ("Facets and directions of modern *shufa* in China"). In Wang Dongling, ed., *Zhongguo xiandai shufa lunwen xuan* 中国现代书法论文选 (*A Collection of Critical Essays on Modern* Shufa *in China*) (Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, 2004), 157–164.

characters are again rendered in a way such that they become pictures of tangible things, which echoes Foucault's discourse on the "pursuing" of meanings.

Secondly, the typography of Chinese characters is standardized and embellished to serve various purposes; this is why "*shufa*" is translated as "word-writing art" but not "calligraphy"[7]. Embellishment of characters or letters as scripts is a kind of designing and modelling that must either comply with rigid rules and serve sacramental ends, just as Quran quotes written in mosques do, or aim to delight the human eyes in visual terms. In today's world, advertising and graphic design tackles the issue of how to design the shape, outline, coloration, volume, texture, and feel of movement of characters or letters. While studying in an art school in China, two parallel courses must be taken, one on applied decorative Chinese characters (实用美术字), the other on *shufa* (word-writing art). Decorative Chinese characters and *shufa* are two different things. Highly beautified design of the shape of characters or letters draws the viewer's attention to form, not content, and the physical presence of the "writing" again becomes the focal point. This is a consensus commonly shared in the design industry. The radical traces of writing have explored new directions and functions of dissemination, such as Robert Indiana's[8] word painting and sculpture "LOVE" and Milton Glaser's[9] I ❤ NY, created in 1977, inspired by Indiana's "LOVE". Different from alphabetic languages, Chinese characters, hieroglyphs (which are also used in Japanese, and appeared in the Korean and Vietnamese languages in the past) are far more intricate and complex, just as Zhang Xianglong 张祥龙 has discussed in great

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7 My PhD supervisor Lothar Ledderose told me that his PhD supervisor Dietrich Seckel translated *shufa* as Schriftkunst not Kalligraphie.

8 Robert Indiana (1928−2018) is an American Pop artist. In 1965 his designed image LOVE was printed on greeting cards sold at MoMA, and in 1970 it was converted to the first sculptural version. In 1973 the lettering appeared on an 8-cent federal postage stamp; after that, it became widespread.

9 Milton Glaser (1929−2020), an American graphic designer, made I ❤ NY, the official slogan/logo of the New York State Department of Commerce.

detail.[10] Such intricacy and complexity concern not only appearance but also semantics. Thus, the figural/pictorial asset of Chinese characters can move from abstract or pure outside appearance to a more synthetic state of being, further highlighted and amplified by semantic assets. However, one can barely say that such rich formal valences of Chinese characters are all that *shufa* is about, because the essence of *shufa* lies in brushwork, or, to be specific, the powerful morphology of line as a vehicle of expressing humanity. It is natural that brushwork drawn from *shufa* later affected fundamental changes in Chinese painting.

For the expressiveness of brushwork to be optimized in terms of using the morphology of line to capture humanity in a freer way and to express more, the Artist shall steer away from representation of the Object and explore a theoretical system of abstraction. Chinese aesthetics has a rich repertoire of theories with a solid philosophical foundation, as well as a whole set of creative methods. Subsequently, China and East Asia in general have formed an Art History that diverges from Western Art History, which was formed by ancient Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions. The timeframe of the advancement of Asian Art History roughly corresponds with the Italian Renaissance initiated by Giotto (c.a. 1266–1337), and two strands of Art History evolved parallel to each other thereafter; this cannot be something fortuitous.

Slightly later than Zhao Mengfu 赵孟頫 (1254–1322), both Huang Gongwang

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10   "Words consist of a number of letters arranged in form, while the form of Chinese characters composited of strokes. For example, the character 永 illustrates the most essential eight strokes, nevertheless, the combinations are very diverse and pictorially, constructing a space similar to the hexagrams in *The Book of Changes*, but much richer. A Chinese character can be composed of one to more than thirty strokes, because Chinese characters have the function of constructing meaning (referring to things, pictograms, knowing meaning, etc.) and modern phonetics (half of the pictophonetic characters). It can be seen that the richness of strokes of Chinese characters and Western phonetics characters is incomparable…The combination of and connection between Chinese strokes can be described as countless diversification. Moreover, other letters are used to represent sounds and form words, which are meaningless in forms themselves, and the single sounds they represent are generally detached from meaning. The strokes of Chinese characters themselves may be intentional, and their combination not only constructs the meaning, but also the pronunciation. Therefore, the strokes of Chinese characters are different from the letters that make up words. It is another fundamentally different way of constructing meaning, more similar to Distinctive Features suggested by phonetics."Zhang Xianglong, "Why can Chinese Calligraphy Become an Art" 为什么中国书法能成为艺术. In Zhang Xianglong, *Cong xianxiangxue dao Kong Fuzi* 从现象学到孔夫子 (From Phenomenology to Confucius) (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2011).

黄公望 (1269−1354) and Ni Zan 倪瓒 (1301−1374) defied representational painting in both theory and creative practices.[11] Ni Zan made it clear that painting shall not aim at portraying objective things, but shall adopt brushwork to express one's selfhood ("*xiongzhong yiqi*" 胸中逸气 [the feel of spontaneity and transcendence in the Heart]).[12] But the emergence of self-sufficient theories started with the discourse on the Northern and Southern School proposed by the *Songjiang* 松江 coterie led by Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555−1636) in the mid to late Ming period[13], which traced its origins to the High Tang period (the early 8th

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11 See *Shi Qu Bao Ji* 石渠宝笈, volume 30. The Cursive and seal script technique of art applied in painting is inherited directly from Zhao Mengfu. Huang Gongwang wrote in the postscript that "I personally saw his streaks and sprays of ink, when I was a pupil in the Songxue Zhai" (recorded in *Shi Qu Bao Ji*, volume 30). Songxue Zhai is Zhao's studio. Huang's painting, *Cliff of Mount Tianchi*, now in the collection of the Palace Museum, has a postscript written by his contemporary, a *Hanlin Daizhi* (title of official) of the Yuan Dynasty, Liu Guan, that reads "As Wuxing's chief disciple, who could become an old hand without bleeding fingers." Wuxing is an honorific title of Zhao Mengfu and Huang Gonghuang here was respected by Liu Guan as the first disciple of Zhao. 草籀笔法入画直接传承自赵孟頫，黄公望有诗云："当年亲见公挥洒，松雪斋中小学生。"（载《石渠宝笈》初编卷三十）故宫博物院藏黄公望《天池石壁图》有同代人元朝翰林待制柳贯题跋："吴兴室内大弟子，几人皲轮无血指。"

12 See *Qing Men Ge Quan Ji* 清闷阁全集. Ni Zan has close exchanges with Huang Gongwang, but he has a more conscious expression on the functions of brushwork. In his *Response to Zhang Zaozhonghe* wrote: "Today I went out to a quiet place outside town, and read the deeds of Shanyuan. With painting to capture the scenery, the twists and turns could present the best of its beauty, which might be beyond me. If daubing hastily, only the material aspects of things are left; this is not the intention of painting. Painters in my heart, have nothing more than free brushwork, not for imitation, but just for self-amusement. Recently, I travelled around and occasionally came to town. People who asked me for paintings insist on their own assignment and are strict on time, or there could be contempt, insult, and wrath everywhere. I'm so wronged! How can you accuse the eunuch of having no beard? Because it is just me working with what I have." 倪瓒与黄公望交往密切，但对笔法的作用有更为自觉地表述，在其《答张藻仲书》中写道："今日出城外闲静处，始得读剡源事迹。图写景物，曲折能尽状其妙处，盖我则不能之。若草草点染，遗其骊黄牝牡之形色，则又非乎图之意。仆之所谓画者，不过逸笔草草，不求形似，聊以自娱耳。近迁游偶来城邑，索画者必欲依彼所指授，又欲应时而得，鄙辱怒骂，无所不有。冤矣乎。讵可责寺人以髯也！是亦仆自有以取之耶。"

13 See *Hua Chan Shi Sui Bi* 画禅室随笔. Dong Qichang explored it with his contemporaries Chen Jiru, Mo Shilong, and Shen Hao. Dong concluded in volume two of his *Hua Chan Shi Sui Bi* that "the Zen sect has two schools, north and south, divided since the Tang dynasty. And the two schools of painting are not divided due to geography, but how they paint. The North School was founded by Li Sixun and his son Li Zhaodao, whose technique of coloring landscapes was inherited by Zhao Gan, Zhao Boju, Zhao Bosu, until the Ma Yuan and Xia Gui generation. The South School, typified by Wang Mojie (Wang Wei), rendered light with ink and converted the contouring way of painting; the techniques were passed on to Zhang Zao, Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Ju Ran, Guo Zhongshu, Mi Fu, and his first son Mi Youren, until the Four Masters of Yuan Dynasty. It is just like the Sixth Patriarch of Zen, Hui Neng, who created Zen culture, which was then spread by Ma Ju (Mazu Daoyi), Yunmen, Linji, offspring of the flourishing

century).[14] The fundamental change in Chinese painting in this period lies in the prevalence of the language of line just as in *shufa*[15] and the use of ink in lieu of color as the key means to evoke ambience/atmosphere but not real objects.[16]

Such a transition of aesthetic consciousness and technique of creation artwork is grounded upon worldviews and epistemology. Ever since the dawn of the modern era, methodologies drawn from Western art history have predominated in Chinese art history, so much so that the history of *shufa* and *xieyi* painting in China and East Asia in general has long been overshadowed. Due to contending worldviews and epistemologies, the two kinds of Art are incompatible with one another. In Western art history, the essence is seen as veracious (Truth), embodied in the myriad of things human can perceive and comprehend. The Artwork serves to present upshots or processes of such embodiment and to address ontological concerns or the structure of consciousness as image of the phenomenon. From Aristotle and Plato, medieval scholasticism, Kant, to Husserl and Heidegger, Western thinking has long been proceeding along this line. By contrast, no such noumenon as the essence has been validated in ancient Chinese thought,

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Southern school; the North School gradually became weaker mainly because the the cliffs of clouds and the traces of stones (so-called by Mojie [Wang Wei]) are far more amazing than the mystery of nature. Between the strokes is the epiphany of creation. Dongpo (Su Shi), who appreciated the mural paintings by Wu Daozi and Wang Wei, also said: I am the same as Wei. These are words from a confidant." 董其昌与同时的陈继儒、莫是龙、沈颢共同探求，在董其昌《画禅室随笔》卷二中总结为："禅家有南北二宗，唐时始分。画之南北二宗，亦唐时分也。但其人非南北耳。北宗则李思训父子着色山水，流传而为宋之赵干、赵伯驹、伯骕，以至马、夏辈。南宗则王摩诘始用渲淡，一变勾研（一作研，乃误）之法，其传为张躁、荆、关、董、巨、郭忠恕、米家父子，以至元之四大家，亦如六祖之后有马驹（马祖道一）、云门、临济，儿孙之盛，而北宗微矣。要之，摩诘所谓云峰石迹，迥出天机，笔意纵横，参乎造化者，东坡（苏轼）赞吴道子、王维画壁，亦云：吾于（王）维也无间然（完全一致）。知言哉。"

14 Methods of Wang Wei (701–761) and Wu Daozi have always been documented, but their original works haven't been perserved. A landscape painting in the recently discovered Han Xiu's tomb (Tang Dynasty) shows that there are indeed paintings created with the materials and methods completely identical to *shufa*.

15 That is "the techniques which not only use lines but also simultaneously use difference gradation of ink colours were passed on to Zhang Zao, Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Ju Ran, Guo Zhongshu, Mi Fu, and his first son Mi Youren, until the Four Masters of Yuan Dynasty." See *Hua Chan Shi Sui Bi*.

16 "The South School, typified by Wang Mojie (Wang Wei), rendered light with ink and converted the contouring way of painting…Mojie (Wang Wei) said that the cliffs of clouds and the traces of stones are far more amazing than the mystery of nature, between the strokes and the epiphany of creation." See *Hua Chan Shi Sui Bi*.

except for the "being of non-being" (㤡 in Chinese, pronounced as *wai,* i.e., the combination of the initial of *wu* 无 and the vowel of *zai* 在). "Being of No-being" means the essence of the world and humanity lies in nonexistence — a kind of Void, which yet is impregnated with the relationship between human and all correlations to other related factors and can become "Real" through the engagement of human consciousness, perception, and cognization. Hence the four facets of humanity, i.e. me-to-me, me-to-others, me-to-it, and me-to-He (the sacred or transcendent), from which emerge the world and human nature, are engrained in all human consciousness and human actions. *Wai* can be "incarnated" in different entities and ideas, from which various philosophies or ontologies originated across cultures and historical eras. Therefore, the myriad of things is not the virtual presence of the essence/noumenon, nor is it not. What really makes the difference is a keen awareness of the "being of non-being" — nonexistent and free, just as the variety of human perceptions and existential states is embodied in images and facts when a human faces life and the world in either a highly proactive or pessimistic way.

In such a framework, the absence of the thing-in-itself leads to the groundlessness of phenomena and the Truth becomes reliant on humans' interpretation and ends up becoming a vacancy after *aletheia.* Ancient Chinese philosophy features Lao Tzu's 老子 ontological discourse that goes as "from being comes the myriad of things, and from non-being comes being"[17]. When coming to Zen Buddhism, monk-thinkers from the Sui and Tang Dynasty (581–907), especially Master Hui Neng 慧能[18], posited "not a thing exists in the world

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17 See The Book of Tao and Teh (老子・四十章). "All things of the world / are born from Existence (Being), and Being from Nothingness." 天下万物生于有，有生于无。Lao Tzu, *The Book of Tao and Teh*, trans. Gu Zhengkun (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2010).

18 Hui Neng 慧能（638–713）has five famous disciples: Qingyuan Xingsi, Nanyue Huairang, Heze Shenhui, Nanyang Huizhong, and Yongjia Xuanjue. His disciples then developed their own schools; among them, Qingyuan and Nanyue were the most successful. Nanyue developed into Linji and Weiyang, while Qingyuan developed into Caodong, Yunmen, and Fayan, together forming the Five Schools of Zen, the so-called five leaves from the same branch.

at all", inspired by Indian philosophy, especially mādhyamaka preached by Nāgārjuna (150–250). This transcendence of both noumena and phenomena liberated the heart and mind of Chinese literati and disengaged them from the entrapment of worldly concerns. *Shufa* resonates with such transcendent aims, featuring "spiritualism" of self-expression, from which derived *shanshui hua* 山水画 (the mountains-and-waters painting, a landscape painting written as Word-Writing Art). These monk-thinkers assigned the ultimate being to non-being, thereby transcended the strictures imposed by family ties and worldly life, as well as ego and egoism. By contrast, the Artist remains an ordinary person and the four facets of humanity associated with "being of non-being" as outlined above are all embodied and engrained in his/her life experience. The Artist is still a Being. Traces of brushwork left behind during the act of "writing" *shufa* register the Artist's bodily movement and mental activities, reveal his self-cultivation; this requires the Artist to turn inward or face outward, to the outside world, to draw inspiration for his art. The outside world is not an absolute representational Object, but a "nature" that nurtures humanities. From Indian philosophy's spiritual transcendence to Lao Tzu's quietism and nonaction, the Artist can continue his life smoothly through self-negation. A derivative of *shufa, xieyi* painting has gone further in terms of broadening and enriching the ideation and creative latitude of *xieyi*. Aberrant from the norm of Western art history, such an alternative highlights the issue of engagement. It can be said that *shufa* marks the apogee of achievement of Chinese art and East Asian art in general, and that Chinese painting was fundamentally transformed by the adoption the creative principle of *shufa*. *Xieyi* hence becomes the first type of Chinese art not encapsulated by the canopy of Western Art History. *Xieyi* renders the representational content of images, specific timeframes, and spaces irrelevant. It is all about the expressiveness of the abstract trace, which cogently relates human temperament — e.g., emotion, mood, and the like — which is timeless across history. Not merely presenting regional/provincial cases, *xieyi* has become the predominant creative principle in Chinese art and East Asian Art in general, starting from as early as the 2nd–4th century and threading

through history until artistic ideas imported from the West took center stage in the art scene in China in the late 19th century. Even in today's postcolonial era, *xieyi* remains the key asset of East Asian art — an issue that can be addressed from the perspective of engagement.

To take a step further, non-representational art forms such as *shufa* can find echoes in Paleolithic cave art (e.g., Lascaux), which shows traces of drawing such as lines and dots besides other mimetic images, a phenomenon yet to be fully explained.[19] To construe such traces as signs indicates a way of exegesis still under the sway of Judeo-Christian hermeneutics of image. To make sense of a sign, one must count on the shaping of it, whereas in *shufa* traces (strokes/lines) shall be rendered "significant" in their own right. In light of this line of thinking, we shall explore a third type of images/pictures that features immediate expression of feeling, mood and the other unspeakable spirits — for all kinds of purposes and out of all kinds of motives. A better understanding of *shufa* and *xieyi* painting can help us unravel the issue of engagement.

Thanks in part to the work of Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian, Abstract Expressionism has freed Art from the shackles of representation, although how to study non-representational art remains an issue. Besides mentalité and sociohistorical contexts, we need to study the noumenon of Art as well. As an epitome of the noumenon of Art, *shufa* provides a critical lens for us to rethink the issue of engagement, in reference to both arts in its infancy, during early human history, and modern art such as abstract art.[20]

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19   Don Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola discovered Altamira cave in 1875. At the time, all interpretations, regardless of the dispute on whether it was Paleolithic cave art, were predicated on the assumption that the found cave paintings are realistic images.

20   In the early stage of abstract art in Western, attention has been paid to disengaging of this art from reproducing material Objects as "die Reinheit der Gestaltung"(fine form), which can be referred to Oswald Herzog, in his article on "Der Abstrakte Expressionismus" (*Der Sturm*, Zweites Heft, 1919, 29): "Abstract Expressionism is perfect Expressionism. It is pure creation. It casts spiritual processes into a corporeal mould. It does not borrow objects from the real world; it creates its own objects... The abstract reveals the will of the artist; it becomes expression..." English after William A. Drake.

Chinese art history is not all about *shufa* and *xieyi* painting, beyond which there are plentiful written documents, visual images, and material cultures worthy of research. The tripartite of image-language-material as a gateway of studying human civilization serves to validate seemingly "non-artistic" images or objects as suitable subjects for historical study. As a discipline of the Humanities, Art History has been steering towards imagology (*Bildwissenschaft*), i.e., studying images as a way of addressing a wide range of issues on history and humanity. This does not mean we no longer need history of art-itself, i.e., art in history. If our study of images fails to address the core aesthetic ideas and values that have come into being in a culture in the *longue durée,* then it can only be counted as a science of picture, not Art History.

（Translated by Li Jin）

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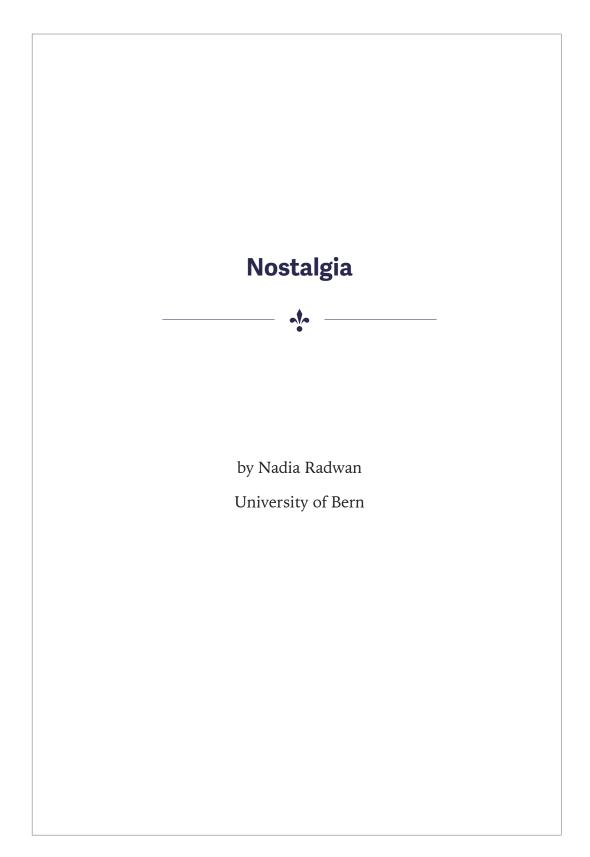
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Nostalgia

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Abstract

This essay discusses the concept of nostalgia as a paradigm that comes into play in engaged art and particularly in contemporary artistic practices and theories that relate to the global margins. While international art platforms and the museum are increasingly calling for decolonization, inclusion and diversity, issues of remembrance, migration and exile, trauma and loss, fragmentation and restoration, often appear to be negotiated or viewed through the paradigm of nostalgia. Can nostalgia be used as a critical tool to address these problematics? Can the aesthetics of nostalgia activate change or even inspire debate? Or, on the contrary, does nostalgia fix and maintain difference when it comes to gender and racial issues, as well as their intersectionalities? Is there a clear demarcation between the perpetrators of colonial nostalgia and the inheritors of its legacies? This essay intends to address these questions and expand the reflection on nostalgia as an effective term for the field of global art history.

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Between Concept and Affect

Although the concept of nostalgia is becoming ever more present in contemporary art practices and discourses, it has not yet been comprehensively analyzed when it comes to engaged art, notably when it is produced by artists belonging to minorities or coming from the so-called global margins. Indeed, the relationship of nostalgia with themes related to (post)colonialism, nation-building, and identity politics deserves to be further examined.[1] One of the convolutions of the term nostalgia that complexifies its investigation, but also broadens its spectrum, lies in its constant oscillation between concept and affect. Interestingly, this unsettled definition of nostalgia, going back and forth between scientific inquiry and sentiment is also what characterizes ethnographic and racial representations that ambiguously fluctuate between powerful discursively constructed scholarly facts and emotion.

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1   This essay is based on a research project undertaken at the University of Bern, Switzerland, on nostalgia in modern and contemporary art and architecture in the Middle East and North Africa that resulted in a collection of essays and a scientific article. The project was awarded the "Inspired Teaching" Grant from the University of Bern, Switzerland, in 2021. See Nadia Radwan and Laura Hindelang, eds., "Nostalgia and Belonging in Art and Architecture from the MENA Region. A Collection of Essays," _Manazir: Swiss Platform for the Study of Visual Arts, Architecture and Heritage in the MENA Region_, 2021, https://manazir.art/blog/nostalgia-and-belonging-art-and-architecture-mena-region. Nadia Radwan and Laura Hindelang, "Between Affect and Concept: Nostalgia in Modern and Contemporary Art and Architecture from the Middle East and North Africa," in _Studies in the Arts - Neue Perspektiven auf Forschung über, in und durch Kunst und Design_, eds. Thomas Gartmann and Christina Urchugeia (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, forthcoming 2022).

The term nostalgia (from the Greek *nostos*, return; home, and *algos*, pain) was first coined by the physician Johannes Hofer (1669–1752) to describe the extreme homesickness felt by Swiss mercenaries posted in France and Italy in the late seventeenth century. The symptoms of this affliction included melancholia, insomnia, anorexia, weakness, and anxiety, and, in certain cases, suicidal ideation.[2] During the nineteenth century, the physiological understandings of nostalgia gradually gave way to an existential but nonetheless incurable condition of romanticism linked to emotion. Nostalgia has since been theorized as a dialectic relationship between past and future across various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities.[3]

From the mid-2000s onwards, the meaning of nostalgia has been debated in modern and contemporary art and architecture.[4] This development may be linked to the fact that a growing number of artists have introduced practices for archiving, reimagining, and deconstructing past, present, and future in order to create decolonial and transnational approaches to cultural memory, knowledge production, and politics. Such approaches have been the focus of international exhibitions, centering on the use of photographic archives and documents, and featuring the works of artists such as Tacita Dean, Vivan Sundaram, and Walid Raad, amongst others[5], while simultaneously entering the semantics of contemporary art discourse.[6]

This "nostalgic turn" has opened up the reflection on ways to examine

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2 Janelle L. Wilson, "'Remember When…': A Consideration of the Concept of Nostalgia," *TC: A Review of General Semantics* 56, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 297.

3 Jean Starobinski and William S. Kemp, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes* 14, no. 54 (1966): 81–103; Fred Davis, "Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 11, no. 2 (1977): 414–424; Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

4 Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October*, no. 110 (Autumn 2004): 3–22; Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room*, no. 23 (Spring 2006): 6–21; Claire Bishop, "How did we get so nostalgic for modernism?" *fotomuseum winterthur* (blog), 14 Sep. 2013, https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/2013/09/14/how-did-we-get-so-nostalgic-for-modernism/. accessed 15 September 2020.

5 Okwui Enwezor, ed., *Archive Fever. Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (Göttingen: International Center of Photography. Exh. Cat., 2008).

6 Charles Merewether, ed., *The Archive. Document of Contemporary Art Series* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

modernism and the question as to why contemporary artists are drawn to the aesthetics of western modernist experiences as well as its failed utopias. Claire Bishop, in her insightful question "How did we get so nostalgic for Modernism?", referring to examples such as Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's *Chandigarh Book* (1996) or Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Dom-Ino* (1998), evokes the photogenic quality of Le Corbusier's projects and the manners in which contemporary artists may have contributed to shaping the nostalgic aesthetics of modernism.[7] However, modernist ideological endeavors comparable to Le Corbusier's architectural projects have not only activated critical responses in formerly colonized contexts, whether North Africa, the Middle East or South Asia, but also engendered multiple stories of modernism, as well as contestations.

The artist Kader Attia, in his multimedia installation *The Object's Interlacing* (2014−2020)[8], juxtaposes the stories, actors, and genealogies of brutalist concrete modernist North African architecture with vernacular mud brick traditional architecture, thereby unfolding a dialectic between the art historical narrative of universality and cultural authenticity. Nostalgia, in Attia's *Genealogies*, can be understood as an individual or collective reaction towards the unsettling experiences of modernity, constantly shifting between the hegemony of universalism and the nostalgic desire for new aesthetics resulting from transcultural exchange of knowledge and culture. This ever-changing nature of nostalgia triggers the question of positionality and subjectivity. Which audiences does nostalgia concern? Does the location of the exhibition space or the lived experiences of the viewers change the meaning of nostalgia? And who is entitled to be nostalgic about what?

While nostalgia was understood as a treatable sickness linked to melancholia in the seventeenth century, Svetlana Boym, in her seminal *The Future of Nostalgia*,

7   Claire Bishop, "How did we get so nostalgic for modernism?" *fotomuseum winterthur* (blog), 14 September 2013, https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/2013/09/14/how-did-we-get-so-nostalgic-for-modernism/, accessed 15 September 2020.

8   I am referring here to Kader Attia's installation as it was displayed in the exhibition *Kader Attia: Remembering the Future* at the Kunsthaus Zurich (21 August – 15 November 2020).

asserts that in the twentieth century it had become an "incurable disease", given that "nostalgia like progress, is dependent on the modern conception of unrepeatable and irreversible time"[9.] Thus, nostalgia cannot be comprehended as fixed in a temporality or a locality but is, rather, an unstable and ever transforming process that is directed as much to the past as it is to the future. This transgeographic and transhistoric dimension of nostalgia resonates in the politics of belonging, as emphasized by Nira Yuval-Davis, who argues that "even in its most stable 'primordial' forms, […] belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations"[10].

Colonial Nostalgia

The close link between nostalgia and belonging has also been underlined by the Palestinian artist, theorist, and critic Kamal Boullata who, in his reflection about belonging and globalization, considers that "affirming one's *be/ing* through *longing*" has become a touchstone of aesthetic expression throughout Arab culture.[11] Hence, spatial geographic distance in the field of global art is often translated by temporal distance and the discourse it produces is often geographically distant from the actual context to which it pertains.[12] Moreover, this distanciation present in nostalgia resonates in the prejudice of timelessness, anachronism, or archaism that has often been projected onto art produced in nonwestern contexts. Therefore, if, as underlined by Timothy Mitchell, "staging the modern has always required the non-modern, the space of colonial difference"[13],

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9   Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 7, 13.

10   Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3 (2006): 199.

11   Finbarr Barry Flood, ed., *There Where You Are Not: Selected Writings of Kamal Boullata* (Munich: Hirmer, 2019), 428; Kamal Boullata, *Belonging and Globalisation: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture* (London: Saqi, 2008).

12   Peter J. Schneemann, "Les paradigmes du regard. La perception de l'art à l'ère globale," *Diogène* 3, no. 231 (2010): 154−157.

13   Timothy Mitchell, *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xxvi.

then the relationship of colonial nostalgia to contemporary art practices and theory deserves to be investigated.

Andreas Huyssen has argued that the nostalgic longing for a past "is always also a longing for another place", a "utopia in reverse"[14]. This definition of nostalgia, a yearning for a place that no longer exists or has never existed, links it not only to the remembrance or the desire for what has been lost, such as the sublime of the ruin, but also to the imagined other and remote lands, which have been romanticized from the eighteenth century onwards. In that perspective, notions such as 'the east' or 'the orient', understood in the sense defined by Edward Said as concepts that have been discursively constructed by western scholarship through a colossal body of knowledge[15], can be linked to the nostalgic desire for a temporality and a spatiality that did not necessarily exist. But then, can nostalgia as a means for engaged art transcend the binaries between local/universal, self/other, here/there in contemporary art practices by involving colonial aesthetics?

The ambiguity of colonial or imperial nostalgia lies precisely in the fact that it operates on two levels: on the one hand, it is used in engaged art dealing with identity politics, issue of gender and race; on the other hand, it can also be triggered by the actual agents of racism and neocolonialism. In both cases, paradoxically, it is expressed as a nostalgia for a place and culture as it was before or during colonization. As Renato Rosaldo underlined, imperialist nostalgia "uses a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination"[16]. William Cunningham Bissell poses a similar question: "How exactly do we come to terms with expressions of colonial nostalgia by the descendants of those who struggled long and hard to overcome the effects of European domination and exploitation?"[17]

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14 Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room*, no. 23 (2006): 6–21.

15 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

16 Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations*, Special Issue: *Memory and Counter-Memory*, no. 26 (Spring 1989): 108.

17 William Cunningham Bissell, "Engaging Colonial Nostalgia," *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (2005): 216.

Hence, it appears that these two antinomic manifestations of colonial or imperialist nostalgia happen to intersect or overlap in contemporary artworks that display colonial aesthetics. This ambivalence can be found, for instance, in South African artist and activist Zanele Muholi's powerful large-scale photographic portraits. In the sleek black and white photographs that recall ethnographic clichés that were displayed in the Arsenale during the 58th Venice Biennale held in 2019, the female subjects' gaze is defiantly reversed, directly towards the viewer, thereby exercising what Judith Butler has called "a plural and performative right to appear"[18]. In that case, the incorporation of the aesthetics of colonial photography and primitivism are used by Muholi as a critical means to celebrate blackness and queer aesthetics while the ambiguity of nostalgia engages the viewer's emotion, whether desire, repulsion, or both, by calling on his/her/their own relation to such aesthetics.

Archival Obsession

Undoubtedly one of the mediums that most immediately generates the sentiment of nostalgia is photography, which is nostalgic in its essence, as the photograph instantly fixes realities in the past to become the marker of the "what has been"[19]. As Susan Sontag remarked, "photographs actively promote nostalgia" and most subjects are "just by virtue of being photographed, touched with pathos"[20]. While photography can be considered as an "apparatus of power"[21] that enables the perpetration of stereotypes through the hegemonic gaze[22], when practiced in

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18 Judith Butler, "Gender Politics and the Right to Appear," in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 25; see also Alexandra Poulain, "Gazing Back: Decolonial Strategies in Zanele Muholi's 'Faces and Phases,'" *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 2019, http://journals.openedition.org/ces/1262.

19 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 79.

20 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 15.

21 Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2014), 85.

22 Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

colonial contexts, it can also be a means to reclaim modernity and its ownership through 'imitation' as an act of engagement.[23] Such overlapping displays of colonial aesthetics through photography broaden the scope of nostalgia from being solely a marker of othering to a critical tool for reclaiming indigenous agency. The fact that nostalgia operates as a mode of social memory by emphasizing distance and disjuncture may partly explain the widespread use of archival documents in global contemporary art and curatorial practices.[24]

Svetlana Boym defines *reflective* nostalgia as a notion related to loss, melancholia, and mourning that is signified by the decay of the ruin, the fragment, and a sense of distance and defamiliarization.[25] Instances of reflective nostalgia can be found in situations of conflict, war, and the trauma of destruction and exile that resonate in the widespread excavation and the usage of the archive by many artists in the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed, works by artists such as Emily Jacir, Mariam Ghani, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, and Zineb Sedira all engage with textual, photographic, or oral archival documents in their work and address questions of memory, remembrance, and fragmented topographies and histories.[26]

Thus, the archive and counter-archive[27] are often closely linked to the notion of nostalgia. Jacques Derrida has described the "archive fever" (*mal d'archives*) of our times as "a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the

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23 Stephen Sheehi, "A Social History of Early Arab Photography or a Prolegomenon to an Archaeology of the Lebanese Imago," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 2 (2007): 178.

24 Hal Foster, "Archives of Modern Art," *October*, no. 99 (Winter 2002.): 81–95; Beatrice von Bismarck et al., *Interarchive: archivarische Praktiken und Handlungsräume im zeitgenössischen Kunstfeld* (Köln: König, 2002); Okwui Enwezor, ed., *Archive Fever. Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*.

25 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 55.

26 Sonja Mejcher-Atassi, and John Pedro Schwartz, eds., *Archives, Museums, and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Anthony Downey, ed., *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

27 Cf. Yvonne Schweizer's entry on "Counter-Archive" in this volume.

return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement"[28]. And, along with the archive's function, classification and ordering, comes archival violence, which one can find, for instance, in colonial repositories. As "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events"[29], the absences, voids, and concealed stories of the archive reveal, in the words of Gayatri Spivak, its "epistemic violence" applied through an "alien ideology established as the only truth, and a set of human sciences busy establishing the 'native' as self-consolidating Other"[30]. Nevertheless, while practices of counter-archives in contemporary art may reveal other stories and discourses from outside the archive's apparatus of power, the obsessive usage of archival documents also points to their attractive material quality. Therefore, as nostalgia has become so prevalent in the works of contemporary artists when addressing issues of war and the disappearance of cultural memory, one is consequently entitled to ask to what extent it has become constitutive of a canon of global art history. And while being an artist from the global margins has also become an emotional marker, nostalgia may conceal the critical potential of decolonizing approaches as much as it may offer new ways of analyzing the construction of narratives and emotion in contemporary art.

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29 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 145.

30 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives (Introduction) 1985/1999," in *The Archive. Document of Contemporary Art Series*, edited by Charles Merewether (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 165.
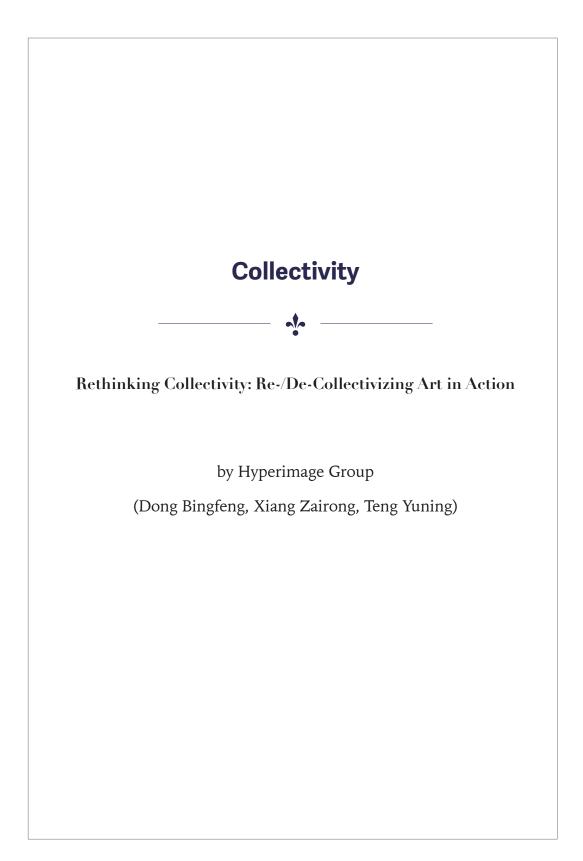
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Collectivity

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Rethinking Collectivity: Re-/De-Collectivizing Art in Action

by Hyperimage Group

(Dong Bingfeng, Xiang Zairong, Teng Yuning)

Abstract

Rethinking "collectivity" aims at carving a methodology and standpoint to deconstruct the rigid forms of collectivity and to build different possibilities of reconnection. The term "to de/re-collectivize" is coined by Hyperimage Group to interpret contemporary artistic practices that intervene in social realities. This essay focuses on three representative artists from Hyperimage's exhibition project "Why Collectivity?" for the Guangzhou Image Triennial 2021: Kidlat Tahimik (the Philippines), Koki Tanaka (Japan), and Daniel G. Andújar (Spain). Their practices respond to the core concern "re-/de-collectivize art in action," which seeks to examine the changing modes of collective memory and visual heritage as they are confronted by the ongoing expansion of global capitalist markets and competing (geo-) politics, as well as the ways in which the imagination of a utopic social order becomes communal (artistic) practices of ad-hoc assemblies and temporary collectivities.

Why do we decide to rethink collectivity, especially given its heavy historic imprint in socialist experiment, a collective memory from where we write as a collective? Our rethinking of "collectivity" does not start with a categorical definition of "collectivity" but aims at carving a methodology and standpoint to deconstruct the rigid forms of collectivity and to build different possibilities of reconnection. We coin the term "to de/re-collectivize" to read and interpret contemporary artistic practices. The term in verbal form rather than a conceptual noun-ification emphasizes the *action* of collectivity's "deconstruction" and/or "reconstruction." The space in between is where artists and their projects find a way to negotiate the productive tension, which could be expressed in Daoist philosophy as a co-existence that is interdependent while mutually restraining, "xiang sheng xiang ke"（相生相克）.

Background: Facing Reality

Against the background of a supremely complex "post-image" world, art is caught amongst multiple challenges, pressures, and even threats: the exigence of political correctness and consumerism from both art institutions and the market itself, as well as complex problems that have surfaced from accelerated technological over-development, felt at both the level of the local community and of the nation-state, the imminent threat of global warfare. Since 2020, the

Covid-19 pandemic has further manifested an extreme scenario of ongoing ecological devastation and social crisis. The infinite mixture and superposition of images have given rise to a "post-image" era in which the traditional hierarchies of disciplines and boundaries between different forms of image-making, between author-subject and work-object, have disappeared.

Now everyone can produce images and the field of art is infinitely open. Contemporary art has moved far away from "representation" in the classical sense. What is/are the direction(s) art could/should move towards? Many artists have given us answers through practices that negotiate and interrupt the boundaries between artistic sensibility and social reality. The connection between and collectivity of cultural practitioners has become ever more crucial. Art museums/institutions and exhibitions have also moved beyond their traditional role of research and knowledge production within and between given disciplines. They have taken up the function of a public space for political action where the interchanging of human actors and events effectively take place to address ever-expanding social issues. All have pointed to a new reality in which collectivities are formed and dissolved following new temporalities of existence and new lines of alliances rather than traditional political and religious communities.

In this essay, we will discuss some representative artworks by three artists who participated in Hyperimage's exhibition project "Why Collectivity" for the Guangzhou Image Triennial 2021.[1] Their practices respond to the core concern

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1   Guangzhou Image Triennial chose Hyperimage's "Rethinking Collectivity" as its 2021 main theme. However, the organizer of the triennial was told to change the theme two weeks before the inauguration of the exhibition without explanation. Shortly after the announcement of "Rethinking Collectivity" in 2020, we happily learnt that collectivity had not been of interest solely to our curatorial collective. Many art institutions and events across the world also shared this concern through their discussions around precisely the questions of "collectivity." (For example, the 2021 Turner Prize selected a shortlist consisting entirely of artist collectives; the theme of La Biennale Architettura of Venice 2021 has adopted: "How Will We Live Together?", not to mention the new edition of documenta that will be curated by the artist collective ruangrupa.) Thus, rethinking collectivity is not a cliché, but a collective concern (that is, a collective rethinking) formed by cultural practitioners and thinkers at the current moment of global emergency. Shall we take this as a sign of the formation of a new "collectivity" in some sense? Together with 17 artists (including one collective) from three continents and 11 countries, "Why Collectivity" tried to explore the visual experiences from different histories through three angles: ecology, art of the common, and collective memory.

"re-/de-collectivize art in action" which aims at examining the changing modes of collective memory and visual heritage as they are confronted by the ongoing expansion of global capitalist markets and competing (geo-) politics as well as the ways in which the imagination of a utopic social order becomes communal (artistic) practices of ad-hoc assemblies and temporary collectivities.

Kapwa: The Art of Community

The seemingly isolated, dispersed, and regional disasters all stemming from worldwide ecological devastation, one must argue, are the direct product of and continuously exacerbated by Western capitalist colonization (and its accompanying structural violence in the forms of financial capitalism and militarization) over the past 500 years. Global capitalism in the post-colonial era wears other outfits and continues its colonial legacy of exploitation, the Hollywood film industry one of them, according to Filipino filmmaker and artist Kidlat Tahimik. Artists join forces with eco-criticism to address the multifarious inequalities passed down through history and intensified in today's "cultural clashes." They also take action to imagine a livable common world, or, to put it another way, to establish a relationship between human and non-human worlds. That could be understood as a form of "collectivity" or "community" between human society and natural environment.

Tahimik has provided us, through his cinematic narratives full of playful ironies, a complex model to rethink these serious questions of historical and ecological survival. He himself often plays the role of an indigenous character from a colonized country, who is at once both "naïve" and economically cunning in his adventures through capitalist modernity. One might argue that his cinematic world captures a reality of the third world through a globalized gaze. One salient example is his ongoing mega film project *Balikbayan #1: Memory of an Overdevelopment, 1979 –*, which has gone through continuous shooting, editing, and reediting, combining a kaleidoscope of home videos, documentary, karaoke MTVs, mixed with fictional scenes from the 1980s through the 2000s, staged primarily by Tahimik's family members and neighboring villagers. *Balikbayan #1* invokes

the hitherto ignored historical figure Enrique de Malacca, the enslaved Filipino servant of Magellan. The project is imbued with an outstanding personal style and meaningful activism. Tahimik's work has been filed under "third cinema," namely a film of decolonization emerging from third-world countries, an act of resistance against the "first cinema" of Hollywood and "second cinema" of European art film. However, Tahimik builds his discussion of politics and cinemas on the principles of communitarianism, self-reliance, and self-determination.[2]

Balikbayan #1 can be seen as Tahimik's life-long reflection on colonial history and the defense of local culture and memory. One puzzling scene towards the end of the film is worth pondering. The director falls asleep on the editing machine and a scene from Werner Herzog's 1974 film *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* emerges from the screen in front, in which the young Tahimik plays the role of an Amerindian "Hombrecito" (in Spanish: little man — its colonial undertone cannot be more explicit) required by the director to "speak your own language." This scene conjures up two intertwined histories: that of Ferdinand Magellan's arrival and the history of enslavement of the Philippines; and that of contemporary Filipino encounters with the West. These two historic moments are entangled by an ironic communality that, we argue, sets Tahimik's "The Third World is People Power"[3] apart from the decolonial endeavor that seeks to get rid of or "delink from" colonial influences.[4] The communality Tahimik establishes is an honest look at the colonial legacy in the very formation of the (postcolonial) Filipino identity, the *kapwa* — "the unity of the 'self' and 'others' […] a recognition of shared identity."[5] The irony is that, without Magellan, Enrique would not have travelled

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2 Christopher Pavsek, *The Utopia of Film: Cinema and Its Futures in Godard, Kluge, and Tahimik* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 38.

3 In Tahimik's 1994 film *Why is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow,* his son asked him what the third world is, for which he answered, "third world is people power." (around 5'13"−6'56")

4 Pavsek, *The Utopia of Film*, 171−172.

5 Virgilio G. Enriquez, "Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology," in *Philippine World-View*, ed. Virgilio G. Enriquez (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 1986), 11; see also Katrin De Guia, *Kapwa: The Self in the Other, Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture-Bearers* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 2005); and Hsu Fang-Tze, "The Voice of the Third World in the Asian Cold War: Kidlat Tahimik," *Renjian Thought Review*, no. 10 (2019): 172−185.

the world and became the first person to circumvent the earth — a marker that is not only a trophy for the "First Man" but, more importantly, as Tahimik shows in the film, is a reminder of the crucial role (or "essential work") that the "slave" of Magellan played in the navigation endeavor: Enrique was the interpreter, the boat-maker, the expert of navigation, the accountant besides being the hairdresser, the cleaner, and the cook … that is to say, he was exactly the embodiment of the "People Power of the Third World." How to understand the entanglement of multiple identities in the director's films? Is it a "Perfumed Nightmare"[6] of the sort that reminds one of colonial brutality and its continuous devastation of the planet? We might find the answer with yet another mutually dependent yet restraining collectivity that often accompanies *Balikbayan #1*'s showing, a group of wood sculptures Tahimik names (with variations) "Battles between Two Goddesses of Wind: The Protracted Kulturwar." The Kulturwar, a "WWIII," stages the wind goddess *Inhabian* of Ifugao blowing up Marilyn Monroe's skirt (itself an iconic collective memory), while a camera made of bamboo records this battle.

Idiorrythmie: The Art of Living Together

Roland Barthes' quest, begun toward the end of his career, for "how to live together" becomes ever more pertinent for reflections on an age of increasing global mobility and migration, an age when traditional categories of affiliation (such as religion) are no longer capable of holding people together. Japanese artist Koki Tanaka amasses many "collective moments" to respond to how we rebuild collaborative networks after catastrophes (such as the 2011 earthquake at Tōhoku or the so-called European "refugee crisis"), in and beyond the artistic milieu. His project "How to Live Together and Sharing the Unknown" for the Skulptur Projekte Münster 2017 invited eight people with different backgrounds and identities to a nine-day workshop to try to live together through a series of planned group activities. To transcend the common concerns of "relational aesthetics" or

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6   "Perfumed Nightmare" is the name of Tahimik's first film made in 1977.

"community art," Tanaka's project aims to critically assess the actual efficacy of artistic practices to foster social reality, however temporary that community might be. His work also asks: how to keep the *idiorrythmie* — that "each subject lives according to his own rhythm"[7] — within collective action? How to connect history to actuality through practices that are rooted in concrete problematics of the social fabric? He sets up multiple cameras to document participants, especially details of their unconscious gestures, emphasizing the process rather than the "meaning" of this participatory art project.[8]

Tanaka's recent work continues this reflection on art's (possible) intervention into the social. Focusing on Zainichi Koreans (immigrant workers from Korea during the Japanese colonial rule of the Korean peninsula and their descents), the project named *Vulnerable Histories (A Road Movie)* consists of six topics exhibited through several screens and accompanied by photographic images that form comprehensive narrative relations with each other. The main format and focus of this "cinema of exhibition" project are that of the conversation, for example, between a half-Swiss, half-Japanese-American man and a Japan-born Zainichi Korean woman that move from quotidian life to the histories of their respective identities in a global context. The artist himself initiates this conversation with different protagonists in the film. These conversations provide some possibility of transgressing rigid national cultural boundaries by "speaking and listening to each other rather than speaking exclusively about the self and the other."[9] The film project has raised awareness of these social issues, including racist attacks, antagonism, and hatred that marginalized groups like the Zainichi Koreans, like many across the world, experience. However, can art really have an impact on real-world society? Tanaka suggests, in response to Sociologist Tong-hyon Han's

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7   Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 6.

8   Koki Tanaka, *How to Live Together: Production Notes* (Münster: Skulptur Projekte, 2017), 16.

9   Koichi Iwabuchi, "Complicit exoticism: Japan and Its Other," *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 8, no. 2 (1994): 49–82.

question in their conversation in the film, that the project intends to carve a "room" in which different histories, protagonists, ideas, and demands could meet, mingle, and result in something. Just as Heike Munder writes in the exhibition catalogue, "The Idea is to turn the museum into a site of active discursive involvement — a space that accommodates doubts and dissent so as to counteract the general tendency toward radicalism and polemics."[10]

Occupatio: The Art of Autonomy

What else could art do today beside provoking reflection and raising awareness? Is there anything art itself is able to do to become a more radical driving force that directly attacks antiquated systems and even brings a new revolution? With a deepened social crisis, regional conflicts, and ever more rigid separations across the globe, what can art do to take up public responsibility? The Spanish artist Daniel G. Andújar gives an answer: "A tremendously complex world like the one we face that is at the same time profoundly interconnected requires complex procedures of collaboration and education in the collective concept. We need a change, and that change must begin with a redefinition of the artist's role in society, and even within his or her specific circumstances."[11]

Downloading high resolution images from the national museums of Prado, Reina Sofía, Louvre, the Hermitage, among others, and printing and framing them the same size as the originals, Andújar's *Master Pieces. Hack the Museum — The People's Museum*, *2018–2020,* launches a thorough deconstruction of traditional art history and contemporary vulgarization-commercialization of classical iconography. Masterpieces like Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* or Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* appeared piled up on top of each other inside the Guangdong Museum of Art (where the Guangzhou Image Triennial 2021 took

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10   Heike Munder, *Koki Tanaka: Vulnerable Histories (An Archive)* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2018), 11.

11   Daniel G. Andújar, "Ways of Working," *The Unavowable Community* (the Catalan Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennial (Barcelona, 2009), 264.

place). The historic and thematic (religious, political, stylistic) specificities of these iconic paintings have assumed new meanings in the site-specific composition, forming temporary collectivities with the audience who gain indiscriminate access to these classics. The contemporary artist is no longer a creator of images, but rather a collector, editor, and even facilitator of images. Through global mobility and localized copying strategies, this work pushes museums and art historical research to face and reflect on the reality of their disciplinary conservatism and institutional rigidity. As Boris Groys argues, "The museum is first and foremost a place where we are reminded of the egalitarian projects of the past and where we can learn to resist the dictatorship of contemporary taste."[12]

Questioning the authoritative image system and the credibility of the archive in collective memory and historiography is a consistent concern of Andújar's work. From the project *Technologies to the People, TTTP*, as early as 1996, that explores the possibilities and absurdities digital media would/could mean for social justice and democracy, to that of the closely related *Postcapital Archive: 1989−2001,* Andújar has closely followed technological development and its impact on society. The project *Postcapital Archive: 1989−2001* consists of an archive of 250,000 files downloaded from the internet, including a large number of images and sounds extracted from journals, videos, and museums. This copious archive records with clarity the world's stunning changes between the end of the Cold War and 9/11. Ready-made images from different media and mass communication are put side by side as an ironic commentary on the out-of-control-madness stemming from ideological sea change, but they also show the multilayered relations between, for example, war and economy, culture and politics. This way of juxtaposing images might suggest a return to Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, yet it also challenges classic studies of iconography. Almost a response to the social predicaments of today, echoing Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* of the 1920s, the visual relations established by Andújar are, however, no longer a result of *Pathosformel*, but of a collective trauma facing contemporary reality.

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12   Boris Groys, "The Logic of Equal Aesthetic Rights," in *Art Power* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008), 21.

Andújar's image archive is not static, but completely open for user consultation, downloading, copying, even editing: "It will be the presence of all citizens that will give art its deepest meaning." [13] The artist explains the ambition behind his idea: "My intention thereby was to create a system of complex relationships with the audience, a dialogue that allowed the viewer to establish an interactive relationship with the project itself, constructing contradictory, even antagonistic relations requiring that all the visual grammar on display be called into doubt."[14] Andújar's work, decentering the author and emphasizing freedom of exchange, calls for a collective action rooted in critical thinking and an insistence on experimentation, a process between de-collectivizing and re-collectivizing. Each time, an occupation is made in a similar vein to what art historian W.J.T. Mitchell calls "occupatio," "the seizure of the antagonists' position and the staging of an emptiness to be filled in later." And he concludes, "Occupatio generally stressed the refusal to speak of something, or the confession of an inability to describe or define."[15]

Conclusion: Freiheitsdrang

Facing a world of increasingly intensified conflicts, we have little expectation of politicians or thinkers to come up with workable solutions to our problems. Meanwhile, artists and their "networks of action" seem to be more efficient, thanks to their intervention in the social life of different registers, cutting through the rigid social categorizations of class, gender, culture, politics, religion, and even ideology. These actions provide lively and dynamic alternatives. The de-/re-collectivizing artistic interventions are not slogans or petitions oriented at achieving concrete political goals, but rather a "Freiheitsdrang" (urge of freedom) aiming to explore alternative ways of assembly and solidarity, essential

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13   Manuel Robles, "Daniel García Andújar exhibition at Iberia Center for Contemporary Art of Beijing," *Catalogue of Postcapital Archive (1989–2001)* (Beijing: Iberia Center for Contemporary Art of Beijing, 2009), 1.

14   Andújar, "Ways of Working," 297.

15   W.J.T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture and Media Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 161.
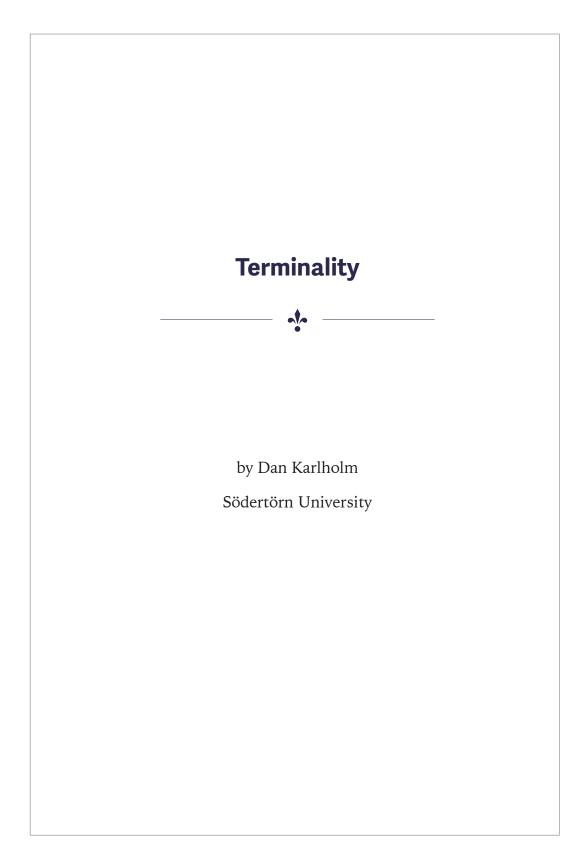
components of collective survival. In this sense, the specificity of the artistic form is of no particular importance and neither is the exhibition as a platform for artistic display. This great transformation of the artistic milieu means that artists no longer work with the end goal of being exhibited in the art museum but to engage with social experimentation in a larger field. Filipino filmmaker and artist Kidlat Tahimik, Japanese filmmaker and artist Koki Tanaka, and Spanish artist and activist Daniel G. Andújar all tackle these complexities in unique ways, through ecologically minded anti-colonial storytelling, situation-specific documentary style exhibition-films, or a revolutionary re-vision of art history and museum's cherished masterpieces through contemporary digital technologies.

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Terminality

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Abstract ───────────────────────────

The liminal term terminality serves as a conversation piece for issues to do with our escalating climate crisis; it is a term of engagement against our lingering collective dis-engagement from what many of us perceive as irrelevant to our profession. Terminality builds alliances between its nominal identity as a term, the temporal duration of a term and the arrival-and-departure characteristics of a terminal. Inevitably, however, the term also connotes end-state or terminal condition. The use-value of such a term is to summon a set of interlinked issues and propositions to stimulate action from and within the most anthropocentric discipline of all: art history. The essay discusses how art history could respond to the above on the level of the material entities of the artworks themselves (usually abbreviated as "art") and the narrations and interconnections we produce to account for their identities, interdependencies and temporal trajectories (usually abbreviated as "history").

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Not long ago, we art historians worried about not being critical enough and devised "critical terms for art history."[1] Today, we need to come to terms with the critical condition of our discipline as a key part of what was formerly known as the Humanities. The term of terms with which we have to engage might be the Anthropocene, but it is coterminously criticized and in danger of being over-used in academic and artistic discourse, despite the fact that it has not yet been certified as the adequate term for the next geological epoch that would terminate the Holocene.[2]

But, to paraphrase atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen, we might not be in the Anthropocene anymore: "We're in the… the… Homocene!"[3] As important as it is to differentiate between *zoë* and *bios*, between bare life and lived human existence, we need to distinguish *anthropos* (referring to species) from *homo* (as in the Human *as opposed to* the Natural sciences). This is not homo as in gay, but as in discoverer, conqueror and human-centered world ruler. Thus, the Homocene would include colonialism, capitalism and similar systems of extraction and exploitation, now and in the past.

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1   Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

2   Jan Zalasiewicz, ed*., The Anthropocene as a Geological Time Unit: A Guide to the Scientific Evidence and Current Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

3   The founding anecdote is to be found, e.g., in Eva Horn and Hannes Bergthaller, *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities* (London & New York: Routledge, 2020), 1.

The liminal term *terminality* serves as a reminder and conversation piece for issues like the one sketched out above; it is a term of engagement against our lingering collective dis-engagement from what many of us perceive as irrelevant to our profession, outside of our expertise, something for natural scientists, politicians and green activists to worry about.

Terminality as a Term

Terminality builds alliances between its nominal identity as a term, the temporal duration of a term and the arrival-and-departure characteristics of a terminal. Inevitably, however, the term also connotes end-state or terminal condition. The use-value of such a term is to summon a set of interlinked issues and propositions to stimulate action from and within perhaps the most anthropocentric discipline of all: art history. Some would say that we have, indeed, reached a terminal state, where we are about to overstep more of our finite "planetary boundaries" or thresholds[4], as in the Greek term *terminus*, border. The etymological root system of *term* is rich and evocative; and perhaps we should dare to take a few artistic liberties and link up with discursive associates like *tempo(ral)* and *thermal* (regarding heat), both conjoined, for example, in the term *tempest*. A *tempest*, which was initially only a regular temporal phenomenon, has become "the progressing storm"[5] in which we stand alongside co-habiting critters like termites and species threatened with ex-termination.

Terminality as a noun unites the root word *term* (another noun and a verb with multiple meanings) with an adjective: *terminal*. An alternative would be *terminalogy*, the suffix of which derives from the Greek *logos*, profoundly connoting ways of speaking, writing and thinking. The territories of terminality, however, lack a control tower constitutive of a formalized school of thought; it

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4   Johan Rockström et al, "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity," *Ecology and Society* 14, no. 2 (Dec 2009).

5   Andreas Malm, *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018).

is not a doctrine, creed or *Lehre*. It is "simply" an attunement to what looks like an impending catastrophe rather than solvable "crisis," a draft for a mindset and agenda towards action, re-, pro- and purposeful non-action.

As a term, terminality occupies historical territory as "a plane of immanence," where the previous hook up with the subsequent, where past mingles with present and future in undetermined ways.[6] This does not imply a philosophy of history, however, some strife toward a happy ending, a bumpy road toward redemption, resolution or transcendence.

Terminal Art History?

Art history taking terminality on board would take all the above-mentioned modes and extensions into account. Two dimensions stand out as particularly important: the material entities of the artworks themselves (usually abbreviated as "art") and the narrations and interconnections we produce to account for their identities, interdependencies and temporal trajectories (usually abbreviated as "history"). The history of art history has its geo-history or *geostory*, which is not about global trade ways or inter-subjective encounters, but is literally pre-historical, even deeply prehuman, as it connects with *geo-* (earth).[7] This dimension would refer to the material and chemical ingredients of the work which not only predate and continue to support it technically and mediumistically, but which, typically, also survive the artist. This level connects the work to the earth, soil, strata and physical conditions of possibility, i.e., not to a history proper but certainly a geostory of sorts. It thus impacts the work's nonhuman temporality as distinct from its human-centered history. To see the artist as one who recombines preexisting elements, determined to "detach and deterritorialise a segment of the

6   Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

7   Bruno Latour, "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene," *New Literary History* 45, no. 1 (Winter 2014) 1–18.

real in such a way as to make it play the role of a partial enunciator,"[8] is to deal a blow to the Romantic notion of the autopoietic genius whose continued presence in the contemporary art world and the contemporary art market is evident.

The other dimension has to do with the tales we tell about the work's "history," i.e., from its origin (including preconditions) to its presentation to the world (its destination) and following adventures. When modern art history, a genre established with Romanticism and under the influence of Hegel, is surveyed in its totality, however, it appears that artworks were born to die, brought forth to be immediately historized as signs, memories and testimonies of their age, period or immediate context, whereafter our interest is directed to the next notable piece in line. This is still the basic script for many educational institutes and big art history museums, unless they mess around a bit with the linear norm.

A terminal art history may seem Hegelian too, a riff on the end-of-art trope, but it is nothing of the sort. Terminality is strictly anti-post; it captures a sentiment of having reached the end of a development, followed by uncertainty where to go next, where to transfer, but without indulging in melancholy or postmodern endgames. Terminality is also incompatible with the delegitimization of metanarratives[9], since we are enmeshed in the greatest possible metanarrative — the homicidal Homocene, which is not "the age of humans" but adamantly *not* about humans. Terminality is also anti-post since all post-designations are historicist — linear, developmental and teleological.

Modern/Postmodern/Contemporary was the periodizing rocket toward ever new horizons of development, advancement, growth and expansion, all fueled with incredible amounts of fossil energy that unleash excessive amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. We can blame this on capitalism, and, accordingly,

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8   Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Sidney: Power Publications, 2006), 131.

9   Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993).

relabel the Anthropocene not the Homocene but the Capitalocene[10], as long as we realize that the hero of political radicalism (left and right), the figure of the avant-gardist, is an instance of this culture and mindset too.

No Marlboro Light-smoking postmodernist ever thought of panicking; and here, their unrecognized offspring, the presentists and contemporalists of the succeeding period, could not care less about either past or future, since they thought — still think — that all this is covered, thus accessible (by their *representation*), on our servers, screens and digital devices. Panic, however, is an appropriate sensation and preparation for engagement now, lest we all be grilled or drown. *Pan* refers to the panpipe-playing "god of flocks and herds of Greek mythology, usually represented with the horns, ears, and legs of a goat on the body of a man,"[11] but its prefix also designates all or completely, which nicely informs this comprehensive *humanimal* creature — a renewed emblem, as well, of our most recent pandemic.

The Task of Terminal Engagement

When Georges Bataille defined the term *informe* in the journal *Documents*, he famously said that a dictionary "begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks."[12] Engagement is a rich and convoluted term for the actualization or realization of a task; its essence being a commitment, pledge or *determination* to do or act toward something important — not just for ourselves but for others or a greater cause. Engagement, however, is never enough. To be engaged may be equal to being persuaded to act, committed to move and determined to take measures, without doing any of these things. We may be

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10 Jason W. Moore, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016).

11 "Pan, n.3." OED Online. September 2021. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/136635?rskey=O3ypDh&result=3 (accessed November 22, 2021).

12 Georges Bataille, "Formless," in *Formless: A User's Guide*, eds. Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 5.

engaged ("I do care…") without engaging, without crossing the invisible boundary between intention and implementation.

A terminal is, among other things, a place of arrival and departure, landing and takeoff. We tend to think of flight terminals as paradigmatic cases of terminals, but airports derive from ancient ports or harbors and share many traits of train stations. Such terminal places anthropologist Marc Augé calls "non-places," places with the identity of no-particular-identity.[13] Another example of this "place" is the computer terminal, today an entry point to a world-wide network of routes, lines and other terminals, but pre-Internet primarily a stationary workstation.

These are all places of transmission and transition — which characterize our collective predicament right now: how to shift to a "sustainable" existence for all living beings on the planet. I put the buzzword sustainable within quotation marks to mark a distance to its frequent misuse as a way to save or sustain our current way of life within "the neoliberal, capitalist world-economic structure,"[14] when it is the latter that provided the turbo engine behind "the great acceleration" of recent decades.[15]

Transition is often discussed as a more moderate alternative to radical transformation, but what we need is, arguably, a combo; no slow reform, but a quickly installed reform of slowness; no snail-smooth transition, but a decisive shift to a more thoughtful, less energy-consuming (s)pace. We have to hurry to slow down, to paraphrase Isabelle Stengers' Manifesto for Slow Science.[16]

Terminality as Eco-Politics for Art rather than Political Eco-Art

As we start again, we must save and consolidate what good things and practices we have, but conservatism is not an option. We have to be etymologically radical,

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13   Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 2nd ed., trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 2008).

14   Timothy Morton, *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People* (New York: Verso, 2019), 35.

15   J.R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

16   Isabelle Stengers, *Another Science is Possible: A Manifesto for Slow Science*, trans. Stephen Muecke (London: Polity, 2017).

locate and respond to the root of the problem, while minding the gap constituted by lingering forms of traditional "radicalism" or avant-gardism (as in most forms of geo-engineering). Initiatives within our discipline or the contemporary art world at large, such as environmental art, eco art, green art, bio art, etc. unveil a paradox, since, while obviously dealing with important issues, the very denomination eco art and the like produces a niche, an exceptional forefront leaving all other art behind. A partition of labor is suggested where some new -isms or movements take care of the ecological *challenges* (this widely embraced euphemism for serious calamities) while the rest continue with *business as usual*.

Labels like eco art, moreover, fall prey to a modernist inclination that could be called *newism*, according to which every artistic approach is tinged with a new touch, attitude, flavor or marketable brand. While every new work of art is literally new, newism implies that it is new in a more comprehensive way, as in "the latest thing" or cutting edge. Contemporary art labelled eco art capitalizes, unintentionally, on the crisis and markets itself as a new art of green engagement. The true challenge before us, however, is that art, as such, and its history need to be ecologized — *all art must be eco art!* Artworks are human *and* non-human, material *and* immaterial and endowed with a "life" of their own.[17] We need to come to terms with "living on a damaged planet" in what Donna Haraway describes as a sympoietic manner.[18] So, what can a poor art historian do in these terminal times? Well, we can adjust what and how we study.

Modern and contemporary art, as the art market has it, is the indexical sign and quintessential vindication of the fossil-fueled modern and contemporary world. Ever since the little ice age subsided in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Industrial revolution went into high gear, "modern" art became, mostly

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17 Cf. Dan Karlholm, "Is History to Be Closed, Saved, or Restarted? Considering Efficient Art History," in *Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology and Anachrony*, eds. Karlholm and Keith Moxey (London: Routledge, 2018), 13–25.

18 Anna Tsing et al., eds., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

implicitly, the celebration of carbon culture with its parasitic relationship toward nonhuman resources and the relentless flight from an alienated Nature. More and more studies are devoted to looking again at this now fruitfully estranged period, from the still lingering repercussions of the Columbian exchange to the postwar excesses of greenhouse gas emissions, which are rising as we speak.

The application of hard theory in the vein of new materialism, queer phenomenology, hauntology or post-humanism, for example, deserves to be extended to all art, and not ageistically and hierarchically reserved for new, "critical" art.[19] Art history in its entirety should be reviewed with an eye to materiality and artifactual ageing, without ignoring thorny questions of sustaining, maintaining and managing art on an everyday basis, since this is part of an artwork's history, too. Artworks need to be seen not just as the offspring of high-credited artists but as ecologically embedded in shifting environments which they may impact and be impacted by. As im/material nonhuman beings, artworks have more in common with each other than with their human mothers and fathers.

Realizing "that the fundamental context for all intellectual work has changed, or must be recognized anew, as the ground beneath it becomes unstable,"[20] we have to brush our readings and art historizations up against the existential imperative to transform our way of life, habits and modes of operation from within, *e.g.*, crisscrossing the globe to check out exhibitions or to embark on ten-hour flights to give a 20-minute paper at conferences with quadruple sessions and hardly anyone present to hear us scream.

The God of Terminality

The Roman Terminus is typically represented as a pillar terminated by a bearded bust. This is the "the deity who resided in and protected boundary markers."[21]

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19   For a fruitful nonhierarchical approach, cf. Andrew Patrizio, *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

20   Timothy Clark, *The Value of Ecocriticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 29.

21   https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Terminus (accessed June 6, 2021).

In art history, this figure is termed a *term* or *herm* (from the Greek god Hermes). This deity is also a "personification of the term terminus" as in (any) boundary or limit – agricultural, territorial, regional, national, geo-political or planetary. The sculpted block of stone turning into a human-looking figure also manifests the concept of the nonhuman (akin to Pan), covering animals, organisms, deities and things — bounder-phenomena long considered subservient to the human. The very paradoxically human- or anthropocentric notion of nonhuman calls for a reconnection with these creatures and entities; neither, however, as phenomena to human perceptivity, nor to reflect upon the finality of our human *Dasein*, but as ecological co-habitants.

Terminus is the defining deity of terminality, embodying the state or station between coming and going, arriving and departing, ending and beginning. Terminus is the slash between these seeming oppositions, a grounded pillar of reflective sense that seems the perfect symptomatic image of our planetary predicament, unless — or especially if! — it finally collapses due to anthropogenically-induced earthly irruptions.

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Hyperimage Group was founded in 2018 with three members from different artistic and academic backgrounds that range from curation, art history, iconology, film studies, philosophy, religious studies and other interdisciplinary areas of inquiry. The aim of the group is to critically assess the current landscape of image research, move beyond image itself – the object of study in the traditional discipline of art history. By moving beyond the limits of social reality in which the practices and research of image are situated, the group investigates and invests in the application and interpretation of image through today's society, intellectual history, and culture.

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